



## **Making Room for Women Project**

**Interview with Linda Lee Henriksen**

**July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020**



**THE ARCHIVES**

United Church of Canada Pacific Mountain Regional Council Archives  
312 Main Street, Suite 320, Vancouver BC, V6A 2T2  
Email: [BGalston@United-Church.ca](mailto:BGalston@United-Church.ca) Tel: 604-431-0434 Ext. 6358

## Oral History Recording Summary

---

Interviewee: Linda Lee Henriksen

Interviewed by: Kimiko Karpoff

Date of Interview: July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020

Location: Zoom call

Transcribed by: Karina Greenwood

Auditor of Transcription: Linda Lee Henriksen

---

<b>Time Log</b> (minutes)	<b>Description of Content</b>
00:01	Chatting
08:20	Beginning of interview; introduction, permission
08:50	Early involvement in the church, growing up in many different churches
14:20	Training and working as a nurse, getting married
16:34	Working as a lay leader, CAB, her call, VST, chaplain at Cancer Agency, CAPPE
23:36	Working at UBC Hospital
29:03	Moving from North Vancouver to South Surrey; mentors
35:24	Gender, interesting people in her care as chaplain
41:40	Active in local congregation, Chair of Ministry and Personnel, working with Gerald Hobbs and Lynne McNaughton on the tours
47:02	Part of the M&P, ensuring there is good leadership at the church, taskforce to review the candidacy project, supervised ministry
57:37	Relationship to the United Church today, changes as a result of COVID-19
1:03:01	Final comments, good-byes

# Linda Lee

1:05:55

## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

church, people, congregation, garbled, chaplain, ministry, united, called, tour, chaplaincy, interview, moved, grandparents, vst, part, conference, laughter, ordained, continue, minister

## SPEAKERS

Linda Lee Henriksen, Kimiko Karpoff

[Chatting] 00:01 – 08:26

### **Kimiko Karpoff** 08:27

Hi, I'm Kimiko Karpoff. And it is July 29th, 2020. I'm here with Linda Lee Henriksen as part of the United Church of Canada's Making Room for Women Project. We are recording this. Linda, do I have your permission to continue?

### **Linda Lee Henriksen** 08:48

You have my permission. Thank you.

### **Kimiko Karpoff** 08:50

Thank you. Linda, the United Church of Canada has wanted to capture stories of women who have been part of the church, and the church life. I think they've recognized that we've captured many stories of a lot of the men in the church and far fewer of the women who have been so integral to the United Church of Canada. And so, thank you for agreeing to be interviewed for this. I want to just begin with a little bit of background about you. Can you tell me about just even your childhood spirituality, your background in that respect?

### **Linda Lee Henriksen** 09:38

Oh, my goodness. Yes. I was raised by parents who were considerably older than most parents were at the time. And they came out of the Methodist tradition. My parents were born at the turn of the century. So they indeed remember the joining of St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church and Wesley Methodist Church in downtown Vancouver. And they were part of the joining and then the ultimate building of St. Andrew's-Wesley United Church. And my father's parents, my grandparents were totally, totally involved. And I mean, real church people. My grandpa was an usher at St. Andrew's-Wesley, until just shortly before he died at age 90. So, a long time. Which is the background to my parents. When I was young, really young, maybe grade one, grade two, thought it was time that I went to Sunday school, because of course, you know, the good Methodist people. I mean, they're, they're not United Church framework, they're, they were Methodist framework in terms of how they operate. And you go to

Sunday school, and there was a big family meeting with my grandparents. And a serious discussion about me going to the Anglican Sunday school at St. Christopher's because it was the closest Sunday school to where we lived in West Vancouver. And they agreed, and more to the point, the grandparents gave their consent to go to St. Christopher's.

**Linda Lee Henriksen 11:56**

So I happily went to St. Christopher's Sunday school until the other set of grandparents moved from Calgary. Now they were more in tune with the United Church. They didn't quite have the same strict structure of my paternal grandparents. Just telling me if I'm going on too much – but I think that it was just lovely the way my grandparents from Calgary thought this would not do, that I should be going to the Anglican Sunday school. I mean, they all agreed that this was the second best. And because they were going to West Vancouver United, they would take me to West Van United. And I honestly don't remember why my parents couldn't take me there. But I don't know that part of the story. Anyway, they – that's where I grew up, probably from about grade three onwards at West Van United Church, with the choir, and continued to be part of that church life. I was very musical. So, I had lots of solos, and was asked to participate musically, which really fed me in the church and probably planted that seed that entrenches one into, for me, the United Church. And when it was decided there were enough people from our side of West Vancouver to build a new church, St. David's United was built, and my parents and my grandparents really supported that financially and every other way. So, I began my early teens, and was at St. David's for those teenage years, and the Young People's, and so yeah, I was churched.

