

# *Clergwomen's Experiences in Ministry: Realities and Challenges*

## **Recommendations**

The Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns calls upon the church at every level to raise awareness about gender-discrimination in the church and recommends that the 215th General Assembly (2003) do the following:

1. Instruct General Assembly entities and request middle governing bodies and seminaries to encourage congregations to call clergwomen from various racial ethnic backgrounds as well as Caucasian clergwomen.
2. Instruct the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns (ACWC) to research current programs and support for clergwomen, particularly racial ethnic and single clergwomen, and to bring recommendations to the 216th General Assembly (2004).
3. Instruct Churchwide Personnel Services and request middle governing bodies, seminaries, and congregations to address the difficulties frequently encountered in the position of associate pastor.
4. Request that presbyteries and congregations review their policies and practices in relation to clergwomen, including salaries, pension, Social Security, health insurance, dependent care, family-leave, and other benefits, and correct any deficiencies or inequities found.
5. Request committees on ministry, committees on preparation for ministry, and congregations to emphasize the importance of integrating self-care and care of family with the demands/expectations of the practice of ministry, for clergy and for candidates.
6. Call congregations to new openness in considering clergwomen for positions of pastoral leadership, especially as solo pastors and heads of staff.
7. Call upon PC(USA) seminaries to develop courses, including continuing education, addressing the importance of holistic health as it relates to the demands/expectations of the practice of ministry.
8. Recommend for study the biblical and theological background and policy proposals incorporated in the study papers "All the Live Long Day: Women and Work" (1998) and "God's Work in Our Hands" (1995).
9. Instruct the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns and the Women's Ministries program area to partner with the General Assembly Committee on Representation and the racial ethnic caucuses to monitor clergwomen's call processes and equity issues related to terms of call.
10. Instruct ACWC to provide a forum at future General Assemblies for clergwomen to comment on issues raised in the 2002 ACWC survey and offer continuing feedback to the church.
11. Instruct the Stated Clerk's office to make this report and any follow-up information available to the church electronically.

## *Rationale*

This recommendation is a final response to the following referral: *2000 Referral: 27.004. Recommendation 3. Direct the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns, in Collaboration with the Office of the General Assembly, Churchwide Personnel Services, and Research Services to Look at the Emerging Issues Related to Clergwomen Serving in Parish Ministry, Including the Decreasing Numbers of Clergymembers Available for Service, Proportionately Lower Numbers of Women Serving Congregations, and the Increasing Numbers of Clergwomen Leaving Parish Ministry, and Report Back to the 214th General Assembly (2002)—From the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns. (Minutes, 2000, Part I, pp. 53, 317)*

The report that was generated from this referral, "Clergwomen's Experiences in Ministry: Realities and Challenges," follows. More extensive information on survey results is available through the Office of Women's Advocacy. For information on how to obtain the full data analysis of this report, contact the Office of Women's Advocacy, toll-free, at 1-888-728-7228, ext. 5043, or, direct, at 502-569-5403.

# CLERGYWOMEN'S EXPERIENCES IN MINISTRY: REALITIES AND CHALLENGES

## Table of Contents

### Full Report

- A. Introduction
- B. Data Analysis
- C. Data Base
- D. Key Question #1: Are the Numbers of Clergywomen Available for Service Decreasing?
- E. Key Question #2: Do Clergywomen Feel Geographically Bound?
- F. Key Question #3: Why Do Clergywomen Leave Parish Ministry?
- G. Key Question #4: What Are Issues of Concern to Presbyterian Clergywomen?
- H. ACWC Conclusions

### Summary of Report

- A. Introduction
- B. Data Analysis
- C. Data Base
- D. Key Questions
- E. ACWC Conclusions

#### A. *Introduction*

The 212th General Assembly (2000) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) directed the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns (ACWC), "to look at emerging issues related to clergywomen serving in parish ministry, including the decreasing numbers of clergywomen available for service; proportionately lower numbers of women serving congregations; and the increasing numbers of women leaving parish ministry" (*Minutes*, 2000, Part I, p. 317).

Early in our work, ACWC reviewed statistics provided by the Office of General Assembly (OGA), Churchwide Personnel Services, and Research Services, and soon discovered a major difficulty in the task: the management of statistics. There is an inevitable fluidity regarding numbers where clergy are concerned; and, in a politically charged climate, statistics can be manipulated. The ACWC believes the PC(USA) has been living in an especially politically charged environment since the 1993 reimagining conference.

A second difficulty of the General Assembly directive was the matter of differentiating between emerging issues and those that have faced women throughout their almost fifty years of serving as clergy. Women were first ordained as clergy in 1956. The ACWC affirms that, from the beginning, clergywomen have faced an uphill calling.

In January 2002, ACWC constructed a survey to gather clergywomen's perceptions and experiences relating to the 212th General Assembly (2000) referral. In March 2002, the survey was mailed to 3,853 clergywomen in the PC(USA) database. In the survey cover letter we wrote, "We need your help, especially in discovering why women leave parish ministry and why lower numbers of women serve congregations." At the 214th General Assembly (2002), ACWC also held a consultation, inviting clergywomen to share their experiences and concerns.

By July 2002, with only one mailing, ACWC received 1,404 responses to the survey, a response rate of 36.4 percent. A number of respondents expressed thanks for receiving the survey. As one woman wrote,

I want to thank you for sending this survey. I believe the issues surrounding the unique situations and problems of women clergy need to be addressed locally and nationally. I am one who is seriously considering leaving the parish ministry. . . . I believe that one of our major problems is that no one is listening!

#### B. *Data Analysis*

After reviewing the surveys, ACWC requested that data analysis be conducted by the REFT Institute, Inc., an independent research firm located in Centennial, Colorado. The ACWC identified key questions it hoped the surveys would

begin to answer, and REFT focused the analysis around these questions. In addition, REFT reviewed past survey data for comparison with the 2002 ACWC survey data.

### C. Data Base

The database for the ACWC 2002 survey was comprised of 3,853 women, including 303 retired pastors. In 2000<sup>1</sup>, clergywomen served in the following positions:

<b>Number of Clergywomen</b>	<b>% of 3,853 Clergywomen</b>	<b>% of 21,065 Total Clergy</b>
1000 pastors & co-pastors	28%	15%
607 associate pastors	17%	42%
175 supply pastors	5%	30%
242 interim pastors	7%	40%
247 chaplains	7%	39%
150 PC(USA) executives	4%	30%
129 serving in schools	4%	24%
63 serving as counselors	2%	33%
7 tentmakers	-	13%
122 other church professionals	3%	30%
808 "at large" presbytery members	23%	33%
<b>Total 3,853</b>	<b>100%</b>	

In 2000, there were 13,989 active clergy. The 3,550 clergywomen comprised 25 percent of the active clergy.

<sup>1</sup>Research Services. 2002. Comparative Statistics 2001. Louisville, Ky.: Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Table 9, p. 14.

#### Characteristics of survey respondents

##### Age

The average age of respondents in this survey is 50 years.  
 15% are in their 20s and 30s.  
 69% are in their 40s and 50s.  
 17% are 60 or above

##### Marital and Family Status

68% married  
 15% divorced, separated, or widowed  
 15% single  
 2% partnered

##### Household Composition

74% percent of the clergywomen had children  
 About 40% had children younger than 18 years of age  
 35% had children who are 18 or older  
 26% did not have children

##### Race/ Ethnicity

96% Caucasian  
 2 % African American  
 1% Hispanic American  
 0.9% Asian American  
 0.4% Native American  
 0.4% Other

The numbers add to slightly more than the "n" given because a few reported more than one race.

##### Decade of Ordination

47% ordained since 1990  
 38% ordained in the 1980s  
 15% ordained in the 1950s, 60s and 70s

##### Full-time Employment Prior to Ordination: Average 7.1 years

29% None  
 27% Up to 5 years

17% 5–10 years  
19% 10–20 years  
8% Over 20 years

Average length of full-time employment prior to ordination: 7.1 years  
For those ordained from the 1950s to the 1960s: less than two years (1.58)  
For those ordained in the 1990s and 2000s: over 9 years (9.7)

Length of Search for First Call  
60% ordained within 1 year of graduating from seminary  
19% ordained within 2 years  
21% ordained within 3–10 years

Length of Search for First Call in Relation to Decade Ordained  
1950s–1960s averaged 2.26 years  
1970s averaged 2.43 years  
1980s averaged 1.61 years (the shortest wait)  
1990s averaged 1.74 (an increase)  
2000s averaged 2.26 (continued increase)

Length<sup>1</sup> of Average Search Process for All Positions: 9.5 months  
7 % did not have a search process  
13% less than 3 months  
46% 3–9 months  
25% a year or more

Length of Average Search Process in Relation to Decade Ordained  
For those ordained in the 1950s: 1.47 years  
For those ordained in the 2000s: 0.69 years

Types of Positions  
Years of pastoral service in a congregational setting: average 10.6 years  
21% Over 16 years  
3% 8–16 years  
43% 8 or less  
3% none

Years of Pastoral service outside a congregational setting: average 3.7 years  
20% less than four years  
26% more than four years

54% of clergywomen have only served in the congregational setting

#### Pastoral Service Ratio:

The pastoral service ratio was created by dividing the number of “years in pastoral leadership” by the total years the clergywoman has been employed in both the congregational and non-congregational settings<sup>2</sup>. The higher the number, the more time the clergywomen spent in congregational settings as compared to non-congregational settings. The data shows a steady increase in the ratio from .53 prior to the 1970s to .85 in the 1990s. This indicates that those who were ordained more recently are spending more time in congregational settings than those who were ordained in earlier decades<sup>3</sup>.

