Jean Stairs considers herself lucky to have been invited to pastor at Acton's Baptist Church. The bright young woman graduated last year from McMaster University's Divinity College and says because the Baptist Church believes in the autonomy of the local church, it makes finding a parish tougher for the new graduate. Finding a parish is up to graduates, whereas in the United Church, ministers are automatically posted in a pastoral charge when they graduate.

(Herald photos by Ani Pederian)

# People seek sincerity-pastor

The sixth woman to be ordained in the history of the Baptist Convention of Ontario and Quebec is the paster of the Acton Baptist Church on Mill Street.

Rev. Jean Stairs, 26, is looking forward to her ordination in October. Following Baptist custom, ministers aren't ordained until they gain experience in a parish.

Young and enthusiastic, Rev. Stairs landed her job after working as a supply preacher for the Acton congregation in the spring of 1981, When the parish realized she had finished school and was available as a pastor. they contacted her to come and fill their empty pulpit.

Overall, there are under a dozen Baptist women clergy throughout Canada, Rev. Stairs said. "Churches aren't being

encouraged by our Baptist structure to look out for the women who are coming through. They aren't often aware that they (women) are training and are available, qualified and competent," she said. "Though I think now they are beginning to realize it."

A graduate of the master of divinity program at McMaster University in Hamilton, Rev. Stairs said there were five women and 14 men in her seminary class. Of the five graduates from the course in her year, she was the sole woman. Finding a lob once you

graduate is really tough In the Baptist structure even for men, Rev. Stairs complained. Because the Baptist church believes in the autonomy of the local church, it doesn't place new graduates in churches. Finding a parish is left up to the young graduate, and finding a minister is up to the churches.

TWO GROUPS Although there exists a churches' and pastors' advisory committee acting as a liaison service between the two groups, it's still very much up to the individuals and churches involved.

This set-up contrasts with the United Church of Canada, where new ministers are automatically posted in a pastoral charge when they graduate.

Having to hustle for your first pastering job can be even harder when you're a woman, Rev. Stairs indicated, because although intellectually people feel it's an acceptable idea to have women pastors, emotionally because of tradition and other factors, often they're not ready to be pastored by a woman.

"This church is unique because it has lots of women in leadership roles," Rev. Stairs said, sweeping her eyes over the wooden pews. "A lot of the women are working women and the body of people are open generally to changing patterns and are therefore more accepting towards a

woman pastor." WELLLIKED She said she tries to

have a place for everyone in her ministry, and feels well liked by the congregation.

they would a male minister, with the exception that some worry about me in a way that they might not if I were male."

FEEL ACCEPTED

acceptance from the

other ministers in town

and feels she contributes

to their meetings. Being

asked to preach at town

functions like the World

Day of Prayer service,

the town Cemetery

Decorating service and

various ribbon cutting

ceremonies make her feel

accepted.

## She said she also feels her sex. WOMEN IN

A special report by Ani Pederian

THE CLERGY

"They're very open at this church. For example, the minister before me was black. They look for sincerity in a person. They saw me as being committed and devoted and it's that sense of commitment and dedication that they're looking for," Rev. Stairs said.

As long as she can do the job, that's all that matters to the congregation, Rev. Stairs sald. She doesn't feel that there is any special emphasis placed by the parish on the fact that she's female. In fact, she said she doesn't think some of the church members even perceive her as being a woman.

"I haven't had a single person come to me and say 'I'm having trouble with you as a woman'. I've had a couple of people say they wondered about it in their minds at first." Rev. Stairs said. "I don't perceive they treat me any differently than

less prone to dismiss them

or treat them as insigni-

RIGHT WORDS

"I was embarrassed. But

be emotional. People

Continued on page A5

"It's probably the most

ficant, Rev. Bandy sald.

Anybody who walks into a new job has difficult things to handle and Rev. Stairs doesn't feel that she found things any more difficult because of

Besides visiting the retired and sick. Rev. Stairs makes trips to lunch with her working parishioners as well.

"Men generally, even when the minister is male, are not inclined to come to the minister for help. They'll come over business or administrat-Ive issues, but in terms of their own life, marital or mid-life problems. they're not inclined to," she said. "The men who aren't as open about these issues, I tend to seek out more and go visit them at home or meet at their work."