**Kimiko Karpoff 14:10**

And so did you continue...

**Linda Lee Henriksen 14:11**

If you want to edit all that out, I was churched! [laughter]

**Kimiko Karpoff 14:11**

And did you continue to attend even as a young adult?

**Linda Lee Henriksen 14:20**

No, no, I didn't. And I didn't because I moved out of home into nursing school at the Vancouver Gen, which was a residential school that was a three-year nursing program. So I wasn't home to go to church, and I drifted away although I was part of the Nurses' Christian Fellowship, you know, you remember those? There was in – at university there was Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship and slightly, slightly to the right, in many ways, politically and spiritually, than what would have been my desire, but they were a nice group of classmates and so participated in that. And also, they created the choir. So it was an obvious place for me to be in nurse's training. I stayed – really not at all connected with the church. Interesting. No, I did a big drift away.

**Kimiko Karpoff 15:30**

You did a big drift. But then you did drift back to the church in some way.

**Linda Lee Henriksen 15:36**

Yes. We got married in the church. A friend of my mother's – my mother went to what was then, when she went to school, it was called Columbian College in New Westminster, which was a church institution. And her friend was a minister emeritus – would be called today – at Canadian Memorial. So my husband and I got married in Canadian Memorial with my mother's friend, the minister, who was the chaplain of the City of Vancouver at the time. And he was able to go to Canadian Memorial. And so that's where we got married. But that was the last time I was in a church for a very long time.

**Kimiko Karpoff 16:34**

For a very long time. And so, Linda Lee, I've heard you talk about bits of your story in the past, because we've sat on committees together, and so it's come up, and you are well known within the United Church now as a very strong lay leader.

**Linda Lee Henriksen 16:56**

Okay, I didn't know that, but okay.

**Kimiko Karpoff 16:59**

Well, participant in things like the committee that we sat on, which was the candidates –

**Linda Lee Henriksen 17:07**

The Interview Board, right.

**Kimiko Karpoff 17:10**

Assessment Board when we were there; it was the CAB – Assessment Board – or at least in my part of it, it had shifted into this new thing. By then. So I know that you have been not just active, but you had done other work that was kind of related. If I'm remembering. Can you tell me about that part of your story?

**Linda Lee Henriksen 17:37**

Good memory! Yes. I had an epiphany and a real call to chaplaincy. And I didn't know how to go about doing that. But it was, it was a really strong call. And it was a call that kept coming back, as call stories do; you know, people have call stories, and it wasn't overnight, but the signals were very, very strong. And so I thought, "Okay, I'll find out what's involved, and I know it'll be too much. And I can at least say, 'Okay, God, I found out and it's not my thing, and we can put that to rest.'" I can't remember who I called, but I connected with VST [Vancouver School of Theology] somehow. And Jim McCullum, who was then registrar at VST said, "What are you waiting for?" And I said, "Well, I don't have a university degree. I'm just a nurse. And I've hardly worked at nursing, and you know, really a stay-at-home mom and did a ton of volunteer stuff. And I just have to put this call to rest. So this is why I'm here." And then he said again, "What are you waiting for?" So he organized that I should have a meeting with one of the teaching chaplains at the Cancer Agency, Colin Johnstone. And I said, "Okay, I'll go see Colin." Colin said, "It doesn't matter that you haven't been to seminary. I want you in my program. Test it, test to see whether chaplaincy might be truly your call." So my goodness, I tested it. He offered me an internship that summer while he was on holidays, to be chaplain for the Cancer Agency while he was away. And to work through the summer, I actually got paid – as a lifelong volunteer, to be paid for something –

really? And then I started VST that fall, and at that time, there was a degree called a Master's Degree of Pastoral Studies, not offered anymore. So I did that degree. And it was really an MDiv without the position paper. So it was essentially the same thing, but we just didn't do a position paper.

**Kimiko Karpoff 20:42**

And you were able to do that without an undergrad.

