

**Barbara Brown Zikmund**  
**Church Historian/Historiadora de la Iglesia**  
**Theological Educator/Educadora Teológica**



1. Getting to Know You/Conociéndote

Name/Nombre: Barbara Brown Zikmund

Antoinette Brown Award/A.B. honor:  
2005

Birthday/Fecha de nacimiento:  
1939

Place of Birth/Lugar de nacimiento:  
Michigan

Hair Color/Color del cabello:  
Brown/Castaño

Eye Color/Color de ojos:  
Brown/Castaño

Siblings/Hermanos o hermanas:  
One sister/Una hermana

Birth Order/Orden de nacimiento:  
First child/Primera

Favorite school subject/Asignatura favorita:  
History/Historia

I enjoy/Disfruto: Reading, singing, cello, school newspaper,  
speech, interpretive reading/Leyendo,  
cantando, tocando el violoncelo, el periódico  
escolar, dando conferencias, la lectura  
interpretativa

I admire/Admiro: Father, youth pastor, husband/A mi padre,  
a pastores y/o pastoras de la juventud, a mi  
esposo

2. *Dad encouraged me to think and to do unconventional things.*

All that she is and all she has done Barbara has filtered through her love of history and her love of the church. Both began at home. Her father, Henry D. Brown, was Director of the Detroit Historical Museum for thirty years:

“Dad loved history. Sometimes when people ask how I got interested in history, I joke that it was genetic. We simply could not drive down a road without stopping to read historic markers. Family vacations were trips into American history. My sister and I would read up and study the itinerary so that at every stop we could refer to books, maps, and background material. When we went west, we followed the Oregon Trail. When we went south, we charted the ‘underground railroad.’ We always met interesting people.”

“My mother was a stay at home mom whom I loved. In my childhood, women were not to work outside of the home. I wanted to be and do more than what she was. She wanted that for me. She encouraged me in her own quiet way.”<sup>1</sup>

Barbara’s family was involved with church. Her mother played the organ and her father was a baritone soloist. Helen Brown became a “ruling elder” in the Presbyterian Church before Barbara was born and her dad joked that she was “elder Brown.” Years later Barbara learned that her mother was one of the earliest laywomen ordained in the Detroit Presbytery.

3. *I had to figure out who Jesus was and how I was part of the faith story that my Jewish friends shared but also did not share.*<sup>2</sup>

Despite their commitment to the Presbyterian Church, her parents felt that the family should relate to one church. When Barbara started attending the youth program where the Protestant youths gathered, her parents changed their membership to Mayflower Congregational Church in Detroit.

From fourth grade through high school the Browns lived in a neighborhood that was over 95 percent Jewish. The rigorous academic competition of her Jewish schoolmates challenged and stretched her. The high school was huge (5,000 students), but non-Jewish students had no social standing. Living as an outsider (a “gentile”) was a painful experience. She says,

“I still burn with the anger I felt when one of my best friends told me she could no longer do things with me because her parents required her to be with her people. I had a good education, in many ways, but church was where my social and personal self was nourished.”

In seventh grade, she started attending the youth program where Protestant youths from many nearby churches gathered on Sunday evenings. She was full of questions about what it meant to be a Christian. Her parents had met at church and they encouraged her. Soon thereafter, the whole family changed their membership to Mayflower Congregational Church.

#### 4. *Mayflower Congregational allowed me to be myself – body, mind, and spirit.*

At Mayflower, she found a youth pastor who took her questions seriously. She says,

“. . . He dealt with this lanky, socially limited, teen-aged girl. I would spend hours with him talking about Jesus and scripture. He gave me courage to doubt. He asked me to dance at our Sunday evening Pilgrim Fellowship meetings. Sure, I was a teenager and I had a crush on him. So did everybody else.”

“At the same time, he affirmed my intellectual journey and celebrated my desire to work in the church. He encouraged me to think about ministry. He gave me opportunities to preach, to write, to imagine some form of service in the church.”

That pastor remembers her well. One time when they were driving home from a youth meeting, the group stopped at a Dairy Queen. He remembers Barbara asking: “How do you dare speak for God and Jesus?”

“I was doing some hard thinking on my walk to pick up the hot fudge sundaes and I replied as we ate them: “I do it very humbly; sometimes not too well, and always with a lot of prayer!”

That youth pastor was the first person ordained at Mayflower. Barbara was the second. When she asked him to preach at her ordination in 1964, his title was “Barbara, How Do You Dare?”<sup>3</sup>

#### 5. *Barbara, How Do You Dare?*

Barbara wrestled with her call to ordained ministry for almost ten years. She knew she wanted to work for the church – maybe as a missionary or an educator. When people asked what she was going to do vocationally,

she told them she was going to seminary. "I wasn't really sure what I was going to do," she said, "but church was my life and I didn't want it to stop."

