

- There we go. I think it's yes, it looks like we are good to go.

- Okay, wow.

- So if you could just say your name.

- My name is Barbara Lundblad.

- Thank you, and are you lay or clergy?

- I am clergy.

- Lutheran, is that right?

- Lutheran, the LCA.

- Yes, good. And when and where were you born?

- I was born in Iowa, I mean I was actually born in a hospital in Fort Dodge, Iowa, but grew up on a farm there, and I was born in 1944.

- Okay, I didn't know about the Iowa. And where did you go to school, graduate or divinity school?

- Well I went to Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois, and then I went to Yale Divinity School in New Haven.

- And how and when did you first become aware of feminist theology?

- Well I was trying to think of that, I mean I do remember that in 1970 the Lutheran church in America, this was before the most recent merger, they met in a convention in Minneapolis, and that was the year they voted to ordain women, and it passed me by, like it really was no big deal. I remember being, I was a visitor there, and I remember that, and it didn't strike me as something monumental, so it was probably in the late '70s then, or mid to maybe the mid '70s, '74 or '75 or so that I was part of a women's group in Minneapolis and somebody in campus ministry got it started, and there were probably 10 or so of us in the group, and it was mainly a support group, I would say. But we did read some feminist theology articles, and essays, I can't remember that we read books, although we might have, it might have even been some of Mary Daly's early books, like Church of the Second Sex, I sort of have a vague memory that we might have read that, but it was pretty tame, and more support than anything else.

- And what was your status at that point, how were you involved?

- Oh, I was doing youth ministry for churches, so some of the other people in the group were also involved in that kind of work, so yeah, there were no ordained women in the group. There were people doing all sorts of different things, some worked at the university, and some. But someone I remember, organized that group and then we met for probably two or three years before, and then in '76, that's when I left Minneapolis to go to divinity school. And then, I mean it was much more of an awakening. I mean then, the feminist movement was very, very lively at Yale at the time. I mean, there were still women there, so if I started in '76, there would have been women who started in '73 or four, when there were very few women at Yale Divinity School, so. You could imagine that by now was probably 30 to 40 percent of the class would have been women, there was still a lot of activity. There was a women center separate room, one of the houses on the quad and Lettie Russell and Margaret Farley and Joan Forsberg, very, very much involved in supporting women. And then the women who were the directors of the women's center, they were very very strong feminists and---

- Did you go to YDS planning to be a ordained pastor?

- I had ambivalent feelings because when I was a youth director, there was a whole sense of trying to affirm those kinds of lay vocations, so at the time they were called lay professionals, which is sort of an odd designation, (laughing) but so I felt a little bit like a betrayal, because to be ordained, I remember somebody telling me, "Well, the only way you can get anywhere in this church is to be ordained," and I wanted to sort of fight back against that, but during the time that I was at YDS people like Joan Forsberg and Lettie really, I think, awakened me to, you didn't have to look at things that way, like a betrayal, but what is it that you really want to do that you feel called to do, that you feel your gifts are, and it was pretty much leading me toward ordination, so I went that direction. But I went there sort of kicking and screaming, in some ways, but I can't overestimate the importance of people like Lettie and Joan and Margaret. I mean, to have women on the faculty, and I think they might have been the only women on the faculty when I started. I mean, there are more women there now, and Bonnie Kittle in Old Testament came while I was there, and Lee McGee, who taught pastoral care and those kinds of things was there, but there weren't so many.

- Yeah, yeah. Well if we could switch, this is really great background, I have to tell you. I'm very interested.

- Oh no, no, no.

- What was your relationship to the reimagining community?

- I had no relationship with the reimagining community until the event itself in '93 and I was invited to be one of the speakers in the session called "Reimagining Jesus", you know, there were all these different sections and those sections people could choose to go. I mean, because there were 2000 people there or something, all those sessions were quite large, I mean there were hundreds of people, but I don't know how it was that I was invited. I mean I was a parish pastor at the time in Upper Manhattan and I mean, somebody

must have told me a little bit about the event, because I knew something about what it was going to be, but I hadn't been part of the planning, and I was in that session with Delores Williams, who was teaching then at Union, and Guap Pilan from the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, and I didn't really know either of those people other than through their writing or hearing of them, so I can remember thinking, "Well, what am I doing here, I'm a parish pastor." I mean, I don't know, I had some visibility as a preacher but maybe they wanted to have someone from a parish be part of that, but I really hadn't been part of the planning in any way until I was there that November and also participated, I don't know when it would have been, a year later or more that there was something called "The Reimagining Revival" that I was also involved with, but.

