



*Journal supporting and strengthening the mission of the
Worship and Education Ministry Team, Local Church Ministries,
and United Church of Christ Women in Mission.*

Service Is Ministry

To Which
GOD
Has Called
US

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common lot

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DEBORAH BAILEY
*Minister for Women's
Concerns & Editor*

RICH FLUECHTLING
*Chair, Local Church Ministries
Board of Directors*

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Address all correspondence to common lot, Worship and Education Ministry Team; 700 Prospect Ave. E # 507; Cleveland OH 44115-1100. Tel. 216-736-3876; Fax 216-736-2281; editorial e-mail to baileyd@ucc.org; subscription e-mail to velezd@ucc.org.

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Sharing our common lot



Deborah Bailey, Minister for Women's Concerns
Worship & Education Team, Local Church Ministries

*Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same spirit; and
there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and
there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who
activates all of them in every one.*

—I Corinthians 12:4–6

In this issue of *Common Lot* we undertake an exploration of women's leadership as it relates to an individual's call to ministry. So often when I ask women in the local church why they have taken on a particular project in their church or community the response I hear back from them is, "it needed to be done, so I got it organized". When I follow up with questions such as, "do you see this as your ministry?" or "what was your call to this particular project?" the reaction many times is one of confusion, in fact, it seems as if there is truly a "disconnect" and for some mysterious reason the questions and answers in this conversation simply are not fitting together. Recently I had the opportunity to hear Kathleen Norris, award-winning poet and author, lecture on the grace and challenges of incarnational language and it made me wonder if perhaps that's what's really at the heart of how we claim our spiritual gifts as well as acknowledge and affirm our individual calls to ministry. Language is so important in how we shape our thoughts and actions.

Yet, throughout scripture the message is very clear, we are indeed, as daughters and sons, the children of God. Each of us has been blessed with our own unique set of gifts for service, and service is ministry to which God has called us.

Why do you suppose women in general, but especially lay women, find that idea hard to claim as their own? Woman after woman in the scriptures, named and unnamed heard God's call and like women today, accepted the call to serve without question.

What are your unique spiritual gifts? How is God calling you to be in ministry?

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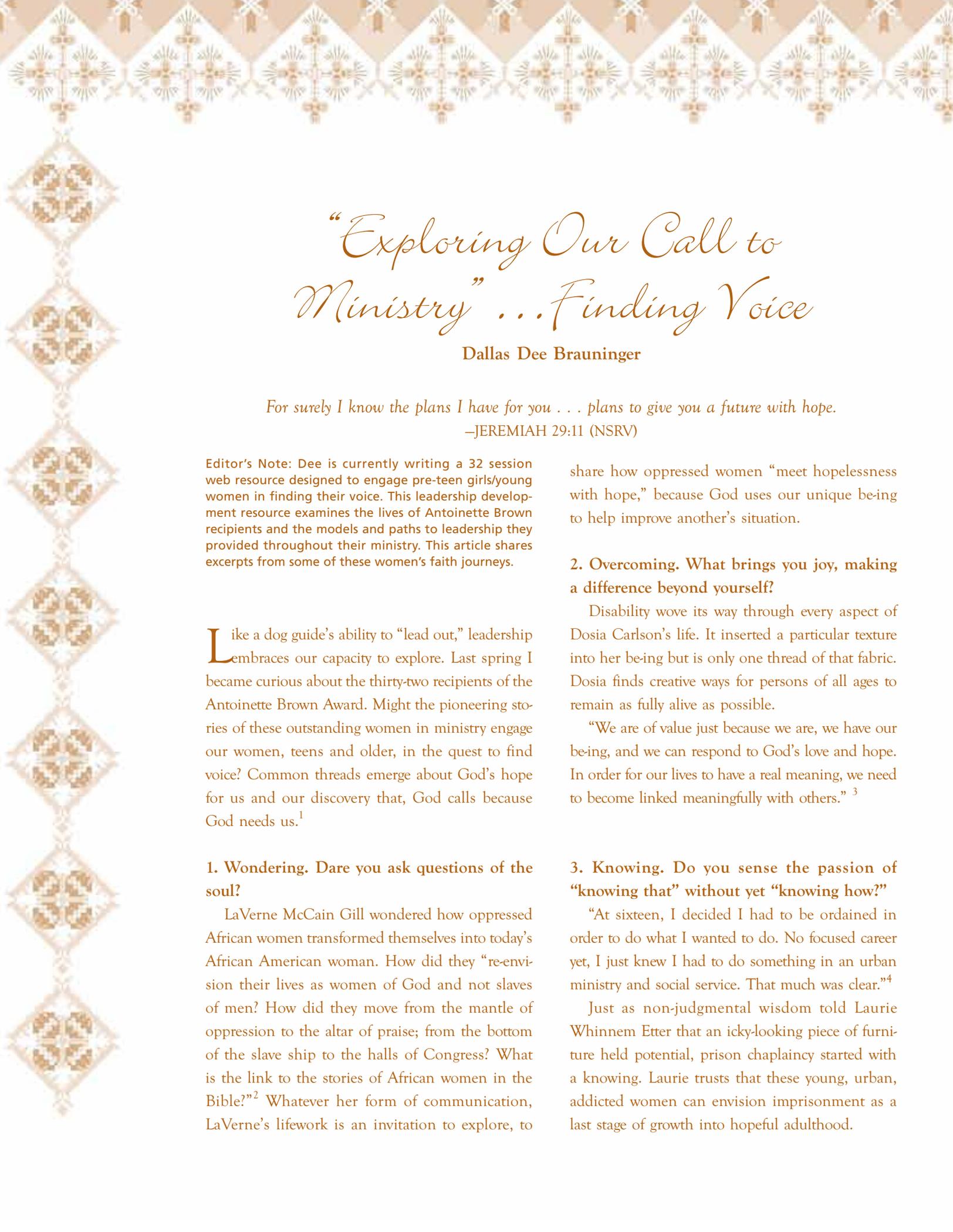
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Over and over women are asking, “how is God still speaking through me?”

How better to answer that and other questions than through exciting and engaging Bible study! Where better to start the journey than with the stories from Genesis.

Through this study of the Genesis texts Celia Brewer Sinclair helps us examine familiar stories from a fresh point of view. This study also calls attention to parts of Genesis that may be less familiar, characters who have been ignored, and voices that have been muted, if not outright silenced!

Genesis is filled with accounts of relationships, and so is this Bible study—relationships between women, between wives and husbands, between mothers and children. Just as each character in the book of Genesis brings a unique perspective to the story, it's understood that each person using this study brings an outlook, a context, and a history that is uniquely her own. Perspectives on Genesis celebrates this diversity and the gifts that come from varied and distinct points of view.



“Exploring Our Call to Ministry” . . . Finding Voice

Dallas Dee Brauning

For surely I know the plans I have for you . . . plans to give you a future with hope.

—JEREMIAH 29:11 (NSRV)

Editor’s Note: Dee is currently writing a 32 session web resource designed to engage pre-teen girls/young women in finding their voice. This leadership development resource examines the lives of Antoinette Brown recipients and the models and paths to leadership they provided throughout their ministry. This article shares excerpts from some of these women’s faith journeys.