#### The Influence of Race/Ethnicity on the Call Histories of This Sample<sup>4</sup> of Clergywomen

Average Full-Time Employment Prior to Ordination:  
African American: 13 or more years  
Hispanic: almost 9  
Caucasian: almost 7 years  
Asian Americans: fewer than 4 years

Length of Average Search Process  
For all women of color in this sample, the average search process was longer than that of Caucasian women.

Length of Search for First Call  
African American and Hispanic women received first calls more quickly than Asian American and Caucasian<sup>5</sup> women.

Pastoral Service Ratio

Hispanic clergywomen spend the least (.62 ratio) amount of their service in congregational settings. Caucasian clergywomen spend more time in that setting (.80) than all the clergywomen of color combined. Asian American clergywomen have higher ratios (.68) than African American (.66) clergywomen in this sample.

D. Key Question #1: Are the Numbers of Clergywomen Available for Service Decreasing?

The 212th GA directive to ACWC suggests that this is so. However, the statistics from OGA do not support this suggestion. The statistics indicate that the number of clergywomen in service is in fact increasing each year.

What we do not know is whether the increasing number of clergywomen in service is in step with the increasing numbers of women who complete seminary education. Current records do not provide this information. Current statistics indicate the following: the number of clergywomen and clergymen in active service in various positions, the number retired, and the number classified as “at large” members of presbyteries. They simply do not show the number of women, or men for that matter, who leave ministry.

It is the policy of presbytery executives and committees on ministry to conduct “exit interviews” with clergy who leave their positions. However, due to timing and circumstance, such interviews are not always conducted. In addition, exit interviews are not standardized, and most records of exit interviews remain “in house.”

The ACWC survey asked, “Do you think the number of clergywomen serving in congregational ministry is decreasing?” The answers varied widely. Thirty-six percent (504 clergywomen) believed the number of women has not decreased; 33 percent (458 clergywomen) believed the number of women has decreased; and 25 percent (346 clergywomen) said they did not know. As these are perceptions rather than a systematic analysis of actual behavior and as there is no clear consensus, this question is not analyzed further. Comments about these perceptions may be found in the full data analysis of this report, available from ACWC.

The ACWC suspects that the truth about numbers is that they are increasing in some presbyteries and decreasing in others, and that the climate of acceptance and support for women is stronger in some presbyteries than in others. Furthermore, we believe the embrace of women’s gifts for ministry depends upon a number of factors, including a congregation’s exposure and level of familiarity with clergywomen; the recognition that women and men often have different approaches to ministry; a congregation’s relationships with former pastors, both male and female; and the cultural climate of a particular congregation/presbytery.

The ACWC believes that the perseverance of clergywomen, rooted in a strong sense of call (the call of God through the voice of a particular congregation) may be strengthened by support networks available to and/or intentionally created by those who affirm women’s call and practice of ministry. We believe that listening to the voices of women begins to address the loneliness and isolation many clergy, male and female, experience in the practice of ministry.

E. Key Question #2: Do Clergywomen Feel Geographically Bound?

Of the 1,404 respondents, 62 percent said that they would feel geographically bound if searching for a new position, while 30 percent stated they would not feel bound to a particular region. Five percent responded with ambivalence, as they were not bound in the strictest sense, but either had reasons for staying in a particular area or the new area would have to meet specific criteria. Approximately 2 percent reported that the question was not relevant to them. These figures are slightly less than the 69 percent who reported being geographically bound in 1993 (Document I, 12 or footnote, *Congregational Ministries Division, Presbyterian Clergywomen Survey: Final Report, Louisville, KY: Research Services, Oct. 1993, 12*). Comments about this question may be found in the full data analysis of this report. For information on how to obtain the full data analysis of this report, contact the Office of Women’s Advocacy, toll-free, at 1-888-728-7228, ext. 5043, or, direct, at 502-569-5403.

Geographically Bound Data: Clergywomen Who Are Geographically Bound (872 clergywomen, 62 percent)

Table 5. Reasons Clergywomen Feel Geographically Bound

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
Family Considerations	267	31%
Spousal Considerations	200	23%
In Preferred Area	193	22%
Aging Parents	103	12%
Children in School	87	10%
Other	63	7%
Respondent Age	27	3%
Special Needs	25	3%

Family Considerations (31%): This category includes proximity to extended family or shared custody of a child.

- “My family is emotionally settled now, where we live. I grew up as a p.k. [preacher’s kid], and we moved every 5 years. Other than where I currently live, I’ve no place to call home. I don’t want that for my children.”
- “I’m a half-time stated supply pastor and a half-time psychotherapist (Fellow-AAPC). My practice is here. Also, if I moved, my daughter wouldn’t be able to see her father very often.”
- “My family. We value staying in one community and raising our children.”
- “We have a desire to stay relatively close to parents/family so our children can have relationships with them.”

Spousal Considerations (23%): Spouse’s employment was the second most common reason clergywomen felt they could not relocate. Thirty people cited the fact that their spouses make the money that supports their family.

- “My husband is employed full-time and we have no great desire or need to leave the area.”
- “We depend on my spouse’s income to sustain our family.”
- “Husband [is an] attorney who doesn’t want to ever take Bar exam again.”
- “I’m married (33 yrs) to a physician in a practice field that depends on building up a long-term patient base over a period of years. When we moved here, it took over 5 years to get his practice built up to a livable level; at our ages, we don’t want to have to try to do that again ... esp. in today’s medical climate. It makes my world look easy!”
- “My husband is a clergyman, so any move involves both of us seeking a call. I have followed him, since his income is so much greater.”

Of the 185 responses citing spousal employment, 18 noted that, since their husbands were tenured at a local college or university, moving prior to his retirement was not an option.

In Preferred Area (22%): One hundred and ninety-three responses were recorded in this category. Criteria for inclusion were: (1) regional preference—whether for cultural or climactic reasons, or proximity to a metropolitan area or airport; (2) having roots where they are—whether owning a home or feeling established in the community; (3) if people did not specify why they liked where they lived. Thirty-three of these people (17 percent) preferred their area because it was near family, so there is some overlap with family considerations.

- “I prefer to live closer to home state, family, progressive mindset.”
- “I own my home here. One son and family live here. I don’t like climates that are hot for most of the year. I am nearly 70 years old and hope I am finished being a nomad.”
- “I would like to stay on the east coast, close to the major metropolitan areas.”
- “Because we own our own home, my husband just retired and wants to remain in this house, and our four adult children all reside in a 40-mile area of us.”

Aging Parents (12%): “Responsibility for husband’s and my aging parents.”

- “Family necessity. Aging parents have retired to my community.”
- “I live with my father giving emotional support after my mother passed away, and this is his home, and he wants to stay here.”

Children in School (10%)

- “We have also moved our kids halfway across the country two times and do not want to put them through that again.”
- “A pledge to our children that they would graduate from our local high school.”

Other (7%): Some mentioned having another profession established in the area. Some wrote of their sense of God’s will. Some cited being single and not wanting to uproot, while others said they are half of a clergy couple and are limited to finding two positions or a shared position.

- “My husband and I are both clergy, both committed tentmakers and own our own home. Finding two ‘tents,’ two positions and being able to economically afford to sell and buy housing is next to impossible.”

- “I feel most A-A Presbyterian churches are alike. I don’t want to uproot my life to move into the same bad situation. My goal is to lead people so that they can grow more to look like Christ. That is not the goal of A-A Presbyterian leaders. We are not compatible (my experience).”
- “For theological reasons and for extended family reasons, I could want/need to stay in northeast synod.”
- “Somewhat. As a single person, I am unwilling to uproot my self and go somewhere I know no one or am too far from friends and family to visit at least quarterly.”
- “We have 350 acres of farmland and farm buildings (2 farms). We could not properly maintain this if we moved. We would need to sell at least the farm with the buildings.”

Clergy’s Age (3%): Some clergywomen specifically said that they considered themselves “too old to move” (11), while others simply cited their nearness to retirement as their reason for not wanting to uproot (15).

- “Near retirement and wish to be somewhat near family and in an area where I could do interim or supply work, especially in smaller church that need solid leadership.”
- “I am nearing retirement and this is our home. Thankfully, God has not seen fit to call me away from here—at least not yet.”

Special Needs (3%): Special needs includes medical or other needs within the family or for herself that can be served best by remaining in the area.

- “Health—near major medical center for complex problems.”
- “Because all of our children are special needs adoptive children, we desire to stay near family.”
- “Spouse tied to handicapped-adapted home and his medical team.”
- “Our son has special needs educationally, so we want to remain in a stable situation for his junior/senior high years.”