- Yeah, and what did you do at that one?

- You know, I gave a kind of concluding wrap-up kind of sermon speech that was interspersed with music done by Tom Witt and Mary Proyce who were friends of mine, that one I remember more international womens' presence, like Musimbe Kanyoro, but I mean I just can't even remember where it was or much about it, but.

- It's been awhile, it really has.

- It was a follow-up on the first one, and I don't know that there were as many people, but it's just much vaguer in my memory than the first one is, even.

- In preparation for this, I looked back at your talk, it was published in Church in Society, the first one, in '93, and I'm just wondering if you can say a little bit more about your, it was wonderful, you talked about Elizabeth and Mary, you talked about the woman who was going to be stoned, and you mentioned Mary Magdalene too, that's right. But do you recall at all your process of choosing those women, or how you designed that, or has it been a little too long?

- Well I look back at that too, because I was trying to think what I had said. I mean, I think it was kind of in three parts, I started with this long poem which I love, at the Smith Methodist Church, which you know, is people really trying to parents in this poem clearly sent their little daughter to vacation Bible school and you know, all of a sudden she was talking about Jesus, and they sort of freaked out, 'cause Jesus they thought was like Thomas Jefferson, and you know, George Washington that children would think of that he was a figure from the past, and all of a sudden they they had to kind of come to grips with who is this Jesus. So it was sort of a way of introducing the whole topic of reimagining Jesus, because I think a lot of people that would walk by the church in New York would say, "Oh, you know, Reverend, we all have the same God, don't we," and I can translate that as, "You'll never see me in church." (laughing) But I think God is kind of general, and Jesus is very specific, so I mean I think there was that feeling, like what are we gonna do about reimagining Jesus, he's very particular, he's a man, he lived a human life, if you're going to talk about incarnation, he's still a man, and you can't turn him into a woman and so how do we reimagine him, and so I think one of the things that I was aware of was the kinds of questions that people have asked. I mean, I think the first section of that talk was gasping for breath, and it was really based on my conversation with a friend

of mine who's a rabbi, who when Jewish women were reading the story of the almost-sacrifice of Isaac, and those women, this was always read at Rosh Hashanah, so women knew this text very well, but they came to that part, where Abraham raised his knife to kill his son, and everybody in that circle just went, (gasps), like that. And I think that Christian women have done something similar in talking when they hear God loved the world so much that he gave his only son, and they put the words in "to die for us" even though that's not in the John text, but I mean I think that that first kind of impulse that feminist theology has suddenly, you think, "Something is wrong, here." there's a kind of gasping for breath, and I think that that was a kind of impulse that didn't take us far enough, because you don't wanna just have your breath taken away all the time, so I think then the other parts of the talk, I can't remember the exact order, but one of them was writing on the ground, which was picking up from that story of Jesus and the woman accused of adultery. And I think there, that women have begun, I think I talked about women's experience as a resource in way that Elizabeth Johnson and other feminist theologians have talked about it. I think I must have just fairly recently read Elizabeth Johnson's book, because I was so taken with it that I quoted her a lot, but I mean I thought she has such a good grasp of traditional classical theology, and yet she can make this turn and say, "Well, here's some things that Aquinas didn't get quite right," and so she has this respect, but also she wants to move things in a new way, so. So that was one section on that talk, of just what do women say when we write on the ground, when we really speak out of our own experience, and we come from the margins, even that text in John eight is kind of in the margins, and it's sometimes in italics, or it's at the bottom, or those scholars say it was a late edition, but I mean, what does it mean for us as Lutherans, you see, it's in the same chapter as our great reformation gospel, "You shall know the truth, and the truth will make you free, and the son sets you free," and I mean we read it every, it was last Sunday, we read it every reformation Sunday. So not every denomination is quite so crazy about the reformation as the Lutherans, but so what kind of truth is that, that starts with that woman accused of adultery, when all the written laws were on the side of the people who brought her. So that was another part of it, and I can't remember exactly everything else. I do remember, I was the third one to speak on that pane, and after Delores spoke and Guap Pilan spoke, I started out by saying, "That isn't in any written text, now for something completely different," (laughing) so there was great laughter, both because I was gonna speak, as the only white woman there, and the only sort of non-academic, and Tribe. (dog barking) So anyway, it went on from there, and there were various places where people laughed, and I mean one of the places where somebody shouted out, at one point toward the, I had said, no, I had said something like, that I lived in the world of man and the poem, where people don't wanna talk about Jesus, but then I also said, "But I am also a parish pastor, and I live in a world where the language is really set in the book, and also that, what about the time that we had been together." No, you're gonna go in there. I don't know why I try to explain this to him. (dog barking) I said, "We have not yet begun any of our sessions in the name of the father and the son and the holy spirit," and somebody there said something, maybe they said "Thank goodness", or maybe they applauded, or, but whatever that was, it was when people began to really push this terrible backlash against reimagining. It was that moment that was picked up in terms of what I had said, so people wrote things like, "Barbara Lundblad spoke out against the trinity," or something like that, or "said the trinity wasn't true," or "laughed at the trinity." So I don't know, what I was saying was simply a statement of fact, really. We hadn't yet begun any session in the name of the father, son and holy spirit, just to try to set up what is the world that we're living in? There's this world that we are living in, these few days, and there's the world that most of us have come from, which that isn't the case at all, so I wasn't saying "This is good and that's bad," even, but of course that's what people heard,