Like a dog guide’s ability to “lead out,” leadership embraces our capacity to explore. Last spring I became curious about the thirty-two recipients of the Antoinette Brown Award. Might the pioneering stories of these outstanding women in ministry engage our women, teens and older, in the quest to find voice? Common threads emerge about God’s hope for us and our discovery that, God calls because God needs us.¹

1. Wondering. Dare you ask questions of the soul?

LaVerne McCain Gill wondered how oppressed African women transformed themselves into today’s African American woman. How did they “re-envision their lives as women of God and not slaves of men? How did they move from the mantle of oppression to the altar of praise; from the bottom of the slave ship to the halls of Congress? What is the link to the stories of African women in the Bible?”² Whatever her form of communication, LaVerne’s lifework is an invitation to explore, to

share how oppressed women “meet hopelessness with hope,” because God uses our unique being to help improve another’s situation.

2. Overcoming. What brings you joy, making a difference beyond yourself?

Disability wove its way through every aspect of Dosia Carlson’s life. It inserted a particular texture into her being but is only one thread of that fabric. Dosia finds creative ways for persons of all ages to remain as fully alive as possible.

“We are of value just because we are, we have our being, and we can respond to God’s love and hope. In order for our lives to have a real meaning, we need to become linked meaningfully with others.”³

3. Knowing. Do you sense the passion of “knowing that” without yet “knowing how?”

“At sixteen, I decided I had to be ordained in order to do what I wanted to do. No focused career yet, I just knew I had to do something in an urban ministry and social service. That much was clear.”⁴

Just as non-judgmental wisdom told Laurie Whinnem Etter that an icky-looking piece of furniture held potential, prison chaplaincy started with a knowing. Laurie trusts that these young, urban, addicted women can envision imprisonment as a last stage of growth into hopeful adulthood.



4. Listening with Trust. Are listening and trusting in your exploration during life-transition?

Until left without work after her life mate's sudden death, Barbara Warren McCall was happy with her life. To her five just-grown children, her ministry for two decades, she wrote, "I'll take only one step at a time. Then the next one will come clear."⁵ Barbara's courageous steps bridged understanding that would guide others through societal change from one world of being woman into another.

5. Letting the Call Unfold. Do you savor the process of finding your voice?

"The call was unmistakable, I said YES, with joy. The sense of certainty and of joy have never faded. Thanks be to God for the call – and for the Spirit-given nerve to say YES!" In midlife, Joan Bates Forsberg reflected, "Most of our spiritual life is the long, slow growth variety, but it is illumined, quickened, redirected on occasion by sudden gifts of insight....by experiences which blast us out of our established routine...or by persons sent across our path by God to get our attention." In this later, "amazingly Grace-filled period of my life, I finally grew into my own self, feeling as though I am finally in the just-right ministry for me."

6. Yearning – Have you begun to listen to the yearning?

Gretchen DeVries' gradual awakening to become a missionary was not "without its doubts and fears, but God has been persistent, daily broadening my vision of what it means to serve Christ and strengthening my faith for that service."

7. Perceiving a Need. What circumstance nudges your faith into action?

Ruth Duck, liturgical theologian, responded to God's call through her baptismal promise by writ-

Questions for Reflection

1. Gretchen DeVries let questions come then puzzled through them to understand her emerging life. How do you see the plan for you unfolding? Will you trust God?
2. Dosia Carlson, a whole person, as she is, is a person of hope. How are you responding to God's love and hope for you? How do you bring hope to yourself and to others by be-ing who you are?
3. How are you a conformer? A transformer? A pioneer? See Romans 12:2. Have you begun to affirm your personal strengths?

ing hymn-texts that overcome sexist language by enlarging our vocabulary of God.

8. Envisioning. Will you "lead out"?

Circuit rider, Leila Waite Anderson, wrote, "At last, a home missionary."

Driving across the continent and Hawaii, the Christian Education field representative wore out two station wagons bringing ideas, encouragement, and listening to church educators

A colleague wrote, "Leila consults with the executive concerning her routes of travel and her methods of work – and then goes where she thinks she is needed and does what she believes is called for by the immediate situation."

¹ The UCC web book/curriculum resource with study guide, *Antoinette Brown Women: Finding Voice*. Forthcoming as downloadable and printable chapters. <Wwww.ucc.org>.

² Gill. *Daughters of Dignity: African Biblical Women and the Virtues of Womanhood* (Pilgrim Press, February 1, 2000) xiv.

³ Quoted by Stephen Sapp in "Beyond Autonomy: Interdependence in Later Life." *Aging Today*, S/O, 1995, 13.

⁴ Phone interview, August 20, 2005.

⁵ Phone interview with John McCall, February 1, 2006.

⁶ A "brief spiritual history for one 48 years of age." Personal paper.

⁷ Ordination Paper, November 6, 1966.

⁸ Truman B. Douglass in Anderson in collaboration with Harriot Harmon Dexter. *Pilgrim Circuit Rider* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1960), x.



The Unfolding Newness of God's Possibilities

Lynn Bujnak

Then I heard the voice of God saying,
"Whom shall I send and who will go for us?"

And I said,

"Here am I. Send me."

—ISAIAH 6:8

One of our sons has known since he was a small child what he wanted to do with his life. Rob wanted to be a fire-fighter. He's a natural for this vocation - caring, giving, and with a strong desire to help others. After being accepted on the fire department in Burlington, Vermont he said, "I can't believe they pay me to do this." Our youngest son when asked by his friend at age 15 what he wanted to do with his life, responded, "I want to be rich." He looked confused when we laughed, turned red and then explained that Rich was the name of the head chef at the restaurant where he worked as a dishwasher. Mike never looked back and now makes his living as the sous-chef in an up and coming restaurant where he gets to use his capacity for creativity, his gifts for offering hospitality and his skill for concocting delicious and novel dishes.

Isn't it great to see someone come into his/her own? Parker Palmer in his book *Let Your Life Speak* says, "Vocation does not come from a voice out there calling me to become something I am not. It comes from the voice in here calling me to

be the person I was born to be ..." (p. 10)

As women, our experience of vocation is often not as clear-cut or the Voice of the One calling as easy to hear. Who precisely is the "person we were born to be" and how on earth do we discover this? We live with so many competing "voices" demanding our attention and wanting to define our vocation. As women we may feel called to a particular career, to supporting our families, to being successful, to child-rearing, to being there for our spouse or partner or, most likely, to some combination of the above. The competing "voices" are also at times conflicting voices that are all mixed in with that persistent, lurking image of the super woman who can and does do it all.



Here am I,
Send me.



It helps me to remember that God's call – and my vocation isn't a static thing. God's call to us unfolds, grows and changes over time. What we are called to today may be quite different from what we are called to tomorrow. Author Renita Weems in her book *Showing Mary* talks about the experience women have of being “pregnant with possibility.” (p. 2) This type of “pregnancy” she says happens over and over throughout a woman's life. The important thing is to be willing to listen intently for the Voice of God amid all the other voices which compete to define our lives, to recognize the signs that new life is stirring within us and to have the courage to answer afresh.

How do we do this? As hard as it is in our busy lives, it is important to carve out a space to be still and to listen for the Spirit's stirring in our souls and in our lives. It takes time and space to sort out the voices and to learn to listen for God's call to us and for us and with us in this particular moment. It is countercultural to allow for silence and emptiness instead of filling every single moment of the day! Find a time – early morning before the rest of the household is stirring, before bedtime or when the kids go down for their nap. Find a place – a favorite chair, room or outdoor location. Yes, God is still speaking. The trick is our willingness to be patient and careful in the discipline of listening.

