

Practices of Ministerial Leadership of Korean-American United Methodist Clergywomen; Toward a Wesleyan Ecclesiology in a Global Context

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Statement of the Problem

In 2006 the United Methodist Church (the UMC) celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of clergy rights for women in the Methodist tradition. Approximately 131 Korean American United Methodist (KAUM) clergywomen serve within the UMC.¹ KAUM clergywomen have provided ecclesial leadership as an important part of the UMC since the 1970s.² However, their discourse of leadership style and other ecclesial experiences has not been shared in or outside of the UMC in any sustained or formal way. This paper proposes to fill this gap by examining how the experiences of Korean American United Methodist (KAUM) clergywomen may inform and contribute to Wesleyan ecclesiology in a global context. The same methodology can be used to facilitate other UMC racial-ethnic clergy groups to provide their authentic voice, which will not only break systematic and structural mutism within and outside of the United Methodist but also may inform and contribute to Wesleyan ecclesiology in a global

¹ Presently, none of the United Methodist (UM) organizations are asking for any particular ethnic group identification in their data collecting efforts. Therefore, there is no way to get an exact number of KAUM clergywomen. The Center for Pacific and Asian-American Ministries in Claremont, California, collects the data of Korean American clergy, including clergywomen, for the annual directory. As of July 2007, Dr. Chan Hie Kim, editor of the directory, has collected information on 131 KAUM clergywomen since 2003. In this study, KAUM clergywomen include elders and deacons in full connection, commissioned provisional members, and local pastors.

² Patricia J. Thompson, *Courageous Past Bold Future* (Nashville: General Board of Higher Education and Ministry of The United Methodist Church, 2006), 179. The Reverend Colleen Kyung Seen Chun, consecrated as deacon in 1979 in the California-Pacific Conference, is recorded as the first Korean woman consecrated as deacon in the UMC.

context. In this study, the “global context” refers to a context in which a creative synthesis, of traditional Wesleyan ecclesiological commitments and glocal,³ ecclesial practices of the UMC, has occurred.

Central to this study are these questions:

- *How do KAUM clergywomen understand their call to participate in and contribute to the church?*
- *What are their experiences of the church, the UMC in particular?*
- *How do their experiences of the church relate to their practices of faith?*
- *What role does their ecclesial leadership play for an emerging Wesleyan ecclesiology in a global context?*

“Practices of faith”⁴ in this study mean *living responses* to the grace of God that are constructed with Christian symbols and cultural narratives by individuals’ participation in a faith community that provides energy for their transformation to fulfill their potential to be fully human in the image of God.

KAUM clergywomen’s experiences and understanding of the church may reflect their negotiation process in pursuit of being independent cultural, social, political, and

³ Sociologist Roland Robertson introduced the word “glocalization” in 1997. It encompasses the co-presence of particularizing and universalizing the socioeconomic tendencies without losing the authenticity of the locality (Roland Robertson, *Globalization and Indigenous Culture: Comments on the Global Trade and Glocalization* [n.p.: Institute for Japanese Culture and Classics: Kokugakuin University, 1997]).

⁴ Dorothy C. Bass defines *practice* as “a dense cluster of ideas and activities that are related to a specific social goal and shared by a social group over time.” She defines key components of Christian practices as meaningful clusters of Christian life and doctrine, communal and social in nature, adaptable according to changing circumstances, and expressions of Christian wisdom. Christian practices express Christian faith and shape Christian traditions as communal modes in a faith community (Dorothy C. Bass and Miroslav Volf, eds., *Practicing Theology* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002], 3–6). Rebecca S. Chopp argues that practices carry traditions and at the same time evoke change and transformation (Rebecca S. Chopp, *Saving Work: Feminist Practices of Theological Education* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995], 17).

religious agents between Korea and the United States. As a method of analyzing this process, Paulo Freire's pedagogy of conscientization will be examined through feminist theological and Korean cultural perspectives. The term *conscientization* refers to a process of perceiving the political, social, economic, and religious elements that oppress a person.⁵ As a feminist biblical scholar, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza uses the process of *conscientization/consciousness-raising* to birth an emancipatory-self.⁶ As a Korean cultural concept, *Ja-Ah Bal Gyun* indicates the conscientization process. *Ja-Ah Bal Gyun* is a Korean term for the awakening of an agent from the submerged elements that have prevented a person from accessing an emancipatory discovery of self as an independent cultural, social, and religious agent.

Methodology

Don Browning argued that Christian practices are "theory-laden" forms of practical wisdom (phronesis).⁷ This perspective means that every Christian practice already contains (or rather, expresses) the practical reason of a faith community that is based on symbols and convictions. Therefore, this study documents, analyzes, and

⁵ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum Publishing Corporation, 1986), 88.

⁶ The pedagogical method of conscientization, which is originated from Paulo Freire, encourages women to find a connection between their lives and biblical life (*Leitura Popular da Biblia*) and evokes a desire for personal transformation. *Conscientization/consciousness-raising* is "a process in which an individual or group names and understands the structures of internalized oppression and begins to become free of them" (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways: Introducing Feminist Biblical Interpretation* [Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2001], 159, 208.)

⁷ Don S. Browning, *A Fundamental Practical Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 10.

interprets Korean American United Methodist (KAUM) clergywomen's practices of faith in and understandings of the church.

A "practice-theory-practice" model of practical theology was used to pay systematic attention to the practical locus of the inquiries. Twenty Korean American United Methodist clergywomen were interviewed by telephone, using a voluntary sampling technique to ascertain how they both experienced the church and understood and lived out various practices of faith, including preaching, participation in and administration of the sacraments, preparation for ordained ministry, and other spiritual practices such as prayer, worship, retreats, and journaling.

The study summarizes those findings, provides contextual and historical interpretation, and then analyzes their responses in relation to Wesleyan theology, *MinJung* (mass of people) theology, and the theology of *YeoSung* (women who display dignity and honor as human beings).

Then I turn to constructive, practical, and strategic recommendations based on what I learned from conducting the study of how KAUM clergywomen are experiencing the Church. According to this study, KAUM clergywomen's experiences and practices of faith as ecclesial leaders strengthen Wesleyan ecclesiology in terms of the UMC's efforts to be an inclusive church through connectionalism, and its commitment to social justice. *MinJung* theology and the theology of *YeoSung*, in their respective understandings of the church, broaden Wesleyan ecclesiology and enable the Church to be more relevant in a global context by embracing those who have not been normative theological subjects.

Qualitative Study

In this section, I offer a description of the experiences of, understandings of, and hopes for the UMC expressed by the twenty Korean American UM clergywomen. The Korean American UM clergywomen interviewees reported that they understand the church as an open, inclusive, and transparent community that has the power to transform the world by nurturing discipleship that challenges the inner-core power structure of society. As one interviewee said in defining the church, “The Church should empower people sociologically, politically, and economically.”

Practicing faith was another important concept for being a church. For these interviewees, the church is a visible presence of God in the world, and God works through people. One clergywoman said, “Jesus Christ and we are partners. As God’s ambassador for the world, the church does what God wants to do for people.” The church as a “living example of God’s love” is where Christians “practice God’s love” and “live out commitment to Jesus Christ.” One interviewee defined the church as “love”: “The church is love. What the church needs to do is to love. Injustice is from not loving, failing to love.” In terms of using metaphors related to the church, a few interviewees used images from nature, such as “water,” “fresh air,” and “light.” Some of them also used communal images to describe the church, such as “body of Christ,” “kingdom of God,” and “heavenly banquet.” It was interesting that three interviewees used very clear feminine metaphors when speaking of the church, including “mother’s womb,” “mother’s bosom,” “birth,” and “fetus.”

The twenty women who were interviewed reported that their rewarding experiences are found within the community, such as witnessing a change in a person, serving people from different cultures, and serving the denomination as leaders. They find joy in cross-racial and cross-cultural contexts when they feel acceptance. Their challenges have included racial and gender discrimination within the Church, such as being treated as a token; being degraded because of cultural and language differences; becoming victims in the midst of crude politics in the Church, whereby they are placed in between Caucasian and African American communities; and being expected to behave according to the stereotypes of Korean women. Some of the interviewees shared their marginal experiences that have brought them loneliness and led them to withdraw from active participation in decision-making processes among clergy.

A few of the interviewees find their support from particular organizations in the Church, along with encouragement from their family members. Five clergywomen mentioned bishops and their Cabinets being supportive. Some of them also stated that they nurture their own inner strength through spiritual practices. In fact, reflective spiritual practices such as personal worship, prayer, meditation, silent retreat, journaling, and personal retreat, were quite important to the majority of the interviewees.

Twelve of the twenty cited Korean clergypersons who influenced their ministries (seven mentioned Korean male clergy members, and five mentioned Korean female clergy members). Four interviewees said their clergy husbands were influential. Nine said they received little support and did not know what to say about receiving support from the denomination. However, several of the interviewees claimed that they found new

meaning and life within the UMC, since the Church provided them opportunities to transform their cultural *Han*, which had previously prevented them from fulfilling their potential and responding to their call to live their lives to the fullest.

The interviewees expressed their role in the sacramental life of the church in three ways: (1) they believed that they were *agents of God's symbolic action promoting equality*; (2) they saw themselves as *representations of the priesthood*; and (3) they viewed themselves as *servant leaders*.

Most of the clergywomen interviewed expressed the belief that their presence and different perspectives contribute to the whole of the United Methodist Church. They believe that they provide a different role model of church leadership by bringing Eastern and Western influences together and practicing an inclusive leadership style in a global context. Seventeen of them are bilingual, two of them are trilingual, and three of them are proficient in reading a third language; their multilingual and multicultural abilities are assets for ministry in the UMC. Most of them pointed out that their marginal experiences as racial/ethnic women contribute to the spiritual formation of the Church as wounded healers since their experiences of suffering help them understand church members' struggles.

The theologian Henri Nouwen stated in his book *The Wounded Healer* that one's hardships in life can be a source of transformation and healing for others. The clergywomen's understanding of *Han* has, indeed, enriched their servant leadership so that their capacity to love, forgive, and respect all people could be expanded. Some of them believe that KAUM clergywomen have a strong commitment to their calling and a

robust willingness to serve with sacrificial servant leadership. They also believe that their faith is deeper and their spiritual discipline is stronger because of their marginal experiences.

The majority of the interviewees believe that the UMC has been changing in a healthy and spiritual way and needs to continue to change to take into account a global context. The Church needs to learn to respect people, to be a more spiritual community, and to become a truly diverse body. They hope that the Church will find unity among diversity and be an open-minded, learning community. (The majority of them also expressed their appreciation to the UMC for giving them opportunities to serve through the itinerancy system, which keeps the Church from being overtly discriminatory in its selection of pastors.)

Finally, the interviewees had high hopes for the future of the Church. They have committed to contribute their continued presence, leadership, and the gifts of their experiences to help the Church fulfill its call to be a global church.

Theoretical Foundations of the Study

Wesleyan Ecclesiology

Methodism began as a spiritual renewal movement within the Church of England. Because of this, Methodism has been slow in developing its own distinctive ecclesiology.⁸

⁸ Thomas Jackson, ed., *The Works of John Wesley Jackson Edition CD-Rom*, vol. 13 (Nashville, TN: Providence House Publishers, 1995), 274. John Wesley said, "I live and die a member of the Church of

The doctrinal standard of the United Methodist Church defines the church as follows: “The church is a community of all true believers under the Lordship of Christ. We believe it is one, holy, apostolic, and catholic. It is the redemptive fellowship in which the Word of God is preached by men divinely called, and the sacraments are duly administered according to Christ’s own appointment. Under the discipline of the Holy Spirit the Church exists for the maintenance of worship, the edification of believers and the redemption of the world.”⁹

Randy Maddox agrees with this definition because it embraces four classic marks of the church, namely *unity, catholicity, apostolicity, and holiness*.¹⁰ Russell E. Richey et al consider four different marks of Wesleyan ecclesiology: *itinerancy, discipline, connectionalism, and catholicity*.¹¹ Richey and Maddox agree that the central ecclesiological themes in the Wesleyan tradition can be categorized as *faithfulness, nature, and the mission of the church*. Richey emphasizes that these three are not

England.” He never left the Church of England and was very conscientious about not breaking any of its laws.

⁹ *The Book of Discipline*, 67–68.

