

93 Hillside Ave.
San Anselmo, Ca. 94960
April 11, 1977

Dear Stacy, Susan, Cherry, Jody, and Loey:

It was a pleasure meeting with you at the Committee on Ministry last month as you look to "in care" and eventually ordination. I was impressed by your commitment to your ideas and your support of one another. I have been giving some thought to your request for corporate "in care" status and then ordination.

I find myself affirming the support group you have formed based on my own experience in such a group. I also think it is necessary to find ways of reducing competitiveness among clergy. Certainly sexism needs to be rooted out in the Church as well as other institutions in our society.

Though every Christian has the responsibility and privilege of witnessing to the Gospel, the United Church of Christ recognizes that God calls certain of its members to full-time service for various forms of ministry in the Church. In our polity ordination has to do with the performance of certain tasks of ministry. Somehow I feel that performing these specific tasks of ministry are less important to you than the idea of corporate ordination and making a witness to your corporate solidarity. In the history of the church there are ways of making a corporate witness for those who want to serve together and commit themselves to one another. That kind of purpose has resulted in the formation of a wide variety of religious orders. It seems to me that this option is open to you and that you should not attempt to use the ordination procedures to carry out that kind of purpose or make that kind of statement. Ordination, from the "call" in Biblical times to the present, has always been and is by definition an individual relationship to God. If I understand your meaning in the paper you refer to the corporate relationship between God and his people as perhaps being a model for, a reason for corporate ordination. Moses experienced an individual call at the burning bush. As I view the matter, to say that God related to Israel as a community of faith and then apply a similar covenant to corporate ordination is, to me, questionable exegesis.

Ordination is a lifetime commitment. You five have been together about 6 months. Is it your intention to remain together for the rest of your lives? Based on my own experience in years past I would be surprised if you are together five years from now. What happens if one of you decides to leave the ministry or demits? Does that mean that the other 4 are no longer ordained, assuming that you were ordained corporately? I would say no, of course not....but that brings us back to the reality that ordination applies to an individual, not a group.

I admire and support the kind of corporate witness that you want

to make, but I feel that you are trying to use the ordination process to make such a witness rather than responding to ordination's original functional purpose within the life of the United Church of Christ, i.e. ordaining individuals to perform certain tasks of ministry in full-time service.

Whatever the outcome, I wish you well in the pursuit of your ordination.

Warmest regards,


Rev. Francis Geddes

cc Committee members and Staff
Bill Eichorn