Further, if we are to pay attention to our vocation, we need to be willing to let go of some things. If God is calling us to a particular thing now, it may mean acknowledging that some other compelling thing will NOT be done, some other voice not answered – at least not at this time. This requires a great deal of trust – that God is at work in our lives, that each “calling” is important in its own right,

Questions for Reflection

1. How have you heard God calling in your life?
2. Has your “vocation” changed over time? How?
3. Author Frederick Buechner says vocation happens at the meeting place between our deep joy and the world's deep hunger. Where is that place for you right now?
4. Can being a wife/partner and/or a mother be a vocation? If so, how?
5. How do you listen for the call of God?
6. What might you need to let go of in order to fully embrace what God is calling you to at this time?

that saying “no” to something in this moment does not mean that God will not “call” us to it at some other moment of our lives. When we can truly practice this, we can let go of some of the guilt of not being able to do it all and simply embrace what we CAN do always keeping wide-awake to unfolding newness of God's possibilities.

Over and over, in all the moments of our lives God calls. Whether we've been able to identify our “vocation” our whole lives long or are just sensing a new or renewed stirring within, ALL persons, ALL women, are called. By listening deeply and having the trust to let go, may we find the courage to respond in this moment, “Here am I. Send me.”

Push...Plant...Pray...Offer Presence

Jo Ann Chance

PUSH...

“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! ... If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.”

—I JOHN 3: 1, 17-18

Part of what I sense in my calling to ministry is that I should sometimes be a bit pushy. For a quiet person, that is not often easy, but I am sometimes compelled to speak or act or offer theological reflections when the understanding or willingness to act as Christ's disciples should seem to be weak.

Having a firmer foundation of faith through greater understanding of the scriptures, of ministry and of the theology, polity and history of our wonderful denomination, which I have gained while participating in our Conference School of Theology classes for lay persons, enables me to step out of my box in those crucial times. It may only mean asking a pertinent question. It may mean getting on a soap box about missions or Christian values or extravagant hospitality. It may mean simply sharing information or perspectives that others are missing. But I cannot stay silent when apathy or avoidance are causing my sisters and brothers in Christ to take the easy path. Sometimes I am the thorn; sometimes the rose.

PLANT...

“Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up...let us encourage one another...”

—HEBREWS 10: 23-25

My call to ministry is also to plant seeds. They may be seeds of information that need to be planted and re-planted through various means of communication. Sometimes they are seeds of opportunities to be shared with others when I feel someone might benefit from the experience, fellowship or opportunity to move further on their faith journey.

Other times, I try to plant courage, support and love when sisters or brothers need encouragement or affirmation of the gifts they have to offer. Mentoring in subtle ways, giving opportunities to learn leadership skills, and using my gift of listening in order to allow others to speak through their pain or share from their heart are ways in which I try to plant acceptance and help others grow in their faith.



Walk in the
Light of God's
presence

PRAY...

“Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit...as one for the faith...without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you.”

—PHIL. 1: 27-28A

My ministry and mission is to be true to my faith in all circumstances, which takes prayer; sometimes, often, much prayer. Living my life as a person of faith is a witness that is being observed by those with whom I interact in my daily walk and also by those of which I am unaware. We never know who is watching us. We may be the only Christ that some folks, young or old, see. How important to keep Christ in our heart in all circumstances.

Prayers for Christ’s Church, our UCC church in all its expressions, pastors, leaders church family, and the mission and ministries of the church are vital. My calling includes being supportive of these in prayer and practice.

“If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion... Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves... and act according to (God’s) good purpose.”

—PHIL. 2: 1-4, 13

That is a very high calling, and one that will continue to keep me challenged, prayerful and focused that I might live and minister to others to the glory of God.

Questions for Reflection

1. Where have you felt that you needed to be pushy for God? Was the situation or outcome blessed by your efforts?
2. Are there some tasks you once thought mundane or unimportant that you can now consider part of your calling? How might that change the way in which you do them? How would that make a difference in their perception by others?
3. Who has been a mentor for you along your faith journey? How have you reciprocated that support and affirmation? Are you being called to mentor someone?

OFFER PRESENCE...

“I will sing of the LORD’s great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations...Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you. Blessed are those who have learned to acclaim you, who walk in the light of your presence, O LORD.”

—PSALM 89: 1, 14-15

What greater calling, as either laity or clergy, than to “walk in the light of (God’s) presence”! Being there for friend or stranger when pain, illness or death sting deeply... Being there to comfort the lonely, frightened, abused or neglected... Being there to lend moral support, financial assistance, physical or heartfelt care and prayers in times of need... Being Christ’s hands and feet... Just being there.

We are each precious and beloved children of God. Let us not forget to see that light of God in every face and to shine that light from deep within ourselves. Let us hear our call to walk in God’s love and grace always.

Turn to page 27 To read “You Call Me” by Jo Ann Chance



Searching for Good News

Margaret (Peg) Slater

As soon as they left the synagogue, they entered the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told him (Jesus) about her at once. He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. Then the fever left her and she began to serve them.

—MK 1:29-31

I don't know about you, but some times I think I must be wearing defective glasses when I read the Good News of the Bible and it seems like such bad news to me! Where is the good news in this tiny passage in Mark? Each time I read the passage the air around me takes on a slight blue tinge and I pray that no one can read my mind!

Haven't you been in this scene your self....numerous times? You're half dead, you're in a full house, you just want and need to be left alone. You begin to get your feet under you and low and behold those whom you love best on earth.....want some thing from YOU! This is not good news!

It does help to know that to serve (from the Greek: diakoneo) also means to minister. It doesn't help a whole lot in a culture....then and now...that sees serving as less worthy, less challenging, less exciting, even less valuable than ministering. So on top of being outrageously unfair.... expecting women to rise from their sick beds and serve, one assumes with a lovely smile on one's face, that it may also push a little bit further in this day and age and pit women who serve against women who minister. Good news, eh?

Last year I attended a retreat for preaching from the healing texts of the Gospels. As a woman with disabilities, I can tell you that this is no easy task. After arguing if your or your parent's sin caused

your disability and then being told to "rise, take up your pallet, and walk" there isn't much room for breathing, let alone finding good news! And yet, after doing some exegetical work and discovering what really might be happening, and acting out some of the text, and telling our own stories, most of us concluded that there might be some good news there after all....if one will not take the texts just at face value.

So, where is the good news here? Perhaps it is that women were called by Jesus at all. For at this time women were definitely second class citizens with little recognition and very few legal rights. Women were also seen as 'unclean' according to religious authorities. It was therefore quite remarkable that Jesus actually touched this woman.... Just as Jesus touched, and stayed with, and welcomed so many of the other despised, marginalized, and devalued people of his time. Most didn't even get called by their own names, but they were called, never the less, to minister, to serve an all welcoming God!