During eleventh grade, she got a recruitment questionnaire from the Congregational Christian Churches national office. She had never met a female minister, although she had read a book about one when she was fourteen. She wrote to the national office in Boston and asked them to send her the names of some ordained women. She remembers,

"With the brashness of a fifteen-year-old, I wrote to those women. I wanted to know how they 'discovered' their call to ministry and what the problems and blessings of ordained ministry for women were."

Two women, whom she met years later, took her seriously. "In gratitude," Barbara says, "when I meet anyone who is considering ministry seriously I give as much help as I can."

One of those women wrote:

"I do not want to build up the idea in your mind that it is any more difficult for a woman to be an ordained minister than to be an engineer. . . . We must never think of ourselves as being discriminated against, but we must face the fact that it is not always easy to be a pioneer. . . . None of us as we approach this type of work has any visions of grandeur, but we rather have an ideal of service, and making our lives count for something."<sup>4</sup>

The other woman warned Barbara about attempting to be wife, mother, and minister all at the same time. She wrote:

"If she is married, she owes her first duty to her husband. If she is a minister, she owes her first duty to her church. There may be exceptional cases where she can be both, but they are rare indeed. . . . [A woman minister should not further her] own career at her husband's expense."<sup>5</sup>

Barbara was discouraged by these words. They haunted her for years. Yet, with the optimism of youth, she still believed that it was possible to do it all.

6. *I was very clear that if Joe and I were to think about marriage I was still to go to seminary.*<sup>6</sup>

In 1957, Barbara enrolled in a small liberal arts school founded by the Congregationalists. Building on her exposure to Judaism, she took

courses in other religions. She explored mission thinking and struggled with Christian claims to exclusive truth.

During her first year at college, she met Joseph Zikmund, a junior political science major. By the end of that year, Joe began talking about a long-term relationship. Barbara resisted.

“It was too early to settle on one man. Besides, I was becoming surer that I wanted to go to seminary and be ordained. I presumed that getting serious about marriage was a threat to my emerging clarity about my call to ministry. I was enjoying my newfound social life too much to be tied down to one person too quickly. I told Joe, ‘no.’”

They went their separate ways for a year, but during the summer after Joe graduated, the couple corresponded. When they met again in August, there was a new chemistry in their relationship. Joe wanted to teach at college level, and Barbara began to think about campus ministry. By Thanksgiving, they had made the decision that her husband has since called “the bargain.”

“We would get married and would not compromise either of our career goals. Furthermore, we would not get married until I graduated from college.” The bargain was unusual. Many of her female classmates scaled down or gave up their career goals when they married. Barbara did not. “Joe Zikmund has been a quiet force. He jokes that our marriage turned out different, but he never second guesses our decisions.”<sup>7</sup>

“As a college senior,” she remembers, “one week I was planning to do campus ministry or teach in a seminary (after all I was marrying a college professor). The next, I was feeling a deep call to ministry in the local church.”

August 26, 1961 finally came. After their wedding, Joe and Barbara packed up a U-Haul trailer and headed for Durham, NC and the adventure of marriage, graduate schools, and two careers. “I was very clear that I was going to do it all,” she says.

### 7. *I refused to be tracked into a “woman’s job.”*



At Duke University, several church history professors became her mentors. “They were wonderful history teachers who encouraged my scholarship.” After one semester as a special student, she also found “the inner strength and the external affirmation” to claim her calling to prepare for ordination. There were only three women enrolled in the pre-ordination program. Most

women in the Divinity School were there to get training in Christian education. “The joke was that they were also hoping to find a husband.” As a married woman,” she says, “I was not looking for a husband and I was able to relate to the situation with incredible freedom.”<sup>8</sup>

During that first year in seminary, she read Valerie Saving Goldstein’s feminist critique of “male theology,”<sup>9</sup> Betty Freidan, and Mary Daly. “Slowly,” she said, “I became a feminist. Yet I was not an ideological feminist I was a pragmatic feminist.”<sup>10</sup> She also became more and more aware that history provided the framework for her call to ministry.

### 8. *Have you...? Were you...? Do you think that...?*<sup>11</sup>

As seminary and marriage unfolded, Barbara still wondered how being a wife and mother fit with her call to ministry. In 1962, she saw an article about a UCC clergywoman who had been ordained in 1935. She was a minister, wife, and mother. Barbara mailed her a list of questions:

1. Have you always combined an active ministry with marriage?
2. Were you active during your son’s childhood?
3. When in your career was he born?
4. Do you or did you have any household help during your career? (particularly when your son was small)
5. How have you and your husband’s vacations been able to adjust to moves and to other pressures?
6. How much part does your husband take in the church you serve? Is there ever any danger of people considering him the minister?
7. How do you divide your time between these two loyalties of family and church and which comes first in a squeeze?
8. What advantages and disadvantages do you encounter as a woman minister? In preaching, pastoral work, etc.
9. What kind of social and community pressures do you feel play on a female rather than a male ministry? What ways have you coped with these pressures?
10. Do you think a woman in the ministry should and can work more effectively in education, women’s organizations, and interdenominational or denominational groups, than in an active preaching ministry? Advice???

