

- If it won't pick up too much of my blowing my nose, and so forth, or coughing.
(laughing)

- Well, it's all part of it, isn't it? (laughs) Let me make sure. There we go, all right. First of all, I need some background information from you, your name.

- Okay, Manley Olson.

- And are you lay or clergy?

- I'm this weird thing in the Presbyterian Church called an ordained elder, which is lay, but, in the Reformed Church, you've got the ordained, so I'm an ordained elder.

- And the Presbyterian Church, yeah? Manley, when and where were you born?

- Born in Wisconsin in 1936.

- Oh, okay. So you're a Midwestern person. Where did you go to school? Graduate school, Divinity school, any of those things?

- Got a PhD from the University of Minnesota in Constitutional History.

- Oh.

- Well, I was in, but my dissertation was on Church-State Relations.

- Is that right, I never knew that, really. And so what kind of work did you go into?

- Well, I spent 30 years as Dean of Liberal Arts at Normandale Community College.

- Okay. Great, all right. These interviews are great. I find out all kinds of interesting things. So how and when did you first become aware of Feminist theology?

- I couldn't tell you a specific time or place. One of the interesting things is that a lot of things I've gotten involved in the church had been strictly by accident. And, I had agreed to, the Presbytery had a list of committees you could get involved with, and one of them had to do with higher education, so I had checked off that. So I end up with a committee, somebody made a mistake, obviously. I think, I don't know.
(laughing) You basically start to say, well, the Holy Spirit works. I ended up on a committee that, I don't remember what the title was, but it was basically dealing with vocation. And, so we talked about vocation

and theology, and one of the things we did was officer training and elder training and so forth. So we started talking about, that was my first real discussion with anybody about theology of any kind.

- Oh, interesting.

- Because I went to a public institution, and, had no background at all in it, and got involved in some discussions of that. That was one of the two streams. The other was that I worked at the University of Minnesota, and one of my jobs was, the university was the accrediting agency for non-public schools, and so I was in charge of going and setting up visits with high school, this was high schools, of Catholic, Missouri Synod Lutheran, Seventh-day Adventists, prep schools like Blake and Breck. Well, Breck is I guess nominally Episcopal, but (laughs) it's really pretty secular. And so you get involved with these discussions, and one of the funniest things was we had a visit. You're familiar with North Central Association.

- Yes.

- We had a visit at St. Cloud Cathedral, run by the North Central Association, because we were a part of it. So we're there and we set up. The person who was doing North Central always forgot to set up a religion committee, because they didn't have to worry about that, so we put together an ad hoc religion committee. So I ended up on most of these visits to, we did jointly. I ended up on the religion committee kind of thing. So I got involved and did some discussions and so forth. And it was funny, at one of the schools, at the end, everybody's saying thank you for everybody, and somebody, "It's nice to have a whole bunch of "concerned Catholics at the religion committee." And I said, "Boy, if you're gonna fake it, "fake it with sincerity," kind of thing. So I started getting some interest in those kinds of things. My next committee I got on again by accident, was a women's committee for the Synod. I had put down for something else, and I ended up on a women's committee. So, fine, I'm on the women's committee. And that led to another accident where, the National Presbyterian Church had a committee called Justice for Women, which was just basically what the name implies. I get a phone call late at night from the person I know who was on the committee said, "I just put your name in to be on the "National Justice for Women Committee." I said, "Well, how come," she says, I said "I thought we had nominated so and so for it." "Oh, yeah, but I forgot who it was "and your the only name I could think of, so." (laughs) So from there I went to the Ecumenical Decade Committee, the national one, again because the person who was supposed to serve couldn't, so I ended up filling in. And so because I was on that I said, well, I might as well get involved with the local group, which had just started, so I missed probably the first two or three meetings of the original Re-Imagining group, but I got in at the very ground level, so.

- I love it. What a circuitous route, and you got there. That is wonderful. Well, that transitions beautifully into your relationship with the Re-Imagining committee, which I know has been a long one. So could you pick up there, you started on the Ecumenical Decade.

- So I started on the, I was on both the national committee and the local committee. And the national committee--

- Just to clarify, this is a national committee for the Presbyterian Church?

