



**ORDINATION PAPER**

**OF**

**Sandra Florentino-Hutchins**

**SUBMITTED TO**

**THE CHICAGO METROPOLITAN ASSOCIATION**

**THE ILLINOIS CONFERENCE**

**THE UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST**

**August 6, 2011**

**His Eyes on the Sparrow**

Art by [Lester Kern](#)

## **MESSAGE – THE WORD OF GOD**

*But be sure you live out the **message** and do not merely listen to it and so deceive yourselves*

*(James 1:22)*

### **Theological Position**

I like to think of the Christian faith in terms of it emerging out of God's deep desire to be in relationship with the humanity that God created. For too long God watched as the people moved further and further away from relationship and unity. Time and again God raised leaders to help them get back on the right track. Despite all God's efforts the people still strayed. God being God made the decision to come down as an ordinary human being with the extraordinary ability to lead and serve. It would be this human Jesus that would show us the way to live in relationship with God and each other. Jesus would demonstrate how a faithful, forgiving and loving God held the power to restore and unite us as one people, a peculiar people who loved God and each other.

My life is rooted and grounded in the WORD of God! The Word says I have been created by God, with God's character and nature in order to serve God and others. I understand that I was born for a purpose; I was designed with a specific task in mind. I am walking a path, not always taking the right one, but always knowing it was leading me closer to God. The only way to experience such a journey is through submission, humility and obedience to the one who breathed so that I could live. I am reminded by the words of my ancestors that an empty vessel can be filled to do the work and will of God, but a full glass will never receive the blessings that God has in store! In other words never be so full of yourself that God is left out, and always leave room for God to enter in.

## Personal Journey

This journey is a serious undertaking because the message calls for renunciation of self-will. This mutual relationship between grace and service requires obedience when God calls and as long as we have breath the journey never ends. My faith journey began when I surrendered self-will to God's as I walked the aisle at Trinity United Church of Christ in 1995. I realized and understood that I needed to look to God for direction and guidance in the choices I made. It was in total faith, belief and trust in Jesus Christ I humbly submit to God's chosen path for my life wherever that may lead. I know that the call does not lie within my own power. Through submission and surrender I have been given the endurance to follow the instructions of the Word. I am relying on the guidance of the spirit in the way I should go. This has been my journey.

I was born in the Spring of the year, a time when the earth is being replenished with newness....flowers blooming, birds singing, rain falling, sun shining. Yes, here I was May 8 coming into the world feet first. Many years later as I reflected on this coming into the world feet first, I realized it was a symbol of my being firmly planted in the Word of God!

I was raised by my father's mother as my parents were not married, but they managed to insure that they were both very important parts of my life. I got scripture and wisdom from my grandmother, common sense from my mother and how to interact with all kinds of people from my father. Each one of them was ministering in their own way every day. My grandmother and father owned a beauty salon, and my mother was a bartender. Their professions allowed them to interact with people of diverse backgrounds each and every day. I believe that interaction with this community of politicians, musicians, preachers, teachers, models, singers, actors, pimps,

hookers, homeless people, alcoholics, abusers, and dancers taught me how to live in unity and harmony with other people.

My spiritual life was formed in the Catholic tradition where I faithfully attended mass every Sunday and Confession every Saturday. However, at the age of 12 it hit me that since God knew everything and was everywhere, I didn't need to go to confession. Needless to say, it was time to leave the Catholic Church.

I began attending the First Church of Deliverance with my grandmother. Although I didn't understand much of what was being said I learned the words to every song they sang. What I mean is that the teaching focused on sinners burning in hell, rather than what we needed to do to live in God's will. Here is where music took hold in my spirit. From age 13 to 15 I traveled from church to church, Presbyterian, Methodist, and then a Baptist church. Then at the age of 16 I chose to be baptized at the New Covenant Missionary Baptist Church. On that great day the Holy Spirit announced his presence within as I shouted yes to his glory! But, this would be only the beginning. At age 21 the gift of marriage and the birth of my son led me to find a place where my son would be influenced by the Word of God. He was baptized at Christ Universal temple where I myself began seeking the mysteries of God through Bible study. These were the most trying years. My faith was tested as a single mother, working two jobs and volunteering in the community. The more I studied, the more I found lacking in the sermons and teachings. As a result I left the church, while I continued to search the scriptures for myself and taking correspondence courses. By the grace of God, I began to understand the true meaning of God's love, and how that love was extended through me to others. There was never a time that God did not place me in a position to serve others. With each encounter with family, friends and even strangers I was duty bound to help in some way. I took pleasure in being able to help

