***Women in Ministry Survey***

**Karen Fitz La Barge**

**Abstract**

 A survey completed in the year 2000 of all female graduates of *Western Theological Seminary*, *a Reformed Church in America* seminary in Holland, Michigan. This survey concludes that these women did not feel prepared by their seminary or denominations to face the challenges that they faced in as women in ministry. These results include the perceptions of the respondents to the openness of their denominations to women, and includes sections on the frequency of their challenges to ministry, their hopes for the future, and their exceptionally strong sense of God’s call. Multitudes of specific comments give readers a glimpse of their individual realities and serve as lasting advice to women who are called into ministry by God.

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Self Published by: Karen Fitz La Barge

299 W. 19th St. Holland, MI. 49423 Bilkanf@machineguard.com

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**Acknowledgments**

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 Finally, all thanks and glory to you God, for giving me the strength and courage to tackle this project. Your blessings are limitless, and I can do nothing but praise you and stand in awe in your presence. You are the divine. You are the one who makes the difference. You are the One who calls, the One in whose name we pray. Amen.

**The Survey Cover Letter**

February 14, 2000

Dear Sister,

Thank you for graduating from Western Theological Seminary! As a woman who is just starting her seminary education, I have looked at your pictures hanging on the wall of the alumni office. You all look so distinguished and full of hope! The love of God shines out of your eyes. You look like you could change the world. And I have wondered about you. –What was it like? What kinds of roads have you been down? What kind of experiences have you had? Is it difficult being a woman in ministry when congregations are used to a man? --I would like to sit at your knee and hear your stories. I would like to listen while you answer a thousand questions, and describe in detail the situations in which you have found yourself. But to do this would take the rest of my life –so I had better start with a survey.

As a piece of my involvement with *WITNESS* (a non-profit ecumenical organization working to bring women into fuller leadership in the church) I am taking part in their *Women’s Leadership Institute.* While reading feminist theology and growing in my awareness of God we all must complete a project. For my project, I have organized a weekly lunch for female WTS students. At our lunch we discuss various gender specific issues that are facing us as women in ministry, and then we do something about those issues.

One of the problems that we have is that we do not know enough about the gender specific problems that women are actually facing in their ministries. We don’t know how to best prepare. While we can guess at what it is like, and what the challenges are –we cannot know unless we ask you. We need your help. We need your wealth of experience. We once again would like you to lead us into the future.

So if you could, --would you please fill out the enclosed survey and return it in the postage paid envelope? We would like to have them returned by March 15th, 2000. --Thank you so very much for your help!

God Bless,

Karen Fitz La Barge

For the Women’s Leadership Lunch at WTS

**Women in Ministry Survey**

How do you feel about your preparation?

How helpful was *Western Theological Seminary* in preparing you for the gender specific challenges of women in ministry?

# **Not at all : 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 : Very**

Comments?

How helpful was your *denomination* in preparing you to face the gender specific challenges in the ministry?

## Not at all : 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 : Very

Comments?

Ultimately, how prepared were you to face the gender specific challenges of women in the ministry?

## Not at all : 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 : Very

To what do you attribute your level of preparation?

 What are your perceptions?:

In my opinion, in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ denomination in my location of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ I think

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_% of the churches are open to a woman in a **Christian Education** position in the church.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_% of the churches are open to a woman in an **Associate Pastor** position in the church.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ % of the churches are open to a woman in a **Head of Staff** position in the church.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_% of the churches are open to a women in a **Solo Pastor** position in the church.

Have you had any experience with regional differences in the openness toward women in the ministry? If so, please elaborate:

###### Your challenges to ministry

# How often have you experienced these challenges to your ministry due to your gender?

 (Never, Once, Twice, Several Times, Often, All the Time, or This is Not An Issue)

Sexual harassment:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Difficulty in finding a call:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Balancing your family’s needs with your call:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Being treated like the pastors wife (when you are not):\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Resistance to the use of inclusive language for people:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Resistance to the use of inclusive language for God:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Being thwarted by male members of the staff or congregation:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Being thwarted by female members of the staff or congregation:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

A lower salary/ benefit package than a similarly qualified male:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Feeling invisible because of your gender in a meeting or at a social function:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Having a church’s openness to women misrepresented by the search committee:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

### Other\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

How supportive was your denomination or congregation in helping you to overcome the gender specific challenges to your ministry?

# **Not at all : 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 : Very**

Comments?

How effective have you been in overcoming gender specific challenges in the ministry?

# **Not at all : 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 : Very**

Comments?

How do you feel about your call?

How difficult or easy was it to find your first call?

# **Difficult : 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10: Easy**

Comments?

To what extent do you feel that your gender hindered or helped your finding of your call?

## Hindered : 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10: Helped

### Comments?

### Do you feel called to your current position?

#### Not at all : 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 : Very

Comments?

Your current position:

### What is your current position?\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Do you consider this position to be: A church position A denominational position

A para-church organization position A non-profit organization position.

Other:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Is this position within your denomination? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Comments?

How satisfied are you with your current position?

#### Not at all : 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 : Very

Comments?

 The Future:

Many people lately have commented on an upcoming severe upcoming shortage of clergy due to a large number of current ministers retiring or burning out. How much do you think this will improve the situation for women in ministry?

#### Not at all : 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 : A Lot

Comments?

Final Questions:

Your year of graduation:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Your degree(s):\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Your denomination when entering Seminary\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Your denomination now:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Please comment on the practice of switching to a denomination that is more open to women in ministry:

What advice would you give to a woman graduating from *Western Theological Seminary* today?

Thank you for your response! Please add any other comments, your experience is priceless!

Please return this by March 15th, 2000

 To: Karen Fitz La Barge, WITNESS P.O. Box 9000 Holland, MI 49422-9000

**Introduction**

 Women are not mechanistic objects. The feelings and experiences expressed in this survey will not fit neatly into a scientific graph. It is impossible to understand the magnitude of what happens to women when they come into ministry by adopting a completely objective scientific approach. It is impossible to merely analyze the numerical data and understand the situation clearly. The experience of each of these women is unique. Their words and responses to this survey are shaped by their own life experiences and their personal reactions to the culture around them. Their own stories are of utmost importance. The quotes from these women --quotes which the scientific community would call anecdotal, and would hold to be of no or little importance to a more “objective” study **are the heart of this analysis**. These quotes reveal the real people who have been torn and damaged by a system which does not validate or support them. These snippets of stories paint a portrait of pain and persistence, torture and turmoil, success and failure that speak of the strength of these women and the pervasiveness of the misogynist culture in which we all live.

**A Brief Description of the Survey**

 What is it like to be a woman in ministry? It was the asking of this deceptively simple question that led to the execution of this survey sent to all female graduates of *Western Theological Seminary* (WTS), (a *Reformed Church in America* (RCA*)* Seminary in Holland, Michigan). Included were the female students who graduated with a Masters in Religious Education, those with a Masters in Divinity as well as the Masters of Theology degree. Surveys were also sent to students who lived outside of the United States, but none of those were returned. Of the surveys sent, it is estimated that 175 reached alumna. From those 175, fifty-four surveys were returned --a 31.42% return rate. Thirty-four surveys were from students who graduated with a Masters in Divinity, nineteen surveys were from those with a Masters in Religious education, and one from a Masters of Theology degree holding student. Only one mailing was sent to the graduates. There were no reminder postcards, no reminder notices in any publications, no follow up phone calls, and no additional publicity whatsoever. If any of these reminders would have occurred, it is certain that this additional attention would have resulted in an even higher return rate. When compiled, eighteen single-spaced pages of personal testimony and comments accompanied the surveys. Judging from these comments and the results of this simple survey, the Church has quite a long way to go in order to eliminate discrimination against its women in ministry.

**Explanation of Methodology**

 In order for the survey results to remain clear, the original survey questions will appear in blue as they were presented to the respondents. The resulting responses will appear in a graph below each question. The average (or mean) response will be presented in the first column. The average response is the numeric total of all responses, divided by the number of responses. The average is important because it takes into account the strength of all responses, and includes them even if they are lower or higher than the norm. The average is good tool for establishing an overall perspective that equally includes the views of everyone who responded. The next column will contain the median response. The median is defined as the value at which both below and above there are an equal number of values. It is not skewed by an occasional high or low response to the question. It is good for establishing the typical response to a question. The last column in the graph will present the mode, which is defined as the response that occurs most frequently for each question. If you asked one of the respondents a question on the survey, the answer that you are most likely to receive would be the mode. The mode is useful for determining the most popular perception. In order to determine the popularity of a particular response, the number of times that the mode was given by the respondents will be presented along with the number of responses in that category. For example if the mode is “3”, and “3” appeared twice out of ten responses this will be shown in the following manner: **3 (2 of 10).** At times there can be more than one mode. For example if five of ten respondents replied with a, “1”, and the other five responded with a, “2”; the mode would be presented as 1,2 (5 of 10).

 Responses are presented with all Master’s of Divinity responders in the first row. The second and third rows in the graph break down the Masters of Divinity group into those respondents who identified themselves as in the RCA as opposed to those who are not. The fourth row contains all of the women holding Masters of Religious Education, with the fifth and sixth rows breaking down these women with a Masters of Religious Education who are in the RCA as opposed to those who are not. My brief analysis of the responses will be presented in a different font below the graph. The comments given by the respondents to that question are loosely grouped together under my own descriptive headers. All responses are recorded as closely to verbatim as possible, and no pertinent comments were left out. Only personal information was eliminated from the survey to protect the respondents identity, but each woman’s degree and denomination are left with each quotation in order to provide the reader a context from which to try to understand the respondents point of view.

**Women in Ministry Survey**

How do you feel about your preparation?

How helpful was *Western Theological Seminary* in preparing you for the gender specific challenges of women in ministry?

