



# common lot

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## *Dream On, Sisters!*

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## common lot

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# Sharing our common lot



**L**iterally – for years we have been dreaming of a National Women’s Event that would be a partnership between the women of the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Our two women’s staffs have met periodically for many years and always the lament is raised, “wouldn’t it be wonderful if our women could come together and celebrate our gifts in one place”.

Well, finally plans are underway and a joint planning committee with representation from both denominations is hard at work making this a dream come true.

Interesting that the theme would end up being *Dream On, Sisters*, after all our years of dreaming! And in all this dreaming the hope is that women will come to Indianapolis and discover their dreams, be awakened to God’s dreams for us and leave for home joyously seeking to live out those dreams in the world!

This issue of Common Lot is being prepared with the hope that you will learn a bit more about many of those who will be leading us during our time together June 21-25, 2006 when we gather in Indy! Recently I sent a letter out to all the presenters, preachers, Bible study leaders and musicians asking them:

- Why they said yes to being part of the Mix in ‘06 event?
- How did they hear God’s call to their current ministry?
- What “dreams” they have for this gathering of sisters?
- and lastly, to share with us the women in their lives who most influenced and empowered them on their journey.

Many of them took the time to respond, most with exceptional creativity so throughout this issue we share a sampling of their responses with you! In part so you will know more about them and their dreams but also, to encourage you in your decision to be with us. Please don’t miss this wonderful opportunity to be present when women from all across the country gather to celebrate their sisterhood in Christ. For more information check out our web site [www.dreamonsisters.com](http://www.dreamonsisters.com).

I look forward to seeing each of you next June in Indianapolis!

EACH OF US CAN DREAM—TOGETHER THOSE DREAMS CAN COME TRUE!

# COUNTING OUR BLESSINGS HELPS OTHERS COUNT THEIRS!

God has richly blessed each of us and through the daily use of the Women's Blessing Boxes we find our blessings multiply as we continue to recognize more and more blessings in our lives.

As we recognize our blessings we keep God present in our daily lives!

Gratitude is how we respond to God's blessings and gifts. Gratitude is recognizing those gifts that come from God and sharing what we have received. As we are blessed let us also bless others!

We are a blessed people. God's love and grace are at the core of our blessings. Women and children in the countries listed below have the opportunity to be primary beneficiaries of the many blessing we claim in our lives, so share God's blessing in a very tangible way in the world:

Liberia

The Balkans

Afghanistan

Hong Kong

Dominican Republic

South Korea

India

Niger



# Look at BOOKS

THIS SECTION OF COMMON LOT FEATURES BOOKS BY THE PILGRIM PRESS.

**Aimée Jannsohn,**  
marketing communications  
associate, Pilgrim Press,  
Local Church Ministries



In this issue of *Looks at Books* we are very pleased to feature an interview with Maren C. Tirabassi and Maria I. Tirabassi, co-editors of The Pilgrim Press book *DayBook for New Voices: A Calendar of Reflections by and for Youth*. Maren is an author, editor, and UCC minister who lives in New Hampshire and Maria is a recent college graduate with writing and editing experience. But they are more than just the co-editors of this project – they are a mother-daughter writing/editing team.

*DayBook for New Voices* was released in 2004 by The Pilgrim Press in time for the UCC's 2004 National Youth Event. It is a thoughtful collection of prayers, poems, and reflections for every day of the year, written primarily by youth. It follows Maren C. Tirabassi's popular and highly successful youth resource *Blessing New Voices: Prayers of Young People and Worship Resources for Youth Ministry* (2000).

*DayBook for New Voices* encourages listening to youth voices beyond the ordinary, "special" days such as Youth Sunday and Children's Day, and contains two thoughtfully chosen biblical reflections per month. This unique youth resource also provides journaling space for potential future writers to record their thoughts. Young people will enjoy *DayBook for New Voices*, and youth ministers will find it's a useful confirmation resource as well as a refreshing way to add prayers, poems, and reflections to their Sunday bulletins. *DayBook for New Voices* is a great way to embrace and involve the youth of your congregation.

*DayBook for New Voices: A Calendar of Reflections by and for Youth*  
Maren C. Tirabassi and Maria I. Tirabassi, eds.

The Pilgrim Press

0-8298-1603-8

Paper/240 pp/\$18

## Interview with Maren C. Tirabassi and Maria I. Tirabassi

**Aimée Jannsohn:** What inspired you to work together on this project?

**Maren:** June Boutwell invited me to create a book similar to *Blessing New Voices* (which had been given to participants at the 2000 National Youth Event) for the 2004 National Youth Event. I immediately thought it would be a wonderful opportunity to work with Maria who was in a writing and editing program in college and is very comfortable with the language and imagery of youth and young adults. I

have always worked with youth in my ministry, so I have many contacts. June was encouraging and enthusiastic about an intergenerational effort.

**Maria:** My mother and I have worked together informally on projects in the past, and we thought that since I'd been studying writing and publishing at Emerson, this would be a great opportunity to get hands-on experience. I've also been involved in the UCC my entire life, and it's shaped my life; it was exciting to get a chance to show my mother and my

church how much I've learned and grown from my involvement.

**Aimée:** Maren, what was it like to work with your daughter on a writing project?

**Maren:** It was a delight to work as a colleague with Maria. Professionally, her fresh insights always pulled me out of the ruts of 25 years of ministry. Personally, I've always known that some of the most precious times of my life were when Matthew and Maria were young. She is now an adult, living away from home. I'm sure we will explore many different relationships during our lives — it was exciting to begin with this one. That issue — the change that maturity and independence brings for all parents and children was a central theme of many of the writings submitted to *DayBook*, and it felt integral to the project itself for my daughter and myself to be actually experiencing separation and re-connection as equals.

**Aimée:** Maria, what was it like to work with your mother on a writing project?

**Maria:** She and I have always been close, and we find it pretty easy to work together. I'm much more organized than she is, but she knows how to get things in on a deadline, and those two skills are absolutely essential when you're trying to complete a project that depends on so many different people's cooperation.

**Aimée:** If you have the time, will you do this again?

**Maren:** Absolutely! In fact, we already have a project in process — an anthology of worship resources, not unlike my 1990's volume *Touch Holiness*, but reaching out to writers in their 20s and 30s as well as older writers, so that it can more directly impact congregational members in those decades. Maria gave me a chance to contribute some poetry to her senior thesis project — I imagine she will tell you more about that. I think once she moves to California we might also try to write an epistolary novel...probably more for fun than publication!

