

A CALLING CONFIRMED:
EXPLORING THE SPIRITUAL IMPACT OF ORDINATION
IN THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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DEDICATION

I am deeply indebted to the people of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church, and to Bishop Peggy Johnson, who allowed me the privilege of preparing the ordination service on which this project is based. I was blessed to serve the people of the Northeast District of the conference, and to receive advice and support from the members of my Local Advisory Committee, drawn from this district. What a gift it has been to be in ministry with all of you.

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ABSTRACT

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The meaning and spiritual impact of participation in and attendance at the ordination service of others are evaluated as a means of renewing an individual's own commitment to ministry. The purpose of the study is to ascertain whether the ordination service and spiritual preparation for that service could be used by an annual conference or other judicatory as an instrument of personal renewal and revitalization of ministry commitment.

The biblical foundation and history of ordination are reviewed in order to identify themes and images that might be helpful in constructing an ordination service and devotional preparation that would inspire those already ordained or licensed for ministry. Questionnaires and interviews were utilized in the project to further explore experiences of an individual's ordination that were especially meaningful and that could motivate a recommitment to ministry.

Based on the research, a series of daily devotionals was prepared leading up to the day of ordination. These devotionals address issues highlighted in the questionnaires and interviews, utilizing images from those resources to explore the meaning of ordination and its potential as a source of inspiration for future ministry. The denominational ordinal was also adapted in light of the interviews and questionnaires to provide an experience at the worship service that could reignite the passion for ministry that first leads many into the field as professional clergy.

The evaluation of the impact of the devotional materials and the ordination service indicates that attendees and participants experienced a heightened awareness of the meaning of ordination, and found inspiration in the event in ways that had not been the case in past services attended. The results suggest that the ordination service, when carefully constructed and preceded by appropriate preparatory materials, can be a source of inspiration and renewal for those already engaged in professional ministry as ordained or licensed clergy.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“Ordination is a great theological experiment in which the community of faith tries to hold strong convictions in creative tensions with one another.”¹

Unlike most of my ministerial peers, I have had the privilege of being ordained three times: once as a lay elder in the Presbyterian Church and twice as ordained clergy in the United Methodist Church, first as a transitional deacon and two years later as an elder. All three experiences of ordination were profoundly moving for me and, in conjunction with the awareness of my sense of call, have provided the motivation to persevere in difficult days of ministry. My memories of each occasion are focused and limited, but in each case, the experience had a deep spiritual impact. As a United Methodist clergyperson, my participation in ordination has extended beyond my own ceremonies. United Methodist clergy are ordained at the meeting of the annual conference each spring, in the hope that all clergy will attend as witnesses and be reminded of their own ordination. Consequently, I have attended the ordination service every year but one since my own ordination.

As a District Superintendent in the United Methodist Church, one of my duties was to participate in the actual laying on of hands for those who were being ordained during my tenure. In the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference, the yearly ordination service

¹ Stephen V. Sprinkle, *Ordination: Celebrating the Gift of Ministry* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004), 1.

occurs during the three to four day annual conference. All clergy persons in the conference, both those who have been ordained and those who are licensed for ministry in a particular congregation, are expected to attend the service. The clergy, in robes and stoles, process into the ordination service led by the ordinands and members of the Board of Ordained Ministry (the recommending body for ordination). Conference officials, including the district superintendents and the presiding bishop, bring up the rear. Each year the number of clergy who attend seems to grow smaller. Despite there being over 400 active clergy in local churches and several hundred more retired clergy and ministers serving beyond the local church, less than two hundred clergy processed at the 2010 ordination service. Once ordained, many clergy appear to lose sight of the spiritual impact of their own ordination and forget how meaningful it was to have others present as witnesses to their ordination and as colleagues in the Order of Elders or Order of Deacons. The sense of covenant community among clergy has become weak, and the remembrance of the spiritual power of ordination appears to have dissipated. The question that arose for me was whether there was a way to strengthen the power of the remembered act of ordination in the life of a clergyperson, and whether that might also influence the sense of connection to other clergy. Could participation or attendance at ordination become a source of power for ministry and a bond within the covenant among clergy, or was it simply a hoop to jump through that could then be forgotten or set aside?

My own experience of ordination stands in marked contrast to the latter attitude. The power of the experience has motivated me in ministry, and reminded me of God's call on

my life. I recalled the event in an unpublished paper written for a course in the DMin program at Drew. The ordination ritual occurred during a Sunday morning worship service in the Presbyterian church I attended. Only two of us who had been elected as officers had never been ordained before. We were called forward and stood in front of the pastor in the chancel of the church:

The pastor led us through the ordination vows, up to the point of the laying on of hands. There, he stopped and invited anyone in the congregation who had been ordained elder at any time in their life to come forward and participate in the laying on of hands. I heard a great rustling behind me in the congregation, and turning to look over my shoulder, I saw nearly half the adults in the congregation stand and walk down the aisle toward us. The chancel was small; people crowded around us and stood two abreast down the aisles, anxious to participate in the ordination and bestow their blessing by placing their hand on us. I and the other person being ordained knelt; the pastor and those near me placed hands on my head and shoulders. Those beyond the immediate circle around me placed their hand on the shoulder of the person in front of them. In this daisy chain fashion, I was connected to those who had been ordained before me, from the person standing immediately behind me to the one furthest down the aisle.

And then, in the closest thing I have ever had to a vision, I saw in my mind's eye the hands of those who had preceded even the members standing behind me. It was a great cloud of witnesses, arrayed generation by generation, each one with their hand on the shoulder of the person in front of them, on the shoulders of those who followed them into ordained ministry. From those closest to me who were part of the current life of that church, the line extended back through previous generations of Presbyterian elders who had been ordained in that very chancel. From there the line continued to those who had ordained them, to the pastors and elders of the churches from which the early settlers in the region had come, and from them all the way back to the beginnings of the Presbyterian church, to John Knox in Scotland and John Calvin in Geneva. But my awareness extended even further, to the forebears of the Reformed tradition. I saw the hands of generations before that extended over me in blessing, all the way back to the earliest disciples, and beyond them to Jesus, calling the disciples to leave their nets and their tax booths, to take up their cross and follow, to become the Body of Christ in the world and for the world. I felt an overwhelming sense of connection, not just to those who were part of the church in my day, but to all who had gone before me, responding to Christ's call on their lives. It was as if the power of Christ's call was transmitted hand to hand, all the way up to

me...I became aware of my place in the great throng that has accepted Christ's call to minister to God's people.

As soon as the laying on of hands was over, I found myself once more in the sanctuary with only fellow members of the church around me. Returning to my seat, I expected to see a multitude of people squeezed into the sanctuary, but there was just the usual Sunday attendance. No one else saw anything, no one else commented after the service on anything unusual. But now, twenty-five years later, I still feel the awe of that moment of awareness, a sense of seeing, not with physical eyes, but with the eyes of the soul.²

As I remember my sense of call, I return again and again to that experience, drawing upon it for encouragement in difficult times, and renewing the sense of connection to a larger covenant community.

My ordination as an elder in the United Methodist Church was quite different but equally moving. It was held on a Friday night at a large, center city Philadelphia church, at the end of three days of holy conferencing around the business of the annual conference. Again, I have no recollection of the sermon other than it was offered by the presiding bishop, Bishop Peter Weaver. My clearest memories of that service are of the music. A community choir, made up of over one hundred voices from several churches, sang from the balcony above the congregation. They sang "Great Is Thy Faithfulness," accompanied by organ, brass and timpani, as the anthem before the ordination segment of the worship service. Starting simply and quietly, the music grew in volume and complexity. Eventually, the stones in the wall of the church vibrated with the organ pipes. My soul soared with the music, and I was not alone. By the last verse of the

² Taken from "Narrative of a Sacramental/Preaching Event", an unpublished paper submitted for DMin WSP901, Theology of Story and Sacrament, October, 2009.

hymn, the entire congregation was on their feet and many, including me, were wiping away tears as we pledged our service to a faithful God. The music had lifted us to what the Celts call a thin place, a place where the presence of God is more easily perceived and experienced. The impact of that moment of music carried me forward to kneel before the bishop for the laying on of hands. My memory of that music and how it touched my deepest self has carried me through difficult times of ministry when I have remembered my ordination and given thanks to God for the privilege of serving in this way.

Because my own experiences of ordination had such deep spiritual impact on me, I have never missed the opportunity to attend the annual ordination service of our conference. I go prayerfully, hoping that others might have an experience of God's presence at their ordination that will shape and strengthen them for the rigors of ministry as my experiences strengthened me. The memories of my ordination experiences have reminded me of God's call in times of extreme stress; they have reassured me of God's promise to be with me in my ministerial service, and served as a touchstone in the face of challenge. My experiences of ordination also serve to emphasize and strengthen my connection to the larger community of those called and set apart by God, both those within the conference and those across the ages. Today, attending the service reminds me of my own acquiescence to God's call to ordained ministry, and is a source of spiritual renewal for the work of ministry. I am acutely disappointed by the low turnout for

ordination today, and by the apparent indifference of so many clergy, demonstrated by their non-attendance or their casual attitude when they do attend.

Several years ago, attending my first ordination service as District Superintendent, I had the privilege of laying hands on the first of the candidates to be ordained elder. He was a young man from Africa. His enthusiasm and excitement were palpable as he anticipated the prospect of serving God as ordained clergy. He leaped up the steps to the chancel area, knelt and bowed his head for the ritual laying on of hands. At the end of the rite, he bounded to his feet with a grin as wide as the room, turned to face the congregation and held his hands up over his head in a gesture reminiscent of a victorious prizefighter. Following the ceremony, he bounced off of the walls with excitement and joy, gathering people for pictures and hugging everyone who came near him. He returned to the next year's ordination service with nearly the same level of enthusiasm that he had evidenced at his own ordination, overjoyed this time at the prospect of being God's visible witness to the ordination of a new class.

As I reflected on his demeanor, on his exuberant response the year before, and on my own experiences and responses to ordination, I began to wonder about the spiritual impact of ordination. Were he and I simply people who wore our hearts on our sleeves, and were moved by the emotional freight of ordination? Or had we experienced ordination with a spiritual sensitivity that left an indelible impression on us, one that endured beyond the immediate act of ordination to influence our ministry and our response to others? Was our experience of ordination as a confirmation of our call

different in some ways from our peers' understanding of call and ordination? And I wondered, was there a way to shape our approach to ordination, either through the construction of the liturgy or through individuals' preparation for the service, which would help revive for ordained clergy memories of the deep spiritual impact that ordination might have had for them at the time of their own service? If so, could that result in increased attendance at the service by clergy, both as a sign of support for those being ordained and as a symbol of the individual clergy's recollection of and recommitment to their own call to ministry that was confirmed at their ordination? Might a renewed focus on ordination provide a spiritual spark that could help reignite energy and commitment in ministry for a denomination that has declined in membership and attendance for over twenty years?

This project was undertaken with the express permission of the Presiding Bishop of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church, the Rev. Dr. Peggy Johnson, and with the approval of the 2010-11 chair of the conference Board of Ordained Ministry (BOOM), the Rev. Alan Smith, whose responsibility it was to organize the annual service of ordination. The initial goal was to write the liturgy for the May 2011 service, but in an interview with The Rev. Dr. Taylor Burton-Edwards, Director of Worship Resources for the United Methodist General Board of Discipleship, the importance of using the denominational ordinal was shared as opposed to writing a

new liturgy.³ The Rev. Burton-Edwards asserted that ordination in the United Methodist Church is done for the entire denomination, while the membership of the individual clergyperson is in a particular conference. He believed that this called for a common ordination service, at least at its core, for all conference ordination services. And he further contended that the ritual becomes more meaningful over time when the core is repeated with some variation to make it memorable.⁴ He encouraged our conference to retain a common core with small changes from year to year as a way to balance meaning and creativity. As a result of that interview and subsequent conversation with the bishop and BOOM chair, the focus of the project shifted to adapting the denomination's service and creating a series of daily devotions and reflections on ordination to be shared with conference clergy over the weeks leading up to the ordination service.

Before proceeding to discuss the particulars of the project, a review of the biblical foundations and the history of ordination will be helpful. The United Methodist Church did not begin ordaining ministers in a vacuum, but rather built on biblical precedent and centuries of tradition that preceded the Wesleyan movement, while also diverging from that tradition in ways that continue to impact ministry today. When John Wesley made the momentous decision to ordain pastors for the American Methodists, his decision

³ Taylor Burton-Edwards, Director of Worship, General Board of Discipleship, United Methodist Church; interview conducted by Skype with Bronwyn Yocum, February 11, 2011.

⁴ Burton-Edwards interview.

incorporated his understanding of scripture and historical tradition, as well as his passion for the mission of the church. This decision was a controversial one, given that he had no authority according to the Church of England to ordain pastors or consecrate bishops, both actions which he performed in 1784. The way in which it occurred has left many wondering if Methodism has a theology of ministry and ordination, or simply reacts to events.⁵ Let us begin by looking at the biblical roots of ordination and then trace the development of the set apart ministry from the Apostolic era through the beginnings of ordination among Methodists.

⁵ Bishop William Cannon, "The Meaning of Ministry in Methodism," *Methodist History* 8, no. 1 (October 1969): 3.

CHAPTER 2

ORDINATION IN THE BIBLE

“What else, after all, is Wesley’s Methodism but a system of footnotes upon the sacred text?”¹

From its beginning, the Methodists have regarded Scripture as the primary authority on God’s will. In his work, “The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America”, which Wesley prepared for the new American church, he adapted the Articles of Religion of the Church of England for this new denomination. Article III reads, “Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to Salvation: so that whatsoever is not read therein, or may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man...”² But Scripture is not encountered in a vacuum. For Wesley, “[U]ncorrupted antiquity was the co-ordinate with reason in interpreting or supplementing Scripture...”³ We will therefore begin with an analysis of the Scriptural basis of ordination, and then turn to an historical review. Throughout the Bible, people are chosen by God for special service to the Lord. As the

¹ Franz Hildebrandt, “The Meaning of Ordination in Methodism,” in *The Ministry in the Methodist Heritage*, ed. Gerald O. McCulloh (Nashville: The Board of Education of the Methodist Church, 1960), 70.

² James F. White, *John Wesley's Prayer Book: The Sunday Service of the Methodists in North America* (Cleveland: OSL Publications, 1991), 307.

³ Frank Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1970), 139.

Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry study of the World Council of Churches⁴ affirms, “The church has never been without persons holding specific authority and responsibility.”⁵ This is true not only of the New Testament community, but the Old Testament as well. Prophets, priests and kings are chosen and set apart or consecrated for service. Many of those chosen participate in some form of ritual designating them as chosen, often the laying on of hands, similar to our contemporary Christian ordination rites. However, it is also true that, “While some were appointed by the laying on of hands, there is no indication of this procedure in other cases.”⁶

When laying on of hands is used, its meaning is complex. It can represent the public confirmation of an individual’s call, but can also have a broader and deeper significance. The New Oxford Annotated Bible [NRSV] points out in the note to 1 Tim 4:14 that, “the laying on of hands is not an empty gesture but expresses the donation and reception of a gift.”⁷ By the end of the New Testament period, that gift is identified as the charism of the Holy Spirit, the empowering gift that makes leadership possible. This understanding of the laying on of hands and related ritual actions developed through the centuries of the biblical era.

⁴ Faith and Order Commission, *Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry* (Geneva, Switzerland: World Council of Churches, 1982).

⁵ Faith and Order Commission, 21.

⁶ Faith and Order Commission, 25.

⁷ Bruce M. Metzger and Roland E. Murphy, 1991, 303 NT (New Revised Standard Version).

The laying on of hands as ritual action extends all the way back into the book of Genesis where, in Gen 48:14, Jacob lays hands on Joseph's two sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, to bless them. Here, the act is not an ordination; rather, it implies the giving of a blessing and the invocation of God's protection.

The first major prophet called by God is Moses. Although hands are not laid on Moses, his experience and the development of the Mosaic office have been suggested by Thomas Dozeman as the biblical basis for an understanding of ordination.⁸ In the story of Moses' life, call and leadership, Dozeman sees the beginnings of a set apart ministry. Called by God at the burning bush, Moses responds to the call and enters God's service. His story provides a foundation for our contemporary understanding of call and ordination. Dozeman suggests that "The central teaching on ordination in the Bible is contained in the complex development of the Mosaic office, where the prophetic and priestly dimensions of Moses' call establish the paradigm of ordination to word and sacrament in the Christian tradition."⁹ Dozeman goes on to suggest that in the story of Moses "the biblical authors are exploring the nature of ordination in ancient Israel."¹⁰ Dozeman distinguishes two different kinds of call in the story of Moses, each leading to a

⁸ Thomas B. Dozeman, *Holiness and Ministry: A Biblical Theology of Ordination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

⁹ Dozeman, 5.

¹⁰ Dozeman, 37.

different kind of ministry.¹¹ This dual understanding of Moses' call will become important in the development of John Wesley's understanding of ministry in the 18th century. The first type of call is one to a prophetic ministry of speaking God's Word. This kind of ministry comes through call understood as a charismatic encounter, an overwhelming experience of holiness that invades a person. This can be seen in Moses' call in Exodus 3-4 in which God comes unbidden to Moses in the burning bush, calling him into leadership. Moses' response is self-reflection, a sense of unworthiness and doubt about his ability to respond to the call. In many ways this corresponds to the experience of call as many understand it today: an overwhelming sense of God's invitation into ministry, accompanied by the individual's disbelief and feeling of unworthiness. The second call Dozeman identifies is the call to a priestly ministry of mediating God's holiness through sacramental ritual. This is reflected in the affirmation of Moses' call in Exodus 6, where God incorporates the call of Moses into the tradition of salvation history, identifying the divine presence as the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Ex 6:3). Moses, too, is placed into a historical perspective through an extensive genealogy. In this understanding of call and ordination, Moses is used by God to communicate an entire ritual process for Israel that will reconnect them with their God. Like Moses, today's pastors are incorporated into a tradition of ministry, acquiring a sense of that tradition and its ritual requirements through a seminary education or other form of schooling. For

¹¹ Dozeman, 32-33. The two kinds of call and ministry incorporate the views of Rudolph Otto and Jacob Milgrom exploring holiness as charismatic force and ritual resource.

some today, this incorporation into the tradition is experienced as a necessary denominational process that has little to do with call.¹² Dozeman, however, concludes that ordination to Word and sacrament in the contemporary church corresponds to these two different kinds of call and ministry in the Mosaic Office.¹³

It is interesting to note that Moses' call in Exodus 3-4 includes the appointment of Aaron to accompany Moses in his ministry. From the beginning, set apart leadership is not portrayed as a solo activity of a single heroic figure endowed with every needed gift, but rather the cooperative ministry of two individuals, neither of whom has everything needed for exemplary leadership but who, together, working in collegiality with mutual accountability (for example, Moses' calling Aaron to account for the Golden Calf), are able to achieve the purposes of God. We will later see this same collegiality in the setting apart of Paul and Barnabas to ministry in Acts 13. The United Methodist ordination into an annual conference and into orders of ministry recognizes this collegial and mutual ministry. The 2012 Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church makes this understanding explicit.

An order is a covenant community within the church to mutually support, care for, and hold accountable its members for the sake of the life and mission of the church. These orders, separately or together, seek to respond to the spiritual

¹² While a student at Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary, I remember a student standing up in a large lecture class led by Dr. Ronald Sider and complaining that all this work was irrelevant because all he needed was his "Bible in one hand and Discipline in the other" and he would have everything he needed to be a minister. In a survey of Eastern Pa. Annual Conference ordained clergy conducted for this project, 3% of the respondents described ordination as "a hoop to jump through." (see Appendix 5)

¹³ Dozeman, 23.

hunger among clergy for a fulfilling sense of vocation, for support among peers during this stressful time of change in the Church, and for a deepening relationship with God.¹⁴

In Leviticus 8-9, Aaron and his sons are ordained to the priesthood by Moses.

Dennis Campbell identifies the actual emergence of the idea of ordination in Scripture with this consecration of Aaron and his sons.¹⁵ The rite includes purification by washing, the signifying of new status through new clothing, anointing with oil and with the blood of sacrifice, and ritual sacrifices followed by a seven day period of isolation. There is no mention of laying on of hands. Today, while many ordained persons wear ‘new clothing’, for example the clerical collar, ministerial robes or stole, many others are now choosing to dress in the clothing of the congregation. Preliminary plans for a new ordinal for the UMC include the suggestion that candidates enter in street clothes and are robed in their new clothes as part of the ordination ritual.¹⁶ The current rite includes the bishop’s placing the stole on the ordinand for the first time, both as new clothing and as a symbol of being yoked with Christ. Clergy who are not ordained – those who are licensed for ministry in a congregation or those serving the two year provisional period – are expected not to wear stoles. The traditional color of the stole at ordination is red – the color of the Holy Spirit whose power is invoked by the bishop during the liturgy. Red is

¹⁴ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2012* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012), 221.

¹⁵ Dennis M. Campbell, *The Yoke of Obedience: The Meaning of Ordination in Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 20.

¹⁶ Burton-Edwards interview, and e-mail correspondence, June 25, 2013.

also the color of blood. In Exodus 29, Moses is instructed to anoint Aaron and his sons with the blood of a sacrificed ram as a sign of their ordination. For Christians, Jesus Christ has made the one complete sacrifice. In this way, the red stole that is given to ordinands by the bishop connects both to the Old Testament tradition of ordaining priests and to the blood of Christ by which we are anointed in our ordination.

The first leader actually set apart by laying on of hands is Joshua. When God tells Moses of his impending death, Moses asks God to appoint a shepherd for the people of Israel. God chooses Joshua for the task, and in Num. 27:18-20, God speaks to Moses.

So the Lord said to Moses, "Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand upon him; have him stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and commission him in their sight. You shall give him some of your authority, so that all the congregation of the Israelites may obey."¹⁷

A portion of Moses' authority is then transferred to his young successor through Moses laying hands on Joshua. There is no mention of God's Spirit being imparted; the Spirit is already present in the one to be set apart. The laying on of hands instead represents the imparting of Moses' authority to his successor in a visible way that will inspire the obedience of the Israelites. Thus the conveying of authority is one important dimension of laying on hands, and it is done in a public setting before those over whom the ordinand will have authority.

Franz Hildebrandt, who served as Professor of Christian Theology at the Theological School of Drew University from 1953 to 1967, explored Methodist ministry

¹⁷ All Scripture quotations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version unless otherwise noted.

and ordination in several of his works.¹⁸ In one article, he cites the 1888 work of Benjamin Gregory, pointing to the ordination of Joshua as “a striking and significant description of an ordination service to church rulership.”¹⁹ Gregory identifies in the Numbers passage what he believes to be the critical elements of ordination: a divine call, identification of the nature of the office, the presence of the Spirit in the one to be ordained, laying on of hands before the assembled congregation with the giving of a charge, and clarity about the duty of the congregation in response,²⁰ in this case, obedience.

During the period of the kings, leadership divides to follow two paths: those who are called to religious leadership as prophets and priests, and those who are called to political leadership as kings. Anointing becomes the primary method of setting apart political leaders, beginning with Saul’s anointing by Samuel. As the Old Testament progresses, prophetic leadership becomes more critical to the salvation story than priestly leadership, and an increased sense of an inward call to prophetic leadership unfolds. Those who are publicly consecrated to religious leadership are often at odds with God’s

¹⁸ Franz Hildebrandt, “The Meaning of Ordination in Methodism,” in *The Ministry in the Methodist Heritage*, ed. Gerald O. McCulloh (Nashville: The Board of Education of the Methodist Church, 1960); “Wanted: A Methodist Doctrine of The Ministry,” *Drew Gateway* 29, Winter, 1959, 59-93.

¹⁹ Hildebrandt, 69, quoting from Benjamin Gregory, *Handbook of Scriptural Church Principles and of Wesleyan-Methodist Polity and History in Two Parts*, 1888.

²⁰ Hildebrandt, 69.

chosen prophets.²¹ The emphasis for the ministry of delivering God's Word becomes focused on the inward divine call which may not be confirmed by the religious establishment but, instead, by miraculous action performed by the true prophet or priest. It is the fruit of action that determines who is truly called by God, not the individual's claim to a call nor the institutional affirmation of call. In our review of the early Methodist history of ordination in chapter four, we will see that this idea of inward call was critical to Wesley's revival efforts in the eighteenth century. Wesley contrasted some of those ordained by the Church of England with his preachers in a letter to Dr. Lowth, Bishop of London, in 1780, writing,

Does your Lordship examine whether they serve Christ or Belial? Whether they love God or the world... If not, what have they to do with Holy Orders... But your Lordship did not see good to ordain [Mr. Hoskins]; but your Lordship did see good to ordain and send to America other persons who knew something of Greek and Latin, but who no more of saving souls than of catching whales.²²

The external call of the church did not, in Wesley's mind, necessarily correspond to an inward call from God. Wesley was furthermore moved by the fruitfulness of an individual's ministry, as for example, with his mother's successful prayer ministry in the parsonage during her husband's time away from home. Samuel Wesley expressed his disapproval of her action, but Susannah "dared him to command her to stop" while as

²¹See Elijah and the prophets of Baal in I Kings 18, Micaiah and Zedekiah in 2 Chron 18, Jeremiah and Hananiah in Jeremiah 28, and the condemnations of false prophets by Micah in Micah 3 and by Ezekiel in Ezekiel 13.

²² John Telford, *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, 8 vols. (London: Epworth Press, 1931), 7:31.

many as two hundred people gathered for her to lead them in prayer.²³ The young John watched as his mother's ministry bore fruit, although she had no externally confirmed call to ministry. This understanding would, we shall see, influence Wesley's approach to appointing preachers and ultimately to his conception of ordination.

The biblical foundations for ordination were not limited, however, to the Old Testament. The gospel narratives continue the development of the process of setting an individual apart for leadership. Jesus uses laying on of hands for multiple purposes including the imparting of blessing (Matt. 9:15, blessing the children) and healing (Luke 4:40, healing the sick in Capernaum). Jesus explicitly calls the twelve disciples to a set apart ministry. Although there is no service of ordination or laying on of hands, Luke 9:1-2 does provide for the giving of "power and authority" to the twelve as they are sent out. Like Moses with Aaron, this sent ministry is not accomplished alone but in two's. In Matt. 28:16ff and Acts 1:6ff, the disciples are commissioned for ministry and given the charge identifying what they are to accomplish. In both cases, Jesus promises them the power they will need to accomplish their commission. In Matthew he promises to be with them, and in Acts the Holy Spirit is promised to them. In both cases, the commission is accompanied by the promise of a divine, empowering presence.

John 21 provides a different commission from Jesus to his disciples. Henri Nouwen, a Dutch born Catholic priest, wrote extensively on issues of spirituality. He

²³ Frank Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England* (Nashville and New York: Abingdon Press, 1970), 9.

brings together his thoughts on spirituality and leadership in his book, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership*,²⁴ exploring the implications of this passage for Christian leadership, particularly ordained leadership. Nouwen concludes that ministry is a “communal and mutual experience” and that we are “called to proclaim the Gospel together, in community.”²⁵ Like the ministry of Moses and Aaron, like the mission of the disciples sent out two by two, ministry is not intended to be a solo performance. Nouwen also affirms that appointment to Christian leadership is not to a ‘professional’ position as those “who know their clients’ problems and take care of them, but as vulnerable brothers and sisters.”²⁶ This perspective incorporates the narrative trajectory in the story of Moses that rejects the traditional heroic legend in favor of one who demonstrates vulnerability and human failing in his life.²⁷ Ordination to Christian ministry does not make us super-human, but invites us to mediate the grace of God through fallible, vulnerable human lives that are empowered by God in spite of our weakness. The Gospel accounts reinforce the humanity of the disciples and their imperfection while still mediating God’s grace.

Following Jesus’ ascension, the apostles continue the act of laying on of hands, and its meaning is expanded. It is still used to confer healing, as Paul uses it in Acts 28:8,

²⁴ Henri J. M. Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1996).

²⁵ Nouwen, 40.

²⁶ Nouwen, 42-43.

²⁷ Dozeman, 40.

but in Acts 6 the laying on of hands in the story of the first deacons picks up the Old Testament image of imparting authority. The apostles recognize the need for someone to serve in the distribution of food to the Hellenist widows and so exhort the community to choose six men, “full of the spirit and of wisdom” (Acts 6:3) to be set aside for this special service. Then the apostles pray over them and lay hands on them. In this way they receive a measure of the apostles’ authority that authorizes them to perform this distinct service to the community and to God. Reminiscent of Joshua in the Old Testament, the Spirit was already present in these men. Interestingly, the deacons are chosen by the community but “ordained” by the apostles. We may see here a foreshadowing of the contemporary practice of examination by the people of God prior to ordination by the bishop.

As the New Testament account continues, the laying on of hands is used as a symbolic gesture that signifies the imparting of the Holy Spirit. The apostles and their successors are the instruments through whom God gives the Holy Spirit to new believers and to those being commissioned for service by the laying on of hands. In Acts 8, Peter and John go to Samaria where they lay hands on new believers. It is in that act that the Samaritans receive the Holy Spirit even though they had become believers at an earlier time. The church at Antioch ‘ordains’ Paul and Barnabas at the direction of the Holy Spirit who calls the two into service. The church leaders, after fasting, set Paul and

Barnabas apart for service to God by praying, laying hands on them and sending them out.²⁸

Two words in particular are worth examining in relationship to ordination in the New Testament. In Acts 14:23 and in 2 Cor 8:19, the author refers to the appointment of individuals; in Acts it is the appointment of elders for the churches and in 2 Cor it refers to the appointment of Titus to accompany Paul. The NRSV translates the Greek ‘cheirotoneo’ as ‘appoint.’ But the literal meaning of the word is “to stretch out the hand.”²⁹ This suggests the possibility that such appointments may have been accompanied by the laying on of hands as a mentor stretched out the hand to lay it on the head of the one being appointed.³⁰ Appointment to a specific charge as part of the act of ordination became an imperative for the Protestant Reformers. Today, United Methodist elders are ordained only if there is an appointment available for them.

The second word appears in Acts 13, where the Holy Spirit calls for Paul and Barnabas to be separated or set apart for God. The Greek word ‘aphorizo’ refers to the separation of clean from unclean, usually for service or sacrifice to God.³¹ The New

²⁸ John Wesley disputed that this was an ordination. He wrote, “This was not ordaining them. St. Paul was ordained long before, and that ‘not of man, neither by man.’ It was only inducting him to the province for which our Lord had appointed him from the beginning.” John Wesley, *Wesley’s Notes on the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Francis Asbury Press of Zondervan Publishing House, 1987), 48.

²⁹ William D. Mounce, *The Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1993), 481.

³⁰ Faith and Order Commission, 31, Commentary on Ministry section, V.A.40.

³¹ Robert W. Wall, “The Acts of the Apostles,” in *The New Interpreter’s Bible*, ed. Leander Keck, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2002), 10: 189.

Interpreter's Bible points out that this word was used by the LXX for "Israel's being 'called' out of unclean nations to make a consecrated witness to God's salvation."³² In Exodus 24:8, Moses takes the blood of oxen sacrificed to God and dashes it onto the gathered people as a sign of their covenant to obey the Lord's commands. By this ritual action, Israel is set apart as God's people, to live in a way that was different from those around them – obeying the law of God, observing the commandments of the Lord. This separation was a ritual separation in response to the Lord's command, not lightly undertaken.³³ Today's ordinand is set apart from the laity, no longer a member of a local congregation but, in United Methodism, a member of the conference and called to live as an exemplar for the community. The General Examination of candidates for ordination and commissioning asks if they will "pattern your life in accordance with the teachings of Christ?"³⁴

There is no single form of ritual or structure for governance given in the New Testament for all situations or all churches. But from these examples it is clear that the use of laying on of hands in a ritual way progressed from the Old Testament concept of conferring blessing or authority to the New Testament recognition that the action can impart the Holy Spirit, confer authority and confirm a call received from God. The

³² Wall, 189.

³³ Paul uses this same word to describe himself in Romans 1:1 as "**set apart** for the gospel of God" (NRSV) and in Galatians 1:15 to describe God's action, "But when God, who had **set me apart** before I was born..."

³⁴ Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church, *Ordination Service* (Valley Forge, Eastern PA Conference, 2011), 5.

authority granted in the laying on of hands is the result of both this calling by God and the empowerment through reception of the Holy Spirit. Campbell points out that leadership in the biblical model of ministry was both functional and charismatic: functional in that it contributed to the needs of the whole community, and charismatic because it was given by God and recognized by the community rather than inherited or acquired through training by anyone who wanted it.³⁵ The conferring of the Holy Spirit appears to be a necessary precondition for authority and even, perhaps, the basis for the granting of authority. United Methodism also combines this functional and charismatic understanding of ordination as we shall see in its response to the Roman Catholic concept of absolute ordination.

The biblical text thus shapes our understanding of the laying on of hands as a symbolic action in ordination. In its complexity, the act's meaning includes blessing, the imparting of authority, the conferring of God's Spirit, the confirmation of call by the religious establishment, and a setting apart or calling out from a community. While most of these elements describe human actions, the imparting of God's Spirit is a divine action. Given this understanding of laying on of hands in ordination, it is reasonable to expect a lasting spiritual impact on the ordinand resulting from this imparting of the Holy Spirit. This impact is not, however, the result of an irresistible force such as the Spirit's possession of Saul in 1 Samuel 10:10. Instead, the granting of the Holy Spirit through the

³⁵ Campbell, 1988, 23.

laying on of hands opens possibilities but not inevitabilities. The Spirit empowers but does not impose; it enables the mortal to become the visible representative of the immortal but does not mandate that. Individuals have free will to respond to the gift of the Holy Spirit. Just as Moses could have walked away from the burning bush, individuals who are called have the ability to respond in acceptance or rejection of the call.

Wesleyans are Arminian in their perception of free will. John Wesley believed that because of God's prevenient grace, each person has the free will to accept salvation along with the continuing activity of grace as God's gift to us, or to refuse the gift of grace and salvation.³⁶ Looking at the conferring of the Holy Spirit in this light means that while the laying on of hands provides the power of the Holy Spirit to those who choose to accept it and use it for God's purposes, that power can be refused or extinguished. In 2 Tim 1:6-7, Paul tells his young colleague: "For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline." Paul exhorts Timothy to "rekindle" the gift of God, to reinvigorate the Holy Spirit that was given through Paul's laying on of hands. The symbol of the Holy Spirit is fire, and a fire can burn brightly or can die down, losing both light and heat.

³⁶ See for example Wesley's sermon, "*Free Grace*", *Sermon 128*, John Wesley, *The Works of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), 7:373-386.

When the church is performing well the job of credentialing ordained pastors, those who come for ordination performed with the laying on of hands burn with an inner fire to serve God. But over time, that fire can be suffocated by the demands of ministry, the pressures of a pastor's family life and the challenges of the changing expectations of ministry. The fire of the Holy Spirit does not inevitably burn brightly. That is made clear in the Revelation to John, where the author writes to seven churches. Several of these letters describe churches that at one time burned with the fire of God's Spirit but have now departed from God's ways. To the church in Ephesus, the author writes "you have abandoned the love you had at first." (Revelation 2:4) To the church in Sardis are written these words: "I know your works; you have a name of being alive, but you are dead. Wake up, and strengthen what remains and is on the point of death." (Revelation 3:1b-2a) And in the final letter, to the church in Laodicea, are the words, "I know your works; you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth." (Revelation 3:15-16) In each of these instances, the church that was once ablaze with the presence and power of God is no longer burning with the Spirit's power. Might these images provide metaphors for today's clergy? Could it be that those who once burned with the fire of the Holy Spirit at their ordination have, over time, lost focus, lost power or lost motivation for ministry? Could these also describe the loss of remembrance of our own ordination and of the vitality of our calling to ministry? Some pastors become angry with congregations that don't do what they are "supposed" to do; others are beaten down

by congregational conflict or churches that are content with maintenance ministry; some struggle with family problems. In this postmodern era, some are bewildered by the rapid changes in the culture and by the consequent changes in the expectations of pastors. For these pastors, their call to ministry has become a distant mumbling and the fire to serve God that burned within them is now little more than a few smoldering embers.

The biblical understanding of ordination as a setting apart for leadership of God's people reminds us that we do not take the yoke of ministry on our own (Heb. 5:4). We are called by God to a collegial and mutual ministry in which vulnerable human beings, people who may question their own abilities to represent God, are empowered by the Holy Spirit to accomplish that which they could not do on their own. This ministry involves both prophetic and priestly functions, and is given for the building up of God's people.

The United Methodist liturgy for baptism includes the admonition to the congregation to "Remember your baptism and be thankful."³⁷ In the same way, ordained clergy need to be called to "Remember your ordination and be thankful," and to "rekindle the flame" of the Holy Spirit that lies within, dormant in some but never completely extinguished. The service of ordination may be one way to create an opportunity for ordained clergy to bring to mind their call stories, to celebrate the ways God has worked through them, to remember their ordination and to reconnect with those with whom they

³⁷ The United Methodist Book of Worship (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1992), 92.

have entered the covenant community of the ordained. There is the potential in the service of ordination for a moment of anamnesis, as those who have been ordained live their own ordination again while watching new pastors come forward for their ordination. Just as we experience the presence of Christ in the Sacrament of Holy Communion in a way that unites us with Christians of every age and place, so in the ritual of ordination we might be united not just with those coming for ordination or even with other ordained clergy in the room, but with ordained clergy of every age and place. The cloud of witnesses present at ordination transcends time and location to make ordination an inspirational event, one into which God has breathed the Holy Spirit.

The Apostolic Era saw the further development of the understanding of ordination and the authority to ordain. Because John Wesley's approach to the life of faith was deeply influenced by the ancient church,³⁸ we will make a brief overview of the history of ordination in the church prior to the 18th century.

³⁸ Wesley was called "Primitive Christianity" as a derogatory nickname by those who mocked his reliance on early church history. Baker, 34.

CHAPTER 3

HISTORY OF ORDINATION: APOSTOLIC ERA TO 18TH CENTURY

“Ordination rites are living ecclesial literature that changes and evolves in a fashion that is very seldom linear or progressive”¹

When the Methodist Episcopal Church was established in America, the ordination of clergy was one of the most controversial issues for the new church. John Wesley justified his decision to ordain in part by asserting his right to ordain based on the history of ordination and the connection to the apostolic faith of his action in ordaining. It is, therefore, important for us to review the history of ordination in order to better understand Wesley’s actions and intentions.

Apostolic Era Through The Reformation

The early Christian church anticipated the imminent return of Jesus. While leadership was necessary, there was no clear direction for a single form of leadership. The New Testament does not prescribe one definitive model of ministry.² In fact, several different patterns of church leadership are identified. The Pastoral Epistles speak of

¹ Stephen V. Sprinkle, *Ordination: Celebrating the Gift of Ministry* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2004), 64, describing the work of James F. Puglisi.

² Faith and Order Commission, 24, Section on Ministry III.A.19.

bishops, elders and deacons, but not necessarily as three distinct orders of ministry. First Timothy distinguishes between bishops and deacons (I Tim 3), while Titus speaks of the appointment of elders and then seems to identify them as bishops (Titus 1:5-7). The letters to Timothy identify the laying on of hands as a ritual for the appointment of these representative leaders.³ There are also references that evoke the Jewish synagogue custom of appointing a council of elders. The earliest Christians did not consider themselves as separate from the Jews⁴, and so it would have been logical to adopt the synagogue form of government. We see this illustrated in statements such as the admonition in James 5:14, “Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over them...” suggesting a group or council of elders with pastoral responsibility for the one who is ill. In Acts 20:17 we read that Paul “sent a message to Ephesus, asking the elders of the church to meet him.” Thus, it appears that the leadership offices for which people were selected and the means of installation to those offices were not clearly delineated in the apostolic period.

Paul does make it clear in the Pastoral Epistles that those selected for leadership, whether as bishops, deacons or elders, should be persons whose character embodies Christian behavior. In 1 Timothy 3, he exhorts Timothy to ensure that bishops and deacons demonstrate particular qualities of character, and that deacons are “tested.” (1

³ See, for example, I Timothy 4:14, 5:22, 2 Timothy 1:6,

⁴ Henry Chadwick, “The Early Christian Community,” in *The Oxford Illustrated History of Christianity*, ed. John McManners (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 21-61.

Tim 3:10). The admonition regarding behavior continues in chapter 4, in 2 Timothy 2, and in Titus 1. There are expectations that those appointed to leadership will live in ways consistent with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Holy living is necessary for effective leadership of God's people.

As time went on and Christ did not return, the church began to realize that some "permanent ministerial structure" was necessary.⁵ Two critical issues facing the church in the first three centuries helped shape the evolution of set apart leadership during those years - threats of heretical teaching and persecution. Leadership was needed to ensure the orthodoxy of teaching and to provide inspiration in the face of persecution.

The challenge of unauthorized or heretical teaching required some way of ascertaining those who taught with the legitimate authority of the church. Vorgrimler asserts that the development of leadership roles in the post-biblical era was based on a "concern for adherence to apostolic tradition, both in faith and teaching and in institutional matters."⁶ The apostles had been the arbiters and decision makers in the New Testament church. With their death, the question arose, who will decide what is orthodox? Ireneaus proposed, in considering how to combat heresy, that the connection to apostolic teaching and the assurance of orthodoxy were achieved through the orderly

⁵ Chadwick, 33.

⁶ Herbert Vorgrimler, *Sacramental Theology*, trans. Linda M. Maloney (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), 248.

succession of bishops.⁷ The clergy, bishops surrounded by presbyters/elders and deacons, became the source of assurance of orthodoxy and defense against heresy by connecting the church to the apostolic witness through the episcopal succession leading from the apostles to bishops. This succession provided the “charism of truth” to those consecrated as bishops.⁸ They, in turn, would ensure that clergy ordained or appointed by them taught that same truth. The unbroken line of succession ensured that the proclamation of these clergy was connected to the apostolic witness. Irenaeus advocates obedience “only [to] those presbyters who are in the Church, who have their succession from the Apostles, as we have shown; who with their succession in the episcopate have received the sure gift of the truth [charism of truth] according to the pleasure of the Father.”⁹ Thus, the setting apart of clergy who would proclaim the apostolic faith became critical in defending the orthodoxy of the faith.

Just as the response to heresy shaped the church’s selection of leaders, so did the response to persecution. From the era of Nero through the reign of Diocletian, the church suffered periods of persecution by the civil authorities of the Roman Empire. The government recognized that “the very survival of the church had been due to the

⁷ Irenaeus, “Against the Heresies” in *Documents of the Christian Church, Second Edition*, ed. Henry Bettenson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 68.

⁸ Vorgrimler, 249.

⁹ Irenaeus, 70.

coherence and discipline imparted by the episcopate.”¹⁰ This made the clergy, bishops in particular, targets of persecution.¹¹ Knowing this, the church needed persons of exemplary character who would not shirk their duty and who would, in less stressful times, serve as exemplars of the faith to those within the church and to the world. The second century *Didache* advises, “Elect therefore for yourselves bishops and deacons worthy of the Lord, men that are gentle and not covetous, true men and approved...”¹² Character and moral life were factors in the selection of persons for set apart leadership, because the bishop was considered the visible representative of Jesus Christ.¹³ Ignatius compared the relationship between the church and its bishop to the relationship between the church and Jesus Christ and, even, that of Jesus to the Father.¹⁴ Holy living by clergy was therefore critical in the lives of these visible exemplars.

The nature of ordination to church office was shaped for the future as a result of these challenges. Adherence to the apostolic tradition ensured by apostolic succession, and a blameless life of holy living that represented Christ in the world and could include

¹⁰ Chadwick, 42.

¹¹ Chadwick, 42. Also, see for example, “The Martyrdom of Polycarp in *Martyrium Polycarpi*, a letter from the Church of Smyrna, *The First Martyrology*” in Bettenson, 9-12, and “The Epistle of the Gallican Church: ap. Eusebius, H.E. V. i.” in Bettenson, 12-13.

¹² “*Didache*, or Teaching of the Twelve Apostles” in *Documents of the Christian Church*, ed. Henry Bettenson, 66.

¹³ Nathan Mitchell, O.S.B., *Mission and Ministry: History and Theology in the Sacrament of Order* [Wilmington, DE: Michael Glazier, Inc., 1982], 181, describing Ignatius’ understanding of episcopacy.

¹⁴ Ignatius of Antioch, “*Ignatius to the Ephesians*,” chapter 5, “Early Christian Writings” at www.earlychristianwritings.com (accessed August 2, 2013).

self-sacrifice and possible martyrdom were the elements of the ordained life expected of those who were chosen to serve God through set apart ministry.

The Pastoral Epistles had offered laying on of hands as one method of setting persons apart for leadership.¹⁵ While we know about the nature of ministry during the following years from many authors, references to actual rites of ordination are absent until we reach *The Apostolic Tradition* of Hippolytus in the first part of the third century.¹⁶ This document has become central in early liturgical studies, and contains the oldest surviving ordination rites¹⁷ and the only full account of ordination prior to the fourth century.¹⁸ Some scholars, however, suggest that parts of the document, including the ordination liturgies, were retouched in the fourth century to make them conform to then-current church practice.¹⁹

In contrast to Gregory's generalization about the elements of ordination cited above,²⁰ Stephen V. Sprinkle identifies three elements found in *The Apostolic Tradition* that have continued as patterns in our contemporary understanding of the ordination rite.

¹⁵ See, for example, 1 Timothy 4:14, 5:22, 2 Timothy 1:6. There is no indication, however, that this is the only acceptable means of setting apart for leadership.

¹⁶ Paul F. Bradshaw, *Ordination Rites of the Ancient Churches of East and West* [New York: Pueblo Publishing Company, 1990], 3.

¹⁷ Sprinkle 2004, 62.

¹⁸ Bradshaw, 3.

¹⁹ Bradshaw, 3.

²⁰ See page 17 in chapter 2.

First is the ‘electio.’ Empowered by the Holy Spirit, the whole church chooses or elects the individual to be ordained. Second is the ‘ordinatio.’ This is the laying on of hands with prayer invoking the Holy Spirit. Third is the ‘missio’, the appointment to a concrete charge or mission.²¹ This pattern has continued in some form throughout the history of ordination. We will see that the electio became critical for John Wesley as he examined the outer call from the church in light of the inner call from God. The second element, the ordinatio, will be the primary focus of the actual project.

By the fourth century, the ordinatio, the imposition of hands with prayer, was the heart of the rite of ordination, and the pattern of the rite was becoming fixed.²² At least three primary offices or orders of ministry were present in both the eastern and western church, including bishop, elder/priest and deacon. Several minor offices also had specific rites, with these offices varying by region and time. Among these offices were ritual recognition of widows and deaconesses, offices that did not endure as ordained orders within the church. The *Apostolic Tradition* does not include deaconesses, but instead has a rite for recognition of widows who, it is clearly stated, are not ordained.²³ The *Apostolic Constitutions*, a late fourth century document, is the first to include an ordination ritual for deaconesses.²⁴ In the eastern church, *The Byzantine Rite* included a

²¹ Sprinkle, 62-63.