Once again, a busy woman minister responded:

#4: I have never had household help – not even from my husband, who is allergic to all but dish-washing!

#9: In the matter of social and community pressures, a woman minister is under constant surveillance ... inevitably criticized. She is expected to act as a minister's wife as well as a minister. If you are even moderately good looking, be prepared for female jealousy.<sup>12</sup>

Barbara decided that it was possible to do it all.

9. *They were confident that I would find a recognized way to carry out my ministry.*

Barbara started undergraduate college in 1957. In that same year the United Church of Christ was born, bringing together diverse streams of church history. Also in 1957, the Detroit Metropolitan Association of Congregational Christian Churches (pre-UCC) took her "under care." Barbara remained "in care of Association" for the next seven years.

By 1964, she had completed the theological degree qualifying her for ordination. Although she did not have an immediate "call" to serve in a situation where ordination was needed, the Association wanted to ordain her. They were convinced that God was calling her to ministry. So, on September 13, 1964 she returned to Detroit and was ordained in Mayflower Congregational United Church of Christ. No one knew what campus might be blessed with her ministry, but she was ready. Thinking back on that day, Barbara reflects:

"Having a call" was not the rigid prerequisite to ordination that it later became. My local church and the association that had walked with me for seven years wanted to ordain me. By the time I completed seminary I wanted to be ordained. For me, a call to ordained ministry always comes through community. So when they suggested that we move to ordination, I took that as a Divine blessing.

Reviewing her ordination paper forty-six years later, Barbara says, "The substance of my faith remains grounded in these seventeen pages. It is what I believed then and it is what I continue to believe now."

One does not choose the ministry, it chooses you....The setting apart of a few to full-time Christian service is a functional not a value judgment. The calling to the ministry is not qualitatively any better than that of many other vocations, it is simply different.

- Ordination Paper, "Call and Ministry"<sup>13</sup>

10. *It was risky, but I might be able to do it.*

As Barbara approached graduation from seminary, Joe finished his doctorate and was offered a one-year appointment to teach at Duke. They would stay in Durham, NC for one more year. Barbara had taken many doctoral seminars as a seminarian. She began to wonder:

“What would it take to do a Ph.D.? I figured that as long as I was married to a college professor, my ministry would be in an academic community. I also knew that having a doctorate would enhance my chances of getting a job on any campus. I did not want to teach, I just wanted to get the ‘union card.’”

“I talked it over with the graduate studies director. He told me that if I took intensive languages in the summer, one more year of course work, I could sit for my comprehensive exams at the end of the next summer. It was an insane plan, but it was possible. I went into high gear and passed my exams fifteen months later – a few weeks before we left town. All I had left to do was a dissertation.”

11. *How serious are you about a career anyway?*

In the summer of 1965, Barbara and Joe moved to Philadelphia where Joe had a new appointment at a university there. Barbara worked on her dissertation at the Presbyterian Historical Society, gathering material about a 19<sup>th</sup> century frontier pastor/educator who ended up the first president of Oberlin College from 1835-1850.<sup>14</sup> While she worked on her research, she also taught history and religion at several small colleges in southeastern Pennsylvania. Her husband’s teaching career flourished:

“We had money. We went to Europe. We joined a nearby church and found many friends there. But I began to falter in my drive to get the doctorate. I stopped working so hard. We got a dog. I began to think about having a baby.”

“Joe refused to let me give up. I complained that I was tired of school and I did not need a doctorate to be a campus minister. Joe pushed me. I needed to complete what I had started. I am sure that I would not have finished without his support and gentle pressure. Finally in 1969, four years later, I returned to Duke for my oral defense.”

Barbara valued her husband’s support then and continues to do so. She wrote in her ordination paper, “When I falter under pressures of social custom and wonder if it is worth it, Joe is the one who gives me courage to be myself.”



12. *Yes, I do want to have a child.*

In 1969, Barbara was almost 30. The Zikmunds decided to move back to the Midwest and Joe found a new political science position at a small mid-western college 100 miles from Detroit. They had been married for eight years. Did she want to have a child? The women's movement encouraged her to claim a career alongside the more traditional experiences of women:

“Our son was born that first fall in Michigan. Motherhood was a humbling experience. In my blossoming feminism, I was surprised to discover the emotional capacity to be a good mother. I had no job, no dissertation, and no confidence about a professional future for me. For the time being, I enjoyed my nearby relatives and discovered that Joe shared parenting responsibilities without malice.”

Tragically, within months of their move Barbara's father died suddenly. She took her baby and went to Detroit to support her mother. Not only did she wrestle with her identity as a new mother, she entered into her mother's struggle “to cope, to take care of the car, to manage her finances, and to live her life as a full human being.”

“I became a feminist that year. I saw things about women's lives and socialization with new clarity. I confronted the real joys and pressures of mothering, and I saw the plight of many women who are victims because they lived out their days the way they were 'supposed to.' In that year, I became committed to helping women deal with the realities of an unjust world.”