others, and as I look back, I know now that it was all part of God's plan for me to continue the journey. Just like Paul I was motivated to do the will of God, and joined Trinity United Church of Christ in the Fall of 1995. In obedience I began my journey of Christian service to new members, youth school, tutoring youth, adult church, writing for In-Teen Magazine, and adult Bible Study. My eyes were opened to the truth that if we followed God's teachings God would grant us peace as our faith increased. This gave me a zeal and passion for God and teaching the Word. Yes, I was committed and dedicated to serving, worshiping, studying and seeking a closer relationship with God.

Between 1995 and 2000, I was overwhelmed with the untimely deaths of my grandmother, step-father, father and cousins. Each of them had contributed greatly to my spiritual growth and development. I can truthfully say that it was only because of my grounding in the Word that I was able to endure these losses. The promises of God gave me the courage to accept the will of God, and prepared me to be with them as they took their last breath. I found solace in the words of scripture as I prayed for strength and courage during this difficult time. With each loss I experienced a sense of God's peaceful presence in the midst of my pain. My grandmother used to say after tears come strength, and I believe that God collects every teardrop and turns them into ever increasing faith.

During this period of my life it was not easy balancing work, school and volunteer activities. I can say that my prayer life improved greatly and found myself often listening to music to help me get through. There is something about the words of old hymns, gospels, contemporary and Christian music that resonated with my spirit. When I was struggling with an assignment at work or school I would take time to listen for God's voice in music. Scripture and music reinforced my belief that God was in control of this sacred journey. The more I studied

the Word the more I began to understand that I was created for a purpose. God wanted me to get out of the way so that I would surrender my all to serve. I laid my life at God's altar as a living sacrifice, humbly seeking a closer relationship with God. And just like Paul I was motivated to do the will of God. (John 6:38; Acts 21:13, 14) I dedicated and committed myself to diligent service to God and God's people in 1995. God was preparing, maturing, arranging and rearranging me. My eyes were opened to the truth of the Gospel that we the people are the church. We are the written Word living, acting and behaving to the true testimony that Christ lives. I've learned that we must be obedient to the Word of God in all aspects of our life in order to fulfill God's plan and purpose. We must not only do things in ministry but we must also live as we believe.....that we are one in the body of Christ!

I am a living testimony to what God will do when you are faithful and obedient to God's Word. By the grace of God I stand before you today as a witness that God works everything out according to God's plan, not ours. God's plan from 2000 to 2008 for this woman who was age 53 at the time and working full time was to be ordained as a Deacon at Trinity UCC, enroll simultaneously in the Seminary Consortium for Urban Pastoral Education Program and North Park Theological Seminary, get not one but two Master Degrees, Christian Education and Divinity. I would take Clinical Pastoral Education at Montgomery Place and Boundary Training through the Chicago Metropolitan Association. I would complete my Field Education experience in the Amani Hospice Care Program. And if that was not enough I would serve as pulpit supply in diverse congregations....and Field Internship preaching at Progressive Community Church. Not to mention help out at three new church starts: Reverends Wanda Washington, Grace UCC; John Jackson, TUCC-Gary and Malcolm Griffith, Advocate UCC where I taught and served.

Did I learn a lot, you bet I did! I learned to be a more humble, compassionate, obedient and loving servant in my ministry.

All of my study and training gave me the tools I needed to be more effective in my teaching ministry. When I completed my education God placed me in position to administrate thirteen (13) free online bible courses developed by the Center for African Biblical Studies. I also collaborated with authors/professors obtaining copyright permission in order to adapt their material for online study. This gave me an opportunity to incorporate music and video presentations into the teaching of scripture. I can truly testify like Paul that God gives you intellectual boldness, strength, moral character and a human heart enlarged by the grace of God. On this journey God has been joy for my pain, calmed my fears dried my tears and my heart is filled with gratitude and praise. I submit my life wholeheartedly as God continues to make, mold, and shape me. To be in God's will is my only desire. For me the **message** is clear Christ is made visible through the lives of those who love and serve God and God's people.