²² Vorgrimler, 252.

²³ Bradshaw, “The Apostolic Tradition”, 109.

²⁴ “The Apostolic Constitutions”, Bradshaw, 116, and Bradshaw’s comments, 84.

rite for the ordination of deaconesses with marked similarity to the ordination of deacons.²⁵ Although this is a later text, Bradshaw believes that the elements of the rite and the prayers go back much farther than the 8th century, possibly to the 4th century.²⁶ By the time of the 12th-13th centuries, however, the order of deaconess had disappeared in both eastern and western churches,²⁷ and the minor orders were reduced to non-ordained roles or positions in the preparation for ordination as priest.²⁸ By the Medieval period, only the three orders of deacon, elder and bishop had rites of ordination or consecration that included the laying on of hands.

During this period, the major development in the understanding of ordination was the establishment of the idea of absolute ordination, leading to the inclusion of ordination among the sacraments. At the Council of Chalcedon in 451, absolute ordination was forbidden,²⁹ but in 1099, a Roman synod reversed that position.³⁰ Absolute ordination did not require the individual ordinand to be related to a specific community. Such

²⁵Bradshaw, "The Byzantine Rite", 137-139.

²⁶ Bradshaw, 7.

²⁷ Nancy Vyhmeister, "The Ministry of the Deaconess Through History: Part One of Two," *Ministry: International Journal for Pastors*, (July, 2008), <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2008/07/the-ministry-of-the-deaconess-through-history.html> (accessed July 3, 2013).

²⁸ Vorgrimler, 253.

²⁹ Vorgrimler, 252.

³⁰ Vorgrimler, 253.

ordination was seen as causing a “permanent, indelible character change”³¹ through the grace conveyed in the rite. Augustine argued for ordination as a sacrament that could not be lost even if the individual priest removed himself from the church.³² This countered the claims of the Donatists who questioned the validity of sacraments administered by clergy who had yielded to persecution. Augustine argued that the change which occurred in a priest at ordination was the result of an act of God and, therefore, irrevocable. Regardless of the priest’s subsequent actions, the grace of God was still mediated by the priest because of God’s action in ordination. Aquinas brought together the arguments for permanent change in his theology of ministry.³³ Ordination was not simply entry into a job or career; it was a sacrament that resulted in an objective, ontological change to the essence of the ordinand, apart from connection to any particular community. This changed status resulted in great power for the ordained who now held life-long capacity to wield God’s grace and forgiveness in ways that determined the salvation of individual believers. Because of this absolute ordination, the priest’s new divinely given powers were unrelated to appointment to a particular congregation. This led to the Roman Catholic practice of a priest’s offering mass apart from a congregation. The ‘missio’

³¹ Campbell, 36.

³² Augustine, *On Baptism, Against the Donatists*, in New Advent: Church Fathers, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/14081.htm> (accessed July 3, 2013).

³³ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica, Third Part, Question 63*, in New Advent: Church Fathers, <http://www.newadvent.org/summa/4063.htm#article2> (accessed July 3, 2013).

element of the ordination ritual, the relationship to a specific congregation, was no longer essential.

The concepts of absolute ordination, ontological change in the ordinand, and disconnection of ordination from relationship to a congregation, were principles disputed by the Protestant Reformers who rejected the inclusion of ordination among the sacraments, denying that ordination resulted in a permanent, ontological change.³⁴ For the Reformers, the focus of ordained ministry was preaching and the administration of the sacraments.³⁵ Ordination, thus, was viewed as a functional process, not an ontological one. Ministry was reduced to one order, presbyter, and ordained clergy were tied to a specific congregation, restoring the ‘missio’ of the *Apostolic Tradition*.

While the Protestant Reformation on the continent was based on theological issues, the English Reformation developed out of political and economic issues. The three-fold ordering of ministry and the episcopal structure were retained from the Roman Catholic Church. The worship service remained similar in many ways to the Mass. Although the Church of England broke with Rome, the English Reformers sought to ensure continuity with the apostolic witness through adherence to the apostolic faith. The

³⁴ Martin Luther wrote: “Of this sacrament the Church of Christ knows nothing; it is an invention of the church of the pope,” and “And therefore this sacrament of ordination, if it have any meaning at all, is nothing else than a certain rite whereby one is called to the ministry of the Church. Furthermore, the priesthood is properly nothing but the ministry of the Word, mark you, of the Word — not of the law, but of the Gospel.” Martin Luther, *A Prelude on the Babylonian Captivity of the Church* in BibleExplore.com, http://www.godrules.net/library/luther/NEW1luther_b5.htm (accessed July 3, 2013).

³⁵ Campbell, 38.

preface to the first ordination liturgy of the Church of England, published in 1550, took care to trace the founding of the three orders of ministry covered in the Ordinal to apostolic times.³⁶ Over the next century, theologians and leaders in the Church of England sought to develop an understanding of Anglican theology that went beyond a simple repudiation of Roman authority.³⁷ Jeremy Taylor, Bishop of Down and Connor, wrote in *A Letter to a Gentleman Seduced to the Church of Rome*, that the Church of England had everything needed for salvation, including “the Word of God, the Faith of the Apostles, the Creeds of the Primitive Church.”³⁸ And William Sherlock, Dean of St. Paul’s, wrote in 1690,

The profession of the true Faith and Worship of Christ makes a true Church, and all true churches are the One Catholic Church, whether they be spread all over the world, or shut up in any one corner of it, as at the first preaching of the Gospel the Catholic Church was nowhere but in Judea.³⁹

If adherence to the apostolic faith had been guaranteed by apostolic succession in Roman Catholicism, it was achieved in the Church of England by appeal to Scripture, the apostolic witness and the early creeds. The Church of England theologians asserted that the Roman Catholic Church had diverged from the apostolic witness and no longer represented orthodoxy. This is made clear in *The Differences*, a section of “*A Letter to*

³⁶ Puglisi, 2:113.

³⁷ Bettenson, 300.

³⁸ Jeremy Taylor, “A Letter to a Gentleman Seduced to the Church of Rome”, in Bettenson, 301.

³⁹ William Sherlock, “A Vindication of the Doctrine of the Trinity”, in Bettenson, 301.

the Countess of Peterborough,” by John Cosin, Bishop of Durham. He outlines where the Church of England differs from the Roman Catholic Church, and where there could be agreement, stating that the Anglican Church “differ[s] from them (as much as they do from the ancient Catholic Church)”⁴⁰ and asserting that the orthodox witness of the Roman Catholic Church only extended for the first 600 years.⁴¹ For the Anglican theologians, the source of authority for the Church of England was “[t]he Bible, interpreted by reason and the ancient church.”⁴² Like the Roman Church, the Church of England did reserve to the bishop the authority to ordain clergy. Considering the two original reasons for ordination – ensuring the authority of the church’s teaching and providing inspiration for the life of faith, the Anglican Church relied on the authority of the bishop to implement these two factors. The examination of candidates by the bishop and the requirement of a university degree seemed to provide for the continuity of authorized teaching. And the same examination of candidates combined with oversight by the bishop should have ensured the kind of holy living needed for inspiration. But Wesley would soon challenge this arrangement, claiming that it led the bishops to ordain those with moderate learning and no piety rather than those with piety and no learning.⁴³ By the eighteenth century, after England had suffered under the previous century’s

⁴⁰ John Cosin, “A Letter to the Countess of Peterborough”, in Bettenson, 303. Parentheses Cosin’s.

⁴¹ Cosin, in Bettenson, 305.

⁴² Frank Baker, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1970], 11.

⁴³ Baker, 262

religious wars, the Church of England was firmly planted as the established church in England, although dissenting churches were permitted. It is into this church environment that John Wesley was born.

The Anglican Rite Of Ordination

The first ordinal of the Church of England was written by Thomas Cranmer⁴⁴ and published in 1550. It clearly delineates three orders of ministry: bishop, elder and deacon.⁴⁵ The ordinal does not explicitly specify that the bishop is the presider at the ordination of priests, but that has been assumed and was so specified in later revisions.⁴⁶ The original rite included the laying on of hands with prayer for those being ordained elder, but although there was mention of the Holy Spirit, there was no prayer to receive the Holy Spirit in conjunction with the laying on of hands. Instead, the ordination proper was preceded by a litany and collect in which God is entreated to “pour down thy grace upon [the ordinand] that they may properly exercise the office which is now entrusted to them.”⁴⁷ Following the laying on of hands, the ordinand received a bible and chalice, later adjusted to just the bible. With the giving of the bible came the words, “Take thou authoritie to preache the word of god, and to minister the holy Sacramentes in this

⁴⁴ James F. Puglisi, *The Process of Admission to Ordained Ministry: A Comparative Study* [Collegeville: MN: The Liturgical Press, 1998], 2: 112.

⁴⁵ Puglisi, 2: 113.

⁴⁶ Puglisi, 2: 129.

⁴⁷ Puglisi, 2: 115-116.

congregation.”⁴⁸ Thus, we see in the earliest Anglican rite of ordination an affirmation of the three orders of ministry, the laying on of hands, and the connection of ordination to appointment to a specific congregation. Furthermore, the office to which the individual was ordained incorporates both of Dozeman’s types of call to ministry – the call to be prophet and the call to be priest, or the call to preach the Word of God and the call to sacramental orders. God is implored to pour out grace rather than the Holy Spirit, and the bishop on behalf of the church grants authority to preach. The preface to the ordinal indicated that some form of examination and election occurred prior to the service of ordination⁴⁹. Thus, the Anglican ordinal utilizes the three elements of the *Apostolic Tradition* identified by Sprenkle: electio, ordio and missio, but without the prayer for the Holy Spirit during the laying on of hands. In the revision of 1661, the invocation of the Holy Spirit during the imposition of hands was added with the words, “Receive the Holy Ghost, for the Office, and work of a Priest, in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the imposition of hands.”⁵⁰ These words would have been pronounced at John Wesley’s ordination as a priest of the Church of England in 1728, where he would have experienced laying on of hands by the bishop, the invocation of the Holy Spirit and the charge to preach and administer the sacrament.

⁴⁸ Puglisi, 2: 118.

⁴⁹ Puglisi, 2: 128.

⁵⁰ Puglisi, 2:138.

CHAPTER 4

HISTORY CONTINUED: JOHN WESLEY AND THE METHODISTS

“Ministry in the Methodist tradition is perhaps as difficult a subject to delineate with precision and confidence as any in the entire area of ecclesiology. The reason for this is that ministry in Methodist history has been defined almost entirely by circumstance. Practical necessity in this instance has dictated theology as well as determined polity and devised the strategy for mission.”¹

The history and theology of ordination in the Methodist tradition is not easily comprehended as evidenced by Bishop William Cannon’s words above. John Wesley was a priest of the Church of England until the day he died. His decision to ordain ministers for the new American nation is, perhaps, the prime example of Bishop Cannon’s assertion. Wesley was moved to take that action from a sense of necessity, viewing the situation in America as an emergency.² He criticized the vitality of the Church of England, broke with its traditions by preaching in fields, introduced widespread use of lay preachers, and elevated personal experience as a criterion of faith, but he never left the Anglican Church nor did he challenge ordination itself as necessary

¹Bishop William Cannon, “The Meaning of Ministry in Methodism,” *Methodist History* 8, no. 1 (October 1969), 3.

²Frederick E. Maser, “The Eighteenth Century” in *United Methodism in America: A Compact History*, ed. John G. McElhenney (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1992), 41

for certain kinds of ministry.³ In fact, when confronted on one occasion about his authority to preach, he replied that such authority was “by the authority of Jesus my Master, conveyed to me by the (now) Archbishop of Canterbury, when he laid hands upon me and said, ‘Take thou the authority to preach the Gospel’”⁴ He took his ordination in the Church of England very seriously, accepting the liturgy and worship of the church. When he prepared his *Sunday Services* for the American church, he adopted much of the liturgy of the Anglican Church,⁵ making changes as he deemed necessary in light of American independence and frontier conditions. The history of ordination in Methodism reflects this same tension between commitment to traditional authority and the exigencies of the church’s mission.

At the start of the Methodist movement, Wesley established small groups where those who were convicted by his preaching received spiritual formation through preaching and teaching, worship and a process of mutual accountability. These small groups were often served by “assistants” selected and overseen by Wesley himself.⁶ The lay “assistants” provided leadership to the societies, and were charged to teach, later to

³ In a 1745 letter to Westley Hall, John Wesley wrote “We believe it would not be right for us to admnister either baptism or the Lord’s Supper unless we had a commission so to do from those bishops whom we apprehend to be in succession from the apostles.” John Telford, ed., *The Letters of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.* [London: The Epworth Press, 1931], 2:55. Baker points out that this is the last time Wesley defended apostolic succession through the episcopacy, shortly after coming under the influence of Edward Stillingfleet (Baker, 151.)

⁴ Telford, 1:320.

⁵ Puglisi, 2:155.

⁶ Burdon, 21.

preach⁷, and eventually to oversee circuits. By 1770, Wesley had even sent these lay preachers across the Atlantic Ocean to America.⁸

When Wesley appointed a new lay preacher, he often included a rite reminiscent of ordination. In 1746, Joseph Cownley met with Wesley in Bristol. Burdon provides the story of that encounter as related by John Telford. “At the climax of that interview Cownley knelt down, and Wesley, putting the New Testament into his hand, said ‘Take thou authority to preach the Gospel.’ Wesley then gave Cownley his benediction. Thus authorized, Cownley went on his way.”⁹ A similar ritual is reported in 1782 by Adam Clarke:

Mr. Wesley took me kindly by the hand ... He said, “Well, brother Clarke, do you wish to devote yourself entirely to the work of God?” I answered, ‘Sir, I wish to do, and be, what God pleases.’.. [Wesley] then turned to me, laid his hands upon my head, and spent a few moments in praying to God to bless and preserve me, and to give me success in the work to which I was called. I departed, having now received, in addition to my appointment from God to preach His Gospel, the only authority I could have from a man, in that line in which I was to exercise the ministry of the Divine Word.¹⁰

Wesley regularly utilized the language and rituals of ordination in setting apart his lay preachers for ministry. His brother Charles disapproved of this simulation of

⁷ Burdon, 23.

⁸ Heitzenrater, 244. At the Conference of 1769, Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmore agreed to go as the first officially appointed preachers, Pilmore to Philadelphia and Boardman to New York.

⁹ John Telford, *Wesley Veterans: Lives of the Early Methodist Preachers*, 7 volumes [London: The Epworth Press, 1912-14], 4:128, cited in Burdon, 24.

¹⁰ J. Etheridge. *The Life of the Rev. Adam Clark, LL.D., 2nd edition* [London: John Mason, 1858]. 55.

ordination, but Wesley continued the practice until his actual decision to ordain in 1784.¹¹

During these years of supervising lay preachers, John Wesley's understanding of the church and ordination underwent dramatic changes. Frank Baker, in his book, *John Wesley and the Church of England*, concludes that Wesley developed two fundamentally different views of the church which remained in tension throughout his ministry. Baker describes them, writing,

One was that of an historical institution, organically linked to the apostolic church by a succession of bishops and inherited customs, served by a priestly caste who duly expounded the Bible and administered the sacraments in such a way as to preserve the ancient traditions on behalf of all who were made members by baptism. According to the other view the church was a fellowship of believers who shared both the apostolic experience of God's living presence and also a desire to bring others into this same personal experience by whatever methods of worship and evangelism seemed most promising to those among them whom the Holy Spirit had endowed with special gifts of prophecy and leadership.¹²

The two views seem to correspond to Dozeman's two types of call and ministry – one the priestly call, oriented around the an institutional understanding and the provision of sacraments, the other, the prophetic, focused on empowerment by the Holy Spirit and concerned with sharing the word of God. Wesley vacillated between these two conceptions of the church. Recognizing the priestly function, he insisted there be no

¹¹ Richard P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* [Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995], 192.

¹² Baker, 137.

sacramental administration without ordination,¹³ a traditional viewpoint of the institutional church. But Wesley also felt an obligation to God to reach souls for the kingdom, and so appointed lay preachers based on their efficacy in winning souls rather than on their educational credentials.¹⁴ He pushed the boundaries of church practice in order to reach people with the gospel of Jesus Christ. As Wesley expanded his ministry, mission became a higher priority than theology and orthodox praxis, and the saving of souls his single highest goal.¹⁵ In England it was possible for Wesley simultaneously to maintain these two views of the church, insisting on use of the institutional church for priestly functions such as sacraments, and authorizing lay assistants to work with societies and bands in order to obey God's call for evangelistic zeal.

Wesley clearly distinguished the lay preaching ministry from ordained ministry. In a letter from September, 1756, Wesley wrote, "...I do tolerate unordained persons in preaching the gospel, whereas I do not tolerate them in administering the sacraments."¹⁶ He was convinced of the correctness of lay preaching by the fruits it yielded.¹⁷

¹³ Hildebrandt, 1960, 68.

¹⁴ Burdon, 35. Under Wesley's direction, the Conference of 1747 developed three questions for evaluation of those claiming a call to preach: Do they know in whom they have believed? Have they gifts for the work? Have they success? It was the evidence of fruitfulness that particularly swayed Wesley, as can be seen in the incident with Thomas Maxfield, related below in note 110.

¹⁵ In a letter to Westley Hall, Wesley wrote that he would act against church law in areas of necessity because "we cannot obey with a safe conscience." Telford, *Letters*, 2:57.

¹⁶ "To Nicholas Norton," 3 September 1756, in Telford, *Letters*, 3:186.

¹⁷ Burdon, 22. Burdon tells the story of Thomas Maxfield who was charged to expound the Bible but took it upon himself to preach. Wesley's initial outrage was tempered by his mother's pointing out the fruits of Maxfield's preaching.

Wesley's lay preachers pressured him for many years seeking permission from him to administer the sacraments, but he was adamant in his refusal. In the 1755 Leeds Conference, Wesley asserted that there was biblical precedent for "extraordinary prophets" but that God had never called "extraordinary priests."¹⁸ Five years later, at the 1760 Conference, Wesley told his preachers that "he himself would rather commit murder than administer the Lord's Supper without ordination."¹⁹ Thus, Wesley clearly differentiated between the prophetic and priestly call and church function.

Wesley's theology, however, set up an impossible situation for his Methodist followers in America. He emphasized the need to receive communion as a means of grace and insisted on receiving the sacrament of Holy Communion from ordained clergy as often as possible, but the small number of ordained clergy in America made this difficult. Even before the Revolutionary War, Joseph Pilmore wrote from America, "The chief difficulty is want of ordination, and I believe we shall be obliged to procure it in some form or other."²⁰ The matter came to a head in 1779 when, at a conference in Fluvanna, Virginia, a small group of Methodist preachers formed a presbytery and, citing early church precedent, voted to ordain themselves, and then did so. Those ordained

¹⁸ Heitzenrater, 193.

¹⁹ Baker, 257.

²⁰ Baker, 259, quoting from John P. Lockwood. *The Western Pioneers* (Boardman & Pilmoor). (London: n.p., 1881), 177.

began administering sacraments, and only stopped when Asbury obtained their agreement to a one year moratorium while the matter was referred to John Wesley for advice.²¹

Wesley continued to be pressured by lay preachers in America, England, Wales, Scotland and Ireland to allow them to administer the sacraments. In 1784, Wesley finally made the decision to ordain ministers but only for the Methodists in America and a year later for the Methodists in Scotland. His decision was based on his sense of necessity, but also on a changing understanding of the authority of presbyters and bishops, an understanding that had undergone a significant change through the years and prepared him for this action.

As the leader of the Methodist societies, Wesley perceived himself as functioning in the role of bishop. He called himself a ‘scriptural episkopas.’²² During the decade of the 1740’s Wesley read two books that greatly influenced his understanding of the role of bishop and the power to ordain. The first was Lord Peter King’s work, *An Enquiry Into the Constitution, Discipline, Unity and Worship of The Primitive Church*. Wesley recorded his impressions of King’s book in his journal on January 20, 1746, writing, “it would follow that bishops and presbyters are (essentially) of one order.”²³ King argued that if they were of one order, the rights of bishops were also the rights of presbyters,

²¹ John Wigger, *American Saint: Francis Asbury and the Methodists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), Kindle edition, Loc 2348 of 12146.

²² Baker, 277, quoting from Wesley’s defense in the January 1786 edition of the *Arminian Magazine*: “I firmly believe I am a scriptural episkopas as much as any man in England or in Europe.”

²³ Burdon, 39. Taken from Nehemiah Curnock (ed.), *The Journal of the Rev John Wesley, A.M.*, 8 vols. (London: Lobert Culley, 1909-16), 2:232.

including the right to ordain. The second book, *Irenicum* by Edward Stillingfleet, carried the argument further, asserting that ancient presbyters did, in fact, ordain in cases of necessity.²⁴ By 1780, Wesley believed he had the right to ordain, but did not feel it appropriate to exercise that right.²⁵ He had come to see a bishop as “a special officer of the church rather than as a special transmitter of the spiritual grace through confirmation or ordination,”²⁶ a functional office rather than a separate order of ministry or ontological state.

Wesley’s attitude was further shaped as he repudiated the idea of the uninterrupted apostolic succession of bishops, calling it “a fable.”²⁷ The Roman Catholic Church then, as now, continued to affirm apostolic succession through the episcopacy; that is, they believed their bishops were in direct succession to the apostolic witness of the early church through succession from the original apostles. In the previously cited 1745 letter to Westley Hall, Wesley himself had affirmed such succession. But in 1760, Wesley published a response to the Roman Catholic bishop Richard Challoner’s ‘Caveat against the Methodists,’ writing “I deny that the Romish bishops came down by uninterrupted succession from the apostles. I never could see it proved and I am

²⁴ Burdon, 41.

²⁵ Telford, *Letters*, 7:21. In a letter to his brother, Charles, in June, 1780, Wesley wrote, “I verily believe I have as good a right to ordain as to administer the Lord’s Supper... But I see abundant of reasons why I should not use that right, unless I was turned out of the church.”

²⁶ Baker, 270.

²⁷ Telford, *Letters*, 4:140.

persuaded I never shall.”²⁸ Instead, Baker suggests that “[t]rue apostolic succession for [Wesley] consisted in having the apostolic spirit”²⁹ which was made manifest in “spiritual success.”³⁰ The mission, which took priority over polity and doctrine, thus also became the means of authenticating the validity of the faith.

Despite his changing views on ordination, Wesley did attempt to have his preachers ordained by the Church of England but met with little success. The Bishop of Chester refused ordination as a presbyter to Brian Bury Collins, a Methodist preacher already ordained as deacon, because of his “wandering mode of life and of preaching.”³¹ Those who followed Wesley in itinerant ministry and field preaching were not welcome in the Church of England.

By 1784, the American Methodists were suffering from the absence of ordained clergy to provide the sacraments. Francis Asbury reported to Wesley that “thousands of children remained unbaptized in America and that some members of the Methodist societies ‘had not partaken of the Lord’s Supper for many years.’”³² At the Conference in Leeds that year, Wesley shared with his senior preachers his plan to ordain ministers

²⁸ Baker, 152.

²⁹ Baker, 152.

³⁰ Baker, 151.

³¹ Baker, 261.

³² Heitzenrater, 285.

for America. They unanimously opposed it.³³ Others consulted by Wesley were equally opposed.³⁴ Ignoring their advice, Wesley met in Bristol, at the end of August, 1784, with two lay preachers he planned to ordain, Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey, and with Thomas Coke, already an ordained priest of the Church of England, who would be ordained as a superintendent. James Creighton, another ordained Anglican priest, was also present to participate in what occurred.³⁵ On the first day Whatcoat and Vasey were ordained deacon. On the second day they were ordained as presbyters and Coke was ordained as Superintendent, Wesley's term replacing bishop. Coke's ordination certificate prepared by Wesley includes the words, "There does not appear to be any other way of supplying [the Methodists in America] with ministers."³⁶ This was the necessity which in Wesley's mind justified his actions. Working with these men, Wesley developed plans for a new church in America that would be separate from the Church of England.

The decision to ordain grew from Wesley's view of himself as a 'scriptural episkopas,' the demands of mission in response to the situation in America, and his understanding of presbyters and bishops as belonging to the same order of ministry, giving him the same rights as a bishop. It is ironic, therefore, to see that the *Form of*

³³ Baker, 264

³⁴ Heitzenrater, 287.

³⁵ Nehemiah Curnock, *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.* (London: The Epworth Press, 1938), VII: 16, contained in page note written by the Rev. Thomas McCullagh.

³⁶ Curnock, VII:16 insert.

Discipline for the Ministers, Preachers, and Other Members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, adopted by the Christmas conference in 1784 and published in 1785, stipulated that “No person shall be ordained a *Superintendent, Elder, or Deacon*, without the Consent of a Majority of the Conference and the Consent and Imposition of Hands of a Superintendent.”³⁷ No one else would be permitted to do what Wesley had done.

Members of that nascent American church faced the question of whether their ordination by Wesley or those ordained by him could be considered valid. They dealt with that in Section 4 of the *Discipline*. Written in question and answer format, the *Discipline* asks, “What is the proper origin of the Episcopal authority in our Church?”

Answer: In the year 1784, the Rev. John Wesley, who, under God, has been the father of the great revival of religion now extending over the earth by means of the Methodists, determined, at the intercession of multitudes of his spiritual children on this continent, to ordain ministers for America and for this purpose sent over three regularly ordained clergy.³⁸

Given that two of the three clergy referenced were ordained by Wesley rather than any bishop of the Church of England, the new church here affirms its acceptance of Wesley’s ordinations as ‘regular’ and acceptable. In fact, Thomas Coke, preaching at Asbury’s ordination, said of Wesley:

The whole body [of Methodists] have invariably esteemed this man as their chief pastor under Christ... And we are fully persuaded there is no church office which he

³⁷ Form of Discipline for the Ministers, Preachers and Other Members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America (Philadelphia: Charles Cist, 1785), Question 26, note to answer.

³⁸ R. J. Cooke, *History of the Ritual of the Methodist Episcopal Church: With A Commentary on its Offices* [Cincinnati: Jennings & Pye, 1900], 284.

judges expedient for the welfare of the people entrusted to his charge but, as essential to his station, he has the power to ordain.³⁹

Having denied ecclesiastical authority conveyed through apostolic succession in an uninterrupted line of bishops, the Methodists had to deal with the question about the source of Wesley's authority to ordain. Although his decision was not unanimously greeted with approval by the Methodists, there is no question that Wesley was perceived as the leader and father of the Methodists, a bishop in all but name. In a more current reflection on ordination in the United Methodist ordinal for the 2009-2012 quadrennium, the 2012 Book of Discipline is quoted, saying, "Ordination to this ministry is a gift from God to the church. In ordination, the church affirms and continues the apostolic ministry through persons empowered by the Holy Spirit."⁴⁰ Uninterrupted apostolic succession of bishops has never been the source of Methodist authority or continuity with the apostolic witness. Instead, the mission and ministry of the church, empowered by the Holy Spirit, provide for our connection to the apostolic witness. The church has followed Wesley in affirming the primacy of the mission.

There are several additional attitudes expressed by John Wesley that are germane to understanding the development of Methodist ordination. Wesley seemed to be of two minds about the meaning of the act of ordination. Burdon and Baker agree that by the time Wesley conducted his ordinations for America, he no longer believed that bishops

³⁹ Baker, 269.

⁴⁰ The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2012 [Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2012], 217, Para. 303.

imparted grace in the laying on of hands.⁴¹ Burdon describes Wesley's view of ordination as an "authority-giving rather than a grace-imparting rite."⁴² Indeed, Wesley identified true ordination as the work of God,⁴³ with the church merely confirming what God had already done. But in preparing the ordinal which Wesley sent to America with Coke, he retained for the ordaining of Methodist superintendents the language of the Church of England ordinal for consecration of bishops, "And remember that thou stir up the grace of God which is given thee by this imposition of our hands."⁴⁴ The two visions of the church to which Baker pointed at the beginning of this section, historical institution vs. fellowship of believers, seemed to be in continuing tension for Wesley. At times ordination was simply a rite of authorization, a purely institutional function, but Wesley stopped short of dismissing the conveyance of grace and spiritual empowerment in that rite.

Wesley also straddled the line on the question of the purpose of set apart ministry and the ontological change in those ordained. In the Roman Catholic tradition, absolute ordination meant that priests were not ordained to a specific locale, but empowered apart from any connection to a congregation or parish. The Continental Reformers rejected this, making ordination functional rather than ontological and so connecting ordination to

⁴¹ Baker, 154, and Burdon, 47.

⁴² Burdon, 47.

⁴³ Baker, 154.

⁴⁴ Burdon, 104.

a specific charge.⁴⁵ Wesley and the Methodists have come down in between these two positions. From the beginning of Methodism, ordained elders have ministered through itinerant ministry, appointed first by Wesley, and then later by General Superintendents and ultimately bishops. Itineracy lies between the continental Reformers insistence on relationship to a specific congregation for the ordained and the Roman Catholic vision of ordination apart from any congregational association. The exigencies of 18th century England with the significant population shifts led Wesley and his followers to preach in fields, at the entrances to shipyards and mines, without the limitations of the traditional understanding of parish. In fact, Wesley wrote in his journal in 1739, “I look upon all the world as my parish; thus far I mean, that, in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty, to declare unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation..”⁴⁶ Those whom Wesley appointed as preachers, similarly preached wherever they could gather people together to hear them. In America, for example, Asbury preached in Methodist meeting houses and in private homes, but also in places as diverse as a theater in Berkeley Springs, Virginia, and in the open air.⁴⁷ He did, indeed, hold an appointment to specific circuits which included all the people within the region, appointed there by those who supervised him prior to his becoming a general superintendent. This idea of appointment to a community or region rather than simply to

⁴⁵ See page 39 above.

⁴⁶ Wesley, *Works*, 1:201.

⁴⁷ Wigger, Kindle Loc. 1884-5 of 12146.

a local parish and its members connects to the Methodist understanding of the role of ministry in saving souls, and the consequent obligation to share the gospel with any who will listen. Thus Methodist ordination involves both an appointment to a specific charge, but also a responsibility to extend the gospel far beyond that charge. Ordination to a conference relationship and the appointment process itself become theological statements about the purpose of ordination and the source of authority. For Methodism, that authority derives from God through the conference, not the local church. In this way, the minister is free of dependence on a specific congregation, and beholden only to God through the conference. The itinerant pastor submits to the authority of a conference and Episcopal leader, but not to the authority of a local congregation. Ordination is accompanied by membership in an annual conference, and the service of ordination is held at a meeting of the annual conference, not in the local church to which the ordinand is assigned. The itinerant pastor is both prophet whose purpose is to reach souls for Christ, those who are not already within the church, as well as priest to those already within the church. The purpose of set apart ministry is thus both priest and prophet, both local and general.

Wesley's position on absolute ordination also reflects, perhaps, his need to defend the Methodist movement in the face of criticism by Anglican bishops. When Wesley's preaching in fields led to his being charged with disloyalty to his ordination vows, which included the words to preach "where thou shall be lawfully appointed," Wesley sought to

deny that restraint.⁴⁸ In his response to the charge, offered in *Farther Appeal*, Wesley pointed out earlier words in the ritual Ordering of Priests. “But before those words...were those spoken without any restraint or limitation at all, which I apprehend to convey an indelible character: ‘Receive the Holy Ghost for the office and work of a priest in the church of God.’”⁴⁹ By asserting an indelible change in the character of the ordinand through the power of the Holy Spirit, Wesley sought to make the call of God to the priesthood independent of any restriction by the church hierarchy. The ontological change justified Wesley’s decision to disregard the bishops’ condemnation of his preaching outdoors within the parish boundaries of other Anglican priests. Just as Wesley had used the fruit of Maxfield’s preaching to determine whether lay preaching was acceptable to God, so he used the fruit of his own actions as a sign of God’s endorsement.⁵⁰ In this case, the argument seems to be one of expediency rather than theological conviction, for in 1756, in his *Reply to the Roman Catechism*, Wesley framed ordination as the conveyance of a commission rather than the transmission of grace that would result in a change to the person.⁵¹ And within Methodism, the preacher’s or minister’s authority was only recognized as long as they participated in the office of ministry as an itinerant under appointment by Wesley in England or his superintendents

⁴⁸ Baker, 95-6.

⁴⁹ Wesley, *Works*, 8:118-119.

⁵⁰ Burdon, 19.

⁵¹ Wesley, *Works*, 10:126.

in America. Those who strayed too far from Wesleyan orthodoxy were disciplined or purged from the ranks of Methodist preachers.⁵²

Another critical factor in Wesley's theology of ordination has to do with the sense of call. In the Church of England, a call from God, felt inwardly by the one seeking ordination, was not essential.⁵³ In fact, Dennis Campbell in his book *The Yoke of Obedience*, points out,

Among Anglicans of [Wesley's] day, emphasis in ministry tended to be upon formal education and ordination to Holy Orders. In ordination the Holy Spirit empowered the ordained to exercise the ministry of Word and Sacrament and the outward acts of ministry were not necessarily related to the inward spiritual life of the ordained minister... [Wesley's] own experience convinced him that authentic ministry requires the inward conviction of rebirth in Jesus Christ and call from God.⁵⁴

Wesley distinguished between the outward and inward calls to ministry. The inward call is that prompting from God to preach the Word and serve God's people in ordained ministry. The outward call is the recognition and affirmation by the church of the inward call. Speaking of these two kinds of call, Wesley wrote:

I apprehend indeed that there ought, if possible, to be both an outward and inward call to this work; yet if one of the two be supposed wanting, I had rather want the outward than the inward call. I rejoice that I am called to preach the Gospel both by God and man. Yet I acknowledge, I had rather have the divine without the human, than the human without the divine call.⁵⁵

⁵² Heitzenrater, 212.

⁵³ Harnish, 26.

⁵⁴ Dennis M. Campbell, *The Yoke of Obedience: The Meaning of Ordination in Methodism* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1988), 53.

⁵⁵ Telford, *Letters*, 3:195.

Wesley's insistence on the inward, divine call has become a commonplace today, for both Methodists and for all Christians. In the 1950's, Richard Niebuhr wrote, "The Church everywhere and always has expected its minister to have a personal sense of vocation, forged in the solitariness of encounter with ultimate claims made upon them,"⁵⁶ a statement which ignores the reality of the church in medieval times. In the contemporary United Methodist Church, the inward call to ministry is critical. One of the first areas examined when an individual contacts the District Superintendent for acceptance as a candidate for ministry is the individual's sense of call. This is in accord with *The Book of Discipline*: "Therefore, it is appropriate that those persons who present themselves as candidates for licensed or ordained ministry be examined regarding the authenticity of their call by God to ordained ministry."⁵⁷ Or as William Willimon says, "Ministers are more than those who are credentialed and validated by the approval of their fellow members of their profession. Ministers must be called."⁵⁸

Several other concerns related to ordination need to be mentioned. Wesley distinguished between the call to ordained ministry and the call to preach. In a 1756 letter to James Clark, Wesley wrote that he believed "several who are not episcopally

⁵⁶ H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry* [New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1956], 64.

⁵⁷ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church*, 2012, 223, Para. 310.

⁵⁸ Willimon, 33.

ordained are nevertheless called of God to preach the Gospel.”⁵⁹ Campbell points out that the early *Disciplines*’ descriptions of the offices of superintendent, elder and deacon lacked any reference to preaching.⁶⁰ This separation of the prophetic (preaching) and priestly (sacramental) may have contributed to the continuing confusion in Methodist theology about sacramental authority. For 150 years, administration of sacraments in the Methodist churches required ordination. Licensed pastors, the heirs of Wesley’s lay preachers, were first permitted to serve communion in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in 1926. The Methodist Episcopal Church permitted baptism by licensed pastors but not administration of communion. In the 1939 reunion of those two denominations, full sacramental authority was granted to licensed pastors. Then, in 1968 at the merger that formed the United Methodist Church, sacramental authority for licensed pastors was rescinded, but that decision was reversed in 1976, once more granting full sacramental authority within the charge to which the licensed pastor is appointed.⁶¹ This raises questions about the meaning of ordination in relation to licensing for today’s pastors. The sacramental authority of non-ordained pastors has become a stumbling block in the church’s ecumenical dialogues, and a bone of contention among many ordained to the

⁵⁹ Telford, Letters, III:200.

⁶⁰ Campbell, 74.

⁶¹ Campbell, 78-79,

diaconate.⁶² In addition, it raises the question, what is the purpose of ordination – to authorize sacramental authority or to further the mission of the church in saving souls through the proclamation of Christ’s gospel. That question has yet to be formally answered by the church

Another complication for Methodists has been the difference between ordination and membership in the annual conference. In 1935, John Nuelsen wrote that ordination “gives nothing to the preacher ... the act decisive for the life and work of a Methodist preacher is not his [sic] ordination, but his reception into full connexion and thus into the world-wide fellowship of Methodist preachers.”⁶³ Just four years later, at the formation of the Methodist Church, “ordination seemed to lose importance as conference membership and itineracy became the norms. Little was said in the 1939 *Discipline* about ordination, its purpose, meaning and relationship to conference membership.”⁶⁴ In Britain, the imposition of hands and ordination were not considered necessary until 1836. Prior to that, membership in full connection, rather than ordination, was the goal for those entering ministry.⁶⁵

⁶² The author, while serving as chair of the conference Order of Elders, attended a meeting of chairs of order from across the connection at which the issue of sacramental rights for deacons was hotly debated. Many deacons circulated petitions at the meeting seeking signatures to petition General Conference to grant such rights to deacons. The meeting was held during the 2004-2008 Quadrennium.

⁶³ Hildebrandt, 82, quoting John L. Nuelsen, *Die Ordination Im Methodismus*. (Bremen, 1935) 162.

⁶⁴ Harnish, 48.

⁶⁵ Hildebrandt, 83.

The membership of clergy in the conference rather than a local church can be seen as “a theological affirmation that...the authority of the appointed pastor does not derive from the local congregation.”⁶⁶ The ordination service itself is held at the annual conference meeting, a clear sign that ordination is performed for the larger church, not simply a local congregation. Russell Richey writes that “ministers are ordained in the conference because the call is not to some locale but to mission, to the connection, to the world.”⁶⁷ The conference ordination also underscores the importance of the itineracy and the image of ordained ministry as a sent ministry, just as the apostles were sent by Jesus Christ. The mission of the church rather than any single congregation is the dominant consideration in this case.

Finally, the issue of connectionalism and collegiality is an essential element of the Methodist understanding of ordination. From the beginning, John Wesley gathered his preachers together in regular conferences for oversight. Today’s church has no single individual who exercises the authority of a Wesley. Instead, there is a covenant of accountability and mutual support among the ordained. The *Book of Discipline, 2012* affirms that “Ordained persons exercise their ministry in covenant with all Christians... They also live in [a] covenant of mutual care and accountability with all those who share

⁶⁶ Campbell, 94.

⁶⁷ Dennis Campbell, William Lawrence and Russell Richey, eds, *Connectionalism, Ecclesiology, Mission and Identity, Vol. 1 of United Methodism and American Culture* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1997), 5.

their ordination, especially in The United Methodist Church.”⁶⁸ The covenant includes expectations about effectiveness in ministry and moral character. By ordaining elders and deacons in classes at annual conference, the church encourages the sense of connection and mutual support among groups of clergy and reminds the church at large of the connectionalism that lies at the heart of Methodism. Ordination into orders, the Order of Elders or the Order of Deacons, further encourages an understanding of ordination as entrance into a life that is collegial, connectional and mutually accountable. It reminds clergy that the work of the gospel is not an individualistic task but one that demands teamwork and collegiality, much as Moses and Aaron working together, or as Wesley’s traveling preachers often riding together.

With all of this as background, let us turn now to the elements of the DMin project.

⁶⁸ The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2012, 218, Para 303.3.

CHAPTER 5

THE PROJECT

Setting And The Ordination Process

As a District Superintendent in the United Methodist Church, I sought to identify a DMin project that would build on my expertise as a superintendent and also address an issue important to the congregation with which I worked, which was the clergy of my district, and to the annual conference. The ordination process is one in which the DS is directly involved throughout the period of candidacy, from the early steps of an exploring candidate to ordination. The vitality of ministry, both of clergy and local churches, is one of the chief concerns of the DS; seeking a way to link ordination with a renewal of vitality offered an opportunity to combine the DMin program's liturgical focus with the concerns of a DS and the annual conference served.

In order to understand the project and its impact, the reader needs to have an understanding of the organizational structure and role of ordination in the United Methodist Church. The project was completed in the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church (EPA), which is made up of approximately 450 churches in a geographical area spanning sixteen counties in the eastern third of the state. Within the boundaries of the conference are two of the three largest urban areas of the state,

Philadelphia and the Lehigh Valley, as well as significant suburban and rural populations. The EPA shares a bishop with the conference to our south, but the two conferences operate independently.

The annual conference is divided into six districts, each one served by a district superintendent (DS). The DS is the extension of the Episcopal office,¹ and as such, oversees the ministry of the churches in their assigned district as well as serving the conference as a member of the bishop's cabinet. The author served as a DS during the completion of this project. The DS does not pastor an individual church of his or her own. Rather, the clergy and laity of the district are the congregation they serve. In 2011, each district was composed of 70-75 charges – individual churches or circuits of multiple churches served by one pastor. The DS serves both as pastor to the pastors and as overseer of the clergy, as well as bishop's representative to the laity of the district.

Candidates for ordination begin their journey at the District Committee on Ordained Ministry in a process of discernment and evaluation. When the District Committee is satisfied that the candidate's calling is genuine and the requirements for moving forward in candidacy are met, the committee recommends the candidate to the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry (BOOM) for evaluation and either licensing as a local pastor or the next step toward ordination.

¹ *The Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church, 2012* [Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2008], 332, Para 417.

Each winter, BOOM holds interviews for persons seeking to enter ordained ministry who have been recommended by the district committees. Candidates provide written answers to a set of questions, sample sermons and bible studies, and various other documents required in the process. Those who successfully complete the first set of interviews are recommended to the clergy session of annual conference² to be approved for commissioning as provisional elders or deacons. The candidates who are approved by the clergy session are commissioned at the ordination service held during the annual conference meeting.

In the United Methodist Church, persons seeking to be ordained must first serve a two year provisional period as commissioned ministers, either as commissioned deacon or commissioned elder, before they can be considered for ordination. At the end of the two year provisional period, and after a second round of interviews and written materials, approved provisional elders and deacons are ordained at the annual ordination service. When the current process was developed in 1996, the intent of the denomination was to separate the commissioning service from the ordination service.³ The revised ordinal published by the General Board of Discipleship following the 1996 General Conference, contained liturgies for separate services of ordination and commissioning. The 2004 ordinal contained explicit instruction that the service of commissioning should be held on

² The ordained clergy members of the annual conference are the final authority for approval of persons seeking commissioning and ordination. In the EPA, the clergy session usually meets on the first day of annual conference, the multi-day annual business meeting of the conference.

³ Burton-Edwards interview.

a different day from the service of ordination.⁴ In 2008, the board finally created a liturgy that incorporated both commissioning and ordination in response to the large number of conferences that both commissioned and ordained in the same service despite the admonition to hold separate services. The rubrics were changed so that the ritual action for commissioning is different than that for ordination.

Based on my research and my experience with candidates for ministry, I believe the conflation of the two ceremonies into one service has weakened the impact of ordination on the individual clergy and diminished the service's ability to serve as a vehicle of renewal. This is based on my interaction with clergy as their DS, and on the interviews and questionnaires used for this study. The incorporation of both ceremonies into one liturgy may result in elevating commissioning to an equal importance with ordination. I would further propose that it leads to a confusion of the memories of the two services and thus decreases the impact of ordination. For example, in one interview, a commissioned elder related how heavy the hands were on her during the laying on of hands⁵ the previous year. In the commissioning service, however, hands are only held over the individual, not placed upon them. Her memory appears to have merged her own experience with her memory of watching others being ordained.

Prior to 1996, the only permanent order of clergy was that of elder. Candidates for ordained ministry were first ordained as deacon, serving a two year probationary

⁴ Burton Edwards interview.

⁵ Interview by D.Felker with female commissioned elder, February 2011.

period, followed by ordination as elder. Persons who were ordained under this system experienced ordination twice, first as a deacon entering into a probationary membership and transitional status, and were later ordination as full elders. This became important in the questionnaires and interviews conducted as part of the project. Asking questions about the experience of ordination led to people speaking of their deacon's and elder's ordinations without differentiation. Like those who are commissioned in the same worship service as ordination, some of those ordained twice did not make a distinction between their memories of ordination as deacon and as elder. This led me to conclude that the unique nature of ordination, the commitment to live in covenant community within an order, and the power of recollected ordination to renew a sense of call are all weakened by the failure to separate preliminary steps from the final ordination.

The Project Purpose

As the project began, the question that was foremost was “Is there a way to offer an ordination experience that will be spiritually uplifting and memorable for those being ordained and commissioned, and revive the spiritual impact of call and commitment for those ordained in the past?” Some clergy perceive ordination as a purely functional process, in terms of human authority and ceremonial.⁶ I wondered was it possible to instill in them an understanding of ordination as a spiritual event that involved

⁶ Three of the respondents to the initial survey about attitudes toward ordination identified it as “a hoop to jump through.”

recommitment to call, celebration of community and renewal of covenant. The intent of the project was to create an experience of renewal for current clergy without sacrificing the importance of the event for those coming before the bishop as candidates for commissioning and ordination.

The original design of the project was to write a new ordinal for use by the EPA in the 2011 ordination service. The project changed as a result of the conversation with the Rev. Taylor Burton-Edwards. He suggests that ordination is a ritual of the whole denomination, not merely the conference, and he asserts that it is, therefore, important to use the denominational liturgy rather than write a new one.⁷ He believes that ritual becomes more meaningful when it is repeated over time,⁸ and utilizing the denominational ordinal ensures the repetition of the ritual. Burton-Edwards suggests that the way to make ordination most memorable is to maintain continuity from year to year in the major elements, but to make some small changes from one service to the next.

The value of this sense of continuity with the past in the ordination service was borne out in an initial survey of conference ordained clergy at the start of the project. One respondent made reference to the connection between his/her own ordination and those of other members of the family.

The alternatives between writing a new service and adapting the denominational ordinal were discussed with Bishop Peggy Johnson and leadership of the Board of

⁷ Taylor Burton Edwards interview.

⁸ Taylor Burton-Edwards interview.