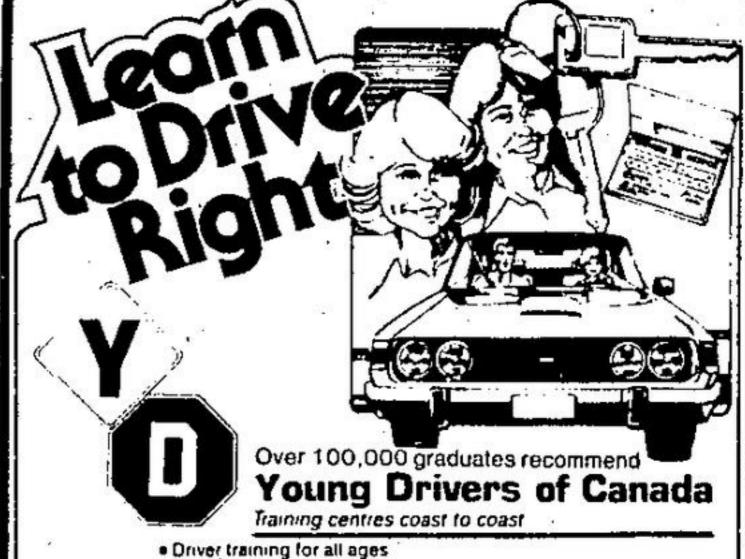
Pastoring the children in the congregation is a source of joy for Rev. Stairs. She sald being

female may give her greater sensitivity as to what's important to children and how to help them through grief and

The fact she's single and attractive worries her Acton congregation, Rev. Stairs admitted. . "They're afraid I'll get married and go away." However, even if she were to marry, Rev. Stairs doesn't see herself giving up her vocation. She said she would

continue to paster. "We're the models, the ploneers for the women coming out of the semi-

naries now," she said. The first woman ordained a Baptist minister was Muriel Carder In the 1930s. It wasn't until 1945 that a second, Clareholm Stewart, was ordained. Although very slowly, the number of Baptist women clergy is growing.



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## Couples weren't sure if Lynne Bandy could legally marry them

# Judging on merits, not sex

has had to assure couples bemoaned this fact, noting on more than one occasion that there is a much higher that if she performed their percentage of women wedding it would be legal. pastors in the prairie pro-

ordained by the United where they are well Church of Canada in 1977. received. She practised as a minister until moving to Georgetown last fall, when her occur at the time of the minister husband Tom second call. Women just accepted a position with are not being asked to the Ballinafad and St. Andrew's United Churches especially in urban in Halton Hills.

Friendly, with an easy of the Division of Mini-Bandy is using her personbeen working as pastoral ed Church in Willowdale.

"Willowdale is the first church where I haven't been mistaken for the refreshing not to have to face that," she chuckled.

Rev. Bandy works three days a week at the church and feels very much accepted by the congrega-

moved to Georgetown after working four churches together in New York state following their marriage. Before that, Rev. Bandy ran a threepoint pastoral charge in rural Manitoba for a year on her own.

"A number of my parishioners were customs officials, which made crossing the border easy," she laughed. SMALL TOWN

Her term at Emerson, Manitoba, a small town near the Minnesota and North Dakota borders, followed her three years at the University of Toronto's Emmanual College semi-As part of her training,

Rev. Bandy worked one summer in a northern Saskatchewan parish and another in downtown Toronto. She holds Bachelor of Arts and Master of Divinity degrees from the University of Toronto.

"In my year of seminary, one-third of my class was female," Rev. Bandy said. "It was the first year that women in any great numbers started to enter seminary."

Once ordained, new ministers are generally placed in rural parishes. "In the United Church

when you're ordained, the church places you. You're settled by the church and the charges have no choice," she explained. "Therefore it was very easy for me to be placed." However, the situation changes when a minister

wants to go to another church.

"It's hard for women to be 'called' and find themselves a second placement," Rev. Bandy sald. "If nobody calls you, you

stay where you are." A recent laste of The

The petite Lynne Bandy United Church Observer Rev. Bandy, 29, was vinces and the Maritimes SECOND CALL

"The problems seem to apply to congregations, Ontario," Mary Sanderson

manner that makes you stry Personnel and Eduwarm right up. Rev. cation said in the article. The United Church al skills to advantage headquarters circulates a again. Since March I she's list of ministers seeking another position and assistant at Lansing Unit- churches looking for new or additional ministers as

groups. "I heard one woman minister's wife, niece or minister say that when she daughter. It's really puts her applications out for another parish she always just puts her initials down," Rev. Bandy said. "That way she hides the fact that she's

a service to assist both

"It's kind of sad in a way The ministerial couple that you wouldn't be judged on your own merits but would immediately be excluded just because you're female," she said. It was in 1936 that the United Church ordained its first woman, and although 46 years have passed since then, it's still unusual to see women ministers around.