# **Not at all : 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 : Very**

Comments?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Average**  | **Median** | **Mode** |
|  | **Response** | **Response** | **Response** |
| All Masters of Divinity Respondents | 4.30 | 3 | 3 (9 of 33) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 5.5 | 4.5 | 7 (2 of 8) |
| RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 4.08 | 3 | 3 (8 of 25) |
| All Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 4.25 | 4 | 2 (4 of 18) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 4.75 | 4.5 | 5 (2 of 8) |
| RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 3.85 | 3.25 | 2 (3 of 10) |

*Note that the respondents who are a part of the RCA rank WTS lower than the students who are from other denominations. This is perhaps because students from other denominations do not experience as high of a level of sexism in their churches, as do the students in the RCA.*

**WTS is rated negatively on addressing gender issues**

* “WTS was, and appears to remain, unengaged with the core issues that lead to systemic oppression –Gender, Racial, Economic. They are the establishment.” (M Div in the RCA)

* “It was 16-20 years ago. Biblical/ theological study didn’t include much gender questions –it was only beginning then.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “(Western was not helpful by) not standing firm on the preaching supply issues. I was allowed to be turned down.” (M Div in the RCA)

*(The “Preaching supply issue” is in regard to the practice at WTS of allowing their male students to practice their preaching at churches that deny this same opportunity to female students. A “firmer stance” by the seminary would be to not allow their male students to preach at the churches that deny this equal opportunity to women.)*

* “There are no feminist theology or outlook classes offered at WTS and women seem to be held to a different standard for “liberal” theological views, particularly [by] faculty members. Changes would help.” (M Div in the RCA)

**Knowledge and skills proved helpful in ministry, but women not prepared for reception in churches.**

* “I was wonderfully encouraged in seminary to use all of my spiritual gifts. The church, however, has not always been so affirming.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “[Gender specific, not helpful at all] preparation for ministry and theological studies was excellent ☺!” (M Div in the RCA)
* “Whatever gifts in ministry I have been able to use have found their base in the knowledge and skills I learned in seminary.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “My sense of call was affirmed but the seminary assumed no responsibility in placing any of its graduates (female or male.)” (MRE in the Episcopal Church)
* “I started in 1979 and was encouraged by the professors into the M Div program –but received no preparation or support as I was denied ordination by my Classis.” (MRE in the PCUSA)

**WTS did not address the resistance of other students.**

* “The resistance of the male students (many) was typical of the attitude of some members of Presbyterian Pulpit Nominating Committees and Churches.” (M Div in the PCUSA)
* “I was told it would be more difficult for women –especially in certain areas—nothing specific. And if I tried to discuss it in small groups, it was dismissed as not important by fellow students.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “Seminary professors/staff treated me as if my call were normal and even to be celebrated. However not all students felt like this. Yet having the support of the structure was significant. But this was informal, not formal preparation. “(M Div in the RCA)

**Specific Professors were helpful to the alumna.**

* “Diane Maodush-Pitzer and a few other professors did what they could!” (M Div in the RCA)
* “Individual professors were helpful, but not the system of the institution.” (M Div in the UCC)

**Gender issues not a problem for non RCA, non Masters of Divinity Alumna.**

* “Gender issues not a problem. “(MRE in the PCUSA)
* “? I took only 1 year after ordination. “(Th M in the UCC)

**Positive comments about preparation and gender issues.**

* “In the late ‘80’s, the administration gave us “space” to process such issues and accepted some of the challenges we placed before them. I think WTS did OK at that time –not great.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “Most of the learnings and reflections on gender specific challenges occurred in CPE.” (M Div in the RCA)

*The comments of these alumna indicate that Western Theological Seminary (WTS) does not take the initiative to address gender issues at the Seminary. The changing of the negative attitudes of fellow students toward women and the issues that women will face once they go into ministry are not part of the system and curriculum. From these comments, it could be concluded that only if women bring issues to the attention of the administration are they addressed. It seems that there is no formal preparation or raising of consciousness of the students to gender issues, nor is there a stance by the Seminary for activistic change in the denomination. Women are encouraged and prepared in exactly the same way as male students. --Very well theologically, and for ministry, but without any preparation to overcome the resistance and sexism that hinders their opportunities and ability to actually perform ministry.*

How helpful was your *denomination* in preparing you to face the gender specific challenges in the ministry?

## Not at all : 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 : Very

Comments?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Average**  | **Median** | **Mode** |
|  | **Response** | **Response** | **Response** |
| All Masters of Divinity Respondents | 3.26 | 2.5 | 1 (11 of 34) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 3.67 | 2 | 1 (4 of 9) |
| RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 3.15 | 3 | 1 (8 of 26) |
| All Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 3.28 | 2.5 | 1 (5 of 18) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 3.63 | 3 | 1&2 (2 of 8) |
| RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 3.00 | 2.5 | 1 (3 of 10) |

*Note that the most popular response from all women in regards to preparation from their denomination is “one”. On the average, non-RCA women rank their denominations a little bit better than women do the RCA.*

**Negative comments about the RCA**

* “Not intentionally helpful –unintentionally, it reflected the realities I would face and so modeled the reality I must always engage.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “I once tried to discuss it with one of the well-known women leaders and was again dismissed with the comment, ‘It’s going to happen. That’s the way it is.’” (M Div in the RCA)
* “There has been a lot of discussion about the issue but virtually no action that I can determine.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “It wasn’t discussed much.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “I was ordained in the RCA which was NOT helpful. It was an individual clergyman who provided support and encouragement. I have standing in the UCC –who do moderately well.” (M Div in the UCC)
* “[The issues were] not addressed. The RCA makes “space” –does not prepare, advocate, or walk with. The Commission for Women listens but has limited power. “(M Div in the RCA)

**The RCA *Commission for Women***

* “The Commission for Women met with us (women students) twice, but it all seemed nebulous then. “ (M Div in the RCA)
* “The women in ministry retreats sponsored by Commission for Women were incredibly formative for me. It also connected me to others in the RCA.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “I attended a conference for women in ministry –good. I didn’t complete preaching assignment because of lack of open pulpits.” (M Div in the RCA)

**Sympathetic Men**

* “Many men were sympathetic to the small number of potential positions and offered to help in any way they could.” (M Div in the RCA)

**Specific Realities**

* “Lake Erie Classis and my home church were generally baffled and very ill prepared to help me reach my goal of serving in my area of ministry (Pastoral Counseling) in the RCA. I was a woman and I wasn’t interested in a parish. They didn’t know what to do.”(M Div in the RCA)
* “I have struggled for years to be a woman in ministry in the RCA. First I was denied ordination. I then went for my MRE degree. After receiving my master’s degree, after 7 years of experience, I was offered a prominent job at a high profile RCA church. They offered me a non-livable wage. I couldn’t support my family and I had to decline. I have left the RCA after all that.” (MRE in the PCUSA)
* “ I did not seek assistance [from the RCA].” (M Div. in the American Baptist)

**Informal Women’s Network**

* “I was active in the women’s network so was pretty prepared for the challenges, but always surprised by the insidiousness.” (M Div in the PCUSA)
* “Other female pastors shared their challenges and provided a valuable support base.” (MRE in the Episcopal Church)

**Denominational gender issues not a problem for an MRE in the PCUSA.**

* “Gender issues not a problem.” (MRE in the PCUSA)

Ultimately how prepared were you to face the gender specific challenges of women in the ministry?

## Not at all : 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 : Very

Comments?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Average**  | **Median** | **Mode** |
|  | **Response** | **Response** | **Response** |
| All Masters of Divinity Respondents | 5.82 | 6 | 7 (5 of 34) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 6.22 | 8 | 8 (3 of 9) |
| RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 5.58 | 6 | 7 (5 of 26) |
| All Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 5.33 | 5 | 5 (4 of 18) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 6.38 | 7 | 8 (3 of 8) |
| RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 4.5 | 4.5 | 5 (2 of 10) |

*While all women ranked their level of preparation as higher than the level provided by their school and denomination, RCA women felt less prepared than their counterparts from other denominations. RCA Masters of Religious Education holders felt the least prepared of all respondents.*

**Role Models and Women’s Networks**

* “(I attribute my level of preparation to) Listening to other women. “(M Div in the RCA)
* “Lack of role models in the education process. “(M Div in the RCA)
* “College psychology classes with women professors and my women student peers. “(M Div in the RCA)
* “A few professors at WTS, colleagues. “(M Div in the RCA)
* “Conversations with laywomen who were supportive. Personal confidence in my call, and the sovereignty of God. --Eccumenical ministeriums. “ (M Div in the RCA)
* “Other women telling their stories.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “Friendships and conversation with women already in ministry. “(MRE in the PCUSA)
* **“**Mentoring by other female clergy.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “ Marti Rienstra.” (M Div in the UCC)
* “My age and work with various feminist groups.”(M Div in the PCUSA)
* “Lack of support group or role models. “(MRE --Ecumenical)

**Personal Experience**

* “The experiences I had preaching at the churches at which I was working gave me an inkling of what I would face.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “ Experience out in the field as I was preparing for and going through seminary. However, even this was tempered with the attitude –and was actually said to me, ‘We can put up with this because it’s only temporary.’ “(M Div in the RCA)
* “Experience in college administration.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “Personal experiences prepared me.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “Acceptance/ Awareness of reality…personal relationship with God and affirmation of my call to ministry by the Spirit and from family and friends.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “Life experience and the process of surviving the gauntlet of Seminary and Fitness Process.”(M Div in the RCA)
* “My own awareness and expectations; years of experience in other professions.” (M Div in the UCC)
* “Having faced difficult situations and rejections and age –49 at graduation.” (M Div from the RCA)
* “Life experience and success in other professions.” (MRE in the Episcopal Church)
* “I was a “veteran” teacher before coming to Western. Life prepared me. I grew up in parsonages, with forward looking parents. Our RCA churches included everyone.” (MRE in the ELCA)

**Other Denominations**

* “I have learned more since graduating, joining and becoming active in the UCC” (MRE in the UCC)
* “From growing up in a denomination that encouraged women in ministry.” (MRE in the RCA)
* “I haven’t had any gender issues come up. “(MRE in the PCUSA)

**Despondent Women**

* “At the time that I was in seminary there was no real concern for what women would face out in the church. I believe the churches still don’t care. “(M Div in the RCA)
* “I knew what to expect. There are no positions in the RCA to do what I do. “(M Div in the RCA)

**Other Educational Experiences**

* “A masters degree in education from Western Michigan University.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “CPE –Post Seminary.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “Role models and experience at Fuller Theological Seminary. Being a husband and wife team.” (MRE in the RCA)

What are your perceptions?:

In my opinion, in the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ denomination in my location of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ I think

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_% of the churches are open to a woman in a **Christian Education** position in the church.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_% of the churches are open to a woman in an **Associate Pastor** position in the church.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ % of the churches are open to a woman in a **Head of Staff** position in the church.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_% of the churches are open to a women in a **Solo Pastor** position in the church.