Clergywomen Not Geographically Bound (n=426, 30%)

Table 6. Reasons Clergywomen Do Not Feel Geographically Bound (n=426)

Reasons	Frequency	Percentage
Regional Considerations	353	83%
Spousal Considerations	13	3%
God’s Will	7	2%
Financial Considerations	3	.5%
No reason stated	51	12%

Regional Considerations (83%): Some women were open to moving, depending upon the region they would be moving to. Some required a metropolitan city, an airport nearby, etc., while others required a progressive mindset or particular weather patterns. Some simply like the area they are in.

- “Only emotionally—couldn’t live in a rural area.”
- “Actually I would not like to serve in the Southeast U.S. again. I’m not Southern enough (i.e., nonprejudiced against African Americans).”
- “Not bound, but we prefer warmer climates and like living in the U.S. at present—for our children.”

Other Considerations (n= 67, 5%): Sixty-seven respondents struggled with this question, primarily citing family and spousal considerations.

- “My son is settled here and near his Dad; but I would like to move, but not without my son. So I feel stuck.”
- “I am deeply committed to this presbytery and this state; also my husband and children are happy in their employment and school situations. But we’d all move if we felt God’s call elsewhere.”
- “Would have to be a move that is good for my kids. My husband can move his headquarters, but has employees to consider.”
- “My husband is an ordained United Methodist elder. A new call outside of his conference usually means he loses any kind of ‘seniority’ he’s had, and he starts at the bottom of the ladder.”

Not Applicable (n=27, 2%): Twenty-seven clergywomen (2%) were either retired or did not intend to look for a new position.

F. *Key Question #3: Why Do Clergywomen Leave Parish Ministry?*

The ACWC survey Q. 13 asked: “If you have ever ceased serving a congregation, why did you leave?”

Eight hundred eighty-five clergywomen (63 percent) reported having left a congregation for reasons other than retirement. Reasons for leaving varied widely. For instance, they may have left one congregation for financial reasons, and another because of spouse’s job relocation. Some mentioned leaving a particular congregation for a several reasons. For example, their spouse’s job was relocated, but they also felt unfulfilled and ready to leave anyway. Or they were “burnt out” from the schedule and the congregation conflicts were overwhelming. The 1,283 reasons given are listed in the table below.

Table 7. Reasons Clergywomen Leave Congregations (n=885, 63%)

<b>Reason for Leaving</b>	<b>Number of Comments</b>	<b>Percentage of Reasons</b>
Internal Church Politics—Issues w/Staff	154	12%
Received Another Call	146	11%
Family Time	122	10%
Felt Unfulfilled	111	9%
Interim Ended	93	7%
Internal Church Politics—Issues w/Congregation	91	7%
Spouse Job	89	7%
Alternative Ministry	79	6%
Discrimination Against Women	59	5%
Schedule too Demanding	55	4%
Financial	49	4%
Emotional Distress	46	4%
Finished/Began School	44	3%
Moved	42	3%
P-T to F-T or vice versa	34	3%
Marriage/Divorce	28	2%
Illness	21	2%
Left for Secular Job	15	1%
Sexual Orientation Discrimination	8	1%

The REFT Institute clustered these reasons into four thematic categories: Difficulties Within Position, Personal Reasons, Normal Course of Events, and Change of Life Direction.

By broad category, the ranking is as follows:

Difficulties within Position: 462 total, 52%

- Internal Church Politics—Issues with Staff
- Internal Church Politics—Issues with Congregation
- Discrimination Against Women
- Schedule too Demanding
- Financial
- Emotional Distress
- Sexual Orientation Discrimination

Personal Reasons: 457 total, 52%

- Family Time
- Felt Unfulfilled
- Spouse’s Job
- Finished/Began School
- Moved
- Marriage/Divorce
- Illness

Normal Course of Events: 273 total, 31%

- Received Another Call
- Interim Ended
- Part-time to Full-time or Vice-Versa

Change of Life Direction: 94 total, 11%

- Alternative Ministry
- Left for Secular Job



More than half of all respondents reported leaving a congregation because of the difficulties within the position, including church politics, gender discrimination, expectations, low pay, etc.

More than half also reported leaving for personal reasons, including the need for more family time and a lack of fulfillment in the position.

### *Analysis of Comments*

#### 1. Difficulties Within Position: (462, 36%)

Internal Church Politics—Issues w/Staff (12%): Not all clergywomen identified the staff members with whom they experienced significant conflict. However, approximately half were specific. Sixty-five indicated conflict with the senior pastor/head of staff, 13 with the presbytery, 11 with other members of the session, and 7 with the committee on ministry.

#### Senior Pastor/Head of Staff

- “I left my first Associate Pastor job because . . . [the newly hired pastor] was constantly putting me down in front of staff, session and members. I was humiliated, and discriminated against by this man.”
- “When I served as an associate, I felt my work was undermined by the senior pastor and did not receive support from personnel committee.”
- “Eagerly left 1st call once a new call was secured. Horrendous situation. Pastor of 25 years at that one church had never had an associate. . . . Without strong support network, I would have left the ministry.”
- “Advised to do so by center on ministry psychologist—to get out before the senior pastor destroyed me. Was told by COM I needed to find a Senior Pastor who was secure enough in his own identity and ministry, not to be threatened by mine and how I approached my ministry.”
- “Head of staff was destructive and controlling.”
- “The relationship with my head of staff was oppressive. The situation was very painful.”
- “Unable to work with new head of staff. This was clear immediately, and I knew as an associate, I was to ‘step aside’.”

#### Session

- “Conflict with session—very toxic situation. They did not handle my remarriage well. Became possessive of my time, micromanaging, several ‘clergy killer’ type persons.”
- “I left after a senior pastor retired, and all ordained staff were expected, even told, to leave by session. This session action displeased the congregation, but other pastors did leave.”

#### Presbytery or COM

- “Presbytery/COM/Exec. encouraged me to go out on a limb saying they’d be right behind me and would ‘call in their chips’ and then ‘forgot’ to stand behind me as the limb was sawed off. Made to feel ‘the sick one.’ Felt voiceless—patronized with/lip service or pats on the head! It was more important to the congregation and the presbytery (congregation was its deep pocket) that the head of staff be propped up at all costs (even though 30 staff left in the 3 years).”
- “I was in a Presbytery which was not particularly female-friendly . . . except as interims and supplies. I was geographically bound (then as now); my GP made it explicitly clear that she would recommend me only as an interim; and I knew that doing interim positions would kill me, emotionally, spiritually, and professionally.”
- “I had no Presbytery support or backing.”
- “The COM chair told my session, while I was on sabbatical, that the only choice they had was to dissolve the relationship. This was after an anonymous survey showed there was some dissatisfaction. In agreement with the session, I stayed 5 months to correct my problems but felt the lack of support and help in the congregation and in the presbytery wouldn’t change enough for a good relationship of trust to be re-established.”

Internal Church Politics—Issues with Congregation (7%): Many clergywomen wrote about “congregational dysfunction.” Some specified female parishioners feeling competitive with a female pastor, while some just described a high degree of interpersonal conflict.

- “Frustration with congregational dysfunction.”
- “Because the small congregation turned inward and refused to change or reach out in mission. Ministry is no longer enjoyable at this church.”
- “Too much of a meat grinder! What satisfied half the congregation was sure to be unacceptable to the other half. Also secrets and desire to turn me into something I’m not. At first, they wanted the gifts I offer.”
- “I left a pastor position after 2 ½ years. I followed a 38-year pastorate. The church was growing financially, numerically, and structurally. The growth was causing growing pains. When I got pregnant, it was more than they could take, and conflict erupted everywhere.”
- “I left because my contract as designated pastor was ending and because the tension and animosity between the two congregations was such a heavy burden that my health was ruined! Anxiety and stress induced the onset of diabetes. I was glad to leave that place where I had to literally ‘beg’ for my salary check every 2 weeks. The health of the town congregation was septic! There is no hope there!”

Discrimination Against Women (7%): Although a relatively small percentage attributed their leaving a congregation due to gender discrimination, many clergywomen commented on gender discrimination in other sections (i.e., Q. 14). Those who did leave a congregation because of sexism wrote relatively long explanations. These clergywomen felt gender-based discrimination in a variety of ways: on the individual level—not respected, promoted or paid as well because they were female, and sexually harassed. Some experienced individual discrimination, but it was so pervasive that it was not attributable to a few people, but rather to an entire group or system.

#### Individual-Level Discrimination

- “I also followed a retired associate [woman] who left worship with the children every Sunday and took care of the nursery. I refused to do so.”
- “I resigned because the administration committee did not raise my pay at the same rate as the male pastors. The congregation fought the committee but the senior pastor covered his ears and pretended not to hear anything. I was the first woman pastor in the church and the staff and pastors were so happy to have me at first. But then when I didn’t clock in and out with the rest of the women, the staff disliked my hours. One of the male pastors made advances towards me and several other women, but it was ‘hushed-up.’ He now serves a large church elsewhere.”
- “Ministry was not life-giving and even though they hired me and my husband as a couple to share one call, he was definitely the pastor and I was the pastor’s wife.”