For the next three years, she created jobs for herself in that small college town. In 1971, she became Co-Director of Women's Programs in Continuing Education at the college. She developed a program of “Life Review” for older women students. She served interim pastorates, did abortion counseling when it was still illegal, and she got elected to the city council, serving as mayor pro tem.

Joe enjoyed teaching and became chair of his department, but it was becoming clear that the college was not open to hiring them as an academic couple. Barbara had never envisioned herself as a professor, but in the early 1970s more and more women were going to seminary. Teaching in a seminary was a form of campus ministry. They agreed that Barbara should look for a position and Joe would follow. They would attempt to make a two-career move with Barbara in the lead.

13. *I began to feel that God was moving me, showing me a new way to ministry.*

By 1975, opportunities for women in theological education had expanded. Chicago Theological Seminary invited her to teach one course and then offered her a tenure track position. They wanted an ordained woman rooted in Congregationalism with a Ph.D.

“Some of our friends and acquaintances were amazed. How could Joe give up the chair of his department and tenure to follow her? Their funny reactions to our news implied that if we did this thing there was something wrong with our marriage or with Joe’s professional self-esteem.”

“Talking about making a career move with me taking the lead was one thing, and actually doing it was quite another. I was scared. The financial health of our family would depend upon my earning power. If Joe failed to find a position, what would happen to him?”

Fortunately, Joe found a genuine professional opportunity in the Chicago area. We had done what many people said was impossible.

As the pieces fell into place, their son entered first grade at the University of Chicago Laboratory School, half a block from home. Barbara walked three blocks to campus. Her husband drove ten minutes to the Illinois Institute of Technology.

“I was a city girl and thrived in that pluralistic and dynamic environment. My zeal for history and teaching, my political and administrative talents, my commitment to women’s issues and my love for the church could exist in harmony -- my experience and talents were especially needed.”

Shelby Rooks was the first African-American president at CTS. He knew what it meant to be an outsider and showed Barbara how outsiders need to support each other.

“I can remember sitting in a faculty meeting when our eyes would meet after some white male faculty member said something or did something that sustained the old unconscious but well-intentioned habits. Shelby was not a feminist, but Shelby taught me how to be a forgiving Christian feminist.”

14. *At the beginning of the speech, nobody knew anything about this new professor from Chicago.*

In 1977, Barbara gave a major address before the UCC General Synod—“But I Have Called You Friends: A Theology for the Laity in the United Church of Christ.” It was a watershed event and after Synod she was flooded with invitations. In the speech she examined the issue of inclusive language and she challenged the church to empower laity.

She referred to the child’s game of finding hidden pictures within a larger picture:

“Once you have seen those hidden items, you can never look at the original picture without seeing those hidden objects. So it is with sexist language. You can go on for years enjoying the total picture and never recognize the hidden drawings. But once you see them, you can’t get it out of your head.”

“For years, I gave sermons celebrating ‘God the Father’ and inviting people to become ‘sons of God.’ Somewhere along the way, I came to see how certain word pictures distort the faith. Inclusive language was not a matter of taste. It was a matter of justice. Not to change was even idolatrous.”

Looking back upon that speech Barbara reflects, “I am humbled by its power. Building upon my interest in women’s role, I challenged the Synod to move beyond the dualism, which divides God’s people into clergy and laity. Through the metaphor of friendship I invited the church to rethink its theology and mission.”

I believe that the United Church of Christ can maintain that balance between unity and freedom so necessary to the church in order that the sovereignty of God is not mocked, nor the needs of individuals ignored.<sup>15</sup>

“Barbara has created a climate in which injustice has a hard time succeeding,” says her long time friend Donna Schaper. “She has shown courage in the deed and grace in the doing. She is a seeker of the truth in what has already happened in the UCC.”<sup>16</sup>

15. *I had no intention of pushing our luck.*

To balance “all this new fame” and being gone from home, the Zikmund family purchased a cottage on Lake Michigan, spending many family weekends together in a beautiful place. Barbara and Joe had made one two-career move. Therefore, when Pacific School of Religion in the San

Francisco bay area began asking her to consider becoming its dean, she declined. The Zikmunds were not going to push their luck. However, PSR was persistent. In 1980, Barbara accepted the position, moving to Berkeley with their son Brian in January 1981. Joe followed in June and soon found an administrative position in a nearby small college. They had done it again. At their silver wedding anniversary in 1986, Barbara said:

“Taking risks has something to do with our endurance. I look forward to taking even more risks in the future. After all, I am only 46 years old and my life is hardly over.”

Her first six months at PSR were important:

“I strengthened my ties to Brian, then in sixth grade. I tackled a new and demanding job and found that I could do it. I dealt with my mother’s slow death from a cancer. I preached in chapel that first semester and I asked the choir to sing, ‘Sometimes I feel like a motherless child a long way from home.’ It was true.”

“In my mother’s final days I grew closer and closer to my younger sister. Although I was miles from Ohio where she lived, she became my best friend. Each year to this day we take what we call “sisters vacations”—no children, no husbands, just us. When we are down or when we want to celebrate we call or email to share the pains and the joys.”