Have you had any experience with regional differences in the openness toward women in the ministry? If so, please elaborate:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Average**  | **Median** | **Mode** |
| **Christian Education Position** | **Response** | **Response** | **Response** |
| All Masters of Divinity Respondents | 81.44% | 90% | 100% (9 of 32) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 97.14% | 100% | 100% (5 of 7) |
| RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 77.54% | 85% | 80% (5 of 26) |
| All Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 81.94% | 90% | 100% (8 of 18) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 93.33% | 100% | 100%(7 of 9) |
| RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 70.56% | 90% | 90% (4 of 9) |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Average**  | **Median** | **Mode** |
| **Associate Pastor Position** | **Response** | **Response** | **Response** |
| All Masters of Divinity Respondents | 39.56% | 30% | 10% (5 of 32) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 73.57% | 80% | 100% (2 of 7) |
| RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 31.96% | 27.5% | 10% (5 of 26) |
| All Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 44.24% | 40% | 10, 30, 70% (2 of 17) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 59.63% | 75% | 75% (2 of 8) |
| RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 30.56% | 30% | 10% (2 of 9) |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Average**  | **Median** | **Mode** |
| **Head of Staff Church Position** | **Response** | **Response** | **Response** |
| All Masters of Divinity Respondents | 16.90% | 10% | 10% (9 of 32) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 45.42% | 37.5% | 10% (2 of 6) |
| RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 10.32% | 5% | 10% (7 of 26) |
| All Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 22.63% | 10% | 0% (5 of 16) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 36.43% | 20% | 20% (2 of 7) |
| RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 11.89% | 2% | 0% (4 of 9) |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Average**  | **Median** | **Mode** |
| **Solo Pastor Position** | **Response** | **Response** | **Response** |
| All Masters of Divinity Respondents | 21.78% | 10% | 10% (7 of 31) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 63.75% | 70% | N/A |
| RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 11.71% | 5% | 10% (6 of 25) |
| All Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 14.69% | 7.5% | 0% (3 of 16) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 25.14% | 20% | 20% (2 of 7) |
| RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 6.56% | 5% | 0,2,5,10% (2 of 9) |

*In comparing the viewpoint of RCA respondents and respondents from other denominations, the RCA seems more closed to women than other denominations. Even in the area of Christian Education, (where women have traditionally been in positions of leadership) the RCA women view those positions to be on the average only 70 – 77% open to their ministry. In every category, the RCA respondents viewed their denomination as more closed to women in ministry than women from other denominations see their churches.*

*Perhaps most striking is the respondent’s view of the solo pastor position. RCA Masters of Divinity students view their denomination as only 11.71% open on the average to women in a solo pastor position. Other denominations view solo pastorates as averaging 63.75% open to women.*

*Masters of Religious education graduates thought that solo pastor positions open to women were even more rare, with non RCA graduates listing their denomination’s solo pastorates as being only 25.14% open to women and RCA graduates viewing solo pastor positions as averaging only 6.56% open to women.*

**East coast is more open than the mid west.**

* “Working on the Commission for Women I know there is much less bias against women in the East, and much more in the West, compared to Western Michigan.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “--Just hearsay…friends have moved east. “(MRE in the RCA)
* “East coast so much more open.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “Many churches from the east have expressed openness to my applying.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “Of course, when we lived in New York people were more open to women pastors (the congregation my husband pastored was later pastored by a woman). Midwest, highly unlikely, unless you get out on the prairie where no male pastors want to come sometimes. (Lutheran Pastor in our town is a woman and this is what she says.) “(M Div in the RCA)
* “The east generally seems more receptive. “(M Div in the RCA)
* “I have been in two Regional Synods, both in NY State. There is no real difference in openness toward women [in these two Synods], although one has churches with multiple staffs and the other does not (churches too small).” (M Div in the RCA)
* “I spent 11 years in Connecticut –although “on the surface” more open than Michigan, it depends on the model/ style of leadership portrayed by the individual woman. “ (M Div in the UCC)
* “I think there is greater acceptance in upstate New York and in more rural areas of the Midwest, but I’m not sure why. “(M Div in the RCA)
* “I have had regional and denominational experiences that demonstrate differences to me. I have had interviews for solo pastorate positions in the Albany area of NY and a UCC church in Western Michigan has interviewed me. “(M Div in the RCA)

**Michigan and the midwest are variable.**

* “I have never lived anywhere except western Michigan.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “Yes --some areas of northern Michigan are more open than others.” (M Div in the UCC)
* “The church itself differs so much from MI to MN, more competitive in MI. [There is a] more relaxed atmosphere here, yet less diversity. I have not been treated with any disrespect by Classis members. Minnesotans would be more likely just not to deal with controversy.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “Holland, MI and Grand Rapids are very different from Hudsonville and Zeeland, whether RCA or CRC. “(M Div in the RCA)
* “From Holland, even as far away as Zeeland isn’t, Zeeland’s not a great place to try to spread one’s wings!” (M Div in the RCA)
* “West Michigan Presbyterians were more open than the RCA and CRC back in the 80’s. But here in East Michigan/ Thumb social movement is about 25 years behind.”(M Div in the PCUSA)
* “West Michigan RCA churches have a long way to go.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “Yes –we are a very conservative and chauvinistic county. More openness in cities –Kalamazoo, Detroit and eastern states. “(MRE in the UCC)

**Urban areas are more open to women.**

* “I find the general reaction of rural churches to women in ministry to be one that is more guarded. It’s a paradigm shift. Those outside my association, within the community, are likely to be the most surprised at finding a woman in ministry.” (MRE in the NACCC)

**West Coast**

* “Here on West Coast the Church seems very open.” (M Div in the RCA)

**South**

* “Yes, I lived in the South (US) after graduation (5 years after) and joined a PCA church. No one was open to the above.” (MRE in the UMC)
* “Southern U.S. (generalization) has a bit more resistance to women in pastoral role. “(MRE in the PCUSA)

**Area Analysis**

* “East Coast –Most open. Mid West –Same. South- Zero. “(D Min in the UCC)
* “Yes, I think Michigan and the East Coast are the most open –also California. There is still a lot of resistance in the mid-west and Canada.” (MRE in the PCUSA)
* “Regional differences –definitely in the mid-west and far-west.”(M Div in the RCA)
* “Yes, in California and Eastern USA it is less of an issue. I am now in ELCA. We have many women leaders.” (MRE in ELCA)
* “I sense South Dakota is probably more open than northwest Iowa because of the survival mentality. South Dakota is much less open to women on consistory than churches in Michigan that I was associated with.” (MRE in the RCA)

**Other Denominations**

* “I am an MRE graduate. Many Methodist churches in our area have women pastors –I can’t think of any Missionary Baptist pastors who are women. Our local Episcopal Church pastor is also female.” (MRE in the Missionary Baptist Church)
* “I have been offered positions in the Methodist denomination in this area –not in the Reformed.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “West Michigan is much more receptive to female priests in leadership roles than Oregon has demonstrated.” (MRE in the Episcopal Church)
* “In a 9 state region UMC women lay pastors experienced loss of credentials in regional or district offices and stirring of discord by departing male pastors –while male lay pastors did not report these experiences.” (MRE –Ecumenical.)

