

“Full Clergy Rights for Women: Two Dramas”

The Methodist Church General Conference ~ Friday, May 4, 1956

Two Dramatic Presentations

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Advantages to using this dramatic presentation in a local church, district, annual conference, seminary class, or other church setting:

- **IT’S TIMELY** ~ 2006 is the 50th Anniversary for Full Clergy Rights for Women
- **IT’S INTERESTING** ~ It’s fascinating to see how the debate unfolds
- **IT’S EASY** ~ There is very little prep time or rehearsal time required. All you need to do is make enough copies of the drama for the number of actors you will have involved
- **IT’S EDUCATIONAL** ~ Provides an opportunity for United Methodists to understand more about how The General Conference process works
- **IT’S IMPORTANT** ~ See how the General Conference took a bold progressive position guaranteeing women full clergy rights, fully equal to the rights of available to men!

Introduction:

The year 2006AD marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Methodist General Conference’s decision to grant full Clergy Rights to Women. The Methodist Church was one of the first denominations to embrace this position. This play offers an opportunity for a United Methodist Women’s group, a United Methodist Youth Fellowship or even an Annual Conference itself to recognize the milestone and celebrate. It will also offer a chance to relive history and reflect on the fascinating debate that led to this bold move by General Conference in 1956.

There are two dramas available.

A) ***“A Story to Tell Our Grandchildren”*** – fictional overview (see page 2)

B) ***“It’s a Matter of Discrimination”*** – an abbreviated version of the actual 1956 General Conference floor debate on this issue (see page 9).

Either drama (or both) could be used as an educational tool to celebrate Full Clergy Rights for Women. These dramas are also available in a “gender reversed” version so the debate concerns “Full Clergy Rights for Men.”

Additional Resources:

The second drama presents the debate itself. This debate is an edited version of the actual dialogue taken from the *Minutes of the 1956 General Conference*. An exact rendering of the 1956 debate minutes is offered online by *The General Commission of Archives and History of The United Methodist Church*. See ~ <http://www.gcah.org/1956%20women.htm>

Worship resources celebrating the Fiftieth Anniversary of Full Clergy Rights for Women are offered by The General Board of Discipleship at: http://www.gbod.org/worship/default.asp?loc_id=9,1115&act=nav_loc

Additional Resources can be found at The General Commission on the Status and Role of Women at <http://www.gcsrw.org/newsarchives/2003/stories06.htm>

Also check out the Clergy Women site hosted by General Board of Higher Education and Ministry at <http://www.gbhem.org/clergywomen/>

Order of Program

Greeting and Opening Prayer

Hymn “And Are We Yet Alive” #553

Professor: Today we are going to be considering the debate from the 1956 Methodist Church General Conference in which the church debated and adopted a new policy granting full clergy rights for women. There will be two parts. First there is a short play about three people who meet each other in a hotel lobby before the start of The General Conference and have a discussion about the pros and cons of full clergy rights for women. This play will be followed by another drama taken from the actual floor debate recorded in the 1956 General Conference minutes.

Drama #1 ~ A Story to Tell Our Grandchildren

Scene – Hotel Lobby. Couches (or chairs). McHenry and Bowers are seated. They are approached by Georgia Harkness carrying a suit case.

Characters:

General Conference Delegate ~ Mrs. Henry McHenry

Friend of Delegate ~ Dr. Franklin Bowers

Theologian ~ Dr. Georgia Harkness, Professor of Religion at Pacific School of Religion,
65 years old

A Story to Tell Our Grandchildren

Harkness: Pardon me, is this chair saved?

McHenry: No. But we’re praying for it.

Harkness: Well let me join your prayer meeting. My feet are killing me.

Bowers: It is a crowd of people and it looks like everyone is wanting to register at the same time. We’re just sitting here waiting for the rush to pass.

(Pause) Harkness looks around the room. Harkness smiles at Bowers and McHenry. McHenry looks inquisitively at Harkness.

McHenry: Excuse me. You look a great deal like the professor of theology, Dr. Georgia Harkness of Pacific School of Religion in San Francisco.

Harkness: Guilty as charge. I am Georgia Harkness.

McHenry: It’s a pleasure to meet you. I’ve heard so much about you. I am Mrs. Henry McHenry but my friends just call me Mrs. McHenry. This is my cousin, Dr. Franklin Bowers of Minnesota Wesleyan

College.

Harkness: A pleasure to meet you both. So Franklin, what's your specialty at MWC.

Bowers: Political Science.

Harkness: What a fascinating field! So are you here to collect some political science case studies from the conference deliberations?

Bowers: (laughs) It would be interesting. No. Just here for the day. It gave me a chance to visit with Mrs. McHenry. We haven't seen each other in several years.

McHenry: This is my first General Conference. I'm so excited to be part of this. It is an amazing thing to see all these delegates gathered together from all corners of the world.

Harkness: I know what you mean. It never gets old to me. I love it.

McHenry: I do have to say that I am most concerned about this whole Full Clergy Rights for Women question. Most of the people I talk to just don't believe the church is ready to go down that road.

Harkness: Of course you may know that I can't agree with you on that one. It seems to me that this is the year 1956. It's not the dark ages. Women today are working as doctors, in politics, as scientists, in a whole host of professions. I have to believe that God can use women as clergy as well.

McHenry: Well I just don't see it that way. Most of the country is not like the folk out in California.

Harkness: That may be true and there a lot of people in California that are proud of that fact. You need to know, though, that I spent most of my life in the American heartland. I know full well that this will be a challenge for a number of our members.

Bowers: Well personally, I don't think the church should discriminate against anybody. On the other hand, I do wonder if The Conference is ready for it. I just don't know. It is so dominated by the men. I read that there are 735 delegates in attendance and only 80 of them are women. The women represent a miniscule 11% of the whole.

Harkness: You have really done your home work.

Bowers: I do love to read. Read all the time.

Harkness: There are, indeed, many more male delegates than women but I've talked to so many of the men who believe it is time to move forward on this. I also know that there were a lot of Methodist Women who have been working tirelessly on this issue, ever since last General Conference. I'd have to say I'm guardedly optimistic that this is the year Full Clergy Rights for Women is going to pass.

McHenry: Well before it does, I think we need to think hard about what the Bible says about the place of women in the family and society. Does the Bible not say in 1 Timothy 2:12 that women are to be silent in church and not be appointed to positions where they teach or have authority over men because they were created second and the men were created first.

Harkness: Now you know I can't go along with that one. I have a number of men in my classes at Pacific and, for the most part, I believe we get along just fine.

McHenry: Well just because they are doing it doesn't make it right.

Harkness: Ouch!

McHenry: And what do you do with Ephesians 5:22. Doesn't it say that women are to "submit themselves to their husbands as to the Lord".

Harkness: Sounds like you've been doing your homework as well.

McHenry: I have been talking to several people about this question. My pastor has helped me too. He showed me what the Bible says about this.

I just happen to believe that the Bible is right about this issue, that the Bible intends for women to be submissive and for men to take the lead. It's just like dancing, not that I would ever actually go dancing. I personally don't believe in dancing. Never have. Never will.