¹⁰ Randy L. Maddox, “Central Ecclesiological Themes, Emphases, and Tensions” in “Marks of Methodism: Essays Submitted to the Committee on Faith and Order” (October 2009), 1–4.

¹¹ Russell E. Richey, with Dennis M. Campbell and William B. Lawrence, *Marks of Methodism: Theology in Ecclesial Practice* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005).

separable yet are mutually distinguishable for being a church.¹² Richey argues that Maddox's classic marks of the church belong under the faithfulness of the church.¹³

The nature of the church is well expressed in Wesley's own definition of the church in his sermon "Of the Church." Wesley defined a visible church as having three characteristics: living faith, preaching, and administration of the sacraments:¹⁴ "The visible Church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men, in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly administered . . . In this the words were *coetus credentium*, 'a congregation of believers': plainly showing that by 'faithful men,' the compilers meant men endued with "living faith."

These three characteristics of a visible church are the main guidance when searching for the nature of the Church, and the interview questionnaires for this study were created around them.

¹² Russell E. Richey, "The Faithfulness, Nature, and Mission of the Church: A Catechism," an article submitted to the Faith and Order Committee, July, 2010; and Maddox, "Central Ecclesiological Themes, Emphases, and Tensions," 1–4.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Albert C. Outler, ed., *John Wesley* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 312–13. The unity of the Church is maintained through the presence of Christ in the lives of the members within the Church and through witness of the Word of God by preaching and the administration of the sacraments. The Preamble to the Constitution of the UMC reflects this very understanding of the Church: "The Church is a community of all true believers under the Lordship of Christ. It is the redeemed and redeeming fellowship in which the Word of God is preached by persons divinely called, and the Sacraments are duly administered according to Christ's own appointment" (*The Book of Discipline* [Nashville, TN: The United Methodist Church Publishing House, 2008], 21, 62).

Emphasis on living faith: disciplined living

The United Methodist Church believes that Christians are called to continue to grow in grace, and the church is responsible to nurture Christians to perfection.¹⁵ According to Richey, a disciplined life is one of the marks of being Methodists that originated from the Holy Club.¹⁶ For clergy, to live a disciplined life means “to honor their covenants and commitments and adhere to codes of ethics” according to the *Book of Discipline*, but a disciplined life is more than being obliged to obey the rules and laws of the Church so the governance of the Church will be in good order.¹⁷ Rather, adhering to the *Book of Discipline* is expected and important for all Methodists. Yet, disciplined living is more than being accountable to the *Book of Discipline*. It is also about practicing faith that helps one maintain holy living. Wesley emphasized sanctifying grace as a gift from God, and God’s sanctifying grace works with the human activity of good works. To encourage Methodists to live a disciplined life, Wesley provided specific guidelines to link Christian doctrine and Christian living, such as the aforementioned “General Rules: By doing no harm, by doing good, and by attending upon all the ordinances of God.”¹⁸ “Renewing grace” liberates believers from the bondage of brokenness and restores them to the image of God through the process of sanctification. From this perspective, Wesley’s concept of salvation requires our participation and thus makes it possible; so

¹⁵ *The Book of Discipline*, 47.

¹⁶ Richey et al, *The Marks of Methodism*, 75; *The Works of John Wesley CD Rom*, vol. 8, “The Nature, Design, and General Rules of United Societies,” 269–71.

¹⁷ *The Book of Discipline*, 78.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 73–74.

that we can refer to it, in the words of Maddox, as “responsible grace.” Maddox is convinced that Wesley’s concept of “responsible grace” is the key to his theological activity.¹⁹ “Responsible grace” enables Christians to live through justification toward a life of transformation. This process is sanctification in Wesley’s theology. As a “justified” person, one should pursue the holy life throughout his/her lifetime. This is the process of what Wesley called “Christian Perfection.” Wesley’s understanding of perfection is not a state of arrival but a maturing, gradual work in Christians. Christians are responsible to hold each other accountable in “works of piety” and “works of mercy.” Faith must bring forth good works as its fruits. Practicing faith that is amenable to mutual accountability is the foundation for the covenantal living as a community of faith which leads to holiness in life. Richey ascertains that a disciplined life is about being faithful to the gospel; however, we know that being human, our subjective view of discipline can cause conflicts among Christians due to how they understand the gospel calls them to live; Currently for example, this is evidenced by disputes about issues around homosexuality within the UMC.

Emphasis on preaching

According to Richey et al, “Methodist beliefs and practices have been transmitted orally and aurally by preaching, singing, praying, and testifying.”²⁰ Preaching is in the center of connectionalism since itinerancy literally connected Methodism by preaching

¹⁹ Randy Maddox, *Responsible Grace: John Wesley’s Practical Theology* (Nashville: Kingswood, 1994).

²⁰ Richey et al. *The Marks of Methodism*, 8–9.

points.²¹ Witnessing faith in God is to proclaim our faith in human communities where the Word is made present, lived, and served. The Word of God shapes and informs life together and life in the world: “The Church is the communion of those who, by means of their encounter with the Word, stand in a living relationship with God, who speaks to them and calls forth their trustful response; it is the communion of the faithful.”²² Preaching is embodying the ministry of Christ, who is the Word of God.²³ The Word of God, through preaching, provides “rules and guides for faith and practice” in Christian life; God’s sanctifying grace works through the Word and the Spirit.²⁴ One of the primary roles of preaching within the Wesleyan heritage is teaching of Scripture illumined by historic doctrinal exposition so Christians will go out to the world with vital faith.²⁵ The essence of Wesley’s preaching style was witnessing about “faith” in Christ: when asked, “What can I preach?” he responded, “Preach faith till you have it, and then, because you have it, you will preach faith.”²⁶ However, for Wesley, intellectual, social, and religious elements of preaching should accentuate one’s witness of the Word of God:

²¹ Ibid., 49.

²² *The Nature and Mission of the Church: A Stage on the Way to a Common Statement* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, Faith and Order Paper, 198, 2005), online at <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-commissions/faith-and-order-commission/i-unity-the-church-and-its-mission/the-nature-and-mission-of-the-church-a-stage-on-the-way-to-a-common-statement.html>.

²³ *The Book of Discipline*, 59.

²⁴ Ibid., 67, 69.

²⁵ Ibid., 52.

²⁶ *The Works of Wesley CD Rom*, vol. 1, Journal from October 14, 1735, to February 1, 1737–378, 86.

demonstrating faith and love put into practice through preaching is an expression of practical divinity.²⁷

Emphasis on sacraments

The United Methodist accepts two sacraments that are ordained by Jesus Christ and given to the church: baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism is the nonrepeatable rite of initiation of persons into the body of Christ by giving them identity and mission, and Holy Communion is the regularly repeated rite that sustains and nourishes Christians in the journey of salvation. These are means and visible signs of God's grace.²⁸ According to John Wesley, sacraments are "outward signs of inward grace" and are "sign acts that both express and convey God's grace and love."²⁹ Further, "sacraments are sign-acts, which include words, actions and physical elements" through which God communicates with us in spite of our brokenness, revealing the mystery of how God's grace works among humanity.³⁰

Baptism. Baptism is "a sign of profession, a sign of regeneration, and a mark of difference whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized."³¹ God first enters into covenant relationship with God's people through baptism, the initiatory

²⁷ *The Book of Discipline*, 45.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 68.

²⁹ The Committee to Study Baptism, "By Water and the Spirit: A United Methodist Understanding of Baptism" in *The Book of Resolution* (Nashville, TN: The United Methodist Publishing House, 1996), 947; *The Works of John Wesley, Jackson Edition CD-Rom*, vol. 5, "The Means Of Grace," 188.

³⁰ "This Holy Mystery: A United Methodist Understanding of Holy Communion," 969.

³¹ *The Book of Discipline*, 63.

sacrament, which offers promise and requires responsibilities. The UMC believes that baptism involves “dying to sin, newness of life, union with Christ, receiving the Holy Spirit, and incorporation into Christ’s church.”³²

“Prevenient grace” is both symbolized and mediated in baptism for Wesleyans, and to affirm prevenient grace is also to affirm that the grace of God is freely given to all people, including infants. Wesley affirmed the twofold experiences in baptism, sacramentalism and evangelicalism.³³ His understanding of the practice of baptism was a combination of the practices of the primitive church and the New Testament. For example, Wesley did not specify one way of baptizing people, since it was not specified in the New Testament, so the UMC uses sprinkling, pouring, or immersion in water when administering baptism.³⁴ Wesley also believed that infant baptism was scriptural since it has been a practice of the apostolic church.³⁵ The church becomes the example of “the place where the first signs of the reign of God are identified and acknowledged in the world” through baptism.³⁶ The sacrament of baptism is a “mark of Christian discipleship” that involves a covenant of promises and responsibilities of both God and people.³⁷

³² “By Water and the Spirit: A United Methodist Understanding of Baptism,” in *The Book of Resolutions of The United Methodist Church* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2008), 947.

³³ *Ibid.*, 942–44.

³⁴ *The Works of John Wesley, Jackson Edition CD-Rom*, v. 10, 188.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 191; “By Water and the Spirit: A United Methodist Understanding of Baptism,” 949.

³⁶ Russell E. Richey et al, *The Marks of Methodism*, 22.

³⁷ “By Water and the Spirit: A United Methodist Understanding of Baptism,” 947.

Holy Communion: The Lord's Supper. Holy Communion has six major meanings in the New Testament: thanksgiving (Acts 2:46–47a, “A Service of Word and Table I,” *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 9–10); fellowship through sharing and bonding as a community (1 Cor. 10:17); remembrance (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24–25); re-presentation of the sacrifice of Christ and presentation of Christians as a sacrifice to be used for the redemptive work of God in the world (Heb. 9:26; Rom. 12:1; 1 Peter 2:5; *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 10); action of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8, “Pour out your Holy Spirit on us”: *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 10); and eschatology (“Christ has died; Christ is risen; Christ will come again”: *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 10).³⁸

The United Methodist Church's sacramental understandings and practices today are grounded in the Wesleyan heritage.³⁹ The Wesleyan understanding of Holy Communion is in line with that of Ulrich Zwingli, a Swiss reformer, who asserted that the Lord's Supper is “a memorial or reminder of Christ's sacrifice, an affirmation of faith, and a sign of Christian fellowship.”⁴⁰ In Wesley's words, Holy Communion is “the continual remembrance of the death of Christ, by eating bread and drinking wine, which are the outward signs of the inward grace, the body and blood of Christ.”⁴¹ It is the grace of God available in and through the sacrament, equipping and replenishing Christians in conviction, repentance and conversion, forgiveness, and sanctification: The United

³⁸ “This Holy Mystery,” 967–69.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 965–68.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 965.

⁴¹ *The Works of John Wesley, Jackson Edition CD-Rom*, “The Duty of Constant Communion,” 149.

Methodist Church believes in neither transubstantiation nor consubstantiation. This understanding is from Wesley, who described the Lord's Supper as "the grand channel whereby the grace of his Spirit was conveyed to the souls of all the children of God."⁴² For this reason Wesley was adamant about having frequent Holy Communion, four or five times a week:⁴³ Wesley understood that it is Jesus' command ("Do this in remembrance of me"—Luke 22:19 KJV) so "it is the duty of every Christian to receive the Lord's Supper as often as he [she] can."⁴⁴

Holy Communion is a means of grace, according to Wesley: "By 'means of grace' I understand outward signs, words, or actions, ordained of God, and appointed for this end, to be the ordinary channels whereby he might convey to men [and women], preventing, justifying, or sanctifying grace."⁴⁵ It is God's mercy upon human beings to keep us in the likeness of God by obtaining holiness on earth, so it should be a Christian's first priority to accept and receive Holy Communion.⁴⁶ No fear or business of life should keep Christians from doing so as often as he or she can.⁴⁷

The Lord's Supper is "a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death" in which Christians partake of "the body of Christ and the blood of Christ."⁴⁸ It is a gift of God

⁴² Ibid., vol. 5, "Sermon on the Mount," 338.

⁴³ Ibid., vol. 7, "The Duty of Constant Communion," 147–57.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 147.

⁴⁵ Ibid., vol. 5, "The Means of Grace," 187.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 150.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 154.