#### Sexual Harassment

- “I left because the first congregation I served had a head of staff who was a sex addict. He was also the chair of COM. When he made advances toward me, I couldn’t go to COM [him], so I went to the Presbytery Exec. He didn’t believe me because the senior pastor told him I was lying to cause dissension in the church. This is doubly troubling because the Exec. was well aware of what was going on.”
- “Sexual harassment case of a close colleague at same church; handling of it by Presbytery and church.”
- “After being raped by a resident of the village where I served.”

#### System-Level Discrimination

- “Lack of support from male counterparts, especially at presbytery level.”
- “Patriarchy and resistance to my ordination.”
- “I was unprepared to cope with the attitudes toward women in ministry that I experienced in the church.”
- “I dropped out of the call process for installed positions because larger churches (above 300) were not calling women as senior pastor/head of staff.”

- “I was given severance, because the (then) new head of staff did not want to work with a woman clergy and the PNC told him I could be gone in 6 months if he would accept the call.”
- “ ‘Senior’ pastor (even though we don’t have that title) asked me to resign, saying ‘my call there just hadn’t worked out,’ and I could stay home with the baby (I was pregnant at the time) and concentrate on my husband’s career. The church administrator told me in my first month at the church he didn’t think women should be pastors. I was pretty devastated.”
- “In my first call, I was asked to leave because I used inclusive language in worship and prayed for peace during the Gulf War. In my third call, I was asked to leave because I used inclusive language in worship and attended the 4th world conference on women in Beijing. In my sixth position, I was asked to leave because they did not want an interim pastor, especially one who was female.”

Schedule Too Demanding (6%): Of the 53 counted in this category, 21 used the general term “burnout” to describe why they left a particular congregation. A number also mentioned long commutes—up to four hours. Although the percentage of clergywomen who proffered schedule as a reason is relatively low, their comments were vehement. Additionally, demanding schedules seems to be part of why some clergywomen felt they needed additional family time (i.e., a personal reason).

One woman who is seriously considering leaving had this to say:

- “I am considering leaving soon if certain things don’t change. But personnel is willing to work with me. I am working 60–65 hours/week with little administrative help, and I can’t see keeping this pace without further repercussions to my health—physical and emotional.”

Others who had already left wrote:

- “Due to long hours and burnout, I am not looking for another full-time call. I have decided that the hours that entails are crazy and inhumane, not healthy!”
- “Just last summer I resigned because I was exhausted physically, emotionally and spiritually. Also I wanted freedom to be home in the evenings and go places on the weekends. I was tired of the public role.”
- “Small children, not conducive to be in parish working 70 hrs. a week and also not free to leave for pastoral emergency at drop of hat.”
- “I did find the demands on clergy in a congregation extreme, and I do think particularly so for women clergy.”

Emotional Distress (4%): Two persons cited non-work-related emotional distress as their reason for leaving. Others described emotional distress as a result of the job itself, the location of the job, the conflicts inherent in the job, the lack of privacy, the lack of appreciation, and so on. “Burnout” was again a popular term to describe emotional distress as a result of working with congregations. Although there was some overlap with other categories, this category was used for reasons described as sadness, loneliness, frustration, and the like. The number of responses under “emotional distress” could have been higher had we included all those who experienced discrimination, conflicts with congregations, etc.

- “First call, because after three years, I felt lonely and isolated, and moving did help.”
- “Being the only female pastor in a small rural town (conservative town) was very difficult, particularly on a social level.”
- “Burn out: I always felt on the edge of burn out—feeling I had to work twice as hard as a male pastor plus wanting to be an active mother, spouse and friend.”
- “Professional burnout: this is not limited to female clergy, but I would say that many women simply leave the ministry rather than put up with unreasonable and abusive expectations.”
- “I have left active ministry because I was more and more having to twist myself into a pretzel in order to be able to do ministry. I truly felt it was an issue of integrity and faith in the PC(USA). Also, three of my close clergy sisters had died premature deaths (at 49, 50, 60) of stress-related conditions—I decided I wished to live! It was a sad decision because I had a real commitment to ministry.”

Financial (4%): Either the church could no longer afford to fund the position, or the clergywoman needed to make more money than the church was offering.

- “I was asked to take a pay-cut to meet budget; ‘one woman needs less money to live on!’”
- “They didn’t want to give me a raise. Instead they wanted me to work full-time for the same amount of money.”
- “I left my most recent parish position to accept a call to presbytery staff because I am paying tuition for two sons and was offered a significant increase in salary.”

Sexual Orientation Discrimination (1%): The majority of comments were about the church’s stand on the ordination of lesbian, gay, transgender, and bisexual Presbyterian clergy.

- “I responded to a G.A. call to participate in dialogues on homosexuality. As an out lesbian, I knew that would end my career in parish ministry.”
- “I resigned from another call because people met me in the parking lot to say I would be in trouble if I let a lesbian be nominated for session.”
- “The only reason I left was the church’s position/policy on the ordination of gays/lesbians. I love pastoral ministry. Especially miss preaching.”

## 2. Personal Reasons: (457, 52%)

Family Time (10%): Family time includes pregnancy, wanting to stay home full- or part-time to care for children, needing additional time to care for other family members, and simply wanting more time to spend with family.

- “My parents were entering their 90’s and I wanted more time with them; the birth of a granddaughter made me say, ‘I’m working 24/7, but I want to know you and you to know me.’”
- “I had a baby and wanted to be a full-time parent.”
- “I left my first call because the pressure of being a solo minister and a mother of young children is enormous. I was the primary care giver for both the church and my children! As the child of a minister myself, I also know the kinds of expectations placed on a minister’s family (both by the minister and the church). I wanted to remove my family from that difficult environment.”

Felt Unfulfilled (9%): Fifty-eight women wrote, “It seemed time to leave,” “I had done the work I could and needed a change,” or words to that effect. These were all categorized as unfulfilled. Also in this category were those seeking new challenges because they became professionally or theologically unfulfilled, and those who expressed general dissatisfaction with some aspect of their work situation.

- “I just did so—15 years in one congregation, just left Dec. 31, 2001. I had come to the end of ways I could grow in ministry there. I did not want to stagnate or plateau for my own sake or the congregation’s.”
- “It was time to leave—I had exhausted every new idea and my spirit was in need of nurture. I needed a change and a new vision and so did the congregation. I left and it was both a shock to them and a great favor . . . It taught them how to be church. It taught me how to find the spirit in my life again.”
- “In my 2nd position, after having the rare opportunity to be acting head of staff, the choice was either go back to being associate or move on.”
- “Unfulfilled as associate—gifts and skills fit better in solo position.”
- “Desire to grow spiritually and professionally, desire for a change of pace and setting.”
- “No good opportunities: poor pay (especially for full-time positions). Poor work conditions, i.e., lack of professional development. Lack of creative opportunities, lack of engaged (spiritually) congregants.”

Spouse Job (7%): When the spouse’s job was listed as a reason, it usually entailed a geographical move, but not always. Some respondents with children could not maintain the pace of both parents working, especially if the church position included strained relations.

- “My husband was working an hour and fifteen minutes away. The commute became prohibitive when we started our family.”

- “Once I left after 5½ yrs. because my husband had another call. Once because the interim was over. (Again) once because my husband had another call.”

Moved (3%): Most of these respondents moved as a result of family urgency—usually the spouse’s job. Some, however, left to seek a more suitable region—urban as opposed to rural, for instance.

- “I left my second congregation to move closer to my husband’s work.”
- “Needed to move closer to sick parent.”
- “I got married and moved from Iowa to Wisconsin, but I was looking to leave.”

Finished/Began School (3%): These reasons include spouse or self returning to school or completing educational program, either of which caused move from the congregation. Approximately half left for further religion-focused education, and the rest for training in a different field altogether.

- “Graduated from Ph.D. program; moved on to accept a teaching assignment at a seminary.”
- “To pursue full-time MSW degree studies.”
- “Twice because husband (also clergy) sought further education in pastoral counseling.”

Marriage/Divorce (2%): Many of the clergywomen simply wrote “marriage” as their reason for leaving. Others explained that marriage meant she needed to move, to be with her spouse or near his job. Of those who wrote “divorce,” the main issues were the congregation’s lack of support and/or the emotional or financial turmoil that resulted.

- “I had gotten married, husband was trying to commute 75 miles one-way, and stepson living with us was impossible situation. Did that for 2 years but finally had to change for the sake of marriage and sanity.”
- “Conflict within congregation and long-distance commute strained my marriage.”
- “I got married and my husband began serving a church in another state. The congregation assumed I was leaving to be with my husband and began treating me like a short-timer. I decided to leave, as it appeared my ministry there was finished.”
- “Left because of divorce—not my choice—voted while I was on vacation.”
- “Didn’t want to bring a congregation through my divorce . . . felt vulnerable due to sexual identity.”

Illness (2%): A small percentage left their positions because of personal illness or that of a child or spouse. In a few cases, the ensuing death of a spouse caused the clergywoman to leave her position.

- “Significant hearing impairment limits my ability to do certain functions, moderate session work with youth and children’s groups, group social situations.”
- “I had health issues that made it difficult to work all day and attend meetings at night and work all weekend including Sunday morning sermon and bible study.”

### 3. Normal Course of Events: (273, 31%)

This category had a lower cumulative percentage than the personal or professional reasons.