**Linda Lee Henriksen 20:45**

I was able to do that without an undergrad. So really, Kimiko, the doors opened, that, really by all rights should not have been opened. But which is why I'm particularly mindful and open to our candidates or people who would like to be candidates. I'm attuned to their story. And, you know, I always have to question well, why would we *not* admit this person? So that's sort of where my thinking enters in. And so I started the process with what was then the Canadian Association of Pastoral Practice and Education [CAPPE], and now I think they've shortened their name. And so the United Church part is – in order to do advanced work with CAPE, it was called CAPE – in order to do that you needed something called a “mandate for ministry” from your denomination. Now, the United Church did not have anything called a “mandate for ministry.” So my very good friend, Brian Thorpe was Executive Secretary of BC Conference at that time. And so I said to Brian, “Okay, how do I get a mandate for ministry?” So, he took it to the committee of the day, education and something perhaps... took it to the committee of the day, and they agreed that I could have a mandate for ministry, if, number one, I had a successful interview with the interview board, and number two, if my congregation gave me a blessing supporting what I was doing.

**Kimiko Karpoff 22:54**

And who would you have considered your congregation at that point?

**Linda Lee Henriksen 22:57**

Oh, at that point, I was well and truly back in the church. I was away for 15 years, but when my children needed Sunday school, I went back.

**Kimiko Karpoff 23:11**

To which congregation?

**Linda Lee Henriksen 23:14**

It was called Mount Seymour. Before it was Mount Seymour, it was still Mount Seymour/Deep Cove. They amalgamated, and I was chair of the Council during the amalgamation time, so yes, I was back in the church. Okay.

**Kimiko Karpoff 23:31**

Okay. So you got a mandate for ministry that didn't exist, but you got one anyways.

**Linda Lee Henriksen 23:36**

Yep. And so completed advanced training with CAPE and the certificate you got was a specialist, a “Specialist in Institutional Ministry.” So that's what I did. And I wasn't expecting to work. I thought, “This

is nice. I like this.” Didn't expect to work. But I had a job offer given to me before I finished school. So I worked UBC Hospital for a number of years.

**Kimiko Karpoff 24:18**

And how long did you end up working in that role as a chaplain?

**Linda Lee Henriksen 24:23**

Gosh, it must have been close to 10 years.

**Kimiko Karpoff 24:26**

Wow.

**Linda Lee Henriksen 24:27**

Yeah.

**Kimiko Karpoff 24:29**

So what years were you in the UBC program? What time was this?

**Linda Lee Henriksen 24:37**

At UBC?

**Kimiko Karpoff 24:39**

Yeah.

**Linda Lee Henriksen 24:40**

I started in – it would have been the fall of '92.

**Kimiko Karpoff 24:45**

Okay, so that's the early '90s. So that's a lot of change from that moment when you needed a mandate, to interview boards and the CAB that we were on, and all of that sort of thing, in the last years. That is 30 years.

**Linda Lee Henriksen 25:11**

Yes. Yeah, for sure.

**Kimiko Karpoff 25:15**

And in those roles –you were given a mandate by the church – were the roles in any way accountable to the church?

**Linda Lee Henriksen 25:30**

Not a bit. Not a bit. No. It was merely a vehicle to be able to do the CAPE advanced training.

**Kimiko Karpoff 25:41**

Okay.

**Linda Lee Henriksen** 25:44

And when I was hired by the hospital, it wasn't a church hire; it was a hospital hire.

**Kimiko Karpoff** 25:50

It was a hospital hire. And there was no connection to the United Church or anything.

**Linda Lee Henriksen** 25:56

The United Church really didn't care what I was doing. I'm not saying, "Poor me, they didn't care what I was doing." It's just that I was off the radar.

**Kimiko Karpoff** 26:07

You were off the radar, because you weren't actually a minister.

**Linda Lee Henriksen** 26:15

No, I wasn't. No, because I could not be ordained to that ministry. I could be now, I think. But then, no.

**Kimiko Karpoff** 26:26

Even though you'd done the VST coursework?

**Linda Lee Henriksen** 26:30

Right. Yeah. And my degree at that time was not an MDiv, it was a Master of Pastoral Studies. So there were lots of good reasons. I mean, really good reasons why I was not eligible to be ordained at that time, for sure. But I got to do what I wanted to do, which was the point for me.

**Kimiko Karpoff** 27:00

Yes. Would you have done an MDiv if that was a possibility? Or that wasn't even on your radar?

**Linda Lee Henriksen** 27:08

I had no illusions that I could ever be a decent pastoral minister in a congregation.

**Kimiko Karpoff** 27:15

Right.

**Linda Lee Henriksen** 27:17

Yeah, absolutely not my calling. First class disaster – would not have happened. But I really was good at what I did in the hospital.