**Your challenges to ministry**

# How often have you experienced these challenges to your ministry due to your gender?

 (Never, Once, Twice, Several Times, Often, All the Time, or This is Not An Issue)

Sexual harassment:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Difficulty in finding a call:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Balancing your family’s needs with your call:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Being treated like the pastors wife (when you are not):\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Resistance to the use of inclusive language for people:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Resistance to the use of inclusive language for God:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Being thwarted by male members of the staff or congregation:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Being thwarted by female members of the staff or congregation:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

A lower salary/ benefit package than a similarly qualified male:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Feeling invisible because of your gender in a meeting or at a social function:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Having a church’s openness to women misrepresented by the search committee:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

### Other\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*In the answers to this section, “Never” was ranked as zero, “Once” was ranked as one, a “Rarely” response as 1.5, “Twice” as two, “Several Times” as three, “Often” as four, and “All the Time” as five. “Not an issue” was left blank in the calculations.*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Average**  | **Median** | **Mode** |
| **Sexual Harassment**  | **Response** | **Response** | **Response** |
| All Masters of Divinity Respondents | 1.24 | 1 | Never (13 of 33) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 1.89 | 3 | Several times(5 of 9) |
| RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 1.08 | 1 | Never(11 of 25) |
| All Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 1.53 | 1.25 | Never(7 of 16) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 1.64 | 1.5 | Never(2 of 7) |
| RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 1.44 | 1.44 | Never(5 of 9) |
|  | **Average**  | **Median** | **Mode** |
| **Difficulty Finding a Call**  | **Response** | **Response** | **Response** |
| All Masters of Divinity Respondents | 2.69 | 3 | All the time(7 of 26) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 3.25 | 4 | All the time(3 of 8) |
| RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 2.53 | 3 | Never, All the time (4 of 19) |
| All Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 1.82 | 1 | Once (4 of 11) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 1.40 | 1 | Never, Once(2 of 5) |
| RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 2.17 | 2 | Once(2 of 6) |
|  | **Average**  | **Median** | **Mode** |
| **Balancing Family Needs with your Call**  | **Response** | **Response** | **Response** |
| All Masters of Divinity Respondents | 3.92 | 4 | Often(12 of 2) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 3.67 | 4 | Often(5 of 6) |
| RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 4.00 | 4 | Often(8 of 21 |
| All Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 4.29 | 5 | All the time(8 of 14) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 3.40 | 4 | All the time(2 of 5) |
| RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 4.78 | 5 | All the time(7of 9) |
|  | **Average**  | **Median** | **Mode** |
| **Being Treated like the Pastor’s Wife (when you aren’t)** | **Response** | **Response** | **Response** |
| All Masters of Divinity Respondents | 1.84 | 2 | Never(8 of 29) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 2.00 | 3 | Several times(4 of 7) |
| RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 1.85 | 2 | Never(7 of 23) |
| All Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 1.82 | 2 | Never(5 of 11) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 1.00 | 0 | Never(3 of 5) |
| RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 2.50 | 3.5 | Often(3 of 6) |
|  | **Average**  | **Median** | **Mode** |
| **Resistance to Inclusive Language for People**  | **Response** | **Response** | **Response** |
| All Masters of Divinity Respondents | 2.74 | 3 | Often(11 of 33) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 3.36 | 4 | Often(4 of 7 |
| RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 2.58 | 3 | Never, Often(4 of 23) |
| All Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 2.44 | 3 | Never(5 of 16) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 2.67 | 4 | Often(3 of 9) |
| RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 2.14 | 3 | Never(3 of 7) |
|  | **Average**  | **Median** | **Mode** |
| **Resistance to Inclusive Language for God**  | **Response** | **Response** | **Response** |
| All Masters of Divinity Respondents | 3.73 | 4 | Often(13 of 30) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 3.13 | 3.5 | Often(4 of 7) |
| RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 3.95 | 4 | Often (9 of 22) |
| All Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 4.00 | 4 | Often(7 of 15) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 3.88 | 4 | Often(3 of 8) |
| RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 4.14 | 4 | Often(4 of 7) |
|  | **Average**  | **Median** | **Mode** |
| **Being Thwarted by Males: Staff or Congregation**  | **Response** | **Response** | **Response** |
| All Masters of Divinity Respondents | 2.59 | 3 | Several times(12 of 29) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 3.25 | 3.5 | Often(4 of 7) |
| RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 2.41 | 3 | Several times(10 of 22) |
| All Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 2.30 | 3 | Several times(6 of 15)  |
| Non-RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 1.67 | 2 | Several times(3 of 6) |
| RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 2.72 | 3 | Several times(3 of 9) |
|  | **Average**  | **Median** | **Mode** |
| **Being Thwarted by Females: Staff or Congregation** | **Response** | **Response** | **Response** |
| All Masters of Divinity Respondents | 2.38 | 3 | Several times(10 of 28) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 2.57 | 3 | Often(3 of 7) |
| RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 2.39 | 3 | Several times(8 of 22) |
| All Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 2.29 | 3 | Often(3 of 12) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 1.50 | 1.5 | Never(2 of 4) |
| RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 2.69 | 3.5 | Often(3 of 8) |
|  | **Average**  | **Median** | **Mode** |
| **Lower Salary or Benefits Package than Similar Males**  | **Response** | **Response** | **Response** |
| All Masters of Divinity Respondents | 1.96 | 1 | Never, Once(7 of 24) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 2.29 | 2 | Once, twice,All the time(2 of 7) |
| RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 1.78 | 1 | Never, Once(6 of 18) |
| All Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 3.33 | 5 | All the time(7 of 12) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 2.00 | 0 | Never(3 of 5) |
| RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 4.29 | 5 | All the time(5 of 7) |
|  | **Average**  | **Median** | **Mode** |
| **Feeling Invisible at a Meeting or Social Function** | **Response** | **Response** | **Response** |
| All Masters of Divinity Respondents | 2.24 | 3 | Often(8 of 31) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 2.78 | 3 | Often(4 of 9) |
| RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 2.11 | 2 | Often(6 of 23) |
| All Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 2.63 | 3 | Several times, often(5 of 16) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 2.00 | 3 | Never(3 of 7) |
| RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 3.11 | 3 | Several times(3 of 9) |
|   | **Average**  | **Median** | **Mode** |
| **Having a Church Misrepresent Openness to Women** | **Response** | **Response** | **Response** |
| All Masters of Divinity Respondents | 1.12 | 0 | Never(15 of 25) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 2.00 | 1.5 | Never(3 of 6) |
| RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | .84 | 0 | Never(12 of 19 |
| All Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 1.56 | 1 | Never(4 of 9) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | .05 | .5 | Never, Once(2 of 4) |
| RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 2.40 | 3 | Never(2 of 5) |

*Non RCA Masters of Divinity respondents reported sexual harassment more often than other groups. This is perhaps because there are more positions open in these denominations and more opportunities for sexual harassment to occur. This same group also reported more difficulty in finding a call, perhaps because their expectation of the number of positions available to them is higher than women from the RCA. Overall, Masters of Religious Education graduates found it easier to find a call then graduates with a Masters in Divinity.*

RCA Masters of Religious Education graduates reported the highest amount of difficulty with balancing their family’s needs with their calls citing that this occurs all the time.

*Non RCA Masters of Divinity graduates reported the highest instance of resistance to inclusive language in the church –both for people and for God. This group also reported the highest instance of being thwarted by males in the congregation. Perhaps this is due to the number of these women who are serving in the church as a pastor as opposed to Chaplaincy or other positions. On the other hand, RCA Masters of Religious Education graduates expressed the highest percentage of being thwarted by women, perhaps because of the traditional women’s structures that have typically run Christian Education programs in the past.*

*In responding to the question of receiving a lower salary or benefits package than similarly qualified males, Masters of Divinity non-RCA graduates report this occurring more frequently then those graduates who hold a Masters of Divinity degree in the RCA. The fixed salary matrix that is used in the RCA to determine the amount of compensation for pastors may account for this difference. Unfortunately, this question was not worded in a way that was clear to graduates who hold a Masters of Religious Education. Because typically there are very few males in the Masters of Religious Education program, these women chose either to respond with a comparison between themselves and Masters of Divinity graduates, (which led to a response of “All the Time”), or to compare themselves with the non-existent group of males in Christian Education. –Leading to a response of, “Never”.*

*RCA Masters of Religious Education respondents reported the greatest instance of feeling invisible at a meeting or a social function. This is perhaps due to the fact that Christian Education positions are typically not treated as true pastoral positions with ordination or equal benefit packages.*

*Overall, Masters of Divinity respondents in the RCA reported the fewest instances of misrepresentation on the part of a search committee --probably because these committees are allowed by their denomination to clearly state that women are not welcome in their congregations. However, it is very interesting to note that RCA women who hold a Masters in Religious Education report the highest instance of misrepresentation of a church’s openness to women. This is perhaps due to disparity in the search committee’s view of the position’s place and role in the organization in comparison to the women’s view of her ministry.*

How supportive was your denomination or congregation in helping you to overcome the gender specific challenges to your ministry?

# **Not at all : 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 : Very**

# Comments?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Average**  | **Median** | **Mode** |
|  | **Response** | **Response** | **Response** |
| All Masters of Divinity Respondents | 4.34 | 3 | 3 (8 of 32) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 4.67 | 5 | 3,5 (2 of 9)  |
| RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 4.33 | 3 | 3 (6 of 24) |
| All Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 4.29 | 4 | 1 (4 of 17) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 5.00 | 4.5 | 9 (2 of 8) |
| RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 3.67 | 4 | 1 (2 of 9) |

**Denomination: RCA**

* “The RCA is full of ‘soft’ discrimination and passive aggressive power dynamics vs. the CRC’s ‘hard’ discrimination. It’s similar to Northern vs. Southern racism –hard to call one ‘better’”. (M Div in the RCA)
* “While in seminary, I had a church refuse me as an intern because of the ‘impropriety’ of working with a male pastor.” (M Div in the RCA)
* ‘Certain key individuals were supportive in my Classis.’ (M Div in the RCA)
* ‘My answer [2 on scale of 1-10] is based on the amount of assistance I have received in obtaining a call in the area of my choice.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “[I feel] too visible in Classis: the ‘token woman’”. (M Div in RCA)
* “When I bring up a situation, I am heard and receive a sympathetic hearing. Little change however. [It is] handled more as counseling for the female pastor. “(M Div in the RCA)
* “Getting caught between feminists in the RCA and traditionalists in the RCA is very painful.” (M Div in the RCA)

**Congregation: RCA**

* “ I was allowed on staff as long as I didn’t perform any pastoral duties. “(M Div in the RCA)
* “A lot of feminist talk doesn’t translate into practical adjustments that traditional congregations must make in the Midwest (where I come from) toward the expanding roles of women in the congregation on a daily basis.” (MRE in the RCA)
* “Each time I tried to discuss the issue –especially to ‘head off’ deeper problems, I was told it wasn’t an issue –until it exploded.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “Not sure. [It] comes from within myself and from outside the denomination. My little congregation is very affirming.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “My present congregation is very affirming.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “Congregation is very understanding and supportive about balancing parenting and pastoring.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “It varies. I’ve had both CRC and RCA congregations –all were in different places [on these issues]. “(M Div in the RCA)

* “I find more acceptance from older members –more problems from middle age and young conservatives.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “I am still blind sided by subtle stereotypes –leadership by collaboration is still seen as weaker than proclamation, and is associated with female leaders. I spent my first pastorate outside of the RCA which strengthened me by letting me learn I could do ministry.” (M Div in the RCA)

**UCC**

* “The RCA was not supportive at all. The UCC was a 6 (on scale of 1 to 10). “(M Div in the UCC)
* “[My denomination was 1 on scale of 1-10] that’s why I went over to the UCC.” (M Div in the UCC)
* “I am UCC which is a denomination outspoken in it’s support of women in Ministry.” (M Div in the UCC)

**ELCA**

* “Congregations were great with inclusive pastors. When pastors were uneasy, the attitude spread. “(MRE in the ELCA)

**PCUSA**

* “Generally, the challenges are seen as my problem for me to overcome.” (M Div in the PCUSA)
* “Not an issue.” (MRE in the PCUSA)
* “Example –Certification of Christian Educators –Lots of work – No salary basis – No voice in Consistary or Classis- Why? Because most educators are women.” (MRE in the PCUSA)

**NACCC**

* “We are in the process of forming a national Women in Ministry group for support, sharing ideas, possible retreats, etc. “(MRE in the NACCC)

How effective have you been in overcoming gender specific challenges in the ministry?