and they tried then to just pull things apart and find, you know. You could find in almost any speech something that doesn't sound right, but so I was trying also to be mindful of, there were a number of people there from parishes, laypeople and pastors, and what does all this mean, when we go back home, so I was trying to talk about I think the questions that ordinary women have in congregations, that one day you wake up and you say, "This is just can't be true, if this is who God is, this is awful, I mean, I can't abide this," so. I think the gasping for breath part I think was important for me to acknowledge, but also, you don't wanna stop there, so you wanna, what is that we can say, what is it that's good and true and so the rest of the talk was more about that, more a constructive kind of piece, but. And I think it was nothing radical, I mean I wasn't disavowing the resurrection, or the kinds of things that surely have been much more radical in terms of theological questioning and deconstructing and I wasn't saying that I thought Jesus should be a woman, I mean Elizabeth Johnson talks about that, a servant woman, yeah, everybody's seen that before. So it was different to see a different kind of man, so I mean I think I said something about that, and I did, I just thought her writing was so important, and at one point in there, I had sort of an aside, just giving thanks for women who do this kind of writing, like thanking Delores and Guap Pilan, because those of us who are in parishes and don't either know how to do that kind of writing, have not had the training to do it, don't have time to do it, but I said, "I feel like when these books come out, it's like receiving a letter from St. Paul," like the early church must have waited to hear, "What is he going to say about our troubles here in Corinth," so I mean I think when I read, I was so taken by that book by Elizabeth Johnson, I read it one summer when I was on vacation, and it just was sort of like water in the desert, that sort of feeling.

- Yeah, how was the whole, if you remember, the whole experience of that whole reimagining gathering for you?

- Well, it was very affirming, it was fun to explore different ways of speaking, and I think that the planners had said, "We're going to have this time together to really hear new language for God that we don't always hear, that we won't be using male language for God," I can't remember if they said it so explicitly, but it might have been in some of the publicity that came out. I think it was originally meant as kind of a local event, and then all of a sudden, you can see people all over the country, mainly women, but there were men in the planning committee, a friend of mine who was a man who teaches at Texas Lutheran University, he came, and I had forgotten that until he sort of responded to something on Facebook that I had put about that article about what has happened to language, somebody I think from the committee put that up there, and I just said, "Some of you may remember similar themes from reimagining," and so everybody who had been there started responding, "I was there," and Phil responded, I had forgotten that he was there, but yeah, I think at the time, none of us, I mean none of the people around me, at our table, we were seated at these round tables, and nobody thought of it as a crazy event, in any way. It wasn't even as radical as someone like Mary Daly, I mean it wasn't male-bashing in any way that I can remember, it was very positive. The one issue that I remember coming up toward the end was really the lack to the presence of, it was a very white gathering, and there was, I remember somebody asking, I think Joan Martin was standing there, I was toward the back at that point, you know, Joan Martin wasn't gonna get up and say that, and my friend Melanie had already planned to do a kind of gathering of lesbian women who were there to call anyone lesbian to come forward and so they asked Melanie if she would do that, and says, "It's not my place to do it, I don't know that people are gonna conflate these two issues then, about racism and sexism," so that was

