Wiggling Through It: A Comparative Case Study on Decision Making Processes of United Methodist Church Second-Career Clergy Student's Route to Ministry

by
Mellinda Gay Hansen-Holloway

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APPROVED BY:

__________________________  ___________________________
Dr. Colleen Aalsburg Wiessner  Dr. Tamara V. Young
Chair of Advisory Committee  Committee Member

__________________________  ___________________________
Dr. Tuere Bowles  Dr. Julia Storberg-Walker
Committee Member  Committee Member
ABSTRACT

HANSEN-HOLLOWAY, MELINDA GAY. Wiggling Through It: A Comparative Case Study on Decision-Making Processes of United Methodist Church Second-Career Clergy Students’ Routes to Ministry. (Under direction of Colleen Aalsburg Wiessner.)

The purpose of this research is to better understand how second-career professionals choose between a graduate professional degree and graduate level continuing education in order to pursue a new profession. Using Student Choice Construct (Paulsen & St. John, 2002; Perna, 2004) as a lens to examine these choices, the study details the experiences of six second-career clergy student’s beginning with their call to the ministry and concluding with their first appointments as ordained clergy members in the United Methodist Church. The United Methodist Church recognizes two educational tracks, the Masters of Divinity, which is a professional degree, and the Course of Study, which is a continuing education program. Either track can be used to seek Ordination as an Elder in Full Connection, the highest professional standard for the denomination. Based upon the theory of Student Choice Construct (Perna, 2004), it was expected that second-career clergy would base their educational and vocational choices primarily upon their educational, socioeconomic, familial and professional backgrounds. Instead, the second-career clergy students based their choices primarily upon their call experiences and the United Methodist Church’s institutional requirements for ordination. The participants’ educational experiences were impacted by issues of gender and educational, socioeconomic, familial and professional backgrounds. It was also discovered that the formal education of clergy, regardless of the type of program, only provided the clergy with the theological and theoretical background needed for their new careers. The remaining skill sets needed for their new profession was either learned through on-the-job training or was transferred from a prior profession.
BIOGRAPHY

Mellinda “Mel” Hansen-Holloway is an artist, Christian Educator, consultant, former Diaconal Minister in the UMC, and an equestrian. When she is not teaching at Apex School of Theology, she offers consulting services to churches and religious institutions on Christian education and formation and event planning. She also has a small business selling her creative efforts. Mel is an active layperson in her local UMC congregation and has worked as a missionary in several different settings. Mel is also active in several non-profit organizations including the Mosaic Rural Wellness Center, Inc. In her spare time, Mel trains and shows Arabian horses sidesaddle and is a member of the American Sidesaddle Association, Inc., South East Aside, and the Arabian Horse Association.

Mel is the proud mother of Oni and the loving wife of Rondell. They own four dogs, three horses, and too many cats to count. They live in a small rural community in the piedmont of North Carolina. Mel is originally from Kansas, but has lived in many states including North and South Carolina. More information about Mel and her adventures can be found at her web page www.geocities.com/sideseat.
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The rest are listed in no particular order.

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