Ordained Ministry. The Bishop decided to follow the advice of Burton-Edwards and use the denominational ordinal. This necessitated redesign of the DMin project. Rather than focusing primarily on writing a new service, the project shifted to incorporate a series of daily devotions in the weeks leading up to ordination. Surveys and interviews provided input for both some adaptation of the ordinal as well as the providing direction for the devotions. These devotions would be designed to enhance and reinforce the theological understanding of ordination and the individual's connection to their own ordination, as well as provide a vehicle for the conference clergy to pray for those coming for ordination. It was the bishop's hope that such preparation might also lead to an increased attendance at the service of ordination.

The Project Process

In the fall of 2010, as the project began to take shape, the Lay Advisory Committee was recruited. The DS's primary congregation is the clergy of the district, and the target population for the project was clergy. As a result, the Lay Advisory Committee was renamed the Local Advisory Committee and was to be composed primarily of clergy. That raised an issue of concern. The DS serves as pastor to the clergy of the district but also serves as their supervisor and influences the appointment of clergy to particular congregations. It was, therefore, important to identify potential LAC members who would not feel intimidated by the relationship with the DS, and who would be able to provide honest feedback during the project phase. Recruitment focused on

clergy who were retired or worked beyond the local church, and were not currently under direct supervision by the DS. The final composition of the committee included two retired elders, one elder working beyond the local church, one elder in a local church on the district, and one layman beginning the process leading to ordination as deacon. Because of the DS's influence on appointments and on the candidacy process, the selection of these final two followed frank discussion of the potential conflicts. Could the elder's next appointment be affected by the DS, or the candidates's progress toward ordination be delayed? Both expressed their desire still to be part of the process despite the potential difficulties inherent in the supervisory relationship with the DS.

The LAC process began with the author leading a meeting designed to inform the LAC about the characteristics of post-modern generations and worship styles, and discussion of the narrative methodology and kenotic listening skills. The group also reviewed Sweet's EPIC⁹ acronym describing the shift in worship expectations for post-moderns. A worship service to engage post-moderns as well as moderns will need to be Experiential, Participatory, Image Driven and Connected. These elements were discussed with the LAC. A process and timeline was then developed by the group.

The LAC created a questionnaire to be sent to all ordained elders and deacons of the annual conference (Appendix 2). A questionnaire designed by Neil D. Presa for his Ph.D. dissertation at Drew and used by permission provided guidance in developing the

⁹ The EPIC acronym was presented in a lecture during the Theological Methods and Practice Class, July 27, 2010, by Dr. Daniel Kruger. It originated with Leonard Sweet who offered it in his book, *The Gospel According to Starbucks*.

questions.¹⁰ The LAC's questions were designed to solicit attitudes about ordination, to evaluate the impact of an individual's ordination and to collect memories of meaningful aspects of previous ordination services. The questionnaire was prepared using Survey Monkey, and the URL link was distributed in an electronic memo to 409 ordained members of the annual conference, both elders and deacons. Of those who were invited to participate, 175 answered some or all of the questions. This information provided guidance in adapting the ordinal and preparing the devotions.

The LAC then invited all of the provisional elders and deacons, both those hoping to be ordained in 2010 and those not yet ready to move forward, to be interviewed about their expectations of ordination and their experience of commissioning. A script was prepared by the LAC (Appendix 3) and invitations extended by phone call to each candidate. The contacts occurred after the candidates had completed their interviews with the Board of Ordained Ministry and had been notified whether or not they would be ordained that year.

Of the fifteen invited for interviews, only seven were willing to be interviewed and give permission for their comments to be used in this project. This was disappointing, and raises the question of why so many refused an interview. They had been promised anonymity with regard to identification of their answers with their names, even from me as a DS. I wondered if the refusals could have been the result of ordination

¹⁰ Neil D. Presa, "*Here I Am Lord, Send Me: Ritual Analysis for a Theology of Presbyteral Ordination in the Presbyterian Church*" (PhD diss, Drew University, 2009, Appendix 1).

fatigue, with the project interviews scheduled so soon after the interviews by the Board of Ordained Ministry. The timing was the result of both the DMin schedule and the timeline necessary to prepare the liturgy for the annual conference. There were also potential issues of geographical location with some of the ordinands located 2 hours away. Or was something more serious at work? Might some have declined out of distrust of the confidentiality promised and a continuing sense of vulnerability given that their actual ordination was still three months off? Might those who had been turned down for ordination have refused to be interviewed out of bitterness? Or, could a lack of importance placed on ordination as a rite of the church account for the significant number who declined? Was their understanding of ordination such that they did not regard it as a substantial step in their response to God's call or something worthy of the time to reflect on theologically? Did they not understand ordination as entrance into an order and a rule of life, instead seeing ordination as an individual event that related only to them, not to the community of which they were becoming a part? In "Connectionalism, Ecclesiology, Mission and Identity", Russell Richey writes, "The 'connexion' of preachers became a family headed and governed by John Wesley; it was a monastic-like order held together by affection, by common rules, by a shared mission, and by watchfulness of each member over one another..."¹¹ Were those who declined an interview people who minimized the importance of ordination as a communal experience or who held a

¹¹ Campbell, et al, eds., (*Connectionalism, Ecclesiology, Mission and Identity*), 4.

different ecclesiology? Since they were unwilling to be interviewed, there are no answers to these questions, only questions.¹² I can only speculate about the possibilities.

The candidate interviews were all conducted by the LAC due to the possible concerns of candidates fearing an interview with a DS. For those in the first year of the two year provisional period, the DS would participate in the ordination decision by BOOM the following year, and for all of clergy, the DS would participate in the appointment process, having the power to influence the candidate's appointment to a local church.

Five additional interviews were conducted by the author, one with Taylor Burton-Edwards, two with United Methodist bishops and two with ordained clergy of the annual conference. The scripted questions were adapted for those already ordained.

The current ordinal of the denomination was discussed with its editor, Taylor Burton-Edwards, in a Skype interview on February 22, 2011. It was as a result of this interview and after discussion with the members of the LAC, the bishop and BOOM, that the focus of the project was changed from writing an original ordination service for the conference to the daily devotions. In the late '90's and early 2000's, the EPA ordination services were written by clergy members of the annual conference. Since 2004, the denominational ordinal has been used. The conference leadership decided to follow the advice of Burton-Edwards to use the current ordinal of the denomination with adaptation.

¹² This same group was asked to complete an on-line, anonymous evaluation of the ordination service itself, with an even lower response rate as we will see in subsequent chapters. The same questions can be raised, again without answer at this time, about why there was so little participation in the evaluation process following ordination.

The shift in the project led to a plan to write daily devotions for the three weeks prior to annual conference. The devotions would be e-mailed to all conference clergy to prepare them to attend and participate in the annual ordination service in a way that would assist them both in understanding the act of ordination and in seeing in their own ordination a source of inspiration for ministry.

Completing the interviews was a challenging task. The members of the LAC each agreed to contact several candidates. Half of the candidates declined to be interviewed, and geographical distance made face to face interviews difficult to schedule. The LAC members, primarily clergy, had very full schedules as well, even in retirement. The timeframe for the interviews was extended beyond what was anticipated in the original timeline.

Based on the input from questionnaires and interviews, a series of eighteen daily devotions was written. Burton-Edwards suggested writing the devotions focusing on the questions asked in the ordination service. He conceived of these questions as the theological crux of the ordination service, and a rule of life for those entering the order of elder or deacon.¹³ Given my sense of the lack of a clear theology of ordination and ministry in the United Methodist Church, the idea of raising up the ordination vows as a common understanding of ordination was an attractive idea. Thus, some of the devotions would address these questions. There were also themes that emerged from the

¹³ Burton-Edwards interview.

questionnaires and interviews that suggested directions for the devotions, such as concerns expressed about holding the service in the warehouse setting where annual conference would be held. Each devotion also included prayer by name for one of the persons coming for ordination, recognition of orders from another denomination, or commissioning. While the devotions were prepared in advance, the prayers were written shortly before publication, lifting up the individual being prayed for in a way that connected to the theme of the devotion.

One adaptation was necessary to respond to a request from Bishop Johnson. She approved the idea of the devotional, but over the winter months shared a desire for something that could be used by both ordained and licensed clergy. That necessitated finding ways to interpret the importance of ordination so that it would apply to those who were licensed to provide ministry in a particular church setting rather than ordained. The language of the devotionals thus became more general to include clergy in professional but non-ordained ministry.

After review of the questionnaires and interview notes, the ordinal was reviewed and adapted. Liturgy was written, music selected, and rubrics developed for various portions of the service. Subsequently, the author was asked to assume responsibility for the full service, which included recruiting participants, obtaining the necessary physical items for the service, and leading the lining up of clergy for the processional.

A series of eighteen devotions was prepared and e-mailed daily to the conference clergy, beginning with a letter of introduction on April 30, and daily devotions May 1

through 18. Sent to approximately 650 active and retired clergy, the e-mailed devotions were opened by over 200 people each day, with the number decreasing slightly each day during the first two weeks, then rising during the final week.

On the night of the ordination service, members of the LAC handed out a simple evaluation form to obtain feedback on the service and the devotionals. An on-line feedback questionnaire was also distributed by e-mail for those who had not completed the form the night of ordination, or who had additional comments. In addition, a separate questionnaire was e-mailed to those who had been ordained at the service and another to those commissioned requesting their feedback. Of the eight being commissioned, only one responded, and of the five being ordained, one responded.

Let us turn now to the project's findings.

CHAPTER 6

THE ORDINATION SERVICE AND THE DEVOTIONS

The Initial Questionnaire

An initial questionnaire was designed to ascertain existing attitudes about ordination as well as to collect information that would shape the adaptation of the ordination liturgy and the development of the daily devotionals. The full questionnaire can be found in Appendix 2. The questions covered familiarity with the ordination service, understandings of the meaning of ordination, memories and impact of the individual's own ordination, and experiences at subsequent ordination services as well as demographic information. Two thirds of the respondents indicated that they attended ordination almost always or frequently, and so had some experience with the worship service beyond their own ordination.

The attitudes about ordination expressed in the responses seemed to change as respondents progressed through the questionnaire and focused more intentionally on remembering their own experience. The early answers showed a greater emphasis on the functional aspects of ordination. When asked about their understanding of ordination in Question 3, with an opportunity to select up to three answers, the top two responses were “the conferring of authority by the bishop/conference” (75%) and “the community’s

affirmation of an individual's call" (72%). The next most chosen response, "fulfillment of God's call upon an individual" was chosen by only 42%, and the explicitly pneumatological response, "reception of the Holy Spirit" came in fifth with only 26%. Slightly more than one fifth, 22%, saw ordination as a credentialing process.

As the respondents moved through the survey, however, the answers shifted toward the spiritual aspects of ordination more than the purely functional. In Question 9, respondents were asked to select the most important actor in the service. Choices included the bishop, ordinands, the community, sponsors and the Holy Spirit. Given the overwhelming percentage who understood the service as the conferring of authority by the bishop or conference, I would have expected the bishop to be chosen as the primary actor. Instead, over 90% selected the Holy Spirit as the chief actor in the service. I would suggest that the invitation to recall their own ordination and to reflect theologically on its meaning led respondents to an increased awareness of the spiritual import of the event. This was not true for all of the respondents, but the shift in responses from Question 3 to Question 9 seems significant. This hypothesis was reinforced by one member of the LAC who shared that their own sense of call was rekindled by the process of conducting interviews for the project.

The most meaningful part of their own ordination for most respondents was the laying on of hands. Given the opportunity to select up to three elements of the service as most important, the laying on of hands was chosen by 89%, and when forced to choose only one element, 61% chose the laying on of hands as the single most meaningful

element in their own ordination service. While the liturgy, music, sermon and location all held meaning, the laying on of hands was clearly the element of the service having the greatest impact on individuals, but the action held a variety of meanings for those ordained.

When asked how they experienced the laying on of hands at their own ordination, and given the opportunity to select up to three answers, the respondents demonstrated great diversity of opinion. No single answer was chosen by a majority of the respondents. The greatest number, 46%, identified the laying on of hands as their “being connected to the apostolic faith and the apostolic witness.” Other responses, “the Holy Spirit was empowering me”, “the expression of support, blessing and love” and “the hands of the community” were chosen by 40%, 38% and 34% respectively. This diversity of the responses reflects the richness of meaning in the laying on of hands, mirroring the various biblical understandings including blessing, conveying of authority, reception of the Holy Spirit and affirmation of call by the community.

While affirming that diversity of understanding, I have to say that I was surprised and disappointed by the lack of agreement around any one meaning of ordination. Even with the opportunity to choose three responses for the above question, there was no single answer on which most could agree as one significant meaning of the laying on of hands. I had assumed that our clergy, while having differing views, would also have some agreement about the core meaning of ordination. I was surprised by the significant disparity in understandings of the purpose and content of ordination. On reflection,

however, I realized our denomination has not been intentional about offering a clear theology of ordination and ministry.

While the bishop ordains, it is the conference's representatives, the Board of Ordained Ministry and the ordained clergy meeting in executive session, who confirm the call and vote to approve candidates for ordination. And yet, through all the pages of the United Methodist Book of Discipline, there is no clear articulation of a theology of ministry and ordination to guide these bodies or the candidates who come before them. Bishop Cannon's comment that "ministry in Methodist history has been defined almost entirely by circumstance"¹ may describe not only the denomination's lack of official position, but also the way individual clergy understand ministry and ordination. Burton-Edwards suggested that the theology of ordination is contained in the ordination vows,² but unless that is studied well before ordination, the service of ordination seems a bit late to encounter the official understanding of ministry and ordination. That liturgy is not part of the United Methodist Discipline and is constructed by a small committee that may or may not reflect the theological consensus of the denomination. Consequently, those who kneel before the bishop for laying on of hands are not all of one mind about the meaning of what is occurring in the ritual or the new status into which they are entering.

¹Bishop William Cannon, "The Meaning of Ministry in Methodism," *Methodist History* 8, no. 1 (October 1969): 3.

² Burton Edwards interview.

This lack of consensus also highlights the tension between functional and pneumatological understandings of ordination, a tension that goes back to the divergent views of the Methodist Protestant Church and the Methodist Episcopal Church³. Burton-Edwards pointed out in the author's interview with him that these two views were incompatible but never reconciled following the reunification of these two branches into the Methodist Church in 1939. And we saw in our historical review that Wesley himself sometimes denied the pneumatological understanding because he distinguished between God's action in calling his preachers and the church's call in ordination; even with this distinction, he still included the prayer to receive the Holy Spirit in the ritual he prepared for American ordinations. The richness of meaning in ordination allows the ritual to incorporate both understandings, but the lack of agreement among the ordained raises concerns. If we have different understandings of our ordinations, might that lead to different ecclesiologies that would impact our interactions within the church and between church and world? Could it affect our understanding of the authority of bishops and our life together in the orders of elders and deacon?

I wondered if this lack of unified understanding was something new to the denomination or a long-standing situation. Were we once united but had lost that unity of understanding, or had we never truly developed a consistent and unified understanding of the ritual of ordination? Bishop Cannon's comment and Wesley's own ambivalence as

³ Burton-Edwards interview. See the devotions from the sixteenth and seventeenth days for a treatment of these two approaches.

seen in the origins of Methodist ordination, suggest that there may never have been unity around the understanding of ordination. We may have been living since our early origins with confusion about the meaning, purpose and content of ordination.

The development of the project was affected by this lack of a unified understanding of ordination. It complicated the ability to provide for a common spiritual experience in the ordination liturgy, as well as making it more difficult to utilize a shared memory and experience as the basis for renewal. The differing understandings of the ordination rite needed to be addressed, particularly in the daily devotions. Articulating and describing the ways of understanding ordination seemed a necessary step for encouraging reflection of ordination. That diversity of understanding was, therefore, highlighted in the daily devotions, especially the Day Sixteen and Day Seventeen devotions leading up to annual conference. And the focus in the devotions on the ordination questions attempted to reinforce the theological content of the vows.

In contrast to the organizational emphasis shown in responses to Question 3, Question 7 showed awareness by ninety percent of the respondents that something special happened at their ordination. This group was then asked what that something was. Given the opportunity to select up to three responses, fifty-six percent chose “the Holy Spirit was empowering and blessing me” as one of their three responses. This contrasts with only forty percent choosing “the Holy Spirit was empowering me at that moment” as a description of their experience of laying on of hands at their ordination just two questions earlier. This may be further evidence that as participants reflected on the

memory of their own ordination and perhaps equally importantly, as the questionnaire suggested ways of thinking about the experience, the awareness of the spiritual impact intensified. As already stated, by the time respondents arrived at Question 9, ninety-one percent identified the Holy Spirit as the most important actor in the service of ordination even though in Question 3, “What is your understanding of what ordination means”, the most selected answer was “the conferring of authority by the bishop/conference.” This further emphasized the apparent progression of responses from the earlier ones focused on an organizational and functional understanding of ordination to an increased awareness of the spiritual aspects and the importance of the Holy Spirit. In conversations during the project and after, several members of the LAC shared that their own sense of call was renewed by the process of conducting interviews for the project and the opportunity to reflect theologically on their ordination.

This change in spiritual awareness also suggested the possibility that ordination in general is viewed as an institutional activity, but that the particular experience of an individual carries far greater power than the organizational understanding. When asked to share specific memories of their ordination, one respondent wrote:

Ordination was a meaningful connection to the covenant community, past and present. I felt connected, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to a cloud of witnesses and a spiritual presence much larger than myself. I expected that Elder’s orders would be an experience of ‘jumping through a (necessary) hoop’ but God surprised me.

That “surprise” at his or her own ordination was what was needed in the experience at the 2011 service of ordination – a way of moving from an institutional, bureaucratic ritual to a deeply felt, spiritual experience of the presence of God and connection with fellow clergy.

The shared memories of the respondents’ ordination services provided ideas and themes for the development of the devotions and the adaptation of the ordinal. One of the churches in the EPA has the privilege of keeping the Asbury Bible, owned by Francis Asbury, and the Wesley Chalice, sent by John Wesley to America in the early days of Methodism. Nearly twenty percent of the respondents recalled the Asbury Bible and/or the Wesley Chalice being used in their ordination. As one expressed it, “Touching the Asbury Bible was a true connection to the history of our denomination.” Another wrote, “It expresses continuity not only in the faith but in our denomination. Wow!” And another called it “a link to the historic witness of the church.” One respondent spoke of placing hands on the Asbury Bible, “which places the context of ordination beyond the particular place and the symbol that I am not the most important character” in the conference. The use of the two symbols provided a connection for many to the tradition into which they were being ordained, the priestly calling described by Dozeman. They were also helpful in reaching post-moderns as symbols and visual images of our shared heritage⁴.

⁴ Leonard Sweet, *The Gospel According to Starbucks: Living With a Grand Passion* (Colorado Springs: Waterbrook Press, 2007), 20.

The Asbury Bible and Wesley Chalice were both used at the 2011 ordination service. The chalice was on the altar as a sign of the call to sacramental ministry, and the Asbury Bible was placed on a kneeler by the steps up to the dais. Every candidate for ordination was invited to kneel there in prayer before moving to the kneeler in front of the bishop. They placed their hands on the Asbury Bible and the head of the order into which they were being ordained placed her hands over theirs and prayed with them as they prepared their hearts and minds for the laying on of hands. This resulted in both the experience of touching the Asbury Bible as well as the experience of connection to the order into which the individual was being ordained and with whom they would henceforth live in covenant.

The object most often mentioned in memories of ordination was the stole. At one time, the conference presented handmade stoles to ordinands, and these were clearly treasured, even by one respondent who wrote that although he no longer wears a robe or stole, his ordination stole still has meaning. Many respondents noted that the stole they received is a tangible reminder to this day of their ordination. One described it as “both a mantle of the ‘authority’ as well as a yoke of partnership with God and with the community of faith.” Another called their stole, “the yoke of Christ,” and went on to describe it as “a special symbol throughout the ministry.” During the time that the handmade stoles were given, each year the design was different, and some respondents noted how this connected them to their class of fellow ordinands, creating a sense of community among them at subsequent ordination services. Another described their

handmade stole as “among the holiest items I own.” Not only was the stole important, but many described the action of having the stole placed on them as an especially memorable moment. One wrote that they remembered “the stole, together with ‘Take thou authority.’ Something strange happened then. I can’t explain it, but up until then, the ritual was just an obligated [sic] function.” Another described their stole as “an affirmation of my calling.” For a period of years the conference stopped the giving of stoles, but has now resumed that practice, and is exploring options to give handmade rather than the mass produced stoles currently used.

The second most often cited tangible item was the Bible given to ordinands. The Bible held meaning as “the power of God’s Word in our ministry” and as “continuing the good news of God from the ages past into the present to be ongoing in the future.” One respondent noted that they were able to choose the passage to which the Bible was opened before they laid their hands on it. The Bible is still given to ordinands, and at this service of ordination, it was placed before the ordinand opened to a passage of their choosing. After they placed their hands on the Bible, the bishop laid her hands on theirs and charged them, “Take authority as an elder to preach the Word of God” or “Take authority as a deacon to proclaim the Word of God.”

While a number of other items were mentioned by individuals, the stole, the Bible and the historical Bible and chalice were the only ones mentioned by more than two or three people. These items were, therefore, incorporated into the ordination ritual in 2011.

The Daily Devotions

The questionnaire provided both ideas for adaptation of the ordination liturgy as well as subjects to be addressed in the daily devotionals. At the bishop's request, the devotionals were to be sent to all clergy, whether ordained or licensed. This required some adjustment in the project plans in order to connect the ordination themes to those not seeking ordination. The bishop's hope was that this daily devotion would help raise attendance and participation in the ordination service which for many years had a low rate of attendance by clergy.

The general flow of the devotions was intended to move from a focus on call to ministry in the first week to ordination in the second week to covenant and community in the third week. That changed after the interview with Taylor Burton-Edwards. Call and community became the first two segments, followed by covenant in the third week, achieved by focusing on one element of the ordination vow each day. Burton-Edwards had suggested this approach as a way to connect call, ordination and the ordination vows seen as a rule of life for the orders.⁵ The devotions drew on the collected narratives and comments described in the questionnaires and interviews, on the biblical themes of call and setting apart, and on the ordination vows as an expression of the United Methodist theology of ordination. Each devotion included a passage of Scripture, a meditation, and a prayer.

⁵ Burton-Edwards, Feb. 22, 2011.

The prayers had two purposes. The day's prayer addressed the meditation topic, demonstrating how that day's theme might be realized or lived out in the life of the ordained. It also lifted by name a particular individual coming for ordination, commissioning or recognition of orders. The prayer for the ordinand or candidate was to enhance the sense of connection between the conference clergy and those just entering the body as ordained or commissioned clergy, and to create a sense of unity in the community's praying together for that day's individual.

An introductory e-mail was sent to conference clergy on April 30, 2011, to explain the purpose of the devotions. It was hoped that "the daily messages may assist you in considering the meaning of ordination, and in remembering your own ordination or licensing and its impact on your life." Although the devotions were written in advance, the prayers were written within a few days of publication. The introduction also highlighted the covenantal nature of ordination welcoming the newly ordained into the order of elders or deacons.

The first five devotions dealt explicitly with the nature of the call to ministry, using scriptures from the calls of Moses, Jeremiah and Paul. In the process of candidacy for ordination, candidates are asked again and again to share their call story. Once ordained, however, that narrative seems to be set aside. At the first district clergy breakfast I held as DS in 2008, clergy were invited to pair up to share their call story with each other. The response was overwhelmingly positive as pastor after pastor offered thanks for the opportunity to speak their call narrative to another. For many, it had been

years since they had last shared their story. It thus seemed beneficial to help clergy recall their own call story in preparation for the ordination service.

The first day's devotion explored the reality of our imperfection and God's power in our call. It echoed the comments of one survey respondent who wrote, "I remember rising up and praying 'Dear God what did I just do?'"

The second devotion dealt with an issue raised by a number of respondents in the survey and in interviews: the location of the ordination service. This is an on-going source of contention. For most of the past fifteen years, the service has been held in a location other than a church. Sometimes it has been in a conference center, other times a hotel ballroom, even a converted warehouse or Scottish Rite cathedral. Comments on the questionnaire relating to the location of the service ranged from "It was so ugly and there wasn't any type of worship space decoration" to "My ordination took place in a large 'barn' of space which was not conducive to the liturgy." One respondent complained that "the secular should not be allowed to seep into the sacred ethos..." In contrast, another wrote, "Ultimately (and I only realized this after the service), the place had less to do with it than the power of the gathered community of faith." The balance of comments, however, was overwhelmingly negative about services not held in a church.

Knowing that this year's service would be held in a former warehouse converted to conference center, I knew this was one topic that needed to be addressed in the devotions. Using Exodus 3:5, the second day's devotion examined the places where

Moses encountered God. Included in the devotion was a quote from one of the questionnaire respondents, who wrote,

To me it was very important that the ordination was held in a public place (Valley Forge Convention Center) rather than within the walls of a church building. It was an important symbol that ordination was a calling to serve the world beyond the walls of the church, not the church in isolation from the world.

The devotion went on to describe the intentional policy of one of the fastest growing United Methodist Churches in the country, Impact Church of Atlanta, which holds all of its meetings in public, secular spaces.⁶ The devotion closed with these comments:

If God can claim a patch of desert and a burning bush as holy ground, is there any space that cannot be made holy by the presence of God? After all, if God can make a pastor out of an ordinary, sinful human like me, surely God can make anything sacred.

One devotional would not change attitudes of those solidly opposed to using secular space for ordination, but it was hoped that the reading would prompt reflection and, perhaps, a spirit of tolerance. In addition to the devotion, efforts were made to ensure that the altar area during the service of ordination was populated by appropriate symbols to convey a sense of sacredness.

The third and fourth days dealt with early memories of the call to ministry and those who helped recognize God's voice calling clergy to service. The fifth day's devotion explored the convergence of individual call and community affirmation using Burton-Edwards' discussion of the predecessor denominations' differing theological

⁶ Talk by Olu Brown at the School for Congregational Development, July 29 – August 3, 2009.

views of ordination. According to Burton-Edwards, the Methodist Protestant Church viewed ordination as a ritual of confirmation of call and authorization for ministry. In this functional view, the primary actor in the ritual is the church, recognizing the gifts of the candidate. The Methodist Episcopal Church held a pneumatological view of ordination in which the power of the Holy Spirit enhances the gifts already given to the candidate in order to equip and empower them for ministry. The current ordinal includes both the invocation of the Holy Spirit and the authorizing for ministry. The pneumatological comes first in the words spoken as the bishop lays hands on the ordinand's head. "Almighty God, pour upon *Name* the Holy Spirit, for the office and work of a deacon/an elder in Christ's holy church." The functional aspect of ordination is reflected in the bishop's subsequent charge to "Take authority as an elder/a deacon" followed by a description of what is entailed by that office. Just as Wesley appeared to be of two minds about the purpose of ordination, our current ordinal reflects both aspects. The fifth day's devotion acknowledged the role of both the inner call from God and the outer call experienced in the confirmation of the call by the community in ordination.

The focus shifted in the next group of devotions to the covenant community. The first day invited readers to reflect on their place in the great cloud of witnesses who have gone before. The second day in this section was a reminder that we do not do ministry alone but in the presence of and empowered by God. The third day used the story of Elijah passing his mantle to Elisha to reflect on the ways ordination binds us to an already existing community of the called. And the fourth day considered the United Methodist

practice of ordaining ministers in classes at annual conference. Several of the questionnaire respondents had commented negatively on being ordained with others, expressing a wish that they could have been ordained by themselves. One commissioned pastor described her envy of Episcopal colleagues who “had a service just for them with a personal liturgy...a photo album and real focus on the individual that feels very powerful in contrast to the ‘5 seconds’ that each individual received” at her commissioning.⁷

Others, however, saw it as a gift of community. One respondent wrote

One other person was ordained elder with me. We both wept tears of joy and held on to each other as the bishop invited those with a call to come forward. It was an extremely powerful moment. The two of us have been ‘connected’ in a special way since that moment.

One ordained elder interviewed reflected on how isolated she thought other denominations’ pastors seemed, and asserted that our sense of connection to one another begins with the rites of commissioning and ordination that are experienced as part of a group being received into the conference.⁸ The devotion on this day, consequently, called clergy to remember those with whom they were ordained or licensed, and to renew the connection with them as the foundation of the community of the ordained and licensed.

The tenth devotion connected community to covenant by explicitly inviting readers to use the devotions to rekindle the flame of their own commitment. Five

⁷ Interview by D. Appler 3-9-2011.

⁸ Authori’s interview with ordained elder, 2-4-11.

devotions then examined some of the questions asked of ordinands as a means to renew the reader's own commitment to ministry by revisiting the covenant of the ordained. This was also an effort to explore United Methodist theology of ordination in light of Burton-Edwards' affirmation that the questions, as a rule for life in the orders, contained the church's theology of ordination⁹. He stated that the ordinal task force, charged with creating the quadrennial document, approaches the ordination ritual as a theological document. Thus, the questions and imperatives of the service reflect our understanding of the purpose of the service and how God is at work.

The final three devotions were based on the three imperatives spoken by the bishop within the ordination service, and their implications for ministry. The series culminated in the last devotion which celebrated the richness of meaning in ordination, challenged readers to recommit to the ministry of the set apart, and invited prayer for the entire class of ordinands and those who would participate in the service.

The Ordination Service

The ordination service itself was adapted from the denominational ordinal. Most of the liturgy was provided by the General Board of Discipleship. Working within that framework, the intent was to create a service that would exemplify Sweet's E-P-I-C worship, that is, Experiential, Participatory, Image-driven and Connected. Such a style is

⁹ Taylor Burton-Edwards interview.

most effective in reaching post-moderns, but can still maintain elements of worship attractive to moderns, who make up the vast majority of the ordination service attendance. It was, therefore, essential that the service include elements that would give a sense of participation and experiencing the presence of the Holy Spirit, provide visual images related to ordination, and provide opportunity to feel a connection to other clergy present.

Among the changes to the denominational ordinal was the inclusion of the Lord's Prayer in the early part of the service. The denominational ordinal assumes that the newly ordained will preside at communion during the worship service. Because we both ordain and commission at one service, time is a factor and the EPA does not include communion in the ordination service. Recent services have neglected to shift the Lord's Prayer from the deleted communion portion of the rite. The Lord's Prayer was positioned immediately after the bishop's call to "remember our baptism and affirm our common ministry" as a way to remind all present of the importance of prayer as part of the ministry of all Christians.

The significance attached to the use of the Asbury Bible and Wesley Chalice in the responses to the original questionnaire recommended their use in the 2011 service. The chalice was placed on the altar and lifted up as a sign of the elder's call to sacramental ministry. The Asbury Bible was placed on a kneeler by the steps up to the dais. Every candidate for ordination was invited to kneel there in prayer while waiting their turn to move to the kneeler in front of the bishop. They placed their hands on the

Asbury Bible, and the head of the order into which they were being ordained placed her hands over theirs and prayed with them as they prepared their hearts and minds for the laying on of hands.

During the project planning phase, Dr. Heather Murray Elkins, Professor of Worship, Preaching and the Arts at Drew Theological School, described an element she had designed for use by the West Virginia Annual Conference in their appointment ceremony. She suggested that it might be adaptable for a service of ordination, since the EPA has no appointment ceremony. As a result, a segment entitled “The Affirmation of Our Covenant As Clergy of the Conference” was added to the ordination service. In it, the clergy of the conference, who were seated in the rows immediately behind the ordinands, placed their right hand on the shoulder of the clergyperson in front of them, and together recited the words of the Covenant Prayer in the Wesleyan Tradition as a symbol of their recommitment to ministry in the name of Jesus Christ and to the covenant of the set apart. The ordinands and newly commissioned clergy felt the hands of their new colleagues on their shoulders, and every rank of clergy was connected with those in front of them, behind them and, in the last row, beside them.

Finally, the EPA ordinal always includes an invitation to those who are considering a call to ministry. People who had heard God’s call in their life were invited forward to pray with the DS’s and members of BOOM during the singing of “Here I Am, Lord.” This addition to the denominational ordinal was retained both due to conference tradition and in light of one of the interviews conducted with a candidate coming for

ordination. She shared that she had experienced clarity about her call to ministry at a conference service of ordination.¹⁰ Her pastor had invited her to attend the ordination service. Because her family “thought people who felt ‘called’ were the weird ones that you saw on TV” she didn’t feel comfortable telling them where she was going, so she told them she was going to a Harry Potter movie. The experience of the service was “overwhelming” and she “felt like [she] belonged there.” When the Bishop issued the invitation, she went forward, and was joined by her DS. She concluded, “I left that night knowing that I wanted to be a part of this. I can’t imagine missing an ordination service! It’s where I became certain of my call.”¹¹

One other addition to the service was a last minute addition but, in the post service evaluations, was lifted up as a highlight by a number of respondents. Several clergy in the original questionnaire had cited how meaningful it had been to share prayer with the bishop before the service. As a result, the ordinands, who would enter the main hall at the head of the procession, were asked to gather in the back of the robing room with the dais party. All other clergy were asked to line up in two lines from the doorway into the hall back into the robing area in preparation for the processional. Everyone was invited into prayer by the bishop, with the ordinands standing closest to her. As the opening hymn began, the ordinands processed between the two rows of clergy in order to

¹⁰ Interview on February 21, 2010 by member of LAC with provisional elder commissioned in 2010.

¹¹ Ibid.

enter the hall first. That “gauntlet” provided an opportunity for well-wishes and congratulations by many clergy, and underscored the sense of community with those who were already set apart in ministry. In the follow-up survey, nearly one in ten respondents identified the “clergy gauntlet” as the most meaningful element of the ordination service, and 31% selected the processional/recessional. The music selected for the entrance and going forth was traditional, up-lifting hymns played on a rented organ. In the recessional, many of those who exited first circled to the outside aisles rather than exiting the hall, and continued singing until the final hymn was complete.

Let us now turn to the responses to the project elements and the evaluation of the success of the project in meeting the goals.

CHAPTER 7

DATA AND EVALUATION

Results

In this section, I want to evaluate the project and highlight some of the learnings based on the responses of the clergy who provided feedback through the questionnaires. The project began with three goals in mind. First, it was my intent to create an ordination experience as a vehicle of renewal that would encourage clergy to remember their own call to ministry and ordination, without undermining the significance of the event for those who were being ordained or commissioned at the service. The second goal was to strengthen the sense of community and connection among the clergy of the conference and within the orders of deacon and elder. It was hoped that by accomplishing these two goals, attendance at ordination might increase, as clergy understood the importance of their connection to each other and the power of the service for individual renewal. The goals were accomplished through two elements, the adaptation of the denominational ordinal for the ordination service and the development of a series of daily devotions. The first goal required a balance in developing the series of devotions and a spiritually meaningful service that would connect previously ordained clergy to their own ordination while also ensuring a significant experience for those being ordained or commissioned.

Two different questionnaires following the service provided feedback on both the service and the devotions. A short, two page, simple answer questionnaire was distributed at the service; a longer, more complex questionnaire was made available on-line. There were sixty responses to the written questionnaire and fifty-four to the on-line questionnaire. In addition, an on-line questionnaire was sent both to those ordained and those commissioned, with only two people responding despite several follow up requests.

The night of the service, members of the LAC distributed questionnaires and pencils to all participating clergy as they lined up for the service, and waited at the exits following the service to collect completed questionnaires. Sixty questionnaires were returned. Respondents were asked to compare the night's service with other ordination services they had attended, indicating whether this service resulted in their feeling more or less of the following: aware of the Spirit's presence, connected to the ordinands, connected to other clergy, a participant in the service, and aware of their own ordination and call. In every case, the project goals were met. Of those who responded, nine out of ten felt the evening's service left them more aware of the Spirit (92%), more connected (90% connected to ordinands, 94% to other clergy) and more aware of their own ordination (86%). One hundred percent of those who responded felt this service allowed them to feel more participation than past services.

When asked about the elements of the service, fifty-eight percent identified the sermon as the most meaningful aspect. Of the elements that were added or adapted, two were singled out as particularly meaningful. Thirty-three percent identified the

processional as especially meaningful, with nine percent specifically mentioning the gauntlet of clergy through which the ordinands processed. Twenty-four percent singled out the covenant prayer as being particularly meaningful to them. A third change, inviting candidates to stop and kneel for prayer using the Asbury Bible with the chair of the order into which they would enter at ordination, was cited by four respondents.

Question 7 was designed to measure the effectiveness of the service as an instrument of renewal by asking clergy to indicate any difference in their attitude following the service. Sixty-eight percent reported feeling grateful for their call, 66% felt renewed for the work of ministry, 54% felt affirmed in their call, and 52% felt more aware of their call. Only one person felt no different as a result of the service. This suggests a high level of success in achieving the goal of renewal.

The second goal was to enhance the sense of community and connection among clergy. In question 4, 94% of the respondents indicated they felt more connected in covenant community to all clergy than after previous ordination services attended, and 90% felt more connected to the ordinands. As will be seen below, the covenant prayer, spoken while touching other clergy, was cited as one of the four most meaningful elements of the service, and may have played a role in the increased sense of connection.

One interesting note occurred in the responses. During the initial questionnaire from the winter, sixty-one percent named the laying on of hands as the most meaningful element of the ordination service, with nearly ninety percent identifying it as one of the three most important elements. In the questionnaire distributed the night of the service,

respondents were asked in an open-ended question to identify the most meaningful elements of the service. (See table 7.1.) There, only eighteen percent named the laying on of hands. I would suggest that this reflects the difference from being the one upon whom hands are laid to being a witness in the congregation.

Table 7.1. Meaningfulness of elements of the ordination service

Element of Service	Number	Percent
Processional/Recessional	18	33
Clergy Gauntlet at Processional	5	9
Music	11	20
Prayers	7	13
Scripture readings	6	11
Sermon	32	58
Laying on of Hands	10	18
Invocation of the Holy Spirit on the ordinand	3	5
Praying with Ordinand before going up onto dais	4	7
Covenant Prayer	13	24
Altar Call	10	18
Other	10	18

The four elements most often named in 2011 were, in order: sermon, processional, covenant prayer and music. Three of those were elements in which the responders

participated either by speaking, singing or acting. The laying on of hands would have been an action simply observed, perhaps contributing to its lower priority among those who were present as witnesses.

The goal of increased attendance by clergy at ordination was achieved, with this year's attendance the largest in several years. Although I cannot document the motivation for this year's increase, there are several factors that might have contributed. For the past six years, the service had been held as the closing event of the annual conference. Many clergy left before the service, citing the need to prepare for Sunday worship or expressing a lack of any compelling reason to stay. The timing of the service was changed this year to a night in the middle of the conference, and the bishop had been vocal in asking clergy to attend. Additionally, the devotions reminded people of the meaning of ordination, inviting them to participate as a means of spiritual renewal and encouraging a sense of awareness of the individuals coming for ordination through praying for them day by day.

The second part of the project product was the creation of these daily devotions. When asked about the daily devotionals, seventy-seven percent indicated they had read some or all of the devotions.

The impact of the devotions was gauged in two follow-up questions. First, respondents who had read the devotions were asked if they had an impact on what they found meaningful in the service. Eighty-six percent answered yes with twenty-eight

respondents providing amplification of their answer. These responses can be seen in table 7.2.

Table 7.2. Impact of devotions

Percent	Impact of Reading the Devotions by General Categories
25%	Led me to reflect on or reclaim my call to ministry
18%	Enhanced my sense of connection with other clergy
18%	Enhanced my sense of connection with those coming for ordination or commissioning
14%	Helped prepare me for the service
11%	Increased my awareness of the spiritual aspect of ordination and ministry
11%	Had a personal response, made the event more personal
7%	Led me to reflect on/reclaim the power of my own ordination

The next question asked if the devotions had an impact on the individual's understanding of ordination. Seventy-two percent affirmed that this was the case for them. When asked to amplify their response, respondents made comments such as "Reinforced my understanding and appreciation of ordination and that I could be in preparatory prayer for those who were to be commissioned or ordained," "They gave me a broader perspective on my own ordination," "It made ordination personal," "They reinforced an understanding and helped to think about ordination at a deeper level."

Deepening and enriching were words used by many to describe the impact.

One respondent noted “A wonderful review of the matrix of meanings and connections which ordination embodies.” Given the richness of meaning found in the biblical understanding of ordination elements, this was a rewarding insight. Another described the impact in these words: “They affirmed a commonality of post-ordination experience and the need for constant renewal.” Since the goal of the devotions and the service was to provide a mechanism for renewal of the sense of call and the power of the Holy Spirit in ordination, this comment reflected a response that was exactly what was desired.

Five percent of respondents cited the devotions as the primary reason they attended the service of ordination this year. Among the comments offered were “I was feeling spiritually strong” and “I was reminded of our covenant to be in community with one another.” One wrote that the devotions “drew my attention more to the sacredness of life and personal impact of how people have walked with God.” Several appreciated the opportunity to pray for those who would be ordained or commissioned.

The need to create some mechanism for regular reflection and renewal was lifted up in two comments in particular. The first respondent wrote, “I felt connected to the author through shared and comparable experiences. No forum has led to such discussion of call and ordination.” This echoed my experience as DS at the district breakfast when clergy were invited to share their call stories. Another wrote, “When I was ordained everything was in a whirl. The devotions helped me to ‘relive’ the experience.” The sense of connection was underscored in this comment: “Awesome to wake up each morning and have such a moving word and sense of connection with other clergy praying

the same prayer.” These comments reflect the goals of the project – to create an increased sense of connection within the covenant community and to provide an instrument for renewal in ministry based on reflection on our call and ordination.

The devotions clearly played an important role in the response to the service. One respondent wrote, “I felt that I personally benefitted from the devotions most of all. They gave me much to contemplate before conference and during the laying on of hands & [sic] invocation of the Holy Spirit on the ordinands.” Summarizing the experience of the devotions, respondents cited spiritual impact, sense of connection with other clergy and reflection on their own ministry as examples of the ways they were affected by the devotions.

Because some clergy objected to completing a questionnaire during a worship service, an additional opportunity was provided on-line. The on-line version incorporated some changes based on the initial questionnaire’s responses. Overall, the results of the on-line questionnaire were similar to those obtained the night of ordination. Fifty-four responses were received to the on-line version.

When asked to choose up to three words to describe the experience of the service, 60% chose joyful, 60% chose celebratory, 57% chose spiritual and 47% chose moving. When asked which elements of the service were most memorable, with the option to choose up to three responses, 46% chose the procession of the ordinands between the rows of clergy as they entered the hall. This was only exceeded by the laying on of hands which was chosen by 54%. When asked the night of the service, the question was an

open-ended one. Here, thirteen possible choices were listed based on the responses from the night of the service as well as responses from the initial questionnaire back in the winter. When the respondents were subsequently asked to choose the single most meaningful element, the processional between lines of clergy was chosen by the greatest number, 19%, compared to 17% citing the invocation of the Holy Spirit upon the ordained, and 14% for both the laying on of hands and the bishop's charge to "Take authority." Clearly this last minute addition had a significant impact on fostering a sense of connection between the previously ordained and those coming for ordination, commissioning and recognition of orders.

Respondents were asked about changes in the ordinands or the community as a result of ordination. Seventy-seven percent believed that the ordinands were different as a result of their ordination, and 84% believed the community was different. Describing the difference in the ordinands, respondents mentioned empowerment by the Holy Spirit, a new sense of connection to the order or other clergy, reception of authority and the validation of their call. This reflects both pneumatological and functional understandings of the act of ordination. Answers describing the difference in the community included strengthening the community, new perspectives, reception of the ordinands' gifts into the community and the validation and inspiration of the community.

When asked to name specific objects or images that stood out, a variety of responses was given. Six of the twenty-four who answered referred to the Asbury Bible and the prayer with candidates before they mounted the dais for the laying on of hands.

Respondents were asked what impact the service had on their sense of connection to other clergy. The breakdown of their responses is contained in table 7.3.

Table 7.3. Impact of the service on sense of connection to other clergy

Impact on sense of connection	Percent	Number
Strengthened my connection to other clergy	62.7%	32
Felt separated from other clergy	5.9%	3
No change in my sense of connection	31.4%	16

Nearly two thirds of those responding felt a stronger connection. The elements of the service that were specifically intended to foster this sense of connection included the Covenant Prayer in which clergy placed their hand on the shoulder of another clergy, the processional gauntlet, and the daily devotions that lifted up the meaning of covenant community and invited unity in praying for the ordinands and those to be commissioned or recognized.

Of those who responded to the on-line questionnaire, eighty-nine percent read the devotions. When asked how the devotions affected their understanding of ordination, their responses broke out as indicated in table 7.4.

Table 7.4. Effect of devotions on understanding of the meaning of ordination

Effect on understanding meaning	Percent	Number
They affirmed what I already understood.	45.7%	21
They expanded my understanding.	37%	17

They challenged my understanding.	8.7%	4
They had no impact.	8.7%	4

Forty clergy responded to a question asking them to share reactions to the devotions, with thirty-six finding the e-mails a positive experience, and only two negative. A significant percent, 45.7%, felt that the devotions had either expanded or challenged their understanding of ordination, leading them, it is hoped, to reflect and reconsider the meaning of ordination in general and perhaps, more specifically, the meaning of their own ordination. An equal number indicated that the devotions affirmed what they already understood, suggesting that at least some of these respondents spent time reflecting on what they did believe in order to find in the devotions an affirmation of that. In an open-ended question asking about the impact of the devotions, most found them inspirational, but even more important, many described them in ways that could be called transformational. Seven specifically cited an increased sense of connection with other clergy and three felt the devotions helped them remember their own call or ordination. One answered, “There was a bittersweetness that this was not done earlier. What a difference those devotionals might have made on the lives of clergy and helped them in their own faith journey.” The devotions appear to have made a positive difference.

When asked about the effect of praying for the ordinands by name, an overwhelming majority cited the sense of connection or personalizing the prayer as a

benefit. As one person wrote, “Suddenly these persons became ‘real’ and caused me to anticipate seeing them at conference.” Another commented, “Seemed the service of ordination had already begun.” Several offered a variation of “Even though I didn’t know them personally, I felt connected.” One offered the suggestion that the prayers be continued in future years with the addition of pictures of the ordinands, further personalizing the connection with them.

Overall, the service incorporated elements of both modern and post-modern approaches to worship that connected with most of those present. Sweet’s EPIC worship was an intentional model. There was an effort to create a pace and flow that enabled an experience of God’s presence in the service. One survey respondent wrote that they felt “the awesome movement and presence of the Holy Spirit throughout the service.” Another described parts of the service as “holy moment[s],” and another as “awe inspiring.”