**Maria:** We definitely plan to work together in the future. She already contributed to my senior thesis project, a memoir in poetry that details the experiences of five women in my family called *The Woman I Knew*. We would also like to put together

another book of worship resources in the next few years. I won't be living as close to home next year, so we look at it as an opportunity to remain close and to continue to encourage each other creatively.

**Aimée:** How long did it take to complete this project?

**Maren:** June Boutwell invited us to do this project in March of 2003 and we had to have the manuscript in by January 5, 2004 — it shaped the Christmas vacation! Several of the original writers did not follow up on their work so some of Maria's college friends contributed. Actually that was how we added some of the interfaith dimension — the Jewish, Taoist, Sufi, Greek Orthodox writers and some of the Roman Catholic writers. The earlier work — Maria's outreach at General Synod and contacting Conference Youth Ministry staff, Outdoor Ministries sites and college chaplains was very intensive. Once we had the prayers, poems and reflections, we knew what a great book we had so that buoyed us up through the details. Another way to answer this question — literally thousands of hours!

**Maria:** Technically, I think it took us about a year, but the project was in the works for a lot longer.

**Aimée:** Maria, were you away at school while working on this project?

**Maria:** Yes.

**Aimée:** How difficult was this to do from a distance?

**Maren:** Maria went to Emerson College in Boston, which is only an hour away. Working on this project was a wonderful excuse for me to go visit! Some of the simplest work could be done via e-mail. I also believe that it was easier to have a collegial relationship when we were not living together. Maria had already been away for two years. Writing with someone while living with them can be a bit of a pressure cooker!

**Maria:** The trip between Portsmouth and Boston is only an hour, so we didn't have much trouble getting together. We did do a lot of work on our own time as well though; when we got together, we usually had a strict agenda for editing and organization that we stuck to in order to make deadline.

**Aimée:** Maria, congratulations on your recent graduation. What is your degree and major?

**Maria:** I've just earned a BFA in Writing, Literature, and Publishing at Emerson College.

**Aimée:** What was it like to work with the young writers on this project?

**Maren:** I had earlier experience with the book *Blessing New Voices* and I was looking forward to this. *DayBook* is also for ages 12–22 but this book shifted older than the earlier book. There were more high school and college contributors. It was a joy to read the depth of understanding and reflection in so much of the work, the willingness to grapple with serious issues, and to be honest not only with faith, but also with doubt. Through the editing process I felt like I got to know many of the young people. My only frustration — while much of the submission was via e-mail, permissions must be sent through the regular mail for signatures and for parents' signatures. Some of the contributors just couldn't get the papers back, because they are so used to electronic correspondence.

**Maria:** The writers I met while working on this book were just amazing. My best experience was definitely at General Synod; although the Youth Council mostly didn't write for the book, they inspired me. After that event, I was excited to search out more kids who felt they had something to say to their peers, and to God, and to their respective religious communities.

**Aimée:** Do you think you could have benefited from such a resource when you were young?

**Maren:** Absolutely! I wanted to be a minister when I was in fifth grade (I was a Presbyterian at the time and it was not too long after the ordination of women). In middle school I was so alienated from what I found to be the hypocrisy and irrelevance of the church that I took a 10-year leave of absence. If I had a book that allowed the honest expression of doubt as well as trust, critique of the church as well as love of it, confusion about the future as well as shining ideals, I probably would have felt much more comfortable staying in the community of faith.

**Maria:** Because my mother is both a poet and a minister, I feel like I did have that resource as a child. I was always encouraged to express myself both in the church and on the page, and it was

something I considered a natural part of growth. Part of what I hope came across with the project is that this shouldn't be limited to a single publication opportunity. Young people have a real desire to be heard in the church community, and this should be the beginning of that — not the end.

**Aimée:** Would you say the book is intended only for youth?

**Maren:** Here I would say absolutely not! If anything, it is more important that adults in the church read the reflections of young people to understand how they feel about issues of faith. These are the words of the church — not of the future, but of the present! These writers are very gifted — adults will be surprised by the clarity and profundity of their thoughts.

**Maria:** While I do hope that young people read and enjoy the book, I actually think it's more important for adults to pick it up and see how much these kids have to offer. They've written such beautiful prayers and songs and poems. What they've said and what they continue to say has a place in every community, and it's crucial for the growth of the church that parents, teachers, ministers — everybody, really, understands and appreciates that fact.

**Aimée:** What advice would you give other mother/daughter teams that are inspired to collaborate on a writing project?

**Maren:** Do it! Honestly, a mother/daughter team should be aware that if there are aspects of each other's personality which create friction in daily life, they won't go away in a work relationship. Those very differences, however, can be an important thing to build on. A couple pieces of practical advice: Maria and I worked on many aspects of *DayBook* together, but we also had separate responsibilities and we didn't second guess each other! One example is that Maria did all the placement of the prayers throughout the year — I never said "Oh, I think that prayer would work better in January than in May." It was completely her decision. The things that are boring and no one likes — permissions, indexing, proofreading and proofreading and proofreading again, we shared.

**Maria:** You can only do so much in one afternoon. In other words, don't try to force an idea, or to schedule too much into too short a time. That's a sure way to drive each other absolutely insane.

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Households and Holiness: The Religious Culture of Israelite Women*

By Carol Meyers  
Fortress Press  
2005

Carol Meyers, leading feminist biblical studies scholar at Duke University and author of *Discovering Eve: Ancient Israelite Women in Context* (Oxford University Press, 1988), has written a rich study on women's religious experience and expression. Meyers' multidisciplinary approach is groundbreaking in the field of feminist biblical studies, lifting up the centrality of the household and women's ritual experience and expression in ancient Israel.

Meyers weaves a tapestry of household holiness and embodied spiritual practice in this book on the role of ancient women diviners and healers, and the ritual materials they used. In short, this is a book about holiness afoot in the house.

Meyers draws on cultural, ethnographic, biblical, and archaeological studies to demonstrate holiness in the house. She draws on multiple textual sources that include biblical narratives, historical, poetic, magical, medicinal or herbal writings. In some instances she links ancient practices to contemporary adaptations, for example, the wearing of a scarlet thread properly wound around Rachel's tomb during pregnancy.

The book is short, and clear. Each chapter illuminates facets of diverse daily life activities and practice that create women's religious culture. It lends itself well to group study and lively discussion.

