

**Peggy Brainerd Way,
Pastoral Theologian/Teóloga Pastoral**



1. Getting to Know Peggy/Aprendiendo a conocer a Peggy

Name/Nombre	Peggy B. Way
Career/Profesión:	Pastoral Theologian/ Community Organizer/Teóloga Pastoral/Organizadora Comunitaria
A. B. Award/A.B. honor:	1993
Color of Hair/Color de pelo:	very light blond/rubio muy claro
Color of Eyes/Color de ojos:	Blue/azul
Siblings/Hermanos o hermanas:	None - alot of stuffed animals/Hija única – muchos animales rellenos
Favorite School Subject/Asignatura favorita:	History/Historia
Hobbies/Pasa tiempos:	Reading, collecting stuffed animals, traveling and being an observer of basketball and football/ Leer, coleccionar animales rellenos, viajar y observar juegos de baloncesto y fútbol

My friends and I enjoyed/A mis amigas y amigos nos gustaba: Being in band and chorus, talking about boys, going to movies – a special event at that time; belonging to a little social group called "The 4 Anns" – all had the same middle name./Ser parte de la banda y del coro; hablar sobre los muchachos; ir al cine – un evento especial durante esa época; éramos parte de un pequeño grupo social llamado "Las 4 Anas" – todas teníamos "Ana" como segundo nombre

I admired/Admiré a: Eleanor Roosevelt – the only woman I knew of nationally; my father and other high school coaches/
Eleanor Roosevelt – la única mujer que conocía nacionalmente; mi padre y otros entrenadores de la escuela superior

2. **"There's more than one way to look at things."**¹

A woman dean at my college took time to have conversations with me. Among the other people along the way who influenced me was a couple who taught art and English at my college. They introduced me to pluralism and to there being different ways of looking at things than I had learned in my small town.

Until then, I was just kind of going through day to day. I had polio which meant that I couldn't get around much. So I was very much influenced also by people like Sister Kenny, who tried to work at fixing illnesses in the culture.

I had contracted polio in 1944 at the age of thirteen. It was one of the last big epidemics before the vaccine. My whole life in a sense has been post-polio. The last syndrome was fifteen years ago when I started getting weaker again.

3. The Case for Peggy Way's Hardly Having Been Slowed:

- ✓ 1953 Bachelor of Arts University of Michigan
- ✓ 1956 Master of Social Work Wayne State University
School of Social Work
- ✓ 1959 Bachelor of Divinity Federated Theological
Faculty of the University
of Chicago Divinity School
and the Chicago
Theological Seminary
- ✓ 1960 Ordination United Church of Christ
- ✓ 1973 Doctorate of Divinity CTS and Doane College
- ✓ 1979 Doctor of Philosophy Princeton Theological
Seminary

4. Words for Today's Young Woman: A Foundation in the Middle of History

Since high school, Peggy has been intrigued by history. The basis of her grounding, she said, "was partly the way my brain works."

She has an exploring mind. Part of her grounding is what she was gifted with in her own physiology, biology and chemistry that always has her seeing more than most people would see.

"Also at the basis for today's young woman," she said, "is having some foundation that helps one receive and move through all the inevitable changes that come upon her."

It is important to ground herself in a knowledge of history, a knowledge of philosophy – how human beings have struggled since creation to find who they are supposed to be. Today's young woman can choose to be intrigued with different narratives and different historical epochs – to find that intriguing, not threatening.

Peggy's relationship with her parents shaped her understanding of differing points of view:

I am sensitive to people who find an explorative view of the world threatening. My parents were very conservative. They lived to be in their nineties and basically were always against everything I did. They never shared in my explorative view of the world.

From that, I understand how people have real difficulties being open to gay persons, and of being able to sit and talk with persons who have the "wrong point of view" in terms of what you think is the right point of view. How do you love and relate to people who have the wrong point of view?