one thing that was, that's often a problem at these; I've been at other feminist conferences which end up being very white, and you have to really intentional about doing things in a different way, and we just, I think the planners probably were mainly white, I mean I don't know, since I hadn't been part of that committee, but I think most of us there had just had a wonderful time. I mean, we had a wonderful time, and there were all these things going on, and the artist was painting at every session, and there was lots of different kind of music and songs that we had never learned before, and wonderful groups leading the singing, and we were invited to write things on the tablecloths, they had white paper on the tables, and so there were crayons there, there was dancing, I mean, just a lot of wonderful things going on, and these really wonderful speakers. I mean, I remember particularly, Rita Nakashima Brock really talked about her own experience growing up, and she was wonderful. I mean, there were big plenary sessions in the convention center, and then there were these separate sessions, and then there were small kinds of workshops as I remember, but I can't even remember what some of them would have been. But yeah, none of us thought of it as anything other than a very positive woman-affirming exploration of how we might reimagine very different areas of theology. But we didn't see it having any kind of ecclesiastical authority, for example. I mean, some Methodist bishop I had heard quoted, "It was the greatest heresy since the Reformation," which was odd kind of statement, it almost makes it sound like he thought the Reformation was heresy, but. (laughing) But I think none of us, we didn't think it would have any kind of big impact, I don't know. I mean I think there were lots of Lutheran women there and I mean, obviously if it was in Minneapolis, you can get a lot of Lutheran women, but there were Roman Catholics, and across the board, denominationally. I'd say it was mainly mainline Protestants, probably not a lot of evangelicals, but we thought it was a wonderful event.

- Yeah, and you started talking about the backlash. You mentioned a little bit about this, so did it affected you directly, because of that comment, could you say it--

- Well the thing that happened, and (dog barking) the thing that happened was that just about a week before, Tribe, no. (dog barking) Just about a week before reimagining, the ELC, the ELC had a sexuality study that had been going on for awhile, the first report of that unfortunately, it was released to the press before pastors received it, and it caused a huge uproar. I mean, the Lutherans were on nightly news talking about masturbation, and you'd hear "The Mighty Fortress" playing on national news. And it caused a huge uproar, Karen Blomqvist who had been the director of the study badly castigated by people talking, I mean it was vicious, vicious response, and I can remember during (dog barking) during the conference itself, the woman who was the head of that Church and Society Commission actually called the Lutheran women who were there to come to a meeting over at Central Lutheran Church, and the purpose of that meeting was to say, "We need to stand behind Karen Blomqvist, she's being completely attacked by these very conservative forces in the church who are so angry about this sexuality statement, saying some positive things about masturbation and gay people," I think at the time. And secretaries, they had to call in a therapist because secretaries were answering the phone, and had somebody just screaming at them. So this woman, who was the chair of that committee, said, "We've got to do something to be supportive of Karen, and just want you to know that this is happening," so I actually made reference to it in my talk, because I was talking about anytime voices come from the margins, it was that same section about the woman accused of adultery. But, where it relates to backlash is because that happened so close to reimagining, most of the people who

would have been outraged about reimagining were already so outraged about that that they just didn't get to reimagining, but they were so, so we were saved by sex, actually, is what I've said to people. Because they were so angry about that, they didn't really get any kind of anger toward those of us who were visible speakers. There weren't so many Lutheran speakers, and the Lutheran church, like the Commission for Women, did not give money to people, that was the huge issue for the Presbyterians and the Methodists, so while there were staff people there, national churchwide staff people, a number of them were at reimagining. We did not give any money to it, so eventually the Commission for Women did get some attacks from people. I got personal letters from people around the country, mainly men, some anonymous, some signed by people that actually knew. Hello.

- Hi, how are you.

- Hi, this is Nicole.

- Hi, good to meet you.

- And this is Sherry.

- Hi.

- And the puppy probably needs to either go in a separate room, or he's been okay, but every now or then he gets a little barky, so.

- Okay, he's a little barky.

- Yeah, but some of those letters were pretty vicious, pretty angry, and I think, I had a whole file of reimagining materials that are either at Union with the reimagining stuff, or they're in my, all of the stuff that I gave to the library there, because they wanted, they had asked several of the women years ago if we would give things to the library, so anyway, it may be there, so when you're there, if you talk to Ruth Cameron, it would either be there in a separate file, or some of these, I think some of the letters might even be there, but finally I wrote a letter (dog toy squeaking) (laughing) He likes squeaky things. I wrote a letter, not a form letter, but a letter that I used over and over again to write to people who were upset about it. For one thing, people had so much misinformation, almost all of them referred to things about the trinity, that I had made fun of the trinity, and so I included something specific about that, I talked about the purpose of reimagining and I mean, just write. A lot of people then were absolutely grateful, I mean they wrote back and said, "Thanks so much," even Christian Century had a very bad article about reimagining, I mean they really all played off of Parker, whatever his name was, from the Presbyterian church, and he was the really the one who got to describe reimagining, so after that, even a respected journal like Christian Century should have known better than to just go with what his description was, so I do think that there probably were groups that wouldn't invite me to speak, because I had been at reimagining. I know there were Lutheran seminarians, women, who had a hard time getting calls because they had attended reimagining, and the repercussions, I think, have gone on up to this time. I know the Commission for Women, for