Harkness: (under her breath) That doesn't surprise me. (louder) Yes. It's true. You can find that sentence in the Bible. There are some passages which I believe reflect the culture of the day. Paul was just doing the best he could with the knowledge he had at that time. I think we also need to look at the rest of the passage you quoted. Paul, in this same section, calls on all believers, including the men, to submit themselves to one another. I think this could better be understood as a mutual, respectful, honoring of one another, not necessarily a hierarchy.

McHenry: Well maybe so, but I think that's stretching it a bit. He specifically says for the women to submit.

Harkness: Mrs. McHenry, I want you to know that I do take the Bible seriously but I do not believe that God recited every sentence word for word. The writers were writing within a cultural context in which women were oppressed and that perspective often comes through in their writing. That is the way I understand these sayings. However, there are a host of other passages that affirm the full place of women in the church. Just look at the way Jesus welcomed and included women among his followers. Think about the way he welcomed Mary of Bethany into the group of learners and defended this role for her. This was unheard of, having women learn side by side with men.

McHenry: Well it sounds to me like you just go through the Bible and give each passage a letter grade – "A" passages are worth keeping and "F" passages get scratched out. Is this really fair.

Harkness: No. That is not what I do. I carefully consider every passage. Try to understand it. But I still think we are being most true to the Bible's message when we look at scripture as a whole. What is its central message. I also think as we work our way through the text we see an evolving understanding of God. What I'm saying is I believe they understood more about God as they went along through history; their understanding grew with time. Because of this I believe we need to value the message of the gospels, the early church's record of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, even more than the letters of Paul or the Old Testament. The gospels are the place in the Bible where we receive the best picture of how the early church understood the teachings and ministry of Jesus.

McHenry: So the Gospels get an A. Paul gets a C. Old Testament gets an F.

Harkness: That is not the way I do it. But wouldn't you agree, if you read through the whole Bible, that there are some very troubling passages. Even Jesus didn't take all of these passages as absolute truth. Several times in the Sermon on the Mount he says: "You've heard it said, but I say to you" and then he goes on to give new meaning to old scripture teachings.

McHenry: Well Jesus can do that. But I don't think we need to do that. We need to just take it as it is.

Harkness: The problem is that you can find passages that are oppressive to women and others that exalt women. How do we know which one God intends for us to follow. If you point only to the passages that are oppressive to women what do you do with the many other passages that make it crystal clear that the gospel message is intended to include everyone; that all of God's people are called to use their gifts, whoever they are, to glorify God and proclaim the gospel. And what do you say about a passage like Acts 2 that says "In those days your sons and your daughters will prophesy" – How do you argue with that one. 'Prophecy' is basically speaking the message of God to God's people.

Bowers: Sounds like preaching to me. (McHenry glares at her cousin)

Harkness: The Bible also says that "in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, slave nor free." I think this is Paul at his best, a passage where he proclaims the all encompassing, all inclusive call and invitation of God. No one is left out. All are called. All human distinctions are set aside.

McHenry: So parts of Paul grade better than other parts. Some A passages. Some F's.

Harkness: Now getting back to the Conference's decision; I just don't believe most the delegates here hold a narrow view of the role of women. They have seen the leadership abilities of women. They have seen it first hand. A number of women are already serving as lay pastors and doing a great job.

McHenry: Well just because women are doing it doesn't make it right.

Harkness: I, on the other hand, believe that every single day women are being called by God to serve in the church, even as pastors. The problem of women clergy is that it's a new thing. The newness scares people. People just aren't used to seeing a woman in the pulpit.

McHenry: I'll say. I know I'm not. And I'd say it's more than the newness of it. It's unnatural. A woman in the pulpit is about as natural as the pastor's wife wearing pants in public. It's just not meant to be done.

Harkness: But throughout history women have been prominent leaders in the church. It's just not talked about. Susannah Wesley led Bible studies in her home and there were more coming to her Bible study than were attending the local church.

McHenry: I bet her husband loved that. Wasn't he the pastor there?

Harkness: At first he didn't know. Samuel was the minister assigned to the church but he was away in London during this time. He had another pastor covering for him. While he was away Susannah opened her Bible study to family friends. They told others and soon what started out as a small family Bible study had become a community event.

McHenry: I'm not saying women can't lead. They lead women's circle. Been doing it for years. They teach in Sunday School. Some lead choirs. I think the deaconess program is a great place for women to serve. But we're talking about them leading a whole church. I just can't imagine it.

Bowers: Whether it's right or wrong, I still have very strong doubts that the church is ready to go down this road.

McHenry: And I can tell you that I know for a fact the local churches are definitely not ready for this. If we pass this thing there be a split in the church. People are going to leave.

Harkness: Some may indeed leave the church and it hurts me to say that. But I still think most the delegates are ready to address this issue. I think most of the delegates don't want to discriminate against the women any longer.

McHenry: I hate to say I like to discriminate. Certainly I don't believe in any form of discrimination. You may not believe it but I do feel a bit conflicted on this issue.

Harkness: Conflicted! Whoa! This is a surprise.

McHenry: Actually I do. I have two daughters; I don't know what the future will hold for them. One day one of them might end up being a pastor. But heaven help them if they do, there are a lot people, local church members, just waiting to make life rough for them. I can think of several in my home church right now. (pause)

And frankly these changes scare me. Where will we end up. I like things the way they are now.

Harkness: But just because things are the way they are now, doesn't make them right.

McHenry: Now I think I've heard that argument before somewhere.

Harkness: OK. I hear you.

I think this has been a long time coming. The way I see it, it's like the Church is on a pilgrimage and it is constantly faced with difficult choices. Most of the time we choose to move forward. Not all the time. Sometimes we just tread water. Sometimes we even choose to turn back. On the issue of slavery, for example, we moved forward for a while, and then backward.

On the issue of lay participation in General Conference we moved forward in the 1880's by allowing lay people to become delegates along with the clergy. That was a big step. But do you remember what happened next? Several of the Annual Conferences had the nerve to elect laywomen to attend General Conference. In 1888 five were elected as official delegates. One of these was the leading voice in the Women's Christian Temperance Union, Frances Willard.

McHenry: I remember hearing about her from my Grandmother.

Bowers: Granny B was a very faithful temperance woman. Very committed. Never touched a drop of alcohol.

McHenry: But I remember she said Miss Willard, at times, rubbed people the wrong way. She was

much too open in her approach, willing to work with most anyone, even the Negros. This was 1888 after all. Lots of people weren't ready for that. She also worked side by side with the Unitarians just like she worked with Baptists and Presbyterians, and the Episcopalians. You know all the normal Christians. That's what Granny B said

Harkness: She was, indeed, a little too much on the liberal side of things for some people's taste. But did you know that she also wrote a book promoting the idea of women clergy; way back in 1888 she wrote a book called "Woman in the Pulpit." This issue been debated for a long, long time.

McHenry: See that proves it. Women have been harping on this issue far too long. It's not a new thing, it's an old debate and its time we move on to something else, something more constructive.

Harkness: But isn't that what they told the people working to end slavery? Isn't that what they told women when they were trying to gain the right to vote? Didn't people say: "Stop being so divisive. Stop causing division in the church."

