

## ELEANOR LOUISE GEIB



Eleanor Geib was born, July 27<sup>th</sup>, 1936 in Miniota, Manitoba, but moved at a young age with her family to Conquest, Saskatchewan, where she was raised. As an only daughter and elder sister to five brothers she was a born caregiver and leader, who felt at home in a boys'/mans' world, all good assets for a future of ministry in the church of the times. The work of her lifetime would bear witness that she was also gifted with formidable energy, quick, keen intelligence and no-nonsense determination.

Eleanor describes her first memory of church this way: "I was about five years of age, because I hadn't started school yet.

The WMS in Conquest always had a Pre-schoolers' Party, kind of like the Baby Band I suppose, but it was a party once a year and a Tea for the mothers, and new people in the community were always invited. So I was invited, with my brothers and my mother to this event, and really was looking forward to it. The day that it happened, one of my brothers was sick and my Mother said we wouldn't be able to go. Well, that wasn't for me. If she had to stay home with my brothers, fine. I was going. So I trudged the ½ mile or so down the road to the church. I assured her that I knew how to get there and she wrote a note and explained this rather determined child that she had, who wanted to come anyway. When I got to the church, I went in the door and you could either go up the stairs to the sanctuary or down the stairs to the basement. At the bottom of the stairs stood a woman old enough to be my grandmother with her white hair, and of course she had a hat on and had gloves in her hand. She looked at me coming down the stairs by myself with my note in my hand and she said 'You must be Eleanor.' And I said 'Yes I was.' And she said, 'You're very welcome here.' And I always thought what lovely words for a child to hear and for me to remember all my life. My first memory of going into the church was to hear 'You are welcome here.' And certainly I have made that a goal, to make as many other people as possible feel welcome in the church over the years and perhaps it came from that earliest time."

The call to a life of service and commitment to God came early to Eleanor. "In the Explorer Prayer we prayed that we would stand for the hard right against the easy wrong, and, you know, that always has stayed with me. But as a child my favorite hymn was not 'Jesus Loves Me' or 'Away in a Manger', but when I was quite tiny I loved 'Can a little child like me, thank the Father fittingly? Yes, oh yes, be good and true, patient, kind in all you do. Love the Lord and do your part. Learn to say with all your heart, Father in heaven we thank Thee.' Now, excuse the exclusive language, but the two things that really were important to me in that hymn were the fact that I could do my part. I could do my part to make a change

in society or in individual's lives and I think there was no doubt that that was part of my call. And the other line is, 'Learn to say with all your heart, Father, we thank Thee', because I always had an awareness of wanting to do what God wanted me to do. I developed a strong sense of call early in my life and it did occur to me from time to time that God was telling everybody else something different and I never doubted that they were hearing God's voice as well, and that was a challenge for me, but not enough of a challenge to not say what I really thought."

In her childhood and teen years Eleanor was active and engaged in her community and school activities: in sports, though she never claimed to be good at them; in Mission Band, Messengers, Explorers and CGIT; Sunday School and Church Vacation Schools; Church camping and Youth Caravanning; and 4H, Farm Girls' Camp and Royal Winter Fair. She loved school and decided on her very first day that she would be a teacher so she never had to leave school.

True to her dream, she worked during her senior year of High School, babysitting and doing house work, to save the money to support herself through one year of Teacher's College in Saskatoon, graduating in 1956. Eleanor then taught grades 1, 2 & 3 for one year at McRorie, Saskatchewan, a small community close to her hometown. This allowed her to save enough money to return to Saskatoon for another year of study at the University of Saskatchewan to earn a Standard Teaching Certificate. The alternative to a full year of study would have been five years of Summer School towards the same end, but she was reluctant to give up her summers at Camp, leading Church Vacation Schools and working, for two summers, at PCTC (now Calling Lakes Centre). Once she'd earned her Standard Teaching Certificate she taught for another two years at Lucky Lake, Saskatchewan.