⁴⁸ *The Book of Discipline*, 64.

that shapes and molds Christian moral and ethical lives so that Christians will grow in personal and social holiness. Holy Communion is “ordained by Christ” and is “a symbol and pledge of Christians’ “profession and of God’s love toward us.”⁴⁹ It is God’s visible sign of grace, and God “quickens, strengthens, and confirms” our faith through the grace of God, which confirms a sign of community and mutual love.⁵⁰ Spiritual benefits of Holy Communion include forgiveness (1 John 1:9); nourishment (John 6:35); healing that offers “balance, harmony, and wholeness of body, mind, spirit, and relationships through confession, forgiveness, and reconciliation”;⁵¹ transformation (Rom. 12:1–2); a challenge to participate in ministry and mission (2 Cor. 5:17–21; Matt. 23; Luke 4:16–21; 14:7–11); and eternal life (“Those who eat my flesh and drink my blood have eternal life, and I will raise them up on the last day”—John 6:54 NRSV).⁵² Wesley described the benefits of the Lord’s Supper this way: “We shall be insensibly strengthened, made more fit for the service of God, and more constant in it. At least, we are kept from falling back, and preserved from many sins and temptations.”⁵³

As the nourishing and empowering sacrament, Holy Communion is a reminder for Christians that the church is in need of continual reformation and renewal as they are united with each other and with Christ. The symbol of receiving the bread and wine

⁴⁹ Ibid., 68.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 63.

⁵¹ *The United Methodist Book of Worship* (Nashville: The United Methodist Publishing House, 2007), 613.

⁵² “This Holy Mystery,” 971.

⁵³ *The Works of John Wesley, Jackson Edition CD-Rom*, “The Duty of Constant Communion,” 155.

reminds Christians of the duties of stewardship by acknowledging unjust distribution of human resources.⁵⁴ Taking bread and wine, what Wesley called “food of our souls,” strengthens and refreshes Christian souls as they approach receiving them with self-examination and sincere desire to follow Jesus Christ and keep His commandments.⁵⁵

The importance of administering Holy Communion as an apostolic practice has been a privilege and duty of ordained clergy in the Wesleyan tradition and in the UMC. Actually, this is why the Methodist Episcopal Church in America was created in 1784: American Methodists had no access to Holy Communion, since most Anglican priests had left the country after the Revolutionary War.⁵⁶

Dorothy C. Bass pointed out that Christian “practices are rooted in the past but are also constantly adapting to changing circumstances, including new cultural settings.”⁵⁷ Ecclesiology is a fluid concept that is shaped by communal practices of members of a faith community in a changing context. These members bring cultural, social, political, and economical diversity into the faith community. Ecclesiology evolves over time and is influenced by these changing contexts, all of which are shaped by human experience. Albert C. Outler, Russell Richey, and William Abraham all agree that there has never been an official Wesleyan ecclesiology, even though Richey argues that certain “ecclesial

⁵⁴ “This Holy Mystery,” 972–73.

⁵⁵ *The Works of John Wesley, Jackson Edition CD-Rom*, “The Duty of Constant Communion,” 148–49.

⁵⁶ “This Holy Mystery,” 967.

⁵⁷ Dorothy C. Bass and Miroslav Volf, eds., *Practicing Theology* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002), 6.

sensibilities” were implicit in the development of Methodist polity.⁵⁸ He asserts that those “ecclesial sensibilities” were expressed within the Methodists’ organizational and operational levels from the Church’s beginning. They were most visible in the faithfulness, nature, and mission of Methodists. Richey identifies five “ecclesial sensibilities” from a historical perspective: (1) the spirit of catholicity; (2) unity founded in the confidence of love; (3) a sense of a shared evangelical faith that transcends sectarian differences; (4) Methodism being a part of the broader Protestant missionary quest; and (5) the acceptance, even celebration, of denominationalism as compatible with and conducive to a common Christian purpose.⁵⁹ In my perspective, these Wesleyan “ecclesial sensibilities” represent a model of bringing diverse Christians together with a catholic spirit. This model was based on three elements: love as the ethical norm, one faith in Christ as its theological foci, and practicality as locating people in the church’s center of concern. Eventually this model of creating mutuality within an ecumenical circle evolved into connectionalism, which has become the essence of the Wesleyan understanding of church.

This connectional model is evidence that Methodism from its inception embraced a global vision of seeking to be a church that provides an open space to accommodate diversity: “Connectionalism in the United Methodist tradition is multi-leveled, global in

⁵⁸ Richey, *Methodist Connectionalism*, 189–93.

⁵⁹ Richey believes that Nathan Bangs’s *An Original Church of Christ*, in 1837, and Abel Stevens’s *An Essay on Church Polity*, in 1847 shaped Methodist polity focused on practicality of faith that possesses ecclesiological statements (ibid., 194–98).

scope, and local in thrust. Our connectionalism is not merely a linking of one charge conference to another. It is rather a vital web of interactive relationships.”⁶⁰

According to Richey, the Wesleyan motto, “Spread holiness over the world,” proves that the Methodists understood that the realization of world transformation means to connect differences as a global church.⁶¹ To keep the vision of being a global church means to respond to its changing context; what this means is that ecclesiology is ever evolving for Methodists. The evolving character of ecclesiology is expressed best in the concept of connectionalism, which emphasizes confluence, mutuality, and adaptability as a church.

The question is, however, how does the church recognize emerging needs of the world in the current context and offer its responses to the world in a distinctive way? If the church is responding to this question faithfully, it is an evolving entity, because the process of responding will continue to shape the church. Here I do not mean that the church is an entity that is only shaped by external influences. The church’s responses to the world’s emerging needs should be enveloped by the liberating message of the gospel, and the synergism between Christian heritage and contextualization of practices of faith will shape the church of the time. For example, in early Methodism women were not allowed to preach. However, Wesley empowered lay leadership *including* women. His use of lay preaching and his inclusion of women as leaders in bands, classes, and societies were Wesley’s way of responding to the emerging needs of people in

⁶⁰ *The Book of Discipline*, 90.

⁶¹ Able Stevens expanded what Wesley said about the purpose of Methodism, “spread holiness over the land” to “spread holiness over the world” (ibid., 199, 202).

eighteenth-century England. Exhorting grassroots lay leadership was new to the institutional Anglican Church; however, Wesley as a community-centered Anglican priest was willing to try new structures of leadership.

As essentials of the Christian heritage, baptism and the Lord's Supper orient and habituate the synergism between faith and practice; they are the visible signs of God's grace that strengthen and confirm Christian faith and nurture people to be disciples of Christ. Whenever Christians gather as a community, these sacraments of the church should bind them together in spite of discord and differences and release them to go out into the world to serve. From this perspective, Christian sacramental life provides continuous transformation because Christians learn to be bridge builders and wounded healers as disciples of Christ—as a result, breaking stereotypes that create narrowness in understanding humanity.

Feminist Ecclesiology

Theology of *YeoSung*:⁶² Korean Women's Self-Determination Theology

In the midst of a Confucian patriarchal cultural reinforcement in the Korean church, Korean women theologians have developed a theology of *YeoSung* that infuses life into Korean women. The word *YeoSung* means “women” in a respectful form in Korean; *YeoSung* represents women who display dignity and honor as human beings. Furthermore, *YeoSung* theologian SookJa Jung constructed theological meanings of the

⁶² If I translate the Korean term *YeoSung ShinHak* directly, it will be “*YeoSung* Theology.” However, I will use the term *Theology of YeoSung* since it is “a theology from, for, and about Korean women as a particular group of people.” For example, according to John Hart a “theology of liberation” may be seen as a “theology with the liberation struggle,” or a “theology derived from/in the liberation struggle,” or even a “theology about the liberation struggle” (John Hart, August 18, 2010).

word *YeoSung*. First, the word *YeoSung* represents women and men who have been oppressed, in another word, *MinJung*, throughout five thousand years of Korean history. Second, the word *YeoSung* implies the image of an equal and autonomous structure in society and the church that honors freedom and equality, and reinforces liberation. Third, the word *YeoSung* conceptualizes God, who is a source of life. *YeoSung* participate in creation of the Creator God. Last, the word *YeoSung* epitomizes an inclusive and open community.⁶³

From these perspectives the word *YeoSung* immediately differentiates Korean women and their theological construction from Western and Asian feminist theologies. The theology of *YeoSung* is a systematic theological construction of, from, and for Korean women. It represents the self-determination of Korean women, placing their experiences in the center of doing theology, and localizes Korean women's theological particularity. Korean women's experiences have been incorporated by an Asian feminist theology so far without acknowledging their contextual uniqueness. It is problematic to think that Asian feminist theology adequately represents the experiences of Korean women, especially when Asia is such a heterogeneous environment. Korean women's unique experiences include existence under political dictatorship, a disturbing marginalization during a rapid industrialization since the 1970s that was facilitated by the feminization of cheap labor, and living under a constant military threat in a divided nation.

⁶³ Sook Ja Jung, "Theology and the State of the Korean *YeoSung* Church," in *The Church and YeoSung Theology: YeoSung Theological Understanding*, vol. 3, Association of Korean Women Theology, ed. (Seoul, Korea: The Christian Literature Society of Korea, 1997), 259–61.

Theological issues raised by Korean women (theology of *YeoSung*) focus on the reunification of North and South Korea, the empowerment of women to find their identity, and the freedom of Korean women from areas of economic, social, and cultural exploitation. Because of their unique theological and cultural context, it is essential to explore the theology of *YeoSung* to better interpret KAUM clergywomen's experiences in the Church.

The ultimate purpose of the theology of *YeoSung* is to provide healing to Korean women. Healing should occur in three important areas: (1) to recover Korean women's ability to claim their own subjectivity; (2) to resuscitate Korean women's ability to be angry against injustice (according to *YeoSung* theologians, Korean women lived in the shadow of male dominance, suppressing their feelings of indignation, for so long that their ability to be angry has been paralyzed); and (3) to evoke a theology of suspicion among Korean women who have never been allowed to be and even have been denied to be educated theologically, with critical thinking. *YeoSung* theologians believe that Korean women's passive participation in the life of the church has led them to become Bible literalists, believing in a male-dominated literal interpretation of the Bible without critical analysis.⁶⁴ Therefore, theology of *YeoSung* is about conscientizing Korean women about the overall understanding of this oppressive reality, empowering them to acknowledge themselves as human beings who are entitled to social, political, cultural, economic, educational, and religious access. Expanding women's access in all areas of

⁶⁴ SungHee Son, "*YeoSung Theology and the Korean Church*," in *ibid.*, 42–48.

the society enhances the physical and psychological healing for Korean women that is needed due to their prolonged oppression.

The core claim of theology of *YeoSung* is that women's liberation is a part of liberation of all people, including all oppressors. This is a uniqueness of theology of *YeoSung* that is influenced by one of the Confucian cultural understandings, that an individual can never be separated from a community regardless his/her gender. A community is the foundation of all relationality in Confucian understanding. A majority of the interviewees expressed that being an inclusive community is important to their understanding of the church. One of them said, "The church should be for people, including the un-churched." Another interviewee clearly demonstrated the Confucian understanding of relationality in her understanding of being a church. She claimed that an individual's faithfulness is closely related to what it means to be a faithful church. This is why Korean theology of *YeoSung* urges male participation in its theological construction. Korean *YeoSung* theologians understand that there cannot be true liberation of women unless there is liberation of all the oppressed and the oppressor; for theology of *YeoSung* deconstruction of existing traditional theological assumptions is essential.

SungHee Son defines theology of *YeoSung* as "locating Korean women's experience of God and its meaning and value in the center of reconstructing theology."⁶⁵

The theology of *YeoSung* focuses on the following as it seeks to reconstruct theology:

1. Affirming and valuing the unique feminine nature of Korean women.

Theology of *YeoSung* values the feminine role in relating to a community,

⁶⁵ Ibid., 15.

such as being a mother, caring for family, and respecting mutuality in relationship with others, as the assets to constructing theology.

2. Affirming women's bodies rather than using women's experiences related to their bodies, such as birth and female sexuality, as points of oppression.
3. Recovering women's heritage in Korean culture and history that may be found in Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity, to provide a foundation for value and power for Korean women. *YeoSung* theologians have criticized Confucianism, Buddhism, and Christianity as imported religions maintained by male elites who sustained the patriarchal order in society.
4. Pursuing political and cultural changes systematically, not merely addressing issues theologically. Exploring the ways of practicing theology is the key methodology of theology of *YeoSung*. From this perspective, sharing the discourse of KAUM clergywomen based on their experiences of the Church in the American context is tapping an unknown terrain of the strength and faith of Korean women. Their practices of faith will be an example for many Korean women who have not realized the potential of leadership that lies within them due to andro-kyriocentric⁶⁶ practices of the Korean church.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ The word *kyriarchy* is derived from "the Greek words for 'lord' or 'master' (kyrios) and 'to rule or dominate' (*archein*) which seeks to redefine the analytic category of patriarchy in terms of multiplicative intersecting structures of domination." Kyriarchy is a complex pyramidal system of domination that works through the violence of economic exploitation and lived subordination (Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, 211).

