

**A WORKSHOP TO BECOME FAMILIAR WITH THE
APOLOGY TO DEACONESSES WHO WERE DISJOINED AND
ORDAINED WOMEN DENIED THE RIGHT TO PRACTICE**

LEADERS GUIDE

Kit contents

This kit contains:

Leaders Guide (white)

Background Paper for an Apology to United Church Deaconesses and Ordained Women (pink)

Hymn: For all the Saints (green)

Theological Themes and Apology (blue)

Images of Apology (yellow)

Gender Injustice in the United Church Stories (purple)

Holy Matrimony/Unholy Disjoining and Disjoining Deaconesses DVD

These materials, as well as additional resources suggested in the study, and beyond, are available at UCCDeaconessHistory.ca

All the material can be copied for educational purposes.

Background

At the Annual Meeting of the Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario in 2014, an apology will be made to women who had to leave the employ of the United Church because they got married.

The women affected were Deaconesses, who were “disjoined” and Ordained Women, who were not allowed to practice their ordination. The practice officially ended in the early 1960s but its impact continued well beyond then, in fact it continues today for the women affected who are still alive.

To prepare ourselves for this apology it is important to have an understanding of what happened so our apology can be sincere and result in healing and growth.

The General Council Executive made a formal apology to the women in 2006, at the direction of the General Council. Each Conference was also directed to consider this piece of our history and apologize. Many church people are unaware of this story. Exploring it together can help us to appreciate more about who we have been as a community of God’s people. It also offers the chance to strengthen our understanding of who we are today.

Directive to Learn More

After the Conference Executive was led through a study by Caryn Douglas and Ted Dodd in the fall of 2012, they decided to encourage each Presbytery to devote time to prepare for the 2014 Apology and to commission the creation of a package of study materials.

Caryn Douglas has focused significant energy on the issue of the disjoining and the apology, producing a video, academic papers and a website (UCCDeaconessHistory.ca). She has agreed to be available to assist with the study process during this year.

This kit can be used as

- a self-directed workshop
- a workshop with leadership from Caryn Douglas either in person or via electronic means

This material will also be available through a Webinar *if there is sufficient interest*. Watch for more information. If you would like to set up a webinar to serve your Presbytery or region, or a group across the Conference (for example Student and Education Committees) please inquire at the Conference office.

This kit is also available at UCCDeaconessHistory.ca, check under the Disjoining tab.

Deaconesses and Ordained Women

Prior to 1960 there were nearly 600 women who served the United Church as Deaconesses, and fewer than 25 women who were ordained. The material for the study largely focusses on the experience of Deaconesses because it has been better researched and documented. It is not intended to minimize the experience of Ordained women, or those who could not be Ordained because they were married. See the background documents for a more thorough exploration of the differences between what happened to the two groups of women.

Workshop Design

Audience: The workshop is designed for a group. The group could be gathered together, or you could be participating via Skype or other electronic means, either in “real time” or using a discussion method like email, spread out over time. You could use this as a study at Presbytery, Church Board, Ministry Personnel electronic group, congregational study group. Aspects of the design could be adapted to be used by an individual, but reflection with at least one other person is encouraged.

In advance: The “Background Paper for an Apology to United Church Deaconesses and Ordained Women” should be read by those leading the workshop. It is recommended to provide it as background for participants and if that is not practical, to make copies to distribute at the workshop. (The paper, along with all the other resources for this study, is available at UCCDeaconessHistory.ca, under the Disjoining Tab.)

Teaser: The 4 minute video clip “Disjoining Deaconesses” could be used as a teaser to generate interest in learning more. For example it could be shown during worship, sent as a link to Presbyters in an email, incorporated into a Board meeting.

Length: The following workshop design can be utilized and adapted to your context. Provided is a core design for a 2 to 2 ½ hour workshop. Additional material is noted to expand the study if you have time.