- Presbyterian Church.

- Right, for the Ecumenical Decade.

- There was also a United States, well. Ecumenical Decade was a World Council of Churches event. Then there was a US committee, and the US committee was co-chaired by Mary Ann Lundy and some bishop from some other denomination, I don't remember who it was. I was on the US committee which had probably 15 people from around the country. I remember we had one meeting in Detroit, where we met jointly with the World Council of Churches folks. So I got to meet a lot of those folks. So I got involved with a local group, and was part of that, up through the start of the conference, and then once the conference ended, and we were gonna fold our tents, and we were gonna have a farewell party, and all of a sudden the flack hit, and so we decided to keep going, so, I was a part of it for the rest of its history.

- I wanna talk more about that decision, 'cause I think it's really important, but. So were you involved the whole 10 years? And what kind of role--

- The whole 10 years.

- Were you on the coordinating council the whole time?

- I was on the coordinating council.

- For the whole 10 years?

- For the whole 10 years. I was never on the, we had an individual three or four people that were in charge of planning each of the local events. I was never on one of those. I just didn't have time for that, but I was on the coordinating group. So we met probably, I think most of the time, we met about every month, something like that.

- That's quite a commitment for 10 years. Were you usually the only guy on the committee?

- Uh, no. There were two of us on the committee most of the time. Randy Nelson, and, I don't know if you've heard this story. Do you know Elizabeth Bettenhausen?

- Yes.

- Sally Hill tells the story of she is meeting with Bettenhausen, and, they're talking about Re-Imagining. I think this is after, no, I think it's before Re-Imagining, before the conference actually happened, and Bettenhausen was surprised. "You have men on this committee?" "Oh, yes, we have men. "Manley Olson and Randy Nelson." "Now, wait a minute. "I can understand, but names like Randy and Manley?" (laughs)

- I love that.

- And about, oh, probably the mid-90s, several years after Re-Imagining, I was doing a workshop at Ghost Ranch, and Bettenhausen was doing one, and we ended up doing worship, on the worship committee together for a Sunday morning worship. (laughing) She said, "Okay, I'll believe it, there is a Manley."

- There is a Manley, and she got to meet you. So I'm just, 'cause ya know, 10 years, that's a long commitment. What kept you on that coordinating council for 10 years?

- Two things, I guess. One was there was an awful lot that still had to be done. Because we had one conference just scratch the surface, and each of the subsequent conferences dealt with something. But the other was, all the attacks that were coming from the outside, and I thought I was in a position, given the fact that I was very much involved with the Presbyterian Church, that I could be part of telling the story to the insiders in the Presbyterian Church, that a lot of the people couldn't, because most of them, for whatever reason, were not insiders. They were for personal reasons, or professional whatever, they were, many of the people who were involved, were on the margins.

- Involved in Re-Imagining.

- Yeah, were involved in Re-Imagining, were on the margins of their own denominations, or any denomination, and I was an insider, so.

- A lot of them though were clergy. Wouldn't you say?

- Yeah, mm-hmm, yeah.

- Yeah.

- But they weren't necessarily people who were in the hierarchy kind of thing. They weren't very important. Mary Ann Lundy, who wasn't clergy was, but, a lot of them, most of the rest of 'em weren't. They did have a position, it was in the women's unit, kind of thing, which, was not the most important or prestigious kind of thing. And so a lot of them were involved in the women's part of it. They were involved in Presbyterian Women, or the whatever, the Methodist women's group, and there were a number of Catholic sisters and so forth, again, who had no real input into the hierarchy.

- Right.

- And so forth.

- Oh, that's fascinating, that makes sense. Let's talk about the backlash after the 1993 conference. I know you were aware of it certainly. Did it affect you directly?

- Yes and no, I mean. I caught some of it, but it didn't have any impact on me because I was, I wasn't working for the church. I was working in a Presbytery that is about as liberal as they come.