One of the greatest challenges was the selection of music for the service. A large majority of those present come out of churches with traditional music. In past years, when contemporary music had been used for the service, the level of singing had been dramatically weakened by the numbers of people unfamiliar with the music. This year’s selections were primarily traditional hymns, but chosen because of both the content of their lyrics and their familiarity to large numbers of church-goers. Although some found the traditional music depressing, many were inspired by it. This year an organ was rented for the service, and some difficult lessons were learned about the need to incorporate the

organ's output into the sound system in order to be better heard, and to ensure that the music moved at an appropriate pace.

Participation in the worship was encouraged both through the invitation to stand in prayer for those being ordained, and the use of the Covenant Prayer by the clergy, as well as by the traditional elements of spoken responses in liturgy and singing. The concern for images resulted in a chancel filled with symbols, and the altar adorned in a swathe of red, yellow and orange fabric symbolizing the presence of the Holy Spirit. The presence of the Asbury Bible and Wesley chalice were images that connected to the Methodist heritage. The sense of connection was clearly articulated by a large number of those in attendance who completed questionnaires. That connectedness can be traced in part to the use of the daily devotionals, and the feeling of connection enhanced the experience of Spirit-led worship.

Discoveries

Looking back at the entire project, I would lift up several discoveries for continuing reflection. First, the variety of responses on the initial questionnaire to questions about the meaning of ordination and laying on of hands suggests that the United Methodist Church does not have a clearly articulated theology of ministry and ordination. We spend significant time in seminary discussing Methodist history, polity and doctrine, but seldom does that discussion include an explicit exploration of the meaning of set apart ministry, and ordination in particular. As a DS, I experienced a drift

among many churches away from Wesleyan connectionalism and toward congregationalism; I also saw it among a surprising number of clergy. If we don't articulate what it is we think we are doing, if we allow everyone to do whatever they think is right, have we lost the core of what it means to be a minister of the Gospel and a preacher in the Wesleyan tradition? Perhaps our Methodist doctrine classes should incorporate an intentional study of the ordination vows, as Burton-Edwards suggests, and explore the theology of ministry in the United Methodist Church and the rule of life for the orders.

The second discovery was the way in which the devotions, ordination service and questionnaires helped provide words and concepts for people to use in reflecting on ordination. It seemed that the invitation to reflect theologically on ordination had been lacking in our corporate life. When given the invitation, the early responses to the winter questionnaire provided utilitarian or functional answers, but as respondents delved further into their reflections, guided by the images and language suggested in the project instruments, their ability to connect with their own call and articulate theological reflection deepened. It was as if the questions and ideas in the devotions drew out of them long buried understandings of their ministry, both their call and their connection to other clergy, and gave them the words and images in which to express what they unearthed.

This suggests that regular opportunities to reflect on such topics with guidance might be beneficial to clergy. The sense of renewal expressed in the final questionnaires

can only benefit the churches these clergy serve. Answering carefully prepared questions about our ministry, both our call and our ministry service, can not only help rekindle the flame of commitment but can also help restore or even provide the language needed to articulate and appreciate what God has done and is doing in our lives,. Without the prompting of the devotions and questionnaires, many clergy might have lacked an awareness of a deep seated sense of call and a hunger for connection with other clergy, and the voice with which to articulate that.

The response to the devotions as a motivation to attend ordination leads to the recognition that community and connection among clergy do not just happen. We may be ordained into an order, but the sense of community among members of the order needs to be nurtured and intentionally encouraged. The prayers for those coming for ordination helped forge a connection between conference clergy and new colleagues, and the physical touch at the Covenant Prayer reinforced that connection. It thus became a physical, spiritual and emotional connection. As clergy, we know the value of touch for older parishioners and those hospitalized. Perhaps we need to be reminded that the connection of clergy needs that multivalent dimension as well. As a DS, I sponsored not only district meetings of clergy, but also regional lunch meetings of clergy in smaller groups for the development of relationships. Breaking bread together is another powerful metaphor for connecting with one another.

One thing that became clear to me in this project was the difference between inspiration and transformation. I have always found the ordination worship service to be

inspirational, but I have not experienced it as a transformational experience in the past. Some of the comments by respondents lead me to conclude that it is the combination of theological reflection and inspiration that can truly lead to transformation. The affirmation of the devotions as a vehicle for reflection prepared people to be touched in new ways by the Holy Spirit in the worship service. The need for more than a once-and-done event to effect transformation also suggests that repetition of some type from year to year may be essential to maintaining the usefulness of ordination as a vehicle of spiritual renewal and strengthened connection. The format may vary, but the focus on theological reflection, remembrance of call and encouragement of connection needs to be a regular occurrence.

This has led me to incorporate regular devotions in my parish ministry since leaving the superintendency. I publish a weekly devotional for my congregation that allows me to help shape the way they reflect on their faith and daily life. Using the same format as the ordination devotions – a scripture, the devotion, a closing prayer – I am able to raise questions for pondering and suggest ways of reflecting theologically that provide language and images for people in their own wrestling with faith. The combination of weekly devotion, monthly column in the newsletter and Sunday worship are far more able to result in transformation than just the one hour a week worship.

When the devotions were first published, I did not put my name on them. I was intentional about not wanting this to be about me, but rather encouraging each member of the clergy to reflect on their own experience of call and ministry, and to focus on prayer

for a specific ordinand. The anonymity resulted in some speculation about the authorship, with suggestions ranging from the ordinands themselves writing them to the Board of Ordained Ministry members. I did not intend to hide my authorship, but rather to remove myself as the focus. Although that was accomplished, I now believe that the anonymity may have been an impediment to some, engendering speculation and supposition rather than encouraging the focus on self and the ordinands.

The response to the ordination service made clear that the EPIC approach to designing worship is one that best connects with the clergy of this conference. In particular, the sense of participation and the visible symbols were, I believe, critical to the positive response and sense of participation. That participatory experience reinforced the individual's awareness of the sacredness of the service and the wonder of their own call and ordination.

There were two disappointments in the responses received throughout the project. First, the participation in the original survey that sought input for the development of the project was more limited than I had hoped, both in terms of vocation and racial/ethnic identity of participants. Although ordained deacons received the survey by e-mail, none participated in the survey. I have to wonder if time might have been a factor, since the large majority of our deacons have employment outside the church, and so are, in a sense, juggling two jobs.

Of equal concern was the low participation by people of color. Over ninety percent of those who responded were white, non Hispanic. Of the 146 who answered

the question of racial/ethnic identity, only 9 self-identified as black, and only 7 of any other non-white category. I wondered if the ordination experience might be different for a person of color, or if the remembrance of the event might be different within a congregation that was of a different racial/ethnic identity. I did not pursue this during the research for this project, but would be interested in discovering differences in understanding and memories of ordination in varying racial/ethnic settings.

The second disappointment was the lack of participation in both the preliminary interviews and in the follow up surveys by those coming for commissioning and ordination. Only half of those in the process for recognition at annual conference agreed to be interviewed by a member of the LAC, and only 2 of those ordained or commissioned participated in the on-line follow up survey after the ordination service. Again, I can only speculate as to the reasons why. The period leading up to the Board of Ordained Ministry interviews in February and the time around the annual conference, both before and after, can be extremely busy for those seeking credentialing. It may be that the candidates were suffering from “ordination fatigue” after writing their ordination or commissioning papers and going through the interview process. It may have been an emotionally and spiritually exhausting process that left them too depleted to do more that was not mandatory. They may simply have been unwilling to add more to their schedule, whether interviews in January- February, or taking the time for an on-line survey at the end of May or early June. I also wondered if there had been so much required of them that they had simply reached a point of not wanting to do anything

further. From my interactions with the candidates, I don't believe their own ordination was unimportant, but it may also be the case that the idea of ordination in general was less important at this time, now that their own ordination or commissioning was accomplished. It would be interesting to do a five year or ten year follow up to determine if there was any difference in their attitude as their own ordination receded in time.

The project set out with three goals: to create an ordination worship experience that would be a vehicle of renewal, rekindling the flame as Paul says, for those who were ordained or licensed in the past; to strengthen the community and connection among clergy especially within the orders and the fellowship of local pastors; and to increase attendance at the ordination service. The responses of those who attended indicate that both of the first two goals were successfully met. Although a numerical count was not taken since none had been taken in the past for comparison, the cabinet agreed that attendance was up from the prior years. The model of a series of short, daily devotions as preparation for an event combined with a well-constructed worship service incorporating an experiential and participatory approach to worship can be utilized in multiple circumstances. Four years later, a similar approach is being planned as a preparation for the annual conference at which General Conference delegates will be elected and challenging debates brought to the floor of annual conference. I hope that we can bring a similar sense of connection and experience of the divine to this conference as it deals with resolutions that threaten to divide.

CHAPTER 8

LAST WORDS

*For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands.
2 Timothy 1:6*

Where Do We Go From Here?

The articulated purpose of the project was to explore ways of using ordination as a means of spiritual renewal for those already ordained or licensed, while still providing an ordination experience that was spiritually uplifting and memorable for those being ordained and commissioned. A second goal was the encouragement of the sense of connection among clergy. Although the service itself contributed to both of these goals, the spiritual renewal and connection seem to have been intensified through the use of the daily devotions leading up to the ordination service. This suggests that inspiration alone may not lead to transformation – an inspiring service without education or spiritual direction may not have lasting impact. The formative effect of the devotions enabled the worship service to transform rather than merely inspire. As one elder interviewed said, “for those who invite the Holy Spirit this is a sacred moment and something happens.”¹

¹ Interview conducted by author with an elder of the EPA conference on February 3, 2011.

The devotions may have opened persons to invite the Holy Spirit and the ordination service provided the occasion for that experience.

It is also apparent that the meaning of ordination, while many layered, is not clearly articulated to candidates as they move through the process. The denomination would be well served to develop a clear theology of ministry and ordination that articulates what we believe happens in ordination; identifies what, if anything is different about the ordinand; and explores the varied meanings, particularly exploring the functional and pneumatological understandings of the rite.

The possibilities are extensive for using memories of ordination and call as a means of spiritual renewal. In the late spring of 2011, the Pennsylvania Council of Churches extended an invitation to me to present a workshop on “The Awe/Wonder of Call Through Ordination: Rekindling the Gift of God In Our Call to Ministry” based on the work for this project. That two hour workshop was expanded into a six hour Advent workshop for clergy of the Northeast District in the EPA. Using a variety of resources, and particularly focusing on the call of Moses, participants worked through a series of questions designed to facilitate remembering their own call to ministry and ordination/licensing. In small groups of three or four they were invited to share their call story and their memories of being set apart for ministry. These two workshops included both ordained and licensed persons, so the emphasis was placed on call and setting apart rather than ordination. The response to these two workshops was very positive. Information about the curriculum can be found in Appendix 14.

Expanding the workshop into a workbook for clergy might provide a way for individual clergy, regardless of their conference or even denomination, to engage in theological reflection on their ordination as a means of spiritual formation. The words of Revelation 2:4-5a are an invitation to remember and reflect: “But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember then from what you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first.” Remembering, reflecting and reliving might be a means of renewing and rekindling.

The annual conference may want to separate the service of commissioning from the service of ordination. This would accomplish two things. First, by reducing the length of the service, it may be possible to include communion, presided over by the newly ordained. This has long historical precedent in which the ordained immediately exercise their authority, with deacons serving at the table and elders presiding. If the service of ordination is intended in part to emphasize our connection to Christ, each other and the great cloud of witnesses who have walked this path before, what better illustration than gathering at the Lord’s table? But dividing commissioning from ordination would also reserve for ordination the culminating experience of the ordination service. For those who have been commissioned, the service at which they are ordained can appear to be anti-climactic. The conference already brings together retiring pastors and persons about to be commissioned in a service of anointing of the candidates with oil. Perhaps this could be expanded into a service of retirement and commissioning, bringing together those just beginning with those whose race is run.

The combination of devotions and ordination service created an opportunity for spiritual renewal for many of those responding to the surveys. This raises the question whether other similar worship opportunities might be offered such as an annual service of appointment for clergy, or a renewal of ordination vows. With our annual conference meeting in the spring, some kind of service of worship designed to foster renewal might be scheduled in the fall or perhaps in conjunction with Advent as the start of the Christian year. Clergy could come together for a well-crafted service of worship designed to affirm the clergy's call to ministry and their response, whether through ordination or licensing. The liturgy could include elements from the ordination service, covenantal prayers and preaching that was designed to encourage pastors in ministry. Or such an event might be conducted by the individual orders or fellowship of local pastors. The latter group, especially, needs attention. In the EPA conference, there is no service or special recognition of licensed local pastors at either the time of licensing or upon completion of the Course of Study. These pastors, many of whom juggle both ministry and other employment, might be especially heartened by a service celebrating their ministry and encouraging them to remember their call and give thanks.

The success of the daily devotions invites consideration of an intentional focus on ordination and those coming for ordination in the days leading up to annual conference. Rather than one person preparing all the devotions, they could be written by many different people sharing their own memories of ordination. One respondent suggested that they be written by those coming for ordination as a way of introducing them to the

conference. If the devotions are prepared by several rather than one person, it is recommended that a progression of themes be developed in advance. The questionnaires in 2011 suggest that the educational aspect of the devotions helped to prepare the readers for the transformational effect of the ordination service. Reflections that are targeted to address important considerations in a theology of ministry would be more effective in creating an instrument of renewal than a series of disconnected, albeit inspirational, devotions. One respondent requested that a picture of the ordinand being prayed for be included in the e-mail. This demonstrates a desire to foster connection by getting to know the ordinands.

The positive response to the inclusion of the ritual around the Covenant Prayer in the service of ordination also reminds us of the need to foster the sense of community and connection among clergy. Currently, the deacons of our conference meet separately several times a year, nurturing their connection with each other. The number of elders is far larger, however, and one meeting of the ordained elders would probably not be an effective vehicle for cultivating connection. Other methods might build on the apparent desire of clergy for a venue in which to discuss and share call stories and memories of their being set apart. Clergy gatherings incorporating this kind of opportunity might be well received and create new lines of communication and support for clergy in ministry. The connection can best be nurtured by a combination of spiritual, emotional and physical elements as occurred in the devotions and ordination service of the project.

The annual service of ordination provides an opportunity to help clergy increase their sense of connection and be renewed for ministry. This service alone is not sufficient to accomplish this renewal. There must be preparation of some kind including education about the meaning of call and ordination, the recollection of memories of the individual's own experience, and active, knowledgeable participation in the service when others are being ordained. With these conditions, the ordination service can become an annual event of renewal and recommitment for the clergy of an annual conference. For those in denominations that do not ordain in classes, the regular rehearsing of call and ordination stories in clergy groupings, along with intentional education about the denomination's understanding of ordination, can help to accomplish the same goal.

Like the ash that builds up on charcoal briquettes in a fire, the challenges of ministry over time and the demands of day to day life can become a barrier between the individual clergyperson and their sense of calling and empowerment by the Holy Spirit. The church must be intentional about providing ways to rekindle the fire and renew the sense of God's empowerment for ministry. Whether in devotions, services of ordination and worship, clergy gatherings or workshops, we need to provide times and places for remembrance and celebration of the call that led to being set apart, empowered by God's Holy Spirit, and authorized for ministry.

GLOSSARY

Annual Conference: the connectional organization of churches in a region that constitutes the basic unit of the United Methodist Church. The conference is supervised by a bishop, and conducts business in accord with decisions of the denominational governing body, the General Conference. The annual conference meets at least once a year to complete necessary business including the commissioning and ordination of candidates for ministry and the election of those to be ordained into full membership in the annual conference. The conference itself is made up of an equal number of lay and clergy members, with one lay person for every living clergy person who remains in good standing.

Bishop: elders in the United Methodist Church who have been elected and consecrated to a ministry of supervision of the life of one or more annual conferences. Bishops serve for life, in four-year terms, with a normal limit of two consecutive terms in one conference. They are the only church official who may preside at a service of ordination.

Board of Ordained Ministry (BOOM): the conference body charged with credentialing persons for professional ministry. Candidates for commissioning and ordination are examined through an interview process, after which the Board votes whether or not to

recommend them for commissioning or ordination. All DS's participate in the interview process and share their recommendation of candidates from their district.

Call: the sense of God's invitation to use a person's gifts in a specific way. The call to ordained ministry is the call to use gifts for the good of God's people as an elder or deacon in the United Methodist Church. Some are called to licensed ministry, serving a church with limited authority but without the requirement of completing the M.Div. degree or provisional process.

Candidate: a person in the process of moving toward ordained or licensed ministry. Those formally designated candidate have written to the District Superintendent to request permission to enter the candidacy process and have met with the District Committee on Ministry. As a result of the need to use this term, the author of the project will be referred to as "the D.Min candidate."

Commissioning: persons who have completed the educational requirements for ordination and been interviewed and approved by the Conference Board of Ordained Ministry to serve a two year provisional period before they are ordained. Those who are recommended for this provisional period are commissioned at annual conference. The bishop, DS and other conference representatives hold their hands above the candidate's head rather than laying hands on them. Those who are commissioned are licensed by the conference for pastoral ministry in a particular congregation, and participate in a two year

provisional process including monthly mentoring meetings, monthly group sessions, annual retreats and other preparation for ordained ministry.

Deacon: an ordained clergyperson in the United Methodist Church ordained to service.

Deacons are to extend the love of God beyond the walls of the church in acts of service to the world. Deacons serve in many different kinds of positions including educators, health care professionals, musicians, non-profit administrators and social workers.

District Committee on Ministry (DCOM): The annual conference is divided into smaller units called districts, each one supervised by a district superintendent. The District Committee on Ministry is the body at the district level that accompanies candidates for ministry in a process of discernment until they are ready to be recommended to BOOM for commissioning or appointment as full-time local pastors.

District Superintendent (DS): an ordained elder who serves as a representative of the bishop in an assigned area of the conference, providing leadership and supervision to the pastors and churches of the area. DS's participate in the laying on of hands at ordination for persons coming from their assigned district.

Elder: an ordained clergy person in the United Methodist Church who has been ordained to word, sacrament and order. Elders have sacramental authority and are charged with the ordering of the life of the local congregation. Some elders serve beyond the local church in positions such as chaplaincy. Elders commit to the itinerant system.

Extension Minister: ordained elders serving in positions other than parish clergy, such as chaplains, professors, evangelists, therapists and counselors.

Itineracy: the method by which elders, provisional elders and associate members are appointed to churches and fields of labor. Clergy in the itinerant system agree to abide by the appointments made by the bishop of their conference.

Licensed Local Pastor: persons seeking to be appointed to preach, lead worship and perform the duties of pastor in a specific congregation but who may not have completed the educational requirements for ordination, or may be unwilling to commit themselves to the itineracy system for elders, may be granted a license by the bishop. The license gives them pastoral authority but only for a specific congregation and the people related to that setting. Those who are commissioned on the path to ordination as elders serve under license during their provisional period.

Order of Elders/Order of Deacons: the orders are an effort to emphasize the connectional nature of the church and its clergy. Elders and deacons are ordained into orders within which they commit to provide support, encouragement and accountability to their peers in a covenantal relationship.

Ordination: the process of laying on of hands by which the power of the Holy Spirit is conveyed to the one being ordained in order to equip and empower them to respond to God's call to ministry. It is a setting apart of the ordinand for ministry beyond that of all

the baptized. In the United Methodist Church, persons are ordained as either elders or deacons.

Provisional Member, Provisional Elder/Deacon: someone who has been commissioned for ministry with the intention to continue on to ordained ministry. Provisional members (of annual conference) serve in a professional capacity as pastors (elders) or in their field (deacons) while completing additional requirements necessary for ordination. Regular meetings are held for provisional members with a facilitator; annual retreats are conducted; all provisional members must meet monthly with a trained mentor. In the second year of full-time service (longer if they have served part-time), provisional members complete a new round of written examination material and meet with the Board of Ordained Ministry for a day of interviews at which time they may be recommended for ordination at the spring meeting of the annual conference.

APPENDIX 1

LOCAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Rev. James Anderman (clergy)
Salem UMC
Allentown, PA

The Rev. Dr. Deborah Appler (clergy)
Associate Professor of Old Testament/Hebrew Bible
Moravian Theological Seminary
Bethlehem, PA

Mr. Greg Ellis (laity, beginning candidacy for ordination)¹
Asbury United Methodist Church
Allentown, PA

The Rev. David Felker (retired clergy)
Mt. Bethel, PA

The Rev. Elizabeth Sue Moore (retired elder)
Bethlehem, PA

¹ Since this project was completed, Mr. Ellis was commissioned towards Deacon orders in May, 2014.

APPENDIX 2

ORIGINAL SURVEY

This survey was emailed to all ordained elders, ordained deacons, provisional elders, provisional deacons, retired elders and retired deacons in January, 2011.

1. How many ordination services have you attended?
 - 1-2
 - 3-10
 - 11-20
 - More than 20
2. Do you regularly attend the ordination service at Annual Conference?
 - Almost always
 - Frequently
 - Rarely
 - Never
3. What is your understanding of the what ordination means (check up to 3)?
 - Fulfillment of God's call upon an individual
 - The community's affirmation of an individual's call
 - The conferring of authority by the bishop/conference
 - The individual's culminating "yes" to God's call
 - Credentialing
 - A call from the baptized community to serve the baptized community
 - Equipping by the Church for a specific ministry/service
 - A hoop to jump through
 - A call from the baptized community to serve beyond the church
 - Reception of the Holy Spirit as empowerment for ministry
 - Other:
4. Remembering your own ordination service, what parts of the ordination service were the most meaningful for you? Choose up to three.
 - Written liturgy and worship order
 - Processional
 - Prayers
 - Scripture/readings

- Sermon
 - Hymns/music
 - Presentation of the candidates for ordination
 - The liturgical space
 - The laying on of hands
 - The invocation of the Holy Spirit upon the ordinand
 - The bishop's charge to "take authority"
 - The recessional
 - I don't remember
 - Other:
5. Which part was the most important to you? Choose only one (from question 4).
6. How did you experience the laying on of hands at your ordination service? Check up to three.
- The Holy Spirit was empowering me at that moment
 - The hands were the hands of Christ upon me
 - The hands were the hands of the community upon me
 - The hands represented the universal church in all times and places
 - The hands welcomed me as a fellow clergy member of the annual conference
 - The hands welcomed me into the order of elders or deacons
 - I was being connected to the apostolic faith and the apostolic witness through the ages
 - The hands were an expression of support, blessing and love
 - I don't remember
 - Other:
7. Did you feel or sense that something special was happening at your ordination service?
- Yes
 - No
 - Maybe, I'm not sure
 - I don't remember
8. If you answered yes or maybe to number 6, what do you think was happening at your ordination service that made it special. Check up to three.
- I was receiving a big responsibility
 - The Holy Spirit was empower and blessing me

- The Holy Spirit was blessing the gathered community
 - I was joining the ministry of Jesus Christ through the church
 - The community of those gathered represented the universal Church in blessing me in ministry
 - Family and friends were gathered to celebrate a milestone in my ministry
 - I was joining the covenant community of elders or deacons
 - I was joining the community of conference clergy members
 - There was a connection with the apostolic faith and apostolic witness of the Church through the ages
 - Other:
9. Who are the four most important actors in the service of ordination? Choose 1 for the most important through 4 for the 4th most important.
- Bishop
 - Cabinet
 - Sponsors
 - Holy Spirit
 - Board of Ordained Ministry
 - Conference leaders
 - The ordinand
 - Family and friends
 - Other clergy
 - The gathered community
 - Other:
10. Thinking of your own ordination, what physical object or tangible item comes to mind? Is there special meaning in the item? If so, please describe.
11. What word best describes ordination to you. (Choose one.)
- Somber
 - Serious
 - Joyful
 - Awe
 - Inspiring
 - Spiritual
 - Boring
 - Celebratory
 - Moving
 - Obligatory
 - Other:
12. At ordination services other than your own, did you feel you were a participant in the service?
- Yes
 - No

13. At services you have attended other than your own, what parts of the service made you feel like the gathered assembly was fully participating and a part of the ordination service? Please choose three and rank them 1 to 3, with 1 being most fully participating.
- Witnessing the laying on of hands
 - Participating in the liturgy through responses
 - Hymns/songs
 - Reading of scripture
 - Prayers
 - Offering
 - Sermon
 - Standing in prayer for someone being ordained.
 - Attending the service as a witness to ordination
 - Participating in the altar call for those desiring to renew their commitment
14. How does ordination connect to your call to ministry? Choose one.
- Ordination was a fulfillment of my call
 - Ordination was one step in a continuous process of living out my call
 - Ordination was a necessary hoop to go through in order to do what I was called to do
 - Ordination provided spiritual empowerment for responding to my call
 - Ordination gave me the authority I needed to do what I was called to do
15. In your own experience, how has your ordination connected to your experience of ministry? Choose one.
- Ordination was a ceremony that had little to do with my actual ministry
 - Remembering my ordination gives me encouragement to continue in difficult times
 - My ordination was a source of authority and power
 - Ordination was a reminder of the support of the covenant community of the order of elders or deacons
 - Ordination was a spiritual experience that uplifts me for the challenges of ministry
 - Ordination is something I reflect on regularly, remembering it and giving thanks
16. Please use the space below to share specific memories of your ordination service or of other ordination services you have attended.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

17. What is your gender?
- Female
 - Male
18. What is your age range?
- 35 and under
 - 36-45
 - 46-55
 - 56-65
 - 66-75
 - 76 or over
19. What is your clergy status?
- Active ordained elder
 - Active ordained deacon
 - Provisional elder
 - Provisional deacon
 - Retired elder
 - Retired deacon
20. What is your racial or ethnic identity? Please check all that apply.
- Black
 - Hispanic or Latino
 - Central Asian/Indian subcontinent
 - Asian/Pacific Islander
 - Native American/Alaskan Native
 - White, non Hispanic
 - Other
21. In what religious tradition were you raised? If you were raised in more than one, with which did you have the greatest identification?
- UMC
 - Other Wesleyan
 - Roman Catholic
 - Anglican/Episcopal/Lutheran
(highly liturgical)
 - Reformed/UCC/Presbyterian
 - Baptist
 - Non-denominational
 - Pentecostal
 - Non-Christian
 - None
 - Other:

22. What is your personal preference in the structure of a worship service?

- Highly liturgical
- Moderately liturgical
- Non-liturgical

Thank you for your time. I am grateful for your participation in the survey. The information will be used as background for preparing the 2011 service of ordination. If you have any questions about the survey or would like to see the results when compiled, please send an e-mail to me at bronyocum@gmail.com. Also, if you would be willing to participate in a more in-depth interview about ordination, you are invited to contact me at that e-mail address before January 31, 2011. In-depth interviews will be conducted in January and February. Thank you so much.

APPENDIX 3

INTERVIEW SCRIPT

The questions on the interview script were used in interviews conducted by members of the LAC in conversations with persons heading for ordination, both those planning to be ordained that year as well as those having one or more years remaining before ordination.

INTERVIEW SCRIPT

The interview questions are intended as a guide. Please use your best listening skills, employing curious questions that follow up on what is said to learn more, rather than ignoring what is said in order to move on to the next question.

INTRODUCTORY QUESTIONS

1. When were you ordained? (For elders, there may be both a deacon's and elder's ordination.)
2. Where were you ordained? (For elders, there may be two ordinations.)
3. In what capacity did you participate in the local church during the years immediately prior to ordination? (Were you in lay leadership, a local pastor with sacramental authority, or other?)
4. Into what order were you permanently ordained? (elder or deacon – not transitional deacon)
5. What bishop ordained you? Did other bishops participate?

REMEMBERING THEIR ORDINATION

6. What do you remember about your service of ordination and the events surrounding ordination? (The space, the music, the sermon, the conference at which you were ordained, etc.)
7. Who were the people who attended your ordination who were significant to you personally? (Family, friends, church members, home church members, etc.)
8. Were there people participating who were personally significant to you? If so, who, how did they participate, and how were they significant?

9. What memories do you have of the bishop who ordained you related to the ordination service and surrounding events?
10. What are the most meaningful events surrounding your ordination?
11. What do you remember about the laying on of hands?
12. What feelings do you recall from your ordination?
13. Are there tokens or physical items from the service that have special meaning for you? What are they and what is their significance to you?

REFLECTING ON ORDINATION, CALL AND MINISTRY

14. When you started out toward ordination, what did you expect of ordination and the ordination service?
15. How did these expectations shift as you moved through the candidacy process?
16. What do you think happens in ordination?
17. To those coming for ordination: What will be different about you after you are ordained? Do you change, are you changed? Will the community be different or changed as a result of your ordination?

To those already ordained: What is different about you as a result of your ordination? Is the community changed or different as a result of your ordination?

18. What connection, if any, do you see between your call to ministry and your ordination?
19. To those coming for ordination: What are your expectations of the service of ordination?

To those already ordained: Did your service of ordination meet your expectations? How or how not?

20. Can you describe to me some times in your ministry when you have remembered your ordination? (Probe for feelings – is there a benefit in remembering ordination?)
21. What connection do you see between your ordination and your subsequent ministry?
22. How does the person see their ordination in light of the biblical understanding of laying on of hands as a way of setting people apart for God's use? How do they see themselves in light of the Methodist history of ordination?

ORDINATION AND COMMUNITY

23. What effect if any did ordination have on your sense of community with other clergy and other ordained clergy?
24. Does ordination create or nurture a sense of community and collegiality distinct from the sense of community among all clergy? Should it?
25. If someone said to you, “Remember your ordination and be thankful,” what would your reaction be?
26. How would your ministry be different if you were licensed rather than ordained?
27. As a member of the congregation attending an ordination rather than as the one being ordained, how have you experienced God’s presence and action in the service? What could make an ordination service more meaningful to you as an attender?
28. In what ways has or could an ordination service other than your own allow you to make a recommitment to your ordination vows?

DEMOGRAPHICS

29. Please make a note of: gender, racial/ethnic background, age and whether they consider themselves highly liturgical, moderately liturgical or non-liturgical so that we can evaluate the impact of these differences on views of ordination.

APPENDIX FOUR

CONSENT FORM

You are being asked to volunteer to take part in a research study in the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church (EPA) by participating as the subject of an interview with a member of the research team. It is important that you read and understand the information on this form.

Purpose and expected benefits of study

The goal of the study is to identify ways to maximize the spiritual impact of the service of ordination both for those coming to be ordained and for those previously ordained. By collecting remembrances of previous services and expectations of those coming for ordination, a service may be created that is meaningful to those who are coming to be ordained but also helps those previously ordained to remember their ordination, to celebrate their place in the order, and to be strengthened for the work of ministry

Use of Research Result

The results may provide direction for the preparation of future Services of Ordination, as well as providing guidance in ways to assist active clergy in finding strength and support for the challenges of ministry by remembering their own call to ministry and ordination. The results will be written up and published as a Doctor of Ministry project through the Drew Theological Seminary of Drew University, Madison, NJ.

Description Of The Study:

The purpose of the study is to identify the spiritual impact of ordination on an individual and their ministry by exploring common themes, images and language that occurs as pastors anticipate or remember their ordination. Information gathered will also be used in the writing of the 2011 Service of Ordination for annual conference. The time frame for this study as follows:

Collecting data: January 10, 2011 – June 15, 2011

Writing of a daily devotional the 2011 Service of Ordination: March-April, 2011

Publication of daily devotional: May 1 – May 18, 2011

Service of Ordination: May 20, 2011

Writing up findings; July, 2011-April, 2012

Interviews will be conducted with 25-50 people who have been ordained or have been commissioned and are working toward ordination. Interviews, lasting 45-75 minutes, will be conducted during January and February by members of the research team. Questions will invite participants to share memories and/or expectations of their own ordination, responses to other ordination services attended, and reflections on the impact of ordination on their ministry and life. At the 2011 Service of Ordination, all clergy present will be asked to complete a simple survey giving feedback on reaction to the service. Study participants who are willing be asked to participate in a follow-up survey after the service to reflect on its effectiveness.

Interviews may be recorded with permission of the participant. If not recorded, notes will be taken. No individually identifying information will be kept with notes, and only voice will be identifiable on recordings which will be kept confidential. Tapes and notes will be kept with initials only; names will be maintained in a separate file. Surveys will be completely anonymous, with only general demographic data collected.

Persons asked to participate in the study will include those coming for ordination in 2011, those who were commissioned in 2010, and a selection of ordained persons with varying tenures as ordained clergy. In addition, several bishops and leaders of the Board of Ordained Ministry will be asked to complete interviews, as well as persons who were ordained at one time but have surrendered their credentials.

The data from the interviews will be used to develop a daily devotional to be e-mailed to all conference clergy from May 1 through May 18, to assist them in preparing for the 2011 Service of Ordination. The data will also be used in the writing of the 2011 Service of Ordination, seeking to create a service which is meaningful both to those coming for ordination as well as those who were previously ordained.

Your Rights

1. You are not required to take part in this study: Your participation is entirely voluntary.
2. You may request to be interviewed by a member of the committee other than the District Superintendent.
3. You can refuse to participate now or you can withdraw from the study at anytime after giving your consent. This will not interfere with your appointment, if active clergy, or with your pension, if retired.
4. There will be no cost to you for this study done as part of a research.
5. There will be no risk in this study.
6. For questions about the study contact: Bronwyn Yocum 610-246-5275
7. You will not receive any payment for your participation in this study.
8. A copy of your consent form will be maintained on file.

Authorization To Use Interview Results

1. Images, stories, and language from the interviews may be used without identifying characteristics in reporting the results of the interviews in writing up the research. If stories to be used contain identifying information, additional permission will be sought before using them.
2. With your signature below, you will authorize the disclosure of interview information upon request, to the Rev. Dr. Heather Murray Elkins, Sr. Kathleen

- Flood and the Drew Theological Seminary review committee. The only identifier link to your study data that would be shared is your initials.
3. You have the right to see and copy any of the information gathered about you, but not until the study is complete.
 4. You also have the right to withdraw these permissions at any time by providing a written request to Bronwyn Yocum, 2336 S. 9th Street, Unit 3, Allentown, PA 18103. When you withdraw your permission, no new information that might identify you will be gathered after that date.
 5. Your refusal to sign this Authorization will not affect your appointment, your salary, your approval for ordination or your pension, if retired.
 6. All notes and audio tapes will be kept confidential. Materials will be maintained by the principal investigator, Bronwyn Yocum, in a locked venue. No identifying information will be released without obtaining prior authorization from the participant.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANT'S RIGHTS:

- The study was explained to me and all of my questions were answered.
- It has been explained to me that I do not have to take part in this study.
- I may withdraw from this study at any time.
- The results of this study may be published.
- I voluntarily consent to participate in this study.
- I authorize the use of my non-identifiable information as described in this form.
- I may request a signed copy of this document for my records.
- I have the contact information if I have questions at a later date.

In case of questions regarding the study, I can call: Bronwyn Yocum, principal investigator, 610-246-5275

CONSENT: *My signature below indicates that I have read and understood this consent document and had ample opportunity to ask questions. (Check each statement below that applies.)*

_____ ***I have voluntarily agreed to participate in this research project.***

SIGNATURES	PRINTED NAME	DATE SIGNED
Subject:		
Person Obtaining Consent:		

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What questions should I ask before volunteering to take part in a research study?

- Who is doing this study and what questions might it answer?
- Who reviewed or approved this study?
- What are the procedures and measurements for the study?
- How long will this study last?
- If I decide to participate in this study is there any risk?
- Will I be charged anything or paid anything to be in this study?
- Who will be told I am taking part in this study? What information will they receive?
- What happens after the study ends?
- Will I be told the results of the study?
- How do I end my participation in this study if I change my mind?
- What other options or choices do I have if I decide not to take part in this study?
- Whom do I contact for questions and information about the study?

What if I do not want to take part in a research study?

- If you decide to take part in a study, you do so as a VOLUNTEER. This means YOU decide.
- If anyone asks you to take part in this study, you have the right to say “no.”
- Your decision will not affect your appointability, ordination status or pension.
- You can change your mind and leave a research study at any time without risk or loss.

APPENDIX 5
ORIGINAL SURVEY RESULTS

Since most of the surveys were completed on-line (with the exception of the Ordination Service Night Survey), all responses have been printed as submitted, including errors in spelling and grammar.

1. How many ordination services have you attended?

	Percent Response	Number of Responses
1-2	1.2%	1
3-10	45.9%	78
11-20	26.5%	45
More than 20	26.5%	45

2. How regularly do you attend ordination?

	Percent Response	Number of Responses
Almost always	33.5%	57
Frequently	34.7%	59
Rarely	28.2%	48
Never	3.5%	6

3. What is your understanding of what ordination means? Check up to three.

	Percent Response	Number of Responses
Fulfillment of God's call upon an individual	42.4%	72
The community's affirmation of an individual's call	71.8%	122
The conferring of authority by the bishop/conference	74.7%	127
The individual's culminating "yes" to God's call	29.4%	50
Credentialing	21.8%	37
A call from the baptized community to serve the baptized community	10.0%	17

Equipping by the church for a specific ministry/service	12.9%	22
A hoop to jump through	1.8%	3
A call from the baptized community to serve beyond the church	3.5%	6
Reception of the Holy Spirit as empowerment for ministry	25.9%	44
Other		12

OTHER:

a continuing process of God's calling
a continuing process of God's calling
it is being set apart for ministry. the person is no longer the same.
The setting apart of an individual for ministry THROUGH the Church.
For Some reason, your engine would not accept my "clicks"
Connection with those who have gone before in ordination and ministry
a means of grace through which the Holy Spirit calls, affirms, confirms, edifies and empowers the ordained and other participants
Communal ceremony marking a significant spiritual direction
A call to serve Church and community
confirmation of God's call, recognized by authorities and the Body.
being set apart for leadership in the body of Christ
A gift from God to the Church

4. Remembering your own ordination service, what parts of the service were most meaningful to you? Check up to three.

	Percent Response	Number of Responses
Written liturgy and worship order	9.0%	15
Processional	16.3%	27
Prayers	4.8%	8
Scripture/readings	4.2%	7
Sermon	21.1%	35
Hymns/music	20.5%	34
Presentation of the candidates for ordination	10.8%	18

The liturgical space	6.0%	10
The laying on of hands	88.6%	147
The invocation of the Holy Spirit upon the ordinand	44.6%	74
The bishop's charge to "take authority"	56.6%	94
The recessional	0.6%	1
I don't remember	1.2%	2
Other		19

OTHER

It was not a United Methodist Ordination Service
Yoking with retiring clergy - I received a stole from the Elder who led me through the Candidacey Workbook. My ordination at the same Conference where he retired was deeply meaningful to me.
the time to kneel in prayer before my turn
Sense of connection with other ordinands and members of conference
colleagues standing for me, my standing for others
Ceremony is not what clicks for me. My head understands it's social and even theological value.
washing of feet
The Liturgy from the Book of Worship
call to ministry at the end where people in the congregation could come forward
Being surrounded by clergy and laity whom I respected and admired in a space (Albright Chapel) that was meaningful.
very difficult to select only three! - ALL of it!
looking the bishop in the eye
For Deacon's orders loved being a part of the AME ordination at the Philadelphia Convention Center in 1987
Passing of the stole from retired clergy to new ordinands
the entire congregation joined hands in a circle around the sanctuary as clergy and others laid hands on me.
support of family, local church friends, and sponsors
I have not been ordained yet
I would check almost all of these for my own experience

In NY Annual Conf rec. communion set: told after service to perform Com. well. Over the years this charge has taken on meaning.

5. Which section was the most important to you? Choose only one.

	Percent Response	Number of Responses
Written liturgy and worship order	0.0%	0
Processional	0.0%	0
Prayers	0.0%	0
Scripture/readings	0.6%	1
Sermon	3.0%	5
Hymns/music	1.8%	3
Presentation of the candidates for ordination	0.6%	1
The liturgical space	1.2%	2
The laying on of hands	61.1%	102
The invocation of the Holy Spirit upon the ordinand	15.0%	25
The bishop's charge to "take authority"	15.6%	26
The recessional	0%	0
I don't remember	1.2%	2
Other		5

OTHER

Laying on of hands and bishop's charge are similar to me
This was later amplified, when Bishop weaver gave me a parting hug and told me to make things happen in my new appointment.
The INDIVIDUAL laying on of hands
i do not remember anything important happening
friends and family from through my life were present-- my sunday school teacher from when i was 4 thru others.

6. How did you experience the laying on of hands at your ordination? Check up to three.

	Percent Response	Number of Responses
The Holy Spirit was empowering me at that moment	40.4%	67
The hands were the hands of Christ upon me	19.3%	32
The hands were the hands of the community upon me	34.3%	57
The hands represented the universal church in all times and places	27.7%	46
The hands welcomed me as a fellow clergy member of the annual conference	23.5%	39
The hands welcomed me into the order of elders or deacons	18.7%	31
I was being connected to the apostolic faith and the apostolic witness through the ages	46.4%	77
The hands were an expression of support, blessing and love	38.0%	63
I don't remember	0.6%	1
Other		13

OTHER

the weight of responsibility
Maybe you can explain why I can type in this box, but cannot click any of your questions
Affirmation of my calling
hands of the bishop were heavy and conveyed authority, responsibility, and trust
a powerful moment when Christ's Body, the Spirit, and myself all agreed with God's call on my life.
The hands represented shared responsibility for carrying forward the work of Christ in the church.
I never put it into words and can't find words now...
the pretense of the heirarchy felt especially present
affirmation of the community
The Holy Spirit was present and empowering
have not been ordained

All of the above. I felt unusual extra weight when the bishop laid hands on me.
The hands were an affirmation of my call and personhood

7. Did you feel or sense that something special was happening at your ordination?

	Percent Response	Number of Responses
Yes	90.0%	153
No	4.7%	8
Maybe, I'm not sure	4.7%	8
I don't remember	0.6%	1

8. If you answered yes or maybe to Number 7, what do you think was happening at your ordination that made it special? Check up to three.

	Percent Response	Number of Responses
I was receiving a big responsibility	24.7%	37
The Holy Spirit was empowering and blessing me	56.0%	84
The Holy Spirit was blessing the gathered community	10.0%	15
I was joining the ministry of Jesus Christ through the church	33.3%	50
The community of those gathered represented the universal Church in blessing me in ministry	30.7%	46
Family and friends were gathered to celebrate a milestone in my ministry	30.7%	46
I was joining the covenant community of elders or deacons	32.7%	49
I was joining the community of conference clergy members	8.7%	13
There was a connection with the apostolic faith and apostolic witness of the Church through the ages	44.0%	66
Other		12

OTHER

I have been retired for almost 10 years, and have not gone to Conference since
The privilege of being set apart as a servant of God/ a co-laborer with Christ.
Confirmation of a 9 year journey in which God's presence was evident.
My call was affirmed by the community
This was a public confession of my call to ministry and the Church receiving/affirming that role/gift/calling
affirmation & acceptance of me, commitment by me
milestone of committing my life to sacramental ministry
I was completing a process based on my call to pursue the ministry of Word, Order, Sacrament in the Church, but I also understood the journey in this capacity was only just beginning.
Take Thou Authority took on the meaning of Authority deep within rather than over against.. the authority I was taking was the authority of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
I was making a commitment to Word, Sacrament & Order
I felt my life narrative was now continuing to be subsumed in a much larger narrative of which the clergy who sponsored me, the other ordinands who were ordained with me and the church(es) I would serve would be a part
The mantle was passed

9. Who are the four most important actors in the service of ordination? Chose 1 for the most important through 4 for the 4th most important.

	Most Important	Second	Third	Fourth	Average	Response Count
Bishop	15.4 % (22)	53.8% (77)	20.3% (29)	10.5% (15)	2.26	143
Cabinet	0	4.5% (1)	40.9% (9)	54.5% (12)	3.50	22
Sponsors	1.4 % (1)	16.2% (12)	51.4% (38)	31.1% (23)	3.12	74
Holy Spirit	91.0% (122)	5.2% (7)	1.5% (2)	2.2% (3)	1.15	134
Board of Ordained Ministry	0	18.2% (2)	45.5% (5)	36.4% (4)	3.18	11
Conference leaders	0	0.0% (0)	50.0% (2)	50.0% (2)	3.50	4

The ordinand	13.5% (12)	42.7% (38)	19.1% (17)	24.7% (22)	2.55	89
Family and friends	0	10.8% (7)	38.5% (25)	50.8% (33)	3.40	65
Other clergy	0	11.4% (4)	42.9% (15)	45.7% (16)	3.34	35
The gathered community	7.6% (5)	19.7% (13)	28.8% (19)	43.9% (29)	3.09	66
Other						5

OTHER

Is anyone else having difficulty responding to this?
Collegial class of ordinands
My answers may reflect theological ambivalence
Father
For me, personally, the Holy Spirit was present in the people chooses above

10. Thinking of your own ordination, what physical object or tangible item comes to mind? Is there special meaning in that item? If so, please describe.

I received a Bible from the Board of Ordained Ministry as well as a stole. When I wear the stole or read from the gift Bible I recall my Ordination.
handmade stole
Hands--as they reached out to me in caring and accepfnace.
Stole - emblem of pastoral authority. The old Wesley Bible - a link to the historic witness of the church. Laying on of hands - umbroken apostolic annointment and authority going back to Jesus
Wesley Covenant given by Bishop Ault. A stole would have been awesome.
A Cross and flame my father made me.
The wearing of the Minister's Gown - from that moment on, every time I wore the gown, it reminded me of the sigificance of my Ordination.
The Wesley Bible and the stole that I received.
Wesley Chalice
I recieved a stole from the conference which I still use.