**Kimiko Karpoff** 27:28

And it was the case, and correct me if this is wrong, but that in that era, if you were ordained, then the requirement was you were ordained into typically a congregational ministry. As opposed to now, it could be potentially a chaplaincy, or another kind of ministry.

**Linda Lee Henriksen** 27:53



Yes. Also, at that time, settlement was still in existence.

**Kimiko Karpoff 27:59**

Ahhh.

**Linda Lee Henriksen 28:01**

And I was not going to leave my husband to go to Gravelbourg, Saskatchewan for two or three years, either. And I knew – I mean, that just was not my calling.

**Kimiko Karpoff 28:13**

Right. Okay, that's interesting to me to just place it in that era. Right? The the era of settlement, for one thing. I mean, even when I was commissioned, there was no settlement. So, I think I was actually the first year of no mandatory settlement. So I had kind of forgotten that that was a piece of the history. And so you continue to work as a chaplain. But not on the radar of the United Church. But you were still at this point now a participant in the United Church.

**Linda Lee Henriksen 28:59**

Yes.

**Kimiko Karpoff 29:02**

With your family.

**Linda Lee Henriksen 29:03**

We'd changed neighborhoods. From North Vancouver to South Surrey. And so, not very active in the church for a while. I really grieved leaving Mount Seymour because we were by then Mount Seymour United Church with the amalgamated congregation, and a beautiful building, and just great ministry and all my friends – we raised our children together. And moving down to South Surrey was quite a wrench. Although I certainly dropped in at the church and it's walking distance. So, you know, I dropped in once in a while, but didn't take a very active role until, actually, I left work, because then I had more time.

**Kimiko Karpoff 30:03**

Right. Yeah. Were there any, either clergy or other leaders in the church, as you grew up (or were a teenager/young adult) who you would say were particularly inspirational to you?

**Linda Lee Henriksen 30:27**

Are you thinking in terms of mentors, or just someone I looked up to?

**Kimiko Karpoff 30:36**

Either. People who kind of step in and do – well formal or informal kind of mentorship – but there's also those people who just inspire us, who we look at and think, "You know, there's something about this person that really strikes me," or they take an interest in us.

**Linda Lee Henriksen 30:57**

Right. And I think some of those people weren't necessarily formal leaders of the church, they weren't ministers, or head of the youth group, but they were... I remember people in our youth group at St. David's United. And in those days, I know parents would never think of it now, but we ran ourselves. We didn't have the youth leader; we designed our own projects; we decided what we were going to do. And there were some older ("older!" – gosh, they probably were 18 or 19)... and my 14- and 15-year-old self thought they were just amazing. And their demeanor, and how they led was not something I could analyze now, but then I didn't. I just really admired them, and thought I'd really like to be like them. But at various stages of my life – and I can sort of look back – there have been people who have intersected with my life, who I think, "Oh, my goodness, there's somebody I'd like to know better." And I'd like to kind of have some of them rub off on me.

**Kimiko Karpoff 32:35**

And is there anyone in particular you'd want to mention?

**Linda Lee Henriksen 32:38**

Well, in chaplaincy, my good friend, colleague – and we actually job shared for years at UBC – was the first person to graduate from VST with a Master of Pastoral Studies. And she's Roman Catholic. And I just was in awe of how she practiced chaplaincy, and her groundedness in her faith. Because it's really hard to do that job unless you're really grounded in your own faith, so that you don't let your own faith interfere with anybody else's. You just have to be really sure of where you are and not attempt to impose or project when you're in a clinical situation. You need to let that situation be where it is. But yeah, my friend, **Mary Katherine** was very, very important in terms of my development as chaplain. And my maturity as chaplain, I think. I really looked to her. And consequently, we're still friends. And she said that she looked to me, but I don't know what she looked to me for, but I know what I looked to her for. But both of us – I would say that during the VST time and after. Nancy Cocks, who was teaching at VST at that time: I really found Nancy to be an inspiration. And we are still friends, too, and I continue to find inspiration in Nancy Cocks.

**Kimiko Karpoff 34:51**

What did she teach?

**Linda Lee Henriksen 34:52**

She taught pastoral theology. Yeah. She's Presbyterian. But I didn't hold that against her. [laughter] But a wonderful teacher and a – really, really smart. Really smart. Yeah. So I learned a lot and continue to.