⁶⁷ *YeoSung Theology and the Korean Church*, 28-34.

Korean American feminist theologian Chung Hyun-Kyung focuses on women's suffering in her theological work, bringing Christianity and shamanism together through Korean women's *Han* (unrequited suffering). This leads to the discussion of "God as liberator." The root of Korean women's *Han* is a combination of classism, sexism, colonialism, neocolonialism, and cultural imperialism.⁶⁸ From this perspective, Christ is seen as a priest of *Han*, a shaman who consoles the brokenhearted, heals the afflicted, and restores wholeness through communication with the divine.⁶⁹

The concept of *Han* and Korean women

The Korean word *Han* can be described in two levels: personal and collective. Chang-Hee Son defines *Han* as pathos individually as well as ethos collectively: "*Han* is the heart of a person who has endured an affliction, of which the pains, wounds, and scars are not always apparent or visible, because they are the kind that occur deep within the heart or soul of the person. *Han* connotes an affliction of a heart and struggle with a deep emotional or spiritual pain."⁷⁰ *Han* is a sense of hopelessness felt by the oppressed, a feeling of just indignation, or an unresolved resentment against unjustifiable suffering. From a collective perspective, *Han* in the people's collective consciousness enables them

⁶⁸ Ibid., 4.

⁶⁹ Kwok Pui-Lan, *Introducing Asian Feminist Theology*, (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2000), 88.

⁷⁰ Chang-Hee Son, *Haan of Minjung Theology and Han of Han Philosophy: In the Paradigm of Process Philosophy and Metaphysics of Relatedness* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2000), 4.

to form a bond with shared experiences of cultural and historical oppression.⁷¹ As collective consciousness *Han* can be transformed to a dynamic energy that seeks reckoning of the source of suffering. According to Young-Ae Kim and Jung-Yong Lee, *Han* is multilayered social and political suffering that inhibits the community or individuals from realizing their full potential because the oppressed were denied education in cultural and intellectual matters.⁷² The generational differences in terms of understanding *Han* among the interviewees clearly demonstrated the personal and collective levels of *Han*. Those in their fifties and older had a clear understanding of personal *Han*. However, those in their forties and younger would identify their understandings of *Han* with collective experiences of oppression as racial/ethnic women and immigrants in the American context.

According to Chang-Hee Son, Koreans accepted Christianity in the nineteenth century because they were seeking God, who could hear their cry of *Han*. Koreans found meaning and purpose for their *Han* in the context of Christ's suffering, and *Han* became a channel of transformation and hope of their lives. Koreans learned that they did not have to be powerless sufferers of *Han* anymore in the liberating message of Jesus Christ.⁷³ The transforming power of *Han* was evident to the interviewees, as they claimed that their

⁷¹ Andrew Sung Park identifies an ethos of collective *Han* of Koreans in three ways: patriarchy, hierarchy, and foreign intervention (Andrew Sung Park, "Theology of *Han* (The Abyss of Pain)," in *Quarterly Review* 9:1 (Spring 1983): 52–53).

⁷² Young-Ae Kim, *Han: From Brokenness to Wholeness* (PhD diss., Claremont School of Theology [CA], 1991), 10–11; Jung-Yong Lee, *An Emerging Theology in World Perspective* (Mystic, CT: Twenty-third Publications, 1988), 5.

⁷³ Chang-Hee Son, *Haan of Minjung Theology and Han of Han Philosophy*, 27–31.

experiences of *Han* made them stronger, resilient, and courageous in speaking up, even bolder in standing up for justice.

Theology of *YeoSung* also resisted being an auxiliary to either Third World theology or Asian male theology of liberation. *MinJung* theology challenged theological colonialism; however, it failed to challenge heteronormative sovereignty, which is evident in patriarchy in the name of “Korean tradition.” This furthered what Native American feminist theologian, Andrea Smith calls “secondary marginalization.”⁷⁴ Unfortunately, *MinJung* theology places Korean women as subjects for secondary marginalization in their construction of Korean theology of liberation.

YeoSung theologians sometimes are caught between national liberation and gender issues. For example, Sun Ai Lee Park stated, “Third world women must prioritize national liberation together with their men. The women’s issue is a secondary issue.”⁷⁵ This is not uncommon among racial/ethnic women theologians, such as African American, Hispanic/Latina, or Native American women theologians, who must deal simultaneously with nation building in the midst of white supremacy and finding dignity as women in the face of patriarchy.

Theology of *YeoSung* calls for a partnership of women and men, and I believe that the solidarity of Korean males in encouraging the KAUM clergywomen interviewees to fulfill their “call” is a result of this effort. This relationship represents the spirit of transforming community and commitment to building a just society: “Our vision is to see

⁷⁴ Ibid., 82.

⁷⁵ Wong Wai Ching Angela, “Women Doing Theology with the Asian Ecumenical Movement” in Kwok Pui-lan, *Hope Abundant*, 37.

men and women in communities of genuine partnership, with true reciprocity and mutual respect, in communities that care not only for people but for our whole planet earth.”⁷⁶

MinJung Theology

When Korean theologians in the 1970s struggled with the question of indigenization and contextualization of Protestant theology, *Minjung* theology emerged from their analyses and reflections. *MinJung* theologians questioned the relationship between politics and the church as they pointed out problems of the conventional ecclesial reality in Korea. They noticed that political forces that determined the lives of the people had been structurally manifested in Korean history, yet the church had not been involved in their transformation to benefit the people. The growth of the historical consciousness of *MinJung* theologians forced them to seek a spiritual renewal of the church by sharing their theological insights and articulating the oppressive reality of the people. Also, they were convinced that Western-dominated Christian ecclesiologies are inadequate to deal with the Korean Church in Korea’s specific social, cultural, historical, and political context.

According to Yong-Bok Kim, a Korean *MinJung* theologian, the main concern of the ecclesiology of *MinJung* theology is the church’s relations with the people, especially the marginalized.⁷⁷ The key concept of the *MinJung* Church is the inclusion of all people, regardless of their faith in Christ, in the life of the church by ministering to them as it

⁷⁶ Virginia Fabella and Sun Ai Lee Park, eds., *We Dare to Dream: Doing Theology as Asian Women* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1988), x.

⁷⁷ Yong-Bok Kim, *Messiah and MinJung: Christ’s Solidarity with the People for New Life* (Kowloon, Hong Kong: Christian Conference of Asia, 1992).

meets their needs in life. The *MinJung* Church expanded the traditional understanding of the church, which held that the church is there only for those who believe in Jesus Christ. In other words, different from traditional ecclesiologies that centered on the church's unity of faith, order, mission, and service, the ecclesiology of *MinJung* theology, like other theologies of liberation, focuses on critical theological reflection on the social reality of people in its practice of faith. As we saw in the previous chapter, KAUM clergywomen interviewees were very intentional about reaching out to the marginalized. They also take the nurturing and empowering of each Christian seriously. *MinJung* theology will shed light on the understanding of the concept of *Han* related to ecclesiology among KAUM clergywomen. Yong-Bock Kim argues that understanding the Korean people's history is important in the life of the *MinJung* Church since "one cannot think of ecclesiology without the historical experiences of the life of the people of God, for the church is the new people of God, the people of the new covenant."⁷⁸ This is the very reason that this study includes the Korean American immigration history and the history of Korean women's identity formation in the later part.

As Korean feminist theologian Hyun-Kyung Chung has pointed out, *MinJung* theology unfortunately ignored a large segment of *MinJung* in Korean cultural, economic, ecclesial, and social contexts; that is, Korean women, whom she called "*MinJung* within the *MinJung*." Chung focuses on women's historical and cultural suffering in her understanding of the church. Korean women are born in a civilization where they are unwanted at birth, unnamed in society, and subservient to male figures in the patriarchal

⁷⁸ Ibid, 49.

family structure. In addition to being women, they share double or triple oppression because they are socially marginalized, economically exploited, and politically deprived. Yet, Korean women are very active in their women's organizations in the church and educational institutions.

Another criticism about the *MinJung* theology is that it does not have a solid ecclesiology. *MinJung* theologians ask about the nature of the church by asking this question: "For whom does the church exist?" I believe that the lack of ecclesiological structure in its theological construction is a common trait shared by *MinJung* theology and Wesleyan theology:

- Both of them began as spiritual movements in an existing church.
- In each case their theological focus was on putting people's experience in the center of theology.
- Their shared theological concern was integration of faith and practice.
- They both developed faith communities with likeminded Christians—"united societies" for Methodists, and *MinJung* churches for *MinJung* theology.
- Both were concerned about the church's involvement in achieving social justice.
- Both theologies were responding to a contemporary context.

TaeSoo Im, a Korean *MinJung* theologian points out two important characteristics of the *MinJung* church: (1) *MinJung* church is "of *MinJung*, for *MinJung*, and by *MinJung*"; and (2) *MinJung* church is about practicing faith, keeping faith alive in

Christian actions.⁷⁹ This correlates with Wesley’s “practical divinity” and KAUM clergywomen interviewees who claimed to be conscientious about practicing their faith in action as a sign of discipleship.

To review, these three theological/ecclesiological frames—Wesleyan, *YeoSung*, and *MinJung*—will provide the theoretical background for my interpretation of and engagement with the reported self-understanding and experiences of the KAUM clergywomen. While each of these theoretical frames will be examined with reference to ecclesiological questions that bear on the experience of KAUM clergywomen, I will also rely on Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Rita Nakashima Brock, and Robert Hill for the theological, cultural, and ethical implications of the interviewees’ experiences for the church. This will provide guidance to the questions, “What does it mean to be a church in the midst of unavoidable theological and cultural convergence in a global context?” and “How does the church keep its theological integrity and ethical commitment as it is challenged by such vast diversity?”

Unique Contributions of KAUM Clergywomen

In this section I will respond to four main questions that provided the foundation of this study in an attempt to integrate (1) my research data; (2) Wesleyan theology, theology of *YeoSung*, and *MinJung* theology; and (3) ethical and intercultural issues related to ecclesiology in a global context.

⁷⁹ TaeSoo Im, *MinJung ShinHak* [MinJung Theology: Toward the Second Religious Reformation] (Seoul: The Christian Literature Mission Society of Korea, 2002), 138.

Some common themes that surfaced among the respondents' respective understandings of their call to participate in the Church as clergywomen were their practices of being "bridge builders," "strong nurturers," "highly committed educators," "wounded healers," "stereotype breakers," "persistent seekers to fulfill their call," and "respondents of current issues from a theological perspective."

Practice of Being Bridge Builders Who Inaugurate "Interstitial Integrity"⁸⁰

How do KAUM clergywomen understand their call to participate in and contribute to the Church?

An intense and sometimes contentious debate has developed around the identity formation of the Christian church within a culturally and religiously pluralistic context. The church has been under pressure to negotiate the interpretations of the gospel with social and cultural diversity. However, it has not been successful in providing a space where discussions on racism, sexism, colonialism, and economic exploitation can furnish a connection among people who live in a different reality. The concept of "interstitial integrity" from Rita Nakashima Brock appeals to a need for the church to fulfill its role of bringing people together in the midst of varied multifaceted perspectives, ideas, and religious preferences. According to Brock, who is a Japanese Peruvian theologian, interstitial integrity represents Asian American women's image of self-construction that refers to the constant conscientization of self by embracing "both-and" fluidity of a

⁸⁰ The word *interstitial* originated from *interstitium*, tissue that connects the organs within the human body. (Rita Nakashima Brock, "Cooking without Recipes: Interstitial Integrity," in *Off the Menu: Asian and Asian North American Women's Religion and Theology*, Rita Nakashima Brock, Jung Ha Kim, Kowk Pui-Lan, and Seung Ai Yang, eds. [Louisville, London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2007], 126).

pluralistic culture, maintaining a strong sense of self at the same time.⁸¹ One interviewee said, “The church needs to be like a lighthouse anchoring the world that attracts a community of diverse people.”