As dean of PSR, for the next ten years Barbara worked closely with the president Neely McCarter. “He taught me a lot about people and institutions. I gained confidence about myself as a leader under his tutelage.” She also began to view “administration” as a ministry. When people asked her how she had changed a few years later, she said:

“I have become a citizen of the world. My administrative work, my teaching, my denominational activities, and my ecumenical and international involvements push my horizons beyond American history, American women, and American church life.”

16. *I have developed a special commitment to the history of my denomination.*

Barbara became involved in teaching, research, and writing about the history of the United Church of Christ. While still in Chicago, she contributed major chapters to two volumes of a three-volume documentary history of *Women and Religion in America*.<sup>17</sup> In California, she saw the need for historical resources about what she called the *Hidden Histories in the UCC*,<sup>18</sup> editing two volumes that continue to be important resources in many UCC History, Theology, and Polity classes.<sup>19</sup>

“In the course of her academic career,” says Randi Walker, “she has furthered the study of history and polity of the UCC, encouraging a dynamic understanding of authority for ministry as embodied in the relationship of leader and people.”<sup>20</sup>

Supported by Shelby Rooks, who later became the Executive Vice President of the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries, she worked with a team of fifteen editors for 15 years to develop a seven-volume documentary resource, *The Living Theological Heritage of the United Church of Christ*, weaving together diverse threads of the denomination’s life.<sup>21</sup>

“BBZ, as we fondly call her, is a theologian, an historian, and an educator who is helping us to chart and recall not only our path as women in the church but connecting us all to the living theological history of the UCC.” – Yvonne Delk<sup>22</sup>

Her historical writings reflect the respect she holds for the community of relationship. In her ordination paper, she wrote:

I meet God in the depth of life and there I gain insight as to what God is like.... When I look at history, I see transcendent value and meaning, not the mere chaos of circumstance.<sup>23</sup>

Frederick Trost, co-editor with her of the final volume of LTH, applauds her scholarly precision and discipline:

Barbara is fiercely determined to tell the truth about us, grateful for the grace that marks our life together and unafraid to acknowledge our shortcomings. . . . Her personal courage and the example she has set for others of what it means to be true to one’s vocation have lifted the spirits of all who know her.<sup>24</sup>

Virginia Child, a UCC pastor who served as Barbara’s research assistant for four of the LTH volumes, appreciated her ability to look at “the long picture, to draw threads together and tell an entire story. Many parts of the family had no history written down,” Virginia says, “but because she cared and hunted for materials, and pushed, and insisted, our story will be preserved, in the words of the participants, for future generations.”<sup>25</sup>

17. “She respects and brings dignity to all of our stories.”<sup>26</sup>

My faith is based upon the Biblical message and personal experience that to trust and give oneself to the uttermost in love is to be accepted. So whether [we know] God is tested only by [our] answer to the question, “How deeply have you loved?”<sup>27</sup>

Barbara told the audience when she received the Antoinette Brown Award in 2005, “I did not seek ordination as a response to some second-wave feminism. I was ordained before second-wave feminism happened.” Reflecting on her seminary years in the South, she believes that the traditions of southern hospitality protected her from some of the hostility and difficulties her northern feminist sisters endured. Gracious, even patronizing, Southern habits kept her from becoming bitter.

The friends and colleagues who wrote letters to support Barbara’s nomination for the Antoinette Brown award celebrate her compassion and advocacy for women.<sup>28</sup>

“She has paved the way for many women who are now teaching in seminaries around the world. Her support is thoughtful, truthful, and even painful, but always given with the deepest respect and care for our ministries and our personhood. She has always been willing to take up very tough issues and to confront them.” -- Lynn Rhodes<sup>29</sup>

“Barbara is a vivid model of an ordained woman who broke through the glass ceilings kept in place by a liberally benign but still very patriarchal church. She did that with grace and integrity, never with rancor or mean-spiritedness, but always with strength and determination that are so much a part of her fidelity and character.” - Clyde Steckel<sup>30</sup>

As Barbara learned more about the interconnections between racism, class, and sexism, she became intentional about affirming the ministries of women and retrieving the stories of women. “I did not set out to do research on women. In fact, I thought that was kind of tracking me in a way I did not want to go.”<sup>31</sup>

Yet, many people agree with Marilyn Breitling that BBZ’s ability to capture the rhythms of life around her, and share them with all of us in language that is thoughtful, theologically true, and unambiguous is a gift. Early in her career, she sought out and told stories about women, persons of color, and the laity in a clergy dominated church hierarchy.