**Kimiko Karpoff 35:24**

I wonder if, throughout any of the education, or your role in chaplaincy, or even maybe some of your leadership roles in the church, did you ever feel that you were either treated differently, or seen differently – well, obviously seen differently – but treated in any particular way because of your gender?

**Linda Lee Henriksen 35:51**

Because of -

**Kimiko Karpoff 35:52**

Your gender, because...

**Linda Lee Henriksen 35:59**

No, I never – no, I don't think so, I can't recall any incidents where I was sensing, "Oh, now, if I was something different, I would be at an advantage." I never did.

**Kimiko Karpoff 36:24**

Interesting, either with people in your care, or people in the church?

**Linda Lee Henriksen 36:31**

No, and interestingly, one of my significant pastoral encounters, which stays with me today, was when I was interning at the Cancer Agency, and the minister of one of Vancouver's largest evangelical churches, huge congregation, was really, really ill. And truly heading towards palliative care. He was very ill. And he had the world, he had the world of evangelical clergy dropping in at the Cancer Agency, to his bedside, to pray for him. And they prayed like, you wouldn't believe they prayed, I couldn't even think of all those words. They prayed. And my job as the staff chaplain at the Agency, was to go in and introduce myself and say that I was the chaplain on this floor. And whatever seemed appropriate at the time, to sort of introduce myself to him and his family. And his family – first of all, I'm a woman and, and this didn't have any consequences on my employment or anything like that. It's just that I was out of their realm. And through all his wonderful colleagues who came to pray from New York, from London, England, from everywhere, he did have a rebound, he got better for a little while, and so much so that he was preparing to go home. And I dropped in as I frequently did, just to touch base, and let him know that I was there and we'd say a little prayer together and, he said – when I came in, there was someone who didn't know me, and he said, "Let me introduce Linda Lee to you. She's my chaplain." Wow.

**Kimiko Karpoff 38:58**

Wow.

**Linda Lee Henriksen 38:59**

Wow. So, it didn't last long his, his family you know, they came around very quickly to accepting that I was part of the furniture at the Cancer Agency, and wouldn't hinder but might be able to help, if nothing else, make a cup of tea for them. So that incident probably cemented my call more than any other incident.

**Kimiko Karpoff 39:33**

Wow.

**Linda Lee Henriksen 39:36**

It was pretty, it was pretty extraordinary. So – where were we? [laughter]

**Kimiko Karpoff 39:45**

Well, I had asked whether being a woman...

**Linda Lee Henriksen 39:52**

Oh right, gender.

**Kimiko Karpoff 39:53**

...had had any impact on your – you know, so many women who are in – well, in any field, particularly, you know, in – well, even now, the women in ministry often talk about the subtle and less subtle things that happen because of their gender.

**Linda Lee Henriksen 40:18**

I did not, honestly, other than sort of momentary “Oh, you're the minister,” or in those days you didn't say “Oh, I'm the spiritual care provider.” Then chaplain was the, the word that was generic. But no, I was never affected by any gender disparity. No, I got paid the same as my male colleagues.

**Kimiko Karpoff 40:52**

Great. That's awesome.

**Linda Lee Henriksen 40:54**

Yeah, of course, I wasn't paid by the church, but I was still, I was paid very, very well at the hospital. Yeah.

**Kimiko Karpoff 41:02**

And so after you retired from that, and you started to go back to church more...

**Linda Lee Henriksen 41:10**

I was back before then, but I really got act active in the local congregation.

**Kimiko Karpoff 41:16**

And so what ways were you active at that point, then?

**Linda Lee Henriksen 41:22**

I right away was made Chair of Ministry and Personnel. At that time, there was a rather awkward ministry team at the church, and they were clearly needing to find another place. Really – a bad fit. It was just a bad fit. So I did that. But at the same time that I retired from the hospital, I had a phone call from Rev. Gerald Hobbs. Do you know Gerald?

**Kimiko Karpoff 42:00**

I know of Gerald.

**Linda Lee Henriksen 42:02**

Okay, he taught church history at VST for a very, very long time. And so he called me and he said that he and his teaching partner, Lynne McNaughton, who's an Anglican priest...

**Kimiko Karpoff 42:23**

Who I *do* know.

**Linda Lee Henriksen 42:24**

...were planning on doing a study tour, maybe, you know, in the year 2000, if that was successful. They had hoped to do more study tours; would I help him? And I thought, "Oh, this is fun!" He wanted me to be his registrar, essentially, and help tie some of that together. And he said, "We can waive the tuition if you decide to come on a tour." So that seemed like a good idea to me, and I fell into volunteerism again. And so from 1999 until really, last year, when we kind of decided that we probably wouldn't have any more tours for a while, I worked with them.