## **MINISTRY – THE WILL OF GOD**

*I am grateful to the one who has strengthened me, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he considered me faithful in putting me into **ministry**, (1Ti 1:12)*

### **The UCC Statement of Faith**

We, the United Church of Christ, recognize that the spirit of unity is vital in healing divisions within the church. In seeking unity we, the UCC, require mutual understanding and agreement on what aspects of the Christian faith are most essential in life. It is essential that we seek unity, diversity and above all charity. We must remember that unity in the church is a gift from God, and the common thread that binds us together as one is love. Our testimony is a living faith that believes in God witnessed by the indwelling spirit that leads us to follow Christ's

example. We were created and called to mirror God's character in the world. God seeks to reconcile all of humanity back into loving relationship. Through the Holy Spirit's leading, we the church are renewed and restored. However, as the church, we are called to accept the cost and joy of discipleship as servants in service to all of God's people.

### **The Bible: its authority, relevance and application for today**

When it comes to the *authority of scripture* the BIBLE for me is Basic Instruction for Better Living Everyday inspired by God as revealed through writers in the context in which they lived. The Bible is the story of the human family whose lives consisted of struggles between their divine and human nature within their society, culture, economic, social and political environment.

In the Old Testament we find the human condition and those things within us that cause us to rebel against God. Genesis, the book of beginnings is a guide into the lives of the human family and the struggles of life. But, if we study the Word we will learn valuable lessons on how to remain faithful in the struggle. From beginning to end the Word leads us and guides us in the way we can become one community and one family united by our faith.

### **God**

Each story in the Bible gives us important lessons on how *God* works through every human situation, despite our shortcomings and failures. God's plan is that we get in line with our purpose for living. In the Genesis we see that self-will and God's will are in constant conflict. However, in page after page we find a just, merciful, faithful and loving God who time after time waits patiently for us to admit failures and shortcomings. (Genesis 1-50) I see the Old

Testament as the reason for the New Testament because a rebellious disobedient people still didn't get it. God created order out of chaos, and God created all of humanity to be in relationship. I don't profess to know the mind of God, but I imagine that God was just tired of trying to get us to act right, so God decided to come down in human form and meet us at our point of need.

### **Jesus Christ**

We needed *Jesus Christ*, the living Word a man who would show us how to live this God given life. Jesus would walk, talk, teach, pray, cry, grieve, live, eat, sleep and struggle just as we did. Then Jesus would be tempted and tried, betrayed, imprisoned, bruised and beaten, ridiculed and hung, forgiving and pleading until his last breath as God's revelation broke through. As we all know that is not the end of the story, because Jesus got up so everyone could see that all power was in God's hands. I believe that God sees all things, knows all things, and controls all things. I believe that God wanted desperately to restore relationship with the human family. I believe that God came down in human form to experience the human condition. I believe that God wanted to show us how to love and live eternally. I believe God wanted to reconcile us back into a unified harmonious and loving community.

### **The Sacraments: Baptism and Communion**

We, the United Church of Christ recognize the two sacraments instituted by Christ, Baptism (Matthew 28:19) and the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:26-29). The sacraments were instituted by Jesus and in worship are ritual actions asking the Holy Spirit to use the water, bread, and wine to make visible God's grace, forgiveness and presence in Christ. Both baptism and the Lord's Supper remind us of our oneness as God's people. Baptism with water and the Holy Spirit is the sign and seal of our oneness in Christ. It marks the beginning of our new life as

followers of Christ and our response to God's gift of grace. We acknowledge our unity with Christ which reminds us that our oneness in Christ is achieved through obedience and service. In communion we welcome the presence of the Holy Spirit. These outward acts demonstrate our unity with God and our fellowship with one another. They signify that we are hopeful that God's promised kingdom on earth will become a reality. When we participate in the sacraments we are committing ourselves to fulfill God's desire for us to be a just, loving, faithful, peaceful and unified Christian community.