Bridge Builders by *Living Faith*

The Methodist movement itself represents a church attempting to live as “bridge builders,” bringing people together through the Word of God. Wesley believed that the church is a community of faithful Christians who are conscientious about living out their faith.⁸² Possessing *living faith* was essential in the formation of a visible church. For Wesley, *living faith* should be expressed in and through various spiritual practices, such as Bible study, prayer, fasting, and the Lord’s Supper.⁸³ Likewise, the *living faith* of the respondents is manifested through personal worship, regular spiritual retreats, and spending time with a spiritual director. They also developed personal virtues, such as “patience,” “remembering who they are,” and “letting go,” that are significant characteristics of being bridge builders. The interviewees mentioned that their practice of faith—*living faith*—developed their character as stronger and resilient Christian leaders

⁸¹ Brock, “Cooking without Recipes: Interstitial Integrity,” in Brock et al., *Off the Menu*, 126.

⁸² John Wesley interpreted the phrase “a congregation of faithful men” from an Anglican definition of the church (The Anglican Article of religion, XIX) as “men endued with *living faith*,” as we saw in an earlier chapter. “The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments be duly administered” (*The Book of Discipline–2008*, Article XIII, 62).

⁸³ Gwang Seok Oh, *John Wesley’s Ecclesiology: A Study in Its Sources and Development* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc., 2008), 318.

who can empathize with the sufferings of others and initiate a space for interstitial integrity available among diverse community members.

It was obvious that these women are very conscientious about issues of the oppressed and the disadvantaged because of their own experiences of marginalization. Likewise, the Methodist movement was an evidence of Wesley's *living faith* that was expressed in practical divinity as he responded to the social, ethical, economic, and religious concerns of England in the mid-eighteenth century.

Bridge Builders by Preaching the Word of God

For Wesley, word and sacraments are means of grace, and they are equally important for the formation of a church. Wesley was convinced that preaching “the pure Word of God” facilitates the formation of “the visible church of Christ” by sustaining, refreshing, strengthening, and increasing spiritual life. Albert C. Outler called Wesley's understanding of preaching “evangelical preaching.”⁸⁴ Wesley said, “This is the scriptural way, the Methodist way, the true way” to preach; that is, “preaching the gospel—preaching the love of God” and “preaching the law—sustains and increases spiritual life in true believers both at once, or both in one.”⁸⁵ Likewise, proclaiming the unconditional love of God and God's grace for all people is one of the main themes that the interviewees like to preach about. Preaching nourishes and strengthens the soul by

⁸⁴ Outler, *John Wesley*, (New York: Oxford University Press, Inc. 1964), 312, 232.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 232–37.

teaching Christians how to walk in Christ in everyday life.⁸⁶ Wesley believed that preaching the Word of God “begets faith” in true believers that teaches and guides them to live in holiness of life as disciples of Christ.⁸⁷ In other words, preaching is a tool for inaugurating a space for interstitial integrity within a Christian community by initiating theological reflection among Christians. One interviewee saw preaching as a way of “calling people back to God.”

According to Gwang Seok Oh, preaching is a pivotal area in which Wesley’s pragmatism was expressed as he responded to the context of the time. Likewise, the KAUM clergywomen interviewees expressed that they like to preach to empower Christians to respond to current issues. They use preaching time to challenge Christians to practice their faith in their lives by “analyzing scripture,” “nurturing spirituality,” “conveying information,” and “studying the Bible.” The respondents were playing the role of bridge builders between Christians in the pew and the rest of the world by focusing especially on social justice and Christian identity issues, such as who we are before God and who we are in relation to others. In so doing, their preaching would provide a space for theological reflection among Christians to inspire them to practice hope, grace, and unconditional love for all people. For these KAUM clergywomen, preaching the Word of God is the time for challenging Christians to be bridge builders themselves by making a difference and living out the commandment of Jesus Christ.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 233.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 232.

Inclusion of women in leadership, evangelical preaching using plain language, and open field preaching are some examples of the Methodist movement's attempts to "build bridges." Some interviewees expressed appreciation to John Wesley for his theological openness, which ultimately granted women the right to preach. By doing so he became a bridge builder between what would later be described as malestream theology and feminist theology. A few of them said that were they not ordained, people may not listen to them as racial-ethnic women in the American context.

Practice of Being Strong Nurturers

Because they were raised under the influence of one of the Confucian cultural operating principles in Korean culture, *Hyun Mo Yang Chu*—understanding women as nurturers in a family context—many of the respondents believe that they are called to be "strong nurturers" in the Church.

Hyun Mo Yang Chu is traditional and the most virtuous image of a Korean woman. This image has historically justified sexism in Korean society. The phrase *Hyun Mo Yang Chu* literally means "a sacrificial mother and a submissive wife." Her fundamental role is to nurture her children and empower her husband by taking care of their every need. The *Hyun Mo Yang Chu* image defines women's social role as serving their fathers (before marriage), husbands (after marriage), and sons (after their husbands' deaths). This image restricts a woman's role to a domestic world within the family structure, and her identity is defined by the male presence in her life. Therefore, those who are not married or whose husbands are deceased become social outcasts, since they do not have their men to define them. Without family, there is no place for a woman in society.

With this, no doubt, in mind, 30 percent of the respondents said that their most rewarding experiences involved seeing change for the better in the members of their congregation. The role of *Hyun Mo Yang Chu* is to focus on nurturing and empowering each individual member of the family so he/she (especially the male members) will perform to his/her best potential in society. It is no surprise, then, that 60 percent of the interviewees emphasized the importance of nurturing individual disciples who will go out to the world and represent Jesus Christ.

Another example of KA clergywomen being strong nurturers is the fact that 30 percent of the respondents expressed that when they served Holy Communion, they felt as though they were feeding their church family, as a hostess or a mother does. This shows their understanding of the church based on a filial relationship, which is another Confucian cultural operating principle in the Korean culture.

Baptism (Matt. 28:19) and the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:26–28) are the two most important Christian communal practices in Wesley's ecclesiology. They are the outward signs and visible means of grace that nourish the spirits of believers and nurture their discipleship.⁸⁸

Strong Nurturers by Administering Baptism

Wesley believed that baptism is an initiatory sacrament that is “proper sacrament, a sign, seal, pledge, and means of grace, perpetually obligatory on all Christians.”⁸⁹ For

⁸⁸ Maddox, in Langford, *Rethinking Wesley's Theology*, 135.

⁸⁹ Jackson, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 10, 188.

Wesley, baptism was one of the means of salvation.⁹⁰ Through baptism Christians are incorporated into the new covenant of God, and they are admitted into the faith community.⁹¹ The gift of the Holy Spirit through baptism initiates an inward transformation that leads to a new life that is the beginning point of sanctification.⁹² This understanding was evident to the KAUM clergywomen interviewees.

According to one interviewee, baptism is entrance into God's family, wherein a child should be nurtured by the members of the family as he or she grows in faith. As clergy, one woman sees herself as the initiator of that same nurturing process, whereby, once complete, the image of God is restored. Another clergywoman sees baptism as "an official [public] proclamation" of her congregants' relationship with God. Still another believes that baptism is where her parishioners' personal faith is born, and that the covenant act of baptism leads them to "responsible grace" throughout their lives.

Respondents especially emphasized the importance of nurturing Christians when they talked about infant baptism.⁹³ The cultural influence of Korean women being *Hyun Mo Yang Chu* upon the KAUM clergywomen interviewees was clear from their use of feminine imagery, such as "holding a baby like a mother" or "giving birth to a spiritual person," when describing their role as they administer baptism. One interviewee in

⁹⁰ Ibid., v. 6, 395.

⁹¹ Ibid., v. 6, 76.

⁹² Wesley emphasized an inward transformation through baptism: "They speak of the new birth as an outward thing, as if it were no more than baptism . . . I believe it to be an inward thing; a change from inward wickedness to inward goodness" (ibid., v. 1, 225).

⁹³ As stated earlier, Wesley was a proponent of infant baptism (ibid., 191).

particular mentioned her memory of her mother washing her children one by one, as if God was washing their sins away through baptism.

Strong Nurturers by Administering Holy Communion

For Wesley, the Lord's Supper was central to the life of the faithful church. He affirmed that receiving the Holy Spirit by participating in the Holy Communion is the constant duty of members of the faith community for two reasons: (1) it is a command of Christ (Luke 22:19); and (2) it renews our commitments to Christ by refreshing our souls.⁹⁴ Wesley believed that the Lord's Supper was necessary for the renewal of one's soul and the well-being of a church. God increases our faith through the Lord's Supper, nurturing Christians by conveying prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace.⁹⁵

For the KAUM clergywomen interviewees, the symbolism of equality as women, humble representation of Christ as ordained clergy, uniting a faith community as one, and providing spiritual nourishment for the transformation of life are the important aspects of their role of serving Holy Communion. The most interesting images they mentioned were those related to a woman's role as nurturer in her own family. As stated earlier, they see themselves as "housewi[ves]" and "spiritual mother[s]" whose responsibility is to gather family at the dinner and feed them. They feel affirmed in that role, taking great pleasure in uniting the family by gathering them together to confirm that they are an "intimate community that shares joys and pains together." The respondents believed that their

⁹⁴ Outler, *John Wesley*, 335.

⁹⁵ *The Works of John Wesley, Jackson Edition CD-Rom*, vol.1, 248.

presence as ordained clergy is an extension of God's grace to those who receive Holy Communion because it demonstrates an acceptance of Korean American women in ordained ministry in the same way that God has demonstrated total acceptance of the church. During this "holy time" God nourishes people by the redemptive body and blood of Jesus Christ and nurtures them with God's healing grace. One interviewee believes that "taking the substance and absorbing it into our bodies is letting the power of Jesus Christ literally become one with every cell in our bodies. Holy Communion is a common denominator for living. It is in the basic necessity of living that we find God." Another woman asserted that frequent Holy Communion is important to her because it "forms and nurtures a gentle and loving community."

Practice of Being Committed Educators

Another cultural operating principle of Korean society is the promotion of education for social mobility. The Korean social structure was constructed of two major classes in the Yi (Chosun) Dynasty: YangBan (ruling elite class) and ChunMin (uneducated common class). The YangBan ruling class was defined by their education and family background. In this class structure, education has been a key factor for social mobility in defining social status. Yet, women were excluded from formal education. This means that even women who were born in a YangBan family could not exercise their social power unless they married into another YangBan family. Women's grassroots education was promoted from 1948, yet it was focused on preparation to be *Hyun Mo*

Yang Chu rather than for personal fulfillment in life.⁹⁶ Growing under the influence of this cultural operating principle, the respondents displayed a strong desire to achieve higher education not only in their own lives but also in the life of the congregation. It was obvious that not only their cultural upbringing—with emphasis on education as Koreans—has a huge impact on how the interviewees approach their ministry, but also their zeal for higher education is a result of *conscientization* of Korean women through education, which is a priority of theology of *YeoSung*. It made sense that the interviewees see themselves serving the Church as “highly committed educators.”

Practice of Being Wounded Healers

Another contribution KAUM clergywomen bring to the Church in a global context is their experiences of being “wounded healers.” Their response to the question, “What are your experiences of the UMC in particular?” explains how they are able to grace the Church as “wounded healers.”

Han and Korean Women—Wounded Heart and Their Theology

It was evident that the interviewees’ practices of faith were shaped especially by their marginal experiences as racial-ethnic women in church and society. These experiences were at the center of their ministries and were defined in their role as “wounded healers.” In spite of generational differences in their experience of *Han* as Korean American women, almost all of the interviewees agreed on the concept of *Han* from a collective perspective.

⁹⁶ El-Hannah Kim, in Song and Moon, *Korean American Women*, 28.