**Kimiko Karpoff 43:27**

What kind of place... touring where? Where did you tour to?

**Linda Lee Henriksen 43:31**

We toured in Europe and in England, Scotland, Ireland. We did several tours in Italy. We did certainly a lot of touring in France, and they used to be two weeks, you know, sort of 14-day tours, with about 30 participants. Thirty, max 36, participants. And it was church history, and how the church history – our history – influences who we are as North American Christians today in the, in the Protestant tradition. So, very rich relationship indeed. And both Gerald and Lynne McNaughton have become really, really fine friends, and firm friends, and so to now. I was one of the few people who was at their wedding, and certainly made it to Kelowna, too, for the installation of Lynne as bishop, and we still chat on the phone often. Not as often as we did because we're not doing anything, that needs consultation, but probably, you know, every six weeks or so we have a good conversation. That time was extremely rich, working with them. And then every summer being on tour, and being their "gofer" on tour, you know, the expression "gofer."

**Kimiko Karpoff 45:17**

Yeah.

**Linda Lee Henriksen 45:20**

Just sort of easing the way for both participants and for them, and that actually was ministry for me. So that was a whole different way of viewing ministry. I got to know people from all over North America who came on our tours, and certainly United Church folk, and Presby [Presbyterian], and Anglican folks, all across the country. And anything I could do to make their trip, their tour, more nourishing, more comfortable, helping them, more able to learn and be open, comfortable... that was my job. And, and it was ministry. Yeah. So that was significant.

**Kimiko Karpoff 46:17**

Amazing.

**Linda Lee Henriksen 46:20**

But it was just because Gerald knew that I had been involved as a volunteer with the Vancouver Opera Guild, with organizing their tours.

**Linda Lee Henriksen 46:29**

Ahhh.

**Linda Lee Henriksen** 46:29

I would miss class because I was on an opera tour. So he knew that connection. I mean, I hadn't been retired. I wasn't retired, I don't think for longer than maybe two months. And Gerald called. So had he not called, you know, [I] would have been doing very different things over the last 20 years.

**Kimiko Karpoff** 47:02

Wow. So you were part of M&P [Ministry & Personnel] in your congregation?

**Linda Lee Henriksen** 47:10

Oh, briefly, yes.

**Kimiko Karpoff** 47:14

I know you from the regional work that we did together when it was BC Conference. How did you get involved in that?

**Linda Lee Henriksen** 47:26

Well, now, on the tours with Gerald Hobbs and Lynne McNaughton, Louise Rolston (Louise and Peter, her husband Peter) went on the tour. And I think in 2001, the year after we were on that tour together – and we had several other tours together too, I did with Peter and Louise – Louise was chair of the Interview Board at the time. And she called and she said would I be interested in being on the Interview Board. I thought, “I've got lots of time. I'm not working, right?” So I said, “Yes.” And honestly, I've been there ever since.

**Kimiko Karpoff** 48:20

And so you're still part of what the new...

**Linda Lee Henriksen** 48:22

I'm still part of... yeah, I guess for me. It's the third generation of the Interview Board.

**Kimiko Karpoff** 48:29

Oh, so what year would that have been? That you started?

**Linda Lee Henriksen** 48:31

2001.

**Kimiko Karpoff** 48:33

Okay. Wow.

**Linda Lee Henriksen** 48:38

So, by all rights, I should have been gone in about three to six years. Was the term something like that? And I'm not sure why I'm still there. Well, I do know why I'm still there. But that has been incredibly rich work for the church. And when you were mentioning in your note to me about passion, my passion at

the moment is to ensure there's good leadership coming into our church, and to support good leadership as they process through the pathway.

And I think one of the most significant positions is not even a position, I was just – I was asked to sit on an ad hoc committee by the national church. And I think I was asked because I was on the Interview Board in BC Conference, and they took representatives from across the country, and the job, the task, was to look at the candidacy process and make suggestions for a new process. So for a week, we dismantled the current process, the process at the time, and this was about 2007. And Harry Oussoren, who was out west, was the staff member in charge of those of us who were privileged to be part of that process. So, at the end of the week, we had the essence of what became the candidacy pathway.

**Kimiko Karpoff 50:36**

Okay!