I am cautious about affirming any one right viewpoint. The human pilgrimage is the need to have a viewpoint that sustains one or that helps interpret the magnificent messiness of the world. Whenever you find the right point of view, you risk being judgmental of all those with the wrong viewpoint.

5. "I never had an intentional career."

The early time of Peggy's career was the big period of training ministry students in urban ministry:

I graduated from the University of Chicago when the Chicago Theological Seminary and the Divinity School were still federated. Right after seminary, during the 1960s and 1970s, I worked in urban ministry.

I always responded to invitations. I spent time on seminary faculties. I also served on the faculty of the Urban Training Center. This center retrained pastors for an urban world. I was on McCormick Seminary faculty until I had a second baby. At that time, the seminary would not allow anyone with babies on their faculty.

Peggy then became program director for Don Benedict and the Chicago City Missionary Society, which was the United Church of Christ mission program in town. Out of that, she was invited to join the faculty at the University of Chicago Divinity School. In 1970, she became the first woman professor at the university.

6. Grandmothers, Mothers and Daughters of the 1960s.

As a seminary professor and as coordinator of the Chicago Metropolitan Ministry, Peggy participated in a recorded conversation with two other Chicago area leaders involved in various struggles for liberation.²

In this conversation, Peggy addressed the complex relationships among women. She spoke about the absence of heroines for the

white woman. She placed women in three categories. The "grandmothers" were a basically healthy generation, she said. They were the women who worked for women's vote. They were out in the streets establishing settlement houses and working on legislative matters.

The "mothers" were essentially a fearful generation. They took most of their identity from white men and the rest of it from being able to produce "socially acceptable kids who had to look like their mothers thought they ought to look."

The mothers may be "at the threshold of realizing what it would mean to be free, but they still aren't really willing to go through with it," she said. Peggy sorrowed over the wasted resource of this "very unfortunate generation." This regret, she said, strengthened her commitment to women's liberation:

If the women's liberation movement is going to be a freeing thing for white women — and then, hopefully, for white men, somebody has to be thinking about how we can say, as Operation Breadbasket [Jesse Jackson] does [with Black men and women], "I am somebody" -- not, "I am somebody because I'm your master," or "I am somebody because he tells me I am."

The "daughters" were the present women's liberation generation. They had no identity images among the mothers. The daughters had "the negative task of ceasing to be the 'wrong somebody.'"

It was difficult, she said, to get white women even to move beyond acceptance of the identity structure of those years and to dare to raise questions. It was hard to move beyond the culturally negative images about the competency of women. This only increased the necessity of women coming together.

7. "I kept looking around with great hopefulness."

As she looked around her, Peggy observed that "white men were uptight":

They are not free, they run things badly, and you get caught up with hostility. Speaking as a white woman — and as someone in the church, I work every day with frightened white men.

Peggy observed a related reality of that era. The further the more active young women progressed in women's liberation, the further they separated themselves from men who were their peers and their age. The freer a white woman became, the less chance she had of having a lifemate.

"I keep looking around with great hopefulness that somewhere I'll find a man who is liberated," she said. "At this time, our culture is not producing the whole and strong white men that women like to have as life mates and work partners.

She saw also that women's liberation would have to figure out that it was not merely against men:

At the same time we really are concerned about the liberation of the white man — and of all people — because we don't want to be liberators who merely oppress another group. Men shouldn't have to be stronger than women. We can work together as persons and figure out our relationships together.

From this conversation, she concluded that "maybe as a white person, the best I can do right now is to try to free up a few people to engage in that creative process."

Peggy saw the few places where people were trying to free up white women. "The church ought to be one of those places," she said. "Women, at least in the white church, constitute about 60 per cent of the membership. Their participation is even higher."

Each time she changed work positions, she had found herself asking if she really wanted to remain in the church. At present, she said, "Here is this place with all these women with whom nobody is working at all."

8. "Sometimes hearts can meet when minds cannot."

Whether she spoke about differences between men and women or differences among faith practices, she saw the task as learning to live together, understanding that differences exist and have always existed. Peggy Way would carry that robust theme throughout her career. It found words as the capacity "to stand each other in our differences."