*Review written by Rev. Kimberly Whitney, Minister for Higher and Theological Education, Worship and Education Team Local Church Ministries UCC.*

## BOOK REVIEW

### *Mama's Going to Heaven Soon*

By Kathe Martin Copeland  
Illustrations by Elissa Hudson  
Augsburg Publishing for Children and Families,  
2005

The author deals tenderly and realistically with the death and separation of a beloved parent. The words of the story make it clear that although mama will be gone physically from this earth she will be in heaven with God and her love for her children will continue eternally.

In the midst of a reassuring message about mama's eternal love for them, the children receive a balanced reassurance regarding their sadness about the death of and the separation from their parent. They are encouraged to freely express a wide range of feelings to the surviving parent, minister, teacher, coach and friends. The naming of this supporting community of caring adults confirms that the world is still a safe place with people who will help the children through a very difficult time. The implied message is that God is good and the Creator is still providing love and care for God's children.

Through the words of the story and the section on talking to children about death, caregivers will be able to share the simple and honest truth about death. They will be able to share their own emotions about death while explaining that hurting hearts do mend. This story of hope and its promise of everlasting love will help caregivers teach grieving children that ultimately life is greater than death.

*Review written by Rev. Carolyn Landers Pettigrew, Minister for Children and Families, Worship and Education Team, Local Church Ministries UCC.*

# Curran Reichert



Curran Reichert is an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ, a licensed Spiritual Director and a certified Interplay instructor. She is currently serving as founding pastor of Open Prairie United Church of Christ in Princeton Illinois, a radically progressive congregation in the rural heartland of America. Curran has been a performing artist for over twenty years working in theater, films, and television. This self-described Rev. Energy is poised and ready to exercise her Cabaret muscles whenever the opportunity arises. Curran is deeply committed to the pursuit of bringing the arts and spirituality together.

I said an enthusiastic “yes” to being a part of the Mix on ’06 during a conversation with Loey Powell. She asked me if I had any desire to be a part of a Women’s Event in 2006. She said she wasn’t positive, but she thought the event would include Holly Near and Bernice Johnson Reagon and she would like for me to be involved in some way singing, dancing, leading worship, etc. I leapt to my feet shouting, “are you kidding, I’d walk to the end of the earth for an opportunity like that!” And so it is with much enthusiasm and excitement that I am looking forward to being a part of an event that I believe has tremendous potential to shift the DNA of the planet for good!

As you might have gathered I am an excitable individual. However, if you had asked me five years ago if I would be excited about starting a church in rural Illinois, I would have politely excused myself from the conversation. As an urbanite, who’s background is in performance and who is most comfortable living where avocados are easy to come by (namely Northern, CA) I was as surprised as anyone to find that God was calling me to start a new church with the good people of Princeton Illinois, in the glorious cornfields of the Mid-West. My partner and I have been serving Open Prairie United Church of Christ for nearly two years and we are finding there is much to love about the middle of our country. I am proud to serve a group of thoughtful, progressive Christians who are embodying Christ’s message of radical inclusivity.

This Gathering is bringing together women from two vibrant and creative denominations, I dream that we will build lasting relationships and coalitions of support for and with one another. I dream that we will learn how to better support our talented and gifted young women within both denominations. I hope we will encourage one another to dream big, to dare to become all that God visions us to be and to do it in relationship, relationship, relationship, with one another. We live in a world that drives us to believe that there can only be one number one, one gold medal winner, one best. I believe that the women of this generation are called to challenge and undo that kind of thinking – to vision another way of being Christians in relationship with one another. We are called to be about creating a world rooted in God’s abundant love for all people. I want to see us grow deeper with one another and make a difference together.

Among the women in my life, who has empowered and inspired me as a leader... my grandmother on my mother’s side used to were stripes and plaids together. She was a hoot! My mother went back to school when I was thirteen and became the first college graduate in her family, she went on to earn a Master’s Degree and taught High School Speech and Debate for seventeen years. Those are the women who have shaped me the most, they were/are quirky, powerful, and faith filled. I have also been privileged to have strong women mentors and brave women friends as well as a truly magnificent life partner the Rev. Katie Morrison. They continue to inspire me to think beyond my own limitations, to trust God and to believe in myself.

# Sandhya Jha

Whenever I go back to visit my family in India, conversation bubbles around me in Bengali. When I could speak very little, I, the youngest cousin and the only one raised outside of India, was discussed at great length in the third person. What my elder cousins would inevitably come around to (and even though I could speak very little Bengali, I understood enough to catch the gist of the conversation) was *how much I looked like my grandmother*.

My grandmother claimed her place in my family mythology long ago as a near-saint. She made the best sweets; she rubbed tense shoulders and arms to convey her deep love; she wept every night for the youngest son (my father) who went overseas. She embodied gentleness and compassion.

And yet. A Filipina friend of mine has spent the summer interviewing Asian women leaders, both lay and ordained, to better understand their spirituality and how it sustains them. She recently interviewed a Japanese American spiritual counsellor in the Bay Area, who said, "To me, Jesus is an African American woman." That may sound strange, she said, but Jesus was revolutionary in a way that womanist theologians continue to be. Asian women, she mourned, continue to be caricatured as submissive and servile, but we also continue to perpetuate that behavior.

This conversation made me ache and made me proud. I was proud of this strong woman seeking outside of her community for models of leadership and strength. I ached because she had given up on our community in the process. And when I look for strong women who have mentored me, they are often outside my family and outside my fatherland.

Maybe that is not something to mourn, entirely—I have received the gift of knowing that I can look to women for mentorship as leaders in the church who look nothing like me; this is part of God's vision for every one of us, and sometimes we do not take the opportunity to seek for God outside of our immediate group, because others follow different rituals, or are too loud, or are too meek, or are too poor, or don't speak "good English."

Maybe, though, I have been given another gift. The world has many strong (and usually headstrong) leaders; they sometimes get their way, but at great cost to others. God has given me the gift within my own family and within my own culture of recognizing that worshipping God happens not just in the loudness and in the strength, but in the rubbing of arms and sharing of sweets. It is my dream (fantasy, perhaps) that the "leaders" in this world, and, frankly, the leaders in our congregations and denominations, would recognize we please God through both our gentleness and our strength; either one is insufficient for God's greater plan.

I cannot wait to join with other strong, gentle women to dream together how to embody and help build God's Holy Commonwealth; I look forward to learning from you and sharing with you at the Mix in '06!