One of the questions I have for this text is; how do we not recreate the whole rotten system all over again? How do we avoid devaluing the calls and vocations of all the Baptized? Is an ordained minister more valuable than a licensed minister? Is a commissioned minister more worthy than a lay person? What is real ministry? Is it paid? Is it authorized? Is one who loves to serve in a kitchen

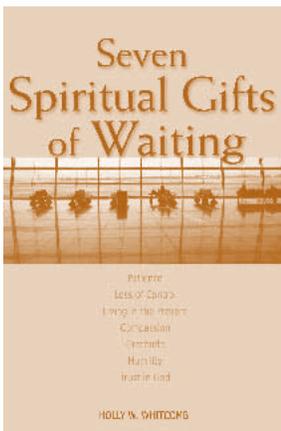
more important than one who serves on a committee or board? Must one's call be to the church? Can one's vocation be outside the church and still be faithful?

I am still not quite sure this text is all good news, but maybe the good news is that we are called by God to wrestle until we find a blessing some where in the wrestling! Perhaps the good news is that we are still trying to make sense of what Jesus was saying and doing. Perhaps the good news is that we are trying to serve God as best as we can.

Questions for Reflection

1. In a group, or by yourself, discuss/reflect on the questions in the next to last paragraph.
2. What is your vocation? What is your call to serve/minister? Is there a difference?
3. Where else in the Gospels is some light shed on this discussion?

BOOK REVIEW



Seven Spiritual Gifts of Waiting
by Holly W. Whitcomb
Augsburg Books

Well known to many in the United Church of Christ, Holly W. Whitcomb, a UCC clergywoman and director of Kettlewood Retreats, in her latest book explores the seven spiritual gifts of waiting: patience, loss of control, living in the present, compassion, gratitude, humility and trust in God as spiritual offerings that we commonly overlook in our daily lives.

In this remarkable book she looks at various aspects of waiting in our fast paced world where most of us have been taught faster is better, leaving little opportunity for contemplation. Always looking for a quick fix, she shares what can happen when we finally accept that not everything can be fixed. Her suggestions for reframing life's uncontrollable circumstances offers a new perspective on how we can live in today's world. Her book is full of personal anecdotes, poems, Biblical selections and excerpts from inspirational writings.

In a quote from Jesuit Pierre Teilhard de Chardin we read, "trust in the slow work of God". Holly reminds us, this is what the Israelites did during their long sojourn in the wilderness and what Christians must do despite the difficulty so many of us have to control things rather than just relax into the grace of God.

The book would make an excellent group book study during Lent or Advent and also contains a course outline for use with a study group.

Holly Whitcomb is also the author of *Feasting With God: Adventures in Table Spirituality and Practicing Your Path: A Book of Retreats for an Intentional Life*.

A Prophetess In Her Own Time

NANCY PEELER KEPPEL:
A Personal Tribute by Mac Hulslander

In reflecting on the life and ministry of Nancy P. Keppel, I soon realized that most of us rely on a certain shorthand to capture the essence of a person. Usually that is in terms of vocation, personality, political leanings, etc. We feel a certain comfort in making such facile ID's. It's so very practical and convenient. But with Nancy Peeler Keppel it is not only impractical to do so, it is impossible. Such descriptions fail for such a woman who was very much ahead of her time on almost every front of social injustices and progressive causes. But it was not always so. Although the mother of three extraordinary children and a homemaker for most of her life, it was a middle-aged divorce that "awakened" her from a very middle-class existence to the world of those who experience oppression and/or reduced status within American society. Betty Friedan in her book, *The Feminine Mystic* spoke volumes for Nancy and one can only speculate on the excited conversations now occurring on the other side with Friedan's recent demise.

I first became acquainted with Nancy in the late 60's while conducting anti-racism workshops in the Southern Conference of the UCC and ecumenically. Nancy heard of my work and went about setting up an event. Always the maverick, she continually pushed church and civic leaders on all fronts and at the edges to address the plight of those who are marginalized in our society. Though regionally frowned upon at the time, Nancy became an ardent advocate for civil and human rights including the cause of the Wilmington Ten. It was her profound understand-

ing of Christ's all encompassing love and acceptance that would not allow her to be otherwise.

But her commitments extended beyond racism, civil rights and social justice. She was an ardent feminist in the very best sense of that word. It was through Nancy that I was privileged to serve on the Southern Conference' Task Force on Women in Church and Society during the mid-70's. In hindsight I honestly feel it was her subtle way of seeing to this young (read un-conscious) white male's education and consciousness-raising. Through the work of the Task Force we became advocates for the ERA, female leadership opportunities at all levels of the church's life and work while raising a few eyebrows in the process. It only seems fair to note here that the publication of the book she edited, *God Calls: Women Respond* published shortly before her death was a tribute to the many women who answered the call to authorized forms of ministry. Even though the progeny of a prominent NC business family (and classmate of Senator Elizabeth Dole), popularity and privilege were never part of her vocabulary or among her goals. It did serve her well in lending support to that in which she believed.



all baptized
Christians are gifted
for ministry

Beyond these activities and missions must also be added her significant role with local Human Relations Councils, service with the Board for Women in Ministry in the South, Reality Therapy Counseling and the formation of RINGLE, The Raleigh Interfaith Network for Gays and Lesbians. Her Public Radio commentaries were sheer testimony to her uncanny insights into human nature and foibles and carried their own brand of delightful wit and dry humor. In all things she led one to think more deeply and more responsibly about the way things are and the way they could be changed.

Of all the interests and passions this woman possessed, the one that perhaps was closest to her heart, and indeed my own, was the ministry of the laity. Nancy eschewed the inequality she found inherent in the clergy-lay divisions and distinctions into which the church has evolved. She saw all baptized Christians as equally called and gifted for ministry and became one of its strongest proponents. I recall how she so unabashedly attended Conference and Association clergy gatherings on the strength of her role as a “volunteer” Christian educator. Symbolism was one of her many and extraordinary strengths.

Aware of our mutual concern and commitments to laity, it was at her family’s summer cottage in the fall of 1978 that the organization, CLAY: Clergy and Laity Together in Ministry was birthed. From the outset its aims were to empower the laity for ministries in, to, through and beyond the institutional settings of the church. With Nancy’s abiding and generous support, I became the first Director of the organization and we were off. The strength of CLAY’s mission was the development of a faith-based vocational discernment process known as “From Faith to Focused Ministry” (or, Faith to

Focus for short). Theologically we understood ourselves as being about an unfinished Reformation aimed at securing for laity the prominence of that step-child of the Protestant Reformation – The Priesthood of All Believers – that somehow never was quite as definitive as Salvation by Faith and The Authority of Scripture, the other two pillars. Efforts within the UCC went all the way to the General Synods held in 1983 and 1985. First came the Pronouncement, Empowering The Laity For Ministry and a few years later, a Plan of Action. (The subject missed becoming a national priority of the denomination by one place!)

If there is any one legacy within the church she so loved, it is this one and it continues, even in death as she has given generously to provide for the furtherance of empowering and enabling laity in their ministries. (A sequel to *God Calls, Women Respond* sharing the ministries of lay women I understand is in the offing.) Hopefully the UCC will be equal to the challenge she has put forth for “challenge” was an essential part of her very makeup. Those of us who knew and loved, yes, and even though who despised her for all she confronted us with, are all the richer and more blessed for her having done so. She was truly an extraordinary human being, a prophetess in her own time. It is a great privilege to honor her life and ministry among us in this way.

Mac Hulslander is a Commissioned Minister of the Southern Conference of the UCC and the former Director of CLAY: Clergy and Laity Together in Ministry, Inc. He is the author of “Beyond Domestication: The UCC and its Laity”, Prism, Spring, 1992.