Community, she said, is standing one another over time rather than calling forth the perfect community. "There is an otherness where

people do not collapse into being just the same but where they have to negotiate existence around otherness."

"As the church," she said, "we are used to welcoming, but we are finding that we are not always the welcome ones. Because of the different interpretations, we seem as strange to others as they are to us."

At a symposium, she reminded clergy that as inclusive church we often seem as strange to others as they are to us. "It is not only that we welcome the stranger," she said, "but we ourselves may experience being out of place because in the diversity of Church, we are not the sole definers of the Church."³

"How do we communicate amidst the very different interpretations of what is going on?" she asked. "Respecting differences is the goal. Listening to the particular wisdom found in differences is the intent and not squelching what does not agree with your particular perspective."

From the University of Chicago, Peggy moved on to the faculty at the Jesuit School of Theology in Chicago. In a recorded interview with a former seminary student, Chuck Currie, she reflected about the viewpoints of the United Church of Christ and the Catholic church.⁴

We must be terrible realists in understanding there have been differences from the beginning. The church has always had to decide how it is going to strive to bring a message in the middle of history. To me, the church is always partly defined by culture – and this isn't bad. That's the way history is.

What church is and what religious faiths and denominations have to do is to reflect on what we are asked to do in the particular given period of history in which we find ourselves. It is not necessarily something we create. We are always trying to figure out who we are supposed to be as a church. The task is to find out what is given and what the bigger picture is.

The history of how the four denominations formed the United Church of Christ, she said, is one from which people can learn:

Look how long it has taken. It is built into our own pilgrimage. When I first was working in the UCC, they were trying to figure out appointment to committees, how many

E's, how many R's, how many CC's did you have to have. To know your own history of your personality, your family and your church keeps you open to what a magnificent and messy historical existence we are created to live in.

What the church has always had to do is show it will thrive and bring in an idea of history. From this we learn to live together through the perennial situations to be entered into by each generation. We learn to not run away angry when things don't change.

9. "From the beginning, the Christian Church has been a work in progress, a task to be accomplished."⁵

The local church, Peggy said in *Created by God: Pastoral Care for All God's People*, "is the one place in culture where diversity is lived and not only preached as God's good gift. Here strangers are viewed as friends and that which appears as threat is made real and worked with through dialogue and shared worship."⁶

How important ordinary graciousness, everyday recognitions, and little kindnesses are for a hospitable culture, Peggy said in the book she had been working on her whole lifetime. Throughout the twelve essays about being creatures in relationship, she exposes us to her artistry of pondering how we can live in harmony with others.

As we try, she said, we are both burdened and gifted by differences. She sets us to considering how we can "see through the eyes of more than oneself." As we are able to do this, we begin to perceive our differences and particularity as gift rather than threat. This, she said, "is certainly practice for being able to receive the many other strangers who inhabit our many worlds." [*Created*, 80].

10. The Invitations of Peggy Way's Career Continued.

Invitations to work continued, she said, because of the Women's Movement, the Civil Rights' Movement and the Gay/Lesbian Movement underway.

"That was all undulating behind the scenes wherever I was," she said. "These were all people interested in church renewal. I was always the first, the only, or one of a few women."

Along the way, Peggy finished her doctorate. "I was working on it all through those years," she said, "a little at a time, here and there."

In 1987, after six years with the Roman Catholics, she became Associate Professor of Pastoral Theology and Counseling at The Divinity School, Vanderbilt University. From Vanderbilt, she went to Eden Theological Seminary.

11. Standing Each Others' Differences

In a writing for New Conversations, Peggy lifted up Christ's prayer "that all might be One" (John 17:20-21) as the hope that all people will know inclusion. "But," she wrote, "let no one underestimate the difficulties of its realization!"

Still, those with heart to hope can participate -- no matter how momentarily -- in places where all belong and receive and offer care, and where the hope of a fulfilled humanity is experienced even as a dream *that must be real* is recalled.