Sandhya Jha is co-moderator of the Anti-Racism Commission of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). She recently graduated from the University of Chicago with a Master of Divinity and a Master of Public Policy. Sandhya serves on the Executive Committee of the North American Pacific and Asian Disciples and since graduating has served as an intern with the Northern California-Nevada region.

# Rosemary McCombs Maxey



Rosemary McCombs Maxey is a member of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation of Oklahoma and Fellowship United Church of Christ in Tulsa. She co-teaches the Muscogee language in the Oklahoma State University system and serve as the Acting Director of the Eagle Butte Learning Center, a ministry of the Council for American Indian Ministry (CAIM) and the United Church of Christ.

After a thirty-year absence, I returned to the place of my childhood by way of Rainbow Highway, a dirt and gravel road that parallels the old forgotten and abandoned Fort Smith and Western railroad right-of-way. In the 1910's, itinerants, hobos, horse thieves, and traveling merchants caught rides on those trains going somewhere. They jumped off behind my grandmother's house for a good meal and a night's rest in the field sheltered by scrub oak and persimmon trees. They chopped wood or carried water or left gifts in exchange for Grandmother's hospitality.

I often refer to Dustin, my hometown of 300 citizens, as the universal center for peace and justice. I live just off Rainbow Highway very near where the Gypsies once camped, they say. Sometimes I can hear the women singing and dancing to music from violins and tambourines. I hear the laughter of small children. And, I see the faces and eyes of three generations of Creek people who observe, shake their heads solemnly, and say, "The Trail of Tears from Georgia was a long trip. We're not moving anywhere else."

My neighbors tell me the dual-wheeled pickups hauling trailers of steers behind them by day are the same ones who haul marijuana crops past my house by night. My mother used to say the old beat up mobile homes moving along, raising up dust on the road are future meth labs. Women on horses rustle cattle in the moonlight. Preachers and parishioners imprisoned for possession, after five years, are released along Rainbow Highway while I sleep.

Famous women and men, some more famous than others, visit, eat a meal, and spend the night at the headquarters for universal peace and justice. We share our food, beds, dreams and visions, and look for rainbow connections where justice and peace might emerge and merge.

## HANDCRAFTS DELIVER HOPE by Nancy Potter



Khalada is a basket maker in rural Bangladesh and one of the artisans that A Greater Gift purchases from. She bought two bullocks with the income she made selling her baskets through A Greater Gift

Beshi, beshi orders," this is the refrain I heard over and over last fall when I visited artisans in rural Bangladesh. It means more, more orders and the artisans were referring to orders for their handcrafts that they make and export here to the United States through A Greater Gift. My hostess Tanu said "Usually a person can survive on fish from the lagoons and local rice but if you wish to marry and have a place to live, if you need medicine, if you wish to educate your children, if you need to

leave an abusive situation, all these things mean you need some money and there are very few safe ways a woman can ever have any money." A Greater Gift is in the business of offering real income to these women.

Our organization was founded by the Church of the Brethren in the 1940's to help refugees in war-torn Europe. Some members brought handcrafts that refugees had made to the United States and sold them, funneling the proceeds back to them. The

Right now, language revitalization is an urgent need in our Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Once a month, an intergenerational array of people comes for an afternoon of language practice and storytelling. Two pre-teen daughters and their father, two teachers, a college professor, and several unemployed men and women drive in. We teach and learn around the table, the classroom, where we connect with an ancient worldview, a difficult past, and a very real present.

E-mails, instant messages, phone calls, conference calls, cellular calls, and collect calls from cells enjoin travelers of dusty roads, abandoned rails, old and new pathways and highways, techno-cyberspace ways, to be good news to the poor, to aid in the release of captives, in recovery of sight to the blind, by letting the oppressed go free, and declaring the year of God's favor. (Luke 4: 18-20)

I see them – the mothers and fathers of children singing and playing with them, enjoying laughter and good food, safely traveling from one stage of life to another. I see love, justice, and mercy emerging and merging like billowing dust behind a pickup and trailer blowing toward my house and engulfing the world around me.

I see women, UCC and Disciples, gathering in Indianapolis, dancing in friendship circles, loving and being loved, feeding and being fed, teaching, preaching, learning, celebrating our dreams and being our visions. I see healing, wholeness, and life-affirming equality, freeing us to “Dream On, Sisters!”

name they gave their project was SERRV, an acronym for Sales Exchange for Refugee Rehabilitation and Vocation. SERRV expanded over the years and today work with over 90 different artisan groups in 36 different countries. In the early nineties, in response to the ecumenical nature of the work, became an independent nonprofit no longer affiliated with the Church of the Brethren and in 2004 changed the name of the handcraft program to A Greater Gift instead of SERRV.

A Greater Gift defines itself as an “alternative trade and development organization”.

Alternative trade means they adhere to fair trade practices—making sure the artisans receive fair wages and have healthy, clean work environments. They also establish long-term relationships with their artisan partners, listening to their needs and offering whatever is necessary to move them to self-sufficiency. This may take many forms such as design consultation, business consultation or small grants for tools and infrastructure. All of this programming is made possible through the sales of handcrafts, some fair trade foods and donations.

All sales are directly to consumers through the catalog and web site. They also sell wholesale to a network of stores across the U.S. but because their roots are in the church, church wholesale and consignment sales still account for more than 40% of the money they are able to send to artisan partners. You can call 1-800-423-0071 and order a packet of information on how to host a sale in your church. Having a sale is a great way to build community, have fun and at the same time make a dramatic difference in the lives of artisans and farmers and their families in low-income regions of the world.

CONSIDER HOSTING A SALE IN YOUR CONGREGATION THIS FALL.



**“A Greater Gift creates pathways of love to the world-when you have a sale, those pathways grow. And it's fun!”**

—DIANNE STEVENS (is a member of Orchard Ridge UCC in Madison WI. She and the members of her congregation host an alternative gift fair every fall where they sell fair trade handcrafts and foods from A Greater Gift

# Renée Bondi



The story of Renée Bondi features all the drama, hope and inspiration that only God could orchestrate and is being shared—by the only one who could tell it—Renée herself. Renée Bondi is a fresh, new recording artist, speaker and author whose music and message reflects what God has taught her through her suffering and disability. Confined to a wheelchair and told she would never sing again, Renée married, gave birth to a beautiful son and is one of the highest selling independent Christian artists in the country. By her example Renée encourages us to recognize the power of Jesus Christ in our daily lives.