Received Another Call (11%): Some left for a call outside of congregational ministry, some left for another parish, some left because they felt called by God to work in alternative ministry.

- “To go somewhere else. I haven’t been forced out anywhere.”
- “I was called to pastor a church closer to home.”
- “Left 1st pastorate to seek a solo position, because I wanted that experience, no unhappiness.”

In some cases, the clergywomen indicated they felt they were being led in a new direction.

- “I felt a definite calling to older adult ministry as a chaplain.”

In 19 instances, comments about accepting a new call reflected anguish over past experiences.

- “Felt called to preach, not plan youth programs.”
- “Chose to seek a new call to get ‘relief’ from extensive conflict within the congregation.”

Interim Ended (7%): These responses were relatively straightforward. It was clear from some answers that some women go from interim to interim. It appears that some women choose interim work for family reasons. For example:

- “At the end of our co-pastorate, [my husband] took a call as an EP, and I had to do interim work in order to fit work with family responsibilities. Then he chose to return to pastoral work, so I continued doing interim until he retired.”

#### 4. Change of Life Direction: (94, 7%)

This category captured those moves from a congregation that resulted in disassociation from parish ministry. Very few left for a secular job.

Alternative Ministry (6%): Examples of alternative ministry mentioned were counseling, mediation, teaching in a seminary, social activism. Some of these shifts were a direct result of negative experiences with congregational ministry, while others were a result of refining personal goals and reflecting on individual talents:

- “I’m a good preacher and teacher, but loathed all the administrative junk that absorbs a pastor’s time and prevents him/her from really sharing the gospel. I seem to be doing much more ‘behind the scenes’ mentoring, teaching, etc., now.”
- “Sense of call to specialized ministry. Limitations of working as associate in a system where the glass ceiling limits gifts.”
- “Positive reason—loved doing pastoral care and chaplaincy was perfect fit. Negative reason—my time as a single woman pastor was the loneliest period of my life.”
- “I went to be a volunteer-in-mission. I felt ‘called’ to serve in a more hands-on-way tired of preaching the gospel and wanted to live it.”

Left for Secular Job (1%): Very few respondents stated that they left ministry for a secular job. Ambiguous to responses were defined as “received another call.”

- “I resigned from a church to support my husband while he did doctoral work.”
- “I was exhausted and definitely needed a change. A 9–5 job Mon–Fri seemed like a vacation by comparison to parish ministry.”
- “I chose to enter another profession and trained to be a clinical psychologist.”

#### G. Key Question #4: What Are Issues of Concern to Presbyterian Clergywomen?

Clergywomen were asked to rate fifteen issues using a scale of major issue, definitely an issue, minor issue, and not an issue in their experience. The frequency of responses and intensity of the fifteen issues are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Clergywomen Identified Issues and Intensity of Concern\* (n=1404)

Issues	Intensity Rating	Importance of the Issue			
	4=major issue 0=not an issue	Major issue	Definitely an issue	Minor issue	Not an issue
Professional burnout	2.01	442 33%	550 41%	252 19%	87.5 7%
Self-care	1.99	451 33%	553 41%	241 18%	109 8%
Discrimination in the call process	1.98	376 28%	643 48%	235 18%	85 6%
Difficulty of relocation because of spouse’s job	1.94	398 33%	507 42%	118 10%	176 15%
Negotiating equitable terms of call	1.69	310 23%	494 37%	339 25%	189 14%

Pastoral authority in the congregation	1.62	216 16%	557 41%	418 31%	158 12%
Finding quality day care/child care	1.58	235 22%	408 38%	191 18%	252 23%
Racism	1.40	153 15%	416 40%	179 17%	304 29%
Privacy	1.41	213 16%	388 29%	471 35%	262 20%
Inclusive language issues	1.38	203 15%	375 28%	508 38%	264 20%
Difficulty in staff relations	1.19	107 8%	359 28%	471 37%	329 20%
Acceptance in the community	1.12	67 5%	365 27%	587 43%	335 25%
Acceptance by colleagues on the church staff	.96	50 4%	290 23%	503 39%	437 34%
Acceptance by colleagues in the presbytery	.94	64 5%	226 17%	630 46%	440 32%
Examinations on the floor of the presbytery	.90	83 6%	214 16%	518 39%	513 39%

\*Some clergywomen gave a range of values in response to some issue questions. These responses were coded as the midpoint of the range. When the midpoint was halfway between two responses, the response is listed half in one category and half in the other on the table.

Six hundred and ninety-one clergywomen responded to the invitation to comment on any issues they ranked as “major.” About 75 percent of the clergywomen rated four issues as “definitely an issue” or “a major issue”: discrimination in the call process, professional burnout, self-care, and difficulty in relocation because of spouse’s job.

Discrimination in the call process (76%) : Fifty-eight comments were offered on discrimination within the call process. Comments made in other sections of the survey support the importance of this issue: the glass ceiling perceived by many clergywomen, the perception that few appealing positions are truly open to women, the sense that they are often simply token interviews in order to satisfy representation requirements.

Some comments about call process discrimination:

- “The cousin system/good ol’ pastors’ network in the call process.”
- “I’ve been on Committees on Ministry for the past 20 years (in 3 different presbyteries). To this day I continue to hear from PNC’s that they do not want to call a ‘woman pastor.’”
- “Many search committees appear to list minimum salary on CIF. But if a man is called, offer significantly more money than they would to a woman.”

Difficulty in relocation because of spouse’s job (75%): A sample of 22 comments on this issue follows:

- “Many of us (men and women) are facing complex decisions about our careers vs. our spouses’ careers.”
- “The Presbyterian system was not set up to consider the needs of the family if the pastor is also the primary care provider nor was it set up with any regard to a spouse’s occupation.”

Professional Burnout and Self-care (74%): These issues received 289 comments and often echoed one another:

- “This is a clergy issue—male and female. But health issues—spiritual and physical—are different for women. Also, women seem reluctant to seek out what they need to be healthy and whole. Women are natural givers—burnout is very real!”
- “The difficulty in balancing healthy care of self and responsible care of others, I believe, is the most difficult challenge to women in ministry. Women are socialized by church and society to excel in care of others. Clergywomen struggle (more than men) to pay attention to themselves.”
- “Self-care and burnout seem to be very much related. Women have a sense that they need to succeed not only for themselves but also for the women who may come after them. Rather than seeing things which don’t work as (at least in

part) the fault of the committee or session or group involved, it is seen as a personal failure, to be avoided by over-functioning and not taking care of self.”

In 2000, male and female clergywomen also felt strongly about self-care and achieving balance in their lives. (Fox, Susan E. “Call History Survey,” New York, NY: Union-PSCE, Office of Field Education and Placement 2001, 8). In 1993 (Congregational Ministries Division, Presbyterian Clergywomen Survey: Final Report, Louisville, KY: Research Services, Oct. 1993, iii) and in 2000 (Fox, Susan E. “Call History Survey,” New York, NY: Union-PSCE, Office of Field Education and Placement 2001, 9), clergywomen discussed their loneliness and isolation as well as the difficulty of establishing boundaries.

Finding Quality Day Care/Child Care (60%): Thirty-five clergywomen wrote specifically about their experiences with childcare; a larger number discussed the choice to stay home to care for children so that they would not have to use daycare.

- “Also adequate child care for continuing education, retreats, upper judicatory meetings, etc., even for presbytery committee work.”
- “With regard to the child care issue specifically; this presbytery remains the only presbytery in the state ... that will not offer childcare during its stated meetings. As a clergy couple, one of us must choose not to attend each meeting. My husband and I have pursued this topic through presbytery council and staff without success.”
- “A line item in our salary packages for day care would be a huge incentive to remain in the ministry.”
- “Childcare—when church members care for my kids, complicate dual roles. Can be okay if done right, but there are concerns.”

Negotiating equitable terms of call (60%): Respondents volunteered forty comments on this issue. Some examples follow:

- “I resigned because the administration committee did not raise my pay at the same rate as the male pastors (three of them who’d been in the church 12, 14 and 17 years). The congregation fought the committee, but the senior pastor covered his ears and pretended not to hear anything.”
- “It is assumed women have a spouse whose job pays well, so they need not be paid as much. To ask for it is viewed as being greedy by those in the church.”
- “Equitable term of call—even though my husband and I have the same degrees and number of years in ministry—only one congregation has paid equitable calls and that was because my husband took a cut in his!”
- “Women get paid less at same pastorate than men. Church depends on spouse’s insurance to free them of that cost—women aren’t able to negotiate as well because the options are fewer.”
- “I have turned down positions where the inequality was apparent, and they weren’t willing to budge. The man who took one position got \$50,000 more than they offered me!”
- “In co-pastorates, my husband was referred to as ‘pastor’ while I was ‘Mike’s wife.’ Congregation’s feeling that I ‘didn’t need’ equitable pay or pension.”

Generally, there were more comments about low wages clergy received. Comments about low clergy pay were written in response to three questions on the survey. Eighty-seven of the clergywomen who felt that women are leaving the profession discussed low pay as a major reason. Fifty of those who had ceased serving a congregation at some point cited pay as a reason for leaving. In addition, 78 clergywomen added comments about wages, while elaborating on what they considered to be the “major issues” of those listed on the survey. Another 24 clergywomen wrote responses to “Other Issues” that concerned wages.