These University and teaching years were undergirded by engagement with the local communities and churches; the Teachers Christian Fellowship; teaching Sunday School; leading CGIT; attending the WA meetings – which she always enjoyed; and even leading Worship services when called upon to do so in emergencies. The life of a public school teacher proved to be a fertile training ground for educational ministry in the church. Eleanor describes her awareness of a transition from teaching to a call to be a Deaconess: "Mine was certainly not a Damascus Road experience, a sudden change in direction. It was a continuation of what I do and believe." A local minister encouraged her to consider The United Church Training School, and fellow teachers began to say things like "Eleanor, there are lots of good teachers who could take your place or mine as a teacher, but the church needs you. These towns all need leaders and teachers. They need people to help them, to train them and to work with them, and if you know how, that's something you can do." She felt herself that she was growing in faith continually and was eager to study Bible and learn more about the faith. Once again, she began to save money to return to school.

In the fall of 1960 Eleanor began at the United Church Training School. Life in Toronto was a culture shock for a young woman from small town Saskatchewan, but for her, another adventure. "I arrived at the United Church Training School and began to meet my classmates, and one of the exciting things was that we were from all across Canada, and so we brought a picture of the church across Canada. We had Maritimers . We had people from BC. We had folk from Toronto and from all other places in Ontario. It was just exciting to get to know them. The course of study was demanding because we had academic courses year-long in Old Testament, New Testament, Church History and Systematic Theology and we had professors largely from Emmanuel College. We couldn't have our classes together because many of us did not have an undergraduate degree, and the classes from Emmanuel students were post-graduate degrees. But in actual fact, when we would check with our friends, mainly the fellows from Emmanuel College, they would be taking almost the same thing that we were, from the same people. So we were getting a rigorous academic education, I believe, and I really enjoyed that and got into it.



(Photo: Eleanor pouring tea at U.C. Training School)

But we also had a very practical component to our education. We had what we called Christian Education, and we studied and learned the programs and the workings of the church, and we had Field Work. We were each assigned to a church in Toronto, and a particular piece of work. And my first year I was in a group teaching Juniors, grade 4, 5 and 6, and we were experimenting with The New Curriculum. We had the draft copies of the Junior Curriculum, for Year A I believe, and we would teach it and then, we would take our lunch and have a meeting for about an hour and a half with the staff person who was editing that part of the curriculum. We'd go over it and delete what was unhelpful, because we'd actually used it with kids. That was a wonderfully thought-out, educationally sound program, I believe, that the church came up with. So we worked with the kids and people would say to me 'You're going from the friendly prairie to a big church in Toronto, don't expect to get to know people there.' You know, the parents of every child in that class of about ten invited me for Sunday dinner, for tea, or for an evening meal during the week.

“The minister was a former Moderator. He wasn’t a Moderator yet then, but Dr. Ernest Marshall Howse was the minister. We did our other observations and getting to understand the workings of the church in our field work placements, which meant that you went to a Board meeting, or a Session meeting. So, I phoned Dr. Howse, and I was quite new in Toronto, and said to him, could I come to a Session meeting because I had to write up what I’d learned and what the Session was, for an assignment. There was dead silence on the other end of the phone and then he said ‘Well Eleanor, I’ll be glad to invite you but, I really don’t think I can this month because we’ve never had a woman at a Session meeting before, and I think I should ask them and warn them’ – I don’t know if he used the word warn. But anyway, how times have changed in 52 years. So, in a few days I went by the desk and there was a message for me to phone Dr. Howse. All very important you know, because I wasn’t used to this kind of formality, but I phoned him and he said ‘Yes, we had our Session meeting last night. They’d be delighted for you to come next month and they would like you to lead worship.’ I thought well, I wasn’t really planning on that. I was new. I had no idea what kind of worship services they had. But anyway, I wrote something about Church Boards and Sessions in small Saskatchewan communities and coming to theirs and imagining what it was, and finding out they had the same issues and the same concerns, the kind of thing that you’d be apt to do. So, those were kind of precious experiences.”