“She saw the strength and power of the early women’s organizations, and preserved their story for those of us who would follow. She spoke with clarity and plain language meant to be understood by all. She modeled for us the earliest and most grace filled attempts to be inclusive in our language about women and men. She respects and brings dignity to all our stories.”<sup>32</sup>

18. *I set out to share my faith, to develop myself as a leader, and to be intentional about supporting other leaders.*<sup>33</sup>

In a 1995 radio interview, Lydia Talbot asked what led Barbara to the academic side of her profession. Barbara responded:

“Well, I certainly did not set out to be a seminary president. I came along in the mid-seventies when more and more women were becoming visible leaders in religious communities. I was deeply enmeshed in the history of the church, being trained historically. I began to see that this was a moment in history when some of the past patterns of leadership were going to change dramatically and that I was at the right place at the right time. I began to feel that working in theological education was a very special calling that I could respond to.”

“Throughout her career in theological education,” Barbara Gerlach says, “Barbara made a commitment to nurture institutions and make them vital resources to the community for training ministers and growing the faith.”<sup>34</sup>



During the 1980s, Barbara served on the boards and commissions of many national and international ecumenical organizations, such as the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches. As one of the few female administrators in theological education, she was involved with the Association of Theological Schools and eventually elected as the first female president of ATS. In these settings, her passion for bridging differences among Christians, and between Christians and people of other living faiths, expanded.

19. *“God has shown me that I should not call anyone profane or unclean.”*<sup>35</sup>

At the end of two five-year terms as dean at PSR, Barbara was approached to consider a presidency at several seminaries. Joe was open to another move and by that time their son Brian was in college. In 1990 she accepted a call to become the first female president of Hartford Seminary in Hartford, CT. Joe found a research position with the Connecticut Board of Higher Education.

Hartford Seminary, founded by traditional New England Congregationalists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, was becoming a progressive center for diverse programs dealing with congregational studies, minority and

women's leadership, and Muslim-Christian relations. It was a natural step for Barbara, building on her involvement in ecumenical and interreligious organizations.

Jane I. Smith, Professor of Islamic Studies and Christian-Muslim Relations, says:

“Barbara courageously took on the Board of Trustees. She led the school to hire two Muslim faculty members to develop an Abrahamic Religions program with the University of Hartford and to expand interfaith programs through its Macdonald Center for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations.”<sup>36</sup>

According to Peggy Orr Thomas, a Hartford trustee, “She stressed ‘faithful living’ and did this as a committed Christian.”

“I believe it is not accidental that a woman took the steps that broke stereotypes about the exclusively Christian nature of small theological seminaries without breaking the fellowship of the people who lived within one such small, vibrant, and pioneering institution.”<sup>37</sup>

20. *Radical openness to many forms of faithfulness may be the ultimate calling of a Christian.*<sup>38</sup>

“Barbara has been personally and professionally committed to deepening the understanding of Christians on how to live faithfully in a religiously diverse community and world and of how to build bridges with persons of other faiths to effectively address issues of social and economic justice.” -- Clark Lobenstine, Executive Director of the Interfaith Conference of Metropolitan Washington<sup>39</sup>

In the 1990s, drawing on her ecumenical and interfaith experience, Barbara helped launch the World Conference of Associations of Theological Institutions. She became involved with an interfaith working group within the National Council of Churches, later serving on the NCC Executive Committee, and as chairperson of its new Interfaith Relations Commission from 1999 to 2007.

In 2009, Barbara was given an award by the UCC for her ecumenical and interfaith leadership. Lydia Veliko, UCC Minister for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations, said in that ceremony:

“BBZ has approached her work with the premise that without the commitment to build relationships, all of the tasks we set ourselves to won't bear fruit for long. As she has embodied that approach,

she has infectiously transmitted it to so many in her own church and beyond.”

“She has always pressed the UCC and our ecumenical partners to think theologically about what it means for committed Christians to engage people of other faith traditions with respect and integrity – not just to think programmatically, socially or personally – but to do so in a way that views our neighbors first as children of God, and only second as a representative of a particular faith tradition.”<sup>40</sup>

21. “Her sense of integrity was refreshing to her students and aroused them to new insights.”<sup>41</sup>

After ten years as a seminary president, sobered by the serious illness of her son who underwent a bone marrow transplant in 1999, and disappointed during a nomination process for a national leadership position in the UCC, Barbara made a conscious decision to start a new chapter in her life. Joe took an early retirement offer from the State of Connecticut and Barbara told Hartford Seminary that she would step down in June 2000. She did not retire; she actively opened her life to something new.

The Zikmunds had often talked about teaching overseas and in 2001, they moved to Kyoto, Japan. For the next four years, Barbara taught at the Graduate School of American Studies at Doshisha University as an associate missionary of the Common Global Ministries Board. Joe did some teaching but spent most of his time studying and visiting Japanese gardens.

In Japan most of Barbara’s teaching was in English, except for a few courses in feminist theology with a colleague/interpreter. Robert Mikio Fukada says:

“Dr. Zikmund’s competence and effectiveness in presenting the material to her students was impressive. She established herself as a bridge of comradeship between churches in the United States and in Japan. Japan is still a male-dominant society, but Dr. Zikmund presented herself as a model figure of an able scholar, pastor, counselor, administrator, and simply a Christian personality, transcending a gender difference.”<sup>42</sup>

22. *I believe that the good news of Christianity opens windows and gives everyone equal access to divine love and fullness of life.*<sup>43</sup>

In 2005, the Zikmunds returned to the United States. Earlier retirement planning led them to Washington, DC—a city with good public transportation, fine medical care, international airports, moderate climate and an abundance of museums, universities, libraries, and cultural resources.