The laying on of hands and the stole being placed on me.
The anointing oil
presence of officiants, friends, family
The giving of the Bible. Being responsible for the precious Gospel of Christ.
The stole. As both a mantle of the "authority" as well as a yoke of partnership with God and with the community of faith.
The Ordination Service
The Bible< It's God's Word and my instructions
The gift of a handmade stole placed around my neck. The yoke of Christ. The stole has been a special symbol throughout my ministry.
The Bible I received. It was a nice gift, which I appreciated, although it held no particularly powerful meaning for me.
Communion chalice -- It reminds me that I am joined with those who help to keep Christ's presence and memory alive in the community of faith.
The building itself - the Valley Forge Conference Center. To me it was very important that the ordination was held in a public space rather than within the walls of a church building. It was an important symbolism that ordination was a calling to serve the world beyond the walls of the church, not the church in isolation from the world.
I still use the Bible that I received.
Kneeling alone with the hands of authority and community upon you
The hymn: A charge to Keep I have and the laying on of hands by the Bishop and clergy
The Book of Worship which was inscribed and signed by the Bishop
Stall
n/a
Handmade stole I was given by the Conference
The red stole
Stole
The Asbury Bible
The prayer of John Wesley - Our Covenant - that the Bishop gave us.
Gift of a stole made for ordinands

The stole - I held off wearing stoles until after ordination though a number of them had been given to me as presents over the years of my commissioning. My parishioners were gracious enough to understand my desire to wait and as promised I wore them in the weeks following ordination.
None
The community of persons who were there
Asbury Bible, Bishop's Crook, Vestments History, Authority, Vocation
A stole I received from my husband as a gift. He took the time in choosing it and went out of his way to make sure I got it on time.
A chalice that my mentor gave to me
The kneeling bench
Kneeling with the laying on of hands by the Bishop and sponsors.
footwashing by bishop
The Stole
Stole given as a gift.
Wesley's Chalice
The historical Bible that was used to impart the authority to preach the Word, and the Wesley Chalice giving authority to celebrate sacraments
Stole
Bible with my name inscribed to share the words with the world in and out of the church sanctuary
The Bible presented from the Bishop.
The kneelers, always the kneelers. The first one while I was waiting and the second one when I was ordained.
Asbury Bible
The kneeler, representing submission and prayer.
Bible I was given, which I chose to have opened to Isaiah 40 when I was given "authority to read the Word"
The Bible

THE WESLEY BIBLE, WHICH SPOKE TO ME OF CONTINUITY
The Francis Asbury Bible. It was a tangible connection to the United Methodist Church in the United States.
The stole. It symbolized my being yoked with Christ in a mutual/covenant ministry.
Wesley Chalice; Asbury Bible; Stole
stole in addition to servanthood made by nun so link to wider community and shared by peers as those in previous classes also shared identical stoles
Placing of my hand on the Asbury Bible, Which places the context of ordination beyond the particular place and the symbol that I am not the most important character in "The Philadelphia Conference."
The Bible that was given to me by the Bishop.
I received a hand made ordination stall as a symbol for my ordination experience. It is among the holiest items I own.
Stole. I often wear my hand-made stole reminding me of journey and identity. (It also means I don't have to think liturgical fashion/color/coordination at that moment ;-)
Receiving a stole - our stoles were hand made by a nun who also designed them. It is significant because thought and love went into the gift and every time I wear it I am brought back to the day of ordination.
Wesley's Chalice
None
The Bible I received. It is a special reminder of this ministry that I have been called to.
my ordination stole; I wear it on Pentecost and at subsequent ordinations because I connect it with my empowerment by the Spirit to be in the order of elders.
The stole I received remains the single most important object to me. To me it symbolizes both a yoking with Christ and the yoke of authority and responsibility conferred not only by the Annual Conference but the church at large.
Wesley Chalice/Asbury Bible
The person who was ordained elder with me. We have a connection that will never end.
At the time of my ordination we were given an ordination stole that marked, not just ordination, but was special to that year. I treasure that stole to this day.
Nothing

Wesley Bible
Bible...the meaning being the call to preaching the Word.
The cross necklace my parents gave me that has 5 loaves and 2 fish. I usually wear whenever I preach.
The altar where we kneel is very powerful. I felt the presence of the Holy Spirit around me. The altar was symbolic to kneeling before the Lord because God's presence was all over me when knelt down for the laying of hands.
I received a Bible, which was a guide and support in ministry. I also recall the weight of all the hands on my head, which symbolizes the weight of responsibility in ministry.
Stole presented to me.... I don't wear a robe or stole any more... It has sentimental value, primarily.
Field House
The stole given to me signifying being yoked to the Ministry of the Church of Jesus Christ and the United Methodist Church
The stole, as a mark of ordained and appointed service.
Communion
The Bible and chalice from St. George's
Stole. At that time, stole was not given by Annual Conference, so was gift from my family
The stole that I received - it's a beautiful Pentecost stole
The awe inspiring space at Grove City College's chapel.
The engraved Bible given me at my Deacon's ordination, the stole given at my Elder's ordination
Hands being placed on head
the stole, together with "take authority". Something strange happened then. I can't explain it, but up until then, the ritual was just an obligated function
The bible and the chalice that J. Wesley gave to Asbury. It expresses continuity not only in the faith, but in our denomination. Wow!
The Bible; it was an affirmation of the calling on my life.
Receiving the hand made stole at Elders ordination is still an blessing to me 21 years later.
The stole that was given me, and its significance
Red stole

The congregation i was serving gave me a communion set for use in visitation. i use it 11 years later
Putting the stole around my shoulders
The stole that was given to me, and the symbol of the "yoke" that it represents.
Bishop Corson gave me my first clergy shirt.
BIBLE that was given to us during the ordination, representing the centrality and power of God's Word in our ministry.
Bishop's gift of a Wesleyan Prayer and Devotional Guide with a note on the inside cover (in his handwriting) from II Timothy 1:6 "I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands". Bishop Dixon, SW Texas Conference, 1992.
The unique (to my class) stole presented to me.
The Bible open to a scripture passage of my choosing.
The placing of the stole on me.
My Stole which I still wear at the ordination of others and on Pentecost
Rhe weight of the laying on of hands: unforgettable symbol of the magnitude of the ordained task, and the unlimited power of the Holy Spirit for the task
The stole, symbolizing the responsibility and blessing given and accepted.
The Asbury Bible carried the tradition of the first conference through to my ordination. Where would US Methodism be without Francis Asbury?
I was permitted to use my own stole created as part of my M.Div. ministry project, which represented my theology, faith, and ministry.
The Bible and chalice
Bible - continuing the good news of God from the ages past into the present to be ongoing in the future.
The robe given me by my clergy sponsor. It was a meaningful symbol of pastoral ministry given me by my pastoral mentor which I still use, a reminder of the tradition in which I now stood!
The stole at my elder ordination and the Bible at my deacon ordination
The stole I received. Always a memory of my ordination and serves as an affirmation of my calling.
The Wesley Bible
Placing a hand on the Bible, then afterwards having the stole placed on my shoulders
The stole - being yoked to Christ - AND the Framed and mounted John Westly "Covenant Prayer" given to us by the Bishop.

The preacher - Fred Craddock - comes to mind. The sermon was moving.
Wesley Chalice, a symbol of the sacramental ministry of the ordained and a tangible connection to the Wesleyan tradition
<p>This image took a while to come, but it would be the cross with the image of Christ nailed there with his arms outstretched. I can't remember which book, but Annie Dillard tells the story of a large ice sheet floating toward the North Pole.</p> <p>Those floating on the ice sheet are all the misfits she's observed in church over the years, including herself. All are floating toward the North Pole;</p> <p>If I'm remembering correctly, she's strapped down to the ice, and there's nothing that any of them can do about it. When I sit behind the pulpit each Sunday, I glance at the large wooden cross behind me and imagine Christ there with his arms outstretched and all of us "misfits" floating toward the North Pole and there's not a thing we can do about it.</p>
Laying hands on the Bible
The laying on of hands.
Wesley's chalice
The Stole
The hand-made stole. It's personalized and aesthetically beautiful.
Bishop's staff--not important to me Asbury/Wesley Bible--not important to me Stoll--hand made, very nice and representing elder role was meaningful
Receiving the stole
The Kneeling pad
Receiving the hand made stole
Ordination Bible
None
The stole
Kneeler, Bible, stole
The use of Asbury's Bible as a tangible sign of my connection to our rich evangelical heritage and to my father's and uncle's ordination.
The stole I received
My stoll that I received at ordination.
The gathered community. It represented "a cloud of witnesses," a connection with the saints past, present and future.
Bible

No

11. Which word best describes ordination to you?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Somber	3.1%	5
Serious	3.7%	6
Joyful	14.9%	24
Awe	15.5%	25
Inspiring	17.4%	28
Spiritual	13.0%	21
Boring	1.2%	2
Celebratory	21.1%	34
Moving	6.2%	10
Obligatory	3.7%	6
Other		8

OTHER

Well, looking at the choices above, it was indeed somber, yet joyful
Awe inspiring except the sermon which was a great boring disappointment - I was hoping to be inspired by the sermon and instead received a message full of cliches.
Joyfully somber (it was a great gift and obligation)
The call & journey are spiritual, celebratory, joyful, moving..!. the ceremony is not.
The music was celebratory and wonderful!, yet, at times it was serious, spiritual, awesome. Nover boring or obligatory.
Covenant
Empowering
I personally would rather have been ordained in my home church in front of my own congregation and then later introduced with the other ordinands at Annual Conference. Then again, I'm an introvert.

12. At ordination services other than your own, did you feel you were a participant in the service?

Response Percent

Response Count

Yes	82.6%	133
No	17.4%	28

13. At services you have attended other than your own, what parts of the service made you feel like the gathered assembly was fully participating and a part of the ordination service? Please choose three and rank them 1 to 3, with 1 being most fully participating.

	1	2	3	Average	Count
Witnessing the laying on of hands	55.0% (55)	28.8% (28)	16.0% (16)	1.63	100
Participating in the liturgy through responses	29.3% (24)	29.3% (24)	34.1% (28)	2.20	82
Hymns/songs	28.6% (20)	37.1% (26)	28.6% (20)	2.11	70
Reading of scripture	26.7% (4)	33.3% (5)	40.0% (6)	2.13	15
Prayers	27.0% (10)	35.1% (13)	35.1% (13)	2.14	37
Offering	20.0% (2)	30.0% (3)	40.0% (4)	2.40	10
Sermon	9.3% (4)	41.9% (18)	39.5% (17)	2.49	43
Standing in prayer for someone being ordained.	41.0% (48)	38.5% (45)	17.9% (21)	1.82	117
Attending the service as a witness to ordination	23.3% (17)	26.0% (19)	41.1% (30)	2.37	73
Participating in the altar call for those desiring to renew their commitment	9.5% (2)	28.6% (6)	52.4% (11)	2.62	21

14. How does ordination connect to your call to ministry? Choose one.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Ordination was a fulfillment of my call	13.6%	22
Ordination was one step in a continuous process of living out my call	44.4%	72
Ordination was a necessary hoop to go through in order to do what I was called to do	1.2%	2

Ordination provided spiritual empowerment for responding to my call	14.8%	24
Ordination gave me the authority I needed to do what I was called to do	25.9%	42
Other		4

OTHER

It is the symbol of call, response and "sending forth"
The community witness assured me that I would have the encouragement, support and accountability needed to fulfill my call
We used to joke that when ordained as an elder, we were ordained to a pension fund.
Ordination was a gift that marked a mutual commitment to the work of living out God's calling

15. In your own experience, how has ordination connected to your experience of ministry? Choose one.

	Response Percent	Response Count
Ordination was a ceremony that had little to do with my actual ministry	5.8%	9
Remembering my ordination gives me encouragement to continue in difficult times	18.2%	28
My ordination was a source of authority and power	24.0%	37
Ordination was a reminder of the support of the covenant community of the order of elders or deacons	20.8%	32
Ordination was a spiritual experience that uplifts me for the challenges of ministry	24.0%	37
Ordination is something I reflect on regularly, remembering it and giving thanks	7.1%	11
Other		13

OTHER

Reminder of being a part of the legacy line of elders
It was a source of affirmation of call and empowerment to duty
Power from the Holy Spirit
It was a spiritual experience of God's presence and goodness which continually reminds me of my call
Ordination was for me like a nun taking her final vows, I am committed to this/I choose this life for God
Bishop Corson's private address to the class colored my practice of pastoral care.
Ordination was a sign and connection between my call and God's human agency the church
Ordination was filled with meaning for me, but most of all it was a turning point from preparation to full participation in the work and ministry of the church of Jesus Christ.
primarily a good memory of being in 'community,' being accepted, a part of things.
I would choose all but the first one. All are vital to me.
Ordination reminds me of the community of support i have outside of elders and deacons.
Sacramental. Years ago FTLP and LP did not share the same sacramental credentialing they often do now.
Ordination was/is a defining moment, yet remembrance of the service has little impact upon my current ministry

16. Please use the space below to share specific memories of your ordination service or of other ordination services you have attended.

<p>It was incredibly powerful. Ira Zepp, an amazing professor and clergy from the Baltimore-Washington Conference laid hands on me. I think about his commitment to justice and my connection to him and am so grateful for that experience. Bishop Yeakel and the community gathered embodied the power of the Holy Spirit who was now calling me to serve Christ in word, order, and sacrament. It was and still is a very powerful event for me.</p>

<p>At my Ordination I was touched by the congregation's response, where they fond me and the other candidates worthy of ordination. Also the Bishop laying his hands on my head while saying, "Take thou authority..."</p>
<p>The altar callseeing someone respond who had been in my prayers and affirming their call.</p>
<p>The presiding Bishop at my ordination had his secretary give me a book after the ceremony inscribed with "Congratulations from the office of the Bishop", no signature. I always wondered if I was to thank his desk or credenza for the book, since there was nothing marking it as from a person.</p>
<p>Bishop's laying on of hands, father's presence, (also an elder) and witness by family. Other ordinations... when I was a "sponsor".</p>
<p>I remember rising up and praying "Dear God what did I just do? I just became a servant!" But I also felt the ordination verified and affirm that I had authority to be a pastor and it all wasn't just in my mind.</p>
<p>The inward feeling and hush of the holy moment within my self and reflect by those present.</p>
<p>The feeling of being set apart was both uplifting and frightening.</p>
<p>Sorry, but I don't have anything outstanding to share, except the excitement of it all</p>
<p>There was great "power" and meaning when, in addition to the Bishop, others laid hands on me. That sense of commissioning was empowering and enjoining.</p>
<p>I have always felt the Spirit of God during these services, all clergy sholud be in attanance if possible</p>
<p>I have appreciated sponsoring candidates for ordination.</p>
<p>I found it most meaningful that Bishop Morrison chose to wash the feet of the ordinands.</p>
<p>I remember loving my ordination service, but I don't remember many details (guess it was too long ago).</p>
<p>On the evening following the service of my ordination, the Rev Mark Kroehler, retired elder, introduced himself to me as the pastor who baptized me. It was a powerful moment of the affirmation of God's steady love!</p>
<p>the feeling of both the weight (laying on of hands) as both a reality and a symbol</p>
<p>It was held in a gymnasium rather than in a church</p>
<p>I was ordained at the convention center at Oaks. The location was a huge detriment. It was so ugly and there wasn't any type of worship space decoration.</p>
<p>I was told by an elder that when the Bishop laid hands on me they remembered their own ordination for the first time in years, by my father that he was suddenly struck by the Holy Spirit in a way he could not understand, and by a layperson at one of my former churches that he heard a call to ministry reaffirmed.</p>

<p>One of the hymns sung at my ordination service was 'Lord, You Have Come to the Lakeshore", that was my dad's favorite song. He died in 1981, and I miss him every day, but singing that hymn, I knew he was there with me.</p>
<p>The force of the hands on my head was a significant reminder of those who stand by me, both in joyful times and in difficult ones.</p>
<p>Sadly, both my deacon's & elder's ordination were not conducted in sacred spaces (churches), but public spaces (convention center & field house). There was little effort to alter those spaces for the ordination service. Also, the liturgy was made up & did not follow any pattern from the historical church, nor UM liturgy. There was more confusion, than ceremony. The institutional church (a member in full connection to the Conference) was lifted up as being more important Word, Sacrament, & Order. My ordinations were genuine disappointments. Having said all of that, I believe that the Board of Ordained Ministry & the bishops have made tremendous strides over the past several years to "do" ordination better. I thank God for that!</p>
<p>My husband's pride and joy in the experience</p>
<p>Bishop Susan Morrison-I miss her very much.</p>
<p>I remember the solemn nature of the service, something that is missing in some more recent services I have attended. It is joyful, not giddy or hilarious.</p>
<p>Mine: support and encouragement</p>
<p>Here I Am Lord was the hymn that was sung as I left altar and each time I hear it since then, I go back to that time and place and that very special event of my spiritual journey</p>
<p>It was at an Annual Conference service of ordination that I received the call to ordained ministry.</p>
<p>Attending others ordination service reminds me of my ordination service.</p>
<p>Bishop Ault's message. The power of the laying on of hands!</p>
<p>The powerful emotion I experienced in the laying on of hands. The support and love of my parents both with their presence at my ordination and their presentation of a Bible to me right after the service of ordination.</p>
<p>The song sung by soloist has often been a highlight - Sue Coe, Lydia Munoz, and others.</p>
<p>having members of the church I was serving attend was significant. My parents pastor drove them to the service again a link to the wider church have been</p>
<p>I want to use this space to state that I believe we owe our ordinands a professionally conducted service with strong preaching and music.</p>
<p>Kneeling before the Lord, I felt His hands upon me as the Bishop and sponsors laid hands on me sending me on my journey of ministry.</p>

<p>Walking up to the chancel area with my sponsors was awe filled. I chose my sponsors with care and I felt supported and joyful by their presence.</p>
<p>At two different ordination services early in my journey--both at Tindley Temple--I powerfully experienced God calling me into ordained ministry. Those services were probably even more moving for me than my own actual ordination.</p>
<p>I was six months' pregnant and had to be helped up after I knelt! I also recall another ordination where Fred Craddock preached THE most moving sermon I've ever heard and I have replayed the cassette tape many times through the years to remind me why I am doing what I have been doing.</p>
<p>Bishop Morrison gathered with us privately before the service to celebrate Holy Communion. Fred Craddock preached the sermon. Since he was one of the persons whose sermons and books I was required to read during my seminary experience this was very meaningful to me. The music was outstanding, both the hymns and the superb choir from the Bala Cynwyd Church. Some people objected to the site (the Scottish Rite Cathedral) but to provided an large auditorium that was comfortable, had convenient parking, and afforded all in attendance a view of the proceedings. All in all my ordination was an awesome experience in which I experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit because of the Order of Worship, all things that were included in it and the people who were a part of it.</p>
<p>I remember how humbled I felt as I knelt that day and the great responsibility that was placed in my hands to care for and lead God's people. I remember the Bishop placing hands upon my head and feeling unworthy to be called to lead God's people, preside over the sacraments and and preach God's word. Yet, there was no doubt ever that I had been called.</p>
<p>As a DS I participated in leadership at the Ordination services during my term. It reinforced my expeience that this is the inmost shrine of worship after Holy Communion.</p>
<p>I had the priviledge to sit with a friend who had been held back a year for elder's orders. I had been specifically asked to take on the task. Then the following year I was even more priviledged to stand and pray when this person was ordained. Both events were very moving.</p>
<p>Touching the Asbury Bible was a true connection to the history of our denomination. And the Bishop saying "Take thou authority ..." has remained with in tough times.</p>
<p>Being 8 months pregnant at the time....there was a feeling of new birth of me as a minister and of a child soon to be born who was being "ordained" with me in a sense.</p>
<p>One of the participants (not one of my sponsors) in the laying on of hands who I did not know well wrote me a letter afterward thanking me for the privilege he had to participate in that special moment and that was very inspiring, encouraging and made me feel very special.</p>
<p>I was so overjoyed sharing the moment with my mother who traveled all the way Africa to be there for me and I shared the moment with all present. It was very uplifting and special moment and will remember that experience always give thanks to God.</p>

<p>I recall one Ordination service about ten years ago when there was a palpable sense of the Holy Spirit moving in the church (Arch Street?) Music, message, liturgy, and witness to the acts of Ordination all were just amazing. I don't think that can be planned for, although all the elements had been carefully planned. More than any other, including my own, I remember that service as one of the most moving services of worship I have ever attended. The Holy Spirit was certainly present in that place and at that time. And I was not alone in sensing that Holy Presence.</p>
<p>The laying on of hands was a powerful moment in my life, and hearing the words of the bishop, "Take thou the authority of an elder in the church ..." was almost overwhelming.</p>
<p>I don't process or sit with the clergy... I am more comfortable and more connected just being a member of the congregation than having to robe and march in. Unless I know someone being ordained, I often leave after the sermon, or I don't attend at all. The presence of other clergy (and people in general) who are there because they 'should be' doesn't add anything to the service for me. I have no idea who did not attend my ordination service, and that doesn't matter to me in the least. It doesn't mean they don't care or aren't supportive. So, as I "don't attend or leave early," I fully give others permission to do that when I retire... when I'm remembered in the memorial service, etc. The people who want to be and are able will be there, and that's good. :-)</p>
<p>The sense of being connected to the ministry of the universal church. The support of clergy colleagues. The sense of affirmation from the Bishop.</p>
<p>I celebrate that my ordination service was at Tindley Temple and it was on John Wesley's birthday (June 17). The service itself did not go terribly smoothly and was not particularly inspiring, but in a way that made me reflect on GOD'S part in ordination more than "man's". I didn't feel particularly "different" afterwards, but I value the event and the process.</p>
<p>Support of clergy and family</p>
<p>My ordination took place in a large "barn" of space which was not conducive to the liturgy. I believe such a service should always be conducted within the confines of a church regardless of the number of seats.</p>
<p>Mine was so long ago. The sermon was totally inappropriate to a class that included a women (I was the only one), as the language was not inclusive and at least half the sermon spoke to the wives who were to help their clergy husbands in their work. Thankfully, times has changed.</p>
<p>When the Bishop placed his hands on me, I had a strong sense of connection to the "communion of saints."</p>
<p>Mostly I remember them being very hot and so crowded not everyone could sit. This is why I and many clergy only attend if we are involved as sponsors of a candidate.</p>
<p>For me, there is nothing greater than hearing strong voices join together in hymn and song, praising the Lord! And something does happen when the Bishop and others lay hands ... I cannot describe it - it is the Holy Spirit empowering me for service. I do not take it lightly and as I watch others become ordained, I pray for them and I rejoice with them. Participating renews my own covenant with the Lord.</p>

<p>My most moving experiences of ordination services have been in protesting them relative to the barring of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people from ordination</p>
<p>One specific memory that stands out for me is the procession of other clergy in support of the ordinands. This was affirming and moving.</p>
<p>I was not ordained with the members of the probationer class I started with and that was a disappointment for me. However I was welcomed into the class by several of those who I was ordained with.</p>
<p>I remember the moment of laying on of hands vividly. I knew the Bishop personally, and her instruction to Take Thou Authority has been one of the most important moments in my ministry. I loved my ordination.</p>
<p>I appreciated not being ordained in the UMC as I was able to design my own service with hymns, scripture and clergy that had specific meaning to me. I also feel i was able to involve the local church and people beyond clergy in ways that i have not witnessed at UMC ordinations</p>
<p>Mark Miller provided music that was uplifting and appropriate to folks who respond to different worship styles. The multi-media was the best quality I've ever seen at an annual conference. And, youth participated through operating cameras, acting as pages, etc. The youth were an important factor!</p>
<p>I was ordained a deacon in the Rajah temple in Reading and ordained an Elder in a Roman Catholic school gymnasium.</p>
<p>I remember vividly the awe that I felt toward Bishop Herman Kaebnick as he led the ordination service. I felt that God was using his authority to accomplish all of the things that I listed above in terms of the meaning of the service. The only reason I have not been attending the ordination services is that I have moved outside of the Eastern PA Conference area and have found it almost impossible to be present when the ordination service takes place. This questionnaire has motivated me to try harder to be present for this beautiful, meaningful service.</p>
<p>At both my ordinations as deacon in the SWT conference and elder in the Eastern PA conference, I had significant representatives as part of the service/laying on of hands that were symbolic of my confirmation to the call to ordained ministry and empowerment to go and do great things for the sake of Jesus Christ and His church.</p>
<p>I often recall fondly those who shared in the laying on of hands: DSs & sponsors.</p>
<p>One other person was ordained elder with me. We both wept tears of joy and held on to each other as the bishop invited those with a call to come forward. It was an extremely powerful moment. The two of us have been "connected" in a special way since that moment.</p>
<p>The awesome power and weight of the laying on of hands spoke of the heavy responsibility to remain faithful to God as I serve His Church.</p>
<p>I remember individual people who were ordained, sharing the sacred occasion with special people.</p>

<p>Having my ordination in a church sanctuary deeply added to the experience. It felt appropriate to be in a holy space, a church.</p>
<p>Heather Elkins preached an amazing sermon in the Albright Chapel during a thunderstorm which caused her microphone to spark. I saw that as a symbol of God's presence at this moment in time. I also recall becoming lost in prayer in the moment of laying on of hands in a moment that seemed like eternity before I returned to the Bishop and those laying hands on me.</p>
<p>I was incredibly blessed to be ordained in my home church - First United Methodist Church, Lancaster. I was also deeply blessed to have my uncle, a retired bishop in the Mennonite church of my birth (which at that point was not yet officially ordaining women) put the stole on me.</p>
<p>My ordination service appeared to me - and given the feedback from fellow ordinands, family and friends - to be a service of jumbled pieces attempting to be all things to all people, yet in the end, pleasing no one.</p>
<p>Reminded me to be faithful so that I could receive the words upon the completion of my ministry and later of my life "well done, good and faithful servant".</p>
<p>The space in which the service is held is VERY important to me. Christian sanctuaries with their symbolism and "sacred" architecture are most important for me. The rich tones of an organ help to convey the sense of connection to tradition. Convention space, Masonic halls, hotel meeting areas, try as hard as we may to accommodate to these settings, don't convey the same seriousness due this service. Certainly cheering and clapping after each ordination has no place in the setting apart of those for Christian ministry. The secular should not be allowed to seep into the sacred ethos of ethos. This is a serious matter -- giving one's life to full-time service in the Lord's church.</p> <p>Ordination is not an entitlement but rather a witness to the Lord's activity and the church's confirmation of that activity.</p>
<p>I was overwhelmed with support from the congregation way beyond people I actually knew.</p>
<p>Ordination was a meaningful connection to the covenant community, past and present. I felt connected, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to a cloud of witnesses and a spiritual presence much larger than myself. I expected that Elder's orders would be an experience of "jumping through a (necessary) hoop" but God surprised me. I'd be willing to share some reflections on this at length.</p>
<p>I felt very empowered, and spiritually filled by my ordination. However, it was sad to see ordination being used as an opportunity for groups to protest positions of the U.M. church - particularly when it was participants in the service who were coming forward, vowing that they had read, understood, agreed with, and would teach and uphold the beliefs of the U.M. church</p>
<p>I remember that the Bishop did not come to our room and say hello. Didn't even acknowledge our presence. Thought a prayer before the service would have been nice. Pastor giving the sermon spoke much too long. Sanctuary was very crowded. There was not enough room for everyone.</p>

Going up front and joining in standing with one who responded to the Call to Full- time Ministry in the church.
The one thing I did NOT like at my ordination - one of the ordinands made a spectacle of herself at one point. I felt this detracted from the experience, drawing attention to herself, not the class as a whole.
My ordination was the year that the service was held in a masonic temple in Reading. There was much controversy about this. Ultimately (and I only realized this after the service), the place had less to do with it than the power of the gathered community of faith.
Traditional Liturgy, traditional great hymns of the church rather than contemporary so-called worship songs, powerful sermons, the act of ordaining, a large contingent of attending ordained clergy, solemn and respectful venue in a church building
This was the moment I felt authority was conferred to me.
The ordination services renews my commitment.
Trumpet(s) playing along with the organ, many voices singing, All Creatures of our God and King. Seeing my friends and family afterward.
Holding the folder with the ordinands names and words as the Bishop ordained each person. Helping coordinate the line up and details of processing/recessing/staging for an ordination service.
There was one difficult moment in my ordination service. Part of my first committee on conference level threatened to stop my ordination on the day of the service. It was an empty petty gesture. But, it came because that first committee's decision to stop my ordination had been appealed and turned over in time for me to be ordained that year.
The participation of Clergy and Lay representatives was important and remembrance of same with a framed photo of the ordination.
I was ordained in my college's chapel, bringing full circle my experience of call, because it was there during my freshman year that I first acknowledged God was indeed calling me to ordained pastoral ministry.
I remember being so happy for the fellow members of my probationary group when they were ordained the year after I was.
I expected it to be more inwardly meaningful but it impacted me very little. Most of the services I have been to have had such bad problems that I have not wanted to attend them.
There is something special to me about the thought of a continuous process starting with the first disciples and going hand by hand through the generations

17. What is your gender?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Female	27.2%	44
Male	72.8%	118

18. What is your age range?

	Response Percent	Response Count
35 and under	1.8%	3
36-45	10.4%	17
46-55	33.7%	65
56-65	31.3%	51
66-75	16.6%	27
76 or over	6.1%	10

19. What is your clergy status?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Active ordained elder	74.4%	122
Active ordained deacon	0.0%	0
Provisional elder	1.2%	2
Provisional deacon	0.0%	0
Retired elder	23.8%	39
Retired deacon	0.6%	1

20. What is your racial/ethnic identity?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Black	5.6%	9
Hispanic or Latino	0.6%	1
Central Asian/Indian subcontinent	1.2%	2
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.9%	3
Native American/Alaskan Native	0.6%	1
White, non Hispanic	90.1%	146
Other		4

OTHER

And of what importance is it to know my ethnic identity??
Irish-Euro-Native (Algonquian) –American
Native American/White
I would prefer the category as caucasian!

21. In what religious tradition were you raised? If you were raised in more than one, with which did you have the greatest identification?

	Response Percent	Response Count
UMC	79.3%	115
Other Wesleyan	1.4%	2
Roman Catholic	3.4%	5
Anglican/Episcopal/Lutheran (highly liturgical)	6.2%	9
Reformed/UCC/Presbyterian	3.4%	5
Baptist	4.1%	6
Non-denominational	0.7%	1
Pentecostal	0.7%	1
Non-Christian	0.0%	0
None	0.7%	1
Other		21

OTHER

Church of the Brethern
My parents were originally in Church of the Nazarene, but left when I was a boy
Methodist Church in India (MCI)
Methodist Episcopal Church
AME
EUB
EUB/UMC
Anabaptist
Christian and Missionary Alliance
Evangelical/Evangelical United Brethren
Methodist/UMC

Evangelical Congregational
Evangelical United Brethern
Presbyterian/Amer. Baptist/Evangelical Free/UMC
Actually, E.U.B. until 1968!!
I was baptized as an infant in a Lutheran Church. However, my family was not active in the life of the church. Only after high school did I become active in a local UMC.
EUB until it became UMC
Mennonite
Church of the Brethren
The Methodist Episcopal Church - how could you forget that one?
EUB

22. What is your personal preference in structure of worship?

	Response Percent	Response Count
Highly liturgical	13.5%	22
Moderately liturgical	74.8%	122
Non-liturgical	11.7%	19

APPENDIX 6

DAILY DEVOTIONALS

The following materials were distributed to all clergy of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church by email during the four weeks leading up to the annual conference meeting and the ordination service. The devotionals were sent over successive days as dated. Each devotional ended with a prayer for a specific candidate coming before the annual conference that year. For purposes of publication, the names have been eliminated.

April 30 Introduction

In less than three weeks, the annual conference will gather at the Philadelphia Expo Center in Oaks for the 2011 Annual Conference. On Friday night, May 20th, we will celebrate the commissioning, ordination and reception as full members of candidates who have been on a long journey in response to God's call on their life. Over the next eighteen days, you will receive a daily devotion designed to prepare our clergy for this service of ordination. The daily messages may assist you in considering the meaning of ordination, and in remembering your own ordination or licensing and its impact on your life. The devotions will also direct you to pray each day by name for a particular candidate coming for commissioning, ordination or recognition.

Many of you shared memories of your own ordination through interviews or the survey conducted in January. Thank you to everyone who participated. Far more of you volunteered to be interviewed than our team was able to meet face to face. The remembrances garnered from the survey and interviews provided direction for planning this year's service and these daily devotions.

It is now our privilege as the clergy of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference to help create memories for those who will stand before us this year. With the ordination service planned for Friday night rather than the last night of conference, it is hoped that many of you will attend. Whether you wear your robe and red stole, or dress in street clothes, come help us witness to the grace of God and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit empowering these candidates for ministry. Together let us welcome into the ranks of clergy those whom God has called and equipped, as we confirm God's call in this rite of ordination and commissioning. And let us once more affirm our own commitment to mutual support and encouragement as United Methodist clergy.

May God bless you as you prepare for Annual Conference 2011. And may these devotions help you to remember with thanksgiving your own call to ministry and the mighty ways God has been at work through you for the glory of God's kingdom.

May 1

"The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" He said, "I will be with you; and this shall be the sign for you that it is I who sent you: when you have brought the people out of Egypt, you shall worship God on this mountain."
Ex 3:9-12 (NRSV)

"Do you believe that God has called you to the life and work of ordained ministry?"
Ordination service, 2011

I'll never forget the night I told my family that I believed I was called to ministry and planned to begin my M.Div. at a local seminary. We had gathered the extended family at our house for a holiday meal, and when dinner was over, the women cleared the table and began cleaning up the kitchen. I washed dishes as my mother, mother-in-law, and other female friends and relatives stood around the sink, dishtowels in hand. As we came to the end of our work, I turned to the group and shared my good news. "I just received my acceptance letter to seminary. I'm going to begin my M.Div. and become a minister." For a moment there was stunned silence. Then one of the women burst into hysterical laughter. "You can't be a minister," she said as she tried to catch her breath. "You're not perfect!"

That's probably how Moses felt when God called him at the burning bush. Moses had plenty of excuses why he couldn't go to Pharaoh - the ruler would not believe him, he

didn't talk well, and he didn't know the name of God. But God had an answer to every objection. More importantly, God had the one answer that outweighed any objection - God had called Moses and God would be with Moses to guide him and empower him in all that Moses was sent to do.

God knows I know I'm not perfect; I didn't need a relative to tell me that. But I was then, and am now, convinced that God has called me to pastoral ministry. In that call comes God's assurance that God will be at work in and through me. It is only because I know I'm not perfect that I can do the work of ministry, for I know I do not engage in ministry on my own. I do it with the help of God, who has called me into this ministry, and with the support of my brothers and sisters in ministry. On Friday evening, May 20th, Bishop Johnson will ask those who come for ordination, commissioning or recognition of orders, "Do you believe that God has called you to the life and work of ordained ministry?" May we each be able to respond in our heart silently as the candidates answer aloud, "I do so believe."

Prayer: Gracious God, you have called me into this life of ministry to serve as your instrument of grace. Help me always remember that behind every act of ministry, every word of comfort and every invitation to faith that I offer is your abiding presence to empower and guide me. Open my heart to be led by you and to serve your kingdom. Today I lift up to you (Name) who comes to be ordained as an elder in your church. May she know your empowering presence throughout her days of ministry. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

May 2

Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." Ex 3:5 (NRSV)

What is the proper place for a service of ordination? Should it be in a church sanctuary rather than in the hall of a convention center? Is designated sacred space the only proper place for ordination? That's certainly a question that causes great debate among the members of the annual conference.

In the January survey on ordination, a number of people shared their desire to have ordination in a sacred space. But there was one respondent who offered a different perspective. "To me it was very important that the ordination was held in a public place (Valley Forge Convention Center) rather than within the walls of a church building. It

was an important symbol that ordination was a calling to serve the world beyond the walls of the church, not the church in isolation from the world.”

I remember hearing the Rev. Olu Brown of Impact Church, a United Methodist congregation in Atlanta and one of the fastest growing UM churches in the nation, speak about their meeting policy. No church meetings are held in private spaces. Every committee, board and even most classes hold their meetings in public locations. Their membership has grown as waiters asked who they were when the church finance committee met at a local restaurant. Bible studies in cafes extend the Word of God to people who would never have picked up a bible. They are intentional about demonstrating that any space can be sacred space when the Spirit of God is invoked. Moses surely would not have expected to encounter God in the middle of the desert, yet that is where it happened. Later, he would meet God on a mountaintop, and recognize the presence of God in a pillar of fire by night and cloud by day. Centuries after, as the Israelites were carried off in exile, they, too, discovered that God would not be confined to a temple or approved sacred space. Instead, God went with God's people to Babylon. Jesus reminded us that God is present wherever God's people gather, even as few as two or three together. And where God is, there is holy ground.

If God can claim a patch of desert and a burning bush as holy ground, is there any space that cannot be made holy by the presence of God? After all, if God can make a pastor out of an ordinary, sinful human like me, surely God can make anything sacred.

Prayer: Holy God, you took the dirt of the ground, with no gems or precious minerals, and shaping it, you breathed into it to make humanity. You take ordinary human beings, not spiritual giants or religious geniuses, and bring us together in your church where we are built into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood. As we prepare for this annual conference, remind us once more that anything, anyone, and any place claimed by you for your use is holy. Help us to see this space in which we will gather for worship and conferencing as holy ground, not because we make it so, but because your presence transforms the ordinary into the holy.

Be with (Name) as he prepared for ordination as an elder. Remind him that whatever his gifts for ministry, whatever his talents, by your blessing of them they will be sufficient for every circumstance into which you call him. Keep him always aware of your holy presence infusing his life and transforming him into your servant. In Jesus' holy name, Amen.

May 3

"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations." Then I said, "Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy." But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a boy'; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak whatever I command you. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD."
 Jer 1:5-8 (NRSV)

I wasn't any more than six years old when I first imagined being a pastor. As a member of the children's choir at Rocky River Methodist Church, I wore a red and white surplice. On Christmas Eve, I would don my robe and create an altar on the top of the television in our living room, with candlesticks and a bible. Then I'd call my parents to sit in front of the silent TV while I told the Christmas story and said a prayer. It was nearly forty years before I put on a real clerical robe and led worship as a newly ordained deacon, waiting to be ordained elder two years later.

When did you first hear God's call to ministry? Was it as a child, playing at being grown up? Or perhaps, like many Eastern Pa. Conference clergy, you experienced God calling you to ministry as a youth, sitting around the campfire at a conference camp. For many, the call was not clearly discerned until after beginning another career. Some hear the call and immediately begin the journey toward ministry; others imitate Jonah, heading as quickly as possible in the opposite direction. No matter when we hear or how we respond, Jeremiah's opening chapter reminds us that God has known since before we were born what our calling will be.

And yet in the end, that call requires our cooperation. God does not extend an irresistible call. Those who have followed the path to ordination, commissioning or licensing, have made a decision to respond.

Every ordination service invites us to remember our own calling and give thanks - thanks for the privilege of serving God, thanks for the assurance of God's presence with us, and thanks for the amazing ways that God works through imperfect humans like us to continue the mission of Jesus Christ. Remember your calling this day, and give thanks for the ways God has used you to make a difference in the world.

Prayer: Eternal God, thank you for calling me to service in your kingdom as a minister of your Gospel. You have known me from my earliest days, and have guided my path all these years. I pray that I may continue to listen carefully for your voice and discern how I may best serve you. Lead me so that I may lead your people closer to you.

I lift up to you (Name) as he comes to be ordained as an elder in your church. You have walked with him through these years of preparation, and you promise to be with him in his service to you. Open his heart and mind so that he might know your leading and follow you into the fields of service. For the sake of our savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

May 4

“Now as Saul was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" He asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting.”
Acts 9:3-5 (NRSV)

“I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you.”
2 Tim 1:5 (NRSV)

How did you know you were called to ministry? Few of us have an experience like Paul’s – a blinding flash of light, a voice from nowhere speaking to us. More of us are like Timothy, who was raised by a mother and grandmother who were believers, and at some point met Paul who encouraged him to accept leadership in the church.

Would Timothy have pursued ministry if his mother and grandmother had not nurtured his faith? Would he have become a church leader if Paul or others had not encouraged him? Are there encouragers in your own story, people who affirmed your gifts, parents or friends who nurtured your faith, pastors who invited you into positions of leadership, someone who asked you, “Have you ever thought about going into ministry?” These people, with the gift of discernment, perceived in us something we may not have seen in ourselves – evidence of God’s grace at work in us.

Few of us come to a sense of call without some encouragement or affirmation by another, a confirmation that we possess gifts that demonstrate God’s grace at work through us. Maybe you led a bible study at your home church and someone told you how much their faith grew under your leadership. Perhaps you preached a sermon on youth Sunday and touched someone’s heart. Perhaps you led a youth fellowship or chaired a church council. Somewhere and sometime, in the process of using your gifts from God, others saw in you the makings of a pastor.

Take a moment and recall those who encouraged you on your way. Give thanks for their affirmation of your gifts, and how that led you to move toward professional

ministry. In the days ahead, consider writing a note to let them know that you are still responding to God's call on your life. And then ask yourself, who around you, now exercising their own gifts, needs you to ask, "Have you ever thought about going into ministry?"

Prayer: O Lord, giver of every gift, you endowed me with gifts at my baptism, and later called me to ministry, inviting me to develop and use those gifts for the good of your people. Thank you for those who saw in me the potential those gifts represented. For people who encouraged me on the pathway toward ministry, for those who supported me through a process that is not always easy, I offer my gratitude. Help me now to become that kind of encourager in the lives of others, as I seek to discern those whose gifts are waiting to be recognized.

I lift up to you (Name) who comes before our conference for ordination as a deacon. She has committed herself to using her gifts to connect the church and world in the ministry of the deacon. Surround her with people who will encourage her; fill her with the joy of serving you. Let her life be a witness to the world as she makes visible your love to those whom she serves. In Jesus' name. Amen.

May 5

"The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ."

Eph 4:11-13 (NRSV)

"On behalf of the laity of local congregations who have examined and approved these candidates, and on behalf of the Board of Ordained Ministry of this annual conference, which has recommended these persons, and this annual conference, which has approved them, we present these persons for the work of ministry in the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church." Ordination Service

In one of the churches I attended as a layperson, the choir was very good, and the church's music ministry was widely celebrated. Many people wanted to join the choir because it was so well regarded. Rather than accepting anyone interested in joining, the director required auditions, asking people to sight read and sing. He had very high standards, and he would wait for the person or people who had the right gifts rather than

admitting people who did not have the gift of singing. Everyone had been given gifts, he believed, and wanting to sing in the choir was not enough. He insisted that each person was called to use the gifts they had been given by God, and the community was the place where gifts were confirmed. His job, as he saw it, was to help people discern whether or not they had musical gifts. If they did, he would help them develop them; if not, he would redirect them to other ministry opportunities that might be more in line with their gifts.

Ordination or licensing represents the convergence of God's call with the gifts God has given, and the community's affirmation of both. Sometime in the life of every minister, the community of the church, represented by a Pastor Parish Relations Committee, charge conference, a District Committee on Ministry, or a Board of Ordained Ministry, has examined them to ascertain their gifts for ministry. Sensing God's call is not enough by itself. Where God calls, the church believes God also equips, so those who have a call to professional ministry will also show evidence of gifts. Each person who is licensed or ordained has been interviewed by conference laity and clergy and their call has been confirmed by the community. Ordination or licensing celebrates this convergence of the individual's sense of call and the community's affirmation of their gifts. As one clergy member responded, ordination is "confirmation of God's call, recognized by authorities and the Body." (January ordination survey)

The call to ordained or licensed ministry is not a right. I am not entitled to set apart ministry because I want to be a minister. It is a privilege that comes from God and is conferred on us by the community. It is a gift not only to us as individuals but to the community, designed to build up the people of God for the work of God. Thus the service of ordination is the culmination of a process of discernment by both individual candidates and the members of the community. May we each give thanks for the gift of our ordination or licensing, and for those who have accompanied us on the journey of discernment and examination.

Prayer: Almighty God, I thank you for the way you have not only called me into ministry but gifted me for the work you want me to do. Bless those who journeyed with me through the discernment process in my life. I pray that I may continue to develop my gifts so that I may serve you with skill and energy.

I lift up to you (Name) as she comes for ordination as a deacon. May she use her gifts for the good of your people, serving you and serving the world in the name of Jesus Christ. Be with her in this ceremony of ordination and throughout her years of ministry. In Jesus' name. Amen.

May 6

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.”

Heb 12:1-2 (NRSV)

My first ordination was a lay elder in another denomination. It occurred during the Sunday morning worship service. I don't remember the sermon or the content of the worship service, but I will never forget the actual ordination. Those being ordained were asked to come forward. The pastor descended from the raised chancel and stood in front of the communion table facing the congregation; the two of us to be ordained stood in front of him, our backs to the congregation.

The pastor led us through the ordination vows, up to the point of the laying on of hands. There, he stopped and invited anyone in the congregation who had been ordained as a lay elder at any time in their life to come forward and participate in the laying on of hands. I heard a great rustling behind me in the congregation, and turning to look over my shoulder, I saw nearly half the adults in the congregation stand and walk down the aisle toward us. The chancel was small; people crowded around us and stood two abreast down the aisles, anxious to participate in the ordination and bestow their blessing by placing their hand on us. I and the other person being ordained knelt; the pastor and those near me placed hands on my head and shoulders. Those beyond the immediate circle around me placed their hand on the shoulder of the person in front of them. In this daisy chain fashion, I was connected to those who had been ordained before me, from the person standing immediately behind me to the one furthest down the aisle.

And then, in the closest thing I have ever had to a vision, I saw in my mind's eye the hands of those who had preceded even the members standing behind me. It was a great cloud of witnesses, arrayed generation by generation, each one with their hand on the shoulder of the person in front of them, on the shoulders of those who followed them into ordained ministry. From those closest to me who were part of the current life of that church, the line extended back through previous generations of elders who had been ordained in that very chancel. From there the line continued to those who had ordained them, to the pastors and elders of the churches from which the early settlers in the region had come, and from them all the way back to the beginnings of the denomination. But my awareness extended even further, to the forebears of that tradition. I saw the hands of

generations before that extended over me in blessing, all the way back to the earliest disciples, and beyond them to Jesus, calling the disciples to leave their nets and their tax booths, to take up their cross and follow, to become the Body of Christ in the world and for the world. I felt an overwhelming sense of connection, not just to those who were part of the church in my day, but to all who had gone before me, responding to Christ's call on their lives. It was as if the power of Christ's call was transmitted hand to head to hand, all the way up to me...I became aware of my place in the great throng that has accepted Christ's call to minister to God's people.

As soon as the laying on of hands was over, I found myself once more in the sanctuary with only fellow members of the church around me. Returning to my seat, I expected to see a multitude of people squeezed into the sanctuary, but there was just the usual Sunday attendance. No one else saw anything, no one else commented after the service on anything unusual. But now, twenty-five years later, I still feel the awe of that moment of awareness, a sense of seeing, not with physical eyes, but with the eyes of the soul.

Reflecting on your own ordination or licensing, can you sense your place in that great crowd of witnesses? How do the generations of those called and confirmed in ministry surround and support you? When we are admitted into the community of the ordained or licensed, we join a line of God's servants that goes back to the earliest disciples. What a privilege to be part of such a community!

Prayer: Eternal God, you have called me to join a long line of servants who have dedicated themselves to the work of your kingdom. Thank you for that great cloud of witnesses who surround and support me in my ministry. It is humbling to recall so many who have preceded me. I pray that I may use my gifts in ways that bring honor to you and to the ministry to which you have called me.

I lift up to you (Name) whose orders have been recognized and who is now to be received as a full member of annual conference. May he know the support of this community of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference, and of those who came before him. As he joins the long line of those who serve you, give him strength to persevere in the race that is set before him. For the sake of your kingdom and in the name of Christ. Amen.