Bowers: So what happened when Miss Willard showed up at General Conference? Did they tar and feather her?

Harkness: Not quite but they did refuse to seat her. They refused to seat any of the women.

Bowers: Can they do that?

Harkness: Well they did it that year. And do you know what rationale they used for their ruling? The Bishops led the way in saying that the word "laymen" should not be presumed to include the women. In fact, it should be presumed that it does not include women unless women are specifically mentioned. Basically, The Conference ruled that if the writers had intended that women be included, they would have said 'laypeople' or "lay delegates" can be elected. Not 'laymen.'"

Bowers: That's funny because nowadays when you hear the word "men" used in a similar context you assume it includes both men and women.

Harkness: One would think that. But that's not the way the conference interpreted it. They took it very literally and used the word 'laywomen' to exclude Frances Willard and the other women.

Bowers: So maybe the best thing to do is to approach this thing gradually.

McHenry: Yes gradually. I like that. The slower the better. First, just let women serve as Christian educators, things like that, not full pastors. Why do we have to jump all the way over to Full Clergy Rights for Women this year?

Harkness: I disagree.

McHenry: Surprise. Surprise.

Harkness: I know. I know. Maybe I'm getting predictable. But I don't think we should think small. We need to think big. We need to ask for full clergy rights for all women, full voting rights, full participation, just like the men have. And the Church needs to move forward, boldly proclaiming to the world that we as Methodists believe women are fully equal members in God's church. And we need to

unapologetically say that we believe, with God's help, women are able to do any job, carry out any role, that any man is capable of doing.

Bowers: Amen. Sister! Now I believe you've started preaching.

Harkness: Well, thank you Dr. Bowers.

Bowers: I think you are right, one day this is definitely going to pass, one day women will have equal rights. My problem is the practicality of the thing. I just don't see this working at the local church level. From a practical standpoint, maybe we should work on Full Clergy Rights for Women incrementally; take it a step at a time.

McHenry: Yes. Incrementally. I like that. Slower the better.

Harkness: But an incremental movement toward full clergy rights for women would be a very poor witness for the Church. It will say to the world: 'Yes, Methodists believe women are being discriminated against. Yes, they are being treated unfairly. So now we are going to discriminate against them a little bit less than we did before.' Is this a just solution? The current discipline is simply not fair to women. We need to change it to make it fair.

Bowers: I guess I just don't believe The Conference will go for it? I just don't think the men of The Conference will support this. Many of them are pastors and it is not in their self interest. Bottom line!

Harkness: I know the progressive men are going to have to step up. It can't come just from the women. 80 women can not win over 660 men unless they can win over a good number of those 660 men. Win them over to their side.

McHenry: Dr. Harkness, I will have to give you this. You certainly can turn a phrase.

Harkness: Why thank you, Mrs. McHenry. That's the nicest thing anyone's said to me today.

McHenry: I know it's the nicest thing I've said to you.

Harkness: So this is what I think. I'm going to make a prediction of the future.

Bowers: Whoa, not only preacher. A prophet as well!

Harkness: Well I do my best. My prediction is that one day, 50 years from now people may be reading about the work of the Methodist Conference meeting in Minneapolis, Minnesota in the year 1956. They will read the statements made by all the various speakers about Full Clergy Rights for Women. They will read the names of those speakers who stood up for the Full Clergy Rights for Women and the names of those who did not; those who challenged the church to move boldly into the future and those who argued against it; those who stood for progress and equal rights and those who stood against it.

McHenry: And they are going to say. Thank God the majority of those delegates put their foot down and saved Methodism from Dr. Harkness and raving liberals.

Harkness: That's not where I was headed with this speech.

McHenry: OK. Continue the sermon.

Harkness: I just hope and pray that this Conference of Methodists will choose to move the church forward. I hope that we don't come to this Red Sea that is lying before us, look over the edge into the surging current, and then turn back in fear. This is exactly where I see us as the Church right now. It is like we are standing at the edge of the Red Sea, wondering where we go from here. What if Moses and the people had turned back instead of stepping forward? The waters never would have parted. The story of the great Exodus never would have been told. There would have been no story to tell. I hope 50 years from now we will have a story to tell; a story to tell to our grandchildren and our great grandchildren; that in 1956 the people of The Methodist Church made history, and the church has never been the same since.

McHenry: Yea. Yea. I hear what you're saying. I guess we'll just have to wait and see if The Conference will once more maintain its senses or if it goes and does something totally off the wall. Time will tell.

Bowers and McHenry: Great to visit with you.

Harkness: and with you as well. God bless you both.

Professor: We all know the rest of the story. Indeed the General Conference went on to approve Full Clergy Rights for Women in 1956 by a vote of 389 in support and 297 opposed. Today about one in five United Methodist Clergy are women (9400 of 46.000 UM Clergy). Fifteen women are now serving United Methodist Bishops. Still, many of local United Methodist churches continue to insist that they are "not yet ready" for a female clergy. We, as a Church, have made great strides. We have a long way yet to go.

Optional Hymn – O God, Our Help in Ages Past #117

Drama #2 - “It’s A Question of Discrimination: 1956 General Conference Debates Full Clergy Rights for Women”

This second drama presents a slightly altered rendering of the debate itself. This debate is abbreviated version of the actual dialogue taken from the Minutes of the 1956 General Conference.

LIST OF CHARACTERS:

- 1) Professor ~ pages 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23 ~ a seminary professor teaching Methodist polity
- 2) All Bishops can be played by same actor: (every page of drama) Bishop Charles D. White. Bishop Willis King
- 3) Rev. James S. Chubb ~ pages 11, 15, 20, 21, 25 (Nebraska-SC) Majority Report ~ Chair of the Standing Committee
- 4) Rev. Marvin Stuart ~ page 11 (California-Nevada - W)
- 5) Rev. J. Dewey Muir ~ pages 11, 12, 13, 18, 20, 22 (Illinois – NC) Minority Report
- 6) Leonard Slutz ~ pages 13, 14, 24 ~ Attorney (Ohio – NC)
- 7) Secunder –pages 14, 16, 17, 21, 21, 22, 23, 23, 24 (someone in attendance to second all motions)
- 8) Rev. Allen B. Rice ~ page 14 (Northwest Indiana –NC)
- 9) Rev. Claude Garrison ~ page 14 (Ohio – NC)
- 10) Rev. Robert H. Duncan ~ page 14 (Holston – SC)
- 11) Rev. Henry Lyle Lambdin ~ page 15 (Newark – SE)
- 12) Ernest W. Peterson ~ pages 15, 23, 24 (Oregon –W) Journalist
- 13) Rev. C. Anderson Davis ~ page 16 (East Tennessee – C) African American Pastor in Bluefield, WV
- 14) Rev. Everett W. Palmer ~ page 16 (Southern California-Arizona – W)
- 15) Rev. Joe E. Bowers ~ page 16 (Oklahoma – SC)
- 16) Mr. Ashoke B. Singh ~ page 17 (Bengal – OS) Principal, Collins Institute
- 17) Rev. Lynn J. Radcliff ~ page 17 (Ohio – NC)
- 18) Mrs. Henry D. Ebner ~ page 18 (New Jersey – NE)
- 19) Mrs. Edwin S. Anderson ~ page 19 (New England – NE)
- 20) Miss Mary Lou Barnwell ~ page 20 ~ General Secretary of the Commission on Deaconess Work of the Woman’s Division of Christian Service of the General Board of Missions of The United Methodist Church (received 1956 General Conference award for longest title. Just joking.)
- 21) Rev. Adlai C. Holler ~ page 21, 24 (South Carolina – SE)
- 22) Rev. Marvin L. Boyd ~ page 22 (Northwest Texas – SC)
- 23) Rev. William H. Alderson ~ page 23 (New York East – NE)
- 24) Rev. Zach T. Johnson ~ page 23 (Kentucky – SE)
- 25) Rev. Russell E. Clay ~ page 24 (Southern California- Arizona – W)