In retirement, Barbara is active in First Congregational UCC, and she continues to teach, research, and write. Her commitment to interreligious dialogue finds her part of the Interfaith Council of Metropolitan Washington, a Daughters of Abraham book group, an interreligious seminar at Georgetown University, and a research center at Catholic University of America. Every other year she teaches a course on the UCC at Wesley Theological Seminary.

Her love of history and longstanding support for women in ministry continues. She says, “Women are reinventing ministry for the future, refusing old definitions, and reshaping understandings of ordained persons.”<sup>44</sup>

“In a postfeminist world, the church will live wherever communities of faithful, humble women and men focus upon human need, honor the mysteries of life and death, and commit themselves to working toward a better world. This postfeminist world links compassion and responsibility.”<sup>45</sup>

23. *So What about You?*

- “Dad encouraged me to think and to do unconventional things.”

**Who nudges you to think for yourself?  
How is allowing yourself to be yourself  
in mind, body, and spirit coming along?**

- When religious differences kept her friend from her, the hurt Barbara felt influenced her whole life.

**Trace through Barbara’s life her passion to bring  
people together with respect.  
Tell about a hurt or a profound disappointment  
that has made a lasting difference in your life.**

- “Without the commitment to build relationships, all of the tasks we set ourselves to won’t bear fruit for long.”  
Reread John 15:15-16.

**Why do you think Christ used the word “friends”?  
Have you chosen to call someone “friend” when you  
know that will be difficult?  
Say something about the tender balance  
between standing up for what you believe  
and not shutting out someone because  
of a difference of belief.  
Why is exclusion an injustice? Inclusion a justice?**

#### 24. *Church Family Project*

In a group of women of a variety of ages from your church,

- 1) Revisit BBZ’s questions to Helen Galazka. Role-play a possible 1963 conversation between Helen and BBZ.
- 2) Invite someone from your group to read beforehand BBZ’s article, “Women in the Ministry Face the ‘80s”<sup>46</sup> and to share highlights. Compare the 1960s with the 1980s.
- 3) Have on hand for all to read BBZ’s sermon, “Faithful Living in a Multi-Faith World,”  
[http://www.csec.org/csec/sermon/zikmund\\_3817.htm#sermon](http://www.csec.org/csec/sermon/zikmund_3817.htm#sermon). Plan a time to meet again to discuss it.

#### 25. *Still Curious?*

Read from these selected writings:

- Zikmund, Barbara Brown. “Church as Gift Not Accomplishment,” Sermon at First Congregational UCC, Washington, D.C., September 30, 2007. <http://www.fccuccdc.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/10/sermon20070930.pdf>. Web. 5-28-2010
- . et al. *Clergy Women: an uphill calling*. Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1989
- . “Faithful Living in a Multi-Faith World.” Sermon with accompanying interview by Lydia Talbot. Program #3817. First air date: 1-29-1995.  
[www.csec.org/csec/sermon/zikmund\\_3817.htm](http://www.csec.org/csec/sermon/zikmund_3817.htm). Web. 5-28-2010
- . *Hidden Histories of the United Church of Christ, Volumes 1 and 2*. New York: United Church Press, 1984 and 1987.  
[Http://www.UCC.org/about-us/hidden-histories](http://www.UCC.org/about-us/hidden-histories). Web. 5-28-2010

- . "Introduction to Finding Women's Voices."  
[www.UCC.org/women/finding.html](http://www.UCC.org/women/finding.html) Web. 5-28-2010
- . "Remembering Her, Article 1, Retrieving Women's Histories"  
 at <http://www.UCC.org/women/remembering.html> Web. 5-28-2010
- . Adair T. Lummis, and Patricia Mei Yin Chang. "Women, Men and Styles of Clergy Leadership." Reprinted by permission by *Christian Century*. May 6, 1998.  
[http://hrr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/clergywomen\\_summary.html](http://hrr.hartsem.edu/bookshelf/clergywomen_summary.html) Web. 5-28-2010

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, Dr. Zikmund's words are quotations or paraphrased selections from "My Autobiography" presented to Pacific Coast Theological Society, 4/11/1986, which she generously shared for this chapter. Received from The Burke Library Archives, Union Theological Seminary, received 07 May, 2010

<sup>2</sup> To read BBZ's sermon, "Faithful Living in a Multi-Faith World," and Lydia Talbot's interview, go to [http://www.csec.org/csec/sermon/zikmund\\_3817.htm#sermon](http://www.csec.org/csec/sermon/zikmund_3817.htm#sermon) Barbara Zikmund. "Faithful Living in A Multi-Faith World." Program #3817 First air date 1-29-1995

<sup>3</sup> Gene McCornack, Pastor Emeritus, Faith-Trinity United Church of Christ, Warren, MI

<sup>4</sup> Lillian Gregory. Letter to Barbara Brown, 4-9-1957

<sup>5</sup> Wolfe, Edith. Letter to Barbara Brown, 9-5-1957

<sup>6</sup> Zikmund. "My Autobiography"

<sup>7</sup> Antoinette Brown Award Acceptance Speech, General Synod, 2005

<sup>8</sup> From 1972 to 1980, the number of women in the nine leading Protestant seminaries grew from 3,358 to 10,830.