example, in the ELCA, whenever they planned a churchwide gathering, rather than print out a bulletin or a program for a worship service, they would put everything up on the screen, because anything in print had to be approved by the secretary of the church, who was an ordained man, at that time. And a lot of that goes back to reimagining, they didn't want any female language, they surely didn't wanna have Sophia blessing anything. They didn't wanna have any of that going on. So I think in that sense, the repercussions, more than, I don't think any of the Lutheran women who participated or who were speakers got badly beaten up. Delores Williams really got, she was at Union, so Union was gonna be supportive of her, but her words got taken out of context, everybody's words got taken out of context, I mean, I think she said something about "We don't need anymore bloody bodies dripping around," she was talking about violence against people, in our time, but then and people heard her talking, saying she didn't believe in the crucifixion or the atonement, or whatever, so I mean everything got out of whack, out I think think I've said this, when I was teaching in Chicago, when they were talking about language, I said, "The issue of language, what we at Union call 'expansive language for God,'" not getting rid of male language, but adding explicitly, openly, female language, not just neutered language, but there is so much fear of that, that in our newest worship book, which is maybe probably now five years old, but there are 10 settings of the liturgy, of the communion service, and not one of them has female language for God. I wouldn't expect that one whole setting would be only female language, but I would expect that maybe one setting would have had some female language for God, but the explanation that I've heard is that they wanted all 10 settings to have the same text across all musical settings, but indeed, one of them has a very different text, and it's just not true. I think that reimagining really scared particularly the male leaders of the church and any kind of female language was just gonna be impossible, just wasn't going to be allowed, and so we had this new book, which in many ways has some wonderful things, I mean the salter has really changed a lot of male pronouns to second person, so "you" rather than "he", all over the place, but even at a conflict. But when that book was introduced, I was at a churchwide assembly and there were hearings, you know they had hearings anytime there was something contentious coming before the board, before the body, and I remember one man standing up and saying, "This translation castrates men", and this was from someone who is a professor, I mean, he's taught ethics for many years at a seminary level, and so even that small, what I would consider small change, it doesn't call God "she" in any of the psalms, but.

- So how do you account for that fear?

- I think it's just something deep, deep and primordial. I mean, I think it's about power, I think Mary Daly was on to something. Years ago, if God is male, then male is God, and I think that if you're God, why would you want to change anything, so I think that's part of it. I think it's something, I think it's a deep as a sense of awe and fear of women being able to bear children, so that over against that power, you have this male power, in the name of the father, son, and holy spirit to give new life, the eternal life, so all you can do, all we can do is give earthly life, but men, this male god, can give eternal life. I mean, I think it's as deep as that, but I think it's very hard to, you read Elizabeth Johnson's book and you say, "Yes, exactly, this is what we have to do," and then in congregations, I think congregations themselves, like where we'd go to church now, we pray always, our mother, our father in heaven, hallowed be your name, but baptisms are in the name of the father, son, and holy spirit, one god, mother of us all, but that wouldn't be in any worship book, and I don't think it's the only congregation here that does that. But in New York, that would have been very rare.

- Really?

- New York, I think liturgically, is much more conservative than Minnesota.

- Oh, that's interesting.

- Well I think here you've got so many Lutheran churches, that some of them, in sense, can afford to do something different and in New York it's very, very hierarchical, I would say, moreso, even though in some ways they think of themselves as being on the cutting edge in terms of liturgical reform they are definitely not. And I think they're also very much shaped by particular teachers at the Philadelphia Seminary, and then a sense of being part of a Roman Catholic culture, where the mass has a certain order and you don't change it, but.

- You know, I feel like you've said quite a few facts, but I wonder if you could say, are there other specific things about the reimagining conference or gathering that you think caused the backlash?