“I can’t say enough positive about the relationship of the students at Emmanuel College and the United Church Training School at that time, because when the Christian Education component of the Emmanuel College students came up, they invited United Church Training School students to lead them in workshops. So we were in teams of about four, and we did workshops to which these students came, and I thought it was a very, quite wonderful way of us working together and them acknowledging the gifts of people that were becoming Deaconesses. We were also included in things like the Theological Society, which was for all classes. It was just a student-led organization and we were welcome to go, but I can always remember that they would tackle these important theological issues to us, to students at the time. This was in the late 50’s and early 60’s remember, and one topic was - this was revolutionary I guess for student ministers to even be contemplating - that they could be card-carrying members of a political party. This would be the stuff of a formal debate. I was invited to be on the affirmative, that yes, ministers could be card-carrying members of a political party and they were going to get another Emmanuel College student to work with me, and then two of them would take the negative. I didn’t know who I was working with and I asked the Student Minister in charge and he said, “Well, I’m having a little trouble finding someone to work with you but I think we will.” Well, when I got there and there’s all these people sitting around and this formal table at the front for the speakers, lo and behold, they hadn’t got a second person to take the affirmative. So, they said “Well, I guess you’ll just have to do it.” Al Forrest was the Editor of the United Church Observer at that time and he was the Moderator of this debate. So, he

looked at me, this poor kid from Saskatchewan taking on these two theologs, and he told me afterwards that for about the first 15 minutes he was really sorry for me and then after that he was sorry for the other side. Anyway, I think I held up the side that we not only had a right to be a card-carrying member, we might have a social responsibility to do that at some points in our life. So I thought that the ethos of the College helped us get to know the ministers that we were going to be working with, to respect their calling and for them to accept our calling.”

“The living together in United Church Training School was a real joy because you ate your meals together. You talked about your assignments. You cared about each other and we developed friendships that have lasted for 50 years and I am very grateful for those because they are people that you discuss issues about the church with, and they’re people that live all across the country so that has added .



(Photo: Eleanor & Joan Davies Sandy, September, 1961)

“Half our class married students from Emmanuel. Those women were strong minister’s wives. Those were the days when the minister’s wife was like another worker. In those days there was the tension of whether women could be married and carry out a ministry or the Deaconess role – the Diaconal Minister role that we call it now. Certainly there was no taking away your designation as a Deaconess if you were married, but you weren’t really welcome to work for the first 2 or 3 years. That was a struggle that was just happening, that women

could have careers outside the home and so people tended to make a choice. Several of my classmates, in fact, got married right after they graduated or some of them would work for a year if their husband had another year of College, depending upon where they were in their educational things. That was one of the struggles that the church was facing at that time and there were, as we know, women that had received their Bachelor of Divinity in Theological Colleges and were seeking ordination but they also wanted to get married and so had to choose, had to choose one or the other. It was interesting times, as women sorted out what really was their vocation and could you have a family life and a professional life as well. Now, I realize that it wasn’t just the church that had that struggle, that was happening in society in other places as well. In one way, you might say it hardly affected me at all and in another way you might say it shaped the whole direction of my life because I chose. I believed that I had a calling to do this work and if I had that calling I just really wasn’t interested particularly in looking at men as potential partners, or a life with them. My role

was to be this single worker in the church. And once I made that decision, and once I took that Diaconal training I really didn't ever spend much time thinking about it or wavering from it thereafter. So I think it did profoundly affect me, but it didn't keep coming back as a recurring issue. It was my choice in life and has brought me great joy and been a decision that I'm very happy with."