MinJung are people who could not expand to the full potential of being who they are before the Creator due to individual, social, economic, cultural, and religious conditions. *MinJung* theologians see *MinJung* as “a people empowered and capable of bringing about change and justice as a people who will not suffer in silence or with compliance. They will work out their *Han* with social action not sufferance.”⁹⁷ In this study, the concept of *Han* is used as a transformative energy that forces Korean American UM clergywomen to pursue the vision of a new life against personal, social, cultural, economic, and religious oppression, as a response to God’s grace upon them.⁹⁸

This transformative spirit of *MinJung* was evident among the interviewees as they expressed how God has been walking with them through their journey in spite of difficulties they had to endure in life. In *MinJung* theology, *MinJung* is the subject of creating reality, not just objects of history.⁹⁹ *MinJung* determine their meaning of existence and create their own destiny. They refuse to accept their culturally imposed social location. This is the very concept of *YeoSung* in theology of *YeoSung* as well.¹⁰⁰ The word *YeoSung* represents the oppressed who are able to perceive their obstructive situations and have the ability to respond to them with concrete actions as independent agents, which creates an emancipatory reality. From this perspective Korean American

⁹⁷ Ibid., 34.

⁹⁸ “If *Han* is unraveled positively, it can be converted into the constructive energy needed to change social injustice” (Andrew Sung Park, “Theology of *Han*”), 52–53.

⁹⁹ Yong-Bok Kim, “Christian Koinonia in the Struggle and Aspirations of the People of Korea,” in *Asian Theological Reflections on Suffering and Hope*, ed. Yap Kim Hao (Singapore, CCA, 1977), 38.

¹⁰⁰ See page 90.

UM clergywomen are “*MinJung* within the *MinJung*,” or “*YeoSung* within the *YeoSung*,” not because they have been oppressed but because they are the prime example of a community of people who were able to transform their *Han* to a positive energy that created a new reality in their lives, and Jesus Christ was a liberator as a catalyst in the center of that transformation. This is why Korean theologian Chi-Ha Kim defined *MinJung* as the fulfillment of God’s promise to humanity.¹⁰¹ *MinJung* become partners with God as they transcend the present circumstances to a better reality.

As Wesley’s spiritual experience impacted him to be a prophetic voice to the world, the interviewees also expressed how their experiences of *Han* encouraged them to raise their prophetic voices in their ministry and shaped their characters into being “much stronger, self-reflective and resilient” Christians.

Practice of Breaking Stereotypes: Experiences Providing Openness

Responding to the signs of the time has been what Methodism is all about. In a similar manner, the effort to be open and inclusive in their leadership, which is still a new paradigm of leadership in a dogmatic and *malestream* church structure, was evident among the KAUM clergywomen interviewees.¹⁰² Their leadership style of breaking stereotypes—not only by their presence but also by their skills based on transnational and intercultural experiences—contributes to the Church and changes the traditional image of

¹⁰¹ Nam-Dong Suh, “Historical References for a Theology of MinJung,” in *MinJung Theology*, ed. CTC-CCA (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1983), 155.

¹⁰² *Malestream* meaning that it is male-centered and defined, elite male dominated, and marked by its exclusion of wo/men (Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. *Wisdom Ways: Introducing Feminist Biblical Interpretation* [Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001], 212).

being a Korean woman. El-Hannah Kim describes the Korean cultural norm for being a woman: “A Confucian woman is born to be a woman, not a human, to become a mother, wife, and daughter only, not an educator, philosopher, businessperson, government official or the like. She is also born to be of submissive social status in the Confucian social order.”¹⁰³

The respondents were far from the traditional image of Korean women. As people of God, they are challenging the Confucian hierarchical social structure that tries to sustain a static social context. (For example, one interviewee mentioned that she would have never been an ordained clergy if she stayed in Korea.) These women’s creative and bold leadership style of breaking stereotypes is urgent in a global context among church leaders where convergence of theologies, cultures, and political ideas are demanded. One way of exploring their leadership style is, following Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, by analyzing one’s *structural position* through a *subject position*.

“Ja-Ah Bal Gyun” (Awakening of Agency) as Korean American Women

Paulo Freire proposed a methodology of liberating education in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.¹⁰⁴ A methodology of conscientization influenced theologies of liberation around the world, including Theology of *MinJung* and feminist theology. The term *conscientization* refers to a process of perceiving political, social, and economic “limit-situations,” or elements of oppression, surrounding a person. Freire borrows the

¹⁰³ El-Hannah Kim, in Song and Moon, *Korean American Women*, 24.

¹⁰⁴ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum Publishing Corporation, 1986).

concept of “limit-situations” from philosopher Alvaro Vieira Pinto. Once a person learns about “limit-situations” that confine him/her to domination, he or she responds to them with what Pinto called “limit-acts,” which means “decisive and concrete actions.”¹⁰⁵ “Limit-acts” will bring transforming responses. The uniqueness of conscientization is that the process of awakening to “limit-situations” demands not only reflection but also actions—the praxis.¹⁰⁶ Conscientization is “the deepening of the attitude of awareness characteristic of all emergencies” from the submersion under “limit-situations,” and it requires intervention in reality.¹⁰⁷ Freire asserts that there will be no transformation without “limit-acts” toward “limit-situations.” He concludes that only human beings are the agents of praxis—“the praxis which [are] the reflection and action which truly transform reality.”¹⁰⁸ Being aware of one’s “limit-situations” is critical since if s/he does not perceive them, s/he cannot construct a new reality, which prevents her/him from transforming her/his contextual configuration.

Ja-Ah Bal Gyun is a methodology to raise self-consciousness of Korean women acknowledging that they are conscious historical social beings who “exist in a dialectical relationship between the determination of limits and their own freedom.”¹⁰⁹ *Ja-Ah Bal Gyun* in this case is a discovery of an emancipatory-self as a Korean American woman.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 88–90.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 19.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., 100–1.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 91.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 89.

Advocating *Ja-Ah Bal Gyun* is a way of revealing that the silence of Korean women could be a reflection of “a structure of mutism in face of the overwhelming force of the limit-situations.” Korean women share a common theme of the patriarchal “limit-situations,” for example, the cultural operating principles. *Ja-Ah Bal Gyun* precedes full humanization of women who engage in a dialectical interaction with the world. Awakening to one’s contextual reality that constitutes “limit-situations” will enable her to engage in a critical form of thinking about her world, and this process will require “limit-acts.” As a way of conscientization, *Ja-Ah Bal Gyun* will create and re-create a new reality for women as they practice “limit-acts”; this is truly a sign of life. Practicing “limit-acts” is a starting point where life begins with hope.

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza also uses Freire’s theory of conscientization as a methodology for biblical interpretation from a feminist perspective. Social status is a social construction that relates to the matter of political and social domination and liberation. It is defined by a given social-cultural setting as a *structural position*, according to Schüssler Fiorenza.¹¹⁰ Women’s status in society is interpreted based on existing *malestream* hegemonic cultural, political, and religious discourses within social structure.¹¹¹ Even though a *structural position* of women is a fact of life, Schüssler Fiorenza argues that women should learn to interpret their *structural positions* through a *subject position*. A *subject position* is a set of discourses that assist women in diagnosing and analyzing their *structural positions*. It is “variable, open to intervention and

¹¹⁰ Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, 106.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 105.

changeable, but also limited by hegemonic structures of domination.”¹¹² The role of feminist discourses is to provide alternative frameworks for women to shape their *structural positions*: they are feminist theories such as women and oppression, androcentrism and patriarchy, *Gynecentrism/Gynaikocentrism*, *kyriarchy* and *kyriocentrism*, *androgyny*, and the *ekklesia* of wo/men.¹¹³

As a Western feminist biblical theologian, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza proposes a concept similar to *Ja-Ah Bal Gyun*; she calls *conscientization/ consciousness-raising*, extending and elaborating on Freire’s concept. She believes that the *conscientization* of women is the first step for them to recognize their exploitation at the hands of patriarchy, neo-capitalism, and racism in social and religious systems. *Conscientization* seeks to deconstruct the public discourses of *structural positions* of women by analyzing internalized *malestream* hegemonic structures of domination.¹¹⁴ The *consciousness-raising* process nullifies the definition of women that is based only on a sex/gender relation; it will include a socio-systemic contextualization. This analytic process starts from a clear understanding of the subjectivity of women.

The process of *Ja-Ah Bal Gyun* is a mode of inhabiting “emancipatory self” in the center of a woman’s life. Because of their experiences of *Ja-Ah Bal Gyun*, it was evident for the interviewees during their interview that they were demonstrating social consciousness against any form of oppression. They recognize the inadequacy of using

¹¹² Ibid., 106.

¹¹³ Ibid., 107.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 102.

old paradigms to deal with a new multicultural and transnational reality. The creative spirit of Jesus Christ formed the nucleus of *Ja-Ah Bal Gyun* for the KAUM clergywomen interviewees and has given hope for a new reality to them. Their self-realization of being an “emancipatory self” was accomplished by responding to a call to an ordained ministry as a free religious agent, and the journey they went through to fulfill their call against all odds could be articulated as a practice of faith.

Practice of Persistence in Seeking to Fulfill Their Call: Ordination as a Practice of Faith

One of the primary questions I asked of KAUM clergywomen was, “How do your experiences of the Church relate to your practices of faith?” (Marjorie Suchocki had pointed out that Wesley’s inclusion of experience in doing theology provided the ground for concrete action: practices of faith.¹¹⁵) As we have seen, some interviewees’ observations of their mothers’ rejection when they sought ordination in the church propelled their determination to pursue ordination as a way of practicing their faith, position that God called women to ordained ministry. For them, pursuing ordination as a way for Christians to practice their faith had continued over two generations. Participating in the sacramental life of the church through ordination symbolizes full acceptance of God as fully human to some of the interviewees since their mothers had not had an opportunity to be a part of this particular practice of the church.

¹¹⁵ Marjorie Hewitt Suchocki, “Coming Home: Wesley, Whitehead, and Women,” in *Thy Nature and Thy Name Is Love: Wesleyan and Process Theologies in Dialogue*, ed. Bryan P. Stone and Thomas Jay Oord (Nashville, TN: Kingswood Books, 2001), 58.

According to the *Book of Worship*, ordination is: “a public act of the Church which indicates acceptance by an individual of God’s call to the upbuilding of the Church through the ministry of Word, Sacrament, and the Order and acknowledgment and authentication of this call by the Christian community through prayers and the laying on of hands.”¹¹⁶

Ordination is a community act of upholding and continuing the apostolic ministry—Service, Word, Sacrament, and Order—through people who made a conscious decision to live a disciplined life by practicing living faith. Ordained individuals live in “covenant of mutual care and accountability” with a community of people who share their ordination. Being responsible leaders throughout their personal and spiritual discipline, ordained individuals represent the love of God to the world.¹¹⁷ Personally, those who seek ordination should “nurture and cultivate spiritual disciplines and patterns of holiness” that represent the life of sanctification.¹¹⁸ Therefore, ordination is a practice of faith, especially for KAUM clergywomen, not only because they strive themselves to “[follow] Jesus’ pattern of love and service” but also because the community of faith authenticates their calling as leaders of the Church regardless of their gender and racial-ethnic background.

Being ordained as Korean American women was a critical practice of faith for the interviewees. Many of them were unaware that they could be called to ordained ministry;

¹¹⁶ *The Book of Worship*, 1996, 670.

¹¹⁷ *The Book of Discipline*, par. 303.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, par. 304.

however, breaking the glass ceiling of ordination as Korean American women meant being “trail blazers of an unknown path,” as one interviewee expressed it. To be “trail blazers of an unknown path” requires spiritual discipline and persistency in implementing concrete actions. The ordination process and practice of pastoral ministry have been ways to live through sanctification since those experiences have provided transformation to the interviewees. Wesley understood ordination as a practice of faith of the church that responds to the needs of people.¹¹⁹ If ordination is seen only from an ecclesiastical-structural perspective, pursuing ordination as women would be concurring in the *malestream* power structure of an institutional church. However, if ordination is understood as one of the Christian practices that provide an opportunity to fulfill one’s potential to be, all Christians regardless of their gender should have access to it.

According to the KAUM clergywomen interviewees, their journey to ordination has transformed their lives as Christians in terms of how they relate to the church and to God. They were no longer women who were ambiguous about their calling, because of their decision to take concrete action toward ordination. Approximately 70 percent of the interviewees shared that ordination served as a conduit for getting people to listen to them and accept them as leaders in the Church. Ordination provided an authentic voice to KAUM clergywomen in the Church and granted them authority to serve the sacraments. Their leadership in the sacramental life of the Church is symbolic of the equality of women, especially of racial-ethnic women in this case.

¹¹⁹ The ordinations of Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke in America officially separated Methodism from the Anglican Church as a denomination. Wesley allowed that to happen for the practical reason that ordained clergy were needed to serve the sacraments.