**W**hy did I say “yes” to being part of the Mix in '06? I have a real passion for helping women realize that God is real and God is faithful. Often women need to be reminded that the Lord is not just some ethereal being in the clouds, but rather an intimate Savior who walks with us daily and cares for us deeply. So I consider it a sweet privilege to be invited to speak to the women at the Mix.

And it certainly didn't hurt that a woman on the Disciples of Christ Ministry staff, Adonna Bowman, was the one that contacted me. I so thoroughly enjoyed working with her on a project here in California many years ago. I look forward to ministering with her!

**How did I hear God's call to my current ministry?** It's funny, I never dreamt that the Lord would use me in a speaking ministry. I am a high school choir director by profession, but when I broke my neck leaving me paralyzed at the age of 29 my life took a drastic turn. About one year after my injury and confined to a wheelchair, a local pastor asked if he could interview me during one of his sermons. It was well received and other local churches heard of that special Sunday and began inviting me to their churches. Soon it spread nationally. It took a few years and, I'm embarrassed to say, HUNDREDS of speaking engagements to finally say, “Gosh Lord, can you really use me in this wheelchair? I guess you can, so here I am. Use me”

**What are my dreams for this gathering of sisters?** My dream for the women gathered next summer in Indianapolis is that they will let the busyness of life stop long enough to just be present to the Mix event, put their feet up, relax and be rejuvenated in the Lord. I feel certain that while attending, you will be given fresh, new tools to enjoy the season of life that you are currently experiencing.

*Have the courage  
to follow your dreams.  
It's the first step towards  
attaining your destiny.*

—NIKITA KOLOF

# Mary Mikhael

I was born in Syria in 1943 and serve as a Presbyterian Elder in the Presbyterian Church in Beirut, Lebanon.

I am an Associate Professor of Christian Education, receiving a Masters degree from the PSCE in Richmond, VA, and an Ed. D. from Columbia University and Union Theological Seminary in New York City.

I have served on the Faculty of Near East School of Theology (NEST) since 1984. I became the first woman President of NEST in 1994 and continue in the same position.

My passion is for better Christian Education in the churches, and I am deeply concerned about women's issues, most particularly, the role of women in the Christian ministry.

I have directed the women's program of the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC) and was involved in the Fellowship of the Least Coin, and the World Day of Prayer - International Committee for many years.

**Why did I "yes" to Mix in '06?** Because among women, I find my proper identity. I hear God's call to me in every student who comes to the Seminary to be trained for working in the church.

My dream is to create a lasting solidarity with as many sisters as possible. I give thanks to my grandmother and several of my teachers who have empowered me and helped me become what I am.



Dr. Mary Mikhael (President, Near East School of Theology, Beirut, Lebanon) is an internationally known writer, lecturer, and advocate for women. She resides in Beirut, Lebanon. Her passion, as she says, "Is for women to be and to do as God intended for them to be and do."

## Walking on Sacred Ground

The tapestry of the land is as diverse as those who live and care for it. The writers of the 2005 Mosaic share their stories and believe that persons can and do walk on sacred ground wherever they are. In the unit lessons of the Walking on Sacred Ground Mosaic participants have the opportunity to learn more about the value of farming as well as experience life in small towns and rural churches. Whether active in agriculture or not, the land has touched us, and made us sisters in Spirit.

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# Holly Near



Holly Near is a unique combination of entertainer, teacher and activist. She was born to parents, one from North Dakota and one New York who were political activists, ranchers, and supporters of culture in the rural community of Ukiah, California. Holly moves comfortably in this blend of west coast sensibility and east coast sophistication. Near's career as a singer has been profoundly defined by an unwillingness to separate her passion for music from her passion for human dignity. Holly Near is an ambassador for peace inviting the audience to its best self. She brings to the stage an integration of world consciousness, spiritual discovery and theatricality

I am very pleased to have been invited to join the gathering and to work in collaboration with Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagan and Carrie Newcomer in a cultural presentation. Working with Carrie will be new to me. I look forward to it. I have learned from and worked with Dr. Reagan for nearly 30 years. I come away from these unique intersections enriched, challenged and improved.

It is my understanding that women will come to this gathering through many doors. My hope is that we come open and willing to make the best use of this window of opportunity.

What is "a window of opportunity"? I see an organization as providing a space, a pallet, a stage, a drawing board. And we who attend are invited to create. We will create with critical thinking, with the articulation of ideas and the exchange of stories, with music and prayer. If we are successful, we will all leave the event changed in some way — our perspectives improved, our spirits refueled.

It will not be surprising if there is anger and frustration and hurt feelings and humiliations along the way. In advance, may we all recognize such moments as teachers, and see if we can engage in conflict resolution with more skill than the model provided by world leaders. When we gather, we practice.

And so for me, having done political cultural work for over 35 years, my "contract" with such events as this is to bring a willingness to be both student and teacher in all moments.

When I was a child, my family occasionally attended Methodist, Presbyterian and Unitarian services. My mother attributes her coming to consciousness to George Buttrick, who was the minister at the Episcopalian Church she attended as a child in New York City.

I am interested in a deeply personal dialogue with the unknown, in nourishing community, and in singing each other to our best selves. That said, I will bring my voice to the table.

*I was not looking for my dreams to  
interpret my life, but rather for my life to  
interpret my dreams.*

—SUSAN SONTAG

# Laura Hall

**M**y name is Laura Hall. I am a working musician, lucky enough to be making my living playing music for over 20 years. When my husband and I moved to Los Angeles, we became involved with a Disciples church, Church of the Valley. I had been raised with very conflicted messages about Christianity and the church in general, while my husband grew up in a family active in the Baptist church. We were searching for a place where we could both grow and explore our “grown-up” faiths, and COV was a great fit for us. We were both challenged in very positive ways by the experience. We became very active in the music program, both the choir and contemporary praise band. I have to say it was through the music that I came to Christ. I feel like music can speak to us in such a direct way, and can open us up to God’s word on the most intuitive, gut level.

I started writing songs for the choir and the praise band because I had been so blessed by the music in my church, and wanted to give something back. I have been blessed to have very supportive and talented musicians who nurtured both my spiritual and musical growth. I was happy to offer a few of my songs for the *Dream on Sisters* CD, largely because I write from a woman’s perspective, and I feel that I have something to share with other women.