<sup>9</sup> [Http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,827700,00.html](http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,827700,00.html)

<sup>10</sup> Zikmund. "Women in Ministry in a Post feminist Era." Page 235 in Hunt, Mary E., and Diann L. Neu, Eds. *New Feminist Christianity: Many Voices, Many Views*. Woodstock, VT: Skylight Paths Pub. (To be released August 1, 2010). In New Femin\_text 5/26/10 9:39 AM pages 236-237 attached as "New Feminist\_Zikmund in "Attachment." Message to Brauninger. 28 May 2010. E-mail

<sup>11</sup> ---. Copy of handwritten note, "Questions in letter to Rev. Galazka"

<sup>12</sup> Helen Galazka

<sup>13</sup> From "Ordination of Barbara Brown Zikmund 9-16-64," 1

<sup>14</sup> Asa Mahan was an important leader in the "Oberlin Perfectionist" school of mid-nineteenth century Protestant revivalism. BBZ's papers related to this work are in the Oberlin archives.

<sup>15</sup> Ordination Paper, 14-15

<sup>16</sup> Rev. Dr. Donna Schaper, The Women's Fund of Western Massachusetts, Amherst, MA. In "Support Letters"

<sup>17</sup> Rosemary Radford Reuther and Rosemary Skinner Keller. 1981, 1983, 1986

<sup>18</sup> New York: United Church Press, 1987. [Http://www.UCC.org/about-us/hidden-histories](http://www.UCC.org/about-us/hidden-histories). 5-28-2010

<sup>19</sup> Find Barbara Brown Zikmund's online resources for teaching UCC History, Theology, and Polity at <http://www.UCC.org/education/polity>. Web. 5-30-2010

<sup>20</sup> Randi Walker in "Support Letters"

<sup>21</sup> Pilgrim Press, 1995-2005

<sup>22</sup> Rev. Dr. Yvonne Delk. Introduction of the Rev. Dr. Barbara Brown Zikmund at the Antoinette Brown Award Luncheon, General Synod, 2005

<sup>23</sup> Ordination Paper, 6

<sup>24</sup> Trost in "Support Letters"

<sup>25</sup> In "Support Letters"

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- <sup>26</sup> Marilyn Breitling in "Support Letters"
- <sup>27</sup> Ordination Paper, 6
- <sup>28</sup> In "ABrown award support letters and emails-2" Attachment to "Fw: Letters and emails about BBZ." Message to Brauninger. 30 April 2010. E-mail
- <sup>29</sup> The Rev. Dr. Lynn N. Rhodes, Associate Professor of Ministry and Field Education, Pacific School of Religion. In "Support Letters"
- <sup>30</sup> Clyde J. Steckel, Ph. D., St. Anthony, MN. In "Support Letters"
- <sup>31</sup> Read Zikmund. "Women's Ministries Within the United Church of Christ" in Catherine Wessinger. *Religious Institutions and Women's Leadership: New Roles Inside the Mainstream*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1996, 59-78
- <sup>32</sup> Breitling in "Support Letters"
- <sup>33</sup> [http://www.csec.org/csec/sermon/zikmund\\_3817.htm#sermon](http://www.csec.org/csec/sermon/zikmund_3817.htm#sermon)
- <sup>34</sup> Gerlach in "Support Letters."
- <sup>35</sup> Acts 20:28
- <sup>36</sup> Jane I. Smith in "Support Letters"
- <sup>37</sup> The Rev. Margaret Orr Thomas in "Support Letters"
- <sup>38</sup> "Faithful Living in a Multi-Faith World"
- <sup>39</sup> The Rev. Clark Lobenstine in "Support Letters"
- <sup>40</sup> The Rev. Lydia Veliko. From Introduction, Avery D. Post Award Given to the Reverend Dr. Barbara Brown Zikmund, 6-26-2009, Council for Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations.
- <sup>41</sup> Robert Mikio Fukada, Professor Emeritus, Doshisha University. In "Support Letters"
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>43</sup> BBZ. "Women in Ministry in a Postfeminist Era," 242
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 239
- <sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 244
- <sup>46</sup> "Women in the Ministry Face the '80s." Originally published in the *Christian Century*. February 3-10, 1982, p. 113. [www.religion-online.org](http://www.religion-online.org). Web. 5-28-2010

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Dallas (Dee) A. Brauninger. *Antoinette Brown Women: Finding Voice*,  
September 2009