In AIDS ministries and hospice programs, in church-related residential treatment programs for teenagers and those with developmental disabilities, and in movements to encounter and eliminate racism and provide decent jobs, inclusivity intends a public face. Strangers become friends and fellow citizens -- or at least there are moments when such partnership is experienced.

12. "My ultimate goal in all my courses is to help students see little signs of hope in impossible situations."⁷

In 1991, the first full year she was at Eden, Peggy's husband, died in a car accident. She wrote later about this impossible situation:

In an instant he was gone, and I was thrown into the chaos of having lost a husband, best friend, and person who loved my disabled body. [Created, 45]

and

The central issue in considering the dynamics of *joy* is the capacity of human religious experience to receive both awefulness and awefulness with authenticity. [Created, 131]

Peggy remained at Eden as Allen and Cornelia Wehrli Professor of Pastoral Theology until her retirement in 2005 at the age of 74. Her classes at Eden and at other seminaries have been known for their spirited discussions:

In my multi-cultural course, students discuss the different cultures to which we all belong -- and sometimes those cultures are not so obvious. Scripture teaches us to love, not judge. I want my students to know that Christianity must be an embodiment and practice, not a set of statements or words. I encourage them to celebrate diversity because it is God's intention that diverse cultures learn how to hear each other.

Throughout her lifework, Peggy Way has been committed to the inclusion of women, minorities, gay and lesbian persons and persons with disabilities. That ministry has spilled over into regular participation in lay education programs, in ecumenical and interfaith dialogues and in conversation about practical theology.

Among her favorite professional commitments is teaching adults in local congregations. She invites all to claim their role as church theologians. She invites people to talk about things that do not get talked about:

What kind of selves do we have to be to live in association with others, with the perspective of first do no harm, so that cities such as Sarajevo, Beirut, New York, and Jerusalem might at least find enclaves of otherness that respect one another's right to existence without the need to destroy them or force them into becoming like selves? [Created, 74-75]

What kind of selves do we need to be in order to live in harmony with others? How should we think of our identity? How should we relate to the other? How should we go about making peace with the other? [Created, 76]

13. A Theology of Pastoral Care

I am a person who places myself in the perspective of the scriptural story, to stand present with people in the middle of their histories and help them clarify what is truthful and how are they to live or how are they to stand it in the midst of a very complex or ordinary human existence.

Peggy's ministry, research and teaching have centered on pastoral care. She spoke about the threads that came together as her theology of pastoral care. These threads always have included the pondering of "how human beings can stand each other in our differences and learn how to live together – whether it was Chicago in the 1960s or the gay/lesbian movement or the women's movement or just ordinary living when I was working as a therapist and counselor. "

"And always came the pondering," she said, "how does one find enough courage and endurance to live in the middle of history without its having to be a utopia?"

Human beings seem to want things to be in their control. My argument is that we never are. So we create illusions that we are in control. Human issues are perennial. We are not moving toward a perfect world where we have good relationships with everybody.

Even in ordinary experience marriage, families, children don't turn out to what we want them to be. That to me is natural, not bad.

Our bodies were created to die. That's why I use words like courage and endurance much more than I use words like hope and everything will be all right.

In pastoral care, she said, one listens to the other person's story and tries to help that person understand it better, make better decisions within it, maybe find ways to be kinder to other people – even though that person may have been wrong.

I am interested in helping people to consent to the period of history in which they were born. Consenting does not mean that you settle down and say, "Oh, that's the way things are." You consent to it enough to make small moves within history.

14. Statement of the Nature of Pastoral Ministry⁸

Our God,
We are simply asked,
As if it were easy,
To make gentle a whole bruised world,
To tame its savageness;
And how can we tame savageness

Without stepping into the den of the lion?

To be compassionate of all,
Even those people who do not collapse
Into what we want them to be,
To be compassionate of all,
Including ourselves
And, even sometimes God, our families.