Nancy Keppel

Let's Tithe our Talents and make DREAMS a REALITY!

We're hoping to get 10% of the participants at Mix in '06 involved in mission. 300 women will work at a local food bank; 45 will work in community gardens; at least 75 will assemble health kits, and many more will donate items for those health kits.

We are called to be good stewards of our gifts.

At the Mix in '06 Women's Event, we can live out that calling!

Specific Options for being involved:

All mission opportunities will offer a service learning focus. We'll be involved hands-on with some kind of service and receive some training on how to bring this work back to our communities at home. It's important to leave the city we are meeting in better than when we found it. It's also important to take home with us

what we have learned and experienced. So, we'll work with local organizations to impact Indianapolis and give all participants the tools to take home possibilities of impacting their hometowns as well! You'll participate in the work as your workshops for the day

We will need everyone to pre-register for working.

Three ways to serve while at the Mix in '06

Gleaners Food Bank of Indiana

<http://gleaners.org/index.shtm>

Gleaners' goal is to help charities feed people in need. They have a huge warehouse where donated food is sorted, cleaned, organized, tossed and boxed up. Women are gifted in all those areas so we'll take 100 people a day to help do all those tasks. No physical prowess is needed. Just open minds and hearts and willing hands to sort through donations. We'll also be boxing up food to be sent out to senior citizens in July. In addition to our work, we'll have a tour of the facility and hear how Gleaners impacts lives in Indiana. It's a short bus ride from the convention center and promises to be an afternoon of great fellowship as well as service.

Workdays:

Wednesday, June 21st: 12:00 - 4:30
Thursday, June 22nd: 12:00 - 4:30
Friday, June 23rd: 12:00 - 4:30

We will provide transportation and lunches. The warehouse is a pleasant temperature. All work is inside work. Be sure to wear closed-toed shoes!

Return to the Garden

<http://www.discipleshomemissions.org/ReturnToTheGarden/index.htm>

Learn about community gardens, their role in hunger alleviation, and get ideas for how to start a community garden in your hometown. We'll visit Indianapolis area community gardens, including church gardens, where we'll do some work and learn how they got started. We'll get our hands dirty working in the dirt (weeding, maybe planting) and we'll receive training on the why's and how's of community gardening. This will be a great opportunity for those who love to garden, who want to be outside for part of their stay in Indy and for those who are feeling called to bring this powerful ministry to their homes.

We'll take 15 each day to a different garden site. You may sign up for one day only because of the limited spaces available.

Workdays:

Wednesday, June 21st: 12:00 - 4:30
Thursday, June 22nd: 12:00 - 4:30
Friday, June 23rd: 12:00 - 4:30

We will provide transportation and lunches. You'll be working outside, so be sure to dress accordingly! Feel free to bring your favorite gardening gloves and tools. And, be sure to wear closed-toed shoes!

Assembling Health Kits

<http://www.churchworldservice.org/kits/health-kits.html>

For those who want to be involved, but don't want to venture out of the convention center, we have work for you! We're asking all participants to bring supplies for Church World Service Health Kits. We all learned this year, as our country was hit by ravaging hurricanes, how critical these kits are worldwide. When a family loses everything in a natural disaster (or at the hands of war), the very basics are a welcome sight! Church World Service delivers health kits throughout the world and in the United States and is always in need of more. So, we'll gather donations from all participants and set up a massive assembly line in the convention center to put them together. All are welcome to participate in this process! We're hoping for at least 75 people to say yes to assembling these life giving kits.

Workday: Saturday, June 24th: 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

We'll all be inside the air conditioned convention center. No need for special clothes or shoes! Just be ready to sort, assemble and laugh with your sisters learning to make a difference in the world!

Items to be brought with you as you travel to Indianapolis:

- Hand towels
- Wash cloths
- Combs
- Metal nail files or nail clippers (don't bring these in your carry-ons!)
- Bath size soap
- Tooth brushes and 4-7 oz. tubes of toothpaste
- Band-aids

We'll have bins to collect your items when you arrive...how many items can your CWF or Women's Fellowship collect and send? None of these take up much room in your luggage, so we hope you can bring several! Just think...if 5,000 women all bring a few of these items...how many health kits can we assemble???

*Note: We hope to also gather items for the Women's Prison in Indianapolis. Be watching for a list of those items which can be collected in your hotel room!

Mix in '06 Women's Event Honors Church Secretaries/Administrative Professionals

THOSE WHO STAFF THE OFFICES of congregations, regions, church-related colleges and seminaries and general ministries are the backbone of the day-to-day work of the church. The women of the church want to honor these special persons at the Mix in '06, June 21-25 in Indianapolis. Retired persons who have served in this position will be included.

If you want to see that your special assistant is included you can do two things:

1) Send a photograph (preferably 5x7) of your honoree including the person's name, church and location along with a few words describing the person's special gifts or endearing qualities. There will be a collage of these pictures in a prominent place at the event.

2) Help her attend the Mix in '06 Women's Event with time off and monetary assistance. Be sure she checks the box on the registration form marked "Church Secretary/Administrative Professional" so she can be specially recognized.

Even if your assistant cannot attend the Mix we would still like to have her picture to display at the event. By May 1 please send the picture and information requested above to either:

Rev. Betty C. Brewer-Calvert
Christian Church (DOC) in Georgia
237 Vineville Ave.
Macon, GA 31204

—or—

Bette Graves Thomas
First Congregational Church (UCC)
105 Courtland St. NE
Atlanta, GA 30303

Original Artwork Display

Calling all women artists to share your moments of transcendence. You are invited to enrich and enhance this grand gathering of women by creating or sharing a work of art you have already created, to reflect the theme Dream On, Sisters!

Dates:	June 21-25, 2006
Location:	Indiana Convention Center – Indianapolis, IN
Eligibility:	Women artists, professional or amateur
Requirements:	Selected artists are encouraged to register and attend the conference.
Fees:	\$25 nonrefundable entry fee
Mediums:	Please – only original work by the artists. No photographs, reproductions or scanned work. 2-D original paintings, fiber art, collage, pastel, hand-pulled prints, pencil.
To Enter:	Fill out the entry form and mail with up to three (3) entries by slide, 4x6 photograph or digital images.
	Send entries to: Mix in '06 Office, 130 E. Washington St. Indianapolis, IN 46204 ATTN: Lonnie Graves
Due Date:	April 15, 2006

Bizarre ~ Bazaar

Does an organization or an individual in your church make "bazaar" items to sell, or as a hobby?

CALLING ALL AMATEUR ARTISANS & CRAFTERS

Here is an opportunity to show off and sell your handmade wares to thousands of women at Mix in '06!

No Food Items Allowed or
Professional Vendors
(There will be another venue for
professional exhibitors)

**SAT., JUNE 24, 2006
12:30 – 4:30 p.m.
Indiana Convention Center
TABLE & SPACE: \$50**

There will also be a COOKBOOK
table(s) for churches
needing a partial table to sell
cookbooks.

ONE-FOURTH TABLE: \$15
Return by April 15, 2006 to:
Mix in '06 Women's Event
130 E. Washington St.
Indianapolis, IN 46204
Attn: Kathy Wright

For more information write to
info@dreamonsisters.com



Do You
Have New
Women's
Ministries
Ideas
to Share?