It's A Question of Discrimination:
A Dramatic Debate on "Full Clergy Rights for Women"
General Conference 1956 - Minneapolis, Minnesota

Professor: Friends. Great to see you all made it. I'm very excited about today's lesson. Today we are going to be reenacting an important debate that happened at General Conference in 1956. It was there that they decided to change the United Methodist Book of Discipline to grant to women full clergy rights; clergy rights equal to those available to men. I am going to need a number of volunteers to play the particular parts. All it will involve is reading the lines for the character that has been highlighted on your copy. (Distribute copies)

Now in the first section I want you to watch for several things. Listen for the way the Standing Committee on Ministry tries to scale back the idea of full clergy rights for women so that it will only apply to a select number of women. Who are the women who will be accepted into full membership? Think about why the committee would want to try to seek a compromise position on this issue.

Friday Morning Session, May, 5, 1956

OPENING OF SESSION – Bishop Costen J. Harrell

"I call this session to order. Everyone please take your seats. Friends we are considering reports from Standing Committee on Ministry. The reports deal with suggested changes to our Discipline which will address the issue of "Full Clergy Rights for Women." There will be a Majority Report followed by a Minority Report. I now call upon the Rev. Dr. James S. Chubb to present the majority report.

MAJORITY REPORT – Presented by James S. Chubb and Marvin Stuart

Bishop, members of The Conference, my name is James S. Chubb, ministerial delegate from Nebraska Conference and chair of the Chair of the Standing Committee on Ministry. The Committee on Ministry recommends that paragraph 313 be changed so that it reads as follows:

"Women are included in **all** provisions except that **only unmarried women and widowers may apply** as candidates to the traveling ministry **or continue therein.**"

I want all of the Conference to know that this amendment was approved by our committee by unanimous consent.

Now I'll ask Marvin Stuart to come forward with a statement on our Majority Report

MARVIN STUART

"Mr. Chairman, Members of the Conference. Marvin Stuart, a ministerial Delegate from California-Nevada Conference. You may know, we received more than 2000 petitions on the subject Full Clergy Rights for Women. Each of these memorials was considered by our committee.

We spent a number of hours working together on this question. We recognized that we were up against two decisions; one is the matter of Full Clergy Rights For Women a matter of principle? I think that most, if not all of us, were persuaded that in principle we could not object to it.

The other question concerned the difficulties, the practical difficulties, in the way this is going to be implemented at the local church level?

We turned to our District Superintendents. They presented very carefully, very persuasively some

of the problems, the practical problems, involved, in appointing female pastors to local congregations. So it seemed to us that we were moving toward a proposal which would, we realize, still be discrimination, would still be a compromise, but nevertheless which might be the most effective step which could be taken at this time.

After hours of consideration, a member of the Sub-Committee presented the action which you have before you, allowing for women clergy but only allowing single women and widowers to serve. And this Committee, which earlier in its deliberations had been divided on the more clear-cut issue, seven to seven, now unanimously approved what you have before you.

Bishop Costen J. Harrell, presiding officer.

We will now hear the second report, the minority report, presented by the Rev. Dr. J. Dewey Muir.

MINORITY REPORT – Presented by J. Dewey Muir (Illinois – NC)

“My name is Dewey Muir from the Illinois Conference, a Ministerial Delegate.

First, I would call attention to the fact that the general vote of the Standing Committee on Ministry to the sub-committee’s report was 40-32. This hardly indicates any unanimity of opinion on this issue.

Our Minority Report recommendation, in fact, is that this General Conference retain its present policy concerning candidates for the ministry.

We remind you that our traveling ministry operates within an appointive system. Pastors are appointed to local churches. Churches are expected to accept the pastors appointed to them. If the proposed legislation is enacted, let us not assume that women preachers will be sent only to little churches, to undesirable churches, to undesirable circuits, or places no one else wishes to fill.

Rather, let us assume that any church to which a Bishop sees fit to appoint a female Minister will accept that appointment without raising any question as to the sex of the Minister. We also remind you that when any person is admitted as a ministerial Member of an Annual Conference, the presiding Bishop must appoint that person to a pastoral charge. If our Charges operated upon a Call System, the proposed legislation would present no problem, for under such a system a church would issue a call only to a minister whom the congregation desired. Congregations that don’t want female ministers could simply choose not to call them.

Under our appointive system, though, every Ministerial Member of an Annual Conference must be appointed to a Pastoral Charge, whether there is a Charge that wants that minister or not.

Let’s be practical. Until those demanding such legislation are committed not only to the legislation but to the receiving of female traveling preachers, not in general but as Pastors of their own particular Charges, we are of the opinion that our present legislation, which provides for ordination of women with all the rights appertaining thereto, but without membership in the Ministerial Membership of an Annual Conference or the right to vote at Annual Conference, is best for our particular Church.

I trust that The General Conference, not out of any spirit of division, not out of any spirit of ill-will, but only with a sense of the importance of the practical problems of administration, will not change our current system. Thank you.”

Bishop: The chair recognizes the gentleman in row 4.

Leonard D. Slutz (Ohio-NC)

Yes. My name is Leonard Slutz, Delegate, Ohio conference. I rise to make a substitute motion.

I move that Paragraph 313 of the Discipline be Amended to read as follows:

‘Women are eligible for all Orders of the ministry and full Conference membership; provided, however, that Women may be left without appointments, and with the approval of the Annual Conference, thereby

located whenever the Bishop and Cabinet are satisfied that all reasonable efforts have been made and no suitable appointment for her can be found.”

Secunder: Second

Professor: *Let me explain that this motion would allow women to be members of the Methodist conferences, part of the pastor’s guild we might say, but would not grant them equality with the male ministers because every male minister is guaranteed an appointment to a church while the women pastors would not have that guarantee.*

Leonard D. Slutz: Mr. Chairman, if my children are to be educated in the Sunday school, I would prefer that to be under the leadership of a married woman rather than a single woman. I feel that a married woman with a normal family life is on the average better fitted to lead our Church than is a single woman.

We have been told, however there is a practical problem, that of obtaining Appointments. I have talked with many District Superintendents who say that that is the real objection.

