Dr. Sherry Anderson began her leadership journey as a member of an independent Baptist church in Maine.  Since childhood, she had dreamed of obtaining her doctorate and writing a dissertation.  Working on a doctorate in leadership at Franklin Pierce University’s College of Graduate and Professional Studies, Sherry engaged in an internship at her church one summer.  She interviewed both women and men, who served in non-senior leadership positions at the church.  During one of the meetings that Sherry attended in her internship, she was shocked to learn that a gifted woman held a position at the church and she was not paid for her work. Rather, it was believed that she would donate the money and serve submissively.  Once Sherry’s mid-term report was written, she submitted it to her professor, but accidentally sent the report to the Senior Pastor of her church, who was livid about her exposing this and other matters publicly and her internship abruptly ended.  After being publicly humiliated and heart broken by her pastor, Sherry left the church in search of a church where women were allowed to serve in senior leadership positions as pastors, deacons and teachers.  God opened a way for Sherry to speak with a businesswoman who just happens to be an ordained American Baptist minister.  Her eyes were opened to a whole world of women in senior leadership she had never heard of within the confines of her Independent Baptist church.  Rev. Darlene Springer put Sherry in touch with the ABCOM Advocates for Women in Ministry in Maine and Sherry came to one of their gatherings, where she met many women serving as Pastors of churches.  As she shaped her dissertation work, she chose to interview some of these American Baptist women pastors who seemed to defy the theological expectations for women that she had always been taught.

[BOOK] Women as Stewards of Social Change: The Narratives of American Baptist Women Who Held Senior Leadership Positions as Pastors, Deacons, and Teachers

Web address: <http://gradworks.umi.com/36/80/3680110.html>>

Dr. Sherry Anderson - 2014

ABSTRACT Throughout history women have attempted to reach senior leadership positions in churches of all denominations, but only within the past three centuries have women gained a presence in such positions. This thesis was undertaken to fill the gap of current research on the leadership roles of women within the ministry of traditionally conservative churches. Data were collected through surveys and follow-up interviews. Twelve women who held senior leadership positions in American Baptist churches participated in the case study. Their stories of religious transformation, social support, and discrimination are highlighted in this study. Their callings were both a personal and religious experience that could only be captured through

interdisciplinary, qualitative research methods. Religious studies, women's studies, and critical theory were combined to create a feminist narrative of spiritual women who were both leaders within their faith and change agents of conservative, religious traditions. The analysis focuses on their roles in cultural and religious reforms. In addition, the author drew upon recent theories and empirical research on collaborative, transformational, and spiritual leadership and Maslow's earlier work on human motivation to better understand the leadership roles of women in the ministry.