"Between our two years at the United Church Training School, (1961) we were given an opportunity to do what they called, Field Placement, and we were the last class that had an opportunity to be placed by the Woman's Missionary Society, because at the first of the year, in 1962, the WA and the WMS joined together. So I was one of the last students to be placed on a WMS Mission Field, and I had the good fortune of being placed in White Fox, Saskatchewan, to work first of all with Ferne Graham, and then she left to go to the National Church staff that year, and I worked with Joan Davies (later Sandy) for the month of August. So I was there during the transition on that Pastoral Charge from Ferne's ministry to Joan's. We had a WMS car. The WMS provided their workers with a car and this was a great big Chev with fins. This is the car I learned to drive on, and stamped on the side of the car in gold were the words "The Woman's Missionary Society, The United Church of Canada". So everywhere you drove the car, everybody could look and see who you represented. You had a representative mission just by driving up to the door of a store."

"White Fox is in Prince Albert Presbytery. It was a four-point Pastoral Charge, and when I think of that summer, it's astonishing all the things I did. Plus being there for the farewells for Ferne, and the welcomings and the covenanting service for Joan, I had the opportunity to lead, and staff and organize four Church Vacation Schools, in three of the churches on our charge and one for the Supervising Pastor. I also led for a week at Junior Girls Camp at Tapawingo, and visited in the hospital, conducted worship, sharing it with the others, with Joan and Ferne when they were there, and doing it on my own the rest of the time. It was a very busy summer and a time to really learn what it was to be in congregational ministry. I lived with Ferne and her mother in the manse, and then had the manse to myself for the one month, with very little in the way of dishes and so on, because I didn't take any. I used the Grahams, and then used Joan's when she got there, but however, I borrowed things from the church kitchen and managed just fine. It was interesting to always be with your supervisor. You know, you ate together, you planned together, and of course we went out and did different work, but I don't think that would be recommended today, although I was happy to do that."

"I suppose of all dilemmas that one faces in ministry I got a taste of when I was in White Fox, and this is just a simple incident but it shows how people look at life and ministry different. It happened in July, the month I was there by myself, and the minister in one of the other Pastoral Charges in Prince Albert Presbytery had an aircraft – a small, flying farmer's plane – and he brought two students, who were student ministers in his part of

the presbytery, for a flight around the presbytery to meet ministers. They landed in White Fox, and of course I had them for coffee or whatever, and a dreadful storm came up and they simply couldn't leave. So what to do? They had to have a place to stay, so I scurried around and got blankets and sheets from the neighbours, telling them that I had these guests. Well of course everybody already knew I did, because how many people have guests arrive in an aircraft that's parked in the field at the edge of the town and the field then got absolutely muddy in all the rain that came down. So anyway, I made supper for them. They stayed the night and part of the next day and then they were able to go on and I did the laundry, returned the bedding and that was that. Never thought much more about it, or anything about it, I guess, until my final interview at the end and my new Supervisor raised this, and was telling me how unwise it was for a single woman in the manse to entertain all these men overnight - and then to make it so public. Well, it was public anyway. I suppose, coming from a family with all those brothers, it did not seem out of the way to offer them a place to stay. They couldn't stay in their aircraft, and that was the hospitable thing to do. But I can remember discussing it with her, and I said, 'What should I do about this dilemma that you think I'm in?' Well, she thought I should talk to the people that knew, which was the Sunday School Superintendent, and one other neighbor. Well, they didn't think anything about it much either. They just thought I did what anybody in a small, Saskatchewan town would do. You offered hospitality to people in need. But I began to look at the ethical behavior of ministers in general and myself in particular, and how we dealt with those issues. And it was quite interesting to talk, when I got back to the United Church Training School, with my classmates, and there was a division amongst us. Some thought I did absolutely the right thing, and some were horrified, and said 'Well you should have found some other people, to each take one of them, or whatever.' So it was, one might say, a learning experience, but I probably would have done the same thing if I did it again. I didn't learn so much that I would change my behavior on that account. But it was probably the biggest learning, shall we say, of the summer of how people look at issues and, it wasn't an issue to me, you see, that's the thing. It was just day to day living until it was pointed out to me."