When I was asked to be part of the Mix in ’06 event as well, I felt like it was part of God’s call for me to step up into another level of my faith. Our church has gone through a lot of changes and growth in the last year or so. I feel like it’s time for women’s roles to expand and grow within our own church and the greater church community as well. I hope this conference will help me, and other women, learn how to become stronger leaders, walking in faith and living it out in our everyday lives.

*Don't be afraid of the space between  
your dreams and reality. If you can  
dream it, you can make it so.*

—BELVA DAVI



Laura Hall is probably best known as the improvisational pianist on the hit show “Who’s Line is it Anyway.” Hall has worked as a composer for independent films, radio shows, plays and musicals, including “Patty, Patty, Bang, Bang!”. Hall has written and produced two albums of original music for children, “I See a Tiger” and “Come Join the Parade.” She also composed music and songs for the children’s video, “The Wheels on the Bus,” starring Roger Daltrey. Hall has written for the choir, contemporary service band, youth band and children’s Christmas pageant at her home church, Church of the Valley. One of her choral pieces, “Pray for Peace” was featured in a special service after 9/11. Hall loves being able to use her music as an ongoing expression of her faith.

# Brenda Ethridge



Brenda Ethridge is the Disciple of Christ co-Convenor of the Mix in '06 Planning Committee. She also serves as President of the Disciples International Christian Women's Fellowship, and is currently a seminary student.

I have been blessed attending women's gatherings since 1990, and was delighted to have the opportunity to participate in the planning for an event that will effect the lives of women, their families, their congregations, and our denominations for years to come!

I have been blessed by several women who have influenced my leadership, first there was my mother, Wilzetta Wilson, who did not have a high school education, but had an awesome love for God and her family. She encouraged us to dream big, and not allow circumstances to limit us. Another was my Sunday School teacher, Mrs. Wells, who dreamed big for herself and the mission of our very small congregation, and encouraged us to do the same! As an adult it was my sister Wanda, whose footsteps I have attempted to follow; and my past Regional CWF president Mary Jorgensen. She knew how to command an audience and encouraged me to be a woman of bold faith!

I dream that together we will come and be refreshed, challenged, and stretched! Refreshed by re-connecting with former friends and making new ones, and remembering anew how special we are as daughters of the Most High God! I pray that our hearts will be touched and challenged to hear again those dreams and visions that we heard in times past, when we weren't so busy and took the time to dream and listen, before society told us what we were supposed to be and do. I dream that we will have opportunities to participate in experiential learning and mission and work projects that we didn't know we had the ability to do - and touch someone's life in the process. I dream of stretching experiences that take us back home with new courage, new determination, new plans, new visions and dreams to make our homes, congregations, communities and world places where people glimpse and participate in the "kingdom of God."

Also, I want women to think about what price-tag they would put on such a life-changing opportunity for themselves, their families, their congregations, their communities, their world, and think about what a bargain they are getting for only \$375 + travel and housing! What a small price for something that may turn our world up-side-down!

*Without leaps of imagination, or dreaming,  
we lose the excitement of possibilities.*

*Dreaming, after all, is a form of planning.* —GLORIA STEINEM

# Linda Jaramillo

I remember very well the day the I received the phone call asking me to serve as Co-Chair of the Planning Committee for the Mix in '06. I was thrilled to be asked to be part of such an exciting event, yet I wondered how I would be able to dedicate the amount of time and energy needed for such a task. Then I thought of the wonderful memories I have of serving on the Board of Directors of the Coordinating Center for Women and remembered the UCC National Women's Events that influenced my journey in ministry. I am so grateful to the many sisters who were my mentors, teachers, and friends; relationships that continue to feed my soul.

My mother and daughter are a significant part of my life and both have attended previous national meetings; our experiences at those events are precious memories we often share. My Mom is now 87 years old and Cathy is a mother herself and I have already invited them to join me in Indianapolis next June. My Mom asked if some of the women she met so many years ago will be there – I can say with confidence that you will be there! I can also say that there are so many more that will become new friends and will be part of our memories in the years to come.



Linda serves as the UCC co-convenor of the Mix in '06 planning committee and was recently elected Executive Minister of Justice and Witness Ministries of the United Church of Christ.

## Mark your calendar 2005–2006

September 16, 17, 18 2005  
Kansas Oklahoma Women's retreat

October 21–23, 2005  
Southern Regional Women's Event

October 14–15 2005  
Iowa Conference Women's retreat  
Walking on Sacred Ground

March 17–19, 2006  
UCC Women of New England  
Celebration VII,  
Celebrate Micah's Call  
Burlington, Vermont

June 21–25, 2006  
Mix in '06 Joint Women's Event

# Carrie Newcomer



Carrie Newcomer, a nationally known singer/songwriter, has been telling stories and blending diverse musical styles for nearly two decades. Her songs reveal the divine and the sublime in us all. At the center of all she does is the idea of relationships. She has been recording, writing, and touring since 1993. In addition to her eight albums, she has played Carnegie Hall, toured Europe with Alison Krauss and Union Station. She won the 2002 Folkwax Album and Artist of the Year Award and, in 2004 was named Bloomington, Indiana's 'Woman of the Year' for her activism and contributions to her community.

I am delighted to be joining hands, hearts and voices with Holly Near, Dr. Bernice Johnson Reagan, and all the participants and organizers of the Mix in '06 Women's Event. When the program was first described to me, I could only imagine the powerful moving of the spirit that such a gathering of women would inspire.

I believe there is deep strength and wisdom in the faith journeys and life experiences of women. We tell the stories, we move the mountains, we experience the mysteries and we bring the casseroles. We know in our bones the importance of the inner journey as well as the joy and necessity for an active, loving community.

My own life and work as an artist, performer, teacher and social activist has always been an integrated outgrowth of my spiritual journey. I take inspiration from the Quaker adage, "Let your life speak." This means who I am and what I value should be evident in the way I live, which is an easy thing to say, but often a difficult thing to do. There is great joy in following our truest strengths, affinities and passions. There is great value and nobility in an ordinary life lived extraordinarily well.

My dream for this gathering is a coming together of women from many different backgrounds and landscapes. I dream of an open door and welcoming rooms where we hear one another's stories with curiosity, interest, humor and deep compassion. I dream that although there may be difficulties or confusing encounters, these experiences might also be an opportunity to grow.

I have learned loyalty, laughter and perseverance from the dear women who have held my hands in sorrow and lifted me up in joy. I learned the importance of paying attention to my inner journey from the Mary's, and the call to serve the world from the Martha's. And, I am sure I will learn from the diverse, talented women gathered at Mix in '06.