Practice of Responding to a Changing Context: Leaders Responding to the Emerging Issues in a Global Context

A final question addressed in the interviews was, “What role does KAUM clergywomen’s ecclesial leadership play for an emerging Wesleyan ecclesiology in a global context?” To answer this question it is important to identify emerging issues in the twenty-first century that impact our understanding of the church in a global context.

A first issue is the need for an open space of interstitial integrity that embraces particularities of the locality, including cultural diversity and catholicity of the church. Ibrahim A. Gambari expressed this challenge for the church by asking the question, “How does one balance respect for the local or national characteristics of its component parts with the universality of their message and the pursuit of an international community of shared values?”¹²⁰ The other emerging issue is the need for an overall awareness of and response to the reality of oppression in a global context, the existence of *kyriarchal* oppression within and outside of the church.

Globalization and the Body of Christ

Robert J. Hill introduces *peri-postmodernism* as a new epistemological ecotone in a global context.¹²¹ The word *peri-postmodernism* stands for a threshold going from

¹²⁰ Ibrahim A. Gambari, “The Challenges of Globalization and the Role of the United Methodist Church” (General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, The United Methodist Church, 2005), 7.

¹²¹ Robert J. Hill, “Troubling Adult Learning in the Present Time,” in *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, no. 119 (Fall 2008): 83–92, www.interscience.wiley.com.

postmodernism into post-postmodernism.¹²² Postmodernism has been criticized for its relativism, ambiguity, and fragmentation by a fundamentalism that maintains the unyielding construction of a set of identities. Peri-postmodernism resists intellectual hegemony and values different ways of understanding God and the church. Through colonization and now globalization, the hegemony of the Eurocentric way of theologizing the church has repelled consideration of the different ways Christians understand the church.¹²³ Globalization challenges traditional theology to find a way to integrate cultural particularity with universal catholicity, providing an alternative vision that seeks solidarity among all people. Hill's proposition of peri-postmodernism is very much like Roland Robertson's concept of glocalization, mentioned earlier. Glocalization also reflects the church being space for "interstitial integrity," as Rita Nakashima Brock proposed as a metaphor for transnational identity formation of Asian American women. Therefore, the church can provide space for interstitial integrity by considering ethical issues related to globalization and how it should embrace particularities of the underprivileged, such as women, the racial-ethnic community, and children, who easily can be further marginalized in the midst of globalization.

Need for an Open Space for "Interstitial Integrity"

One of the characteristics of new global realities is cultural hybridization.

According to Rita Nakashima Brock, "interstitial integrity" is hybridization that keeps

¹²² Ibid., 86.

¹²³ Sharan B. Merriam and Young Sek Kim, "Non-Western Perspectives on Learning and Knowing," in Sharan B. Merriam, ed., *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education*, no. 119 (Fall 2008): 71–81.

different cultural influences together in relationship of self to others.¹²⁴ The identity formation process of Korean American women, as observed earlier, represents the efforts of keeping “interstitial integrity.” They choose to live in the tension of dual-belonging and to develop skills in navigating the paths of cultural and theological hybridization rather than choosing to be either Korean or American.

The church is challenged by the convergence of cultures and ideas with Christian ideals; this fosters proliferation of different religious ideas that enhance democratization within the church.¹²⁵ Ever-challenging integration of cultures and religious practices forces the church to respond to the phenomena of peri-postmodernism, such as deterritorialization of boundaries, hyperdifferentiation of reality in multiculturalism, and capitalistic expansion that results in new modes of marginalization. Peri-postmodern phenomena deteriorate the communal insularity of a Christian church. For some Christians, a crack in communal insularity is a threat. However, practical theologian Bryan Stone asserts that “failure to be discontent” is sin from a Wesleyan understanding of sanctification.¹²⁶ According to Stone, Christians have no choice but to respond to oppressive elements caused by demographics of race, gender, sexuality, and economic status within and outside of the church. This is what it means to be a sanctifying community and to be engaged in the world, which is the essence of holiness in Wesleyan

¹²⁴ Rita Nakashima Brock, “Cooking without Recipes,” 116.

¹²⁵ Hill, “Troubling Adult Learning in the Present Time,” 90.

¹²⁶ Bryan P. Stone, “Process and Sanctification,” in *Thy Nature and Thy Name Is Love*, 75.

ecclesiology.¹²⁷ In a global context, the mode of being a faith community is shifting from a physical place for religious ritual practices to an open space where “ever-broader inclusion” and “ever-wider availing of ourselves” can take place under the auspices of catholicity. Stone calls this converging process the path to holiness as a faith community.¹²⁸ The substance of an open space of “ever-broader inclusion” is the realm for “interstitial integrity” that aims for meaning making of all people.

Schüssler Fiorenza’s concept of the *ekklesia of women* is complementary to the concept of “interstitial integrity.” The *ekklesia of women* is an alternative ideological space that respects different sociopolitical bodies of women. As a radical imaginative open space for women, *ekklesia of women* seeks to “foster methods of resistance that develop alternative visions to deconstruct the *kyriocentric* politics in society.”¹²⁹ The church must reconcile the disparity between its “ritual life” and its “ethical living” by being intentional about listening to different voices in and outside of its own structure.¹³⁰ For the church in a global context, especially in a peri-postmodern society, intra-cultural and intra-disciplinary dialogue is a must if it is to be a place that nurtures interstitial integrity.¹³¹

¹²⁷ Ibid., 80.

¹²⁸ Ibid., 94.

¹²⁹ Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, 152.

¹³⁰ Richard R. Gaillardetz, *Ecclesiology for a Global Church: A People Called and Sent* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2008), 294.

¹³¹ *Intra-cultural* is deeper interaction with integrity-seeking understanding, compared to intercultural, which could be a surface exchanging of ideas.

KAUM clergywomen interviewees demonstrated that they are clearly equipped to respond to these two emerging issues for the formation of contemporary Wesleyan ecclesiology. These women are the prime example of keeping interstitial integrity by their presence, their inclusive leadership styles, and their intercultural spirituality formed by their marginal experiences. One interviewee said, “The experience of the immigrants, their assimilation and acculturation, puts us in the position that is very unique with a point of view that is very open and multicultural.” A noteworthy point is that 25 percent of these ministers pointed out that the virtue of humility and the ability to respect diverse people is what KAUM clergywomen bring to the Church. These merits work to their advantage in a global context because of their marginal experiences and their Confucian cultural upbringing of respecting human relationships. One interviewee said, “The UMC needs to learn to respect different people, not considering them as tokens.” This harmonizes with Wesley’s definition of the church as the place where those who have a living faith “watch over one another in love, that they might help each other to work out their salvation.”¹³² In many ways, this is a similar concept to *ekklesia of women*. Moreover, this understanding was clear among the interviewees; 35 percent specifically voiced a strong concept of the church being an open space where everyone belongs. One of them said that the church is where “unconditional welcome and embracement of all people should happen.”

¹³² John Wesley, “A Plain Account of the People Called Methodists,” in *Works*, ix, 256.

Women, Oppression, and Globalization

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza addresses the fact that oppression is a comprehensive force that consists of cultural, social, political, economic, and religious practices that further marginalize women and the underprivileged in a global context. The concept of *Han* in *MinJung* theology is a Korean way of articulating this *kyriarchal* exploitation and its impact on human psychology and soul. This is why *Han* should be a subject of theology, and a task of the church is to respond to it.

The availability of cheap labor of Asian women without a union or collective bargaining protections contributes to the global market by further creating a new class of migrant female workers with low-skilled, low-wage, and labor-intensive manufacturing jobs. The global racialized feminization of labor is a form of neocolonial capitalism.¹³³ Facing neocapitalistic exploitation of global capitalism that is creating racial, cultural, and gender-specific labor power, the church is challenged to respond to the ethical issues of gendered international division of labor in its ministerial context. The oppression of neocapitalistic imperialism instilled and enforced by Western hegemony, demands that the Church respond to the ethical crisis of globalization by providing a vision of new forms of political subjectivity, collectivity, and religious practice.

According to Schüssler Fiorenza, the “choreography of oppression” of women can be described in seven categories: *exploitation, marginalization, powerlessness,*

¹³³ Lisa Lowe, *Immigrant Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 160.

*cultural imperialism, systemic violence, silencing, deprecation, and vilification.*¹³⁴ She calls the choreography of oppression the institutional and structural embodiment of the realization of evil because it has been legitimized and presented as a norm, through cultural ideologies, religious symbols, ethical systems, and public educational discourses, to oppress women and the powerless. Therefore, the choreography of oppression is a structural and systemic sin. It politicizes, racializes, and genderizes women in the church as well as in society. The choreography of oppression was described in the KAUM clergywomen interviewees' experiences of *Han*. Some of them mentioned fear of political exclusion, silencing, being emotionally paralyzed by experiences of *Han*, and exhaustion from facing deprecation and vilification in their ministries again and again from people they are called to serve.

As a response to the multifaceted women's issues in a global context, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza proposes shifting the focus of cultural biases against women from patriarchy to *kyriarchy*¹³⁵ because the concept of *kyriarchy* addresses more comprehensive and multiplicative forms of oppression. Kyriarchy operates under an imperialistic mode of maintaining power and control over the powerless in all aspects of life. Schüssler Fiorenza starts her argument by asserting that the role of patriarchy only grants structural and institutional relations of male domination. Patriarchy is inadequate to explain the systematic complexity of oppressive structures. It also neglects the power struggle among women. Therefore, Schüssler Fiorenza proposes to use *kyriarchy* to

¹³⁴ Ibid., 109–10.

¹³⁵ Schüssler Fiorenza, *Wisdom Ways*, 211.

articulate a convoluted character of oppressions. *Kyriarchy* incorporates the multiplicative interdependence of gender, race, and class stratifications in social systems that consist of patriarchy, ideology, and capitalism. *Kyriarchal* democracy, like that in North America, allows the superordinates to exploit subordinates economically and culturally, which is neocolonialism.¹³⁶ As an ideology, kyriocentrism¹³⁷ operates on four levels in a global sense: grammatical-linguistic, symbolic-cultural, ideological-cultural, and social-institutional.¹³⁸ Kyriocentrism constructs roadblocks that prevent women's social engagement from being subjective agents.

According to the Kim and Ross study, "The Status of Racial-Ethnic Minority Clergywomen in the United Methodist Church," 56 percent of Asian-American, 67 percent of Hispanic/Latina, 81 percent of African-American, 86 percent of multiracial, and 73 percent of "other" racial-ethnic categorical United Methodist clergywomen reported that they do not receive sufficient salary support in their current appointments.¹³⁹ They also found out that lack of sufficient salary and change of denominational affiliation correlated.¹⁴⁰ When the interviewees were responding to how often they did baptisms and served Holy Communion during the last six months, a few of

¹³⁶ Ibid., 123.

¹³⁷ *Kyriocentrism* is "the cultural-religious-ideological systems and intersecting discourses of race, gender, heterosexuality, class, and ethnicity that produce, legitimate, inculcate, and sustain *kyriarchy*" (ibid., 211).

¹³⁸ Ibid., 124.

¹³⁹ Jung Ha Kim and Rosetta Ross, *The Status of Racial And Ethnic Minority Clergywomen in the United Methodist Church* (Nashville: The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, 2004), 38.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., 43.

them mentioned that their churches are small, and therefore, they could not perform what they have been authorized to do by the Church. One clergywoman even said that she believes that Korean American women are called to revive small churches within the United Methodist Church. Another clergywoman shared that receiving the last appointment in that year did not surprise her because she was a Korean American woman. Does this mean that the Church is operating under a neocapitalistic mode that creates economic and political stratification among UM clergy? Is the Church racializing and genderizing labor-power, so-called Methodist ministry, in the name of God? Is kyriarchy a hidden operational principle within the Church system? Where is the social holiness that propels our sanctification?

Being aware of the presence of kyriarchal oppression and seeking transformation of that reality is central to reconceptualizing sanctification in a way that leads to social holiness within Wesleyan ecclesiology. Gambari attests, “The church must be a leading voice for the promotion of social and ethical dimensions of globalization and a strong and reliable friend of the unbefriended poor everywhere.”¹⁴¹ One interviewee said, “The Church needs to be with suffering people.”