- In a Presbytery here in--

- Yeah, the Twin Cities area is certainly one of the most liberal, uh-huh. So, I mean, you were aware of it. The only, well, backlash. I guess, notoriety was probably more the word I would use. The Presbyterian Layman. Jack Adams, who was, who Parker, you've probably heard the name Parker, Parker Williamson was a long-time editor of it. When he retired, a fellow named Jack Adams took over, and Jack and I got along very well. We kind of bandied about at meetings and so forth. And every time Jack Adams wrote a story about things it was, Manley Olson, who is one of the ringleaders in the Re-Imagining group. I mean, that was sort of his tagline all the way through, so I got, I mean, the Layman once, on the pages of the Layman, I got called apostate, and people said, "How'd you manage that?" (laughs) So, I mean, I got, I got noted, but, no. It had no negative impact at all.

- As an, one of the, involved in the initial conference, did you have any idea that it would have this kind of backlash?

- No. I don't think anybody did. I think that the... Excuse me.

- Sure.

- The people who were... (blows nose) Well, the... I can remember when I had heard a little bit about that this conference was being organized, because I sat on, I was on the Presbytery women's committee, among other things. But, and, so, several of the people who were on that committee, Judy Strauss Clemons was one, and I don't remember who else was on there, were involved on that, on the original group. So we heard a little bit about it, but we were sort of fighting our own battles in the Presbytery in terms of, just getting women more involved in positions and everything else. So it was... Yeah, we heard about it, and then when I got to the, I remember the first meeting of the Ecumenical Decade Committee was in Atlanta, and, so, I had breakfast with Mary Ann Lundy and a couple other people, and, so, Mary Ann kind of outlined what it was. And it was very clear that this was envisioned as a very high-level academic conference of women theologians, to talk about their issues, and how those issues affected the Christian Church. And, so, as the, as the conference went along, and we started getting numbers, then we started looking at what other kinds of things might we do apart from the content, which was this group of 20 or so theologians talking about various issues. So we started adding various kinds of things, so, Pam Joy wrote a play, for example, and we set up a number of mission trips for people to go out and look at ministries, particularly involving women in the area and so forth, and there were discussion groups set up, and I think there were even, I don't know, I think there were even exercise groups, or things like, I mean, there were other kinds of things. But it was clearly viewed as that, and I think everybody was surprised. Nobody expected 2,000 people were going to show up for this. I think the hope was that, maybe 100, 150 kind of thing.

- Wow. Do you recall, was liturgy or worship always gonna be a part of it, or did that come later on?

- There was always gonna be worship as a part of it, and, I'm not quite sure how the liturgy part developed, as far as the detail of the program. You know, I couldn't say.

- Sure.

- Either Mary Kay or,

- Kathi Austin Mahle?

- Kathi would probably be better.

- Well, how do you account for the backlash, Manley? What do you think caused that?

- The Presbyterian Church, and the Methodist Church, had been, under major tension, over, a couple of issues. The main one was, the whole issue of GLBT. Except then, it was just sort of the gay issue, kind of thing. And so that had been, in the Presbyterian Church, had been a major flap at the 90 or 91 general assembly, and the Methodists were having their discussions of the same thing. So the conservatives were riled up about that. And I think because most of the women were also sympathetic to that, and, a fairly large number of the women theologians were lesbians, not necessarily out lesbians, but at least, I know a number that are or were. So I think it was, that's the enemy, in all of these kinds of things, and, part of it was also the, well, the other hang-over issue was abortion. So you had these issues of abortion, GLBT, and uppity women, and we had to do something about that.

- What was your reaction to the decision by the general assembly, after the conference?

- In one way, it was surprising, in another, it wasn't surprising. Because I... The Presbyterian Church merged in 1983, and the Southern Church was much more conservative. And just the nature of the way the reunion came about, the Southern Church ended up with a disproportionate amount of power in the new church, just because when there was competition for positions, the Southern Church was small and fairly united, and their candidates, they tended to have, their candidates tended to, they had a sort of, they were much more organized in terms of positions, so that the church was, had a very strong conservative wing, in the Presbyterian Church. I can't speak for the Methodists, but guessing they also had that. And it was also, there were also, a lot of people from the Northern Church, particularly from smaller rural areas, and so forth, who were also quite conservative, and there had been a big backlash in the Presbyterian Church over, I don't know if you've ever heard of the Angela Davis situation.

- Uh-uh.