On the other hand, I have talked with as many as I could reach, of the women who favor this legislation. They say this substitute would still be discrimination, but would be acceptable to them. They say that what they are really looking for is to be treated as equals. They want equal rights and equal opportunity. They say they do not want a guaranteed appointment or a sure job or a guaranteed annual wage like the men pastors have. But what they do want is a right to be accepted where the church is willing to have them and where they can serve.

Therefore, I move this substitute.”

Bishop – The chair recognizes the gentleman in row 8

AGAINST SUBSTITUTION ~ Allen B. Rice (Northwest Indiana – NC)

My name is Allen Rice, Northwest Indiana Conference. I am neither fish, nor fowl. I am a District Superintendent, neither Minister nor Layman so far as I can see. I am against discrimination, any kind of discrimination, and particularly that which throws in the lap of the Cabinet the solution of such a ticklish and difficult problem as would be involved in deciding whether a particular woman in such a position was or was not capable of being appointed. I have a feeling that the District Superintendents who are here in some numbers have enough trouble of their own already without being given this extra onerous kind of duty. I certainly am opposed to it.

Bishop: The chair recognizes the gentleman in row 30.

FOR SUBSTITUTION ~ Claude Garrison (Ohio – NC)

Claude Garrison, delegate Ohio Conference It seems to me that under this Amendment when it becomes impossible to make an appointment for a given individual and all possibilities of such an appointment have been exhausted by the Bishop and his Cabinet, it is clearly out of their hands. This amendment makes perfect sense to me.

Bishop: The chair recognizes the gentleman in row 24.

AGAINST SUBSTITUTION ~ Robert H. Duncan (Holston -SE)

Robert Duncan, ministerial delegate, Holston Conference. I am opposed to the amendment. I believe it raises a question that is not fair to women. I would not vote for such a rule applying to us men. We should not have a rule that would suggest to the churches that they might close their doors and refuse to receive a particular pastor.

I am against the amendment, Mr. Chairman, because I believe it does not get at the problem before us. It seems to be that the problem is the matter of women rearing a family. This problem is taken care of in the Majority Report by only allowing single women to serve as pastors. Women with families to care for would not be permitted to serve.

Bishop: The chair recognizes the gentleman in row 21.

Henry Lyle Lambdin (Newark – NE)

I am Henry Lyle Lambdin, Newark Conference.

A great question can be discussed on any one of several different levels. The discussion of this question tends to drift always to the administrative level. The arguments seem to center around the perplexity of the District Superintendent who is trying to promote the Reverend Jane Doe, let say, from Hardscrabble Circuit to the First Church of Lickskilllet.

Pity the poor District Superintendent, is the sum and substance of the argument. After a District Superintendent has had his first round with Pastoral Relations Committees, he should have developed an epidermis that is tough enough to move a rhinoceros to envy. I don't pity the District Superintendents because these men are a sturdy breed.

There is another level at which the whole question needs to be considered. Is this Conference prepared to say in the year of our Lord 1956 that no woman, however well qualified educationally, whatever demonstration he has given of gifts and grace and loveliness, that no woman shall be called of God to spiritual leadership within the Annual Conference?

Now, that, my friends, is the issue, whether any female, no matter what her qualifications – make the qualifications as exacting as you may –no female shall be called to spiritual leadership within the organizational structure of The Methodist Church we call the Annual Conference.

VOTE TAKEN ~ Bishop Willis J. King:

The matter before us at the moment is the vote on this Amendment. By the Rules we have had two speakers on both sides. The question now before you is the vote. Does the Chair of the Committee have a final statement?

James S. Chubb:

Mr. Chairman, we find ourselves inclined to enthusiastically support the Majority Report because it is a compromise legislation. It opens the door and enables us to get rid of another form of discrimination. I hope the body will defeat the substitution.

Bishop King:

Now I would ask for a reading of the Amendment before our vote.

Ernest W. Peterson (Oregon-W)

The Amendment reads: 'Women are eligible for all Orders of the ministry and full Conference membership; provided, however, that a woman may be left without appointment, and with the approval of the Annual Conference, there by located whenever the Bishop and Cabinet are satisfied that all reasonable efforts have been made and no suitable appointment for her can be found.'

VOTE TAKEN ~ Bishop Willis J. King:

Those in favor. (pause) Those against. (Pause) The Amended substitute is **not** adopted. The chair recognizes the gentleman in row 44.

SUBSTITUTE AMENDMENT ~ C. Anderson Davis (East Tennessee-C)

Mr. President. My name is C. Anderson Davis, East Tennessee Conference, Central Jurisdiction.

Professor: *It is significant to note that this is the first speaker from a conference in the Central Jurisdiction, the jurisdiction comprised of all African-American churches. The Rev. C. Anderson Davis was serving a church in Bluefield, W.V. at this time.*

C. Anderson Davis: Mr. President. I move that the Majority Report be amended by deleting the words “that only unmarried women and widowers may apply.”

Secunder: (Second)

C. Anderson Davis: Mr. Chairman and Members of The Conference: I am of the opinion that if we should pass this legislation without striking out the particular sentence we would still be discriminating against a large group of our women. In our own Annual Conference of the five women who are serving as preachers; four of them are married women. These four married women have no children or home responsibility.

I do not believe that we should discriminate against any of the women. It is the same type of thing that prevailed when women were trying to get suffrage, the right to vote. If we discriminate against our women in this particular thing it does away with the whole principle of women having equal rights in any field.

Women who go into the field of medicine, into the field of law and similar fields do not create a problem. I do not feel they would create a problem in the ministry. I feel that they would bring much dignity and add much to it. The District Superintendents and the Bishop have great problems at times placing our men who are in the ministry, and I am sure they would not have any more trouble placing the women.

Bishop: The chair recognizes the gentleman in row 8.

FOR AMENDMENT ~ Everett W. Palmer (Southern California-Arizona- W)

Everett Palmer, Southern California-Arizona conference. I would like to speak in support of the Amendment. Our problem is the point of administration. We have two Paragraphs in the Book of Discipline which will enable District Superintendents and Bishops to deal with any woman who cannot be appointed satisfactorily. She can be dealt with exactly as a man can be dealt with, and that is all the Women are asking for, to be treated just as the men are treated.

We should give them opportunity to have Full Rights in the Clergy and as Members of the conference. With the Full Rights will come the responsibility of meeting the standards and being able to be appointed.

If they cannot be appointed, they may be persuaded to accept voluntary location, and if they cannot be persuaded there is always the possibility of resorting to involuntary location.

I hope we support this amendment. We need to do this thing and we will have to do it some day. Why not do it now and do it graciously?

Bishop: The chair recognizes the gentleman in row 29.

STATEMENT AGAINST Joe E. Bowers (Oklahoma – SC)

Joe E. Bowers, Oklahoma Conference.

Theory is one thing and practice is another. I think it should be made perfectly clear here and now, that if we support this resolution we should support it with the understanding that it means the local church is willing to accept the appointment of a female as minister.

If we have the situation where an individual is unacceptable, it will not be as easy as one might think to publicly announce that this person has been deemed to be unacceptable to be appointed, and therefore must not given an appointment.