### **Baptism**

In baptism Jesus demonstrated how one is to be faithful to God's will in order to accomplish his purpose and commission. In baptism God is revealed through the Spirit. The Spirit is active in creation and empowers Jesus' ministry as a servant of God. In baptism we are dedicating our lives to God and are united with Christ and the church. Baptism is both God's gift and our human response to that gift. Baptism is related not only to momentary experience, but to life-long growth into Christ. As we grow in the Christian life of faith, baptized believers demonstrate that humanity can be re-generated and liberated. They have a common responsibility, here and now, to bear witness together to the Gospel of Christ, the liberator of all human beings. Baptism confirms that we are now in relationship with the body of Christ where the spirit of God is alive and active. Through baptism we are joined in faith and accepted into fellowship with each other and the church. All baptism is rooted in and declares Christ's faithfulness unto death. Baptism symbolizes that we have surrendered our old habits and behavior and taken on the spiritual nature and character of the risen Christ.

In the United Church of Christ infant baptism is commonly practiced and symbolizes the church's belief that God loves the child and is at work in the child's life. Therefore Christian nurture is directed to elicit this confession through confirmation when the child matures. Parents and sponsors promise to see that the child experiences life in the church. Infant baptism expresses visibly that these children are placed under the protection of God's grace, and that we the church take seriously our responsibility and commitment to nurture them to mature in Christ. At every baptism the whole congregation reaffirms its faith in God and pledges itself to provide an environment of witness and service.

## **Communion**

Communion is a gift of God's pure grace and presence among us as we gather in worship. Communion consists of two elements, bread and wine. The bread is a symbol of the broken body of Christ. The wine is a symbol of the blood shed for us. Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper on the night he was betrayed. At the Lord's table the taking of bread and wine says we are one body who recognize Christ's sacrifice and rejoice. It is also a time when we individually and corporately confess our failures and shortcomings. As the worshipping community we give thanks to God for all he has done, is doing and continues to do. When we take communion the whole church reaffirms our commitment to overcome divisions. Communion reminds us that we are all one in the body of Christ. Communion symbolizes our belief that we can live in a world marked by justice, love and peace. At the table we rededicate our lives to witnessing and helping to restore fellowship and unity with God and each other.

## **MISSION – THE WORK OF GOD IN THE CHURCH**

*Show them what you're made of, the love I've been talking up in the churches. Let them see it for themselves! (2 Corinthians 8:24)*

### **Holy Spirit**

I believe the ***Holy Spirit*** is our guide to living the way in which God intended. Scripture tells us that our prayer should always be “thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” (Matthew 6:10) Meaning that the kingdom is within us, and God’s will should be alive and active in this present world. The power of the Holy Spirit is leading and directing us toward reconciliation with God and each other. We are to be the restored community, one that lives life as faithful followers of the will of God. We the United Church of Christ affirm that the authority of God as revealed in Jesus Christ and interpreted with the aid of the Holy Spirit stands and judges all human culture, institutions and laws. We recognize our calling both as individuals and as the church to live in the world. Empowered by the Holy Spirit we are called to praise God, confess our sin, and joyfully accept God's forgiveness. We are to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ and love all people. We are to hear the cries of injustice and stand up for peace and justice. We are to join in solidarity working toward the healing and wholeness of life for all of God’s people.

### **UCC Identity**

I understand the United Church of Christ as trying to live up to the mandate to mirror God’s love. When they formed in 1957 out of four great traditions, German Reformed, Evangelical, Congregational and Christian, they were interested in uniting with other churches to

fulfill the great commission “that they may all be one”. (John 17:1) To this end we, the United Church of Christ believe in authority of scriptures, doctrinal freedom, Christian unity, the Trinity, God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Church, Salvation, bearing witness, redefining faith, and serving others. As the United Church of Christ we firmly stand on the principles of inclusion rather than exclusion. The message version of Galatians 3:28 says “*In Christ's family there can be no division into Jew and non-Jew, slave and free, male and female. Among us you are all equal. That is, we are all in a common relationship with Jesus Christ.*” So what happens when we live God's way? God brings gifts into our lives, things like love and affection for the diverse history, culture and talent among us. We develop a sense of compassion in our hearts, and a conviction that God created all things and all people. We find ourselves involved in loyal loving commitments to God and the building up of God’s kingdom on earth together as one.