"While we're still on the topic of the United Church Training School, the staff largely also lived in the residence with us. So they ate with us, and talked with us. They were a very strong influence on us. I can remember an election in Ontario that happened during our time there, and we were sitting having supper and I was making a case for the fleeting, new NDP which was brand new. There had been CCF of course, but not much of a force in Ontario, and one of the women at the table said 'Well of course there's nobody...' I don't know what she said, I think she said 'stupid enough to vote for the NDP except for you Eleanor.' And Miss Christie said, '... and the Principal' which was really the entree into quite an interesting conversation. So we had all this challenge, day by day, and moment by moment that I think enriched our lives, and for me, to live with all those women was quite a

new experience as well, so I had fond memories when I graduated in 1962 and left the United Church Training School, after our very wonderful Graduation Ceremony. “

When it came time to find work, the Deaconess Order had a staff person, Mrs. Campion, at the General Council offices at 85 St. Clair, to help find employment. As a Deaconess there was no requirement to be settled, but when Eleanor made the decision to return to work in Saskatchewan, Mrs. Campion helped her to discern the church of greatest need. There was no interview and “the paper work was very minimum”.

Eleanor arrived at Third Avenue United Church in North Battleford to find that she was the only woman serving in ministry in the Battleford Presbytery. Although she did not have a vote in presbytery, Deaconesses didn't have that privilege, she felt welcomed by her colleagues in ministry, and the local ministers' wives went out of their way to make sure she wouldn't feel isolated. She was often invited to smaller towns around for Sunday dinner with the minister and his family, and at the Annual Meeting of Conference, when the graduates of different Theological Colleges would meet for lunch, the graduates of the United Church Training School would always be included with Emmanuel College. Ministry in North Battleford meant she had to purchase her first car. She was grateful that, “in those days, the United Church Training School lent us (graduating Deaconesses) some of the money to buy our cars when we first started, which was quite remarkable, and then we paid them back.” During her time at North Battleford she worked in a ministry team of two or three where her primary responsibility was Christian Education with a Sunday School of over 500, more than 125 girls in CGIT plus Explorers, Hi-C, College & Careers groups. It was a busy and enriching time to be in ministry there. After four years of this ministry she decided to act on her belief in education and continue her own learning journey towards completing a degree in Education at the University of Saskatchewan. During this year of schooling back in Saskatoon, she continued to be called upon to conduct worship or Christian Education workshops in both Battleford and Saskatoon Presbyteries. In 1967, with her Bachelor of Education completed, she accepted a call to be part of a team ministry at St. Martin's United Church in Saskatoon as, what they called, a Congregational Worker. St. Martin's proved to be a challenging and growing ministry as Eleanor describes.

It meant “twelve years of constant growth and change for me. They had a program for the ministers, which was rather interesting. They looked at the minister. They said, if you have to describe the minister in one word, it's 'resource'. The minister is a resource to Christians in the congregation to do ministry, and if you renew the minister, then you renew the entire congregation. This wasn't your typical continuing education of today, when ministers sit down and think of what they'd like to take, and go off and register for it. This was sitting with a group of people and saying, 'Where is this congregation going? Where is it in need? Where do we need more resources?' As an example, prior to Eleanor's time there, Ken Wotherspoon, the minister with whom she was working, had been sent to the



East Harlem Protestant Parish to find out how they ministered in East Harlem, that very poor part of New York in those days. Ken came back convinced that to build a sanctuary was an obsolete idea, better to hire staff, and to have places where people could come, an idea that St. Martin's embraced.

The most memorable of Eleanor's Renewable Resource experiences sponsored by St. Martin's United Church began with a solo trip to Belize (then the British Honduras) and Ecuador to be immersed in the just beginning North-South dialogue and experience the role of the Christian Church in those places. "It's quite something; going to someplace where you don't know anybody. You don't speak the language and you've got these great goals for yourself of what you're going to learn about what we called in those days the Third World, this Developing World around us....My horizons were tremendously enlarged." says Eleanor.