Low Pay for Pastors: Thirty-four clergywomen wrote about the low wages clergy receive.

- “Churches are looking to save; have lots of excuses for why they don’t financially support their pastors, male and female, but the bottom line is that leaving negotiation to pastors isn’t working.”
- “To be able to have a continuing ministry, I have accepted positions that are grossly underpaid in relation to the amount of work involved.”
- “Salaries—if I had not had other sources of income, I do not think I would have been willing to stay in ministry.”
- “Terms of call (not equity issue) most are so low as to be impossible to accept (especially small, rural churches).”
- “In 25 years of employment in Presbyterian Church and related agencies, I’ve had 6 years of pension/medical coverage.”



Low Pay for Women: Sixty-four clergywomen wrote about the particularly low pay given women clergy.

- “In the church where I am a parish associate the #2 associate pastor (woman) is paid 1/3 of what the senior pastor is paid. Number 1 assoc. (male) is paid 2/3 of senior pastor’s compensation.”
- “Churches will not hire women as the pastor in medium and large churches!! So you never can make a living wage.”
- “I have been paid on a par with male colleagues in the Presbytery in only one call over my years of ministry and that was an interim for 1½ years. (I’ve been on COM in 3 different Presbyteries.)”
- “As a member of this presbytery’s Committee on Ministry I work with churches seeking pastors. The more rural/conservative, the more they believe they want a guy, but the more willing they are to accept a woman because they believe (and it is true) that they don’t have to pay her as much. It appears that churches are willing to pay more for male clergy.”
- “The idea that a woman does not need as much money as a man still prevails. I think there is also a feeling that a woman pastor is a bargain because you can call a really good minister for a lot less money.”

Pastoral Authority in the Congregation (57%) : 105 comments were made on this issue. Forty-two clergywomen specifically mentioned “pastoral authority,” and another 63 discussed leadership issues—largely, how women’s leadership styles were not as well respected in the church as were men’s.

- “Sometimes others on the staff look at male clergy as having more authority. Female support staff can try to triangulate female pastors to get what they want from the male clergy on staff.”
- “Discrimination can occur simply because one is a woman . . . As my husband and I were interim co-pastors, there was a deep-seated feeling that he was staff and I the deacon.”
- “Working with female secretaries or volunteers (women) my age or younger is not good. Competition? Authority issues?”
- “I think the ‘pastoral authority’ issue can be a problem for second career women moving into head of staff from assoc. positions. The issue is getting committees to understand their qualifications.”

Leadership Issues

- “Being disrespected for having qualities that are ‘male’ in our culture (aggressive, decisive, tough, etc.)”
- “Male power still viewed as more valuable than female power.”

Racism (55%): Seven made comments. For example:

- “In my work on COM and membership in two different presbyteries, I have definitely witnessed discrimination in the call process and racism.”
- “Racism—not [an issue] for me, but I’m sure it is a major issue—how many white congregations have a non-white female pastor?”

Other Issues: Clergywomen were given the opportunity to list “Other Issues” beyond the fifteen provided on the survey. Three hundred and sixty-two clergywomen (26 percent of total) responded. Eight percent or more of these women wrote about three points: the dearth of good positions available to women<sup>6</sup> (12 percent of other responses); the difficulties of balancing family responsibilities with ministry responsibilities (11 percent of other responses); and theological or philosophical incompatibility (8% of other responses).

A lack of positions was attributed to gender discrimination. Difficulty balancing work and family was attributed to women having more family responsibilities than men. Theological or philosophical differences included feminism vs. patriarchal conservatism as well as some clergywomen’s evangelical leanings vs. serving “maintenance-oriented congregations.” There is overlap between these categories in that some of the clergywomen lamented the lack of part-time positions for women who must balance family upkeep with work, for example.

#### Lack of Good Positions Available to Women (43 write-in responses)

- “Delegated to smaller churches with lower pay but responsibilities just as great or greater than pastors of larger churches.”
- “Availability of desirable positions. The ones offered to women men won’t even consider.”

#### Difficulties Balancing Family with Ministry (40 write-in responses)

- “The pressure of having sick kids, poor day care and a full schedule is very wearing and leads to burnout. Dragging a sick kid to work erodes pastoral authority in many cases.”
- “The pastor’s position is set up, historically, for men with wives at home to do the childcare, the housework, the cooking, etc. 55 hours a week, with lots of night meetings. For women pastors who have full-time jobs at home, this set-up is extremely difficult. But to be a senior pastor, a woman must accept this set up. This is the major bind I perceive for female clergy, who have families. Very few find themselves able to take on full-time pastoral positions, and good part-time positions are unavailable.”

#### Theological or Philosophical Incompatibility (29 write-in responses)

- “I also grew tired of fighting the same battles over and over aging, abortion, inclusive language and images, women in leadership, etc. We could never seem to move forward in the church because we had to go backward to re-fight battles we fought 30 years ago. I decided it was time for me to go and do the ministry I felt called to do. I couldn’t wait for the church anymore. I am now an M.D., working in a central city hospital and a free clinic.”
- “1. The rejection of feminist theologies and biblical studies, and ethics as serious responses to an elite, white, male tradition. 2. Different styles of ministry challenge male concepts of power and authority.”

#### H. *ACWC Conclusions*

A glance at Research Services *Comparative Statistics 2001* (see Data Base on p. 294 of this report) reveals how far clergywomen have come in almost fifty years. In 2001 in the PC(USA), women comprised 18 percent of all clergy, including those who are working, those retired, and those classified as “at-large” members. As to position, women comprise 15 percent of clergy who are pastors or co-pastors, 40 percent of associate pastors, 30 percent of supply pastors, 40 percent of interim pastors, 39 percent of chaplains, 30 percent of presbytery executives, 24 percent of clergy serving in schools, 33 percent of clergy serving as counselors, 30 percent of other church professionals, and 33 percent are classified as “at-large.” Please note the disproportionate percentage of women serving in each position. The ACWC wonders why increasing numbers of clergywomen are listed as “at-large.” While clergywomen comprise 25 percent of the PC(USA) active clergy in 2000, yet the average percentage of women graduates of PC(USA) seminaries in 2001 was more than 50 percent, ACWC wonders, “Will these new graduates continue to swell the positions where they are over-represented or will they become pastors and co-pastors?”

The ACWC celebrates the fact that women are being called to positions of leadership in the PC(USA). At the same time, we note that, for many Presbyterian congregations, a woman serving in pastoral leadership is still an unfamiliar and unknown phenomenon. Clergywomen are still commonly introduced with the phrase, “I’d like you to meet our woman pastor.” And, as one general presbyter noted at the 2002 GA Forum on Clergywomen, “Women continue not to get the big jobs. Women are able to get calls to dying congregations, but that prevents any sort of movement along a typical career path.”

It seems that many pastor nominating committees (PNCs) are reluctant to seriously consider interviewing clergywomen. One clergywoman wrote, “I have read that statistically, it still takes women longer to receive a call, most calls are to small or rural churches, the second call to a solo position in a mid-size church is more difficult, and in my own experience I know that the PNC in this church did not even want to look at women clergy and they interviewed me under pressure. They were gracious in receiving me and the committee felt led to extend the call but would not have without the initial pressure from the Presbytery committee. I have heard members of PNC’s of other churches make the comment ‘I don’t think we’re ready for a woman.’”

The ACWC believes that the church is called to address the reality of discrimination in the calling and treatment of clergywomen.

One way presbyteries could help address the problem of discrimination would be to encourage sessions to call women to interim positions. A former seminary dean noted that, in her experience, churches whose interim pastors have been women seem more open to seriously considering women for permanent positions. Presbyteries could help by actively recruiting women for interim positions.

Furthermore, presbyteries, including presbytery executives, general presbyters, and presbytery committees (especially committees on ministry, preparation, and education) could collaborate to conduct gender and racial ethnic awareness training with congregations. When a church is calling a woman for the first time, issues of leadership and gender could be addressed in the congregational meeting. Committees on ministry could expose PNCs to gender differences in gifts for ministry and in ways of doing ministry.

We believe that the church needs to address issues regarding fair compensation for all clergy, but especially for women clergy.

We dream of a time when PNC's will consider women candidates, not because they are mandated to do so, but because of the gifts the candidate will bring to a church. As one survey respondent put it, "Then perhaps women will become more 'human' in the process and not just a gender option."

The ACWC also dreams of a time when the church will value the diversity of calls and gifts of all clergy. We heard from a campus minister who previously served as an associate synod executive. She surveyed more than 300 clergywomen in her area regarding their sense of call and how it was working itself out in reality. One of the significant issues that emerged was the large number of clergywomen, with significant time in ministry, serving in calls other than the parish. She wrote:

The PC(USA) continues to view ministers who are called to ministry in places other than the traditional parish setting with significantly less ... respect. As women in ministry increasingly find themselves in these situations, it is painful to hear regularly the question, 'You are such a good minister. When will you get a congregation?' It is the age-old struggle to balance our desire to value a diversity of calls and gifts with the wider societal perception that bigger is better. Our own parish-based biases continue to marginalize women who minister beyond the bounds of the traditional parish setting or those in ministry in parishes with smaller populations.