In my honest opinion the women would be in a much poorer position with this substitute than they now are.

Bishop: The chair recognizes the gentleman in row 43.

FOR MAJORITY REPORT ~ Ashoke B. Singh (Bengal – OS)

Mr. Chairman, Ashoke Singh, from Bengal, India

Professor: *Here I would point out that this is the only speaker from the church's overseas conferences. Ashoke Singh was serving at this time as the principal of Collins Institute in Bengal, India.*

Ashoke Singh: We, from the far-flung ends of the world, look up to America for inspiration and guidance in matters of progress and forward movement. So I am a bit amused at myself by the fact that I should come from the back woods of Bengal to champion the Full Clergy Rights for Woman.

It seems to me that the sentiments displayed by some of the men of this Conference can be observed in our country also. Some 50 years ago, there goes a story, a friend went to a village on a hunting expedition. There by the side of a river stood a master boatman. He asked him, 'Do the crocodiles in the river cause any harm to human life?' The master boatmen smiled and casually replied, 'No harm to human life. They do occasionally carry away goats and women.'

Mr. Chairman, I think we can trace this hurtful sentiment back to some of the leading men of England. For instance, Samuel Johnson, the famous English writer, when told that a certain woman preached remarkably, is said to have replied, 'It may, indeed, be remarkable preaching, sir, but it is not natural. Like a dog walking on its hind legs, you do not ask whether it is well done, but you are surprised that it is done at all'

I, for one, support Full Clergy Rights For Women.

Bishop: The chair recognizes the gentleman in row 7.

AMENDMENT TO AMENDMENT ~ Lynn J. Radcliffe (Ohio-NC)

Mr. President, members of the Conference, my name is Lynn Radcliff, delegate from the Ohio Conference.

I move that we amend the proposed amendment to read: 'women are included in all provisions, except that married Women can only be so included by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the Annual Conference.'

Second: Second

Lynn J. Radcliffe: Mr. President, members of the Conference, let us not be confused on this issue. The principle is this: does Jesus Christ treat women as children of God, entitled to the same privileges and

rights as a man? I hope that we will not merely extend this right to unmarried women, but that we will extend it under this safeguard of a three-fourths vote to the married women of Methodism as well.”

VOTE TAKEN - Bishop Willis J. King

Those in favor. (pause) Those against. (Pause) The motion is not adopted. (pause)

We will now have the vote on the Proposed Amendment offered by C. Anderson Davis “that the Majority Report be Amended by deleting the words “that only unmarried women and widows may apply’

Those in favor. (pause) Those against. (Pause) The motion is not adopted. (pause)

We will now return to the minority report which will be offered by Dr. J. Dewey Muir.

PERFECTING THE MINORITY REPORT ~ J. Dewey Muir (Illinois- NC)

Mr. Chairman, the Minority Report simply calls for the retaining the legislation which already is in effect. I will again remind you that the Majority Report, was adopted by the very slim majority of the Committee; 40 voting for it and 32 voting against it.

The very discussion which we have had this afternoon is indicative of our contention that the Majority Report would be very difficult to administer. Lest we be swept off our feet through just sentiment without considering all of the practical implications that are involved in administration, we submit the Minority Report for your decision.

Bishop: The chair recognizes the lady in row 29

FOR MINORITY REPORT ~ Mrs. Henry D. Ebner (New Jersey – NE)

Mr. Bishop, I am Mrs. Henry D. Ebner, Lay Delegate of New Jersey Conference.

Professor: *Here we might take note that this is the first woman to address the body on this issue. There have been over two dozen male speakers up top this point in the proceedings.*

Mrs. Henry D. Ebner: Mr. Chairman, members of The Conference, I would like to say that I think this is a very serious question that is before us, and although we have had some funny comments and stories, I think we should consider this question in a very serious light.

I would also like to say that as a woman, as a Local Preacher in my Church, I have never felt that my Church has discriminated against me, but that wherever I wanted to serve, there seemed to be a door opened to me, to be able to serve.

Personally, I do not like to even to use the word ‘discrimination’ because in my mind it has always been connected with unhappiness and discontent. I have never felt that I needed as a woman to fight for equal rights with men. I feel I already have far more rights than the men will ever have.

I would remind you of the many times that you have been privileged to see great groups of Missionaries coming to the platform, as well as groups of women Deaconesses, and we have been impressed by the great number of years of service that they have given to our Church. But we have also been impressed with the fact that many of these women are beyond 50 years of age and we do not seem to be able to attract the younger women to fill up the ranks.

Now, if I were a young woman and God was calling me into full-time Christian service, I believe that the ministry would be a very attractive field for me. But if we open up another field of service for our younger women, when at this time we do not have enough Deaconesses to work in our institutions and we need to fill the ranks of older Missionaries, we are making a big mistake.

I am not impressed by the number of Memorials because many of them were sent in without the people realizing all that would be involved if this legislation were passed. I know that of those that I have interviewed, some in this very Conference, they said, "Yes, we are in favor of Full Clergy Rights for Women but I don't want a female minister serving in my church."

Now, we do not want to discriminate further against our women, but if we enact such legislation we will find ourselves in the very embarrassing position of belittling many of our women who would be very glad to serve but put in the very awkward position of being rejected by local churches.

Before we vote on this question, those of us who might be tempted to vote to change our Discipline would have to answer yes to three very important questions, and I submit them in all seriousness.

First, of all, if you vote yes, are you willing to honestly say to your District Superintendent, "Yes, send me a female pastor?"

Secondly, and this question is for the ministers as well as the laymen, if you vote yes, are you willing to say to your Bishop, "Yes, Bishop, send me a woman District Superintendent," for if this amendment goes through, we are not going to discriminate in the appointment of anybody.

Finally, my last question would be this: if you vote yes, are you willing to say "Yes, send me and my conference a woman Bishop?" Now, you may think that is a rather exaggerated idea, but, believe me, it is not. I would urge that this matter be considered very seriously, that we have no more joking around, and that you vote "no" when it comes to the Majority Report and that you vote "yes" to the Minority Report for the sake of the women of our Church.

Professor: *This speech, of course, was originally given by a woman who was strongly opposed to full clergy rights for women. What was her stated concern? (Not enough women to serve as deaconesses) Has it been your experience that women are less supportive of women clergy, equally supportive, or more supportive?*

Bishop: The chair recognizes the lady in row 12.

AGAINST MINORITY REPORT ~ Mrs. Edwin S. Anderson (New England – NE)

Bishop. Members of The Conference. My name is Mrs. Edwin S. Anderson, Delegate from the New England Conference. I am currently President of the Conference Woman's Society of Christian Service. In considering women's place in the Church, since the early days when they were not even permitted to sit in the pew with the men of their family, to say nothing of having a voice in Church policy, to the turn of the century when she was gradually given more recognition, the present time finds women being given more recognition in all areas of service and meeting the same standards as women.

We are currently far short of the number of ministers needed to adequately serve the churches and expand our church program, while the reserve of well-trained women ministers is being ignored. Because of tradition we are losing valuable and much needed leadership.