### **The UCC History and Polity**

In studying the history of the UCC I found that we have what I call a kingdom building mentality. This kingdom building mentality has one focus, unity, and is governed by the Word. I understand the history of the UCC in terms of a united community having hearts transformed by the Will of God, one body in service to the Work of God, and active souls dedicated to the betterment of the Worshiping community of God. This sums up the UCC’s commitment and covenant relationships following the Word as its guide for harmony, love and peace worldwide.

In light of UCC history and polity I understand the church, its ministry and mission in terms of the words covenant and unity. Throughout scripture we see that God established covenants with people, and each agreement required action. We are to be in relationship, agree and bound together to live, work, support and hold each other accountable. This covenant

relationship obligates us to go about the task of ministry and mission of Christ in the world. The UCC decisions are based on the fact that no one part of the church can decide for another. But as a united community we are to listen to each other, take each other seriously and be flexible in our understanding. This partnership recognizes Jesus as the head of the church, we are a priesthood of believers (Exodus 40:15), and the local churches autonomy (self-governance). We agree to create a caring, sharing, accountable fellowship. We ordain ministers together and churches are united in relationship with one another.

Each congregation or local church is free to act in accordance with the collective decision of its members, guided by the working of the Spirit in light of the scriptures. Each congregation is also called to live in a covenantal relationship with other congregations. In this relationship they share insights and act cooperatively under the authority of Christ. Likewise, associations of churches, conferences, the General Synod and the church-wide “covenanted ministries” of the United Church of Christ are free to act in their particular spheres of responsibility. Yet, all are constrained by love to live in a covenantal relationship with one another.

The local church is to make manifest the unity of the body of Christ and thus carry out God’s mission in the world more effectively. We the United Church of Christ consider the local church as our basic unit. There is no official hierarchy, each congregation is free to organize, worship, educate and perform mission in its own way. All affairs in the local church are managed by the congregation of which the pastor is considered a member. Local congregations work together in associations to ordain, and set rules and procedures.

In practice our mission is to be a witness to the Gospel through community involvement. This involvement seeks locally to influence public policy, nationally to work toward social and

economic justice, and worldwide to speak up for freedom and to help promote world peace. For example, the Ministers for Racial, Social and Economic Justice (MRSEJ) seek to address racial justice, within the structure of the church and within the world. MRSEJ focuses on economic justice noting that economic denial is one facet of racism. MRSEJ is a voice that speaks to many social issues where people are denied justice. As the UCC it is our responsibility to collectively work for the healing, wholeness and peace that God intended for all of humanity. We have a soul consciousness and personality that will not let us rest while any living human being is denied their God given right to the basic needs of life.

## **MEETING – THE PEOPLE OF GOD**

*Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:19)*

### **Gospel of Grace**

The truth of the Gospel is that God revealed himself to all of humanity, and showed us favor. God poured out love for us. And if we trust God we are promised forgiveness for our rebellion and acceptance back into relationship. The Gospel of grace gives us courage in the struggle for justice and peace. We are assured that God is with us in our failures and our successes. But above all we the church are to be living witnesses in the world that Christ lives.

### **Theological Influences**

Since Jesus for me is the forerunner for any theological position, what I draw upon would have to be the revealed Word of God. The Word clearly outlines how we are to live and act in

accordance with God's plan for all of humanity. Certainly there have been many writers, theologians, and preachers who have influenced my life, but for me Jesus heads my list. Jesus the revolutionary's ministry was shaped by the cruelty, contempt, humiliation, brutality and oppression suffered by the people. Dr. Obery Hendricks, Jr., Ph.D. Columbia University in his book, "The Politics of Jesus", writes that the Gospels confirm this. He goes on to say that the people in Jesus' time were treated with contempt and Jesus came and taught them how to treat the people's needs as holy.

I would have to say that Paul of Tarsus gave me my identity as he described himself as a servant messenger set apart as companion and witness of the gospel. Then there was Tertullian who served with moral vigor defending the Christian faith as first and chiefly an experience of the heart. And Thomas Aquinas who reinforced my belief that revelation of God comes through Christ, as revealed in the teachings of the church and the Bible. I can't forget Dietrich Bonhoeffer's teachings on the cost of discipleship and how he spiritually lived as he preached. I am humbly grateful to Rev. Dr. Jeremiah A. Wright, Jr. who instilled in me what it means to serve. Rev. Wright taught me about not just serving in the church but going forth as living witness and testimony in the world. His teachings gave me holy boldness to not just accept things as they are but to speak up and speak out against any form of oppression and injustice. I give him credit for inspiring my "A" paper "The Face of Justice" in which I state that justice has a face when injustice is unmasked. Injustice masquerades as assuming the duties and authority of another, but it is artificial and hidden disguised as something on the outside that masks what is beneath. "The Face of Justice" is an attempt to unmask the realities of injustice to reveal the face of true justice that operates under the sovereignty of God. Above all, I am indebted to Deacon Shirley Bims-Ellis, the Director for the Center for African Biblical Studies my mentor, teacher,