On another occasion in the early 1970's, St. Martin's arranged for Eleanor to live in Winnipeg for a time at a Marymound Group Home for "acting out" girls. These were girls outside the law, who, instead of jail time, were confined to a Group Home. The goal was for Eleanor to get to them know them, how they thought and acted and how they could be helped.

Another ambitious Renewable Resource experience planned for Eleanor by St. Martin's had to be cut short when she, and a laywoman from the church travelling with her, were denied entry into Nigeria en route to Ghana, and deported to London, England. As Eleanor says, "It was one of the most unsettling and frightening times in my life. It never occurred to us to bribe the customs officials."

While serving at St. Martin's, Eleanor found herself called upon more and more to do all aspects of ministry, including leading worship, preaching, and pastoral care, as well as Christian Education. For two years, first while her ordained minister team mate returned to further studies for a year, and a second year when the congregation was seeking a new ordained minister, Eleanor was on her own in ministry with this active congregation. As she says, "In those days we had something like forty weddings a year at St. Martin's. Well can you imagine how delighted the neighboring ministers were? Forty times on Saturday afternoon they had to come and stand beside me while I conducted a wedding, or I had a wonderful Professor from St. Andrew's College, Dr. Schnell, as my Supervising Pastor. He came for baptisms and would usually preach on that Sunday. But the congregation saw me totally as the minister." During the second year, the Congregation and Presbytery requested of the Conference a special license for Eleanor to do weddings and the Sacraments. Increasingly, her parishioners began to say 'Why don't you just go back to school at St. Andrew's? It's just down the street. Get the classes you need and be ordained.' With their encouragement and her own love of learning, Eleanor did just that, taking one

course at a time until graduating in 1974 from St. Andrew's College with a Bachelor of Divinity degree.

Ordination was then possible, but a formal Discernment had to be made. Eleanor had come through a transition to a new understanding of her call to ministry. "I was encouraged, and I believed that this was my calling as a minister, to have this. I saw myself as a Parish Minister, not as a specialist in anything, not as a hospital chaplain, not as an outreach worker, not as an educational leader that was on Conference staff or National staff, but doing the work of the actual parish. I liked all of the work. I liked leading in worship. I dearly loved the educational aspect. I found it quite satisfying to do pastoral care and I liked to get to know the people well enough to do it, and I seemed to do o.k. at administration. We didn't ever get mired in too much paper for too long. And I didn't mind the challenge of speaking out on social issues, so I felt maybe I had some of the gifts that could make me a Parish Minister." By this time the Church had changed the way Ordained Ministers were screened and interviewed. "You had to go to a Psychiatrist to make sure you were of sound mind, and you had to have a Medical to show you were of sound body, and you had to go to an Interview Board to discuss your faith." Eleanor was questioned closely regarding her understanding of the differences between a Deaconess/Diaconal Minister and an Ordained Minister. "I did my best to explain the different emphasis, and the different education, which in many ways wasn't all that different. It was a difference in amount, how much time you spent on liturgy and worship and how much time you spent on Old Testament and Church History, and how much time you spent on Christian Education. But we all have all of it. I explained that, in my view, we have a common ministry: a ministry of commitment and service; a ministry to care for God's people in the particular place in which we happen to be." The question of settlement was raised, as settlement was a compulsory requirement for ordination, i.e. to be available to go and serve where the church needed you and chose to send you to minister for a minimum of three years. However, Eleanor didn't feel her work in ministry at St. Martin's was done and preferred to defer ordination to a later time to complete it, rather than be settled to a new placement at that time. On further consideration of the facts that: she had gone as a Deaconess to Third Avenue U.C. in North Battleford, not as a formal settlement, but in response to the discerned need of the church and served there for four years; and that she was well-experienced in life in the rural church and communities, Saskatchewan Conference decided to proceed with ordination in 1974. Eleanor carried on her last five years of twelve served in ministry at St. Martin's with little changed, except that the congregation no longer had to apply for a special license for her to perform weddings or the Sacraments of Communion and Baptism.