# **Not at all : 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 : Very**

Comments?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Average**  | **Median** | **Mode** |
|  | **Response** | **Response** | **Response** |
| All Masters of Divinity Respondents | 6.58 | 7 | 7 (5 of 30) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 6.83 | 7 | 4 (2 of 6) |
| RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 6.52 | 7 | 7 (5 of 24) |
| All Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 5.44 | 5 | 5 (4 of 16) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 6.00 | 7 | 9 (2 of 7) |
| RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 5.00 | 5 | 5 (3 of 9) |

*While no group responded as being more than moderately successful in overcoming their gender specific challenges to ministry, respondents who hold a Masters of Religious Education in the RCA reported the least amount of success in overcoming gender specific challenges to their ministry. Much work is needed by the Church to help women overcome their gender challenges in order for them to be able to just do the work of ministry.*

* “I have managed to find placement, earn a living and service my student loans without leaving ministry –that’s a strong success. “(M Div in the RCA)
* “Hopefully a lot.” (Th M in the UCC)

**Good ministry conquers opposition.**

* “Generally my preaching and pastoral care win them over or else difficult members realize they’ll stand alone in their criticism. “(M Div in the PCUSA)
* “It’s about ministry, not gender so much.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “Personally, I’ve found that if I can get an opportunity to preach, I can see people begin to rethink their positions. But they must hear me preach. If I can’t get to that point, there is no movement.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “Just DO and BE and the challenges are overcome!”(M Div in the RCA)
* “(It) depends a lot on how vital my relationship is with God –emotional and spiritual strength. “(M Div in the UCC)

**Supportive People**

* “I have two ministers at my home church where I am very involved, who support me verbally and refuse to let me grow actually.” (M Div in the UCC)
* “I have found that the best antidote to this is getting involved in local ecumenical groups. I am in two. They appreciate the women in the group so much, especially the Roman Catholic and Episcopal priests. Lectionary groups are great.” (M Div in the RCA)

**MRE’s in non RCA churches and women in specialized ministry find fewer challenges.**

* [Gender specific challenges are] “Not an issue. “(MRE in the PCUSA)
* “I’ve met very few gender specific challenges. “(MRE in the Missionary Baptist Church)
* “In specialized ministry, it’s rarely an issue. “(M Div in the RCA)
* “When working with un-churched people, gender is seldom an issue. “(MRE –Ecumenical.)
* “I made my own way. –Pastoral care was my main interest in seminary. CPE at Pine Rest hooked me on this field.” (M Div in the American Baptist)

**Church and Community Dynamics**

* “Ministry happens in a larger community. That community is tougher.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “I’m learning a lot about myself and about church dynamics. “(M Div in the RCA)
* “[I am treated like a pastors wife] Often; by strangers mostly.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “I can identify with some of the challenges you mention, …the feeling invisible as many churches in the past have felt that the man only in the family is, “the Missionary” and introduced us in that way. The balancing of family needs is another one…and also balancing my husband’s expertise with mine. (I have enjoyed learning engineering from him and climb towers with the best of them!) This has enabled us to work side by side and present an unusual partnership to many stations in foreign countries.”(MRE in the RCA)

**Difficulty Over Coming Opposition, Some Leave Ministry**

* “I have had only one job in the RCA ministry as a lay pastor of a 30 member congregation (part time at $50 per week.)” (M Div in the RCA)
* “Therapy helps!” (M Div in the RCA)
* “I left the church for an academic career that supports me completely.” (M Div in the UCC)
* “I have become very ill in the battle to be a woman in ministry in the RCA. I have left the RCA and am now working as a preschool teacher –my health has not fully recovered. It is hard to have to constantly fight for your dreams, --call, the center of who you are.” (MRE in the PCUSA)
* “Well, I guess I finally decided I’d had enough and went back into teaching. Parts of me are still wounded. It didn’t go the way I thought it could. “(MRE in the ELCA)

How do you feel about your call?

How difficult or easy was it to find your first call?

# **Difficult : 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10: Easy**

Comments?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Average**  | **Median** | **Mode** |
|  | **Response** | **Response** | **Response** |
| All Masters of Divinity Respondents | 5.34 | 3 | 10 (10 of 31) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 5.50 | 4.5 | 10 (3 of 8) |
| RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 5.28 | 3 | 10 (7 of 23) |
| All Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 5.73 | 8 | 1, 10 (5 of 15)  |
| Non-RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 6.14 | 8 | 10 (3 of 7) |
| RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 5.38 | 5.5 | 1 (3 of 8) |

*Overall, Non RCA Masters of Religious Education holders reported the easiest time in finding their first call. RCA Masters of Divinity holders reported the most difficulty in finding their first call. Area differences could account for the high disparity of answers to this question.*

# **Have not found a call.**

* “I haven’t had one [a call] yet. I have been actively seeking a call since April of 1999. To date I have sent 75 letters of inquiry.” (M Div in the RCA)

# “Still waiting!! I made the job I am in now! “(M Div in the RCA)

* “I have never received a call; I work on contract. “ (M Div in the RCA)
* “Work in my own field at full salary has been impossible.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “The RCA –Classis Holland—was determined that I could do ministry without being ordained.” (M Div in the UCC)

**Other Options**

# “I chose CPE/ Specialized Ministry –it was one of the only/ very few options. “(M Div in the RCA)

* “I had to go to the Methodist Church and to Specialized Ministry. “(M Div in the RCA)
* “[I] Wanted to stay in the mid-west. Not possible. The East was very open –and I had three opportunities. “(M Div in the RCA)
* “I became a chaplain.” (M Div in the UCC)
* “I went in to pastoral care and clinical social work with mentally ill. This is my ministry.” (M Div in the American Baptist)

**Found a call.**

# “Immediately out of seminary. “(M Div from the RCA)

# “ I was fortunate to have two calls and a third possibility –it was helpful that I was married to a fellow seminarian.” (M Div in the RCA)

* “The situation was different being a husband and wife team. It was a problem for some congregations, a plus for others. I am under contract, not ordained” (MRE in the RCA)

# “ I was in a position before graduation and continued on. “(M Div in the RCA)

* “[Relatively easy] because it was in Chaplaincy.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “I worked in my local congregation and was hired by the same (bad idea). “(MRE in the RCA)

# “I had about four choices.” (MRE in the ELCA)

* “I am working in the congregation who initially supported my call.” (MRE in the RCA)
* “My Lay Pastor position was one where they came to me. Actually [I] had two offers (1 from an RCA, the other Congregational).” (M Div in the RCA)
* “I was able to preach three times as a student before we felt the call to each other.” (M Div in the PCUSA)

# **Difficult**

# “ I was married with a new baby –it was difficult. “(M Div in the RCA)

# “I had difficulty originally, but it is a continual wondering.” (M Div in the RCA)

# “Few role models when young –limited choices.” (MRE in the UCC)

# “Geographic limitations limited available options. “(MRE in the Episcopal Church)

# “ At this point, [I have difficulty finding a call] all of the time. “(M Div in the RCA)

To what extent do you feel that your gender hindered or helped your finding of your call?

## Hindered : 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10: Helped

### Comments?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Average**  | **Median** | **Mode** |
|  | **Response** | **Response** | **Response** |
| All Masters of Divinity Respondents | 3.54 | 3 | 1 (8 of 27) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 3.50 | 3.5 | 3, 5 (2 of 6) |
| RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 3.57 | 3 | 1 (7 of 22) |
| All Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 5.93 | 7.5 | 1 (4 of 14) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 7.00 | 8 | 10 (3 of 7) |
| RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 5.13 | 6 | 1 (3 of 6) |

*Non RCA Masters of Religious Education holders reported that their gender helped them somewhat to find a call. However, Masters of Divinity holders reported that their gender typically hindered them in their search for a call*.