May 7

“But now thus says the LORD, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.”
Isaiah 43:1-3 (NRSV)

I read the Sunday want ads most weekends. I look for jobs that relate to my skill set as a pastor – human resources, social work, non-profit organizational management. Some weeks I laugh at the ads, thinking about all those poor people doing those jobs for pay when I get to do the work for the glory of God and the joy of serving my Savior. But there have been times in my ministry when I read those ads with longing, wishing fervently I could find there a way to get out of the middle of a church conflict or escape some parishioner who had it in for me. In those times, I would read the want ads hoping that something would speak to me, that some job would appear allowing me to jump from ministry to a five day a week job with clear expectations and none of the politics of the church. No matter how often I have read the want ads, though, I always find myself turning back to ministry, convinced that this is where God wants me, nowhere else.

At my deacon’s ordination, Bishop Ault was the guest bishop, and during a luncheon with the candidates to be ordained, he told us, “Remember your call.” I guess I would add to that: “Remember your call and your ordination.” No matter how difficult the path, I come back to the clear recognition that God called me into this life of ministry, the church confirmed that call in my ordination, and God sent the Holy Spirit to empower me and to sustain me. When the flood waters rise, when the fire singes the soles of my feet, I can always turn to God and remember that the God who called me has promised not to desert me.

On Friday evening, May 20th, Bishop Johnson will lay hands on each candidate and speak their name. No, she is not God (sorry bishop), but she does stand in as God’s instrument, calling each person by name, allowing the Holy Spirit to flow through her to the one commissioned or ordained, and through that Spirit, empowering and equipping the individual for the challenges of ministry. Most days, I love my job; but on those occasions when I wonder what ever possessed me to become a minister, I remember my call, I remember my ordination, and I know that as long as I try to act faithfully, God will be with me to lend me divine strength and provide encouragement. May you also find in memories of your call and ordination or licensing the strength to persevere in ministry,

and the reminder of God's abiding presence with us in the flood, in the fire, and in the joys of ministry.

Prayer: Lord, you have called me into this work of ministry, and you have promised to be my guide. You walk with me, directing me and nudging me into the right paths. You strengthen me when I am weak or discouraged; you comfort me when the demands of ministry seem overwhelming. Most of all, you reassure me that you will always be with me, not just when the path is easy, but when the floods roll down and the fires consume. Help me always to remember that your promises are trustworthy. Let me feel your presence when I feel unable to meet the challenges of ministry. May the memories of my call and ordination sustain me and bring me through the times of testing back to green meadows and gently flowing streams.

Lord, I lift up to you (Name) who comes before our conference in two weeks. We have recognized his orders and now receive him as a full member of this annual conference. Walk with him on the path of ministry. Let him always feel your presence with him to guide, to encourage and to strengthen in both the joyful days of ministry and in the challenges. May he look back on his call and ordination, as well as on this day of affirmation by the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference, and see in these events the evidence of a loving God who is faithful in all circumstances. For we ask it through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

May 8

“Elisha picked up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. He took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, saying, “Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?” When he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over.

When the company of prophets who were at Jericho saw him at a distance, they declared, “The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.””
2 Kings 2:13-15 (NRSV)

On my dining room breakfront sits a 200 year old teapot that was brought to America from Wales by my great, great grandmother when she immigrated to this country. The teapot has been passed down from the oldest daughter to the oldest daughter, generation after generation. Looking at it closely, you can see the cracks that spider over the surface and the scorch marks from the open fireplaces in its earlier homes. You can almost smell the tea brewing inside the pot. A well-used teapot, it was not a decoration but a tool used, by generation after generation. It is now a symbol of a strong family that has endured through the generations on two continents, and it is a reminder of

all that has gone before the current era. It is also a source of inspiration, as each new generation is entrusted with the teapot and seeks to live up to its legacy as the future is forged.

I remember the annual conference at which I was ordained deacon, when all of the ordinands were called forward, along with those pastors who were retiring. The retirees were invited to anoint with oil the ordinands as they came before the conference. What a thrill it was for me when my Methodism professor, one of the retirees that year, came over with a small vial of oil and anointed my head. It was a moment of great humility and joy as the one who had been my teacher now welcomed me as colleague. And the symbolism of retirees anointing ordinands reminded each of us coming for ordination that we were receiving more than oil from those anointing us. They were entrusting into our hands the future of the annual conference, passing the mantle to a new generation.

Every year, the annual conference recognizes elders, deacons and local pastors who have served faithfully and now choose to move into retired status. This year, twenty-two will retire. Like Elijah passing the mantle, these pastors are handing off the baton to others who will lead the congregations they leave. But they are also passing the baton to the newly ordained, commissioned, recognized and licensed who will lead the Eastern Pennsylvania Annual Conference into the future. Each new generation is a tool in the hands of God, used to make known the good news of Jesus Christ throughout Eastern Pennsylvania and the world.

In whatever way our call is confirmed by the annual conference, we need to remember that we are not called to invent ministry from scratch. We join an already existing community of the called and set apart. We become part of a community whose purpose for existence is to lead God's people in ministry and service to the world. Those who have gone before us will pray for us, and will be available to provide wise guidance if we ask for it. And God willing, we who serve today will someday pass the mantle to a new generation of clergy who will follow us. What better prayer could there be for us who serve in active ministry today than Elisha's request to Elijah, to receive a double portion of his spirit? May the same spirit now live in us that empowered those before us to reach out with the gospel of Jesus Christ. And when our time comes to step down, although the cracks may be visible, although the wrinkles and the effects of time apparent on our face, may we pass on as well a conference that is healthy, growing and alive with the good news of the gospel.

Prayer: Eternal God, from the days of Moses when you called your prophet to save your people, you have raised up leaders for your church in every generation. Thank you for

those who have gone before me, for their faithful ministry and inspiring leadership. I pray that I may follow in their footsteps, and honor their legacy by my ministry here in the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference and in the fields where you have called me to labor. Grant me a double portion of their spirit, so that I may serve you with energy, intelligence and creativity in all that I do. Let me prove faithful in my ministry, and pass on to those who follow me a ministry that is more vital and more fruitful than the one which I received. May each generation of your servants build upon the one before, and bring us that much closer to the realization of your kingdom on earth.

Today I lift up to you (Name) who comes to be commissioned towards ordination as a deacon. Give her an awareness of that great line of your servants which she now joins. Help her to serve you with the same concern for your people shown by the first deacons. Let the passion for your kingdom that filled Stephen fill her heart as well. As she enters the ranks of commissioned, licensed and ordained ministers, may she find there helpful mentors and caring guides to lead her toward her full ordination as a deacon. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

May 9

“Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.”

Romans 12:15 (NRSV)

My friend is a Presbyterian pastor. When he was ordained, he got to plan the entire service. He wrote the liturgy, selected the participants, chose the scripture readings and had an entire service dedicated to ordaining him and only him. I admit, when I first learned that as a United Methodist pastor I would be ordained at annual conference with a class of people, I was not pleased. I envied my friend, and wished I could have a service like that.

Now, fifteen years later, I cherish being part of a class of ordinands. Coming before the conference as we did reminded us that it is not about us, it's about God. We are commissioned, ordained, recognized or licensed in order to become instruments in God's hands. The celebration of our setting apart is not a celebration of who we are but of what God has done and will do in and through us.

That class of ordinands, meeting together for two years in the provisional program, embodied the commitment of United Methodist clergy to serve in community. Throughout those two years, we provided mutual support, encouraging one another when we encountered ministry challenges, caring for each other in difficult times, celebrating

with each other the victories and accomplishments along the way. And we were blessed by the veteran elder who gave of his time to facilitate our meetings and provide the wisdom born of experience and the care that came from his understanding of community. Today, many of the members of my ordination class still greet each other with hugs and great warmth when we see each other. Whether at annual conference, at the bishop's days apart, or other clergy gatherings, I feel like I have reconnected with an old friend when I see a member of my ordination class. When one left the process, another left ordained ministry and one passed away, I felt the loss as keenly as if they were members of my own family. We were joined in that ceremony of ordination by a bond that would never break.

This sense of community is not limited to the ordained. One of our local pastors shared with me that he could have completed his last year of course of study earlier, but chose to go more slowly toward the end so that the group that began together could graduate together. They had developed a strong bond over the years of summer courses at Wesley despite the fact that they came from several different conferences. They not only studied together, they called each other and provided support to each other throughout the year between sessions of course of study. Their bond of connection is as strong as that of any class of ordinands. They, too, know the meaning of Paul's words above.

Who were the people who were part of your ordination class or course of study class? Do you stay in touch with them, or make a point of greeting them when clergy gather? Are they people you could call on in the challenging days of ministry? If so, give thanks to God for that connection. And if not, consider whether this might be the time to renew the bonds that joined you together in your ordination or licensing.

Prayer: Loving God, you call us and send us into ministry, a most challenging undertaking. But you do not send us alone. Thank you for those who moved through the steps toward ministry with me. Their support and encouragement along the way made the difficult days of ministry bearable, surrounding me with people who would celebrate unselfishly my victories and comfort me in my disappointments. Keep strong the connection between us, so that we may always know the support and love of the community of faith as it is demonstrated by our colleagues. And may we focus at this ordination service less on ourselves and more on the ways your kingdom is strengthened as you work through us for your glory.

I lift up to you (Name) who comes to be commissioned towards elders' orders. May she, also, know the joy of colleagues who uphold her in their prayers and care for her in their lives. Let her experience the strength of community as it binds us together in

the orders and fellowship. Help her to receive this gift of community, and to offer it to others so that in our clergy connection we may know that abundant life promised to us as we connect to one another through your son, Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.

May 10

“I know your works; you are neither cold nor hot. I wish that you were either cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to spit you out of my mouth.”
Revelation 3:15-16

“For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.”
2 Timothy 1:6-7

Spring is here and that means it's time to get my barbecue grill out of the tool shed and clean it up. As I rinsed out the nozzles on the gas grill, I remembered back to the charcoal grill my dad used when I was a kid. Every summer he'd pull that grill out of the garage at the beginning of the season and scrub it down. Then he'd load it with charcoal brickets and we'd have our first cookout.

My dad knew how to start a grill – he's squirt half a bottle of lighter fluid on the brickets. Then standing back, he'd light a match, throw it into the grill and WHOOOOSH, flames would leap up into the air, sometimes two or three feet high. After a few minutes, the flames would die down a bit and the charcoal would start to catch fire (instead of the starter fluid!). After about twenty minutes, the charcoals were red hot, and the fire was ready to cook.

When dinner was over, the charcoal was still very hot, and we'd grab a long stick and marshmallows to toast over the hot coals. But sometimes, if dinner went especially long, the fire didn't stay very hot. We'd wait and wait, but the marshmallows wouldn't brown. Eventually, Dad would come over and stir the charcoal brickets to knock off the layers of gray ash that had built up on the coals and dimmed the heat. Then he'd blow on the coals and like magic, the dull grey brickets would turn bright red and sometimes flames would leap up. The heat would rise and we could toast our marshmallows and make s'mores.

Dad knew that two things happen with fire. First, ash builds up as a fire burns, and laying over the coals or embers, becomes a damper that holds back the heat needed

for the fire to be useful. Sometimes it takes a little stirring, a little shaking up to get rid of the ashes so the fire can burn hot once more. Even then, sometimes the fire has died down and the embers have lost their heat; now only warm, they don't burn with the same fire they had when the fire began. In those cases, it may take a little more work to rekindle the flame in order to make the fire effective, blowing on the dying embers or adding some new kindling.

Paul points Timothy to “the gift of God” that was implanted in him by Paul’s laying on of hands. That gift might be the gift of preaching or teaching, of leadership or visioning, but at the heart of any ministry gift is a burning desire to serve God. Paul imparted that gift in something that looked like ordination – the laying on of hands. But Paul recognizes that such passion does not always burn with the same heat, that the flames of a fire can, over time, die down to embers in need of rekindling.

How hotly does the flame of the Holy Spirit burn within you? Do you still approach ministry with the same passion that burned fiercely within you at your ordination or licensing? Or have the demands of ministry, the challenges of balancing professional and personal life, and the changing expectations of pastors dimmed the fire within you? Sometimes, like coals that have burned down to ashes, the experience of our calling becomes a distant memory. It can be dimmed by layers of disappointment and disillusionment, like ashes that need to be knocked off by revisiting our call and remembering our ordination or licensing. At other times, we may need to stir the embers through a spiritual retreat or plan of continuing education, challenging ourselves to reignite the fire of commitment to ministry in the name of Jesus Christ.

Over the next week we will consider some of the questions asked of ordinands. You are invited to renew your own commitment to set apart ministry by revisiting the vows and looking at how you might rekindle the gift of God that is within you.

Prayer: Gracious God, you have called and equipped me for this path of ministry, empowering me to lead your people as elder, deacon, commissioned servant or licensed pastor. Give me the wisdom to examine honestly my own commitment to ministry today. Help me to see where the passion remains strong, and to consider those places where the fire of my commitment has become lukewarm. Rekindle within me the fire of your Holy Spirit so that I might serve you with the passion and joy I knew in earlier days of ministry. Let me be renewed so that I might be an instrument of your renewing love for the world.

I lift up to you (Name) as he comes for commissioning towards elder’s orders. Let him burn with a passion to serve you in ministry. Keep alight that fire through the

coming years, so that even in the face of the demands of ministry and the challenges of life in the church, he might continue to burn brightly for you. Surround him with people who will help to stir the embers of his love for you. Let him know that the gift of his calling will never die out if he nurtures and fans the flames of the Holy Spirit that lives in his heart. For we ask it through Jesus Christ. Amen.

May 11

“Will you be faithful in prayer, in the study of the Holy Scriptures, and with the help of the Holy Spirit continually rekindle the gift of God that is in you?”

2011 Ordination Service

“If you put these instructions before the brothers and sisters, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound teaching that you have followed... Put these things into practice, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress. Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; continue in these things, for in doing this you will save both yourself and your hearers.”

1 Tim 4:6, 14-16 (NRSV)

When my daughter was younger, we did Girl Scouts together. Weekly meetings, selling cookies and, best of all, camping trips. Year after year I took her troop out to camp sites for a weekend in the woods, cooking meals over a fire we built, sleeping out in the tents, hiking through the woods. I remember how shocked I was to hear about another Girl Scout troop that had a unique approach to camping. The Girl Scout leader set up tents in her backyard, cooked over the gas grill on the patio, and when the girls turned in for the night, the leader and other chaperones went inside and slept on nice, soft beds. They taught camping skills, talked about camping, but the adults in that troop never lived what they taught.

As pastors of the Gospel, we are called not only to teach about the good news of salvation, we are expected to live it in our own lives. We offer our congregation teaching about prayer, instructing people in different modes of prayer and ways to approach the throne of grace. But do we set aside time regularly to listen for God’s voice speaking to us in prayer? We lead bible studies and assist people in learning how to delve into the Scriptures, but do we spend time in God’s Word for ourselves, not to prepare a sermon or teach a class, but to be formed and shaped by Scripture? We call people to repent and confess their sin, accepting God’s grace given without price. Is that something we do as well or just tell others to do it.

So often, the busy lives of pastors end up squeezing out the very disciplines of the faith that we preach about and encourage others to practice. We substitute working in the church for living the life of faith, talking about God for talking with God, teaching the Scriptures for allowing God's Word to be planted in our hearts and shape our lives. But we who lead the people of God as ordained, commissioned and licensed pastors must practice what we preach. The gifts of God given to us as we entered ministry will wither and die if we do not nurture and tend them by attending to our own spiritual formation.

Those who come for commissioning and ordination this year will be asked the question, will you be faithful in prayer and study of Scripture? That is not asking have you been faithful in the past. It is asking those who will enter ministry to commit that from this time forward they will devote time to their own spiritual formation. That commitment will be both a witness to people who see them and a means of God's shaping their own lives and rekindling the gifts of the Spirit. Now that you have been in ministry for a period of time, how is it with your soul? May God help you live the life of faith, not merely speak about it.

Prayer: Lord God, you invite us into relationship with you through prayer and study of your Word. You ask us to teach others not just what we have read in a book, but we ourselves live in our own lives. Give me such commitment to my faith that I might live each day immersed in your grace; let me walk with you through study of your Word and devotion of time to prayer. As I listen for your voice speaking to me in prayer and Scripture, let me be shaped and formed by your grace. May others see my relationship with you and long for that same closeness with you, so that my spiritual life becomes a model and an encouragement to others.

I lift up to you (Name) who comes for commissioning toward elder's orders. Let him find in prayer and Scripture a source of renewal. May the commitment he makes at this ordination service be renewed throughout his ministry as he devotes himself to your voice and your Word. Let his own spiritual life be a priority, so that he might serve as an example of your grace at work. May the years ahead lead to a stronger connection to you and to your people. In Christ's name we pray. Amen.

May 12

“Will you do your best to pattern your life in accordance with the teachings of Christ?”

2011 Ordination Service

“Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, and live in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”
Eph 4:31 -5:2 (NRSV)

My daughter loves art. When she was little, I always carried a pack of crayons in my purse and if we were in a restaurant waiting for a meal or sitting in line at some event, I would take out the crayons and a little pad and invite her to draw. When she was small, the drawings were childlike; stick figures for people with circle eyes and a smiley mouth. The only thing her stick figure people had in common with real people was two arms, two legs and a head. But as she got older, she developed her skills, studying art in high school, majoring in art in college. Now, she occasionally is commissioned to do a portrait or painting. When she is finished and shows it to me, I can recognize the person in the completed picture. Her artwork now more closely imitates reality, and if someone sees her painting, they see enough of the real person in the art to be able to recognize them if they come face to face.

The word “Christian” originally meant little Christ. Each of us, as a baptized member of the church, is called to live in imitation of Christ. As pastors, that is even more critical for us. When people look at us, they ought to be able to see enough of the teaching of Jesus to recognize the Christ in us. No, we’re not perfect; we’re only human. But if we strive to faithfully imitate Christ and embody his teachings, then the world will see Christ through us.

David Kinnaman and Gabe Lyons, in their book UnChristian: What a New Generation Really Thinks About Christianity, point out that while 84% of young people say they personally know a committed Christian, only 15% saw any difference between their Christian friend and everyone else.* How can people learn about God and Christ if they cannot see their presence in our lives? If our faith doesn’t make any difference in our lives, why should others want to be Christian?

We pastors live in a stained glass fishbowl. People we have never met somehow know that we are the pastor of this or that church. And surreptitiously, they are watching to see how we live our lives. Do we embody the love of God in our lives? Do we nurse our anger against others, or do we offer forgiveness even to those who try to hurt us? Are we a window through which the world can see Jesus, or a door blocking those who want to know Christ?

Take a few moments and consider the activities in your life over the last week. What did you do that was different from the average person in the world because of your faith? How did you incorporate your faith into your everyday living? Are you satisfied with the ways your life reflects the model and teaching of Jesus Christ? If not, what might you do differently in the week ahead to pattern your life after the teaching of Jesus?

Prayer: Lord Jesus, my Savior and my Model, you have provided in Scripture and in your abiding presence everything I need to live a life that pleases you. I know that when I live in accord with your teaching, my life becomes a place where others may look and see who you are. By your Spirit, help me to live my life in faithful imitation of you. Let your teaching take root in my heart and flourish so that the world can see the difference you make in my life. Make my life a mirror through which others can see the loving God who offered himself sacrificially for me, who offers forgiveness, mercy, healing and hope.

I lift up to you (Name) who comes to be commissioned towards ordination as an elder. Give him the strength to live each day as a little Christ. Let the people of his community see in his life the qualities that you invoked for our life. May kindness, forgiveness, generosity and love be so central to his life that the world will know you through his example. And may he share that life with your people in ways that inspire them to live that same pattern in their lives. For your sake and the sake of your kingdom. Amen.

May 13

“Will you, in the exercise of your ministry, lead the people of God to faith in Jesus Christ, to participate in the life and work of the community, and to seek peace, justice, and freedom for all people?”
2011 Ordination Service

“With what shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” Micah 6:6-8 (NRSV)

I heard a story years ago about a young pastor who arrives at his first appointment, somewhere down south, anxious to begin preaching. On his first Sunday he

gets up into the pulpit and delivers a rousing sermon condemning the evils of tobacco. After the service, the Lay Leader takes the young pastor aside, and says, “Pastor, I know you mean well. But you gotta remember that half this congregation makes its income raising tobacco. You need to find another topic for your sermons.” So the next week, the young pastor rises and walks into the pulpit, and delivers an enthusiastic sermon condemning the evils of gambling. After the service, the Ad Council chair calls the young pastor over and says, “Pastor, nearly a third of our congregation works in the casinos. In fact, the two biggest businesses in this community are tobacco and the local casinos. Those that aren’t farming tobacco are dealing blackjack down at the casino. Find something else to talk about.” The following week, the young pastor strode confidently to the pulpit when it was time for the sermon, and roundly condemned the evils of koala bear poaching.

Sometimes, it seems the church has lost sight of what it was created to do. People want to come to church on Sunday and be comforted, not challenged; they want to be made to feel good about themselves as God’s children. God is love, is the message ask for. But when that is preached week after week after week, it usually means we’ve lost sight of the character and will of the God we serve. The God of Jesus Christ is a God of love, yes, but also a God who saves the oppressed, who delivers his children from bondage, who redeems people from the clutches of injustice. Time and again God speaks of himself as the God who delivered Israel from slavery in Egypt, the God who redeemed his people, the God who saves. Sometimes, God takes direct action to accomplish this, but quite often God acts through human agents to rescue people.

Those of us who are called to set apart ministry are called to lead people into a closer relationship with Jesus Christ. But Jesus did not come so we could spend our days wrapped in ecstatic contemplation of the divine while the world around us is enveloped in suffering. We are blessed, as God told Abraham, to be a blessing. Pastors and deacons are also called to lead people into the paths of service to God’s people. We are saved so that we might extend the grace of God to others – both in spiritual ways and tangible ways. Jesus reminds us of that when he tells his followers about the sheep and goats: “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.” Matt 25:40 (NRSV)

Too often, pastors turn into chaplains, content to encourage the life of piety, but overlooking Christ’s call to ministries of justice. The genius of John Wesley was his recognition of the need to develop a life built on both works of piety and works of mercy. Either one alone represents an incomplete gospel. Jesus calls us to offer Christ and that cup of water, to preach salvation and to ensure safe housing for all children, to condemn sin and to work for the eradication of racism. How have you answered the call to lead

God's people in paths of peace, justice and freedom for all people? How can you help your congregation listen for those who are crying out to God? Do you also listen for God's call to your church to be a tool used to save God's people?

Prayer: Almighty God, you have told us what you desire – for us to do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with you. Teach us to love this world as deeply as you do, to cry over the injustices perpetrated against any of your children, and to commit ourselves not only to redressing wrongs, but to creating just systems that exemplify your love for all people. Let our faith propel us into the world to seek justice, mercy and peace. Give us your wisdom and vision as we seek to do your will on earth as it is done in heaven.

Lord, we lift up to you (Name) as she comes to be commissioned towards elders' orders. Give her a heart for all people. Help her to preach and to model a life of justice and piety, devotion and mercy. With your help, let her lead her people into relationship with you so that they will commit themselves honor all people and care for your creation. May her faith lead her out beyond the church walls to offer food to the hungry, shelter to the homeless and hope to the despairing. And may her ministry of mercy be a witness that leads others into a life of faith. We ask this for the sake of your son, Jesus Christ, who came to serve, not to be served. Amen.

May 14

“Will you be loyal to The United Methodist Church, accepting its order, liturgy, doctrine and discipline, defending it against all doctrines contrary to God's Holy Word, and committing yourself to be accountable with those serving with you, and to the bishop and those who are appointed to supervise your ministry?”

2011 Ordination Service

“When he entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, appealing to him and saying, “Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, in terrible distress.” And Jesus said to him, “I will come and cure him.” The centurion answered, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only speak the word, and my servant will be healed. For I also am a man under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes, and to another, 'Come,' and he comes, and to my slave, 'Do this,' and the slave does it.”

When Jesus heard him, he was amazed and said to those who followed him, “Truly I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found such faith.”” Matt 8:5-10 (NRSV)

You've probably heard about the man who was shipwrecked on a desert island. After several years, a ship passing by stopped at the island and the man was rescued.

Before the ship left, however, the man offered a tour of what he had built on the island. There was a wonderful treehouse he had built for his home. And there were two grass huts. In front of each hut was a wooden board with letters scratched into the surface. The sign in front of the first hut read, First Church of the Island. The sign in front of the second read, Second Church of the Island. The shipwrecked man explained that he had felt the need for spiritual nurture and so had built the first hut as a place to worship. “But then,” he explained, “I simply could not agree with the doctrine and polity of that congregation, and so I left and started the Second Church of the Island.”

At times, it seems like everyone who claims the Christian faith also wants a church that reflects only their own beliefs about the content of faith, the style of faith, and how we live together as church. We don’t want to be accountable or have a set of church rules imposed on us. We want to design our own worship style, choose our own missions programs, write our own book of rules. But following that to its logical extreme leads us to “the Church of Jane” and “the Church of Bob.” We end up with as many churches as we have people, maybe even more like that desert island.

As ordained and licensed clergy, we are like the centurion who approached Jesus. We lead others, but we are also led. In our ordination or licensing, we acknowledge the authority of God expressed through God’s Holy Word, and the authority of the United Methodist Church expressed in the Discipline and interpreted by bishops and those appointed to supervise us. We submit ourselves to that authority, committing ourselves to our faith as it is expressed through the United Methodist Church. We may not agree with every item in The Book of Discipline or The Book of Worship, but we realize that it is not just about us as individuals, it is about us as a community of faith living together, being the Body of Christ, God’s Holy People.

Henri Nouwen, in his book *In The Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership*, says, “It seems easier to be God than to love God, easier to control people than to love people, easier to own life than to love life. Jesus asks, “Do you love me?” We ask, “Can we sit at your right hand and your left hand in your Kingdom?”* Our temptation is to want to lead all the time, to create our own rules, to be autonomous and powerful. But serving God as ordained and licensed clergy requires us to learn to be led as well as to lead, and to be accountable to a human authority higher than ourselves as the embodiment of God’s authority. As pastors, we are called to servanthood, not self-determination.

Take time today to consider how you have demonstrated loyalty to the United Methodist Church. You chose to be a member of this denomination – what difference has it made in your life to be a United Methodist pastor rather than a Presbyterian or

Baptist pastor? How have you encouraged the development of a United Methodist identity in your congregations? In what ways does your life demonstrate your willingness to submit to the authority of a denomination rather than go your own way?

Prayer: Lord, the people of Jesus' time were looking for a savior who would come as a mighty warrior or ruler, but you sent a baby in a manger. He came among us not as one who commanded or demanded, but as a servant who washed the feet of his followers and submitted his will to yours. Teach us to lead with such a servant's heart. Let Jesus' example remind us that we who lead congregations and ministries are also led by others. Give us spirits that are courageous in leadership and humble in obedience to the authority you have provided for us in the United Methodist Church.

I lift up to you (Name), candidate for commissioning towards elders' orders. He has responded to your call on his life to lead your people as a minister of your church. Give him such a spirit of humility that he might lead always seeking to do your will and allowing himself to be led by those whom you have placed in positions of supervision. May he defend your Word with passion, and accepting the authority of the United Methodist Church, find there a community that provides both support and accountability in his ministry. In the name of Jesus. Amen.

* Henri J. M. Nouwen, *In The Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership*. (New York: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1989). p. 77.

May 15

“Will you, for the sake of the church's life and mission covenant to participate in the order of deacons/elders? Will you give yourself to God through the order of deacons/elders in order to sustain and build each other up in prayer, study, worship and service?”

Response: I will, with the help of God, and with the help of my sisters and brothers in the order of deacons. 2011 Service of Ordination

“So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In him the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.”

Eph 2:19-22 (NRSV)

I have a piece of knotted rope that sits on the bookshelf in my office. It was given to me by a member of the first church I served after my ordination as deacon. Jonathan was a rock climber, and after hearing me preach a sermon that used a carabiner in an illustration, he gave me the rope along with a letter of explanation. The rope has two knots tied into it. At the very end is a loop that would pass through a climber's harness. Above that is the first knot, a double figure eight which he explained is the official lifesaver knot. As long as that knot is tied, and the loop is fixed through the harness, the climber can have confidence that even if they fall, they will not fall far enough to result in fatal injury. But the climber's fear is that the knot will come untied and then, if they should fall, their freefall could end in death. So to guard against that, some climbers tie the loose end of the rope in a second knot known as a half a double fisherman's knot, also known as a keeper knot. The keeper knot is easy to tell at a glance if it is tied or coming undone. As long as it is tied, the lifesaving knot above it cannot come undone, and the climber can be sure of their safety.

It occurred to me that if I take seriously my membership in the order to which I belong, that order becomes a kind of keeper knot for my soul. If I am actively involved in the order, if I am caring for my colleagues in ministry, if I am humbly listening as they speak the truth to me in love, then I can be confident that I am serving God faithfully and caring for my own soul. My eternal life is then closely bound to God. It is when I go out on my own, when I become a Lone Ranger in ministry and think I can do it all without support or accountability to others, that I need to be concerned about the state of my soul and my ministry. When the keeper knot of my place in the clergy community unravels, I need to look at my salvation, my lifesaving knot, to see if it is coming undone and leaving my soul in spiritual freefall.

By committing myself to the order (or fellowship of local pastors), I am creating a keeper knot in my spiritual life. Within this community of clergy are those who understand the demands of ministry. When I am in need of encouragement or support, when I or a family member is ill or in need of help, it is often difficult to turn to the congregation. The order becomes my church, the place where God's love is made visible and tangible in my life by brothers and sisters in faith who share the sense of call and the meaning of life lived under that call. These same colleagues can also be a source of accountability at times, calling me back to the community of faith if I begin to stray from the paths of God's will for ministry or threaten to succumb to temptation.

I don't get to choose who belongs to the order or fellowship of local pastors. The credentialing process is not mine to run. But the church has invited me to live out my life as ordained or licensed clergy through an order or fellowship of local pastors. Together, we clergy are built into a dwelling place for God, a temple of the Holy Spirit. When we

support each other, when we listen to each other, we are fitted together in ways that not only build us up but also build up God's people in the United Methodist Church. Our witness of life in a covenant community becomes an enacted parable for our congregations.

Our orders and fellowship don't hold regular meetings, but we have the opportunity to gather with colleagues for support, encouragement and accountability. I have been part of lunch group that has gathered monthly for nearly 13 years. Some of our clergy have been in a group for 30 or more years. As we deepen our relationships with each other, we are challenged to accept our differences, to forgive others' failures, and to learn to appreciate each other as flawed human beings whose accomplishments are not solo performances but the result of the help of God and our sisters and brothers in the order or fellowship to which we belong.

Prayer: God of covenant and community, you call me to live in relationship not only to you but to my sisters and brothers who serve alongside me in ministry. Thank you for the support and encouragement I receive from colleagues. In difficult days of ministry, when I cannot share my concerns with members of my congregation, you have given me colleagues in the order/fellowship to talk with in order to seek guidance and wisdom. And in those moments when my pride, my anger or my belief that mine is the only way begins to separate me from you, let my colleagues be a mirror helping me to see how I have diverged from your will.

Today I lift up to you (Name) who comes to be commissioned towards elders' orders. Let him experience the joy of covenant community among the clergy. Give him the support of a caring provisional group now and the love of the members of the order of elders in years to come. Let him find in the life of the order a keeper knot that will enable him to remain in your will all the days of his ministry. As he experiences the encouragement and accountability of the order, may he also offer those gifts to others in a community of mutual support. For the sake of Jesus, your Son. Amen.

May 16

“Almighty God, pour upon (Name) the Holy Spirit for the office and work of an elder in Christ's Holy Church.”
2011 Ordination Service

“Moses came down from Mount Sinai. As he came down from the mountain with the two tablets of the covenant in his hand, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God.” Ex 34:29 (NRSV)

As the candidate knelt before the bishop, she was unprepared for the power of the moment. The bishop's hands were heavy on her head. Other hands, those of her DS and her sponsors, weighed on her shoulders and back. The bishop prayed, "Almighty God, pour upon this woman the Holy Spirit for the office and work of an elder in Christ's holy church." In that moment, she felt something extraordinary happen – a change, a transformation signaled by a warmth filling her. She stood and turned to face the congregation. Later, people would tell her that her face was shining as if she was lit from within, like Moses' face as he descended from Mt. Sinai. (This story, from interviews conducted earlier this year, is shared with permission.)

The Holy Spirit is not some power that humans can wield or bishops manipulate. The words of ordination are not a magic formula that compels God's participation. The seven sons of Sceva learned that to their detriment in Ephesus (Acts 19). Instead, ordination is the convergence of God's call, a process of discernment and the community's affirmation of the call. That is what enables a bishop to speak those words of invocation. The candidate, in fulfilling their call, is empowered by the Holy Spirit, authorized by the church and affirmed by the congregation.

Unlike Roman Catholics, we United Methodists don't believe that ordination changes the very essence of the ordinand. Instead, the Holy Spirit will now be at work within the newly ordained, to guide them in the paths of ministry if they are open and receptive to the Spirit's direction. God's call is not irresistible; we must cooperate with the Spirit to be effective in ministry. And in mountaintop moments, like ordination, that inner presence of the Spirit may be more easily perceived by us and others, whether in a face that shines, in words that inspire or actions that witness to God's mercy and love.

Life, however, is not lived on mountaintops. We have to come back down to the valley where we spend most of our days. Even there, however, the Holy Spirit remains with us to empower, encourage and sustain us in ministry. It is easy in the busyness of ministry to forget that. Pastors live in a tension – we are ordinary human beings and yet we are Spirit empowered. That means we are tempted, we fail at times, we don't live up to the calling God has given us, and we may find some of the work of pastoral administration to be tedious. But we are also set apart and gifted by the Holy Spirit to do the work of ministry. In every action, in every word spoken, we have a resource available within us to guide us and lend us power – God's Holy Spirit poured out on us at our ordination or licensing to do the work to which we are called. Thanks be to God that we are not on our own. With the help of God's Holy Spirit and our sisters and brothers in ministry, we can accomplish great things for the kingdom of God.

Prayer: Loving God, your Holy Spirit has filled me and empowered me for the life of ministry. In those mountaintop experiences of ministry, may I always give you the praise. Help me remember that even in the ordinary and sometimes tedious tasks of ministry, your Spirit is with me, making the ordinary holy when it is done in your name. Let my life so shine with your Spirit's presence that others will see and know that you are Lord.

Today I lift up to you our bishop as she prepares for annual conference. Let the light of your Spirit shine through her as she guides our holy conferencing. Give her your wisdom and patience for the task of presiding. Anoint her with your Spirit as she preaches and teaches. May she lead us in doing your will, for the sake of your son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

May 17

“Name, take authority as an elder to preach the Word of God, to administer the Holy Sacraments, and to order the life of the Church in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

2011 Ordination Service

“Name, take authority as a deacon to proclaim the Word of God, and to lead God's people to serve the world, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

2011 Ordination Service

“Moses spoke to the LORD, saying, "Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, appoint someone over the congregation who shall go out before them and come in before them, who shall lead them out and bring them in, so that the congregation of the LORD may not be like sheep without a shepherd." So the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand upon him; have him stand before Eleazar the priest and all the congregation, and commission him in their sight. You shall give him some of your authority, so that all the congregation of the Israelites may obey...So Moses did as the LORD commanded him. He took Joshua and had him stand before Eleazar the priest and the whole congregation; he laid his hands on him and commissioned him—as the LORD had directed through Moses.”

Num 27:15-20, 22-23 (NRSV)

When my brother was in elementary school, it was my job, on days when my mother was out, to see that he practiced piano before going out to play. I was seven years older, and saw myself as the assistant mom. My brother, however, had a different idea.

To his way of thinking, I was no different than he was. I needed some authority beside “I’m gonna tell on you.” My mother realized she needed to do something to make it clear I was in charge. My authority was established in the presence of my brother, and it was symbolized by that instrument of terror, the pancake turner. My mother gave me the pancake turner and with my brother listening, told me to use it if he refused to practice!

Ordination has as one of its meanings the granting of authority for the leading of God’s people. Fortunately, the symbol of our pastoral authority is not a pancake turner or any instrument of coercion; it is the Bible. When the words above are spoken, the ordinand’s hands are resting on an open Bible. That is our authorization for ministry.

Authority in the church is very different from authority in the world. I’ve never led sheep, but I shepherded a group of pastors and laypeople on a trip to the Church of the Resurrection. I told them it was like herding cats! I can assure you that the pancake turner would have had no effect at all. Ordering people around the way it is done in the business world just doesn’t work in the church. People go where they want to go and do what they want to do. The authority of a pastor or deacon doesn’t come from coercion or intimidation. Our authority comes from serving others; it is the authority of Jesus who “who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross.” (Phil 2:6-8 (NRSV))

The authority we have is based on the community’s examination and affirmation of our call and giftedness. Holding ordination at annual conference is one way we celebrate that. We are ordained in front of the gathered community of faith that has walked through the discernment process with us, from the local church to the District Committee on Ordained Ministry to the Board of Ordained Ministry and finally the members of annual conference. Our fitness for ministry is tested at every level. We have been affirmed in our calling by each board or committee. Because they have recognized God at work in our lives, they now grant us the authority to lead. And that leadership is servant leadership.

As you prepare to come to annual conference and to attend the ordination service on Friday night, take time to remember the people along the way who affirmed your call to ministry in the United Methodist Church. Give thanks to God for their discernment and for their encouragement. Remember the bishop who laid hands on you, if you are ordained, and call to mind the congregation before whom you were granted authority. May you use that authority always in service to God and God’s people.

Prayer: Almighty God, you have raised up leaders for your people in every age, shepherds called and gifted by you to be servant leaders. I pray that I have served your people wisely, using the gifts you have granted me. Let my presence at this week's ordination witness to your continuing gift of new servant leaders for your church. Empower me to support and encourage them in their ministry. Help me to be a source of support in difficult times. Hear our prayers as we lift up each person who comes to be commissioned, recognized or ordained at this annual conference. For I ask it through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

May 18

“Remember your baptism and be thankful.” 2011 Service of Ordination

“This service is a high moment for the ordinands, those who have been commissioned and those who have become full members of our conference. It is a time of renewal for those who entered ministry in years past as we recommit ourselves to God's call.”

2011 Service of Ordination

“For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline.”

2 Tim 1:6-7 (NRSV)

There are two ways to think of ordination. Some of us see it as a banana – you peel off the skin, throw the peel away, and there it is - the banana. So with ordination, you take away all the hoopla, get rid of all the pomp and circumstance, and what's left is a simple ceremony we go through to get the credentials we need to do ministry. That is one way of looking at this rite.

But there is another way to think of ordination, as an onion. The first time my mother asked me to peel an onion to help with cooking, I started by taking off the outer layer of dry, paperlike covering. Underneath was a moist layer of onion. I removed that and found beneath it another layer. One after another, the layers came off, piled up on the kitchen counter as I looked for the center of the onion. My mother, looking over, saw my dilemma and laughed, explaining to me that the meat of the onion was in the layers that I was removing. There was no single center that was the usable portion of the onion; the layers were what needed to be chopped up and used in the recipe.

To me, ordination is like that onion. There are layers upon layers of meaning in ordination, and no one layer has the “right” meaning. Ordination is the receiving of the Holy Spirit for the work of ministry; ordination is the transmission of authority from the bishop, the conference and from God; ordination is an entrance into the covenant community of the ordained and set apart as we enter the order of deacon, order of elder or fellowship of local pastors; ordination is a time to renew our own commitment to set apart ministry; ordination is a source of strength and encouragement in difficult times. And it is the receiving of a credential that authorizes our ministry. No one of these is the “right” answer. At different times in our lives, different meanings will be more important than others. When our ministry is being tried and we are disheartened, our ordination or licensing can be a source of encouragement as we remember that we have received the Holy Spirit and been affirmed by the church in our calling. If we are in need of support, our ordination or licensing binds us to a covenant community that has pledged its assistance to us. And if we find our faith challenged, ordination reminds us that the flame that once burned within us can be rekindled if we open ourselves once more to the power of God at work within us. We are not alone, we are incorporated into a great community of those who have been called by God and affirmed by the church to lead the people of God. Across the ages, around the globe, we enter into covenant with all who have gone before, and those who will follow after us.

As we come to this Friday’s night Service of Ordination, let us come with an appreciation of the richness of ordination as a rite of the church. May we commit ourselves once more to the ministries to which we have been called. And may God bless us and those who come before us at this year’s Service of Ordination.

Prayer: Almighty and Everlasting God, I thank you for the privilege of serving you as ordained or licensed clergy here in the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference. I am grateful for the gift of your Holy Spirit and support of sisters and brothers in ministry. I pray that at this year’s ordination, I may once again be reminded of my own ordination/licensing and be thankful.

I lift up to you those who come for ordination this year: (Names of all listed.) May the fire that burns within them at this ceremony continue to burn brightly, to light their lives and the lives of those they lead.

I ask that your Spirit will be present at this Service of Ordination, to strengthen all clergy attending for the tasks of ministry. Bind us together in this service, that we may be one in love and concern for each other, one in ministry to the world. And may your Spirit move in the hearts of those attending, to stir up the passion for ministry among those who may not yet recognize your call in their lives.

I offer you my praise, my thanks and my commitment to serve you with energy and passion all the days of my life. For the sake of your son, Jesus Christ, in the power of your Holy Spirit, and celebrating the call of Almighty God in my life, I lift up this prayer. Amen.

APPENDIX 7
ORDINATION SERVICE

The following pages were published as a booklet to be given to attendees at the annual Service of Commissioning and Ordination of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church on Friday, May 20, 2011. For purposes of this paper, I have deleted listings of names and personal information normally included in the service booklet. This copy includes the rubrics provided for the bishop.

Service of Commissioning and Ordination

Philadelphia Expo Center
Oaks, Pennsylvania

Friday, May 20, 2011
7:00 p.m.

Resident Bishop Eastern Pennsylvania Conference

Peggy A. Johnson

Participating Bishop

Julius C. Trimble

(Deletion of names of District Superintendents, Chairs of District Committees on Ordained Ministry, and officers of the Board of Ordained Ministry.)

*The Board of Ordained Ministry welcomes you to this Service of Commissioning and Ordination. This worship service is a time of celebration and reverence, a holy moment in all of our lives. In keeping with our efforts to invoke the sacred, we ask that you honor those who are commissioned and ordained not with your applause but with your prayer. In addition, we ask that you **do not use flash photography** during the worship service and that you please **place your cell phones on vibrate or turn them off.***

GATHERING

PRELUDE

*PROCESSIONAL HYMNS

“All Hail the Power of Jesus’ Name”

Perronet, alt. Rippon,

All hail the power of Jesus’ name!
Let angels prostrate fall; let angels prostrate fall;
Bring forth the royal diadem,
And crown him, crown him, crown him, and crown him Lord of all.

Ye chosen seed of Israel’s race,
Ye ransomed from the fall, ye ransomed from the fall,
Hail him who saves you by his grace,
And crown him, crown him, crown him, and crown him Lord of all.

Sinners, whose love can ne’er forget

The wormwood and the gall, the wormwood and the gall,
 Go spread your trophies at his feet,
 And crown him, crown him, crown him, and crown him Lord of all.

Let every kindred, every tribe
 On this terrestrial ball, on this terrestrial ball,
 To him all majesty ascribe,
 And crown him, crown him, crown him, and crown him Lord of all.

O that with yonder sacred throng
 We at his feet may fall, we at his feet may fall!
 We'll join the everlasting song,
 And crown him, crown him, crown him, and crown him Lord of all.

“Praise to the Lord, the Almighty”

Neander

Praise to the Lord, the Almighty, the King of creation!
 O my soul, praise him, for he is thy health and salvation!
 All ye who hear, now to his temple draw near
 Join me in glad adoration!

Praise to the Lord, who o'er all things so wondrously reigning
 Bears thee on eagle's wings, e'er in his keeping maintaining.
 God's care enfolds all, whose true good he upholds.
 Hast thou not known his sustaining?

Praise to the Lord, who doth prosper thy work and defend thee
 Surely his goodness and mercy here daily attend thee.
 Ponder anew what the Almighty can do,
 Who with his love doth befriend thee.

Praise to the Lord, who doth nourish thy life and restore thee,
 Fitting thee well for the tasks that are ever before thee.
 Then to thy need God as a mother doth speed,
 Spreading the wings of grace o'er thee.

Praise to the Lord! O let all that is in me adore him!
 All that hath life and breath, come now with praises before him!
 Let the amen sound from his people again
 Gladly forever adore him.

GREETING AND PRAYER *

Bishop: The grace of Jesus Christ be with you all.

PEOPLE: And also with you.

Bishop: We come together to praise God,
to hear the Holy Word,
and to seek for ourselves and others
the power, presence, and direction of the Holy Spirit.
Let us pray.

PEOPLE:

**Eternal God, by Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit
you gave to your apostles many excellent gifts.
Give your grace
to all servants of your church,
that we may with diligence and faithfulness
fulfill our various ministries.
Grant that we your people may follow where you lead,
perfect our ministries,
and live in joyful obedience to your will,
through Jesus Christ, our Savior. Amen.**

RECOGNITION OF COMMON MINISTRY AND REAFFIRMATION OF BAPTISM

(Side of podium) The bishop, standing near a baptismal font, begins:

Ministry is the work of God,
done by the people of God.
Through baptism
all Christians are made part of the priesthood of all believers,
the church, Christ's body, made visible in the world.
We all share in Christ's ministry of love and service
for the redemption of the human family and the whole of creation.

Therefore, in celebration of our common ministry,
I call upon all God's people gathered here:

Remember your baptism and be thankful.

We remember our baptism and affirm our common ministry.

As brothers and sisters in this common ministry, let us join our voices in prayer to
Almighty God, saying the words our Lord taught us:

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name.**

**Thy kingdom come,
 thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
 Give us this day our daily bread.
 And forgive us our trespasses,
 as we forgive those who trespass against us.
 And lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.
 For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory,
 forever. Amen.**

All people are seated.

PRESENTATION OF PERSONS TO BE COMMISSIONED, ORDAINED OR RECOGNIZED

Lay Leader of the Annual Conference:

On behalf of the laity of local congregations
 who have examined and approved these candidates,

Chairperson of the Board of Ordained Ministry:

and on behalf of the Board of Ordained Ministry of this annual conference,
 which has recommended these persons,
 and this annual conference, which has approved them, we present these persons
 for the work of ministry in the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of the United
 Methodist Church.

Chairperson of the Order of Deacons:

(candidates stand as name is read and face congregation, remaining standing until all
 names are read)

We present (Name) to be commissioned for the work of a deacon.

Chairperson of the Order of Elders:

We present (Names) to be commissioned for the work of an elder.