- Angela Davis was a black activist, who was involved in... (sighs) I don't remember all the details, but, anyway. She and several other people were charged with murder, and the question was, was it racially

motivated or not, and Angela Davis, the Presbyterian Church voted to spend, I think it was \$10,000 for the Angela Davis defense fund. Well, and she was a devout communist as well, or at least a communist sympathizer. So you had all of this, you had the racial, the communist, all of these kinds of things, and the Lay Committee originally was formed as an anti-communist group. I mean, to fight the communism of the World Council of Churches.

- The Lay Committee, you mean--

- The Presbyterian Lay Committee.

- Okay.

- That published the Presbyterian Layman.

- Oh, I see.

- That was their start, was this anti-communist kind of thing. And so they just picked up on all of the conservative kinds of issues. So you had a group that, like some of the Republican candidates today, who jump on any conservative issue. And so, that--

- So you said it surprised you in one way, and it didn't surprise you in another.

- Well, it surprised me, I didn't think that the leadership would knuckle under to the degree that they did. That surprised, I was not as involved, at the national level. I mean, I was involved but it was, again, it was on the fringe kinds of things. It was in social justice and women's areas and so forth, and not in the central kinds of things. That came later. So I was... And so while I knew some of the people and so forth, as I say, I was both surprised and not surprised.

- Yeah, yeah. Was that similar to Mary Ann Lundy's resignation?

- Well, yeah, that was a part of it. That was a part of it. In fact, we were, we were at the assembly when that whole thing happened.

- You were, yeah.

- Well, we had not planned on going, but we started hearing all the reports of what was gonna happen, and so we went.

- Yeah. And do you remember what your reaction was, or the reaction of other people at that? What were the feelings?

- Well, again it was, depending on where you were, that the whole, women's part of it, and the women's unit

then was a pretty, a fairly extensive kind of thing in terms of numbers of programs and so forth. But the women, the justice kinds of things, were aghast that this kind of thing would happen. The arch conservatives were, well, this is just the first head that's gonna roll kind of thing. And, the guy who was her boss, who acquiesced to it, the next assembly, he was dumped.

- Really.

- Yeah. Or, no, I guess it was two years later. But, yeah, he had a term, and his term was not renewed, yeah.

- Was it because of this whole thing?

- Yeah, in fact, it was the next, because Mary Ann was dumped in the '94 assembly, and, was it '95 or '96, Jim Brown was dumped, yeah, so.

- And why was he?

- Partly because he hadn't been tough enough on women.

- Really, okay.

- Mary Ann had been the only one who'd been fired. All these other 20-some women, or I don't remember how many women from. The Presbyterian Church paid for people from the national office to attend, and none of them were fired.

- I see.

- Well, you just got rid of one, but you got all these other people still around.

- I see, okay, I didn't know about that piece of it. Talking about the Re-Imagining community, how would you define Re-Imagining?

- You ever read Animal Farm?

- Yes. You've got me intrigued. (laughs)

- Well, they finally end up at the very end, the sign on the barn that says, "All animals are equal, "but some are more equal than others."

- Yes.

- Re-Imagining basically, was to try to carry out the idea that all people are equal, period. And that was basically the gist of it. And because that wasn't the case, people involved in Re-Imagining were, I think for

the most part, motivated by not just bemoaning how bad things were, but what can we do to change it. So I think it was basically a group motivated to try to change the position and perception and influence of women in the church.

- Nice. You alluded a little bit to this, but I'm really fascinated with how and why the Re-Imagining community was formed. Could you say a little bit more about that? You said something about the celebration. You were supposed to have a celebration at the end.