Women are accepted as candidates for the ministry and are permitted to graduate from seminaries. They are permitted to perform all the services that male ministers perform, and they are required to attend the sessions of Annual Conference. Each woman minister brings her Lay Delegate. The Lay Delegate is permitted to sit within the bower of the conference and has both full voting rights and the privilege of the floor, but the female minister has no such privileges. She can neither speak nor vote.

Some say that the churches will not accept a female minister, but we know that some Conferences are already using female ministers most satisfactorily. A female Conference Member being guaranteed an appointment is another one of the objections some raise. But why not for women as well as for men, if they have equal opportunities and equal qualifications?

The Methodist Church has always been able to adapt itself to change and should set an example in granting equal rights and opportunities of service to all its members, regardless of sex.

Bishop: The chair recognizes the Miss Mary Lou Barnwell in row 3.

AGAINST MINORITY REPORT - Miss Mary Lou Barnwell) – (New York - NE)

Mr. Chairman. I am Miss Mary Lou Barnwell. Delegate from New York. I am also the General Secretary of the Commission on Deaconess Work of The Woman's Division of Christian Service of the General Board of Missions of The Methodist Church.

The reference to recruitment of Deaconesses seems irrelevant to the subject of Clergy Rights for Women. There is no intention to seek to recruit deaconesses for the ministry. This privilege should evoke no fear that there will be a great group of these women making application to become clergy. Of 500 Deaconesses now active in The Methodist Church, all except 29 favor Full Clergy Rights for Women. However, only 27 of the 500 have any thought of possible consideration of assuming such relationship for themselves. Ten of the 27 are already serving as Supply Pastors. Full Membership in the Annual Conference will enable a greater degree of effectiveness of any minister.

We trust that the program of Deaconess Work will in no way be confused with this issue of Clergy Rights For Women. In no way do we believe that the extension of Full Clergy Rights will affect the recruitment of Deaconesses.

Bishop: Having had the required number of speeches on both sides of the question I now will invite James S. Chubb, Chairman of the Standing Committee on Ministry, to come forward for any closing remarks he may have.

CLOSING STATEMENT ~ James S. Chubb (Nebraska- SC) Chairman of the Standing Legislative Committee on Ministry

Mr. Chairman, we are right now to the crucial issue as to how you vote. I suppose the issue is this, whether we are taking the daring or grand new opportunity to secure the type of woman who heretofore thought she could not actively enter the ministry.

I recognize the problems. I am a minister. I wouldn't want just any woman on my church staff, but I know a couple of women in this Conference, who, if they will make application, will get very good consideration. I would consider each one of them because of their merit.

Bishop: We will now hear from Dr. J. Dewey Muir as we close debate on the Minority Report.

CLOSING OF DEBATE ON MINORITY REPORT ~ J. Dewey Muir (Illinois – NC)

That we are of divided opinion, of course, is self-evident. Yet I am sure that those who are for Full Clergy Rights for Women or not for Full Clergy Rights for Women are all trying to be motivated and guided by a spirit of love and the spirit of our Christ.

In presenting the Minority Report, the group doing so has brought the Report without any thought of malice, without any urge of contention, without any thought of anything other than that in our judgment it is in the best interest of our Methodist Church that we continue to operate as we now operate. We do not have in our minds any thought of discrimination.

We leave it to your hands and await your decision, as we are all instruments in the hands of God trying to work out here not that which serves any special group, male or female, but that which serves the best interest of the Church and the ongoing Kingdom of our God.

Bishop: Dr. Chubb, do you have a final word before we vote on committee report?

CLOSES DEBATE FOR COMMITTEE – James S. Chubb

Mr. Chairman, members of The Conference. I don't know. I find myself particularly proud of our Methodist women. I think they are about as capable, about as good-looking as any crowd of women I want to meet anywhere.

I don't know how the women are in your family but I have found in my family that the one thing the women want and don't get is very thing that makes them very unhappy. That tripped me up until I finally got smart and just gave it to them. The one thing that many Methodist women want, perhaps an overwhelming majority of them, is the privilege, if they qualify, to become full clergy members of the Conference.

We have been saying for several quadrennia now, "Some day we will do it." The time has come to do it now! Let us get on with the voting.

VOTE TAKEN FOR THE MINORITY REPORT WHICH WOULD MAINTAIN THE CURRENT DISCIPLINE WITHOUT CHANGE ~ Bishop Willis J. King:

"Those in favor. (pause) Those against. (Pause) The motion is not adopted. (pause)

Adlai C. Holler ~ (South Carolina – SE)

I move that a count vote be taken.

Secunder: Second

Bishop Willis J. King

A request for a count vote requires a 1/3 vote of the body. Those in favor, raise your hands. (pause) Those opposed, raise your hands." (pause) A count vote is ordered.

BREAK -

Approach #1

An Offering could be at taken at this time – Conclude with Doxology

In an Annual Conference Setting – the Offering might be designated for Ministerial Student Scholarships

Approach #2 (in a teaching setting)

Professor: What are the three positions being presented regarding Full Membership Rights for Women

- a. Full member rights but only for single women and widows
- b. Maintain Status quo
- c. Full member rights for any women but no guarantee of appointment

What were the arguments against Full Member rights?

What were the arguments supporting Full Member rights?

Friday Afternoon Session, May, 5, 1956

Report of Vote on Minority Report ~ Bishop King: ~

Call to Order. We shall now resume The General Conference by returning now to Calendar No. 26. Report is No. 2 is before us. A count vote was taken and the Minority Report was defeated. 310 For. 425 Against

As the Chair sees the parliamentary situation it is as follows: The Minority Report was not accepted. Therefore, the Majority Report is now before you. Before it is presented there are two matters I would like to have you indulge the Chair in. The first is a question of privilege to Dr. J. Dewey Muir who is the Chairman of the Minority Report. The second has to do with a substitute to be offered by Dr. Marvin L. Boyd of the Northwest Texas Conference. Dr. Muir.

Dr. J. Dewey Muir: Mr. Chairman and Members of The Conference: May I express to you my very great appreciation for the very fine way in which you addressed the Minority Report this morning. I am quite convinced of this one thing: That Methodists may not and, indeed, ought not always to agree with each other in all matters, but in this we really ought always to agree that when we disagree, we disagree agreeably.

I also want to clearly state to this body my position: since the Minority Report has not been accepted by The Conference I am now swinging my full support to the Majority Report, and trust that without a great deal of further debate or deliberation you will enact it as the legislation of this General Conference.

Professor: *Why would Dr. Dewey Muir, the leading voice of the camp opposing Full Clergy Rights for Women now declare his full support the original compromise report and urge that it be approved "without a great deal of further debate or deliberation?" (Since Muir's attempt to defeat the motion by retaining the current wording in the Discipline failed he is now hoping to limit the breadth of his defeat by only allowing "unmarried women to serve as full members of the clergy).*

Bishop: Rev. Boyd.

SUBSTITUTE OFFERED ~ Marvin L. Boyd (Northwest Texas-SC)

Mr. Chairman, I move that we delete all of Paragraph 313 and insert a new Paragraph to read: "Any Annual Conference may include women in the provisions of the Discipline which apply to the traveling ministry, and may establish limitations for the inclusion of women in such provisions."