 **Hindered**

## “It was most of the factor, but not all. I also have a disability which makes finding the right position difficult. There is also no assistance available in finding places for seminary trained women outside parish and Christian Ed work, who are not ordained. “(M Div in the RCA)

* “I think my choice to stay in W. Michigan (to marry an RCA pastor) hindered my ability to find a call. “(M Div in the RCA)
* “There was a male student who began seeking a call at the same time as myself [April of 1999] He was ordained and installed in July/August.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “You should have read comments from churches where I sent my profile. I graduated top of Seminary [class] with highest senior awards, but didn’t meet their standard. “(M Div in the RCA)

## “[Some people] in the Classis tried to find loop-holes in the call that would stop the process of my first call. It took three months to approve the call!” (M Div in the RCA)

* “Finding a pulpit in the RCA was never a serious possibility. Understanding that reality focused my search on viable options.” (M Div in the RCA)

**Helped**

## “The male staff immediately saw the benefits of having a female working in partnership with them.” (MRE in the NACCC)

## “ [It helped.] Plus, I had been there on a year-long internship prior to my call there. “(M Div in the RCA)

* “(It) helped. They only wanted someone part-time, that they didn’t have to pay a lot. I had young children at the time, so it was a match. “ (MRE in the PCUSA)

**Gender wasn’t an issue in these situations.**

## “ [In specialized ministry] it wasn’t an issue. “(M Div in the RCA)

## “(My gender) didn’t matter. “(M Div in the UCC)

* “I don’t think that gender played a role.” (MRE in the PCUSA)

## “Not an issue.” (MRE in the Episcopal Church)

* “Churches are very accepting of women in Christian Ed.” (MRE in the RCA)
* “Didn’t matter….at the beginning.” (MRE in the ELCA)

## Other Factors Besides Gender

## “Denominationalism was also a factor.” (MRE –Ecumenical)

##

* “[It is] Different with each contract.” (M Div in the RCA)

## “My experience as a supervisor for churches in the search process is that they may be resistant until profiles came in and phone interviews are done. The women shine!” (M Div in the RCA)

* “I feel that my age (late 20’s) to be more of an issue for me right now than my gender.” (M Div in the RCA)

**Other women helped me.**

## “The first woman ordained by PCUSA had been associate at Kalamazoo 1st and had preached in Schoolcraft in the 50’s. That opened the door for me. “(M Div in the PCUSA)

## “Women authors and friends helped a lot.” (MRE in the UCC)

### Do you feel called to your current position?

#### Not at all : 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 : Very

Comments?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Average**  | **Median** | **Mode** |
|  | **Response** | **Response** | **Response** |
| All Masters of Divinity Respondents | 9.40 | 10 | 10 (22 of 30) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 9.44 | 10 | 10 (6 of 9) |
| RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 9.27 | 10 | 10 (16 of 22) |
| All Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 9.07 | 10 | 10 (10 of 15) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 9.11 | 10 | 10 (5 of 9) |
| RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 9.00 | 10 | 10 (5 of 6) |

*Surprisingly in this survey, women graduates of WTS feel very called to their current positions, wherever they are. The faith of these women to trust in God and to determine their calls even in the light of current church oppression is very inspiring. Clearly the Church is much poorer for not welcoming and affirming these powerhouses of spirituality.*

 **No longer in Church Ministry**

### “I left Church ministry after 7 years due to a Sr. Pastor who did not want to work with a female. “ (MRE in the Reformed Church)

* “Yes. I guess, not being a full time employee, but a volunteer. I felt called to Western MRE. I left because I felt taken advantage of…in one church. Perhaps that was a calling-out. I loved the work. I couldn’t fit without the pastor’s cooperation. “ (MRE in the ELCA)

### “I left the church ministry and have taken a different type[of] ministry in missionary research.

 I also have had a change in my faith –more charismatic. My priorities have changed. I have learned that gender challenges are not a priority, although I still believe it important. “(MRE in the UMC)

* “I am currently on Social Security for my disability, so I have the freedom to do volunteer work in Prison Ministry, with the option to work into a paying position (future). In a way that’s comfortable and uses my gifts. I’ll never get paid a fair wage (something I would hope isn’t true for women entering now), but I have a way to do ministry and pay bills too.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “I am not working professionally in the church currently. I feel called to spend time with my children right now. “(MRE in the RCA)
* “I have always wanted to try inner city and prison ministries. Now I have been able to do both, but would like to see opportunities for women in full-time pastoral counseling situations like these sponsored and encouraged in the RCA (especially for recent graduates.)”(M Div in the RCA)
* “I like my work. It feels like ministry, but [it] does keep me outside the denominational structures.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “As a woman with a family, I find places to do what I do…in different settings. Pastoring [an] elderly congregation, Office Manager for an inner city ministry, and now prison work. “ (M Div in the RCA)

**Have No Current Position**

* “I am confined to the Muskegon area because of my husband’s position. I have no current position. “ (M Div in the RCA)
* “I don’t have a current position. I’m a minister at large! “ (MRE –Ecumenical)
* “I feel called into the ministry, but face the possibility of a call not materializing, therefore no confirmation of my own sense of call. “(M Div in the RCA)

### **Positive Comments about Feeling Called**

### “I try not to lead with my gender. People get defensive if they sense it’s your ‘agenda’. Being a female in ministry requires sensitivity, strength and wisdom.” (MRE in the NACCC)

### “This call came just the way it might have come to a male. I believe God overrides resistance! “(M Div in the RCA)

* “Actually, it has been an excellent fit and a strong platform for ministry.” (M Div in the RCA)

### “ [I] have shared a call with my spouse in the same parish for 16 years. “(M Div in the RCA)

**Strong Gifts Not Utilized**

### “Yes –but I’m operating in areas of my weakest gifts.” (M Div in the RCA)

Your current position:

### What is your current position?\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Do you consider this position to be: A church position A denominational position

A para-church organization position A non-profit organization position.

Other:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Is this position within your denomination? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Comments?

### *15 people listed positions traditionally termed “Pastor”,*

*9 people listed positions that can be described as “Chaplain”,*

*7 people listed positions traditionally termed “Christian Education”,*

*16 people listed other positions,*

*2 people listed parenting,*

*2 people were categorized as not employed.*

*The listing of positions held by survey graduates is as follows:*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Other Positions**1/4 Time Assistant Pastor- (Pastors Wife) | **Pastoral Positions**Assoc. Pastor | **Children’s Education**Children's Ministry | **Chaplaincy**Chaplain |
| Active Lay Person | Assoc. Pastor | Christian Ed | Chaplain |
| Spiritual Renewal Center- Executive Director | Co Pastor & Regional Staff | Education Director of Faith Based Non Profit | Chaplain Intern M Div Student |
| SS Director & Counseling- Center Director | Co-pastor | Director of Children's- Ministries | Chaplain Resident CPE |
| Co-Executive Director Non- Profit | Co-Pastor | Director of Christian Ed | Ass. Chaplain |
| Spiritual Care Minister | Co-pastor w. husband. | Director of Education & Youth | Director Christian Education- & Chaplain, Hospice |
| Supervisor at CMH | Interim Minister | Minister of Education | Director Interfaith Partners in Caregiving & Hospice Chaplain |
| Teaching Librarian | Interim Pastor |  | Hospice Chaplain |
| Credit Union | Lead Pastor |  | Nursing Home Chaplain |
| Curriculm & Bible Teaching –Spiritual Development Program | Minister of Adult Ed & Discipleship –Associate Pastor |  |
| Social Worker | Pastor |  |  |
| Marriage & Family Therapist | Pastor and Hospice Spiritual Counselor |  |
| Missionary Research & Office Manager | Senior Pastor |  |  |
| Music Educator | Solo Pastor | **Parenting**At home with kids | **Unemployed**None |
| Non Profit Director | Solo Pastor | Home Full Time | Unemployed minister at large |
| Not Associated with any Church |  |  |

### *It is interesting to note the high percentage of Chaplaincy and other positions that women in ministry hold.*

### **Comments about your current position?**

**Positive Comments**

* “I feel well respected locally, statewide and on the national level.” (MRE in the NACCC)
* “Staff of six full time pastors. Three women and three men. My church has 1500 average attendance. I was the first full time woman hired as a pastor. “ (MRE in Church of God)
* “Our ministry engages churches to perform outreach, social services and evangelism. [It] isn’t denominational but functions as one.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “Interim ministers have ecumenical training.” (M Div in the RCA)

#### No Current Ministry Position

* “[It] keeps the options open, pockets empty. “(MRE- Ecumenical)
* “Currently, I’m working at a Credit Union.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “I was laid off in July as Director of Spiritual Care at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Hospital, and there are no open doors for me in any ministry at this time.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “I was the Director of Children’s Ministries at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Reformed, in\_\_\_\_\_\_.” (MRE in the RCA)

**Working at home, or focusing on other roles.**

* “ The choice to stay home is not considered in this survey. Making this choice at this point in my families life makes me feel even more counter-culture! I don’t fit anywhere. “(M Div in the RCA)
* “[This position is not in my denomination], but I teach many happy little Lutherans. (piano)” (MRE in the ELCA)
* “I AM a pastor’s wife!! And this is a self-defining role for my by CHOICE.” (M Div in the RCA)

How satisfied are you with your current position?

#### Not at all : 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 : Very

Comments?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Average**  | **Median** | **Mode** |
|  | **Response** | **Response** | **Response** |
| All Masters of Divinity Respondents | 8.21 | 9 | 10 (11 of 31) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 8.00 | 9 | 9 (4 of 9) |
| RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 8.02 | 9 | 10 (9 of 23) |
| All Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 8.06 | 9 | 10 (6 of 17) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 8.89 | 9 |  10 (4 of 9) |
| RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 7.13 | 7 | 7,10 (2 of 7) |

*Overall, RCA women who have a Masters of Religious Education are less satisfied with their current position than women in other denominations with a Masters of Religious Education. Women who hold a Masters of Divinity degree who are in the RCA are about as satisfied with their positions as women in other denominations.*

**Money Problems**

#### “I wish there was less fund raising. “(M Div in the UCC)

####  “Difficult having to raise the money to run the ministry. The rest is very rewarding. “(M Div in the RCA)

* “[Very Satisfied] –But I’ll be more satisfied when I get paid of course!!”(M Div in the RCA)

**Short Term Pastorates**

#### “I would prefer long term pastorate.” (MRE in the Episcopal Church)

####

#### “ The short term of interim ministry is the only disadvantage.” (M Div in the RCA)

#### Relationship Difficulties

#### “I was treated more as a secretary than respected by others on staff. “(MRE in the RCA)

* “[I] struggle with dominant head of business CEO males who are impatient with process.” (M Div in the RCA)

**Out of Church Ministry**

#### “ I am very happy and do not regret leaving a church staff. “(MRE in the UMC)

#### “I no longer work in a ministry. I work at Community Mental Health.” (MRE in the Reformed Church)

**Limited Opportunities**

#### “Other opportunities are limited –even if I became ordained –unless I move to the Eastern USA.” (MRE in the RCA)

#### “I am beginning to evolve a pastoral counseling ministry on my own.” (M Div in the RCA)

**Working Part Time**

#### “Working two part time positions is exhausting. “(M Div in the RCA)

#### “I am seeking a call to a church that can pay me full time. “(M Div in the PCUSA)

The Future:

Many people lately have commented on an upcoming severe upcoming shortage of clergy due to a large number of current ministers retiring or burning out. How much do you think this will improve the situation for women in ministry?