- Well, I think there are, there are a couple of Re-Imagining communities. One of the things that happened after Re-Imagining, is that in a number of communities, little groups coalesced and kept meeting and doing things. I mean, the only one I really had anything to do with was Santa Fe. There was a group in Santa Fe, and because I was out in Ghost Ranch a lot, I was out there, but there were something like eight women from Santa Fe, who came to Re-Imagining, and when they went back, they were enthused, and they set up their own little community. So there were a number of these little Re-Imagining communities around, and there were a number of them in the Twin Cities, and there were a few that are still hanging on. So I mean I think you've got that kind of Re-Imagining community. But then I think you have the people who were part of the organization, which included two dozen people who were on the main committee, plus all of the other people who worked on various kinds of committees, and about the time, I suppose it was January, we had a, I don't remember if we had a meeting to plan the party, or if we just were gonna have a party, but anyway, I can remember talking to Sally Hill, and Sally was showing me just all the correspondence she was getting from people. I mean, negative letters from people that were reacting to this horrible event that happened, and letters from people who had been at Re-Imagining, who were passing on what the flack they had gotten, and everything else, and, so anyway the, we had, and the event was just for people who were involved in planning, so I don't know how many people were there, but, it was pretty clear that there was just so much misinformation being spewed out there, that we decided that we need to figure out some ways to respond to that at least. And so initially, it was to support Sally Hill, and Mary Ann Lundy and Jeanne Audrey Powers, who were the people who were getting the flack, as well as maybe a few others that we knew about. But, I don't know exactly at what point, we decided, one of the things that we started getting was, "Are you gonna do this again?" So we did. And so we started doing another series of conferences, and all of a sudden, started shifting the mechanism from well, let's see now, how do we wind down all this, and what do we do with all this stuff, to let's keep going, and so we did. And so we ended up opening an office in the church center, and,

- Going on for 10 years.

- Going on for 10 years.

- Mm-hmm. How would you say, how did Feminist theology affect the structure and functioning of the community?

- I think it was, tried to be as much as possible, a nonhierarchical organization. I mean, it was, obviously, there were people who were making decisions because of the necessity to do so, but it was certainly an

attempt to get as many people involved as possible. I think one of the failings was that it became, for the most part I think, a group of privileged white women. And a few white men.

- Right, yeah. Do you have any idea why that was? I mean, that was a concern along the way, but.

- Well, I think part of it was, part of it was (sighs) the structure in the Twin Cities of, there were not a lot of, at least, I don't think people were aware of, the number of, that there were a lot of people outside of the main, mainstream, denominations and so forth, who were interested in this. And so while there were some involvement, it was that those were the people who sort of gravitated to it kind of thing. And even though there had been, and at a national level, well, there were really wasn't a national, there was the local organization, which did conferences and drew in people from the outside, but the people who were invited to conferences and so forth didn't have a long, an ongoing relationship with, with the organization. I mean, the African American women for example, Katie Cannon did not have. Rita Brock had some, because for a while, she was in Hamlin, so she was here, but there wasn't an ongoing kind of thing, so it was pretty much an older, middle-class, white women's group.

- So the speakers were often women of color, but they didn't--

- Oh, the speakers were I mean the speakers, there was an attempt to try to get as broad a range as possible. And even from the, at the first one, there certainly was an array, and there was an attempt to get them down. And then there was a flap at the beginning one, as to whether or not there was enough diversity. And some of the women were pretty critical of that. Joan Martin and Delores Williams. Joan Martin particularly I think was pretty concerned about that kind of thing.

- Diversity among the speakers? Diversity among the participants?

- Well, just the whole nature of things. I think there were speakers but the, the issues seemed to be white women's issues.

- Yeah, mm-hm, mm-hm. Were there efforts during the 10 years to try to address those issues of race?

- (sighing) I, well, from the, The Re-Imagining committee basically was doing two things. It was doing annual conferences, or just about annual conferences. I don't know if we had 10 conferences, but there were probably at least eight I think.

- I think there were six more.

- Okay, yeah, okay.

- Yeah.

- So there were the original and six more. Okay, so there were seven, okay. But that was about, and so there

was a lot of work on those, and then there was the newsletter that was published. And beyond that, there wasn't a lot being done I don't think by a central group or anything.

- Right. Were there other challenges the organization faced during those 10 years?

- Well, it was just how to keep going. Finances, kind of thing. That was, and keep the interest up and so forth, and to some degree, the Presbyterians spun off their own group, which lasted a little bit longer.

- Voices of Sophia?

- Voices of Sophia.

- And you were involved in that as well.

- Yeah.

- Mm-hm, mm-hm.

- I did not make the original meeting. My wife still is upset that, they had this organizing meeting, I got invited, she didn't.