In making this transition, Eleanor felt supported by her diaconal classmates who rejoiced for her, and by the small group of women - ordained, diaconal and lay - who were in ministry in Saskatoon at the time. Since that time however, she has sensed a feeling of

disappointment from some Diaconal Ministers within a growing divide. For her part, she continues to believe that “All of us, men and women, diaconal, lay and ordained, who choose to serve in ministry have a huge job in the world today, and we need one another, and we need the whole-hearted support and prayer and encouragement of others and of both.”



Westworth United Church in Winnipeg, Manitoba extended a call to ministry to Eleanor in 1979 which she accepted. She served the congregation for twenty years, until her retirement in 1999.

(Photo: Eleanor’s retirement party at Westworth United Church, 1999)

The Westworth Interviewing Committee was cautious, calling her back for a second interview before making a decision. The issue was that “they didn’t know how the congregation would accept a woman. They had certainly never had a woman, and Winnipeg Presbytery had not had a woman as the senior minister in a major congregation.” The question was “what if it doesn’t work?” Although it had then been almost forty years since the United Church had ordained Lydia Gruchy as the first woman minister, they were still very scarce in the church, even on the prairies where Rev. Gruchy had ministered. As an ordained woman, Eleanor was a pioneer who helped to pave the way and set the bar high for women in ministry in the prairie Conferences. Once Westworth Church was assured by Eleanor that, “The church was bigger than me, and my ministry, and my call, and if it didn’t work we had to be honest enough to tell one another and I would move on”, the call went forward and proved to be a healthy, faithful, busy ministry for twenty years.

Eleanor lived her life in an interesting way. Because she was usually saving money to go back to school or university in her early years, and didn’t feel she could afford to set up an apartment or home, she boarded during her first ministries at North Battleford and Saskatoon, as well as in her student days. This meant she had good meals prepared for her, shared responsibilities with her landladies and made some good and lasting friendships. It was only when she moved to Winnipeg that she began to live alone. The people of St. Martin’s sent her off “with all manner of new dishes and bedding and everything I could possibly need for this adventure of setting up an apartment”. Living alone brought another set of challenges, as “without specific priorities at home, there’s a tendency to just keep working, keep doing one more thing.” For ten good years she shared an apartment with a

friend and companion, Brenda Howat. Brenda was an active church member and volunteer and loved the Church as much as Eleanor did. They were able to support one another's interests, challenged one another's thinking, and together were able to support causes they believed in. Brenda's early death at age 58 was a great loss and sorrow to Eleanor.

She talks of knowing both sorrow and joy through her life in ministry, but joy wins. "The privilege to be a minister is a great joy to me. It isn't something that we deserve or that we merit and I sometimes wonder that I would be called to be in ministry. I've always preached in a textual fashion and there are many scriptural texts that I could give to my life and ministry. One of the hard ones, that yet I think talks about who I was in ministry, is from Luke chapter 12. It talks about to him, or to her, to whom much is given, much also is required, and to whom much is entrusted, much more is required. I've been given in abundance and I've been entrusted with opportunities and with friendships in abundance and I'd wonder if I would be found wanting in my response to those, but I think that there's no question that I was given a great deal and I am aware that when we do receive a great deal, much is required of us. In some ways that has been the challenge before my ministry, and what can I say, I've been very blessed."

Throughout her fifty years of active ministry, twelve as a Deaconess/Diaconal Minister and the rest as Ordained, Eleanor has served the wider church in many capacities and on numerous committees. In particular, she served as Chair of Saskatoon Presbytery, Chair of Winnipeg Presbytery, President of the Conference of Manitoba & Northwestern Ontario, Commissioner to General Council five times, Leader of General Council Youth Forum, and as a Regent on the St. Andrew's College Board for several years and the Chair of the Fund-raising Campaign for the Rev. Dr. Lydia Gruchy Chair of Pastoral Theology, a teaching position at the College. She has twice been nominated for Woman of the Year, in Saskatoon and in Winnipeg.