A New Mode of Being as a Church in a Global Context

A Han-Releasing Church: A Han-Puri Madang

The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery

¹⁴¹ Gambari, “The Challenges of Globalization,” 8.

of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Luke 4:18–19 NRSV)

From this study it was obvious that the United Methodist Church has been a catalyst for Korean American UM clergywomen by assisting them in responding to their call to ordained ministry. The Church provided space for these women to release their *Han* from *kyriarchal* oppressions. In Korean culture, *Han-Puri Madang* is an open space for *MinJung* to come together to release their *Han*. It is an ancient Korean tradition to provide an emancipatory space for *MinJung* in the midst of a hierarchical Korean society. *Han-Puri* is a Korean's unique ritual of untangling or releasing *Han*. *Madang* is an open space. In it *MinJung*, who have *Han*, gather together and release their *Han* as they go through rituals consisting of dialogue, singing, and dance. *Madang* is a radical space for *MinJung* so they can see the light of a new reality by practicing *Han-Puri*. *Han-Puri Madang* is a catalyst for *MinJung* to express the "otherness" that caused them suffering in society, without feeling threatened by the hierarchy of the government. The *Han-Puri Madang* is still practiced in Korea among younger generations, especially when they demonstrate their concerns against the government.

Contemporary theologians Stanley Hauerwas and Avery Dulles, along with the founder of Methodism, John Wesley, all agree that the church should be able to read the "signs of the times," since the world is a theological focus. According to Hauerwas, the way the church should read the signs of the times is by being a "distinctive people formed

by the narrative of God.”¹⁴² “Distinctive people” here are Christians who witness Christ to the world through practices of faith, which is the ethics of the church. Likewise, John Wesley emphasized the church being a community that holds together “personal assurance and social witness, personal holiness and social holiness, holiness of heart and holiness of life.”¹⁴³ Wesley said, “Christianity is essentially a social religion, and . . . to turn it into a solitary one is to destroy it.”¹⁴⁴ For Wesley the church as a community meant a gathering of a critical mass in Christian faith who take their personal and social responsibilities seriously.

However, some of the KAUM clergywomen interviewees agreed that the UMC has been working very hard for “social holiness” without paying attention to people’s spirituality, or “personal assurance.” Witnessing and proclaiming the good news of Christ starts with individuals, as I already pointed out, when using the Confucian concept of relationality. This was true for John Wesley’s theology also.

Wesley’s commitment to addressing people’s *Han* in his practice of faith stemmed from his transforming religious experience at Aldersgate Street in London in 1738. This experience became the foundation of his spirituality. He clearly understood that God’s work of salvation is free for all through “prevenient grace,” as the scripture says, “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it

¹⁴² Stanley Hauerwas, “The Servant Community: Christian Social Ethics,” in *The Hauerwas Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 371.

¹⁴³ Jack A. Keller Jr. “The Church as a Community of Moral Discourse,” in *Doctrines and Discipline*, eds. Russell E. Rich, William B. Lawrence, and Dennis M. Campbell (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1999), 215.

¹⁴⁴ Jackson, *The Works of John Wesley*, vol. 5. 296.

is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast” (Eph. 2:8–9 NRSV).¹⁴⁵ Wesley’s understanding of church evolved from viewing it as an institution to understanding it to be a “redeeming fellowship” of all people, and his ministry was focused on people; therefore, he was not afraid of taking a risk in practicing his faith. This openness and flexibility in his practice of faith only came after Wesley’s spiritual experience. Wesley’s emphasis on representing a just and merciful God in his ministry branched out from deep spirituality.

Wesley’s emphasis on the integration of “works of piety” and “works of mercy” provides a creative tension between spiritual formation and practical love to be a church with an open space for all.¹⁴⁶ Wesley’s emphasis on dialectical relationship between faith and works, love and reason, individual and society, small group (“class” system) and community solidarity, praxis and theory is a way of expressing how God’s grace is revealed in the totality of Christian spirituality and Christian practice in a concrete life. The KAUM clergywomen interviewees also made it evident that their concerns for *MinJung* originated from their own experiences of *Han* or because they witnessed collective *Han*; this deepened their spirituality. Because of their spirituality based on experience and Christian conviction, they became conscientious about practicing an inclusive model of ministry by placing people in the center of their theological concern.

¹⁴⁵ Prevenient grace “surrounds all humanity and precedes any and all of our conscious impulses” (*The Book of Discipline*, 2008, 46).

¹⁴⁶ This idea is evident in Wesley’s understanding of “faith and good works.” God’s grace and human activity work together, since “God’s grace calls forth human responses and discipline . . . Faith and good works belong within an all-encompassing theology of grace, since they stem from God’s gracious love ‘shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit’” (*The Book of Discipline*, 47).

Nurturing personal spirituality, or “holiness in life,” is a prerequisite for a people-centered church in a global context because Christians will naturally open themselves to address the *Han* of people in their practice of faith, or “social holiness.”

Schüssler Fiorenza constructs what it means to be a church around the concept of “discipleship of equals.” For her, *discipleship* means the practice of “equality from below” in solidarity with all those who struggle for survival and justice. Her understanding of discipleship does not have anything to do with numerical growth. It is about equality, freedom, and responsibility, as well as about communal relations free of what she calls the *kyriarchal pyramid*. Schüssler Fiorenza developed a concept of the “*ekklēsia* of women” that affirms a legitimate democratic, egalitarian space where the historical experience and religious agency of women and the marginalized are respected.¹⁴⁷ The church is called to respond to the needy, the suffering, and the oppressed. The ethics of the church, then, is to be fundamentally social and communal, even as it is expressed and evidenced by individuals, so that it will include people who have been excluded from participation in ethical decision making in the life of the church. A church practicing “equality from below” cannot be realized without nurturing a deep spirituality of its members. Only a church with deep spirituality will be able to play a role of being a *Han-Puri Madang* that calls for “interstitial integrity” undergirded by the catholic Spirit.

¹⁴⁷ Schüssler Fiorenza introduces “*ekklēsia* of wo/men” as an alternative to the feminist discourses of androgyny, matriarchy, the feminine, friendship, and sisterhood. *Ekklesia*, “the democratic assembly/congress,” should create a virtual space for women in transforming societal and religious institutions to denaturalize patriarchal, racial, gender, cultural, and other status inscriptions. “It is necessary to qualify *ekklēsia* with wo/men in order to overcome its *kyriocentric* determination” (*Wisdom Ways*, 159, 200).

Conclusion

This study identified the *extraordinary* call of the KAUM clergywomen interviewees to be bridge builders, strong nurturers, wounded healers, committed educators, breakers of old stereotypes, persistent seekers to fulfill God's call, and ecclesial leaders with "tragic consciousness" who can disrupt marginality and facilitate the creative transformation of *Han* (a deep experience of suffering and oppression) into a constructive energy capable of shaping a new reality. In a multicultural reality, KAUM clergywomen are situated in a unique liminal space (between Eastern and Western culture) that opens up new possibilities for negotiating Christian identity, exploring cultural hybridity, and articulating different Christian practices in the formation of the Church.

A church that is able to connect diverse people to God and one another in a global context needs to be intentional about being an open space, *Han-Puri Madang*, where the synergistic weaving can happen between God and God's people. According to Wesley, intentional participation in breaking stereotypes and disrupting marginality would be impossible without cultivating personal spirituality through practices of faith; that is, sanctification. When justification of our faith and sanctification meet in the core of Wesleyan ecclesiology, the grace of God erupts, covering human tragedy and embracing human experiences. The "otherness" becomes a vehicle for creating an "interstitial integrity" as a faith community allows the weaving of a synergic web under one faith in Jesus Christ. By doing so, the church becomes the realization of a new mode of discipleship that disrupts marginality by exercising tragic consciousness in a world that is deeply in need of an "interstitial integrity."

The overall contextual question of this study is: Do KAUM clergywomen bring any unique theological understandings into the evolution of Wesleyan ecclesiology in a global context? Further, how might their experiences and practices inform and contribute to Wesleyan ecclesiology in a global context?

The KAUM clergywomen interviewees in this study identified emerging issues to which the twenty-first-century church needs to respond in order to recognize multifaceted understandings of faith, provide a space for “interstitial integrity” among Christians, incorporate cultural hybridity that racial-ethnic communities bring to the church, and address social concerns in a global context.

According to John Wesley, the visible church is where faith is alive and practiced, empowered by the gospel that was preached, and sustained by the sacraments.¹⁴⁸ Wesley’s approach to being the church was based largely on functionality, and for this reason, Wesley put more emphasis on practical divinity than on developing a doctrinal ecclesiology. From this perspective, Albert Outler summarized Wesley’s ecclesial understanding well: “The church [Wesley’s understanding of the church] is best defined in action, in her witness and mission, rather than by her form of polity.”¹⁴⁹ Naturally, even though Wesleyan ecclesiology has been evolving as Methodism has taken its shape as an institution through the years, it has been focused on what works for the people of God in terms of learning about and practicing faith.

Perhaps the most salient personal, historical, cultural, and theological determinant of the ministries of these ethnically distinct women church leaders, however, is their

¹⁴⁸ Outler, “Of the Church,” in *John Wesley*, 312.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 307.

infusion of a “tragic consciousness” that “disrupts marginality.” Possessing “tragic consciousness” is the Wesleyan way of practicing holiness in life, because “tragic consciousness” may help Christians to be alert and sensitive to the *Han* of humanity. The *Han* of humanity, according to Kathleen Sands, is “the inevitability of our involvement in evil” in the world.¹⁵⁰ The souls of humanity, especially of those who cannot fulfill their potential to be—in other words, the *MinJung* of the world—are aching because of *Han*. The salvific role of Jesus is to release the *Han* of humanity by offering an ever-expanding and evolving space, the ultimate kingdom of God, where “interstitial integrity” binds humans together with graceful respect.

I defined *MinJung* as “people who could not expand their full potential of being who they are before the Creator due to individual, social, economic, cultural, and religious conditions, yet who have been empowered to bring changes in their lives and in society.” This definition does not confine the concept of *MinJung* to a Korean context or to people who are deprived from accessing social, economic, political, cultural, and educational opportunities, but expands it to all “limit-situations” of human reality that require “limit-acts” from each person. *MinJung* will transform their *Han*, which will enable them to reach their potential to the fullest as people of God. In this sense, the KAUM clergywomen interviewees were clearly “*MinJung* within the *MinJung*,” not only because they have faced barriers to fulfilling their potential in life, but because they have turned their *Han* into a praxis of transformation and creation of an emancipatory-self based on their faith in Jesus Christ. The interviewees demonstrated that they possess the spirit of seeking to reckon the source of suffering in their lives as they practice their faith.

¹⁵⁰ Kathleen M. Sands, *Escape from Paradise: Evil and Tragedy in Feminist Theology* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress Publishers, 1990), 9.

The life of Jesus has inspired them to “disrupt [the] marginality” of *MinJung*. With Jesus as the impetus of their life transformation, their *Han* has been turned into energy to fulfill their potential to be fully human after the image of the God who is infinite possibility—“I am who I am” (Ex. 3:14 NRSV)—and after the image of Jesus who is “the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation” (Col. 1:15 ESV).

The KAUM clergywomen’s practices of faith are *living responses* to the grace of God that have been constructed with Christian symbols and cultural narratives by participating in a faith community, which is the United Methodist Church. The UMC became a *Han-Puri Madang* (open space where *MinJung* could come together to release their *Han*) for KAUM clergywomen by affording them an opportunity to receive the authority to preach and administer the sacraments. It became a radical space for KAUM clergywomen to testify to God’s prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace upon them. The faith community became a catalyst for them to find their subjectivity and to reimagine and reconstruct their understandings of God. One interviewee said, “The United Methodist Church lives and practices an inclusive theology through me.”

Korean American UM clergywomen provide an example of embracing “tragic consciousness” in discipleship. In spite of multilayered oppressive experiences—racism, sexism, the immigration process, and language barriers—Korean American UM clergywomen seek to maintain their dignity and self-respect through faith.

According to this study, KAUM clergywomen are capable of bringing unique theological understandings into the evolution of Wesleyan ecclesiology in a transitional, diverse, and global context. The church can be space for “interstitial integrity” by embracing those who have not been “normative” theological subjects. Openness to

breaking the old stereotypes, and respecting the differences and “tragic consciousness” in the center of discipleship, will enhance the process of the Church being a *Han-Puri Madang* where people can be transformed by the power of the emancipatory Good News of Jesus Christ.

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