- Well, anything about women's bodies, there was a whole liturgy at the end, that really celebrated in very erotic language, I would say, women's bodies, the "nectar between our thighs", I mean I can't remember at all, but I think I do remember thinking, "Wow, this is really something, I've never heard this." I myself thought, "We couldn't do this in the parish," but it was also really wonderful, just that there was that kind of affirmation of sexuality and bodies, and I think that hasn't gone away. I mean, I think there were some things at reimagining that really gave women courage to stand up and say, "You know, yes, our experience is important." I mean, there were other thing going on at the time, too. You think of the '90s, almost all the feminist theology and biblical criticism in this country anyway, has been written since I was in seminary. I was in seminary from '76 to '79, and almost everything Phyllis Trivel, wrote for example, is after '78 or look at all the, I mean surely, Elizabeth Johnson, we hadn't heard of her at all, we had a few thing by Rosemary Radford Ruther and some very gentle kinds of biblical things about "lets remember all these women in the Bible," but nothing like now, we've had attacks of terror and the kinds of biblical criticism that very few Lutheran women were included in these volumes, either, and I think it was because sort of the fear that Lutherans being a confessional church, you could say things that would get you out of line, different from say the Episcopal church, or even the Roman Catholic church, a lot of these writers were Roman Catholic, and how did that happen? I think the church is so big, they thought, "Well, we can do some things here around the edges," but I think reimagining was one of the things that really empowered women to believe we need to say some different things, and there were other things going on in the culture too, I mean surely other parts of the feminist movement were alive and well, so it wasn't just reimagining, but I think that women's studies departments in various colleges and universities and there are more and more women teaching in seminaries, you figure that many of the men had never been taught by women, I mean many of the male clergy. And if these books weren't even written until '78 and on, there some exceptions, but men had also, and women had only read male theologians and biblical scholars, so that was a huge part of the church, when women started being pastors, they too had never studied with women.

- So would you say that in one way, reimagining had created fear and at the same time it also made women more courageous?

- Oh yes, yes.

- Would you say about, it seems almost paradoxical, in a way, but.

- Yeah, I think that women learned to do things around the edges, sometimes, and like the Commission for Women putting worship services on the screen rather than in print, I think that we had to do some things in a sense, surreptitiously, but I think now, there's been a big change in many more Lutheran women writing theology, and challenging traditional theology, so you can see that happened really after reimagining. Now whether they would say, "Oh, I was at reimagining," I don't know that that the case, but I think reimagining cracked something open for a lot of women, and even though there was backlash, I think that the overall, the overall impact for women who were there, and even women who weren't, was that we have a voice and we need to say something now, in our churches, and I think that the treatment of women, the backlash against some women, particularly in the Presbyterian church. I think women then really said, "This is wrong, this should not be happening, we should be able to talk about thing without firing people or without writing." I mean Joyce Soul from the Methodist Women's Division got horrible letters, and I think it just gave those women more courage, and several women in that church, I can't remember, there was a statement that they put together, and sort of like the 95 Thesis, but I think that women were encouraged by it, I think that people began to say, "Well do we have to have this male language about people and hymns, at least" there was kind of awareness, so lots of hymnals have been published since reimagining and there are some liturgical resources, not in say, our cranberry book, what we call our cranberry book, but even in that book, you look around, and there are hymns that, they really made an effort to change the language, it was all male, to at least for people, and there will be hymns like "Mother and God," "Mother and Christ", that would probably have never been included before. And I just think the presence of women now, teaching in almost every seminary, we have women who are presidents of our Lutheran seminaries, and presidents of college, and nine women are bishops and our presiding bishop is a woman so was that because of reimagining? Probably not, but it's one thing among many other things that I think did help people reimagine, and just the very term, I think, has been helpful.

- Why, what about that term?

- Because it says we can do something new, and in fact, we need to do something new, we need to reimagine, because in a sense, things have been imagined before, they haven't been given to a set in stone by God, or they have been imagined through our human reasoning, and resources, and metaphors, and the way we talk about things on earth, and so in a way we know how to talk. So now we need to reimagine, because we have had different experiences, and if the UCC's fond of saying, "God is still speaking," well, I mean, I think all of us ought to believe that, because otherwise, we would just basically say "God is dead," so I think that women have really written and spoken a lot since reimagining, in ways that have really forced seminaries to reconsider what's offered in the curriculum, who can teach here, what do we need. You look at searches now, and almost every search will say, "We are particularly interested in candidates of color

and women," so I think some seminaries, some men have really been angry about that, because they feel like they don't have a chance to get a job if you're a white, straight man, you don't have a chance to get a job, but it's opened things up, surely in seminaries and colleges, and I think it's in secular fields too, but I think it's really changed the face of theological education.