co-laborer and friend who not only inspired, prayed, encouraged and supported me but helped me to stay grounded in the Word so that I would continue to “Study to Show Myself Approved unto God.” (2 Timothy 2:15)

### **Ethics**

When we call one a Pastor or Reverend in general terms we are saying that they are to be revered, honored and respected and therefore are perceived to have power and authority. However, power and authority come from God and with divine assistance Pastors have an ethical responsibility to promote individual well being without exploitation. Pastors have a duty in relation to others by his/her relation to Christ whether it be in the realm of justice, respect for others, refraining from using position for personal gain, or misusing the finances where they serve. Even when called upon for services outside of our own church Pastors are to do so with consent of the appropriate presiding clergy. Pastors are to honor the legacy and histories of their predecessors and upon leaving not interfere with the duties of their successors. As moral leaders of the church Pastors are bound by the code of ethics to conduct their duties by their devotion to love God in thankfulness, humility, trustfulness; worship (sacraments and prayers), and in bearing witness. Pastors’ guiding principles should be to honor confidences, show kindness, empathize, serve and provide practical actions that will promote the well being of others. Think of it in terms of the golden rule which is an ethical code that says one has a right to just treatment, and a responsibility to ensure justice for others; an ethic of reciprocity. The one who attempts to live by this rule treats all people with consideration.

### **Boundaries**

Boundaries define a person's sense of self (i.e., who he or she is as an individual). Setting boundaries make others feel safe around us and allow us to feel safe in our environment. It is a way to exhibit self-respect, thereby increasing the respect shown to us by others. Boundaries give measured protection to our bodies, thoughts, feelings and behaviors as we evaluate and assess the words and actions of other people in our lives. Through the use of our boundaries we determine which words and actions we will accept and which we will block when they are unacceptable.<sup>1</sup>

Having completed Boundary Training through the Chicago Metropolitan Association I gained many insights into what we must do to protect ourselves and others. I learned that as Pastors we can express our openness to conversation with our members, and let them know that their information will be held in strictest confidence. We should exercise caution in initiating touch with the exception of a handshake, and anything beyond that may be viewed as violating the relationship of trust. We should learn to keep a certain distance which indicates our respect for a person's personal space. We should desire the capacity to function as helper and guide while respecting differences, integrity and freedom in others. It is our responsibility to discern an appropriate response when a hug or physical proximity is too close or too long. Above all, our appropriate use of interpersonal influence (power and authority) and organizational power is central in determining whether even well-intended care helps or harms.

### **MOVING – WALKING THE ROAD**

*And determined to live that yourselves. In imitating us, you imitate the Master. (1 Thessalonians 1:6)*

---

<sup>1</sup> [http://ezinearticles.com/?expert=Dr.\\_Jackie\\_Black](http://ezinearticles.com/?expert=Dr._Jackie_Black)  
Sandra Florentino-Hutchins  
Current Ordination Paper  
August 6, 2011

## **Milestones**

This period of preparation for the journey has been both challenging and rewarding and I have learned above anything else to be patient and wait on God. There were times when I wanted to give up. Rev. Dr. Clyde White, my mentor and friend reminded me often that God had made an investment in me and encouraged me to continue the race. Even in the midst of sorrow and pain the Holy Spirit was alive and active in moving me forward to complete the task that God had called me. Looking back, I can say that it was by the grace of God that I completed every assignment and took every test. More importantly, it was my grounding in the Word of God that made it possible for me to stand against the outside forces that attempted to make me give in.