Chairperson of the Order of Deacons:

We present (Names) to be ordained deacons.

Chairperson of the Order of Elders:

We present (Names) to be ordained elders.

Chairperson of the Board of Ordained Ministry

We present (Names) whose orders will be recognized as elder.

Bishop Johnson to center stage:

These persons are by God's grace
to be commissioned, recognized or ordained to ministry in Christ's holy church.
Those authorized by the Church to inquire about them
have discerned that they are persons
of sound learning and of Christian character,
and possess the necessary signs of God's grace,
and have demonstrated a profound commitment to serve Jesus Christ.
Therefore, we believe them to be duly called to serve God.

We ask you, people of God,
to declare your assent
to the commissioning, ordination, or recognition of these persons.

Do you trust that they are worthy, by God's grace,
to be commissioned, ordained or recognized?

We do! Thanks be to God!

Will you uphold them in their ministry?

With God's help, we will!

THE GENERAL EXAMINATION

The candidates turn and face the bishop. All others remain seated except the candidates and the bishop, who stand facing one another. The bishop examines the candidates for commissioning, ordination and full membership:

Bishop Johnson:

My sisters and brothers in Christ,
you have been called
to a commissioned or ordained ministry.
The church now confirms your calling.

As commissioned or ordained ministers,
you are to be coworkers with the laity, bishops,
deacons, diaconal ministers, deaconesses, home missionaries,
commissioned ministers, local pastors and elders.

Remember that you are called
to serve rather than to be served,
to proclaim the faith of the church and no other,
to look after the concerns of God above all.

So that we may know that you believe yourselves
to be called by God
and that you profess the Christian faith,
we ask you:

Do you believe that God has called you
to the life and work of ordained ministry?

I do so believe.

Do you believe in the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
and confess Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?

I do so believe and confess.

Are you persuaded
that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments
contain all things necessary for salvation
through faith in Jesus Christ
and are the unique and authoritative standard
for the church's faith and life?

I am so persuaded, by God's grace.

Will you be faithful in prayer,
in the study of the Holy Scriptures,
and with the help of the Holy Spirit
continually rekindle the gift of God that is in you?

I will, with the help of God.

Will you do your best to pattern your life
in accordance with the teachings of Christ?

I will, with the help of God.

Will you, in the exercise of your ministry,
lead the people of God
to faith in Jesus Christ,
to participate in the life and work of the community, and
to seek peace, justice, and freedom for all people?

I will, with the help of God.

Will you be loyal to The United Methodist Church,
 accepting its order, liturgy, doctrine, and discipline,
 defending it against all doctrines contrary to God's Holy Word,
 and committing yourself to be accountable with those serving with you,
 and to the bishop and those who are appointed to supervise your ministry?

I will, with the help of God.***The bishop addresses the candidates:***

May God,
 who has given you the will to do these things,
 give you grace to perform them,
 that the work begun in you may be brought to perfection.

Amen.

PROCLAMATION AND RESPONSE**THE PREPARATION** *“Lord, Whose Love Through Humble Service”* *Bayly*

Lord, whose love through humble service bore the weight of human need,
 Who upon the cross, forsaken, offered mercy's perfect deed:
 We, your servants, bring the worship not of voice alone, but heart,
 Consecrating to your purpose every gift that you impart.

Still your children wander homeless; still the hungry cry for bread;
 Still the captives long for freedom, still in grief we mourn our dead.
 As, O Lord, your deep compassion healed the sick and freed the soul,
 Use the love your Spirit kindles still to save and make us whole.

As we worship, grant us vision, till your love's revealing light
 In its height and depth and greatness dawns upon our quickened sight,
 Making known the needs and burdens your compassion bids us bear,
 Stirring us to tireless striving your abundant life to share.

Called by worship to your service, forth in your dear name we go
 To the child, the youth, the aged, love in living deeds to show;
 Hope and health, good will and comfort, counsel, aid, and peace we give,
 That your servants, Lord, in freedom may your mercy know, and live

THE LESSON

SERMON

Bishop Julius C. Trimble

WE RESPOND

OFFERING

Tonight's offering will be used to provide scholarships to students from the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference for undergraduate and seminary education.

Offertory

***DOXOLOGY**

“Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow”
 Praise God, all creatures here below;
 Praise God above, ye heavenly host;
 Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen.

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

Eternal God, who has called the Church into being and equipped it to pursue the mission of Jesus Christ, raise up new leaders for your Church that we might continue the work in generations to come. Use these gifts to prepare both laypersons and clergy who will commit themselves to sharing the Gospel and living in imitation of your son, Jesus Christ. Amen.

THE EXAMINATION OF PERSONS BEING COMMISSIONED

To Be Commissioned to Perform the Duties of the Ministry of the Deacon

(Name and information about each candidate)

To Be Commissioned to Perform the Duties of the Ministry of the Elder

(Name and information about each candidate)

(From center stage) The bishop says to the congregation:

By affirming the covenant of baptism,
 all members of Christ's holy church pledge
 to serve as Christ's representatives in the world.

Christ gave all of us this command:

“Ask the Lord of the harvest to send laborers into his harvest.”
 We have asked, and the Lord has answered.

These sisters and brothers know our Savior's concern for God's people,

see the plentiful harvest,
and are ready to respond generously to the Lord
in the words of the prophet: “Here I am; send me.”

Urged on by the love of Christ and strengthened by the Holy Spirit,
they now come to declare in public
their desire to live out the covenant made at their baptism
by binding themselves to the service of God
under the supervision of the bishop
and the guidance of ordained colleagues
and by being appointed to share as servant leaders
in the body of Christ.

Today we commission them to service
as they continue to prepare for ordained ministry among us.

THE PRAYER OF COMMISSIONING WITH LAYING ON OF HANDS

The candidates continue standing.

The bishop, facing the congregation and extending arms over all of the candidates, prays:

God of the apostles and prophets, of the martyrs and teachers,
you raise up men and women to be apostolic leaders in your church.
By your Holy Spirit
help these, your servants,
to understand and live the mystery of your love with boldness and joy.
Deepen their sense of purpose
as they exercise commissioned ministry.
Empower them, and those who will walk with them to guide their ministry,
together with all of your people,
to heal the sick,
love the outcast,
resist evil,
preach the Word,
and give themselves freely for your name’s sake.

Candidates walk up on stage and Bishop walks behind kneeler:

The bishop, both hands upon the shoulders of each candidate, prays:

Pour out your Holy Spirit upon **(Name)**
Send *her* now to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ,
to announce the reign of God,
and to equip the church for ministry,
in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
All respond: Amen.

When the last person has been commissioned, the bishop and others return to their places for the hymn.

HYMN *

“I Am Thine, O Lord”

Crosby

I am thine, O Lord, I have heard thy voice, and it told thy love to me;
But I long to rise in the arms of faith and be closer drawn to thee.

Refrain: Draw me nearer, nearer, blessed Lord, to the cross where thou
hast died.

Draw me nearer, nearer, blessed Lord, to thy precious, bleeding side.

Consecrate me now to thy service, Lord, by the power of grace divine
Let my soul look up with a steadfast hope, and my will be lost in thine.

Refrain

O the pure delight of a single hour that before thy throne I spend,
When I kneel in prayer and with thee, my God, I commune as friend with
friend.

Refrain

EXAMINATION OF DEACONS TO FULL CONNECTION

(Name and information about each candidate)

Bishop at center stage, deacon candidates stand in place.

The bishop examines the candidates for ordination as deacon:

A deacon

is called to share in Christ’s ministry of servanthood,
to relate the life of the community to its service in the world,
to lead others into Christian discipleship,
to nurture disciples for witness and service,

Here a large Bible may be lifted by an assistant.

to lead in worship,
to teach and proclaim God’s Word,
to assist elders and appointed local pastors at Holy Baptism and Holy Communion,

Here a towel and basin with pitcher may be lifted by an assistant.

to interpret to the church the world’s hurts and hopes,
to serve all people, particularly the poor, the sick, and the oppressed,
and to lead Christ’s people in ministries of compassion and justice,

liberation and reconciliation,
even in the face of hardship and personal sacrifice.

These are the duties of a deacon.

Do you believe that God has called you
to the life and work of a deacon?

I do so believe.

Will you, for the sake of the church's life and mission
covenant to participate in the order of deacons?
Will you give yourself to God through the order of deacons
in order to sustain and build each other up
in prayer, study, worship, and service?

**I will, with the help of God,
and with the help of my sisters and brothers in the order of deacons.**

LAYING ON OF HANDS AND PRAYER FOR DEACONS

The bishop calls the people to prayer using these or similar words:

As these persons are recognized or ordained by God and the church
for the ministry of deacons
to which we believe they have been called by the Holy Spirit,
let us pray for them.

The people pray for them in silence.

The bishop, with hands extended over those being ordained, prays:

We thank you, Living God,
that in your great love
you sent Jesus Christ
to take the form of a servant,
becoming obedient even to death on the cross,
and now resurrected and exalted in the heavens.
You have taught us, by his word and example,
that whoever would be great among us must be servant of all.

Give these servants grace to be faithful to their promises,
constant in their discipleship,
and always ready for works of loving service.
Make them modest and humble, gentle and strong,

rooted and grounded in love.
Give them a share in the ministry of Jesus Christ,
who came not to be served but to serve.

Candidates for ordination as deacon are invited to kneel before the bishop one at a time as directed.

Representatives from the laity and cabinet who are to join in the laying on of hands stand with the bishop. When the bishop lays hands on the head of the candidate, others may lay hands on the candidate's back or shoulders.

Family members and friends may be invited to stand where they are for silent prayer during the laying on of hands for each ordinand.

The bishop lays both hands on the head of each ordinand, praying:

Almighty God, pour upon (Name) the Holy Spirit
for the office and work of a deacon in Christ's holy church.
*All audibly affirm the action, saying, **Amen.***

Immediately the candidate places hands on a Bible as the bishop lays hands on the hands of the candidate and says:

(Name), take authority as a deacon
to proclaim the Word of God,
and to lead God's people to serve the world
in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
*All audibly affirm the action, saying, **Amen.***
(put on deacon stole)

When the last deacon candidate has been ordained, all return to their places for the hymn.

HYMN *

O Master, Let Me Walk With Thee

Gladden

O Master, let me walk with thee in lowly paths of service free;
Tell me thy secret; help me bear the strain of toil, the fret of care.

Help me the slow of heart to move by some clear, winning word of love;
Teach me the wayward feet to stay, and guide them in the homeward way.

In hope that sends a shining ray far down the future's broadening way,
In peace that only thou canst give, with thee, O Master, let me live.

EXAMINATION OF ELDERS TO FULL CONNECTION

(Name and information about each candidate)

Bishop at center stage.

The bishop examines the candidates for ordination and recognition as elder:

An elder
is called to share in the ministry of Christ
and of the whole church:
to preach and teach the Word of God

Here a large Bible may be lifted.

and faithfully administer
the sacraments of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion;

Here a paten and chalice may be lifted.

to lead the people of God in worship and prayer;
to lead persons to faith in Jesus Christ;
to exercise pastoral supervision,
order the life of the congregation,
counsel the troubled,
and declare the forgiveness of sin;

to lead the people of God
in obedience to Christ's mission in the world;
to seek justice, peace, and freedom for all people;
and to take a responsible place in the government of the Church
and in service in and to the community.

These are the duties of an elder.

Do you believe that God has called you
to the life and work of an elder?

I do so believe.

Will you, for the sake of the church's life and mission,
covenant to participate in the order of elders?

Will you give yourself to God through the order of elders
in order to sustain and build each other up
in prayer, study, worship, and service?

**I will, with the help of God,
and the help of my sisters and brothers in the order of elders.**

LAYING ON OF HANDS AND PRAYER FOR ELDERS

Bishop stay at center stage.

The bishop, facing the ordinands, calls the people to prayer:

As these persons are recognized or ordained by God and the church
 for the ministry of elders
 to which we believe they have been called by the Holy Spirit,
 let us pray for them.

The people pray for them in silence.

The bishop, with hands extended over those being ordained, prays:

We praise you, eternal God,
 because you have called us to be a priestly people,
 offering to you acceptable worship through Jesus Christ, our Lord,
 Apostle and High Priest, Shepherd and Bishop of our souls.

We thank you that, by dying, Christ has overcome death
 and, having ascended into heaven,
 has poured forth gifts abundantly on your people,
 making some apostles, some prophets,
 some evangelists, some pastors and teachers,
 to equip the saints for the work of ministry,
 to build up Christ's body,
 and to fulfill your gracious purpose in the world.

Give to these your servants the grace and power they need
 to serve you in this ministry.
 Make them faithful pastors, patient teachers, and wise counselors.
 Enable them to serve without reproach,
 to proclaim the gospel of salvation,
 to administer the sacraments of the new covenant,
 and to offer with all your people
 spiritual sacrifices acceptable to you;
 through Jesus Christ our Lord,
 who lives and reigns with you,
 in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
 one God, now and forever.

Family members and friends may be invited to stand where they are for silent prayer during the laying on of hands for each ordinand.

The first two candidates for ordination and their sponsors come forward. The second candidate may kneel at the lower kneeler for prayer while awaiting the ordination of the previous candidate. As each candidate rises from their ordination, the candidate at the kneeler moves to the dais and the next candidate and sponsors come to the lower kneeler.

Bishop Johnson, Bishop Trimble and the Deacon with the notebook move to behind kneeler. The DS of record and sponsors stand behind or at the side of the candidate, placing hands on shoulders of each ordinand.

The bishop lays both hands on the head of each ordinand, praying:

Almighty God, pour upon (Name) the Holy Spirit,
for the office and work of an elder in Christ's holy church.

All: Amen.

(Place hand on Bible)

(Name), take authority as an elder
to preach the Word of God,
to administer the Holy Sacraments,
and to order the life of the Church
in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

All: Amen.

(Put on stole)

RECOGNITION OF FULL MEMBERSHIP WITH ORDERS AS ELDER

(Name and information about each candidate)

From behind kneeler (but candidate does not kneel)

The bishop addresses the one whose orders and full membership as an elder is recognized.

After due examination

of your call and ministry in another part of Christ's holy church,
we now welcome you to this communion.

You have given assurance of your faith and Christian experience.

You have renewed the vows of your ordination
and committed yourself to uphold faithfully

The United Methodist Church.

We rejoice that you have been called to serve among us,
and pray that God may guide your ministry.

*(Name), we now recognize you as an elder in full connection
in The United Methodist Church.*

PRAYER OF THANKSGIVING

Bishop: Let us pray together:

We thank You, gracious God, for raising up among us faithful servants. Clothe our sisters and brothers with your righteousness, and grant that we, with them, may glorify You by giving ourselves to others. Amen.

THE AFFIRMATION OF OUR COVENANT AS CLERGY OF THE CONFERENCE

The bishop addresses the clergy including the newly ordained and commissioned.

God has called you, the clergy of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference, to minister among God's people as shepherds and servants. This ministry is not possible on our own; we depend on the empowering presence of God's Holy Spirit and the support of our sisters and brothers who have been ordained, commissioned or licensed. It is in yielding ourselves to God's call and in committing ourselves to live in covenant relationship as clergy, that we are enabled to do the work to which we have been called. In this community of clergy, we join a vast throng of devoted servants who have gone before us in faithful ministry. Let us stand and renew our covenant with each other as we share in the Covenant Prayer. I invite you to place your hand on the shoulder of the clergyperson in front of you or beside you as we pray together:

Clergy stand, place hand on shoulder of another clergy and say:

**I am no longer my own, but thine,
Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee,
exalted for thee or brought low for thee.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and heartily yield all things
to thy pleasure and disposal.
And now, O glorious and blessed God,
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,
Thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.**

(clergy are seated)

THE CALL

The bishop addresses the congregation:

This service is a high moment for the ordinands, those who have been commissioned and those who have become full members of our conference. It is a time of renewal for those who entered ministry in years past as we recommit ourselves to God's call. This service is also an opportunity for others in the congregation to hear and respond to the call of God to explore and enter ordained ministry, the ministry of a local pastor, or other forms of ministry. If you believe you have heard God calling you to Christian service, I invite you to come forward during the singing of our next hymn. Members of the Board of Ordained Ministry and the cabinet will be available to pray with you and to give you guidance about future steps.

***HYMN**

"Here I Am, Lord"

Schutte

I, the Lord of sea and sky, I have heard my peo-ple cry.
 All who dwell in dark and sin my hand will save.
 I who made the stars of night, I will make their dark-ness bright.
 Who will bear my light to them? Whom shall I send?

Chorus:

Here I am, Lord. Is it I, Lord?
 I have heard you call-ing in the night.
 I will go, Lord, if you lead me.
 I will hold your peo-ple in my heart.

I, the Lord of snow and rain, I have borne my peo-ple's pain.
 I have wept for love of them. They turn a-way.
 I will break their hearts of stone, give them hearts for love a-lone.
 I will speak my word to them. Whom shall I send?

Chorus

I, the Lord of wind and flame, I will tend the poor and lame,
 I will set a feast for them. My hand will save.
 Fin-est bread I will pro-vide till their hearts be sat-is-fied.
 I will give my life to them. Whom shall I send?

Chorus

DISMISSAL WITH BLESSING *

The bishop blesses the people:

The grace of Jesus Christ,

and the love of God,
 and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all always.
 Go in peace
 to serve God and your neighbor in all that you do.
We are sent in Christ's name.
Thanks be to God!

*RECESSIONAL HYMNS

“Go Make of All Disciples”

Adkins

“Go make of all disciples.” We hear the call, O Lord,
 That comes from thee, our Father, in thy eternal Word.
 Inspire our ways of learning through earnest, fervent prayer,
 And let our daily living reveal thee everywhere.

“Go make of all disciples,” baptizing in the name
 Of Father, Son and Spirit, from age to age the same.
 We call each new disciple to follow thee, O Lord,
 Redeeming soul and body by water and the Word.

“Go make of all disciples.” We at thy feet would stay
 Until each life's vocation accents thy holy way.
 We cultivate the nature God plants in every heart,
 Revealing in our witness the master teacher's art.

“Go make of all disciples.” We welcome thy command.
 “Lo, I am with you always.” We take thy guiding hand.
 The task looms large before us; we follow without fear,
 In heaven and earth thy power shall bring God's kingdom here.

“Marching to Zion”

Watts, refrain Lowry

Come, we that love the Lord, and let our joys be known;
 Join in a song with sweet accord, join in a song with sweet accord
 And thus surround the throne, and thus surround the throne.

Refrain: We're marching to Zion, beautiful, beautiful Zion;
 We're marching upward to Zion, the beautiful city of God.

Let those refuse to sing who never knew our God;
 But children of the heavenly King, but children of the heavenly King
 May speak their joys abroad, may speak their joys abroad.

Refrain: We're marching to Zion, beautiful, beautiful Zion;
 We're marching upward to Zion, the beautiful city of God.

The hill of Zion yields a thousand sacred sweets

Before we reach the heavenly fields, before we reach the heavenly fields,
Or walk the golden streets, or walk the golden streets.

Refrain: We're marching to Zion, beautiful, beautiful Zion;
We're marching upward to Zion, the beautiful city of God.

Then let our songs abound, and every tear be dry.
We're marching through Emmanuel's ground, we're marching through
Emmanuel's ground,
To fairer worlds on high, to fairer worlds on high.

Refrain: We're marching to Zion, beautiful, beautiful Zion;
We're marching upward to Zion, the beautiful city of God.

POSTLUDE

NOTES ABOUT THIS SERVICE

~The Board of Ordained Ministry of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference is grateful to all who have helped to make the Celebration of Commissioning and Ordination a rich and meaningful experience for commissioned ministers, ordinands, those who are being received into full membership in the annual conference, family members and the worshipping community.

~We welcome Bishop Julius C. Trimble, resident bishop of the Iowa area of the United Methodist Church, and his participation in this service.

~Providing music for this service (Name), the organist of West Lawn United Methodist Church..

~Participants in this service include (Name), conference lay leader; (Name), Chairperson of the Order of Deacons in the conference; (Name), Chairperson of the Order of Elders in the conference; and (Name), Chairperson of the Board of Ordained ministry.

~The Asbury Bible used in this service was once the possession of our first bishop, Francis Asbury, and is now placed in permanent display in the museum of Old St. George's United Methodist Church in Philadelphia.

~The Wesley Chalice used in this service was sent to St. George's Church in 1785 by John Wesley so that Methodists in the newly formed church could be certain to celebrate the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

~The offering received during this evening's service will be used for scholarships for undergraduate and seminary students from the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference.

~Hymns for this service are reproduced under CCLI License # 1083685. "Here I Am Lord," copyright 1981, 1983, 1989 Daniel Schutte and NALR, is used by permission.

~The Bishop's Crozier

The crozier is made from maple and bloodwood. Maple is easy to bend and shape just as Jesus tried to mold us to be a more perfect person. It has three strips of bloodwood to represent the Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Bloodwood symbolizes the color of the blood of Jesus given for the salvation of the world. The wood of the crozier has some imperfections, blemishes and scars as a symbol of our imperfections and flaws. The clear finish that covers the crozier symbolizes God's way of making us clean and new. As God built the church on a solid rock, the base of the crozier is made of teak wood. It is impervious to rot and cannot be easily destroyed. The church, like this wood, has remained strong through the years. This crozier was made by Greg Ward.

APPENDIX 8

ORDINATION NIGHT QUESTIONNAIRE

The following questionnaire was handed out to clergy on the night of the ordination service. Members of the Local Advisory Committee distributed the questionnaires to clergy in the robbing room, and collected them at the exits following the service. Pencils were provided as well. For purposes of this paper, spaces left for narrative responses have been reduced.

ORDINATION QUESTIONNAIRE

Thank you for taking a few minutes to complete this questionnaire, sharing your thoughts about tonight's Service of Ordination and the daily devotionals sent out over the last 3 weeks. Please return your questionnaire after the service to one of the individuals collecting them as you recess.

1. How often have you attended ordination in the past?
 Almost always Frequently Rarely
 Never

2. Were you:
 Ordained or commissioned tonight A participant in the service
 Processed with clergy

3. Why did you attend tonight's service?

4. How did this service compare with other ordination services you have attended?
(check one for each row)

<input type="checkbox"/> More Meaningful	<input type="checkbox"/> About the Same	<input type="checkbox"/> Less Meaningful
<input type="checkbox"/> More aware of Spirit's presence		<input type="checkbox"/> Less Spiritual
<input type="checkbox"/> Felt more connected to ordinands		<input type="checkbox"/> Felt less connected to ordinands
<input type="checkbox"/> Felt more connected to other clergy		<input type="checkbox"/> Felt less connected to other clergy
<input type="checkbox"/> Felt I was a participant in the service		<input type="checkbox"/> Felt disconnected from the service
<input type="checkbox"/> Was more aware of my own ordination/licensing		<input type="checkbox"/> No more aware of my own experience than in the past

5. What element(s) of the service was (were) most meaningful to you? (e.g., processional/recessional; music; prayers; Scripture; sermon; examination of candidates; laying on of hands; the invocation of the Holy Spirit; the charge to take authority; the Covenant Prayer; the altar call) Why?
6. Did the service leave you feeling: (check all that apply)
- renewed for the work of ministry affirmed in my call to ministry
- more aware of my call to ministry grateful for my call to ministry
- more aware of the Spirit's power in my ministry
- no different than when I entered Other:
7. How did you experience your relationship to other clergy tonight? Did you feel:
- more connected in covenant community to all clergy
- more connected in covenant community with those being ordained, commissioned, recognized
- felt no different
8. Did you read the daily devotionals about ordination sent out from the conference?
- Yes, all or most Yes, some No
9. If you answered yes, did they have any impact on what you found important or meaningful in the service? If you answer yes, please describe more fully.
- Yes, they had an impact No, they did not have an impact

10. If you read the devotionals, did they affect your understanding of ordination in any way? If so, how?
 Yes, they affected my understanding
 No, they did not affect my understanding
11. If you read the devotionals, did you pray the prayer each day?
 Yes, I prayed daily Yes, I prayed some of the days
 No, I didn't use the prayers
12. If you used the prayers, did praying for those coming for ordination, commissioning or recognition affect your sense of connection with them or your participation in this service? If so, how?
13. If you read the devotionals, what other impact did they have on you, if any?
14. Do you have any suggestions for improving the Service of Ordination or the preparation leading up to the service? Or any other comments?
15. Are you:
 Ordained Commissioned Licensed
 Laity

Thank you for your assistance. Please return your questionnaire as you recess. If you would like to discuss the service or your responses, please feel free to contact Rev. Bronwyn Yocum.

APPENDIX 9

ORDINATION NIGHT QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

1. How often have you attended ordination in the past?

	Percent	Count
Almost always	73.3%	44
Frequently	20.0%	12
Rarely	5.0%	3
Never	1.7%	1

2. What was your participation tonight?

	Percent	Count
Ordained or commissioned	5.2%	3
A participant in the service	10.3	6
Processed with the clergy	84.5	49

3. Why did you attend tonight's service?

Our pastor was recognized as an elder in full membership and in support of ministry to congratulate ad be a part of this special occasion and blessing.
To see how a United Methodist ordination is having attended Episcopal ordinations.
we were here for conference
mandate by bishop
support my friends and colleagues because I was excited to see what you had cooked up after those devotionals
to celebrate and affirm my brothers and sisters being ordained and commissioned and to bring back to memory my own ordination
Importance of supporting new clergy
As a part of the covenant community. Unless it is totally unavoidable I always attend all of the conference.
I was ordained tonight

It's a highlight of conference and meaningful celebration of our call and mission as a church
everyone supported me when I was ordained - now I support the ordinands. It is also one of the most uplifting services I attend. Would only miss if incapacitated
I was ordained
1. Bron drafted me, 2. Support those being ordained, etc., 3. bishop said we needed to be here, 4. the e-mail devotions
It's in my DNA because of my connectional clergy covenant.
Just to be part of the service
Because it is an important as who and what we are - God's servants
I was part of the service
Joyful obligation!
Joyful obligation!
I'm a local pastor and I see tonight's service as a time to celebrate what God is doing in calling persons to serve and as a time to support those who are entering this specialized ministry. This service is always meaningful to me, but even more so this year.
As a support to new clergy also love the service
part of who I am as clergy
to be supportive and share in affirming the call of the ordinands and all who serve
Feel it is important
As a clergy, I usually attend to share in the experience of those being commissioned and ordained
knew people being commissioned
I love ordination service
I love ordination service
It is the high spot of annual conference
Because it connects us to the clergy past, present, future
I wanted to support fellow clergy.
to be a part of the service - to support the ordinands - to be blessed by being a part of this community

Because I love ordination and to support my colleagues in Christ
I believe it is an important part of the conference , to affirm our clergy connections
It's a highlight in the lives of the ordinands and being part of the liturgy makes it more grand for them
to keep sacredness of our connection through ordination
to support new clergy coming in and to be connected to fellow elders
part of conference - clergy support
I wanted to (locations were a problem in the past) And the bishop wants us to! (I think Jesus likes it too)
service is such a blessing
Closest friend of one being commissioned
to worship and to be part of the ordinands, commissioned, recognized's journey through a ministry presence of support
Bishop Johnson - the daily devotionals
to be in worship
It is good to celebrate this high moment and be reminded of our vows and commitments
wanted to support ordinands, it was in the middle of the conference
I always do
to be a part of the order to remember my ordination
to be with friends, colleagues and bro & sis in ministry
member of Board of Ordained Ministry
It is our covenant commitment
I like it!
I make attending the service of ordination a priority as it is a wonderfully blessed time of worship and renewal
I am an elder and my participation is a way of supporting the whole order, welcoming the new clergy and expressing my gratitude to God for the privilege of the ministry and praying for our church.
a. because of my "connection " in covenant community to those commissioned and ordained; b. because I have a role to play bringing symbols to be used in service

4. How did this service compare with other ordination services you have attended?

	Percent	Count
More Meaningful	51.9%	27
About the Same	44.2%	23
Less Meaningful	3.8%	2

5. How did this service compare with other ordination services you have attended?
Check one for each row.

	Felt more	Felt less	Count
Aware of Spirit's presence/spiritual	92.0 (23)	8.0% (2)	25
Connected to the ordinands	90.3% (28)	9.7% (3)	31
Connected to other clergy	93.8% (30)	6.3% (2)	32
participant in service/disconnected	100.0% (24)	0.0% 0	24
More aware of my own ordination/ no more aware	85.7% (30)	14.3% (5)	35

6. What element(s) of the services was (were) most meaningful to you? Why?

processional, music, prayers and the sermon message, one step beyond because it made me feel God's presence and the Holy Spirit within me.
Music for upliftment, scripture for more spiritual strength
Circled: processional/recessional, sermon, laying on of hands, invocation of the holy spirit, the charge to take authority. I enjoyed the whole service.
the altar call to service
Singing with hands on each other's shoulders. Sermon so much better than last year - last year it was "your ordination is no big deal", this year it was that it is a big deal. Processional - particularly ordinands walking through lines of clergy.
Circled: processional/recessional, music, sermon, laying on of hands. The processional/recessional is such an affirmation of our mutual journeys. Music lifts the soul. The bishop's ??? all of us to know 'where the water is and take risk was a great encouragement . Laying on of hands recalled my own ordination.
Always find processing and recessing meaningful; the covenant prayer with hands on one another.

presentation of stoles into to altar call
processional and recessional, moment of being ordained, the sermon by Bishop Trimble
Processional, laying hand and charge, Preaching, Altar call
Circled sermon and Covenant prayer Why - remind of promises of ordination – responsibilities
circled: processional, music, prayers, Scripture, sermon, laying on of hands, invocation of the Holy Spirit, the Covenant Prayer, the altar call WHY - because it affirms who we are as clergy and the future of the church
Processional - covenant prayer
All these elements including the altar call were meaningful and significant, but the commissioning, ordination and recognition were the highlight.
Really like the new clergy processional between the clergy
sermon, laying on of hands, altar cal
Music
Sermon - I know where the water is
circled: sermon, laying on of hands, Covenant Prayer - putting hands on each other, altar call. Sermon was a challenge to all the baptized to live in ministry. Laying on of hands reminded me of the devotion about the cloud of witnesses and to me is symbolic of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.
underlined laying on of hands Reminded me of my ordination and power of the HS I call upon daily
praying before ordinands were called up front (on the Bible)
sermon - very timely
The Sermon. It was a reminder challenge for me as clergy
processional, re-affirmation of Wesley covenant
music, prayers, Scripture, sermon
music, prayers, Scripture, sermon
circled sermon the ordination - renewing the call
Sermon (and Old Testament!!) processional/rec
Circled: Scripture, sermon, the Covenant Prayer
I like the idea of a guest bishop. It affirms our connectionalism.

altar call - (remembering my year)
having the ordinands pass through the lines of clergy
Sermon
underlined sermon number of clergy robed tonight
preaching, covenant prayer - I loved putting hands on each other's shoulders during the covenant prayer
circled laying on of hands
circled and underlined the covenant prayer, circled the altar call with comment "how cool is this"
processional, hymns
the message and sitting in the middle surrounded on each side by laity rather than sitting in front or behind them
I thought the way the commissioned knelt before their turn was an excellent thing. We just stood in line. The covenant prayer was powerful.
procession, invocation of HS, covenant prayer
Sermon
Circled: prayers, sermon, laying on of hands, altar call A new generation is being called.
music and prayers - invite me to participate spiritually and felt connected to the service
Enjoyed the processional hymns
prayers sermon
sermon - praying over ordinands/commissioned
circled sermon justice, call to go beyond place of comfort!!!
processional, solidarity of servanthood, sermon was commanding, music very slow and monotonous, covenant prayer always a humbling experience and renews my purpose
clergy gauntlet
Sermon was exceptional/ always love the ordination - it makes me renew my vows should have had a choir
vigil at beginning before it started, singing , processing, sermon
sermon, praying with ordinands prior to going up the steps, the covenant prayer, the altar call (receiving those coming forward)

Processional, laying on of hands. The gauntlet (we need a name for this) was wonderful. The opportunity to share in the laying on of hands with one who heard her call under my ministry.
Good preaching

7. Did the service leave you feeling (check all that apply)

	Percent	Count
renewed for the work of ministry	66.1%	37
more aware of my call to ministry	51.8%	29
more aware of the Spirit's power in my ministry	32.1%	18
affirmed in my call to ministry	53.6%	30
grateful for my call to ministry	67.9%	38
no different than when I entered	1.8%	1
renewed for the work of ministry		6

OTHER

connected with my brothers and sisters in ministry
I've always felt the more's above, and the connection in 7
In #5, noted "a very happy surprise"
wishing I was younger and could go for ordination - I'm licensed
checked
empowered to go and do my calling

8. How did you experience your relationship to other clergy tonight? Did you feel:

	Percent	Count
More connected in covenant community to all clergy	74.1%	43

More connected in covenant community with those being ordained, commissioned, recognized	44.8%	26
felt no different	8.6%	5

9. Did you read the daily devotionals sent out from the conference?

	Percent	Count
Yes, all or most	57.6%	34
Yes, some	18.6%	11
No	23.7%	14

10. If you answered yes, did they have any impact on what you found important or meaningful in the service?

	Percent	Count
Yes	84.6%	38
No	13.6%	6

11. If you answered yes to the last question, please describe more fully.

I was feeling spiritually strong.
sense of connection with other clergy because of the passion, time and skill that went into writing them. It made the ordination feel more spiritual.
I was reminded of our covenant to be in community with one another and be held accountable to one another and reclaim my calling
There are elements in each of the personal testimonies that drew my attention more to the sacredness of life and the personal impact of how people have walked with God
allowed me to reflect on my own experience of call
Excellent The scripture readings were appropriate. The stories relate to the journey we have all taken
When I was ordained everything was in a whirl. The devotions helped me to "relive" the experience.
They amplified the meaning and deep significance of both the call and ordination and drew me into a prayerful connection with the being ordained, commissioned and recognized
They were refreshing to be reminded about the call.

It made me aware of who the ordinands were and allowed/enabled me to pray for them and the service
In a personal way
Great illustrations!
Great illustrations!
Did make me think about the people who would be ordained or commissioned tonight and pray them and all clergy.
I appreciated being able to pray for those who would be commissioned or ordained
it made me reflect more fully - and I was better prepared
called me to pray for those coming before us - connectinalism, and helped me recall and renew my own ordination
made me think about my call
personal experiences
became personal
They were wonderful! What a good idea!
I was prepared to experience the service more fully and I was more prayerful as I experiences the service
two in particular - more recent
May 12th especially good, copied it to all of congregation
I wanted to know who was writing them but they were never signed
I thought they were wonderful! One I found confusing. If I remember correctly (May 7) had a reflection by a clergy person sharing about their ordination as a deacon and then described parish ministry roles and duties. For newly UMC's folks this language without explanation as to the difference in our denomination's process re ordination since 1996
The sense of connection. Greater anticipation thereby lengthening the joy and celebration.
Primed the pump, so to speak

12. If you read the devotions, did they affect your understanding of ordination in any way?

	Percent	Count
Yes	71.7%	33

No	28.3%	13
----	-------	----

13. If yes, how?

By transforming me more spiritually
It made ordination personal. I assume people I read about were being ordained. I just read quickly.
Reinforced my understanding and appreciation of ordination and that I could be in preparatory prayer for those who were to be commissioned and ordained.
I thought I they would have impact on tonight but I think I was caught up in the reality of tonight not the reflection. But they made ordination more immediate.
They gave me a broader perspective on my own ordination
public aspect of ordination
They reinforced an understanding and helped to think about ordination at a deeper level.
See above
see above
Reminders of ordination's meaning
Reminders of ordination's meaning
I appreciated the emphasis - particularly one day - on the community aspect of ordination and licensing. It's not about us - but God's gift to the church. Also found very meaningful the devotions based upon the questions asked of the candidates - thought provoking about ministry in general
affirming, deepening, broadening, personalizing
see above
different takes/views/experiences. I enjoyed reading them all.
It brought to the forefront our calling to be vessels of Christ
They affirmed a commonality of post-ordination experience and the need for constant renewal
deepened
I understood before, but still found them helpful
deepened my understandings by the experiences of others
cause for reflection

Enriching!
Reminded me of the liturgy and words of promise and commitment
A wonderful review of the matrix of meanings and connections which ordination embodies.

14. If you read the devotionals, did you pray the prayer each day?

	Percent	Count
Yes, I prayed daily	56.5%	26
Yes, I prayed some of the days	43.5%	20
No, I didn't use the prayers	0.0%	0

15. If you used the prayers, did praying for those coming for ordination, commissioning or recognition affect your sense of connection with them or your participation in the service? If so, how?

It help to strengthen my relationship with God.
Yes, I had content to inspire and connect me.
Absolutely, it opened my heart up towards them and helped me to anticipate their ordination/ commissioning, rather than just showing up there
the devotional and prayer were threads that began to draw me closer to those preparing for ordination and commissioning
I don't know any of them personally but it was a more personal connection than just reading their bios.
I was connected with others by nature of my Being ordained
yes
I view that my calling is by God, for God and to God. It is through prayer that we are truly connected to one another in Jesus Christ.
Felt I "knew" those being prayed for
see above
It made me aware of the ordained and peaked my interest again.
I was away part of the time, did not have internet
Just knowing the names
Just knowing the names.

I was glad to have the names and to be able to pray for them individually
A sense of anticipation for them and the tasks they are undertaking
Praying for them reminded me of the need to pray for them.
definitely felt like I knew them better just by praying for them
yes - I felt connected to them
Yes. In prayer, we are now invested in them.
yes - made me feel more a part of the whole process with a prayer connection
Just having their names before me in the days leading up made me feel closer than receiving the information at clergy session
No
yes, just seeing their names was helpful
No
participation in service
bridged the time I was ordained to present
yes and in particular to those I know personally
Absolutely, These persons were not just some distant unfamiliar name.
Yes
?
Yes and No - I would have like their picture to accompany the prayer
I prayed for the one that devotion that I read that God would be with them
Yes, I remembered my ordination
Yes, it did assist my giving attention to those being ordained and commissioned and keeping them in my prayers.
Yes. I appreciated the opportunity to be praying specifically for them prior to the service and not just during their individual ordination/commissioning.
A bit. It reminded me of my ordination (1975) when the class of ordained developed a devotional/prayer booklet.

16. If you read the devotionals, what other impact did they have on you, if any?

They impacted me spiritually, mentally and physically.
--

deepening appreciation of new pastors and ministry in general.
Awesome to wake up each morning and have such a moving word and sense of connection with other clergy praying the same prayer. Great way to wake up.
I looked forward to ordination with a sense of anticipation as I remembered my own ordination.
Just to take more time to think theologically about Gods move in my life.
Helped me to reflect on my own ministry
Enlivened my connection to the H.S.
Gratitude
Gratitude
It provided a call to renewal for me in my ministry. They were super! Please thank whoever wrote them.
a reminder to discipline of spirit
I really liked the personal stories and they made me think about my own call and renewed my spirit
I thought that they were well done
Prepared my heart for tonight.
spoke to my heart as I journey toward ordination and as I serve in the local church
It made me think about my own call, and it is always inspiring to hear others' stories.
helped focus for whole conference
they lubricated my soul to experience God's presence tonight
took time out of a busy day. I have too much e-mail now. I have a daily devotion I read beside OT NT daily readings for personal devotions
caused me to reflect on my calling, caused me to wish that licensed local pastor could have a service included. The bishop would lay hand and pray (or anoint and pray). My licensing was a non-event
the diversity and manners of the calls to ministry was exceptional
made me look forward to attending the ordination service
I really enjoyed the devotionals and the many varied ways they framed call and call lived out
Helped me reflect on my own called ordination and value it more

to read more of God's Word
It successfully reminded me daily of the blessing of d blessing my call to ministry this time in the ordinands life as well as renewing an
I felt connected to the author through shared and comparable experiences. No forum has led to such discussion of call and ordination.,

17. Do you have any suggestions for improving the Service of Ordination or the preparation?

Prep was perfect, service was good but two things detracted dramatically from the service. 1. the music was painful, the pace was off and brought energy down. Please consider Lydia Munoz to do the music for that service next year. 2. Considering the less than appealing worship space, is there some way to create a better worship space atmosphere if it is held at Oaks again?
I only wish we could have the service in a church setting though I know how logistically crazy that would be. Please repeat the preparatory devotions/prayers in the future.
Didn't read devotions but thought it was a very interesting idea. The music was very formal and slow - more diversity of music would be very appropriate and could be much more energizing. sitting at tables was a bit odd but it was good to sit near the front rather than, in several years past, processing to the front and back around to the rear!
the tables caused us to be too spread out
The recognition of orders for those coming in from another denomination seemed a little flat. I don't have a suggestion. But it may need a little beefing up.
commitment of all clergy each ordination
No, it was one of the best ones in recent years.
In that many in the upcoming classes are younger, some "modern" hymns/songs might be appropriate. Having said that, "Lord, you give the great commission" would be a good alternative. So what do I really know?
Really liked the new clergy being welcomed by the seasoned clergy. Ref the robing area - need coat racks, place to secure purses, etc. Does ordination always have to be in the evening?
The lining up in preparation for the procession was rather chaotic and could have been helped by having an amplified microphone available for the marshal.
Seating arrangements should be well thought out. It will be good to have the members of the clergy surround the ordained so they can feel the solidarity with them.
More variety in music - too much slow organ, it could have been more lively

<p>1. Bag the tables! 2. Great organ but needs much more amplification 3. Why were Ken and Cindy Hall not laying hands on their son? Please don't tell me it was because they're not ordained; neither are the lay members on BOOM, Jonathan's situation with clergy parents is so unique! 4. Clergy need an order of procession chart - something visual 5. The list of Bishop Trimble's accomplishments was unnecessary</p>
<p>I would prefer NOT having a questionnaire to fill out during ordination! (I hate to interrupt worship with business)</p>
<p>More celebratory music. Music could have had some additions of contemporary music</p>
<p>This was a wonderful service - Thank you Bron (And Bishop)</p>
<p>special music - trumpets? More contemporary</p>
<p>It would be nice incorporating some contemporary music in the service - all of the hymns were slow and dragged.</p>
<p>please no tables next time</p>
<p>None - it was a great service</p>
<p>This year we could have used someone to direct the music, we had trouble staying with the organ. not sure why!?</p>
<p>Organ needs to be louder and faster</p>
<p>I often feel that seating the clergy in the center pushes the ordinands families and friends to the margin</p>
<p>devotionals too long (note to #8) Name recognition and therefore more connected (#12) pictures and bios of ordinands</p>
<p>thank you to all who organized and participated</p>
<p>Announce that friends should stand as hands laid on</p>
<p>no, excellent</p>
<p>keep doing the devotionals, keep the bench upon which the commissioned and ordained kneel up high on stage, keep it to the hour and a half you did tonight</p>
<p>No</p>
<p>Try it again - test it more than once before making significant judgments/changes</p>
<p>I loved the line up as everyone passed between us. I would have felt more connected without the tables and closer seating. A church would have been idea. Was there one close by us, could have gotten shuttles to? More time for dinner and gathering, felt rushed from meetings over dinner to dress. I think lower lighting and no tables would have made one feel much more connected.</p>
<p>Better preaching more meat less fluff and cheerleading</p>
<p>include all people in the clergy - including gay and lesbian folks</p>

I am not sure all clergy, especially relatively new clergy, come to the service with the awareness of wearing their red stoles. Perhaps a communication from the bishop's office re attendance @ the service and the wearing of red stoles would be particularly helpful.
1. Be aware of the handicapped in the processional/recessional. WE should walk no faster than the slowest are able. 2. The recessing clergy should continue singing from the back and sides so the congregation does not feel abandoned.
a. Use of water poured into baptismal font or sound of water in audible ways to connect baptism to call to ministry in visible and tangible ways. b. More scripture lessons than just what serves as text for preaching. At least one from Hebrew Scripture, Epistle and Gospel. c. The use of the Asbury Bible, as viewed or understood by the larger congregation, appeared almost invisible and thus insignificant. d. The inclusion of the covenant prayer (for clergy only) makes call to ministry feel/seem clergy only. What about including lay delegates or inviting lay leaders of congregations? e. Missed a choir and special music.

18. Are you?

	Percent	Count
Ordained	79.7%	47
Commissioned	1.7%	1
Licensed	13.6%	8
Laity	5.1%	3

APPENDIX 10
ON-LINE POST SERVICE QUESTIONNAIRE

Some clergy indicated at the ordination service that they did not want to complete the survey that evening so that they could fully participate and enjoy the ordination service. As a result, an on-line version of the survey was created, with some questions resulting from the results obtained the night of ordination. Fifty-four individuals took advantage of the on-line version. The following questions were asked.

1. Which of the following words describe the ordination service as you experienced it?

Somber

Serious

Joyful

Awe

Moving

Humbling

Inspiring

Spiritual

Boring

Energizing

Celebratory

Obligatory

2. Which one of the words best describes your overall experience of the ordination service?

Somber

Serious

Joyful

Awe

Moving

Humbling

Inspiring

Spiritual

Boring

Energizing

Celebratory

Obligatory

3. What memories stand out as you recall the ordination service and events leading up to ordination?

4. What was the most meaningful event surrounding ordination for you this year?

5. Which elements of the service were most memorable for you? (Choose up to 3)

6. Which single element was most meaningful to you personally?

7. Was there an object or image that stands out in your memory as you recall the service of ordination?

8. If yes, please describe that object or image.

9. Is anything different about the ordinands now that they are ordained?

10. If you answered yes, how are they changed or different as a result of ordination?

11. Is the community different as a result of their ordination?
12. If yes, in what way?
13. How would you rate the impact of the service on your sense of connection to other clergy?
14. Did you read the daily devotionals e-mailed to clergy prior to annual conference?
15. If yes, how did they affect your understanding of the meaning of ordination?
16. If you read the devotionals, please share any reactions you had or describe the impact they made or did not make.
17. What was the impact of praying by name for those coming for ordination and commissioning?
18. How did the service compare to your expectations? What would you change in future services of ordination?
19. Please feel free to add any other comments about the ordination service or the daily devotionals.