Dream On, Sisters!
Mix in '06 Women's Event

Will host a
"Women's Ministries Fest"

Showcasing women's ministries
in UCC and Disciples
congregations

Won't you share what you are doing
in the areas of Fellowship, Study,
Service, or Worship for women?

Return by April 15, 2006 to:
Mix in '06 Women's Event
130 E. Washington St.
Indianapolis, IN 46204

For more information contact
info@dreamonsisters.com





The Feminine Sphere

Christy Trudo

I've been pondering lately the topic of "women's role in the church". My first thought was that the last 35 years have resolved the issue. Women's role in the church is now much like men's. No longer do we have boards of deacons and deaconesses, for example, with different functions. At least on the surface, the ways women work in the church have opened up, just as they have in the rest of our society.

Viewed this way, women's roles in the church are a variant of women's social roles in general. But the last quarter century has opened up another way of looking at women's history and the significance of women's lives. We've come to understand that the work which is known as "women's work" has always been at the heart of ministry. Nurture, education, feeding and healing are not "auxiliary" - they are the ministries of Jesus. And, in fact, women continue to carry much of this work, and often it remains undervalued.

Feminist thought has pointed to the bias of our culture to value what we think of as the "public" sphere, which until recently has been the world of men: government, commerce, the military; work outside of the home, the pragmatic, events which are considered historical. The world of women, valued less, has been primarily domestic and personal; care, nurture, moral concerns, relationships. The "feminine sphere" of life involves indirect power, influence rather than formal authority.

As these values have been held up to scrutiny, biblical scholars have examined the lives of women in scripture, drawing them out of their hiding places behind the scenes and between the lines.

These women's lives were not the story, not what was being recorded, but just footnotes or elements of a bigger story. But new realities emerge from scrutinizing these "stories behind the stories". The meaning of these individual lives, stitched into the tapestry of the historical record of kings and armies and nations, tell us something important about the human/divine relationship.

The story of David and Bathsheba is an example. At first reading it seems to be all about David - his weakness, his plotting, his terrible deed. Bathsheba barely has a voice. But we learn that God sees her differently. As his messenger expresses it, she is the greatly beloved "sheep" who is adored as a part of the family. David's downfall is not that he "broke a rule" - it is that he "had no pity", no feeling for others. Bathsheba is not a wantonly straying wife, but a victim in the eyes of God. Attention to her story reveals that the events of David's "official" story have an **inner** meaning; they are a story about his relationship with God.

God values the "feminine sphere" of personal life, of emotion and relationship, and without it we can't see the meaning within the biblical stories. This "story within the story" has been the life of women in the church throughout its history.



We are ALL
ministers of
the GOSPEL



The Gospel message is more overt. Jesus includes women among his disciples. They emerge from the background with a distinctive role to play. Their presence is a part of the social reversal that the gospel proclaims. As Paul founds churches we hear of Lydia and Priscilla and other women who are both rooted in their time and moving beyond it, doing the dangerous and challenging work of church building.

The late-20th century wave of feminism returned the focus to these women and to the real value of the “feminine sphere” in culture and history. An “ism” is an added focus, and feminism is corrective and contributive, (unlike, for example the demeaning overemphasis which we know as racism). As we continue to live into the world view which the feminist perspective reveals, another, and related ‘ism’ begs for our attention in the church. Over-valuation and emphasis on the clergy role known as “clericalism” has built through the history of the church. Reflecting cultural bias, the public perception of ministry places undue emphasis on public recognition, authority based on worldly achievement, and “professional” status. Until recently church leadership has also been the nearly complete purview of men.

“Clericalism” reflects a distorted view of discipleship. The word “lay”, (from the greek laos, meaning the whole people of God, clergy included) today has a “lesser than” connotation: untrained, non-professional. Thus we have come to say in the church, “I am **just a layperson.**” (Just a person of God, that’s all!) We may even come to think of ‘ministry’ as the *job* of the clergy—and we become the *receivers*, or even the *consumers* of ministry. It’s hard for us to recognize that we are *all* ministers of the gospel, when the ministry which we do is not named or recognized by the church.

Clericalism affects the clergy too, who become frustrated with under-involved congregations.

Questions for Reflection

1. What do you see as “feminine” strengths? In what ways are they counter-cultural? How do they express the gospel for our time?
2. Recall a time when you’ve felt “ministered to” by someone in everyday life. How was the ministry expressed? What made it important for you? What does it say about the nature of ministry?
3. Think of a story which is an important part of your congregation’s history. What was the hidden contribution to the story of someone “behind the scenes”? Do you learn anything by telling the story from their point of view?

And this “ism” has an evil twin which is known as “anti-clericalism”. In a reaction to over-reliance on clergy, some denigrate their real contributions, denying them appropriate recognition. As formal authority is increasingly suspect, the unique knowledge and role of the ordained has been downplayed. Some churches view “the minister” primarily as an employee with a set job description, rather than as a partner in ministry with a distinctive, valuable role to play. All of these distortions are rooted in the overvaluation of the public/ official over the personal/ relational aspects of life.

This distortion misrepresents the nature of the church as an institution, building, or membership roster. “The Church” is, instead, all the places where Jesus is met in everyday life. Jesus doesn’t choose to work in the temple. He’s in the midst of real life with the hungry and the sick, **Jesus is made alive today in a nurse and a waitress.** At the heart of the incarnation is this amazing reality: holiness lives and breathes in the sacred work of being fully human, in all its concrete un-spectacular particulars.

Women and Justice

Loey Powell

On any given day while reading through my email I encounter information on such a wide range of critical justice issues that I either want to run down the hall screaming “When will it ever stop?!” or simply go back to bed and pretend I didn’t get up that morning. Female genital mutilation. Kidnapped daughters in Venezuela found dead in a river. Foster children found malnourished and neglected. Torture in prisons. Abortion ban in South Dakota. Record profits for oil companies. And Katrina - Katrina - Katrina and those still waiting for FEMA. For someone.

On really good days I encounter stories of hope - of people who neither ran down the hall screaming nor excused themselves back to bed but who took action, one step at a time, and made a difference. I like really good days because I need to be reminded that each one of us has the ability to stop the madness and the dehumanization of our sisters and brothers.

Sometimes God puts an issue right in our face. It’s that “still speaking” thing - are we listening? Do we see? You probably know a woman in your congregation who responded to a need or to an issue because she realized that no one was addressing it in her community so by golly, she did! She started a shelter for battered women. She got the town to provide free transportation for persons with disabilities. She got the school system to move their school bus yard away from homes where people experienced elevated rates of asthma and other respiratory diseases due to fumes from the busses.



She got the Environmental Protection Agency to clean up a toxic waste site next to the playground where her children played every day. She started a soup kitchen that evolved in to a free health clinic and job training center.

Our congregations are blessed with the presence of such women whose ministries of compassion and advocacy are often unrecognized because she might say, “But I just did it because it needed to be done.” She learned how to do it by ignoring or overcoming all the barriers and red tape and reasons why it couldn’t be done through sheer persistence. Like the persistent widow in Luke who will not leave the unjust judge alone in the middle of the night until he grants her justice (Luke 18:1-8). “I will grant her justice so that she will not wear me out by continually coming.” [!]