"People are so unaccustomed to seeing women in a clergy collar. When I go to the hospital for visits they turn around and look at me and I know it's not my devastating beauty," Rev. Bandy sald. "I like to go 'Yes, I am a minist-

People are still unaccustomed to seeing women in the pulpit, Rev. Bandy

HARD TIME In the conservative northern part of New York state where she co-ministered with her husband, Rev. Bandy had a hard time establishing herself as minister.

Unfamiliar with women ministers, parishioners would call her up and say "I know how busy a minister's wife is dear, but can

Although she was very visible as a minister, Rev. Bandy sald that because she was working with a man, people tended to

downplay her authority. Calling herself a "lowkey, laid-back feminist", Rev. Bandy believes in equal respect for equal work. She recalled one summer funeral she conducted while still a student minister, Having been the only remotely religious person available at the time, the Saskatchewan farming family had to settle for her services though they were shocked to have a female pastor bury one of their own. Rev.



that makes strangers feel comfortable. Born in a small village in the Blue Mountain area, Rev. Bandy hasn't strayed far from her roots. Since March the has been working part time at Lansing United Church in Willowdale and besides finding it a challenge, finds it satisfying to be using her interpersonal skills again. (Herald photo)

There's a down home quality about Lynne Bandy

Bandy said that after the service, by the graveside, the family went so far as to refuse to shake hands with her or accept any physical gesture of support.

Does being famale come in useful? Rev. Bandy thinks it helps and makes her job easier.

"I think sometimes women find it easier to talk to another woman," she said. "And sometimes it's easier for men' to be emotional with a woman than to express their emotions to a man."

the cloak"

Being female herself

As for women being too emotional, what's wrong with that, counters Rev. JOB EASIER. Bandy. She can usually maintain self-control and stay distant while conducting a funeral, she said, confessing she cried through a funeral she was conducting for a friend

unprofessional thing I've done in my life," she said. it's easier for a woman to

As well, being female grants her automatic venue into maternity wards in hospitals, or when it comes to ministering to women who have had a mastectomy or hysterectomy. Such women are often reluctant to share their feelings with a man, though he "be of

makes it easier for her to listen to and understand female complaints, and



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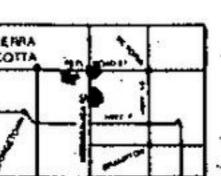
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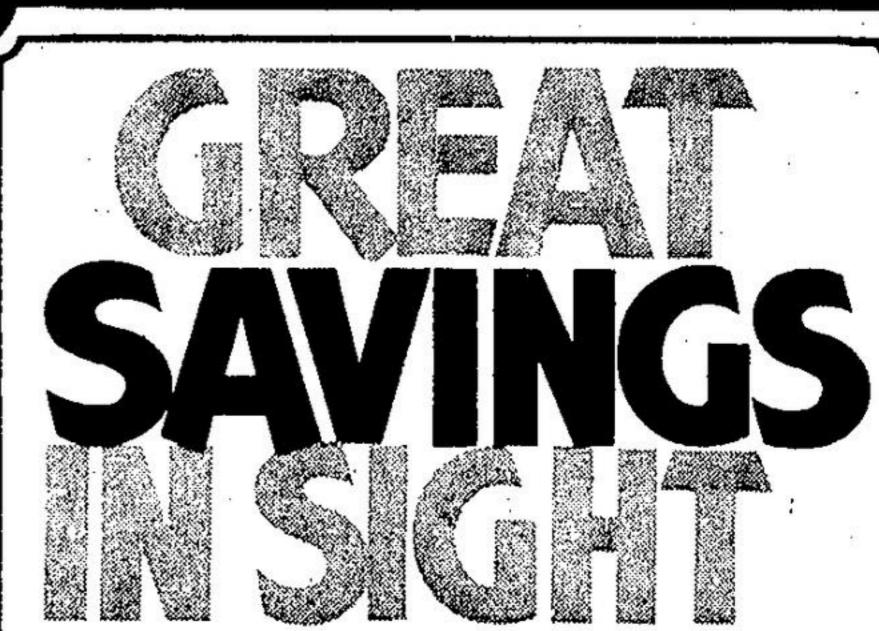
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