Follow up:

This workshop design concludes with an opportunity for participants to consider **concrete ideas** for action in regard to the apology. The actions may be best directed to a congregation or presbytery or for the Conference or General Council. If appropriate, please forward the ideas, and any other feedback from your study to Executive Secretary, Shannon McCarthy, smccarthy@confmnwo.mb.ca. Some process evaluation questions are at the conclusion of the agenda. Even a note to say you engaged the topic would be helpful in planning for the Annual Meeting in 2014.

Goals:

- To understand the history of disjoining
- To become aware of the apology made by the United Church to affected women
- To reflect theologically on gender justice and apology
- To identify and discuss the presence of sexism in the church today

Equipment and Supplies (adapt supplies for your context)

Required Equipment

Computer
digital projector/screen, video monitor or smart board
Speakers (if not built into display equipment)
Internet access OR DVD

Required Print Materials: (in the kit and available for download)

Theological Themes and Apology (1 per participant)
Words “For All the Saints” (1 per participant)
Gender Injustice Story sheets (sufficient for number of readers)
Detailed Agenda (for facilitators)
Background Paper (1 per participant)

Required Supplies

Voices United (and musical accompaniment)
More Voices (and musical accompaniment or MV CD)
Newsprint/markers/tape
Props for story telling (optional)

Required Video/Audio:

Disjoining Deaconesses (download or DVD)
Holy Matrimony Unholy Disjoining (download or DVD)
If I have been the source of pain (DVD, if using)

For optional activities:

Images of Apology instructions (for facilitator)
Images from website
Craft supplies
Bibles
Old magazines
Paper, markers, glue, scissors, tape

To consider:

This design assumes that participants know each other. If not, add some time for checking in and introductions. If you are gathering in person, take some time to make the space inviting. Arrange for refreshments.

Always test the equipment prior to the workshop. Downloading the material from the website to your computer or using the DVD is recommended, especially if internet access is uncertain. Previewing the audio visuals will enhance the learning support the workshop facilitator can offer in the process.

Agenda

Welcome and Agenda Review (5 minutes)

Setting the Stage

Explain why this study is being undertaken and expectations for the process.

Introduction to the topic (6-7 minutes with set up)

Video Clip: Disjoining Deaconesses

- This 4 minute animated clip gives a quick over view of the Deaconess Movement and what happened to women when they were disjoined from the Order, posing the question, “are we sorry?”

(see DVD in the kit, or download, the quality of the DVD in the kit is higher)

Song: For all the Women Saints Words: Kate Galea Tune: Sine Nomine (VU705)
(see handout in the kit, or download)

Personal Connections (about 10 minutes)

Conversation in twos or threes:

- What were your mothers or grandmothers, aunts or sisters doing in the 50s and 60s?
- What personal connections do you have to issues like “disjoining”?

Background Note: The practice of marriage bars was common throughout the world for professions dominated by middle class women. Teachers, librarians, nurses, also faced marriage bars. A significant difference however, is that they did not lose their accreditation. A teacher, for example, may have been barred from teaching in a particular school board, but not all school boards exercised bars. When teachers were in short supply, or hard to attract, the rule was softened. So, if a woman were willing to relocate she could continue teaching.

AD ON EXERCISE (about 10 minutes)

Invite the small groups to share some of the insights from their conversations. Encourage people to be concise and discourage long story telling by introducing the exercise in this manner: Take a moment to reflect on the conversation. Did you notice any similarities in the stories? Was there an “aha”? What stood out for you as surprising or startling?

Hearing the story (30 minutes with set up and intro)

Video Clip: **Holy Matrimony, Unholy Disjoining**

- This 25 minute video features the stories of 4 disjoined women who were present to receive the apology from the General Council Executive in 2006. (See DVD in the kit or download, the quality of the video on the DVD is higher.)

Integrating the Video content (about 15 minutes)

Write these questions on flipchart paper or display on smart board/projector and invite conversation in twos or threes:

- What stood out for you in the video?
- What personal connections could you make?
- What was new for you? What challenged you?
- How do you feel about the Church making an apology on your behalf?

AD ON EXERCISE (10 minutes)

If time allows in the whole group share your reactions to the last question.