And then in the time left over
From this tremendous calling,
At the junctures of history,
Bringing words of grace and dignity
And hope
And holding on to the vision
In the midst of history;

To repeat the ancient tale
Rooted in it
As the source that defines us
As a people
In our places
With the perspective
To repeat that ancient tale

And go the way of God's foolish ones,
Your foolish ones,
Fools for Christ
And not just damned fools,
Fools with a message
To offer to the people
Who come by seeking after us.

Speak to them of truth,
Speak to them of justice,
Speak to them of care,
Speak to them of meaning in history
And not only to speak to them in words
But to touch them and show them the way.
Amen.

15. So What About You?

- Peggy Way talked about her relationship with her parents. To her, they were conservative, and probably to them, she was liberal.

Who in your life has the wrong point of view? For whom is yours the wrong viewpoint?

"How do you love and relate people with the 'wrong point of view'?" Describe how you view things generally.

What do points of view tell you about what truth is?

What are your ideas about how people can work together and figure out relationships together?

- "That all may be one" (John 17:20-21) tells the hope that all people will know inclusion. But, Peggy Way wrote, let no one underestimate the difficulties of its realization.

What does "That all may be One" mean?

Thinking globally, nationally, locally and personally, list several examples of where you see the need to be one.

List some reasons that being inclusive is so difficult.

Give your ideas for communicating with people who have a different perspective of what is going on.

What ideas do you have about people standing each other in our differences?

- Peggy Way wrote about the times that strangers become friends and fellow citizens -- or at least moments when such partnership is experienced.

Tell about a time that you experienced a moment of a stranger becoming a friend?

What does being a stranger or being different from mean?

- Consider the multi-cultures to which each of us belongs.

Name some of the cultures to which you belong.

What kind of self do you have to be to live in association with others, with the perspective of first do no harm?

**What kind of self do you need to be in order to live in harmony with others?
How should we think of our identity?**

**How should we relate to the other?
How should we go about making peace with the other?**

16. Church Family Project

Throughout history, the church has been trying to figure out who we are supposed to be as a church. The task is to find out what is given and what the bigger picture is.

- ✓ Invite past leaders in your church to tell how they figured out in the past who they were supposed to be as the church. What were their conclusions and how did they bring about change in the church?
- ✓ Invite present leaders to talk about what they believe is the present mission of your church. How does that fit into the bigger picture of Church?

17. Still Curious?

Read Peggy Way's book, *Created by God: Pastoral Care for All God's People*. Chalice Press, St. Louis, Missouri, 2005.

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¹ Author phone interview with Rev. Dr. Peggy Way. March 21, 2009

² Joan Brown and Helen Fannings spoke from the black perspective and Peggy from the viewpoint of a white woman. See "Liberation Struggle Generates Tension on Race, Sex Issues" *The Christian Century: The World Around Us*. June 10, 1970

³ Trinity Institute Conference, January 25, 1980. Find at <http://www.trinitywallstreet.org/education/?institute-past>.

⁴ The Rev. Chuck Currie: The Rev. Dr. Peggy Way Talks about her New Book. Listen to the interview at http://chuckcurrie.blogs.com/chuck_currie/2005/08/the_rev_dr_pegg.html August 1, 2005

⁵ Peggy Way. "The Inclusive Church of Jesus Christ." From *New Conversations*; Issue Title: "A Church Inclusive of All People." Summer, 1997. Pp. 47-49

⁶ Peggy Way. *Created by God: Pastoral Care for All God's People*. Chalice Press, St. Louis, Missouri, 2005

⁷ From Eden Theological Seminary. Faculty Bios. Find at www.eden.edu.

⁸ Peggy Way's version of Peter Burn's ordination prayer in "Scripture Today: Handling the Word Rightly." Trinity Institute Conference, January 25, 1980. Find at <http://www.trinitywallstreet.org/education/?institute-past> .

Dallas (Dee) A. Brauninger. *Antoinette Brown Women: Finding Voice*, August, 2008