- Really. (laughing)

- I wasn't at the pre-meeting. I was actually in Detroit for the meeting with the World Council of Churches. But then we had a meeting and we had 50-some people, I think four or five men. We had, Jeanne Audrey Powers was there, and there was an Episcopal nun, and a couple of other people from outside things, but it was pretty much a Presbyterian kind of thing. And again that group basically, for the most part, did events at general assembly. And had a breakfast meeting and a booth, and that kind of thing.

- Did they choose the name Sophia because of Re-Imagining?

- Oh, sure, yeah.

- Mm-hm, mm-hm, mm-hm. Neat. Talking about the significance of Re-Imagining, what aspects of Re-Imagining were most significant to you and why?

- At the time, I suspect it was just being sort of overwhelmed by how many extremely talented women there were doing theology. I mean, I was a novice to the area. I know a heck of a lot more about it now than I did then. I was just amazed by who was out there and how talented they were, and, how strong they were in terms of what they were doing.

- And at that time, were you mostly introduced to them through the conferences?

- Yeah, most of them, I didn't, I didn't really know very many of them from other kinds of things until later. I later got to know a number of them. Beverly Harrison and Carter Heyward for example, I got to know them in North Carolina and so forth. And they had a little house church, and I've been there a couple of times, and so forth, before Beverly died. And so I got to know some of the others as well in various other kinds of capacities, but at the time, I really didn't know a lot of them and so forth. So I think that was sort of my initial reaction. What was the question?

- How was it significant to you and why?

- Well, I think the, the other is that I could see cases where it was seemingly making a difference in some parts of the church. People were raising these kinds of questions and so forth. One place where it was happening, I think it happened for a while, was in Presbyterian Women. Presbyterian Women was the women's group, and it was a combination of, somebody said, pastor's wives and sewing circles, and that kind of thing, and, there were some agitators in the group, but for the most part, they were, they were content to do things from the back, from the back of the room kind of thing. And one of the things that I think Re-Imagining did was to energize that group to start getting, taking more stands on issues and so forth.

- Is that because some of them attended Re-Imagining?

- Some of them attended, and they saw other women out there doing things. I think a lot of the women who were involved, and speakers, probably had very little to do with Presbyterian Women. They were the academics, they weren't... And so I think it, I don't know that that lasted terribly long, but I think it brought women together from a variety of perspectives in the church.

- And what kinds of things did Presbyterian Women at that point get involved with?

- Their conferences, I think had more sessions that dealt with issues. The Presbyterian Women was, up until that point I think their issue was mission, broadly defined, whether it was overseas mission or a local mission and so forth. And it seemed to me that there was a lot more emphasis in discussions about women's issues and getting women involved in all levels of the church.

- Very interesting. How did your involvement in Re-Imagining change your perspective on Feminist theology and/or the church?

- Well, as far as Feminist theology, I learned a heck of a lot more about it.

- Yes. (laughs)

- That's the quick and easy answer, kind of thing. I was involved in these kinds of discussions that, you had to know something about it to be involved. But as far as the church, when I got involved in the church, it was

pretty obvious that the Presbyterian Church was pretty divided on social issues. Social justice, broadly defined, racial issues, ordination issues, abortion. And I think one of the things that being involved in Re-Imagining made me aware as to how divided the church really was. Both in terms of the Presbyterian Church and the Christian community as a whole. And I started, attending events where there are people there from other churches and so forth, and you start talking to people who come from different perspectives, and you just understand the depth of that, of those differences that exist on so many kinds of issues as to what is the church and what is... Well, I guess it's the old focus on is the prime concern the salvation of the individual's soul, or is the emphasis on justice? And it seems to me that on that issue, is where an awful lot of the divisions exist, and I'm sure teaching at a Catholic institution, you get hit with another set of issues relating to that.

- Mm-hm, mm-hm, mm-hm.