#### Not at all : 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 : A Lot

Comments?

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Average**  | **Median** | **Mode** |
|  | **Response** | **Response** | **Response** |
| All Masters of Divinity Respondents | 4.89 | 5 | 7 (8 of 32) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 5.22 | 6 | 6,7,8 (2 of 9) |
| RCA Masters of Divinity Respondents | 4.90 | 5 | 7 (6 of 24) |
| All Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 6.00 | 7 | 7 (4 of 14) |
| Non-RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 7.25 | 7.5 | 7,8 (2 of 8) |
| RCA Masters of Religious Education Respondents | 4.33 | 4.5 | 7 (2 of 6) |

***On the average****, women who are in the RCA have less hope about the future improvement of the situation for women than do the women in other denominations.*

**Improve**

* “I’ve heard that the UCC in particular is facing an extreme shortage. If that is true, it may well get easier to make a switch.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “Come to rural, under-served areas and I think the issue is less stressed.” (MRE in the Missionary Baptist Church)
* “Desperation changes things –Godde moves in mysterious ways. “(MRE – Ecumenical.)
* “I’m trying to be optimistic. “(M Div in the RCA)

**It Depends**

* “[It] Depends on the church.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “Family systems are very complex. “(M Div in the RCA)

**Future shortage will not help women.**

* “There are still a lot of people to convince. “(M Div in the UCC)
* “Certainly shortages make flexibility in congregations more likely, but don’t mistake this for acceptance. (More than is demanded from a man.) Exceptional unconditional love is the only thing that wins people over.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “The issues are still the same! “(M Div in the UCC)

#### “I’m not sure it will make any difference, it sure hasn’t helped the Roman Catholic situation.” (M Div in the RCA)

* “Panic or shortage does not change attitudes.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “Not at all. At least not in the RCA. “(M Div in the UCC)
* “Much depends on the RCA’s denominational culture and it’s intentions about identity. If we follow Barna and Gallop I have very little optimism about it’s future. Authentic Christian community is a difficult thing. “(M Div in the RCA)

**Churches prefer retired males over women.**

* “Some churches prefer a retired male minister, even from another denomination, to a woman minister; but more and more will call a woman and come to love her. “(M Div in the PCUSA)
* “I think that people in the pews will continue to utilize the retired guys as much as they can –to avoid the issue.” (M Div in the RCA)

**Churches will “Settle for less”.**

* “They will just go to other seminaries, and/or settle for less competency. “(M Div in the RCA)
* “Some will welcome [it] sincerely with opportunity to have a pastor; some will accept with the idea “It’s the best we can do” and some will never accept a woman in ministry.” (M Div in the RCA)

#### No Idea

* “No idea –Lord knows! “ (M Div in the RCA)
* “I have no idea how RCA will deal with it. In general, I see women in church leadership positions everywhere.” (MRE in the ELCA)
* “I’m not sure. There still is a lot of opposition out there.” (MRE in the PCUSA)

**Final Questions:**

Please comment on the practice of switching to a denomination that is more open to women in ministry:

**Not Opposed to the Idea**

* “I am not opposed –it could happen to me someday! “(M Div in the RCA)
* “It is a difficult personal choice but must be made in cases where the environment is abusive or death-dealing and lifeless. I don’t believe it is warranted for “career advancement” alone. “(M Div in the RCA)
* “If I still wanted to be in active ministry and stay in the area, it would be the only way.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “Go where they want you! It’s safe.” (MRE in the ELCA)
* “[It is] totally an individual choice.” (M Div from the RCA)
* “I would do it in a heartbeat!” (M Div in the RCA)

**Comments from those who switched denominations.**

* “It was a great move for me! I occasionally think about greener grass in the PCUSA or Episcopal Church for other issues.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “For a period of about one year I had “dual standing” in the UCC and RCA.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “I left the RCA to join the PCA and finally UMC. I also left the ministry. “(MRE in the UMC)
* “My patience ran out; at the time I was in an RCA church where women were not even allowed to serve on consistory. “(MRE in the UCC)
* “I had dual standing in UCC which gave me a very different, very affirming place to learn my craft and gain confidence.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “It was a liberating experience for the most part. “ (M Div from the UCC)
* “It was very painful to acknowledge that there was no place for me in my denomination at that time. Although I chose to leave, it felt like I had no choice. “(M Div in the RCA)
* “I am pursuing UCC, but it does not have a category for specialized minister.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “44 years in the RCA; 20+ fighting for change. [There is] more to life than the fight. Time to just serve.” (D Min in the UCC)
* “It’s more than openness to women, it’s about finding a place of acceptance as a lesbian which is non existent in the RCA.” (M Div in the UCC)
* “I feel a lot more supported. They are willing to use all my gifts [here].” (MRE in the PCUSA)

**Stay and Change Things from Within**

* “It is better to change the denomination from within. If the 1st women who graduated before me had not made some path to follow I would have had an even tougher time in ministry. “(MRE in the RCA)
* “RCA is home. I’d be open to Presbyterian, UCC, but unless forced to leave my family –I stay and work on the dysfunction.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “I wouldn’t consider it. The RCA brought me to Christ…whatever the strengths or weaknesses, they are my family…although I have been deeply hurt by people in the RCA as woman in ministry and can understand why a person would move.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “I understand why women do it. But other denominations need capable role models who will hang in there and wear down the system. That’s what we did in the 70’s. (The Presbyterians did not get us.)” (M Div in the RCA)

**No plans to do so right now.**

* “No plans to do so at present.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “I’ve thought of it on occasion but I don’t feel led to do it.” (M Div in the Wesleyan Church)
* “I have been encouraged by the Methodists to make the switch but am reluctant because I would need to be itinerant.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “That was not an issue, although it is pleasant to see women active in all phases of church life. There are no women clergy on staff though. “(MRE in UMC)
* “I have considered [it], but [I] want my husband and children to stay where they are happy. “(MRE in the RCA)

**Good Experiences**

* “ I grew up attending a church denomination that allowed women in ministry. I was used to the concept. “(MRE in the RCA)
* “This current church is everything I wish RCA churches were. “(M Div in the RCA)
* My situation is different. My denomination has always ordained women. It’s not an issue. Finding a solo pastor position is possible if you are willing to relocate. Larger churches hire men usually for Senior Pastor and women are associates along with men. (MRE in the Church of God)
* “I do not feel that gender is an issue within the NACCC. Some individual congregations may feel challenged as they call a woman into ministry, but they find it to be a blessing.” (MRE in the NACCC)

**Switch Denominations Early in Seminary**

* “After I graduated from seminary, I began exploring the possibility of switching denominations. In that process, I spoke with representatives of the PCUSA, the UCC and the United Methodists. What I discovered was that the likelihood of switching was difficult at best, discouraged at its worst. To switch without ordination would mean having to jump through many of the same hoops you jump in the RCA a second time. And this second round of hoop jumping would take an additional year or two. I was told all three times that it would be easier if a person were ordained in her own denomination first. Another option would be to send letters of inquiry to vacant congregations in other “more open” denominations and hope they would consider you without question. Therefore, I would urge any woman thinking about switching denominations to do so early on in the seminary process. Otherwise, she should think seriously about trying to make as many connections in other denominations, establishing relationships that would provide as many open doors and/or windows as possible after graduation.” (M Div in the RCA)

**Dangers and Concerns**

* “Every denomination has gender bias whether they want to admit it or not!! “(M Div in the RCA)
* “You may be accused of using the denomination you switch to. I’m out of touch with how the RCA is really using women clergy.” (M Div in the PCUSA)
* “UCC more open –but has other issues I’m not comfortable with (the homosexuality issues) so I would not change. “ (MRE in the RCA)
* “Denominations all have their rules, games, controls.” (MRE –Ecumenical)
* “All denominations have significant barriers to women; they may be in different places, but they reflect and participate in American culture.” (M Div in the RCA)

**Go Where God Calls**

* “If one’s vocation is to be Minister of Word and Sacrament, go where you must. But the RCA is poorer.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “I feel called to minister in the church of Jesus Christ; wherever God calls I would go.” (MRE in the RCA)
* “People, of either gender, need to be in ministry where they feel called regardless of gender or denomination, whether that is to challenge ‘the system’ or be part of an existing open ministry.” (MRE in the PCUSA)
* “You need to be where God leads and use your gifts for the greater good.” (MRE in the Missionary Baptist Church)
* “Better to do ministry in another denomination than ignore the Lord’s call. Too many women are inflexible regarding moving both denominationally and geographically. “(M Div in the RCA)

What advice would you give to a woman graduating from *Western Theological Seminary* today?