**Linda Lee Henriksen 50:37**

And when it didn't pass at General Council (because I think the powers that be that moved things along within General Council in terms of motions)... it *didn't* pass. Nor should it have, but at least it was presented. And at that point, conferences were asked to do pilots. So, BC Conference, the Bay of Quinte, and Manitou Conference all took the same parameters, and designed a pathway, and really, BC Conference, honestly, took the parameters and made sense of it. Maybe someone from the other conferences will hear this, but they didn't quite reach the same level of sophistication (maybe I should put it that way) in terms of the candidacy pathway. Essentially, we have that same thing.

So, I take a great deal of pride in being a participant when we did that redesign. And we literally threw everything out and said, "Okay, let's do this, and is this a hoop or is this a real point of discernment? And went through the whole pathway and asked, "Are we doing this simply because the church wants us to do it or is this a meaningful process?" I think we're getting pretty close. A challenge for all those other (now) regions who have been operating under what I call the old system (the pre-2010 system) are confined, in their minds, by the rules and by "Well, you have to do this step before you do that step." And we got over that in BC Conference within a couple of years. We're saying, "Okay, if we really mean that we are designing for the individual, not getting rid of the rigor by any means, but we are looking at this individual and their process, you know, in our minds, what's a hoop and what is something that's really meaningful, and needing to be done? And so that's how we're getting some pretty amazing leaders over the past few years out of that process that you joined us in.

**Kimiko Karpoff 53:37**

Well, listening to you tell this story, I can certainly see why CAB has continued to invite you to be a participant, because you're very passionate about it. And you also were there, from an older system, part of the dismantling, and then also, really integral to the creation of what emerged out of the BC Conference Pilot Project, in my memory.

**Linda Lee Henriksen 54:11**

Well, if it wasn't for the staff who were in place at the time, and BC Conference, and who had the courage to move forward, it wouldn't have gone anywhere. So you know, give credit where credit's due there.

**Kimiko Karpoff** 54:27

Well, credit is due there. But I think that credit is also due to people like you who were both passionate and visionary enough to be able to dismantle something and say, "These are the things that were helpful. And this is just stuff that we do for who knows why we did that at one time. But it's not serving us."

**Linda Lee Henriksen** 54:46

Right. We always did it, so we continued, and that had to stop.

**Kimiko Karpoff** 54:51

And we continued as that pathway evolved to do that. Right? We tested that all along the way and said, "This isn't working, this is – you know, what about these people?" And I recall, too, that you were really part of the education that... what did we call...?

**Linda Lee Henriksen** 55:20

I think...

**Kimiko Karpoff** 55:21

Supervised ministry, right?

**Linda Lee Henriksen** 55:22

There was supervised ministry, right. Well, there were not that many people really keen on going to the congregations to do the training. And I had a quick afternoon, hour would be more like it, with Treena Duncan saying, "This is how you do it. And this is the framework," and then the "okay." So I designed a broader framework around that. But we used to bring people all together, all the supervisors, all the, what we called interns at the time, because they all started at the same time. And we brought them into a retreat setting for maybe three days: supervisors, students, and somebody from their lay supervision team. So, because the internships were all... I don't mean internships – what are we doing? Supervised ministry. Forgive me, I've got old vocabulary and new vocabulary. I know what I mean! [laughter] But we had them – all the supervised ministry starting at different times. So it didn't make any sense to bring anybody into a retreat setting because somebody might have started six months beforehand, but six months later, is not the time to start saying, "Well, let's do a learning covenant," and figuring out how to do that. So I went into the congregations and did the training. Yeah, for quite a long time. I recently did one, too, but hopefully, there will be more members of the current configuration of the Interview Board who will take on that role, because it should not just be a couple of people, a staff person, or me; it needs to be other of people.

**Kimiko Karpoff** 57:29

And so how do you feel your relationship with the United Church is now? How would you...



**Linda Lee Henriksen 57:37**

Ah, that's it, it's a more complex question than what it seems on the surface for me. The United Church of Canada will always be my church. Doesn't matter what route they go, where they go, it will always be my church, and I will always be in the midst. And I know that the presence of God is with me in the midst of that, and is with the church. And it will evolve the way it is going to evolve. And we trust the leaders that have been put in place, and that have covenanted to do their very best to fulfill that covenant. And I have a lot of respect for that. But in terms of my relationship with my local congregation, it's awkward, and it's awkward because there is a dearth of people coming forward to take on leadership roles. There's a – we're blessed; we have a large congregation, we're still at, what, 275 if not more on our rolls, we have two simultaneous churches going on, we have café churches, which is storefront, for the families, and we've got the old people like me, sitting in the pews when we could sit in the pews.