I met such a woman last year at a meeting. In 1979, Dr. Lois Lee became very concerned about the number of children under the age of 18 who were on the streets in Los Angeles and being prostituted. All were runaways. Lois started an organization called Children of the Night to bring attention to these young people and their rights and needs. She provides safe housing for them, counseling, support and schooling until they are of legal age. She negotiates with the police on their behalf, and with their parents who are often abusive and don’t want to have anything to do with their own children. Lois has appeared on national television to bring public awareness to the realities of such children and is recognized as a leader in this field. (Learn more at www.childrenofthenight.org)

Lois is not a UCC church member, nor a member of any particular religious tradition, but what she is doing is God's work. She has "heard the cries of her people" and responded with love and practicality, just as many in our churches have done.

We each have the capacity to make a difference where we work, worship and live. To be in ministry is not to flash around credentials and titles and documents that say "authorized" or "reverend." To

be in ministry is to do the work of loving our neighbors as ourselves, to provide safety for those who are abused, to stop systems that discriminate against and hurt people, to care for those who are lonely, sick, hungry, and homeless.

Let us encourage, support and build this capacity to make a difference within our congregations and members as part of our spiritual discipline. Let us give thanks for these ministries!

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



For Just Such a Time as This

Rev. Amanda Hendler-Voss

Mordecai told them to reply to Esther, "Do not think that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews...Who knows? Perhaps you have come to royal dignity for just such a time as this." Then Esther said to Mordecai, "Go, gather all the Jews... and hold a fast on my behalf... I and my maids will also fast as you do. After that, I will go to the king, though it is against the law; and if I perish, I perish..."

Esther was in a predicament. As a queen yoked to the Persian king, she possessed some access to power. As a Jew, she endangered her life by revealing her religious and cultural identity to expose the plan to annihilate her people. Esther lived within the walls of privilege, but as a woman she resided on the fringes. Her privilege came from her connection to those in power, but ties to her own community prompted her to risk everything.

Many American women also live within privileged borders, but find ourselves on the fringes. Though we reside in a nation with excessive wealth and power, some of us work for poverty wages. Others confront racism daily. Some live with the constant fear of violence from an intimate partner. Shelters are full, and affordable housing is scarce. There's no funding for quality education. Even those of us who fall squarely within the middle class worry about the rising costs of health care for our children and elders.

Sadly, the wealth of our nation is not dedicated toward correcting the injustices recently revealed by Hurricane Katrina. The proposed federal budget for FY07 slashes programs that sustain working families and pours 53% of discretionary spending into the Pentagon to research new nuclear weapons and manufacture obsolete weapons systems like missile defense. The \$439 billion the President allocates

toward the Pentagon is more than we spend on education, the environment, health, international affairs, and veterans' benefits combined.

Like Esther, we live within the walls of privilege but reside on the margins. We benefit from our nation's wealth, but feel powerless in the face of its addiction to militarism. Will we take action to restore justice? Acting for justice is risky. Esther reminds us that we cannot hide our identity as women of faith. She called together her people to fast and pray. Esther insists that we cannot remain silent while people suffer under unjust policies—the poor, our children, and elders.

The good news is that we *can* act. We can remind elected officials that we value the most vulnerable in our society, and our nation has the means to care for them. We can study the federal budget as a moral document and tell the media that the President's FY07 budget reflects an



The good news
is that **WE**
CAN ACT.

addiction to weapons, rather than our shared hope to pursue peace by working with neighbor nations to reduce poverty and resolve conflict. We can, like Esther, speak to national leaders on behalf of those rarely afforded the opportunity to speak up, or those who remain unheard. Perhaps women are called to take action for just such a time as this.

Rev. Amanda Hendler-Voss is ordained in the United Church of Christ and serves as the Faith Communities Coordinator for Women's Action for New Directions (WAND), an organization that educates women about reducing violence and redirecting excessive military resources toward unmet human and environmental needs. WAND recently released a new curriculum, *Faith Seeking Peace*, which addresses issues like terrorism, war, and federal budget priorities from a Christian perspective. To download the curriculum, please visit www.faihwand.org.

Circle of Mercy Supports Helpmate's "Men Who Care" Campaign

WHEN THE MEN OF THE CIRCLE OF MERCY congregation learned about "Men Who Care," a special fundraising campaign to support victims of domestic violence, co-pastor Rev. Ken Sehested suggested that they pool their resources and join the effort as a group. The congregation voted to match this commitment from its "Missions Fund," thereby doubling its commitment to

Helpmate, an Asheville-based nonprofit that provides shelter, counseling, and advocacy for individuals and families affected by domestic violence.

During National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, Helpmate executive director Valerie Collins accepted a donation of \$880 during Circle of Mercy's Sunday evening worship service.

"Given the fact that domestic violence is the leading cause of injury among women in the U.S.—abuse from husbands and boyfriends—we think men have a special responsibility for addressing such violence," said Marc Mullinax, chair of the Religion and Philosophy Department



The men of Circle of Mercy Congregation gather around Valerie Collins, director of Helpmate, after presenting her an \$880 check from the congregation to support the agency's work against domestic violence.

at Mars Hill College and the congregation's moderator. "We need to create a culture that says it just isn't acceptable for men to hit women. And, because of our religious commitments, we think churches should be in the forefront of this movement to support agencies like Helpmate."

The "Men Who Care" initiative was first proposed by Helpmate board member John

Stewart, M.D. The goal is to recruit 1,000 men to contribute \$20 each to Helpmate. For details about Helpmate's work and this fundraising effort, contact Ms. Collins at (828) 254-2968 (vcollins@helpmateonline.org).

Circle of Mercy is a four-year-old Christian congregation affiliated nationally with the Alliance of Baptists and the United Church of Christ. Locally, it is among the founding congregations of Christians for a United Community, an interracial peace and justice organization in Asheville, NC. Circle of Mercy meets for worship each Sunday at 5:30 p.m. in the parish hall of the Cathedral of All Souls. For more information, please call (828) 252-8586.

Children in International Mission

by Ana Gobledale, currently serving the Churches of Christ in Australia through Global Ministries, along with her husband, Tod, her son, Mandla (and her daughter, Thandiwe, who comes home for holidays.)

“As a missionary kid you have something so special – an understanding of the rest of the world that not most U.S. citizens have. You are a global citizen, and that is something that needs to be embraced..” –Jenny Dale, 21

“I’m more aware of all the things around me. I have multi-cultural aspects to myself and I feel I take a lot less for granted.” –Mandla Gobledale, 18

Ever wonder what it’s like to be a kid of international missionaries?

Tod and I headed to South Africa in 1993 with me a few months pregnant with Number One! Our two children – Thandiwe (now 21), born in South Africa, and Mandla (18), born while living with Tod’s parents on furlough – have never been listed as “missionaries” in any official mission board documents, yet their lives have been a vital part of our life and identity as a missionary family. They both have been a gift to us, to our neighbours in South Africa, Zimbabwe and now Australia, and to the wider church. And they are part of an ever growing group of Missionary Kids (MKs), who have not grown up on mission stations on which the “home” culture is preserved and cranberry sauce is opened on Thanksgiving, but rather have been integrated into the local life of the host country where cranberry sauce may be unheard of and the fourth Thursday in November may be merely another warmer day as summer approaches.