- Yeah, yeah. There are several questions that are kind of related here, so I'm wondering if there's something that you would want to particularly talk about. What aspects are most significant to you about reimagining, or how did your involvement change your perspective on feminist theology or the church, do you think there was a great legacy? I mean, is there is a way that one of those questions resonates, 'cause you've been talking some about those issues, for sure.

- Yeah, I mean I think because of the particular Lutheran convergence of this sexuality report and reimagining, and because of the kinds of critique, the really vicious critique of reimagining brought together women and sexuality, almost always, it was that closing litany about women's bodies, and when the Presbyterian layman magazine came out, they took just one tiny piece of this big artwork, which was a picture of a woman giving birth, and putting that together with this liturgy about women's bodies, and then the call at the end of reimagining for lesbians to come forward, then it was like women, sexuality, lesbianism, all these things got all tangled up and I think it made many of us aware, if we weren't aware before, was that one easy way to put down women, at that time, anyway, was the charge that you're a bunch of lesbians. So it was a negative kind of threat, so these women, like the women who didn't get calls, there was always a kind of a assumption that maybe they were lesbian, if they were single, particularly, or women who participated in any way, well, they must be lesbians, which would be like saying they must be witches or at that time, I mean particularly in '93. So I think that these issues about sexuality and women's lives, women's bodies, language, all I think, I don't know how to untangle it all, Sherry, I just think that you see it now in the kind of vitriol against Planned Parenthood, anything having to do, that's much more about women and sexuality than it is about saving the life unborn fetus, because there isn't nearly the concern after that unborn child is born, I mean then that unborn child would be better off never being born, but I mean, how we untangle all of that, but I think it's really that there is a fear of female sexuality, there is a way to charge women with being out of line, or something. It's old, it's as old as the Bible, surely, but I think that it's hard to even talk about it, because it think it's so deep within people, that it goes back. I'm not not a Freudian or a Jungian, but I think it needs somebody to unpack all of that, what that kind of fear really is, and whether or not can you ever get beyond it? If you look at rape as an instrument of war, and almost anything that we can look around what's happening in the larger world, you just see these things coming together. So what I learned I think, in many ways, after reimagining was that deep connection between sexuality and women saying anything, doing anything, believing anything, because of how those two events happened within the Lutheran church at that time, the sexuality report and reimagining. But also, I think it was very empowering, that event, and often I would go for years afterward, I would be at some event, and people would come up and say, "I was at reimagining, just like, I was there when it all happened," so there was a sense of real positive energy and I think now, a lot of the people, I think we know this now, a lot of the people that were at reimagining are old now. They're retired, many of them, many of some have died, so how that energy is carried on into the future is one thing that people are thinking about now.

- Exactly, and I'm wondering what thoughts you have, I mean what, then the 10 years of the reimagining community, as you know, working on a website, and reconstituting, what do think that has to say today, to a younger generation, what does reimagining community have to say?

- Well I mean in some ways, I would say that a lot of the same things that we said then, but we need reach women who just don't know anything about it, and I've talked to younger women like students that when I was in Chicago, and I think men too, I think there's some men who would really like to know more about reimagining. I think we have to get beyond it being such a white conversation and really be aware of, if we have other conferences, I think that those of us who are say, retirement age, if we're going to, it would be fun to have conference where you couldn't come unless you brought somebody who was, if you were coming as a young person, you'd have to bring an old person, or if you were an old person, you'd have to bring someone who's a young person. Or if you're a white woman, you need to come with a woman of color, I think that we have to be that intentional, or it just doesn't happen, because you say, "Oh, let's have a variety of speakers," well you can easily have a variety of speakers, it's much harder to have a variety of attendees, so maybe we need to have smaller gatherings, I think people do like the idea of coming together again, and I think there would be some younger women who would really be excited about it. I think sometimes they don't think there's any problem and then they get out, and either if they're ordained, they face real problems in terms of call processes, and you often hear things like, "Well, we had a woman, but she was not very good, and so I don't think we'd ever call a woman again." Now, you don't ever hear people say, "We had a man as pastor, and he wasn't very good, but I don't think we'd ever consider another man", that just isn't the case, so some women, once they're out working, not just in ministry, but in other fields, then they really do run up against a lot of roadblocks, and even though women, I think have had more chances in the academy, and like I said before, searches often say, "We're really interested in women applying," you still will hear things, "Well, there just isn't any woman who's well-known in the field of early church history," let's say, or whatever field it would be. For a long time, it was, there aren't any women who can be part of say, Lutheran/Roman Catholic dialogues, because there just isn't any woman who has as much experience as George Lindbeck, fill in the blank. Elizabeth Johnson said, some of us had breakfast with her when she was here, and she was on one of the early Lutheran/Roman Catholic dialogs, and there were no Lutheran women, and that's what the reason, was that there weren't any qualified women, and she was, so the only women on it were Roman Catholic women. So I mean I think some women don't realize that until they get out of seminary, or get out of college, or whatever, but, and I think there are more opportunities for women, I think that's surely true. You look around the Lutheran church, and you do see women who are in large congregations, and women who are bishops and presidents and teachers, and that kind of thing, but I think you also have women who really are disparaged because they are women, and not promoted, not given opportunities, whether it's people will say, "Well, we can't hear them," whatever it is. And I think some women are still afraid to say anything too contrary to tradition, so I don't know if something were on a website, what should be there. I do think just the writings from reimagining, I think are still valid, and some of the ideas that were generated over that 10 year period, I don't even really know myself, some of the things that happened after say, those two big events. But I think it could become eventually, I think a gathering place for resources that women have written out there now, because I think there are women, like we have a church in San Francisco called Her Church, I mean who could imagine that still wasn't kicked out of the ELC? But they have a lot of liturgies that are very, very feminist, and then I think there are lots of

