

(laughter)

- So, Vivian what aspects of Re-imagining were most significant to you and why?

- Well, um, I think the support, the ability to work on things together. That was, to me, see, I'm not long on a lot of yick yack for talk. (Laughter)

- I want to get things done, so.

- Right.

- I'm a pragmatist, so if the talk leads to something, I'm okay with it.

- Right.

- But, you know, it was like, for a lot of people, they just weren't ready for people to be as cruel to them as they were.

- Yes.

- You know?

- Yeah.

- And in our case at the college, people stopped talking to us.

- Ohh.

- And I was in a department where that did not happen, but, one of the other women was in a department where she was chairing the department,

- Oh my goodness.

- And everyone stopped talking to her.

- Oh, that would be awful.

- Yeah, so she had to step down and you know, give the chair over to somebody else.

- Ugh, awful. Did your involvement in Re-imagining change your perspective at all on feminist theology, and/or on the church?

- Oh yeah, absolutely. Because at this point, certain things had settled in into my bones at that point. If you will. And my mother had started calling herself a feminist.

- Had she? Aw I love it. That is great. Aw.

- Yeah, and so she was involved in some church work. But, you know, in the Black Lutheran church, women ran the church.

- Is that right?

- Yeah. That's who was in the pew. Just like it is with the white women but pastor didn't do anything without coming past the ladies (laughter) in the church. I mean, because they raised the money for this, they raised the money for that. You know, blah blah blah, they taught, they did all the work.

- Yes.

- And, not all the work, of course men were were part of this, but, the majority of the people were women. And so the black church, women speak out.

- Uh-huh

- So, there was no such thing as somebody saying, "Sister, whatever, you can't talk here." and you know when white people would come from other churches and we'd have a congregational meeting afterwards, and I guess my Dad was ahead of his time too, in this regard but, you know, women taught, women voted. I was like, really?

- Yes.

- I didn't know anything else.

- Right?

- So yeah, so actually, seeing that people had to make choices about things, that helped me understand more about why white women weren't more forthcoming.

- Say some more about that.

- Well, in other words, when I saw how white women could be punished.

- Ah.
- By white people, other white women and white men,
- Yes.
- Because it wasn't part of the culture.
- Right.
- Then I began to understand that, why, they weren't always front and center,
- Got it.
- You know, supporting you, or me, or whatever, because they couldn't support themselves.
- Ha, wow, that's
- So, you know, a part of me really I think became much more forgiving, if you will, as a result of that experience. Because, once you got to know someone a person with a name and a face, you know, not just Reverend Molly's picture here and there or whatever it made a difference.
- Yes.
- It made a difference. So that whole business of showing up? This was all a part of, for me, showing up.
- Absolutely. Oh, glad you did. So, you know, getting at the end here, In the end, what do you think is the greatest legacy of the Re-imagining community?
- I think the greatest legacy of this, and I teach now, I've been teaching for a number of years now, at Luther Seminary,
- Yes.
- And the greatest legacy of this, for me, is young, white males who come into class already feminized.
- Umm
- I mean really, and who take on other males who aren't there, and you don't have to do that work.
- Yeah.

- Okay.

- Right.

- That's the greatest legacy to me.

- Yes.

- Is that the other side of the equation, for the most part, Get it, understand it, and are partnering with, are partnering, and now we have more women than men.

- Uh-huh

- Right, and now we have more clergy couples than the church ever had. And women are willing to serve these little 5-point parishes and 3-point parishes that we couldn't bring enough men in to do.

- Right.

- Also one of the things that Re-imagining has done, is it has given us more seasoned clergy who are choosing this as a second or third career.

- Uh-huh

- And that is a blessing.

- Uh-huh

- That is a real blessing.

- You know, some of the goals of Re-imagining were to bring inclusive or expansive language into the church, and feminist theology, What is your perception of how that is today?

- Oh I think we're getting there.

- Do you? Yes.

- I really do. The reason I say this is because, if you can believe it, in the first instance, you know coming up Lutheran, we didn't even cross synodical lines.

- Right.

- We did not cross synodical lines. And it was said and said many times, Oh, they are too liberal, they are

going to hell.

- Right.

- They're going to burn in hellfire. Okay?

- Uh-huh

- Turn and burn, honey. So. (laughter)

- And so, if we thought that way about other Lutherans, I mean, how far out were the Jews and Muslims, and this and that. Okay, In the civil rights movement, which I contend, was the most ecumenical movement in this country's history.

- Yes.

- My Dad had to be alongside other people. You know, we were taught not to talk to Catholic kids before all of that happened.

- Right.

- Okay, so here he is marching with the Catholics, and the this and the that, he's driving the church people crazy. I mean, because of the religious nature of the movement.

- Right.