As we reviewed the surveys, ACWC found tremendous amounts of stress among the women who practice ministry. We know that the nature and practice of ministry are changing as the church moves forward in time, and that change is not always for the better. Clergy are prepared by seminaries to be spiritual leaders, but they encounter many other expectations in the actual practice of ministry. We know that the needs for family time, for personal time, and for fair compensation cut across lines of gender, race, and sexuality, and believe these issues need to be addressed by the church at all levels. Clergywomen remind us that the gospel of Jesus Christ doesn't call its servants to burn out. The ACWC believes that the church needs to be a better place to work.

Certainly the survey results indicate that the church needs to give greater attention to the matter of staff relations. Stories of painful conflict in staff and parish relations point to the serious need for work in this area. One respondent recommended the book *Becoming Colleagues* by Carol E. Becker. A seminary professor, she has conducted seminars on women and men in leadership roles as colleagues in ministry. Training for heads of staff and for all working in multi-staff situations seems to be a critical need.

In November 2002, ACWC received an inquiry from a joint task force of a COM and CPM in the Northwest, inquiring about the results of the survey, and posing the question "What can we do to attract and retain women pastors in our presbytery?" The ACWC find this to be a refreshing question! So, the questions we pose to the church are these: "How can the church be a more welcoming place for clergywomen? What would attract women to serve?"

Finally, ACWC wishes to thank the REFT Institute for its assistance with coding and analyzing the surveys.

Above all, we wish to thank the clergywomen who responded to the survey and shared their experience and wisdom with us. We are grateful to God for the presence of women in leadership at all levels in the PC(USA). It is our hope that this report will be a tool to engage the church in conversation about important issues and that the church will, with God's help, become a more welcoming place for all its ministers.

## SUMMARY OF REPORT

### A. *Introduction*

The 212th General Assembly (2000) of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) directed the Advocacy Committee for Women's Concerns (ACWC), "to look at emerging issues related to clergywomen serving in parish ministry, including the decreasing numbers of clergywomen available for service; proportionately lower numbers of women serving congregations; and the increasing numbers of women leaving parish ministry."

In January 2002, ACWC constructed a survey to gather clergywomen's perceptions and experiences relating to the 212th General Assembly (2000) referral. In March 2002, the survey was mailed to 3,853 clergywomen in the PC(USA) database. In the survey cover letter we wrote, "We need your help, especially in discovering why women leave parish ministry and why lower numbers of women serve congregations." At the 214th General Assembly (2002), ACWC also held a consultation, inviting clergywomen to share their experiences and concerns.

By July 2002, with only one mailing, ACWC received 1,404 responses to the survey, a response rate of 36.4 percent. A number of respondents expressed thanks for receiving the survey. As one woman wrote,

I want to thank you for sending this survey. I believe the issues surrounding the unique situations and problems of women clergy need to be addressed locally and nationally. I am one who is seriously considering leaving the parish ministry. ... I believe that one of our major problems is that no one is listening!

## B. *Data Analysis*

After reviewing the surveys, ACWC requested that data analysis be conducted by the REFT Institute, Inc., an independent research firm located in Centennial, Colorado. The ACWC identified key questions it hoped the surveys would begin to answer, and REFT focused the analysis around these questions. In addition, REFT reviewed past survey data for comparison with the 2002 ACWC survey data.

## C. *Data Base*

The database for the ACWC 2002 Survey was comprised of 3,853 women, including 303 retired pastors. In 2000<sup>1</sup>, clergywomen served in the following positions:

<b>Number of Clergywomen</b>	<b>3,550 Clergywomen</b>	<b>Percent of Women in Each Position</b>
1000 pastors & co-pastors	28%	15%
607 associate pastors	17%	42%
175 supply pastors	5%	30%
242 interim pastors	7%	40%
247 chaplains	7%	39%
150 PC(USA) executives	4%	30%
129 serving in schools	4%	24%
63 serving as counselors	2%	33%
7 tentmakers	-	13%
122 other church professionals	3%	30%
808 "at large" presbytery members	23%	33%
Total 3,853	100%	

In 2000, there were 13,989 active clergy. The 3,550 clergywomen comprised 25 percent of the active clergy.

<sup>1</sup>Research Services. 2002. Comparative Statistics 2001. Louisville, Ky.: Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), Table 9, p. 14.

## D. *Key Questions*

### 1. *Key Question #1: Are the Numbers of Clergywomen Available for Service Decreasing?*

The 212th General Assembly (2000) directive to ACWC suggests that this is so. However, the statistics from OGA do not support this suggestion. The statistics indicate that the number of clergywomen in service is in fact increasing each year.

What we do not know is whether the increasing number of clergywomen in service is in step with the increasing numbers of women who complete seminary education. Current records do not provide this information. Current statistics indicate the following: the number of clergywomen and clergymen in active service in various positions, the number retired, and the number classified as "at-large" members of presbyteries. They simply do not show the number of women, or men for that matter, who leave ministry.

It is the policy of presbytery executives and committees on ministry to conduct "exit interviews" with clergy who leave their positions. However, due to timing and circumstance, such interviews are not always conducted. In addition, exit interviews are not standardized, and most records of exit interviews remain "in house."

The ACWC survey asked, "Do you think the number of clergywomen serving in congregational ministry is decreasing?" The answers varied widely. Thirty-six percent (504 clergywomen) believed the number of women has not decreased; 33 percent (458 clergywomen) believed the number of women has decreased; and 25 percent (346 clergywomen) said they did not know. As these are perceptions rather than a systematic analysis of actual behavior and as there is no clear consensus, this question is not analyzed further. Comments about these perceptions may be found in the long version of this report, available from ACWC.

The ACWC suspects that the truth about numbers is that they are increasing in some presbyteries and decreasing in others, and that the climate of acceptance and support for women is stronger in some presbyteries than in others.

Furthermore, we believe the embrace of women’s gifts for ministry depends upon a number of factors, including a congregation’s exposure and level of familiarity with clergywomen; the recognition that women and men often have different approaches to ministry; a congregation’s relationships with former pastors, both male and female; and the cultural climate of a particular congregation/presbytery.

The ACWC believes that the perseverance of clergywomen, rooted in a strong sense of call (the call of God through the voice of a particular congregation) may be strengthened by support networks available to and/or intentionally created by those who affirm women’s call and practice of ministry. We believe that listening to the voices of women begins to address the loneliness and isolation many clergy, male and female experience in the practice of ministry.

2. *Key Question #2: Do Clergywomen Feel Geographically Bound?*

Of the 1,404 respondents, 62 percent said that they would feel geographically bound if searching for a new position, while 30 percent stated they would not feel bound to a particular region. Five percent responded with ambivalence, as they were not bound in the strictest sense, but either had reasons for staying in a particular area or the new area would have to meet specific criteria. Approximately 2 percent reported that the question was not relevant to them. These figures are slightly less than the 69 percent who reported being geographically bound in 1993 (Document I, 12). Comments about this question may be found in the long version of this report. For information on how to obtain the long version of this report, contact the Office of Women’s Advocacy, toll-free, at 1-888-728-7228, ext. 5043, or, direct, at 502-569-5403.

3. *Key Question #3: Why Do Clergywomen Leave Parish Ministry?*

The ACWC survey Q. 13. asked: “If you have ever ceased serving a congregation, why did you leave?”

Eight hundred eighty-five clergywomen (63 percent) reported having left a congregation for reasons other than retirement. Reasons for leaving varied widely. For instance, they may have left one congregation for financial reasons, and another because of spouse’s job relocation. Some mentioned leaving a particular congregation for several reasons. For example, their spouse’s job was relocated, but they also felt unfulfilled and ready to leave anyway. Or they were “burnt out” from the schedule and the congregation conflicts were overwhelming. The 1,283 reasons given are listed in the table below.

Table 7. Reasons Clergywomen Leave Congregations (n=885, 63%)

<b>Reason for Leaving</b>	<b>Number of Comments</b>	<b>Percentage of Reasons</b>
Internal Church Politics—Issues w/Staff	154	12%
Received Another Call	146	11%
Family Time	122	10%
Felt Unfulfilled	111	9%
Interim Ended	93	7%
Internal Church Politics—Issues w/Congregation	91	7%
Spouse Job	89	7%
Alternative Ministry	79	6%
Discrimination Against Women	59	5%
Schedule too Demanding	55	4%
Financial	49	4%
Emotional Distress	46	4%
Finished/Began School	44	3%
Moved	42	3%
P-T to F-T or vice versa	34	3%
Marriage/Divorce	28	2%
Illness	21	2%
Left for Secular Job	15	1%
Sexual Orientation Discrimination	8	1%

More than half of all respondents reported leaving a congregation because of the difficulties within the position, including church politics, gender discrimination, expectations, low pay, etc.

More than half also reported leaving for personal reasons, including the need for more family time and a lack of fulfillment in the position.