Seconder: Second

Marvin L. Boyd: Mr. Chairman in all of these matters we have talked in terms of a principle and then of

implementing that principle. It seems to me that when we permit women to be admitted in Annual Conferences anywhere we approve the principle of Clergy Rights for Women.

This substitute allows Annual Conferences to make this decision for themselves. If any Annual Conference is ready at this time to admit women to full clergy membership either with or without restrictions, this amendments makes that possible.

It seems to me the Annual Conference, being the body which assumes the responsibility should, have this privilege. Those of us who do not think our Conferences are ready certainly do not want to do anything that would prevent any Conference that is ready from admitting women under these circumstances.

We feel that when and if we should be ready, this would give us the opportunity and provide the procedure to make that possible. I simply offer this motion in the belief that it might represent the way that would most nearly enable every Conference to do the thing which it is ready and prepared to do.

VOTE TAKEN - Bishop Willis J. King:

Those in favor. (pause) Those against. (Pause) It is the judgment of the Chair that the motion is not adopted.

The chair recognizes the gentleman in row 12.

SUBSTITUTE ~ William H. Alderson (New York East – NE)

Mr. Chairman, members of the Conference, William H. Alderson, New York East Conference. I bring a substitute motion to the Majority Report No. 2, Par. 313. I move that the phrase: “women are included in the foregoing provisions, except in so far as they apply to candidates for the traveling ministry” be entirely deleted from the Methodist Discipline.

Secunder: Second.

Professor: *This is the first proposal to come to the floor that would give full clergy rights to women with no restrictions. It comes to the floor as a “substitute amendment” so it will replace the original compromise report brought from the committee.*

William H. Alderson: Friends, we have just voted in this Conference by a vote of 345 – 310 I think it was, that we did not want this Paragraph to remain in the Discipline as it is. I feel that that means we want some change at this point. If we delete Paragraph 313 from the Book of Discipline the problem of discrimination against women serving as members of the clergy will be solved. Both men and women will then be considered on an equal basis when they come before an Annual Conference Board of Admission.

It is then wide open without any conditions whatsoever, for the Annual Conference to decide whether or not on the basis of qualifications, the man or the woman, the applicant – whoever it is – shall be admitted.

I think the moment has come for us to take this Paragraph out of the Book of Discipline, we will then be able to consider all candidates on an equal basis.

Bishop: The chair recognizes the gentleman in row 9.

AMENDMENT TO SUBSTITUTE ~ Zach T. Johnson (Kentucky – SE)

Mr. Chairman. Zach T. Johnson, Delegate from Kentucky conference. I move that we amend the substitute motion by changing the phraseology to so that paragraph 313 will read as follows: “women are included in the foregoing provisions, and may apply as candidates for the traveling ministry as provided for in Chapter 3 of the Discipline.”

Secunder: Second.

Zach T. Johnson: Mr. Chairman, members of The General Conference, this is a positive approach to this question, and it simply says we are willing to admit any woman who can meet the same conditions that men now meet, to enter any Conference in Methodism. Let's give the women the right to apply on the same basis as any of male members of any Annual Conference in Methodism. This does that.

Bishop Willis J. King. OK. I will now ask that Ernest Peterson read the proposed substitute Amendment before we take a vote.

AMENDMENT TO SUBSTITUTE IS READ ~ Ernest W. Peterson (Oregon W) Secretary of Documents

Proposed Amendment of Zach T. Johnson (Kentucky – SE) “That Paragraph 313 shall be Amended to read; Women are included in the foregoing provisions and may apply as candidates for the traveling ministry as provided for in chapter 3 of the Book of Discipline.”

VOTE TAKEN ~ Bishop Willis J. King,

Those in favor. (pause) Those against. (Pause) The motion is **not** adopted. (pause)

Adlai C. Holler ~ (South Carolina – SE)

I move that a count vote be taken.

Secunder: Second

Bishop Willis J. King

A request for a count vote requires a 1/3 vote of the body. Those in favor, raise your hands. (pause) Those opposed, raise your hands.” (pause) A count vote is ordered.

QUESTION Russell E. Clay (Southern California-Arizona-W)

Mr. Chairman would you clearly state once more the motion which is before the body.

Bishop: Certainly. Mr. Peterson, would you please read once more the amended substitution to the motion.

AMENDMENT TO SUBSTITUTE IS READ Ernest W. Peterson (Oregon W) Secretary of Documents

Proposed Amendment of Zach T. Johnson (Kentucky – SE) “That Paragraph 313 shall be Amended to read; Women are included in the foregoing provisions and may apply as candidates for the traveling ministry as provided for in chapter 3 of the Book of Discipline.”

Bishop King:

You are now voting on the Amendment to the substitute. The substitute proposes to eliminate Paragraph 313 from the Book of Discipline entirely. The Amendment to the substitute proposes to retain much of Paragraph 313, but to rephrase it, by adding “that women are to be included in the foregoing provisions and may apply as candidates for the traveling ministry..”

Leonard Slutz: Question!

Bishop: Yes, the chair recognizes Leonard Slutz of Ohio Conference, in row 29.

QUESTION Leonard D. Slutz (Ohio – NC)

Mr. Chairman, I want to ask a question of parliamentary inquiry. I want to ask the Chair if the Chair interprets this Amendment to grant Full Clergy Rights to Women, which is what I understand it to be and it is the reason I support it.

Bishop King:

My understanding is that this Amendment grants Full Clergy Rights to Women.

Bishop King:

We will now have the vote. All in favor please raise your hand. (pause) All opposed please raise your hand. (Pause)

Bishop King:

The substitute motion offered by William H. Alderson (New York East –NE) as Amended by Zach T. Johnson (Kentucky –SE) has been adopted. The final vote: 389 in favor of Full Clergy Rights for Women and 297 opposed. The Substitute is adopted and will be added to our 1956 Discipline. Women will now be welcome to apply for full membership in the Annual Conferences and will have Full Clergy Rights, rights equal in everyway to the men.

APPRECIATION: James S. Chubb (Nebraska-SC)

Mr. Chairman, members of The Conference, may I express to you my sincere thanks for the courtesy and commitment you have shown in seeking to respectfully hear one another and address the important concerns before our Conference.

Bishop: I would now invite all of us to join together in singing the classic Wesleyan Hymn – “A Charge to Keep I Have.”

HYMN – “A Charge to Keep I Have” #413

CLOSING PRAYER

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

- 1) The Methodist Quadrilateral points to four sources of authority: Scripture, Tradition, Reason and Experience. In this 1956 debate, how often did delegates refer to Bible passages which might be used to limit the role of women in the church? What does this tell us about the thinking process of the conference on this issue?
- 2) At what point did the majority of Conference realize they had the votes to pass full clergy rights for women with no restrictions?
- 3) Which delegates were most opposed to full clergy rights for women? What were their reasons?
- 4) Which delegates were most supportive? What were their reasons?
- 5) Would it helpful to reverse the gender roles and have the debate be about “Clergy Rights for Men”?
- 6) What insights might we draw from this debate for the issues the church faces today?