In 1993 an Honorary Doctor of Divinity degree was bestowed upon her by St. Andrew's College in recognition of her work and service in the church on the prairies.

In retirement, Eleanor has continued to serve the church: as Pastor in Residence at St. Andrew's College; Acting Executive Secretary for the Conference of Manitoba & Northwestern Ontario; and part-time Supply Minister for Knox, Young and Harrow congregations in Winnipeg. She continues to maintain her strong ties with the Presbyterian Church people in Cuba, visiting them last in 2012. She continues to volunteer on the Pastoral Care Team at West Broadway Community Ministry, as she has for over a dozen years, and continues to be a vocal advocate for social justice, and the need for the church and society to address seriously the issue of the inequity of the distribution of our global resources. She is known as a pastor to the pastors, an active and faithful supporter of those who continue to serve in ministry.

In summary, Eleanor says, "When I look back over 51 years in ministry, as both a Diaconal and an Ordained Minister, I feel truly thankful and truly privileged. I've seen the Church change in many ways and what that really does is give me confidence and strength in the idea that, together as a Church, we can face the challenges that are before us at this present time. There are many, and there have been many over the years, and we remember that God is with us and that Jesus is our example and the Holy Spirit gives us the strength and the vitality to carry on, and so I wish I would be around in another fifty years to see where the Church has gone, the role it has served and the difference it has made."

Class 1961-62

## UNITED CHURCH TRAINING SCHOOL

*in affiliation with*  
EMMANUEL COLLEGE  
*in*  
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*Edith*

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## Appendix

### ELEANOR LOUISE GEIB LIFE LINE

- born July 27, 1936 in Miniota, Manitoba
- raised in Conquest, Saskatchewan
- graduated High School 1955
- graduated Teacher's College, Saskatoon 1956
- 1956-57 taught grades 1,2 & 3 in McRorie, Saskatchewan
- 1957-58 attended University of Saskatchewan – Standard Teacher's Certificate
- 1958-60 taught school in Lucky Lake, Saskatchewan
- 1960 attended United Church Training School, Toronto, Ontario
- 1962 Graduated and designated as a Deaconess
- 1962-66 Served Third Avenue United Church, North Battleford, Saskatchewan
- 1966-67 attended University of Saskatchewan - Bachelor of Education Degree
- 1967-79 Served at St. Martin's United Church, Saskatoon, first as a Deaconess
- 1974 Bachelor of Divinity Degree after studying part-time at St. Andrew's College
- 1974 Ordained and continued in ministry at St. Martin's UC, Saskatoon
- 1979 accepted a call to ministry at Westworth UC, Winnipeg, Manitoba
- 1993 Honorary Doctor of Divinity Degree bestowed by St. Andrew's College, Saskatoon
- 1999 Retirement from ministry
- In retirement served as:
  - Pastor in Residence at St. Andrew's College
  - Acting Executive Secretary of Conference of Manitoba & North Western Ontario
  - Part-time Retired Supply Minister at Knox UC, Harrow UC, and Young UC
- Volunteer Work:
  - Twelve Years on the Pastoral Care Team at West Broadway Community Ministry
- Numerous other church committees and pastoral care work
- Nominated twice for Woman of the Year, once in Saskatoon and once in Winnipeg
- Church Offices held:
  - Chair of Saskatoon Presbytery
  - Chair of Winnipeg Presbytery
  - President of Conference of Manitoba & North Western Ontario
  - Commissioner to General Council five times
  - Leader of General Council Youth Forum
  - Regent on St. Andrew's College Board for several years and Chair of the Fund-raising Committee for the Rev. Dr. Lydia Gruchy Chair of Pastoral Theology

*This Biography was written by Rev. Patricia Wotton, Winnipeg, after a series of interviews with Eleanor in November 2012. The project was sponsored by Making Room for Women, The United Church of Canada Archives Winnipeg.*

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