I am certainly attached closely to the congregation, but not in a leadership role. I've sort of pulled myself together to take part with the Affirming Committee and being part of the Affirming Committee, and the education of the congregation. And hopefully we'll get to some point where we can have a favorable response to becoming an Affirming Committee, and I'm not detecting any antipathy. But I'm not hearing it yet, if there is any. And there's bound to be discussion, and I hope there is. But I'm sort of really treading softly on the leadership side because I'm still active in the region. It's not as though I'm pulling away from "The Church." It's just my local church isn't getting as much of me; nor should they. There [are] other people also who are very gifted, who I would love to see come forward.

**Kimiko Karpoff 1:00:41**

Thank you so much, Linda Lee, I'm looking and noticing that we've close-to-been an hour. But I wonder if there's anything that you particularly want to note... any stories, any moments, any people?

**Linda Lee Henriksen 1:01:07**

I think it would be important to let people know that there are other ways of being faithful people and the church, than at Sunday morning congregation. And for – I think now we're 18 years – I've been meeting with a group for home worship. And we started out meeting every Sunday, and then one of our members became ordained. So, meeting every Sunday was not quite as convenient. In pre-COVID days, we were meeting once a month – potluck supper, engaging a scripture, fellowship, with three other families. We were families at the beginning with the kids, and they've all gone grown, and moved away, so it's just the couples now, but this has been a real source of spiritual nourishment, is to meet together for home worship, and we call it "home worship." We're all United Church. We're all – with the exception, the person who's ordained – in the same congregation. And I think it's important for the church not to recognize home worship, we're not – no thank you, don't need that – but to acknowledge the fact that there are other means of having a contribution to the groundedness of faith.

**Kimiko Karpoff 1:03:01**

Lovely. Thank you so much for sharing, Linda Lee, your stories.

**Linda Lee Henriksen 1:03:09**

Thank you for your interesting questions.

**Kimiko Karpoff** 1:03:16

So unless there's something that you want to say as a final note, I'm just going to say thank you.

**Linda Lee Henriksen** 1:03:24

You're most welcome. Thank you for asking me.

[End of formal interview]

**Kimiko Karpoff** 1:03:30

Before I turn off, I will just let you know just out of a point of personal interest when you talked about Peter and Louise – Peter Rolston presided at my wedding.

**Linda Lee Henriksen** 1:03:43

Oh, oh my goodness.

**Kimiko Karpoff** 1:03:46

So, my dad and Peter were university mates. So my dad actually wasn't in theology school but he was at UBC at the same time as people like John Cashore and Peter Rolston, and Jim Williamson, and sort of that generation of clergy. And so they were roommates; he roommated with various people. I don't think he was actually a roommate of Peter, but they were in those circles together. So we had a very tiny wedding, there [were], like, 20 people there including Peter.

**Linda Lee Henriksen** 1:04:28

Okay. Yeah.

**Kimiko Karpoff** 1:04:29

Yeah, it was a very tiny wedding. So that was just a point of interest for me. Yeah.

**Linda Lee Henriksen** 1:04:37

Dear Peter. I still miss him.

**Kimiko Karpoff** 1:04:42

Yeah, yeah. And, and on my, I think my very first interview with Conference was for staff associate. And they, I showed up with someone who was my accompanier, and then they I decided that they didn't want that person to accompany me. So Louise was chaplain, and she offered to step in as my accompanier, rather us having to reschedule the interview.

**Linda Lee Henriksen** 1:05:14

Great.

**Kimiko Karpoff** 1:05:15

She ended up being my accompanier or my first ever Conference interview.

**Linda Lee Henriksen** 1:05:21

Oh, lovely, lovely. Connections.

**Kimiko Karpoff** 1:05:25

Right? Connections. Yeah. Anyways, so many connections. I'm sure we could chit chat about our lives together.

**Linda Lee Henriksen** 1:05:32

I need to hear more about yours.

**Kimiko Karpoff** 1:05:36

And another moment, and we are, you know, close by, and maybe we can have a cup of tea sometime.

**Linda Lee Henriksen** 1:05:44

Would love to.

**Kimiko Karpoff** 1:05:45

Yeah. Okay. Thank you.

**Linda Lee Henriksen** 1:05:48

Thanks Kimiko.

**Kimiko Karpoff** 1:05:48

Bye.

**Linda Lee Henriksen** 1:05:49

Bye bye.

[End of interview]