#### 4. Key Question #4: What Are Issues of Concern to Presbyterian Clergywomen?

Clergywomen were asked to rate fifteen issues using a scale of major issue, definitely an issue, minor issue, and not an issue in their experience. The frequency of responses and intensity of the fifteen issues are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Clergywomen Identified Issues and Intensity of Concern\* (n=1404)

Issues	Intensity Rating	Importance of the Issue			
	4=major issue 0=not an issue	Major issue	Definitely an issue	Minor issue	Not an issue
Professional burnout	2.01	442 33%	550 41%	252 19%	87.5 7%
Self-care	1.99	451 33%	553 41%	241 18%	109 8%
Discrimination in the call process	1.98	376 28%	643 48%	235 18%	85 6%
Difficulty of relocation because of spouse's job	1.94	398 33%	507 42%	118 10%	176 15%
Negotiating equitable terms of call	1.69	310 23%	494 37%	339 25%	189 14%
Pastoral authority in the congregation	1.62	216 16%	557 41%	418 31%	158 12%
Finding quality day care/child care	1.58	235 22%	408 38%	191 18%	252 23%
Racism	1.40	153 15%	416 40%	179 17%	304 29%
Privacy	1.41	213 16%	388 29%	471 35%	262 20%
Inclusive language issues	1.38	203 15%	375 28%	508 38%	264 20%
Difficulty in staff relations	1.19	107 8%	359 28%	471 37%	329 20%
Acceptance in the community	1.12	67 5%	365 27%	587 43%	335 25%
Acceptance by colleagues on the church staff	.96	50 4%	290 23%	503 39%	437 34%
Acceptance by colleagues in the presbytery	.94	64 5%	226 17%	630 46%	440 32%
Examinations on the floor of the presbytery	.90	83 6%	214 16%	518 39%	513 39%

\*Some clergywomen gave a range of values in response to some issue questions. These responses were coded as the midpoint of the range. When the midpoint was halfway between two responses, the response is listed half in one category and half in the other on the table.

#### 5. Other Issues

Clergywomen were given the opportunity to list "Other Issues" beyond the fifteen provided on the survey. Three hundred and sixty-two clergywomen (26 percent of total) responded. Eight percent or more of these women wrote about three points: the dearth of good positions available to women<sup>7</sup> (12 percent of other responses); the difficulties of balancing family

responsibilities with ministry responsibilities (11 percent of other responses); and theological or philosophical incompatibility (8 percent of other responses).

A lack of positions was attributed to gender discrimination. Difficulty balancing work and family was attributed to women having more family responsibilities than men. Theological or philosophical differences included feminism vs. patriarchal conservatism as well as some clergywomen's evangelical leanings vs. serving "maintenance-oriented congregations." There is overlap between these categories in that some of the clergywomen lamented the lack of part-time positions for women who must balance family upkeep with work, for example.

#### E. *ACWC Conclusions*

A glance at Research Services *Comparative Statistics 2001* (see Data Base p. 24 [p. 3 of full report] of this report) reveals how far clergywomen have come in almost fifty years. In 2001 in the PC(USA), women comprised 18 percent of all clergy, including those who are working, those retired, and those classified as "at-large" members. As to position, women comprise 15 percent of clergy who are pastors or co-pastors, 40 percent of associate pastors, 30 percent of supply pastors, 40 percent of interim pastors, 39 percent of chaplains, 30 percent of presbytery executives, 24 percent of clergy serving in schools, 33 percent of clergy serving as counselors, 30 percent of other church professionals, and 33 percent are classified as "at-large." Please note the disproportionate percentage of women serving in each position. The ACWC wonders why increasing numbers of clergywomen are listed as "at-large." While clergywomen comprise 25 percent of the PC(USA) active clergy in 2000, yet the average percentage of women graduates of PC(USA) seminaries in 2001 was more than 50 percent, ACWC wonders, "Will these new graduates continue to swell the positions where they are over-represented or will they become pastors and co-pastors?"

The ACWC celebrates the fact that women are being called to positions of leadership in the PC(USA). At the same time, we note that, for many Presbyterian congregations, a woman serving in pastoral leadership is still an unfamiliar and unknown phenomenon. Clergywomen are still commonly introduced with the phrase, "I'd like you to meet our woman pastor." And, as one general presbyter noted at the 2002 GA Forum on Clergywomen, "Women continue not to get the big jobs. Women are able to get calls to dying congregations, but that prevents any sort of movement along a typical career path."

It seems that many PNCs are reluctant to seriously consider interviewing clergywomen. One clergywoman wrote, "I have read that statistically, it still takes women longer to receive a call, most calls are to small or rural churches, the second call to a solo position in a mid-size church is more difficult, and in my own experience I know that the PNC in this church did not even want to look at women clergy and they interviewed me under pressure. They were gracious in receiving me and the committee felt led to extend the call but would not have without the initial pressure from the Presbytery committee. I have heard members of PNC's of other churches make the comment 'I don't think we're ready for a woman.'"

The ACWC believes that the church is called to address the reality of discrimination in the calling and treatment of clergywomen.

One way presbyteries could help address the problem of discrimination would be to encourage sessions to call women to interim positions. A former seminary dean noted that, in her experience, churches whose interim pastors have been women seem more open to seriously considering women for permanent positions. Presbyteries could help by actively recruiting women for interim positions.

Furthermore, presbyteries, including presbytery executives, general presbyters, and presbytery committees (especially committees on ministry, preparation, and education) could collaborate to conduct gender and racial ethnic awareness training with congregations. When a church is calling a woman for the first time, issues of leadership and gender could be addressed in the congregational meeting. committees on ministry could expose PNCs to gender differences in gifts for ministry and in ways of doing ministry.

We believe that the church needs to address issues regarding fair compensation for all clergy, but especially for women clergy.

We dream of a time when PNCs will consider women candidates, not because they are mandated to do so, but because of the gifts the candidate will bring to a church. As one survey respondent put it, "Then perhaps women will become more 'human' in the process and not just a gender option."

The ACWC also dreams of a time when the church will value the diversity of calls and gifts of all clergy. We heard from a campus minister who previously served as an associate synod executive. She surveyed more than 300 clergywomen in her area regarding their sense of call and how it was working itself out in reality. One of the significant issues that emerged was the large number of clergywomen, with significant time in ministry, serving in calls other the parish. She wrote:

The PC(USA) continues to view ministers who are called to ministry in places other than the traditional parish setting with significantly less ... respect. As women in ministry increasingly find themselves in these situations, it is painful to hear regularly the question, "You are such a good minister. When will you get a congregation?" It is the age-old struggle to balance our desire to value a diversity of calls and gifts with the wider societal perception that bigger is better. Our own parish-based biases continue to marginalize women who minister beyond the bounds of the traditional parish setting or those in ministry in parishes with smaller populations.

As we reviewed the surveys, ACWC found tremendous amounts of stress among the women who practice ministry. We know that the nature and practice of ministry are changing as the church moves forward in time, and that change is not always for the better. Clergy are prepared by seminaries to be spiritual leaders, but they encounter many other expectations in the actual practice of ministry. We know that the needs for family time, for personal time, and for fair compensation cut across lines of gender, race, and sexuality, and believe these issues need to be addressed by the church at all levels. Clergywomen remind us that the gospel of Jesus Christ doesn't call its servants to burn out. The ACWC believes that the church needs to be a better place to work.

Certainly the survey results indicate that the church needs to give greater attention to the matter of staff relations. Stories of painful conflict in staff and parish relations point to the serious need for work in this area. One respondent recommended the book *Becoming Colleagues* by Carol E. Becker. A seminary professor, she has conducted seminars on women and men in leadership roles as colleagues in ministry. Training for heads of staff and for all working in multi-staff situations seems to be a critical need.

In November 2002, ACWC received an inquiry from a joint task force of a COM and CPM in the Northwest, inquiring about the results of the survey, and posing the question "What can we do to attract and retain women pastors in our presbytery?" The ACWC find this to be a refreshing question! So, the questions we pose to the church are these: "How can the church be a more welcoming place for clergywomen? What would attract women to serve?"

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#### Endnotes

1. *Length of Search Process*: When clergywomen had multiple search processes, the values for each process were averaged. "No search" is left out of the average, NOT coded as 0. There appeared to be some disagreement as to what was meant by this question—some gave lengths of unemployment between calls; others gave length from beginning of search to finding a job; while still others gave length from beginning a search to starting employment in the new job. These were all accepted as valid responses.

2. This ratio does not always equal the proportion of time spent in "pastoral leadership," since some clergywomen counted time in neither and/or both categories.

3. Another possible interpretation is that clergywomen tend to serve congregations early in their careers and move to non-congregational settings later in their careers. Since so many of this sample were ordained in the 1990s, it is not possible to explore this possible interpretation now.

4. Table 3 includes only those groups with ten or more clergywomen. Statistical analysis becomes extremely unstable when there are fewer people in an analytic category. Clergywomen who listed more than one of the races included on the table are only included in the category with the smaller "n."

5. All clergywomen who identified their race/ethnicity and took ten years or more between graduation and ordination were Caucasian/White. If these fifty women are excluded from the analysis, the average length of time falls to 1.11 years for Caucasian/White clergywomen.

6. In 2000, data from men and women show, "Fewer than half (40.5%, n=15) of those respondents who moved from a solo first call accepted a call to another solo position, while an additional 18.9% (n=7) moved into a head of staff position—for a combined total of 59.4% (n=22)" (Document A, 4).

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