I have attended a silent Quaker meeting for many years. I frequently work with communities from many denominations and faiths, acknowledging with wonder and reverence what Quakers call "that of God in everyone."

I am looking forward to meeting you all and adding my voice to the song that will sing us into the brightest and best of who we are.

*Dreams are illustrations...  
from the book your soul  
is writing about you.*

—MARSHA NORMAN

# Women and justice

Loey Powell

I dream of many things: that the war in Iraq will end soon and peace, justice, prosperity and calm will take over in that region and in the world. That this “war on terror” will end and that the United States will stop trying to impose its system and values on the rest of the world but that instead the nations of the world embrace the values found in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That women will never again be abused. That lesbians and gays will stop being targets of violence and discrimination. That children will never be hungry and always have hopes and dreams of their own. That our elders will be cared for with loving kindness and dignity. That poverty becomes a distant memory because it is no more. That racism will be eradicated and the Beloved Community will be the norm.

I have lofty dreams – dreams that will probably never become reality in my lifetime but ones that I will strive to make real every day, with every breath I take, with every prayer I exhale. In God’s time, however, these dreams must come true. When I am weary and feel on the verge of hopelessness, despairing that justice seems like a far off horizon, I am reminded that we are never abandoned by God’s presence, grace and strength. “Everlasting” means just that!

And so I approach the Mix in ‘06 – *Dream On, Sisters!* – with hope that sustains me in the midst of all the details. This event is a long time in coming, a dream of women who lead United Church of Christ and Disciples women long before I came on the scene, women who sensed that something new could happen, that it should happen. Their dream has become ours to enact and make real. Marilyn Brietling, Janice Newborn – you are our foremothers in this effort. Thank you!



In 1979, I was an under-30 woman who found her way to Cincinnati from Berkeley to attend the first UCC women’s national meeting for leadership development. I had a role there: to take photos and assemble a slide show of the event to be shown at the last session. No digital cameras existed then. No computers. Just old fashioned slides which are now in the archives of the UCC! I was thrilled to witness

and take part in this first ever gathering on a national level of so many women from all over the UCC. Friendships developed which have endured the decades.

I was there in Milwaukee in 1984 and again had a role – to play the fool and keep things going during a multi-media plenary presentation when the media technology decided to quit. I was there in Boston in 1996, not as active in leadership but attentive to new dynamics and issues. I was there in Charlotte in 2000 as the Executive Director for the Coordinating Center for Women, obviously rather engaged in all aspects of the event and grateful for the ways in which we came together with an eye towards the future while celebrating what had been.

I will be there in Indianapolis next year, in my mid-50’s with almost ten years of ministry at the national setting of the UCC under my belt. And I will come with dreams – that many will come who have never attended a national meeting or Quadrennial Assembly before; that many will come and be transformed as their dreams are set loose; that our churches will never be the same after this meeting because we will return with fire in our bellies and passion in our souls for the expansive and extravagant welcoming possibilities of our faith; that younger women will come and return with

plans for leading our churches into their futures.

And I will come, too, with my dreams for peace with justice for our world, for all of creation, for all of the peoples of the world, for the women of the world, for the children and men, each of whom are created in the divine and loving image of our Creator. I will come knowing that others share these dreams and we will encourage one another to continue to have "courage in the struggle for justice and peace."

I hope that you will come, and bring your best friend, or your granddaughter or great-niece or sister or lover. I hope that you will come and find living waters and refreshment for the dreams that live deep within you. I hope that you will come to be part of a community of women who will sense, and know, and respond to God's dreams for us.

Come. Dream on! And on, and on. May God bless us as we prepare for this meeting, and then as we gather!

## IMAGINE! Another World Is Possible!

A new resource from Justice and Witness Ministries is now available from United Church Resources. It is called *Another World Is Possible: Building a Peace with Justice Movement in the United Church of Christ*. This resource manual for local congregations includes resources and information on developing multi-issue ministries of advocacy for social transformation.

This resource costs \$19.95 plus s&h. It is formatted to fit into a 3-ring binder so that additional information and resources can be added. JWM will be posting supplemental info on the web periodically. A User's Guide will also be available in the fall of 2005.



### Mix in '06 Women's Event

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# Women in international mission

## An Interview with Reverend Susan Valiquette, Inanda, South Africa

by Ana Gobledale

**M**pume N., recently located me through a Google search. Mpume and her sister attended Inanda Seminary, just outside Durban, South Africa, in 1984 when my husband Tod and I served there—me as chaplain and Tod as math teacher.

Inanda Seminary was situated on racially unclassified church-owned land, which enabled blacks, whites, so-called coloureds and Indians to work and live together throughout the years of apartheid, when races were legally separated. Inanda Seminary was my first call after ordination, and our first child, Thandiwe, was born there. Inanda will always remain an important stopping point in the journey of my life.

Numerous missionaries have impacted Inanda students, more familiarly known as “Inanda Girls,” since the secondary school’s inception in the 1800’s. Bringing me up to date with her life, Mpume explained that her decision to work in non-profit organizations serving the community has been significantly influenced by what she saw and learned from Tod and me 20 years ago. Today, it is Susan Valiquette’s turn to serve at Inanda through Global Ministries.

As you read Susan’s reflections, celebrate the presence and witness of the many church workers and their families walking in partnership with Inanda Seminary for 135 years! Many things have changed in our world since 1869, but the joy of watching young girls mature into young women remains the same.

Ana

*Ana Gobledale served our church in South Africa and Zimbabwe, from 1984–2000. Currently, she serves Global Ministries with her husband, Tod, as chaplain of Churches of Christ Theological College in Melbourne, Australia.*



**Susan, what’s your church background?**

My family lived in Beavercreek, Ohio, and we attended Memorial United Church of Christ in Dayton where I was baptized and confirmed. In high school, I joined Hawker United Church of Christ which had an active youth fellowship program. Rev. Steve Daniels (now serving St. John’s UCC in Dover, Ohio) had a tremendous impact on me as a teenager, and my faith was nurtured through his pastoral leadership.

During a youth fellowship retreat, my sophomore year, I experienced my first calling to ministry. When I told Rev. Daniels, I thought maybe God was calling me to ministry, he responded, “I knew you were going to tell me this some day. Keep praying and listening to God; God will continue to affirm your call.”