* “Graduating? Before *entering* WTS, know reality!” (M Div in the UCC)
* “Hold your experiences lightly, expect a big adjustment in the ‘real world’, remember that seminary is a unique environment; don’t expect too much from it.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “Be clear about what you want and use your degree and gifts where you find yourself.” (M Div in the American Baptist)
* “You Go Girl!” (M Div in the RCA)

**Good Advice**

* “Learn diplomacy, tact and conflict resolution skills.” (MRE in the UCC)
* “Know what you want, who you are, and what your limits are.” (Th. M. in the UCC)
* “Relationships built on trust, integrity, care and love are the best way to overcome ‘the issue’.”

(M Div in the RCA)

* “Resolve any anger issues. Be right with God.” (MRE in the RCA)
* “Be confident. Be realistic about your gifts. Don’t whine! Don’t be defensive or over read rejections. The right position in ministry is difficult for many men also.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “ Don’t make yourself an issue—be in ministry. No whining! “(M Div in the RCA)
* “Be secure in your call to ministry, what it is, what it isn’t. Plus ‘You can catch more flies with honey than you can with vinegar’ for a lack of a more succinct way to put it.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “Be realistic, but optimistic about where you will serve in ministry…Keep focused on serving God and not someone else’s idea of your success.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “Be prepared. It is hard to be a woman in ministry. It is also challenging to balance motherhood with ministry.” (MRE in the PCUSA)

**Go East**

* “Don’t try to minister in Western Michigan –or Michigan for that matter –try out east. “(M Div in the RCA)
* “If you wish to remain in the RCA, be prepared to go to areas where it is accepted. If someone challenges your position, I found the best defense was to say I felt called by God to do this.”(M Div in the RCA)

**Select Supportive Systems**

* “Make sure that the pastor you are going to work with is supportive of women in Ministry. His opinion at that time was that the only women who entered ministry were gay or power hungry.” (MRE in the RCA)
* “Listen to the Spirit of Godde, not systems organized “in HIS name”. Take *Women’s Leadership Institute* and join *Witness*. ☺ Bake, break, eat and give your own bread and don’t settle for fish food.” (MRE –Ecumenical)

**On Getting an MRE**

* “Don’t go for an MRE. It is useless in the church. It is not respected! “(MRE in the RCA)
* “I did not get an M Div because I feel I am more employable as a woman in Christian Ed

–Unfortunately! “(MRE in the RCA)

**Other Denominations**

* “Be careful to nourish your own person. If you are settled within, it helps when dealing with controversy. There are lots of friendly folks, you may have to move over a bit to find them. ☺” (MRE in the ELCA)
* “There will be a place that you will find where God has called you to serve God’s people. “(MRE in the PCUSA)
* “I would urge any RCA woman entering seminary to consider the possibility of coming under care in the RCA and the UCC simultaneously.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “If you want a good education, [WTS] is a great place. If you want a great job try a different denomination. “(D Min in the UCC)
* “Keep denominational options open.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “Get out [of the RCA] while you can.” (M Div in the UCC)
* “I was and am a member at Reformed Churches. I was ordained American Baptist.” (M Div in the American Baptist)

**Network**

“Seek out other women in ministry in your community or region and make it a priority to do study, reflection discussion and intercessory prayer together. At times one gets lonely –We need each other!!! “(MRE in the NACCC)

* “Network. Connect with women. “(M Div in the RCA)
* “Do it! But not alone…use any support from your sisters you can get!” (M Div in the PCUSA)
* “Network with women –find a female mentor –one inside the institution, one outside. “(M Div in the RCA)
* “Don’t expect the placement system to work for you. Do your own networking and find as many mentors as you can.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “Get connected with a “Good Ole Boys” club. “(M Div in the RCA)
* “Listen to God and follow the call of servant.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “Be aware! Be wise! Use your connections and make lots of connections!” (M Div in the RCA)
* “Hook up with other supportive women; make sure you have a thick skin! ☹ “(M Div in the RCA)

**Start Looking Now**

* “From the very beginning look for ministry opportunities and work toward them consistently during seminary. It is harder for us. “(M Div in the RCA)
* “If you find your place to serve while in the Seminary –stay there!” (M Div in the RCA)

**Don’t let gender issues become your focus.**

* “Work hard to not allow gender issues to become a primary focus of your ministry –not always easy!! “(M Div in the RCA)
* “Seek first God’s Kingdom! Don’t make gender issues your only goal in life. “(MRE in the UMC)
* “Having just finished an hour and a half meeting with one of the people I mentor and having devoted most of that time to anguishing over some of the happenings at our church –valid things for sure –I find myself wishing that we had instead feasted on the Lord richly for that hour and a half while we had the opportunity! So I just pass that on to you…take if from an old lady…talk and discuss these valid issues of the church that you have listed on your sheet, if you must from time to time, BUT don’t forget the feasting on the Lord. He has a way of making all these challenges seem small if only we intensify our focus on HIM.” (MRE in the RCA)

**Respond With Wisdom**

* “Angry strident voices and fighting will get us nowhere. We simply need to keep doing our jobs well and accept all opportunities to be visible in the church.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “Don’t take anything for granted. Go get your own call.” (M Div in the UCC)
* “There is no Jew or Greek, male or female in Jesus! Respond wisely to gender issues or those who don’t accept your leadership will only become more convinced in their stance.” (MRE in the Missionary Baptist Church)
* “Depends on the woman and her situation. “(M Div in the RCA)

**Practice What you Preach**

* “The advantage of opposition, especially strong opposition, is that you realize your dependence on God’s provision more fully and you have the blessed opportunity to practice what you preach about loving others, especially your enemies. The disadvantage is the way such lack of support undermines your confidence and challenges your deepest insecurities. Inner work (piety) is the only way to peace. You will not change or find a perfect environment for your ministry. : (M Div in the RCA)
* “I can say that there have been times when I knocked on God’s door more than once to announce that I felt that it was time to have “my” time of ministry. After one of those announcements about five years ago, I found the Lord saying AGAIN that serving in an enabling mode for my husband was my ministry. And I found myself content with that and then, to my amazement, God also allowed a ministry of mentoring to spring up and I find myself working one on one with about a dozen or so people either face to face or on the road via e-mail as we work through the Bible or other study books. Being a retreat speaker has also sort of popped up in the last couple of years. I continue on with engineering/ speaking/writing/handling educational seminars with my husband/mentoring and find the Lord is faithful in balancing all these areas.” (MRE in the RCA)

**Please add any other comments, your experience is priceless!**

**WTS, Acceptance and Local Pulpits**

* “It is time that the seminary took a critical look at its roles/ responsibilities to the church of the 21st Century and accepted its leadership responsibility. It might, for example, consider that it’s time to refuse pulpit supply to churches that refuse to receive women. “(M Div in the RCA)
* “I am in a different kind of ministry. In general, staff and patients have been glad to have a woman in ministry. I still struggle to be accepted in local pulpits, however.” (MRE in the UCC)
* “The Sr. Pastor who came to the church six months before I was asked to leave made it very clear that he was threatened by my being accepted by the congregation as a spiritual leader. It took 7 years for me to be outwardly accepted by the congregation. He is currently seeking his Doctorate at WTS.” (MRE in the RCA)

**Affirm all women, no matter what their calls are.**

* “I hope you will hear in this [my survey responses] that true feminism is when a woman really has free choice. MY FREE CHOICE is more traditional than most women seminary grads.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “As you undertake to create a supportive environment at WTS and in the RCA ministry, please make an additional effort to include those who don’t completely fit a feminist model. Since there are so few women in ministry, it helps if everyone is included. This area has been one of much pain, (with no where to fit in) –Thanks! “(M Div in the RCA)
* “I felt the most important thing was to obey God and do his will. It is not as important that people agree with or approve of me, as to let people be free to do what God calls them to do and be.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “My education and experience at WTS was far more about my personal faith journey and spiritual growth. I was not career ministry oriented at the time. I tried a staff position for a couple of years, but for several reasons (and gender issues were one) I resigned. My focus has been on family. That could change in the next few years. I might respond quite differently to this survey in 5 –10 years. “(MRE in the PCUSA)

**Lift up the presence of God.**

* “The only comment I’d like to add as a postscript to your questions is not a postscript, but the most important part. I am often discouraged by surveys and plans and programs that do not name our Lord or hold God’s acts and deeds as prominent and formative. As everything! Every opposition, every angry meeting, every time I was marginalized or left a situation feeling completely powerless and defeated, Jesus made the difference. In the RCA we tend to assume God in our “business” or church meetings –we need to lift up God’s presence. Sometimes God is all I have. –I don’t think you could find a more grateful minister in the RCA! Talk with God and more about God….Blessings.” (M Div in the RCA)
* “By being so “hung up” on women in ministry 10 years ago, I lost out spiritually. It became my thrust rather than the call of Christ.” (MRE in the UMC)

**Raising Consciousness and Change**

* “You can be a consciousness raiser, helping male colleagues to understand female issues –especially those related to domestic violence.” (MRE in the NACCC)
* “As a member of the Commission, I am working to change these situations. I promise. “(M Div in the RCA.)

**Get all your certifications now!**

* “Get ALL of any certifications you may think you may need NOW. (I’ll probably have to go back for a second unit of CPE this year.) (This includes any Christian Ed. Certification too, if that’s a place you think God may call you.) “(M Div in the RCA)

**MRE Issues**

* “I don’t think this questionnaire applies to MRE grads. –At least not me.” (MRE in the PCUSA)
* “A much larger issue for the Christian Educator is pay equity for ordained vs. non-ordained [ministry]. “(MRE in the PCUSA)

**Final Words**

* “Don’t worry –be faithful and tell the truth! “(M Div in the RCA)
* “Remember there are others –the rest of us—out here doing the same thing. We care about you! “ (M Div in the RCA)
* “Don’t give in. Don’t give up. God Bless all of you sisters.” (MRE in the ELCA)