- And one of the side kinds of things is that, I got involved in the Catholic Church from... Bit of history. I grew up in a community where we joked about the one minority family in our school was the one Catholic family, so I mean it was, it was Scandinavian, Lutherans, and New England Congregationalist and Methodists kind of thing. Now, there was a primarily German community 10 miles away that had a Catholic grade school, and a Catholic church, but we didn't have any, so I didn't really know anything about Catholicism or anything like that, or Catholics (laughs) kind of thing, as my Swedish neighbor used to talk about. When I got to the university and I ended up dealing with accreditation of schools, I mean, I was on a first-name basis with Roach and Jim Habiger and Ray Lucker. So I got involved with a lot of those folks. Terry Murphy, who was St. Thomas. Colman Barry at St. Johns. So I worked with those people, but knew them as individuals, not as necessarily church officials kind of thing. So I got to know quite a bit about that, and as I got involved in writing my dissertation on Church and State Relations, there's a very strong Catholic presence in that whole discussion. And so I got into some very interesting discussions with some of the, well, at that time, there was an organization called Citizens for Educational Freedom, which was essentially a group that was advocating for public aid to private schools. And so I got involved, And most of the leadership were Catholic. There were a few Missouri Synod, but not a lot, most of them were Catholic. In fact, yeah, I think, no, I was gonna say the one Lutheran, but I think he was Wisconsin Synod, kind of thing. So I got to know something about them and their perspective and so forth. So I basically read America and Commonweal on a regular basis, and have National Catholic Reporter on my computer.

- Very Ecumenical Presbyterian. (laughs) Would you say, are there certain specific contributions you think Re-Imagining made to Christian theology and/or liturgy?

- Oh, I think it has opened up liturgy a lot. I think just the, and hymnody. And those aren't necessarily divisible, but I think that, created a lot of diversity in terms of the images that we use in liturgy and--

- Do you think that made it into the individual congregations, into churches?

- Only to the degree that there was a catalyst, either a pastor or some people on a worship committee that did it. And I mean, I attended a church that was liberal Presbyterian. I mean, we had 10 people at Re-

Imagining. But yet when one of the pastors talked about praying to our father and our mother, a few people got very, very incensed about it.

- What do you think that's about?

- I think for a lot of people, religion is an anchor. And, it's a central kind of thing, and if you start chipping away at that central set up of beliefs and so forth, what else is there we can believe in? And I mean, these were not people who were biblical literalist or anything like that, but they just, there are certain things that... And I used to have a lot of arguments with some fairly close friends who were, he was a self-proclaimed Kentucky redneck. And we used go around and around on it kind of thing.

- And yet you were still friends.

- We managed to, you know. There were a lot of other things I didn't like about him, but he was an interesting guy and you know, and his wife were friends and everything.

- Yeah, neat. Well, to end with, we still have a few minutes if that's okay.

- Sure, we got plenty of time as far as I'm concerned.

- Good, well, this is very fruitful and helpful. Looking toward the future, what do you think is the greatest legacy of the Re-Imagining community?

- The term Re-Imagining. (laughs)

- Yeah, oh, interesting, yeah.

- Well, you don't have to go very far to see it, and I don't know whether or not that term was used before the 1990s or not, but everybody is re-imagining. The Catholics are re-imagining, the Lutherans are re-imagining, the car dealers are re-imagining. (laughs) So that was sort of a flippant kind of response, but I think it did put the word out there. From what I gather, it has made a difference in terms of, at least in the Presbyterians, and probably in some other denominations, has made some difference in terms of seminary curriculum, at least it seems to be out there more than there are people talking about it. Now, it's not new. I can remember at the height of Re-Imagining, Tom Gillespie, who was the president of Princeton, and Tom was a pretty conservative guy, and I know Tom pretty well, Tom said once, in the debate about Re-Imagining he said, "There isn't a single idea that was raised with Re-Imagining "that hasn't been espoused in some class "at Princeton in the last five years." Tom was much more, Tom's issue was much more ordination. He was totally and completely opposed to GLBT ordination. But as far as the women's issue... I get the sense that if you look at the mainline denominations that there is much more of an equality, it isn't equality yet, but at least things are moving in terms of women's perspectives. And I think there are a lot more women faculty in seminaries. As far as, but on the other hand, I think that to some degree, we're losing ground with the younger generation. I'm not sure how many, and I think that's one of the key things that I think is so

important about what we're doing now, is to just get the generation who grew up that didn't know Joseph.