APPENDIX 11
ON-LINE POST SERVICE QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

1. Which of the following words describe the ordination service as you experienced it?

	Percent	Count
Somber	7.5%	4
Serious	17.0%	9
Joyful	60.4%	32
Awe	9.4%	5
Moving	47.2%	25
Humbling	20.8%	11
Inspiring	43.4%	23
Spiritual	56.6%	30
Boring	5.7%	3
Energizing	22.6%	12
Celebratory	60.4%	32
Obligatory	3.8%	2

2. Which one of the words best describes your overall experience of the ordination service?

	Percent	Count
Somber	3.8%	2
Serious	3.8%	2
Joyful	15.4%	8
Awe	0%	0
Moving	15.4%	8
Humbling	3.8%	2
Inspiring	11.5%	6
Spiritual	13.5%	7
Boring	3.8%	2
Energizing	5.8%	3
Celebratory	19.2%	10
Obligatory	3.8%	2

3. What memories stand out as you recall the ordination service and events leading up to ordination?

candidates praying at Asbury Bible/altar before going to stage.
The sermon
Sermon and encouragement
The collegiality
the laying on of the bishops hands
The joy of celebration to God's call and the other clergy's support to the new ordination candidates.
The processional and connection with my brothers and sisters in ministry; the powerful preaching; the daily devotions and prayerful attention to the persons to be ordained/commissioned.
Having the honor of praying with the candidates prior to their proceeding to the platform; the procession, both in and out; the pagentry of it all; the awesome movement and presence of the Holy Spirit throughout the service
Gathering as clergy, feeling joy for the ordinands, singing together
A sense of real collegiality as we prayed for the ordinands/those to be commissioned, etc. in the daily devotionals. Continued in the great turn-out of clergy for the service.
I went to the ordination of Dr. Donna Jones to support her in her new direction. It is very sad to lose her in our conference and connection, so the service was sad, but I felt like I helped to represent some continuity for her and for the conference as she goes in that new direction.
I really appreciated the daily devotionals; especially the naming of each person being ordained or commissioned.
I'm always impressed and inspired by the congregational singing. That many voices singing, often in harmony, touch me greatly.
laying on of hands
Being asked by Rev. Yocum to participate in the service
The "greeting line" of ordanied clergy that the ordinands passed through - very affirming! The strength of the speaker. The gentle, affirming manner of the Bishop.
I appreciated the ordination devos send to us.
Having the participants walk through the lines of clergy as they moved into the service. It was a joyful processional.
my experience leading up to licensing
music was much too slow, and made the entire service something to endure with inspiring moments of knowing how special the service is for those being ordained.

Prior to the service, Bishop Johnson was dancing, robed with staff, between the rows of clergy.
all of us lineing up for the processiong
It was a beautiful service.
Preacher
Nothing in particular.
The devotions were very inspirational. I felt more connected with the individual candidates by praying for them by name. The procession between the lines of clergy felt very celebratory and also emphasized our connection with each other. I always feel it is a holy moment when 1) the retiring elders anoint the ordinands, and 2) those officiating at ordination lay hands on the candidates & pray for the Holy Spirit to empower them for their tasks.
Processional, standing for ordinands
The care for each person being ordained or commissioned.
I truly enjoyed the daily devotionals - remembering and recalling my own ordination and praying by name for those who were coming before us this year.
being asked to receive the mantle from the retirees. Also kneeling with the Asbury bible
I was ill and did not attend.
the sermon
The powerful witness by the Reconciling folks prior to the service. I am always deeply distressed by the thought that the church is turning away persons with great grace and God-given gifts.
the entrance
depressing music, not joyful, uplifting
When the Bishop laid her hands on them
Seeing the candidates prayed for before going up to be commissioned or ordained
the devotionals set the stage forming a line for the candidates to pass through (although the process of herding us into the line was chaotic--we seemed to be getting conflicting directions and it was difficult to hear or even know who we should be listening to)
The lack of seriousness by the clergy prior to being in public. Large number of clergy seemed to be in attendance.
the excitement of friends and families anticipating the ordination of loved ones
prayer and song vigil with reconciling ministries, visiting Bishop's preaching, procession
Seeing the clergy united together.

Final Hymn
The long line of clergy processing in and out was a firm show of support as an order. Voices raised in song was very moving.
The new candidates coming forward.
the processional was beautiful to watch all the clergy that were able to participate because it was in the same location.
Seeing the joy of the candidates
It's kind of funny - they always have the clergy gather way too early, but that usually gives me the opportunity to talk with some of my colleagues that I didn't have the chance to talk to at other times.
A sermon that was far from memorable. Music with little variety. Liturgy that didn't inspire the people to work for the kingdom.
None

4. What was the most meaningful event surrounding ordination for you this year?

Being sponsor for a candidate and being a part of the act of ordination.
Diversity of those ordained
Sermon
The ordination of someone I mentored
not sure
The speaker was most inspiring with a clear message of unconditional love.
Praying with the candidates
The music and prayers.
The devotionals
A very personal connection with one commissioned.
For the first time in many years singing "Here I Am Lord" caused me to tear up.
laying on of hands
Toss up. REALLY liked the devotions but also liked the passing thru the clergy before the service
The reaffirmation of our common call, and our unity in pursuing that call
Having some young ordinands.

Knowing some of the people who were being commissioned.
the bishop's message, going a step beyond caution
the sermon
Being part of the procession of clergy.
standing in support of those being ordained and commissioned and recognized
The service was awe inspiring.
Hymns
I felt that I personally benefitted from the devotions most of all. They gave me much to contemplate before conference and during the laying on of hands & invocation of the Holy Spirit on the ordinands.
Feeling part of the whole
Appreciated the daily devotionals--any thought for continuing devotionals for next year?
Wonderful singing!
the laying on of hands by the bishop and others
Watching a friend come forward at the invitation
The pre-service vigil mentioned above.
the entrance
Laying on of hands
The naming of the candidates
The service itself, but the devotions were also a blessing
the devotionals
Watching the expressions on the family members as their persons were called
I always love the processional!
witnessing the moment for an ordinand I knew
Being Commissioned.
Watching the Ordinands I know become Ordained
Having it on Friday was the best idea yet.
The new candidates coming forward.
Processional

It's hard to choose one event, it seemed to flow together well
I liked the prayers for each of the candidates in the devotionals - I liked having their names before me, before I came to Annual Conference.
Surrounding ordination? Lining up for the procession was rather joyful. It was nice for those being ordained and commissioned to walk through 2 rows of clergy.
the devotionals

5. Which elements of the service were most memorable for you? (Choose up to 3)

	Percent	Count
Liturgy	17.3%	9
Processional between the lines of clergy	46.2%	24
Processional into the hall	42.3%	22
Prayers	13.5%	7
Scripture reading	0%	0
Sermon	32.7%	17
Music	17.3%	9
Examination of the Candidates	1.9%	1
Laying on of hands	53.8%	28
Invocation of the Holy Spirit on ordinand	38.5%	20
Bishop's charge to "take authority"	26.9%	14
Recessional	15.4%	8
Other		2

6. Which single element was most meaningful to you personally?

	Percent	Count
Liturgy	7.7%	4
Processional between the lines of clergy	19.2%	10
Processional into the hall	11.5%	6
Prayers	0%	0
Scripture reading	0%	0
Sermon	11.5%	6
Music	0%	0
Examination of the Candidates	0%	0

Laying on of hands	13.5%	7
Invocation of the Holy Spirit on ordinand	17.3%	9
Bishop's charge to "take authority"	13.5%	7
Recessional	1.9%	1
Other	3.8%	2

7. Was there an object or image that stands out in your memory as you recall the service of ordination?

Percent		Count	
Yes	47.1%	24	
No	52.9%	27	

8. If yes, please describe that object or image.

Asbury Bible
the bishops staff
The celebration knowing that we are all called and need God's direction and power in order to serve.
The procession of ordinands.
The kneeler w/ the Wesley Bible - it was humbling!
The deacons praying with each candidate before they ascended the stage.
candidates kneeling
The look on the faces of those being ordained as they walked thru the lines of elders
The large cross, only partly green because we are living and growing the faith in the world, and the cutouts of various people at the back of the stage, standing in silent witness of all those who are not present.
The joyful, dancing, movement to begin the processional. This was different from other ordination services I attended.
the dullness and nothing inspiring about the music
My own ordination in 1984 by Bishop Mays. A picture was taken at the moment of receiving my stole and that picture was sent to me and is now framed always reminding me of my ordination.
all the clergy robed together
The invitation for those who felt called to come forward

I found it interesting that the Wesley Bible was placed in a different spot and the ordinands knelt to pray over it - separate from ordination. Interesting difference. Hmmm. Still mulling that over. Can't say it's better or worse - just different.
The bishop's staff and the asbury bible
the DS's and Bishop taking extra turns through the lines of clergy and the joyous celebration it invited
When the Bishop prayed over them
Stoles
The number of clergy present.
The recessional was impressive. The music swelled, the voices rose as one. It was a pleasing sound unto the Lord!
To watch the great line up of men and women still excited about the ordination process and the glow of the candidates being confirmed and ordained.
The slowly greening cross behind the stage.
The Asbury Bible.

9. Is anything different about the ordinands how that they are ordained?

	Percent	Count
Yes	78.7%	37
No	21.3%	10

10. If you answered yes, how are they changed or different as a result of ordination?

walking, talking with authority
One process is over and the new beginning of new orders to go forth and accomplish what they have learned.
They are now the annointed ones, affirmed by the church and annointed by God. This typically manifests as greater empowerment, clarity and holy boldness.
They are now on a path different than before, as they are now ordained by God and their church for ministry - this is different than simply volunteering to serve God.
They have moved into a new relationship with the order into which they are ordained, and their relationship with God in ministry is publicly affirmed and covenanted.
Dr. Jones is now happy to be Baptist and no longer represents us as United Methodists.
They have been placed into an even more specific role.

<p>Their call from God has been validated by the church. A holy moment/memory has been created that will sustain them in future ministry.</p>
<p>They are now bound by the BOD and part of the ordained body of Christ</p>
<p>The are assured of their connection to the fellowship of the ordained.</p>
<p>Holy Spirit is upon them as they serve God with their lives.</p>
<p>I believe they are more free to be themselves as they serve in ministry. It marks the end of one journey and the beginning of another.</p>
<p>They have been examined and tested, and confirmed in leadership by the larger church.</p>
<p>There is a greater accountability and expectation to lead the denomination into the future.</p>
<p>Laying on of hand and "taking the authority" Official ordained part of a larger important Order</p>
<p>They diligent pursuit of a seminary education and their commitment to serve has been recognized and celebrated.</p>
<p>symbolically empowered.</p>
<p>Hopefully they see themselves as connected to the many clergy who have taken those same steps before them and realize that the baton has been passed to them. Hopefully they understand themselves as part of a praying community, dependent upon God and dependent upon the support of others.</p>
<p>They have been affirmed by the church.</p>
<p>those ordained are now full members of the clergy--confirmed by the congregation</p>
<p>They now have the authority - they are now full Elders.</p>
<p>I answered yes because in part I have noticed a difference in my congregations perception of me. I have also felt more confident and willing to take on that leadership responsibilities in recent weeks</p>
<p>They have authority and responsibility to summon God's grace.</p>
<p>They have been given authority and empowered by the Holy Spirit to carry out their call to ministry.</p>
<p>Yes, the empowering of the elders after a long prayerful process</p>
<p>They are now in full connection with the Conference</p>
<p>In theory, they have "taken authority." Since I don't know any of them personally I can't comment on the reality..</p>

Only if they were serious about about the authority of the Bishop to grant them authority. They now officially represent the EPC, for good or for bad in their future conduct, remarks, life.
They are recognized as members of the clergy
They have now received a certain temporal authority from the bishop along with a full affirmation from her colleagues they are called to ministry.
Acceptance of Authority as an Elder
One chapter of life is behind them & another has begun.
I feel that the sense of accomplishment shows in how they carry themselves with more confidence.
Hopefully a closer fellowship with the body
They are spiritually strengthened. They see themselves differently and the congregation and the world see them differently.
Joy that they are now authorized to serve

11. Is the community different as a result of their ordination?

	Percent	Count
Yes	83.7%	41
No	16.3%	8

12. If yes, in what way?

The community grow and expands as gifts of newly ordained are added in, making room for the movement of the Holy Spirit in each of us.
more dedicated servants
Recognized those called and set aside for the work of ordained ministry
Stronger in bond/connection and numbers.
We are strengthened, bolstered, renewed for the ministries to which we are called.
The community will know the presence of the Lord through these ordained servants - their committment will be an example to the community.
We are renewed by the addition of their gifts and grace, and reminded that God cares for the church by calling and equipping leaders among us.
We have lost a powerful voice.
We have affirmed some into specific roles and responsibilities among us.

I believe that intrinsically the community has changed because each ordinande is changed in some way. When a momentace moment happens in ones life, that person's life is changed. In my mind it's as "night follows day" sort of thing. If a person changes then the community to which that person belongs is changed even if that change is not immediately noticable.
Validated, inspired and encouraged to continue the faithful work of ministry.
They have affirmed the calling of God on the lives of those ordained and arer also bound together with them.
It has increased in power and in number
The community will see their ministry in time.
They bring new perspectives and energy to the body. Yeah new ordinands!
The community recognizes thier competence and authority in religious matters and leadership, and will benifit from thier gifts and graces.
expanding our Order and continuing to add others to our community
We ALL called and here to serve.
It sorts of confirmed all of our ordinations as well.
The community has the responsibility of nurture for the new ordinands and the opportunity to be refreshed by their gifts, graces, and new perspectives.
We have grown in number, gifts, and spirit.
new realization that all Christians are called, from that group some are called to specialized ministry. Inspiring.
We are all enhanced by their admission into our community as they each bring their own gifts & graces.
See answer above
The community is more complete because of the added gifts of the spirit
They have become a part of us.
The Community is blessed with their enthusiasm and fresh commitment to Jesus Christ and their call to ministry.
It has welcomed gifted and talented servants into a covenant type group that will lead, shepherd and pastor others in the community.
Like the birth of a child in a family system, freshness and more enrichment to the community
We now have another trained and ordained minister within our community

We have participated in a life changing event and as the ordinands come among us in their newness we too are enriched and renewed.
If the ordinands accept and exercise that authority
We are expanded with the new ordinands participation.
New personalities and perspectives.
New and more diverse Conference
The community is stronger for their inclusion.
A hopefilled reminder that God is faithful & that resurrection is real..
In that we are welcoming into the order more sisters and brothers so there is a sense of ownership. Now they are us and we are them
We have affirmed their ministry and welcomed them among us
We have new members to our community of shepherds.,
Our leadership slowly turns over.

13. How would you rate the impact of the service on your sense of connection to other clergy?

	Percent	Count
Strengthened my connection to other clergy	62.7%	32
Felt separated from other clergy	5.9%	3
No change in my sense of connection	31.4%	16

14. Did you read the daily devotionals e-mailed to clergy prior to annual conference?

	Percent	Count
Yes	88.5%	46
No	11.5%	6

15. If yes, how did they affect your understanding of the meaning of ordination?

	Percent	Count
They affirmed what I already understood.	45.7%	21
They expanded my understanding.	37.0%	17
They challenged my understanding.	8.7%	4
They had no impact.	8.7%	4

16. If you read the devotionals, please share any reactions you had or describe the impact they made or did not make.

Excellent written. Very insightful.
Personal stories were interesting
acknowledgement from our leadership
Prepared me for the service
they were very spiritual
They were a reminder of who we are in Christ and the confirmation that we are called to be a servant like Christ.
The reading was a daily remembrance of my ordination and a connection with those who were soon to be ordained/commissioned.
I answered this on the paper eval. the day of ordination.
Made me feel more connected to the ordinands and to other clergy. Gave me an opportunity to be in intentional prayer for them.
a)They pointed out all the non-church ways our ordination vows connect with our lives. Made it more holistic. b)The prayers for each individual really helped me feel connected to that person in a supportive way.
I thought they were beautifully and carefully written, with wonderful stories and connections.
I appreciated the opportunity and challenge to reflect on the meaning of ordination in general and specifically for myself.
I appreciated the words/sentiments. I find myself wondering who authored the devotionals? Did they have specific connection with the ordinands?
There was abittersweetness that this was not done earlier. What a difference those devotionals might have made on the lives of clergy and helped them in their own faith journey.

I was touched by the naming of each ordinand. Each had his/her on special day.
It took me back to my own ordination and renewed me.
I liked being asked to pray for the ordinands. I think the devotionals would have been more 'special' if there hadn't been so many or so long. Became a task to accomplish...
two were great, saved them
they were very inspiring, but it took a lot of time to read each one. I'm still catching up on ones I didn't have a chance to read every day. I would have liked to know where they had come from - I guess I missed Bron's announcement - did you write all of them. That was a mysterious part of it all.
No impact because I looked for the name of the ordinand and prayed, but the upper part was just too long to read.
I found them inspiring and pertinent
Made me think of the individuals being ordained or commissioned.
I answered this question more completely at the survey I completed at Annual Conference when the devotions were fresher in my mind. They helped me to feel more connected with ordinands, with other clergy, and with the clergy in my past who nurtured me in faith and practice.
Felt connected to all clergy. Realized the uniqueness of the calling to ordained ministry.
I enjoyed reading the different experiences that people had - it deepens my own experience and understanding.
It was helpful for me to hear other voices as I prepared for my ordination
May 5: "The call to ordained or licensed ministry is not a right. I am not entitled to set apart ministry because I want to be a minister. It is a privilege that comes from God and is conferred on us by the community. It is a gift not only to us as individuals but to the community, designed to build up the people of God for the work of God. "; May 14 "Take time today to consider how you have demonstrated loyalty to the United Methodist Church. You chose to be a member of this denomination – what difference has it made in your life to be a United Methodist pastor rather than a Presbyterian or Baptist pastor? "; May 15 "I don't get to choose who belongs to the order or fellowship of local pastors. The credentialing process is not mine to run. But the church has invited me to live out my life as ordained or licensed clergy through a community, ..."; May 16; May 17 " I've never led sheep, but I shepherded a group of pastors and laypeople on a trip to the Church of the Resurrection. I told them it was like herding cats! I can assure you that the pancake turner would have had no effect at all. Ordering people around the way it is done in the business world just doesn't work in the church. " I kept these and read them from time to time since.
I appreciated the thoughtful expressions especially as they were delivered in reference to an ordinand
The devotionals tied me emotionally to the candidates.
They made me think about what ordination is all about

How diverse we are
I anticipated each new devotional. I appreciated that one of the candidates or ordinands was lifted up each day.
They did not effect a change. They became tiresome amidst all the e-mails I get. Too much.
Excellent writing
Great daily devotional. Something that colleagues could all share.
It was nice to hear about each of the ordinands and their experiences leading up to ordination.
They were a good review and should become a regular preparation for the service.
Reminded me of my call once again.
They were rather long and boring, a sense of sameness day after day.
They were wonderful!

17. What was the impact of praying by name for those coming for ordination and commissioning?

I enjoyed having the time to pray for each person by name, taking time to think and pray for them as they prepared themselves for ordination/commissioning.
It was personal with their names being called out
Encouragement
Made me concious of each one
made me feel as if I knew them all personally
Personalize the prayer
Suddenly these persons became "real" and caused me to anticipate seeing them at conference.
I found this very helpful. And, I can only imagine it was beneficial for those who do not know the candidates rpior to seeing them at clergy session.
Felt I was in a relationship with them, even those with whom I was not personally acquainted.
See above.
It was a good way to connect to those who are coming into our conference.
I welcomed the opportunity.

Seemed the service of ordination had already begun.
That I felt connected to them and that when they were introduced at the Clergy Session I felt I knew them
Feeling a stronger connection to each person as an individual.
I felt connected to them.
Put the emphasis where it was supposed to be.
felt like I was supporting colleagues
didn't know personally any of the ordinands this year, so the devotions made it more exciting
The impact was name recognition when they were introduced.
strengthened the connection
No impact other than I thought it appropriate
?
Wonderful! Felt more connected to them even before Annual Conference began.
Made me more excited when they came forward
Prayer is important and appreciated the opportunity to pray for each person. I would like to see this continue.
Connectionalism! We are in prayer for one another - what a marvelous idea to have the body praying for the ordinands before hand. Love it!
Helped me to focus on what was going on in my life and in the life of others
I got to know them better - but please can we have photos next time - I would like very much to continue this tradition but photos would be great. that way I can recognize them when I see them and tell them I was praying for them.
Prayer is always a powerful experience
I read some devotional, not all. Praying by name gave us a connection to these individuals.
It reconnected me to my sense of call and helped me to connect spiritually with the candidates.
I felt that it was a very personal act
felt connected
Even though I didn;t know them personally I felt connected.
I prayed for the one I knew. The rest remained names on a screen.

personalized the experience
I felt a stronger connection to the people.
Raised awareness of coming celebration
This was very helpful to further create awareness of those coming for ordination/commissioning and welcoming them into their order. I felt more connected to the whole process.
Made things more personal.
a family sense
A closer connection
Reminded me of how we are brothers and sisters together in Christ as servant leaders!!
That was nice. It reminded me that church is not about numbers, but people.
Felt I was connected to them before the ordination service

18. How did the service compare to your expectations? What would you change in future services of ordination?

About the same as other ordination services.
Was surprised to see the so called conservatives supporting the liberals in their agenda
not what I expected
More clergy present than in recent years
continue to bring in good powerful preachers
Nothing, all great!
Ordination is always a moving, spiritually enriching event for me and this time did not let me down - it lifted me up. I know the logistics are prohibitive -I'd like to experience the setting in a church sanctuary.
I would not choose to change anything. I love the tradition of it.
Exceeded my expectations - I cannot think of a way I might change it, other than to get rid of the tables (not very conducive to celebrating).
It felt more orderly than some, and the sea of clergy was wonderful to see! I'd love to see a choir anthem somewhere.
It was mostly what and how I would have expected it to be. Some of the specialness is that there is much shared experience by those who are ordained.

<p>Fill in empty reserved clergy seats with guests. Or, seat ordinands family/guests front and center and surround them with clergy.</p>
<p>Very disappointed by the lack of laity at the service. One of the clergy suggested that the clergy, after processing, all turn around at the back of the hall and continue to sing. On a practical note - there should have been some coat racks for the clergy to hang robes/coats on. Also could someone be assigned to watch the robing area so purses could be left in the area?</p>
<p>No changes! It was quite wonderful.</p>
<p>I love the service. It is a tradition I look forward to every year.</p>
<p>I was pleased with the service. The space was better than I expected. I thought the service moved well - not too long or boring.</p>
<p>I still remember the ordination service when Mark Miller was the musician as fabulous...</p>
<p>I was not prepared for any expectations. Therefore, I might be enchanted with anticipation if the service is really non-traditional, spirit filled and connecting me with the Holy and those who are being ordained. We are observers only for the most part. And I don't even know the clergy sitting with me.</p>
<p>I felt that this service was well done</p>
<p>Shorter</p>
<p>Was what I expected</p>
<p>I don't know that I'd change anything in future ordination services. Everything was very well planned this year. The service was inspiring and uplifting!</p>
<p>Was better than usual.</p>
<p>yes! Organ and music was great!</p>
<p>It was wonderful. The only change would be the music - either louder or have someone directing the congregational singing. We were not with the organ much of the time - esp. when processing in and recessing out - we were "off" beat from the organ. But I still loved it!</p>
<p>Exceeded my expectations</p>
<p>the tables disconnected me from the service so I felt isolated. Also the preaching felt irrelevant - the preaching at ordination has not been the best the past few years and I am not sure but I think that is because the preachers are being very careful about what they say in our conference. I also think that to have some speak about inclusivity after Rudy Rasmus was a tall order to follow - Rudy is very real and very clear about what he means by inclusivity he doesn't skirt the issue.</p>
<p>I thought the service was just right. I just hope we can include LGBTQ folks someday.</p>
<p>Invite friends and relatives to stand in support of those commissioned as well as those ordained.</p>

<p>There should have been some time for joy or celebration. This was too somber. My ordination was one of the most joyous ordination celebration I have ever attended and I will never forget that night because of the joy that was in the air. You could feel the movement of the Holy Spirit throughout the room. This was also the feelings of my family who had attended.</p>
<p>This was the first ordination I've attended.</p>
<p>It surpassed my expectations.</p>
<p>Nothing</p>
<p>It met my expectations. Better organization and directions are needed for the processing clergy</p>
<p>Hard to get past the warehouse feel. My spouse totally did get past it.</p>
<p>Have it in a church, not a warehouse</p>
<p>There was no highlight moment of special music as in past services.</p>
<p>Lived up to it. Nothing</p>
<p>The service was as good as I expected. I didn't care for the location. Sitting at tables was great for conference, but not so much for ordination. Took away from the worship experience. I still prefer a church setting.</p>
<p>Quite pleased. Far, far better than my own ordination - thank God. I don't know how you can change this one, but the tables made us feel so removed from one another.</p>
<p>It was way too serious and somber. Just to have organ music does not reflect the celebration of this special occasion in the lives of individuals and the church</p>
<p>It was better than usual.</p>
<p>Just fine!!</p>
<p>It did not meet my expectations. The sermon needed to be more of a powerful sending of the saints, there needed to be a variety of music, there needed to be more creative worship elements getting the congregation engaged with one another, and the multi-media capabilities could have been far better employed.</p>
<p>Music was not uplifting (except for Marching to Zion) and was hard to sing - since this is a service with people who are not all churchgoing attending, please choose more familiar hymns.</p>

19. Please feel free to add any other comments about the ordination service or the daily devotionals.

<p>Please be careful in describing experiences as a Deacon before Deacons became a permanent order in 1996. Though your experience shared was insightful, it can be confusing for those who still do not understand how the UMC now regards Deacons and Elders as separate, permanent orders with different but equally important ministry roles and callings.</p>
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Horrible atmosphere
Liked clergy in the middle section surrounded by other worshippers
It's difficult for me to respond to these questions because, while I always enjoy the ordination service, I did not experience anything noteworthy or of impact in this particular service. Certainly it is harder to experience the impact when sitting far away from the stage and viewing on a screen--this makes me feel much more like an observer than a participant.
While I like the idea of clergy grouped in the center and visible to the ordinands/commissioned, I wished for something less "marginal" for the families of candidates. Not sure how to do that in the space we had, but a thought.
I appreciated the prayers for those awaiting ordination. I thought that was a terribly appropriate thing to do.
I found the preaching to be average.
The daily devotionals were too long.
I don't have nay at this time.
Thank you, thank you, thank you! This was a blessing. Please do this - or something similar - again!
I appreciated everything you did to make this meaningful - I think it was more meaningful for me because of the devotions. However the feeling in that space really detracted from my experience. Is there any way we can find a cathedral or a church large enough to have the service? It would mean so much more. Perhaps with shuttle buses for those who are using public transport or I would even be willing to carpool to save fuel and parking. Your lovely liturgy got drowned out in the enormity of the space and the lack of ability to adjust the lighting.
Thanks for asking
Please always use "Here I Am, Lord" in the invitation.
I would like for the ordination service to be expanded and set that day aside only for ordination
I did complete the survey distributed at conference so you may be getting some dupliacte responses.
Drop the daily devotions. I have others that I read already. I think a great job was done under the circumstances with which the coordinators had to work.
I really enjoyed having the candidates pass between the clergy.
It would be nice to have an ecumenical connection when possible.
Good idea to make it more personal and add meaning. Most of ordinands were people I did not know or have had connections with to this point of time.

I look forward to this service every year, pray for it and pray deeply for our candidates during it. This year was one of the most boring and "non-moving" in recent memory. Pick a broader team of creative worship leaders to pull this together.

APPENDIX 12
ORDINAND FOLLOW UP QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

1. Which of the following words describe the ordination service as you experienced it?
Check all that apply.

	Percent	Count
Somber	0%	0
Serious	0%	0
Joyful	100%	1
Awe	100%	1
Moving	100%	1
Humbling	100%	1
Inspiring	100%	1
Spiritual	100	1
Boring	0%	0
Energizing	100	1
Celebratory	100	1
Obligatory	0%	0

2. Which of the words best describes your overall experience of the ordination service?

Humbling	100%	1
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3. What memories stand out as you recall the ordination service and events leading up to ordination?

The awesome responsibilities that has been conferred upon

4. What was the most meaningful event surrounding your ordination?

My ordination within community

5. What do you remember about the laying on of hands?

The affirmation by the people who have supported me throughout my journey from the time I became a candidate.

6. Was there an object or image that stands out in your memory as you recall the service of ordination?

Yes.

7. If yes, please describe that object or image.

The Bible and the specific verse on which I placed my hands during the ordination.

8. Is there anything different about you now that you are ordained?

Yes

9. If you answered yes, how are you changed or different as a result of ordination?

I expected a liberating feeling having completed the requirements for ordination but it has shifted to a feeling of awesome responsibility for the people in my church and in this community.

10. Is the community different as a result of your ordination?

No

11. If yes, in what way.

12. How did the service compare to your expectations? What would you change in future services of ordination?

It was certainly more spiritual than I expected but I do not know whether it was because of the fact that I was being ordained or the service itself.

13. How would you rate the impact of the service on your sense of connection to other clergy?

	Percent	Count
Strengthened my connection to other clergy	100%	1
Felt separated from other clergy	0%	0
No change in my sense of connection	0%	0

14. Did you read the daily devotionals emailed to clergy prior to annual conference?

Yes

15. If yes, how did they affect your understanding of the meaning of ordination?

	Percent	Count
They affirmed what I already understood	0%	0
They expanded my understanding	0%	0
They challenged my understanding	100%	1
They had no impact	0%	0

16. If you read the devotionals, please share how they affected you.

They both affirmed and challenged my understanding. I spent time meditating and reading Scripture to broaden and deepen my understanding of ordination was to mean to me in the future. I also was moved by the spiritual nature of the devotionals as well as the personal component contained in them.

17. How did you feel knowing that clergy throughout the conference were holding you in prayer by name?

It was affirming that they lifted me up in prayer for the service of ordination and for my future ministry. However, my thoughts while reading the devotions were focused on the other members of my class and those being commissioned.

APPENDIX 13
COMMISSIONED FOLLOW UP QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

1. Which of the following words describe the ordination service as you experienced it?
Check all that apply.

	Percent	Count
Somber	0%	0
Serious	100%	1
Joyful	100%	1
Awe	100%	1
Moving	100%	1
Humbling	0%	0
Inspiring	100%	1
Spiritual	100%	1
Boring	0%	0
Energizing	0%	0
Celebratory	100%	1
Obligatory	0%	0

2. Which of the words best describes your overall experience of the ordination service?

Joyful

3. What memories stand out as you recall the ordination service and the events leading up to your commissioning?

The moment I prayed with (Name) before walking on stage, the moment hands were laid on me on stage, the moment the Bishop prayed with us beforehand, walking through the clergy before the processional.

4. What was the most meaningful event surrounding your commissioning?

The moment hands were laid on me and I was commissioned.

5. What do you remember about the time when you knelt before the bishop?

I remember feeling excited and in awe of the moment.

6. Was there an object or an image that stands out in your memory as you recall the service?

Yes

7. If yes, please describe that object or image.

The Asbury Bible

8. Do you expect anything to be different about you once you are ordained?

Yes

9. If you answered yes, how will you be changed or different as a result of ordination?

I will be relieved because the ordination “process” will be over and there will be no more interviews, essays, meetings, etc. I will be able to focus solely on ministry. I also expect the ordination moment to be a more amplified version of the commissioning moment, a feeling that can only be described once experienced (it’s a God thing).

10. Will the community be different as a result of your ordination?

Yes

11. If yes, in what way?

I expect to be revered more by my peers after ordination because I will be “permanent,” no longer “in training.”

12. How did the service compare to your expectations? What would you change in future services of ordination?

I did not have many expectations of the service other than feeling the support of fellow clergy, family and friends and having a Spiritual experience kneeling before the Bishop. Both of these were accomplished, so the service met my expectations. In future services of ordination, I would make the hymns more upbeat in order to create a more celebratory feel. I would also invite candidacy mentors to lay hands on their candidates during commissioning due to the significant role they play in discernment and support. I would also verbally invite people in the congregation to stand in support of those being commissioned and those being ordained to clear up confusion about this part so family and friends

could be involved. Noting in the bulletin is not enough.

13. How would you rate the impact of the service on your sense of connection to other clergy?

	Percent	Count
Strengthened my connection to other clergy	100%	1
Felt separated from other clergy	0%	0
No change in my sense of connection	0%	0

14. Did you read the daily devotionals emailed to clergy prior to annual conference?

No

15. If yes, how did they affect your understanding of the meaning of ordination?

16. If you read the devotionals, please share how they affected you.

17. How did you feel knowing that clergy throughout the conference were holding you in prayer by name?

Once I found out about these devotionals when a person told me she had prayed for me that day, I felt strengthened.

APPENDIX 14
PA STATE PASTORS' CONVENTION
WORKSHOP OUTLINE

What follows is the outline of a workshop developed for the Pennsylvania State Pastors' Convention in November, 2011. The program was repeated as an Advent workshop on the Northeast District of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference for district clergy. Altogether, approximately 25 clergy participated in one or the other of these workshops.

**THE AWE/WONDER
OF
CALL THROUGH ORDINATION:
Rekindling the Gift of God
In our Call to Ministry**



For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands. 2 Tim 1:6

A Workshop at
The Pennsylvania State Pastors' Conference
November 14-16, 2011
Presented by Bronwyn Yocum

Begin with introductions

As people called by God to a set apart ministry, we must not take that call for granted. It requires our attention to maintain the vitality of the call.

Paul writes to his young protégé, Timothy, telling him:

I am grateful to God—whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did—when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you. For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline. 2 Tim 1:3-7

(All Scripture quotations are from the NRSV unless otherwise noted.)

My electricity was out for four days after the Halloween weekend storm. I had no light, no heat, and no phone. We built a fire in the fireplace, and set out candles (light a candle). I had candles burning all around the house, and I noticed something about candles – let me show you.

(Blow out candle, then relight by holding a lit match near the wick without touching it) I noticed that once the candle wick was alight, if I blew it out, I could relight it without touching the flame directly to the wick. I just had to be near the wick. The flame just jumps across the gap from the match to the wick. I remembered seeing that in school once upon a time, with some explanation of the physics of heat. But seeing it again gave me pause.

Most of us don't stay on fire for God every moment of every day. But perhaps we can stay within rekindling distance, ensuring that even when our gift begins to grow cold, we are within the distance that will permit the flame of the Holy Spirit to jump across the gap from God to us and rekindle the gift within us. Maybe Paul is not saying to Timothy, you poor guy, you've lost it, shame on you. Maybe he was suggesting that Timothy find the way that would work for him to be intentional about rekindling his faith and his gift whenever the flame had died down.

Revelation offers another way to think of this. In the letter to the church at Ephesus, we read about a typical pastor – someone who is working hard, putting in long hours, enduring patiently and bearing up under all kinds of challenges to their pastoral leadership. Sound familiar? But working hard and being patient are not enough according to the letter.

I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance. I know that you cannot tolerate evildoers; you have tested those who claim to be apostles but are not, and have found them to be false. I also know that you are enduring patiently and bearing up for the sake of my name, and that you have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

Remember then from what you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

Rev 2:2-5

For those who are called to ministry, God is our passion, our first love. We may not live in a way that constantly keeps us in that passion. Most of us can't live on that mountaintop or in the most intense of emotional states. I remember visiting a woman who had lost her husband a few months earlier. As we were sitting and talking, one of us said something funny and she laughed. Then she slapped her hand across her mouth and with a horrified expression on her face, began to apologize to me for laughing, saying that she was supposed to be grieving. But even the grief of loss cannot be maintained 24/7 forever. She was simply acting like any human being – experiencing a range of emotions and responses to the realities of life.

So we, too, may find ourselves at times not filled with that passion of our first love. To guard against those embers dying out, we need to stay in a place where we can, as needed, fan the flame, rekindle the embers and renew the gift of our call to ministry.

Last spring I undertook a project, to look at our conference's experience of ordination – not the years' long process leading up to ordination but the actual event and its immediate surrounding experiences – to see if there was a way to use the ordination process for others as a way to rekindle the flame for those who had been ordained in years past. At the beginning of the process, I sent out a questionnaire to the ordained clergy of the conference. Two responses I especially want to share with you:

Ordination Survey, conducted January, 2011, among ordained clergy of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference of the United Methodist Church.

How does ordination connect to your call?

A fulfillment of my call	14%
One step in process of living out my call	44%
A necessary hoop to go through	1%
Spiritual empowerment for responding to call	15%

Granting of authority to do what I was called to do 26%

I was grateful that only 1% saw it as simply a hoop to go through, but I was disappointed that only 15% considered it as spiritual empowerment. Now this was forced choice – choose the one that most closely expresses your feelings.

Another way to consider ordination came in the following question:

How does your ordination connect to your experience of ministry?

A ceremony that had little to do with my actual ministry	6%
Remembering it gives me encouragement in difficult times	18%
A source of power and authority	24%
A reminder of the support of colleagues	21%
A spiritual experience that uplifts me for the challenges of ministry	24%
Something I reflect on regularly	7%

Once again, those responding could choose only one answer. Only 7% saw ordination as something they reflected on regularly, but nearly half saw it as a source of encouragement or support in difficult times. That confirmed what I had suspected, that structuring opportunities to remember our call and our ordination might be a way to support the clergy of our conference, rekindling the flame and providing encouragement for the challenges that we all face in ministry.

All of us have had difficult times. What do you do when the challenges of ministry seem overwhelming? What mechanisms have you created for dealing with those difficult times?

For example, I remember a year of reading the want ads every Sunday, praying that there would be some position that would speak to me, that I could apply for with a sense of peace and joy, something I thought God might be calling me to instead of parish ministry. But I'm still here. How do you deal with the difficult times of ministry? What support structure do you have?

If we depend only on ourselves, it may not be possible to rekindle that flame. The good news is that we don't have to depend on our own abilities.

Do you remember the story of Elijah and the priests of Baal? Those poor priests – all 450 of them couldn't call down a spark to light the fire of sacrifice.

Like them, we may not be able to rekindle the flame by ourselves. Let two bulls be given to us; let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it; I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood, but put no fire to it. Then you call on the name of your god and I will call on the name of the LORD; the god who answers by fire is indeed God." All the people answered, "Well spoken!" Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose for yourselves one bull and prepare it first, for you are many; then call on the name of your god, but put no fire to it." So they took the bull that was given them, prepared it, and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon, crying, "O Baal, answer us!" But there was no voice, and no answer. They limped about the altar that they had made. At noon Elijah mocked them, saying, "Cry aloud! Surely he is a god; either he is meditating, or he has wandered away, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened." Then they cried aloud and, as was their custom, they cut themselves with swords and lances until the blood gushed out over them. As midday passed, they raved on until the time of the offering of the oblation, but there was no voice, no answer, and no response...

1 Kings 18:22-29

When we depend only on ourselves to rekindle the flame of our call, we are like the prophets of Baal, trying to light the altar fire without a match. But do you remember what comes next?

Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD came, saying, "Israel shall be your name"; with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD. Then he made a trench around the altar, large enough to contain two measures of seed. Next he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid it on the wood. He said, "Fill four jars with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood." Then he said, "Do it a second time"; and they did it a second time. Again he said, "Do it a third time"; and they did it a third time, so that the water ran all around the altar, and filled the trench also with water. At the time of the offering of the oblation, the prophet Elijah came near and said, "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel, that I am your servant, and that I have done all these things at your bidding. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, so that this people may know that you, O LORD, are God, and that you have turned their hearts back." Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering, the wood, the stones, and the dust, and even licked up the water that was

in the trench. When all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, "The LORD indeed is God; the LORD indeed is God." 1 Kings 18:31-39

If we try to rekindle the flame on our own, we are like the priests of Baal. WE need to seek God's help, to acknowledge that on our own, we cannot keep that first love burning brightly. But with God, all things are possible. Elijah's actions, dousing the altar and offering with water not just once but three times, remind us that where God desires the flame to be kindled, and where we are open to allowing God to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves, God can and will respond.

So the question is, how do we stay close enough to our call, our passion for Christ, that first love, so that the heat of the flame can leap across the space and rekindle the gift of our calling that is within us? How do we put ourselves in the way of the Spirit?

RECAPTURING, REKINDLING AND MAINTAINING OUR SENSE OF CALL (answers in red)

1. Seek God in prayer.

Remember Elijah

Live in God's presence: Scripture, prayer, worship, means of grace

There will always be those who deny our need for dependence of God, who will applaud our achievements as coming from us alone – don't believe them!

2. Remember your call.

Paul recites his call repeatedly, remembering how he was called:

While I was on my way and approaching Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone about me. I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?' I answered, 'Who are you, Lord?' Then he said to me, 'I am Jesus of Nazareth whom you are persecuting.' Now those who were with me saw the light but did not hear the voice of the one who was speaking to me. I asked, 'What am I to do, Lord?' Acts 22:6-10

H. Richard Niebuhr in his book, The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry (Harper and Row, 1956) wrote: “The Church everywhere and always has expected its ministers to have a personal sense of vocation, forged in the solitariness of encounter with ultimate claims made upon them.” (p. 64)

When is the last time you shared the story of your call? Can you share it now in just a few minutes? Share your call story with someone else.

Remember not just the fact of your call but what it is you were called to – parish ministry, preaching, pastoral care. What is it God called you to do, and are you doing it? Could you write a job description of what God called you to do? Take a few minutes and put together the job description you believe God is offering you at this time.

3. Develop a community _____ that supports your call.

Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Heb 10:23-25

For I am longing to see you so that I may share with you some spiritual gift to strengthen you— or rather so that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine. Romans 1:11-12

We need encouragement, we need support, and we also need accountability. With whom do you share your sense of call? How it might be changing over time? What you are doing to maintain the flame of your call?

REMEMBERING OUR CALL

Perhaps the best model of a call story comes in the book of Exodus as Moses is called by God out of the burning bush.

Look at the story of Moses' call in Exodus 3-4.

The First Inkling and the Places of Significance

Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian; he led his flock beyond the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in a flame of fire out of a bush; he looked, and the bush was blazing, yet it was not consumed. Then Moses said, "I

must turn aside and look at this great sight, and see why the bush is not burned up." When the LORD saw that he had turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am." Then he said, "Come no closer! Remove the sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." Ex 3:1-5

Turn to another person and spend time answering these questions:

What first drew your attention to your call? Where did you experience that first sense of God's calling?

What are the places that are crucial in your call to ministry?

Where did you work through the requirements, educational or experiential, to respond to your call?

Where were you ordained? What was the place like? Was it holy ground to you?

The Tradition That Anchors Our Call

He said further, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God. Ex 3:6

I shared the story of my ordination as a lay elder in the Presbyterian Church, (from the D.Min thesis).

We are called, initiated and ordained into a tradition. What tradition anchors your call? Discuss the tradition underlying your call with a partner.

Understanding Our Call

Then the LORD said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the country of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites. The cry of the Israelites has now come to me; I have also seen how the Egyptians oppress them. So come, I will send you to Pharaoh to bring my people, the Israelites, out of Egypt." Ex 3:7-10

How did you first understand your call? To what were you called?

Has your understanding of your call changed over time? Has your call changed?

What oppresses the people you were called to serve and how is God seeking to liberate people through your ministry? (sin, death, poverty, greed, racism, grief, etc.)

Our Excuses

But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh, and bring the Israelites out of Egypt?" Ex 3:11

But Moses said to God, "If I come to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" Ex 3:13

But suppose they do not believe me or listen to me, but say, 'The LORD did not appear to you.'" Ex 4:1

But Moses said to the LORD, "O my Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant; but I am slow of speech and slow of tongue." Ex 4:10

But he said, "O my Lord, please send someone else." Ex 4:13

When I made the decision to respond to God's call to ordained ministry, I applied to seminary. I received my acceptance a few days before Thanksgiving. That year, the family dinner was at our house. While we were cleaning up after the meal, I shared with the women of the family that I had been accepted to seminary and would begin classes in January. One of the women cracked up laughing, and said, "Bron, you can't be a pastor! You're not perfect." And of course, over the years of seminary, I learned that it was precisely because I was not perfect that I could be a ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We all offer excuses at times, explaining why we can't do something God has called us to do. What excuses have you used in response to God's call during your life? Did you think I'm not good enough, I don't have enough money to pay for education, I'm too old, I'm too young? What excuses did you offer?

What obstacles have confronted you in pursuing your call?

But remember Paul's words to Timothy:

God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline. 2 Tim 1:7

How has God overcome your excuses and obstacles in the past?

The People Who Played a Role in Our Call

I am grateful to God—whom I worship with a clear conscience, as my ancestors did—when I remember you constantly in my prayers night and day. Recalling your tears, I long to see you so that I may be filled with joy. I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you. For this reason I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and of love and of self-discipline. 2 Tim 1:3-7

Our call grows out of our faith, a faith that did not appear from thin air but was nurtured by others, “caught” from others. Our call may have first been identified by others, or strengthened as others prayed for us in our discernment process. Take a moment and remember the people who were integral to your faith development and discernment of call.

People from whom I caught my faith:

People who were an integral part of the discernment process as I considered a call to ministry:

People who supported me in responding to my call and mentored me in ministry:

Take a moment to write out words of thanksgiving for the people who surrounded you on your journey toward ministry.

CALLED TO WHAT?

Thomas Dozeman, in his book Holiness and Ministry, suggests there are two kinds of call, the call to **prophetic ministry** (the ministry of word) and the call to **priestly ministry** (the ministry of sacrament). Many denominations speak of ordination to word and sacrament. Some add **ministries of order** (administration). In Moses, we see all three forms of ministry.

Moses’ first understanding of God’s call is to speak a **prophetic** word to Pharaoh. As the story progresses, Moses’ call includes a **priestly** ministry, mediating the grace of God among the people of God. In the wilderness wandering, Moses is called upon to judge the people, and develops a ministry of **order**.

Prophetic Ministry: What prophetic word have you been commissioned by God to speak, and to whom are you to speak it? How have you done? How can your support community encourage you in this task, and hold you accountable to do it?

Priestly Ministry: How has God worked through you to make the people you serve a holy nation, a royal priesthood, God’s own people?

Ministry of Order: Jethro gave Moses advice on how to organize his leaders to provide the necessary judgments among the people. How have you organized your church for ministry? How do you fulfill the call to a ministry of order?

Which of these comes most easily to you? Which is most difficult?

WESLEY'S TWO CALLS

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, recognized two calls – one from God and one from humans. He said “I had rather have the divine without the human, than the human without the divine call.”(Letters of Johns Wesley, volume III, p. 195, Standard Edition)

Take time to remember with a partner your inward call from God as well as the events of your outward call from the church (ordination, licensing, installation).

CLOSING

I hope you have had a chance to remember your call, to celebrate your ordination or licensing, and to recommit to the ministry to which you have been sent. Let's end by sharing the Covenant Prayer in the Wesleyan Tradition, which reminds us that we have yielded our lives to God as the yoke of ministry was laid upon us.

I am no longer my own, but thine.
 Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.
 Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
 Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee,
 Exalted for thee or brought low for thee.
 Let me be full, let me be empty.
 Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
 I freely and heartily yield all things
 Thy thy pleasure and disposal.
 And now, O glorious and blessed God,
 Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
 Thou art mine and I am thine. So be it.
 And the covenant which I have made on earth,
 Let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

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