**What person influenced you as a child, and helped lead you to your commitment to the church and to mission?**

My grandmother, Hope Anderson, was a strong pillar of Memorial UCC. Although she could not sing well, she taught every child at church to sing, “They will know we are Christians by our love.” She didn’t just teach the song; she lived it. She taught me and others that being a Christian is not just about going to church; being a Christian is about being in mission everyday. My grandmother read her Bible and devotionals everyday, listened to Christian radio, and spent her time helping others in need in her neighborhood. She lived her faith. I watched her give her life to the work of the church and helping others. She was the most giving person that I have ever met. I am still trying to emulate her. The middle name of my second child is Hope—hoping that my grandmother’s legacy will live on in her.

*What does the Lord require of you,  
but to love kindness,  
seek justice, and walk humbly with your God.  
—Micah 6:8*

This is Susan's favourite Bible verse. Consequently, she and her husband, Scott, named their first son, Micah.

**Share any significant events in your faith journey that will help women of the church to better understand your call to mission.**

While attending United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities, I participated in two international study trips – to Nicaragua and Israel. Both of these opportunities changed my theology and strengthened my understanding of mission. In addition, through the former UCC Homeland Ministries, I volunteered at Jubilee Partners, an intentional Christian community that welcomes and resettles refugees. I spent the summer teaching English as a second language to Bosnian children as well as witnessing the faith and mission of the Partners of Jubilee. I also visited West Africa which further opened my eyes to see beyond my own culture and worldview. Although my passion for mission grew through my overseas experiences, I did not desire to be a missionary as a single person. I met Scott Couper, my future husband, at Jubilee Partners. We shared a common passion for mission, and I knew mission would be in our future together.

**What did you do before you joined the mission staff of Global Ministries?**

After Seminary, I was called as Minister for Congregational Life at First Congregational Church United Church of Christ in Battle Creek, Michigan. I am extremely grateful for the Battle Creek congregation who gave me my first opportunity to serve as an ordained minister. Scott and I married. Upon his graduation from Chicago Theological Seminary and ordination, we sought missionary appointments in Africa through Global Ministries.

**What are the most rewarding and challenging aspects of your work?**

**Rewarding...** I am a pastor with school holidays, so I don't work Christmas and Easter—the two highest



Susan currently serves as Chaplain of Inanda Seminary where she leads morning chapel services each school day and Sundays and teaches religious education and confirmation. "The most important aspect of my ministry is pastoral care and counseling," she writes.

holy days! In addition, not many pastors can say that they have 100% attendance on a Sunday morning. I can! Attending worship is compulsory at Inanda Seminary. On a more serious note...

**Rewarding and challenging...** the most rewarding is also the most challenging. I enjoy the pastoral care and counseling. It is very rewarding to watch a young person grow and mature through her high school years. The students all live at the school so I am able to meet with students any time of the day and work with students with more serious problems over several years. I have had the privilege of participating in the lives of the 2004 graduates from grade 8 until they graduated in grade 12. However, while I love the one-on-one pastoral care relationships, the problems are sometimes very serious: AIDS, abuse, rape, death, pregnancy, and family or peer disputes. At times, it is necessary for me to refer my students to a psychologist for professional help.

**What spiritual disciplines strengthen you in your work and daily life?**

I think I have learned the hard way that I need to be fed. I experienced a very low point during my ministry at Inanda Seminary when some of my friends moved away and the school was really struggling. I realized that I needed to make some changes so that my spirit could be fed and I could have access to new friends. Because Scott and I both lead worship at separate places on Sunday mornings, we decided to



attend a contemporary family worship service together with our children on Sunday evenings at Berea Congregational Church in Durban. We have committed ourselves to this practice even when we are both tired at the end of a Sunday. This church family has been a great source of love and support for me, and I am being fed spiritually.

**Share a story from your current work or life situation to describe a time you met God face-to-face.**

Late in the evening on 6 July 2000, my sister-in-law phoned to say that something was wrong with my father. No one knew what had happened, but my brother was driving to his house to meet the paramedics. I immediately knew my father was dead. I can't explain how I knew, but I did. I wept and cried and wailed. Soon the phone rang again to confirm my intuition. My father was 63, physically healthy, relatively young and only one year into retirement. He fell from a ladder, hit his head on concrete, and because he lived alone was not found until the following day. My father's death was extremely difficult for me to accept. It was unexpected. It was tragic. I had not seen him for a year. I knew that the grieving process

Inanda Seminary, a boarding school for girls in grades 7 – 12, was established in 1869 by American missionaries (Congregationalist). While Inanda continues to receive financial and personnel assistance from Global Ministries, it is an independent institution of our partner church, the United Congregational Church of Southern Africa (UCCSA).

was going to be long and painful. I had to face God directly and the pain directly. I was forced to follow the same advice that I give the students at Inanda Seminary: the only way to deal with a problem is to go through it; you can't go around it or under it. My family and I flew to the United States for a very tearful reunion and to begin the grieving process.

*Questions for Reflection*

1. Sing Susan's favourite hymn, "Here I Am Lord" (Chalice Hymnal #452). When have you heard God calling in the night, and how have you responded?
2. What grief is close to your heart? What would be most hard for you if you were far away from your loved ones at the time of a death or tragedy?
3. Who in your church, like Susan's grandmother, helps young people realize being a Christian is "being in mission every day"?

*Prayer Opportunities*

1. Pray for Susan and Scott Valiquette, their children Micah and Madeline, and the Inanda Girls with whom Susan works.
2. Pray for girls and young women around the world facing oppression and sexism and for their mentors and guides.
3. Pray for all the education ministries undertaken by missionaries serving Global Ministries.

**CONNECT TO WOMEN IN INTERNATIONAL MINISTRY THROUGH GLOBAL MINISTRIES**

Throughout God's world women are caring for their families, for their church, for their communities, and for all of God's creation. They/we are standing up in the face of injustice, moaning with sighs greater than words in the face of devastation and disaster, and celebrating the ever constant presence of God in our midst. The international and USA-based staff at Global Ministries\* and Wider Church Ministries tries to listen to our sisters around the world and to walk beside our sisters as companions in the faith.

Global Ministries and Wider Church Ministries can help you hear the voices of our international sisters and identify ways to walk with them. The program Global Mission Partners can connect your conference with a woman serving overseas. People-to-People Pilgrimages can help you plan an international mission trip to one of our partners. Our web site can connect you with stories and articles about women's concerns around the world (<[www.globalministries.org](http://www.globalministries.org)> or go through the UCC home page).

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