- Before I move on to that, and I think that's really important, in terms of worship, I think part of the purpose of Re-Imagining was to bring Feminist theology to churches, to the pews. What is your perspective on inclusive or expansive language, in terms of Feminist theology and worship in mainline churches, maybe specifically Presbyterian church? Where do you think it is today?

- Speaking of the Presbyterians, it's clearly there in terms of the official prescribed kind of situation. And I think it shows up a lot in local churches and so forth, particularly if there has been a woman pastor, and just the growth in terms of number of women pastors. I think it's there. It's still, for those people who aren't really sure that that's a going thing, it's, well, we'll do it kind of thing, grudgingly. We say a lot of things we don't necessarily believe.

- Just to clarify something. When you say it's prescribed, how is it prescribed?

- If you look at the Presbyterian Church at a national level and at the Presbytery level, at policies about use of inclusive language, and the question is how far it goes. And it's both inclusive language for people, and expansive language for God.

- Yeah, right.

- I think there is probably more in terms of the inclusive language for people, than there is expansive language for God.

- Good. I wanna get back to what you were talking about today. I mean, a minute ago about Re-Imagining today. You were talking about younger people. What does Re-Imagining mean today? What needs to happen now?

- Again, I'm not as up on this, but as I listen to people who are involved in seminaries, and so forth, it sounds like Feminism is sort of accepted as, well, something that's there, but, nobody's really paying much attention to it.

- So it's this generation, that it needs to be passed on?

- Yeah, it needs to be passed on. I was on a committee for the Presbyterian Church that was a national fundraising kind of thing, and one of the things we were looking at, in terms of a target population, were churches over a certain size. And I don't remember how many we had on the list. I think it was something like 150 churches. I think three of them had women as the senior pastor.

- Wow.

- I think those are the kinds of things that have not yet come to pass. It's the kind of thing that I think people

believe is possible, but, haven't necessarily seen it with their own eyes. I don't know if there are a lot of young women in seminary who's goal is to be the pastor of a 3,000-member church.

- That's good. You know, we're working on a Re-Imagining website. Do you have any ideas about what you think should be included, or who would benefit and why? Any thoughts about that?

- I think the big thing about websites is that, the audience that you end up with is often not the intended audience. That you end up with people just browsing websites and finding things.

- Good point.

- So I think it's... You have to somehow steer between having it so simple that it insults people, versus having it get bogged down in jargon, and, something people don't understand what you're talking about.

- That's a good point. It's a broad audience, isn't it?

- It's a broad audience, and people end up visiting websites, probably, an awful lot of 'em just are either sheer accident or they're kind of searching for something in a vague way and they hit on something. I think that certainly the history of what has happened and how it's connected to where things are now, I think it would be very useful to have people who have, women who have made it as, in churches, either as professors or as pastors, to just talk with them and, what impact did they make, and because of Feminism and these kinds of things, or did they make it sort of in spite of? I think of women that I know who are in key positions. Most of them are strongly Feminist, but it's not necessarily a point of emphasis with them.

- Is that what you mean by in spite of Feminism? What does that mean?

- Yeah, yeah. That they make it because they were good strong intelligent people who got through, figured out how to work the system and so forth.

- So how much did their Feminism actually influence?

- Yeah, yeah, I mean, I think that any time you get an organization that feels pressure to provide diversity, and a lot of organizations are being pressured to become more diverse. And whether there's a commitment to it or not, we've at least got to have the visible symbols of diversity. I think part of the problem in Minneapolis public schools, is they were looking for a particular, superintendent with particular characteristics, and didn't look very much further than that. And I have seen some horrendous hires of people who were hired because they were women or minorities or whatever the case was. People looked on them with one characteristic. That one maybe wasn't enough to overcome all sorts of other issues. Just like the Catholic Church has found out, just because somebody's male doesn't mean that they don't have a bunch of other flaws.

- Is there anything we haven't discussed, that you would like to mention?

- Oh, I don't know, I've wandered all over the place-- (laughs)

- Well, it's been very productive wandering. It's been very thoughtful answers, and you provided really useful context for a lot of this. Thank you so much, Manley.

- Oh, well, thank you.

- I really appreciate it.

- And thank you so much for doing all this.

- Oh, I'm--