## **Present ministry and/or call**

Currently I am serving as the secretary for CMA cluster six. I am also a delegate-at-large on the CMA council, and sit on the Illinois Annual Planning Conference Committee. I continue to facilitate Bible Study at Trinity UCC and am a member of the Trinity UCC online devotional writing team. I presently serve as Chair of the Christian Education Ministry at Advocate UCC. In that capacity I have been given the responsibility to coordinate programs that insure that all ministries are actively engaged in Bible study. Clearly on this journey God has prepared me with many talents and gifts that would enable me to perform ministry within the church universal. My role is to function, contribute, be used and devote my life to helping and caring for the needs of God's people. But, my heartfelt passion and call is toward Christian Education. While I understand that ordination in Christian Education is not necessary there are other duties that cannot be performed without ordination. I am confident that Christian Education is a vital

component for building faith, hope and trust in God. I believe that study of the Word is the most important means by which we can grow and mature into the beloved community that God intended. It is through study of the Word where we learn not only how to walk as Jesus walked, but also how to live out daily the gospel message through our actions and behavior.

I believe that God created every human being with a specific plan and purpose in life. In fulfilling that purpose as an Ordained Minister in the UCC, I am called to hear the word and do God's work. I am called to serve God and God's people. I am called to use my God given talent to fulfill my role in ministry. My call to Ordained Ministry in the United Church of Christ will enable me to administer the sacraments of baptism and communion. As a shepherd offer care and comfort to people in their personal and corporate lives. Provide leadership that empowers the congregation to do God's work in the world. Instruct the congregation on the meaning and the traditions of the Christian faith. Interpret the Word of God so that it is relevant and applicable to daily life. Lead the congregation toward a corporate response to the Word of God. Manage and administrate the organization of the church. Ordination in the United Church of Christ will confirm my commitment to the nurture and support of local churches and the denomination. Ordination in the United Church of Christ will affirm my total dedication to the mission of the church, and my service in and on behalf of the church universal.

### **Role of Preaching**

I have been privileged to stand in the pulpit of many congregations, and know that in preaching we must also teach. I say privileged because it is one place where God's presence and power is made visible. When we preach we must be able to make scripture relevant to what is going on in the daily lives our congregations. We must study the history, culture, social location

and language to insure that what we say will support and encourage them in their faith. In preaching we must give our hearers a message that will move them to change their behavior and attitudes as they are transformed by the Word.

### **Inner call**

My inner call is to be a blessing to others through my ministry. I understand that I did not choose this journey, but God did. Let me clarify, I didn't say I was going to seminary, God made the way by moving every stumbling block (full time job, part time job, unemployment, friends, family, supervisors, teachers) out of the way. This created time and space for me to devote myself to eight years of study. God positioned me to move through many levels of ministry with a treasure trove of lessons on what to do and what not to do in caring for the people that I can take wherever I go. God gave me boldness, strength, courage, patience and perseverance in the struggle when I wanted to give up. That's why I say in all honesty I am "Saved to Serve". I clearly understand that I have not been saved for myself, but saved to be in service to others. I believe I will be called to a position when God is ready. All I can do for now is to follow Jesus' example humbly and sincerely discharging my responsibility to care for the weakest, neediest, and those in the twilight of their days to the people I meet each and every day.

### **Vow of Commitment**

Moving and Walking the Road means that I will treat the vows of Ordained Ministry with the utmost respect. I am making a commitment to God and all of humanity that I will serve faithfully, and that I accept and am ruled by the Word of God in faith and in practice. I will be

spiritually diligent not only in my private life but also in my public duties. I will speak the truth in love, and I will be faithful to the sacramental rites, pastoral care and leadership. I will keep silent the confidences that have been shared with me. I will minister impartially, and in accordance with the great commission. I will show Christian love to all.

My call is to living the word of God through my actions and behavior as the words of music continues to play God's melodies in my soul. My prayer is that I remain ever faithful, so that God can use me as a vessel to make visible the message of the cross, the mission of the word, and the ministry of Christ to the world. I close now with the words from a song entitled "*I Give Myself Away*" by William McDowell.

I Give Myself Away  
So You can use me  
Here I am  
Here I stand  
Lord, my life is in your hands  
Lord, I'm longing to see  
Your desires revealed in me  
I give myself away  
Take my heart  
Take my life  
As a living sacrifice  
All my dreams all my plans  
Lord I place them in your hands  
My life is not my own  
To you I belong  
I give myself, I give myself to you.