- That is was opening doors to other people. Your gonna, well next thing you know you're gonna be preaching Judaism. Guess what, we already do. (laughter) You know, and Dad always had such a great sense of humor, the point that I'm making here is that this opened the doors for us as women to be way more ecumenical than our churches were.

- Mmm

- Because this battle was being fought all around the world, everywhere you went, and of course, the interesting part about the Mexico meeting was we didn't have a tract that was for religious, we just had the NGO's.

- Ah

- So the religious had to get themselves together on their own.

- Ah

- And I had enough money from my denomination, to actually bring somebody with me to the conference, you know, and stuff like that. So when we went to Denmark, the church was, the Danish church allowed me to open the Danish church to have a meeting place.

- Hmmm

- The NGO's didn't have a meeting place. We were always scrambling for a meeting place.

- Oh wow.

- So we learned interesting things, like, People had come without knowing how expensive it was going to be, and of course, you know, I have to say, there were all kinds of classes who were there at these meetings and so, by the time we got to the second meeting, which was five years in, we'd had meetings at The White House, we'd had all kinds of meetings,

- Wow.

- Yeah, so we were much better prepared at that point. And so, we brought back, and so my Lutheran sisters, everybody but the Missouri synod, they were all at the Danish convention, and so you know, coming back, and the Methodists, you know, everybody was there.

- Yeah

- And the Baptists, and this and that. So, we got to see worldwide, and experience worldwide, the struggles of the women in Asia, the struggles of the women here,

- Ah

- And everyday after our meetings, then you know, we could come to the church, you know we could have meals together,

- Ohh

- You know, all sorts of really wonderful things. So, we were able to process this as world women, if you will, world religious women. And know that it was better in some places worse in others, so, being hosted by the Danish church made quite a

- That's amazing.

- Quite a, yeah, anyway, long and short, so for me, this was really kinda my rootedness, if you will, going out to the larger world and back again. And each time you make one of those journeys, your faith is challenged

and supported in ways that you never thought it would be. Okay, so I used to say, when I was a church executive, that God was black woman with a big purse, and she did not like ugly. (laughter) She'd smack you with that purse.

- I love it.

- It was really funny, somebody sent me a cartoon. And it was this pastor, he just "women this and that" and there was this purse coming out of a cloud, (laughter) coming down, (laughter) I kept it,

- Perfect.

- Yeah, I kept it forever.

- I love that image.

- I knew that we were someplace different, when our seminary, the whole seminary read *The Shack*.

- Ohh

- And had two of us talking about it, and one being non-Lutheran and me. I mean that is, that covers so many bases that I have to unpack it a little bit. One is, nobody ever thought of a woman, you know, until we started all this woman, woman talk, if you will. And thinking about God, the God-head as not being male, except in the person of Jesus. And those are hard hard images to get out of peoples' minds. And then finally, we were reading a piece of literature, which was a bestseller, but I thought it was badly written, but that's neither here nor there, but where God is a black woman.

- Um-hm

- Okay? So that opened windows and doors that we couldn't get through, with even me as a student, an art student, painting Jesus as a Jewish man with black hair and olive complexion, and modern dress, and a jean jacket to be exact. (laughter) But, this opened up the ability to think about God in a different way, where these two things intersect.

- Exactly.

- Yeah, so for that, I thought that we made great strides. And I teach with a woman who is head of a department, I repeat, head of a department, at Luther Seminary, and she, she, is a Roman Catholic Theologian.

- Ohh Oh yes.

- Yes.

- Right.

- For our institutions to open themselves wide enough, or be forced to open themselves wide enough to accept a woman Theologian, who is Catholic?

- Um-hm

- Oh yeah, we've come a long way baby.

- Oh yes. Vivian, this has been great. Is there anything that you want to add that we haven't talked about?

- Oh well, I'll think about it later. (laughter) No, this has been great fun. You know, I'm so in the present and future, that my husband was the rememberer. (laughter)

- Oh yeah? Well you remembered a lot, I think.

- You know, we all have our stories, and that's all we have, really.

- Yes.

- And you know, and the story, in which we all become part of the narrative, is really our faith story.

- Uh-huh And you have a rich story, you really do.

- I do. You know, I can't imagine me being born to, other than the people I was born to.

- Yes.

- Because they were so, they allowed us think whatever we wanted to, you know, and, so I had a brother who was a, younger brother, who was a Black Panther.

- Really? Wow.

- At the same time, Dad was doing his civil rights stuff.

- Ahh

- And in fact, my Dad became quite enamored of the Black Panthers' breakfast program. And so the two of them would go around together and make talks.

- Oh, well I can why you are the way you are, Vivian. (laughter) You have great roots.



- Yeah, this apple didn't fall from the tree.
- No it did not.
- As my Mother says, you're much nicer than I am. (laughter)
- Well, thank you, that's great.