Song: If I Have Been the Source of Pain MV 76 (5 minutes)

- Invite people to listen to the song from the More Voices CD while following along with the words, followed by a brief period of silence. If the CD is not available sing the hymn. Listening to the hymn is very effective and is encouraged.

Theological Reflection (30 minutes)

Distribute the Sheet on Theological Themes in Apology (Lament, Truthing, Confession, Forgiveness, Reconciliation, Metanoia). Divide the group up and assign one theme per group. Make adaptations for a smaller group. Direct groups to follow the instructions on the sheet:

- Read the quotes associated with your assigned theme
- What would it mean to intentionally and faithfully embrace this theological theme vis a vis the history of disjoining of Deaconesses/and limiting Ordained women? For your congregation? Presbytery? or Committee? or for the United Church as a whole?
- For a report back, *name* a symbol which captures some of the insights from your conversation.

Facilitate the report back. Depending on time this can simply be to share the symbol, but if more time allows discussion on some of the theological issues could be facilitated.

AD ON EXERCISE A (10 minutes)

Provide a variety of craft materials and invite groups to create a symbol to share back to the whole group.

AD ON EXERCISE B (can be adapted to be anywhere from 10 to 40 minutes)

Images of Apology

Arrange a way to see the images found on UCCDeaconessHistory.ca, under the Disjoining Tab (either by printing them or electronically). Follow the instructions on the Images of Apology document (in the kit or downloaded.)

Use some or all of the images depending on your time. The activity could be done in either in small groups or the whole with sharing along the way or at the conclusion of reflection on an image. It could also be a solitary exercise, without any group sharing. Adapt to your setting. Participants could be encouraged to keep notes, especially if using several images.

Gender In/Justice in the church (45 minutes)

Storytelling: (approximately 10 minutes) In advance of the workshop, or as participants are arriving, recruit several people to read the short stories about gender injustice: Muriel's Story, Allan's Story, Deborah's Story, Stephen's Story. (Found on the document Gender Injustice in the United Church Stories.) Optional is having a prop for each story.

To introduce the story telling share with participants that sexism and gender injustice may be more subtle than in the 1950s and 60s, but are still present in the culture and in the church. These stories are offered to help stimulate reflection on our own experiences.

Imagining Action: (approximately 20 minutes, or longer if there is time) After sharing the stories, return to the previous small groups to continue with storytelling and to consider actions that could be undertaken by: the congregation, the Presbytery, the Conference, the General Council. Urge people to be very specific: who would do this, what are the implications, how likely is it to be done. Explain that the ideas will be gathered up and fed into the Conference at for the Annual Meeting in 2014 (and as appropriate to other church courts). Give each group these instructions. If time is short, skip the story telling instruction.

- **Very briefly**, share some of your own stories of sexism and gender injustice
- Discuss one or two **concrete actions** that the church could be working on to continue to promote gender justice
- Record these ideas on flip chart in sufficient detail that someone not present could understand them

Facilitate a report back (15 minutes) of the concrete ideas from each group (not the story telling). Determine what should be done with each idea (sent to another group, acted on by this group, and so on.) Assign next steps for follow up with ideas. Make sure someone will report to the Conference that you had this study time and any results of your exploration.

AD ON EXERCISE (20-30 minutes)

Using old magazines invite participants to make a collage with the title: Apology to women affected by the United Church's marriage bars.

Invite sharing in pairs, small groups or the whole. If sharing in the whole this could be the concluding exercise.

Closing:

Invite each participant to share in one word what they are taking away with them from

the workshop.

Sing: In Gratitude and Humble Trust VU 544, Melody Forest Green (VU 518)

Evaluation:

Please take a few moments to reflect and respond to these questions c/o Executive Secretary, Shannon McCarthy, smccarthy@confmnwo.mb.ca

What was helpful about this process?

What recommendations can you make for improving the design?

What were key learnings for you about:

- The disjoining of Deaconesses and limiting of married Ordained women?
- About your church (local, regional, national)?
- About leadership?
- other?

What wisdom can you give to those planning for the 2014 Annual Meeting?