DURHAM, N.C. – The Rev. Judith L. Weidman, who recently retired as general secretary of United Methodist Communications, has been named the 1999 Duke Divinity School Distinguished Alumna.

An ordained United Methodist minister who earned her master of divinity from Duke in 1966, Weidman has worked in church communications and journalism for 34 years. Since 1994, she has directed public relations efforts for the 9 million-member United Methodist Church, the second largest Protestant denomination in the United States.

Weidman was honored today, Oct. 11, at an alumni luncheon held during the divinity school’s annual Convocation and Pastors’ School.

“Judy Weidman’s work in communications represents the kind of transformative service we seek to teach our students at Duke Divinity School,” Dean L. Gregory Jones remarked. “Her commitment to the church, learning and service is a model for us all.”

A native of Savanna, Ill., Weidman began her journalism career in 1966 as an assistant editor for the United Methodist Publishing House’s adult curriculum department. She served as a special assignment reporter for the Kokomo Tribune from 1968 to 1971, before being named associate editor of the United Methodist Reporter, an independent national newspaper based in Dallas. In 1975, Weidman was appointed general secretary for interpretation for the United Methodist Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

Weidman became executive editor of Religion News Service in 1984. She helped steer the agency from virtual bankruptcy to financial solvency and New York Times syndication during the ensuing decade, attracting more than $1 million in foundation grants and funding research on religion reporting and readership.

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Named Communicator of the Year in 1987 by the United Methodist Association of Communicators, Weidman currently serves on the advisory board of the Center for Religion and the News Media, a joint program of the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University and Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary. She is the editor of two books, *Women in Ministry* and *Christian Fellowship*, and has served as a media consultant in Japan, Korea, China, The Philippines and England.

The Distinguished Alumni Award was established in 1973 by the Duke Divinity School Alumni Association to recognize Duke Divinity School graduates for remarkable and exemplary service to God, the church and the human community.

Weidman’s award was presented by the Rev. Nancy Burgin Rankin, chairwoman of the nominating committee and superintendent of the Statesville District of the Western North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church.

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