people out here that are doing things that could be shared, a part of the website could be in a sense, looking back, and seeing where we've been, but also sharing resources that are available now, because I think there are some of those things. And I think there's just also new forms of church that are being explored, we have a woman in the Lutheran Church called Nadia Bolz-Weber, do you know of Nadia?

- I do, I've heard her speak, I've read her books, yeah.

- Yeah, so would you say Nadia's a feminist? In some ways yes, in some ways she's very traditional, theologically. So there are younger women who are in a very different place, they'll raise questions about certain things, more in terms of like worship culture, but probably would not question the Trinitarian formulation, so I think it would be interesting to have that kind of conversation among, in a sense, probably older feminists and younger women who are raising different questions, and I think they're raising important questions, and they're really trying to reach people also, who just have nothing to do with church. And their questions aren't really about language or they're just questions about why should you believe anything, or the church is too judgemental, or whatever it is, so I think there are women like Nadia who are reaching people in a different kind of group than say, the people that usually have come to churches when I've been part of churches, but. So that would be an interesting kind of conversation, I think. Nobody's gonna shut her up because she's a woman, I think she surely would say that, and it's interesting, my guess is that men, also are very taken with her, not just women, and what does that mean? I don't just mean her, but maybe some others too, but there's this whole thing of this big wide Christian conference that happened here, sometime early September, I wasn't here at the time, but there's gonna be another one in Chicago next year at Fourth Presbyterian, and it's Nadia and a woman named Rachel somebody.

- Held Evans?

- Yup, yup, they're very involved in that, and I think that's interesting, there have been surely men, part of that new kind of emergent church, like Rob Bell, but there's these woman that are having as much of a voice in that movement as anybody else, so that's an interesting conversation too, 'cause I don't really know if they pushed the envelope at all, in terms of language or theology, even. 'Cause Nadia's pretty orthodox, I mean, I don't know Rachel, so, but that would be a sort of interesting conversation.

- I have so appreciated this. Is there anything that we haven't discussed, that you would like to add?

- Well not that I can think of. I mean, so much of this gets involved in things beyond the church, the current political campaign, for example, I think there are things like that that the church doesn't know quite how to deal with, we don't wanna say too much about politics, but I think Hillary Clinton as the first woman president, possibly, I think there's gonna be certain amount of backlash against her in that way, there already has been, but I think we'll hear more of that. I'm really grateful to the people that are working on this, the website, and getting it up and running, and making it available. It's something that I would have surely made use of as a teacher, and I think that it would be wonderful if we had, there are all kinds of websites out there, about say preaching helps, it would be a wonderful thing if at least one of them were looking at text from a feminist perspective. There have been books that look at things from a justice

perspective, from a world hunger perspective, but not always from a feminist perspective and I think that it could reignite some people to think about things that they haven't thought about, or to come together. I mean I love this German idea of this Kierchentag that happens every, I don't know, how many years, that people really do come together in a big group to have kind of encouraging worship and challenging lectures and I think that kind of event is very energizing, and now that we have this big stadium here now, even.

- There you go. (laughing)

- We can have such a big event. I don't know where it would be, but I do think that gatherings like that have their own kind of momentum.

- Thank you, Barbara, I really appreciate it, thank you so much.

- Really, it's fine.

- Thank you so much, that was great.