The term “Third Culture Kids” (TCK), coined in the 1950’s by two social scientists, Drs John and Ruth Useem, fits these missionary kids well. Because TCKs do not grow up in the culture of their parents, except within the walls of their own home, perhaps, and they are a “visitor,” not immigrant, to the familiar culture of their friends, these children exist fully in neither one culture nor the other, but betwixt and between – in a third culture.

They bounce back and forth between the USA (usually visiting every 3–4 years) and their home country, sometimes two or three home countries, as our children did.

While this obviously presents a challenge for parenting, the benefits I witness in the young adults who have straddled multiple cultures seem priceless. “Those life experiences of living abroad make you into a richer and more conscientious person. I see myself as a global citizen.” (Jenny Dale). What follows are pieces from interviews with three of these magnificent young people, all Third Culture Kids. Jenny Dale, now a senior at Grinnell College, lived in El Salvador as a child, during a time of war and uncertainty for the people there. Katie Campbell-Nelson, a recent graduate of Earlham College, grew up in Indonesia where her parents still live. And my son, Mandla, has grown up in South Africa, Zimbabwe, the USA and now in Australia where he’s finishing high school.

Ana

Being a Missionary Kid inevitably means spending lots of time at church! This can be either a joy or a pain in the life of a child...

Katie: I didn't like going to church. I didn't like having to sit in the front row of events and try to maintain the best of manners.

Jenny: I don't know if it's being the child of a missionary exactly, but the church was huge in El Salvador. Although I didn't understand it at the time, because I was so young, I knew that the church community was important to my parents and to me. It has mostly been a recognition after the fact that my parents took my sister and me to a war zone to work in solidarity with the Lutheran Church because they were trying to help the people of El Salvador. This social justice aspect of the church was a key value instilled in me as a missionary kid.

Another imposition in the life of Missionary Kids is the compulsory furlough in the USA every 3-4 years. The USA stay, often called "home stay" by folks in the USA, means the missionary kid is uprooted from their home for a significant amount of time, usually at least 6 months. They meet relatives from photos and lots of church folk, who are happy to see them, but who often expect them to know the cultural and social "rules" of the USA. And then there's school and church that are often so different. These TCK's know that, upon entering the USA, they are entering new territory, a new culture into which they don't always slide in easily. "I think coming back to the U.S. is the hardest thing," writes Jenny.

Behaviors and attitudes with which they are familiar, are suddenly "foreign" and even unacceptable. Katie writes, "I like to squat instead of sit in a chair. I don't like to wear tight clothing or anything that shows too much skin because no one I grew up with did. I was told once that I have bad eye-contact when speaking to elders."

Yet with all the challenges of being a Third Cul-

ture Kid, in this world of shrinking boundaries and globalization these Third Culture Kids often exist as living bridges between cultures, races and even religions. And, as adults, they often continue to bridge the divergent parts of their reality.

"In my work and interactions with the Latino community inside the U.S. and outside, my fluency in Spanish is a huge way to break the ice and get to know each other. The food, the music, the movies have all played a huge role in who I am. It definitely makes people pause to see a gringa rocking out to Maná. Or the fact I know what a pupusa or an empanada is." —Jenny

TCK's experiences can defy many of our North American assumptions about racism. Identity can be stronger with a racial group other than one's own, and because of this, the North American "rules" of "race" and colour often don't hold true for the TCK. "The race relations in the United States are not recognized by TCK when they return, and thus they have to learn them at a different stage in their lives. They have not been socialized with the racism and definitions of race like most Americans have."¹

"Sometimes (being white and American) I, in fact, can experience being a minority and know what it means," writes Mandla whose first three years were lived at Mfanefile, Zululand, South Africa, where he was the only white child in the community other than his sister. Later, in Plumtree, Zimbabwe, he was the only white child in his school after Thandiwe left for secondary school. His experiences, Mandla explains, have defined his personality, especially "my non-tolerance of ignorance that I feel so many people possess about other cultures



Jenny



Mandla and Thandiwe

and lifestyles. I am not racist or judgmental towards people who are 'different' from me."

Katie writes, "I didn't like being one of two rich white kids in the neighborhood."

Jenny reflects, "It has been a challenge having this dual identity of having aspects of this U.S. "culture" and El Salvador culture. Not knowing where exactly I belong because I see things differently. To not really fit with the other "white" kids, but because I'm not Latina, not with the Latina kids even though I share so much of the cultural aspects. So this lack of a place is something that is a treasure, but also challenging in developing your identity.

Missionary Kids are forced to decide, upon entry into the USA, how much to adapt to this new culture and how much to keep intact of their "home" culture from which they have come. This will differ from family to family, from kid to kid. My children, knowing they are different and that their names alone will make them stand out, look for ways to easily blend in.

Jenny, whose family moved permanently back to the USA, shares her perspective on re-entry (or first entry) into the US culture: "[Upon leaving ones overseas home and entering the US culture] the most important thing is to keep ties to the country and the people where you lived as a missionary. Try to keep the language and the cultural aspects, because I know for me they are so important to me and if once I moved back to the states I simply blended in with the dominant culture, I would not be the same person I am today." Jenny's parents have enabled the family to stay connected to El Salvador friends and culture by enrolling their daughters in a Spanish speaking school in Chicago, and returning to El Salvador annually. "My ties to Latin America are forever. The people, the culture, the language, everything is in some way or another part

of who I have become," writes Jenny.

As for long-term effects of this multi-cultural upbringing...

Katie: "I like traveling. I like having grown up with an independence and adaptability in most situations of my life."

Jenny: "I want to live the rest of my life working for the well-being of all of the world's citizens. This passion for social change is something that came from my experience in El Salvador. Seeing the church as a instrument of social change and working in the name of the poor shaped my ideas of what the church should be doing in every part of the world.

Mandla (who spent his years in southern Africa without a TV): I am not a slave of TV.

When asked for words of wisdom for missionary parents, Katie provides encouragement and assurance, "Don't worry about having moved around so much with your kids; it builds character." And Mandla adds, "I think that the whole missionary kid situation can be heaven or hell. As long as the kids are moved overseas at an early age, you'll be OK. I think it is harder as kids grow older."

Jenny offers advice for older Missionary Kids moving abroad,

"When you are in the country, become a part



Katie and family



of it, immerse yourself in it as best you can. Find a support community because it's hard being in a new and strange place."

In the end, whether one lives in the country of one's parents' culture or in another or move between the two, it's all about friends and community, loving and being loved.

Jenny: I love to remember just playing with friends at the end of our dead-end street. The people are the things that stick out in my mind. Their love and care for me as part of their family. These friendships that I have kept and maintained into adulthood are the most special and favorite part of when I lived abroad.

Katie: I liked growing up in a neighborhood full of kids. I liked having an extended family to look up to, and not feel responsible to only my "blood relatives" of whom there were only three.

Mandla: What did I like best about living abroad? Being with my neighbors in Zimbabwe and just hanging out, always able to find something to do or a game to play.

"God made from one blood all the families of earth, the circles of nurture that raise us from birth, companions who join us to work through each stage of childhood and youth and adulthood and age." ("God Made from One Blood," #427, *The New Century Hymnal*, Pilgrim Press)

I will close with a reflection from Katie in which she shares a vivid favourite memory from Indonesia:

"When I was about 7 years old, my brother Sam and our friend Oscar and I were playing in the rice fields across the road from our house. We were quite a distance from the house when we saw the first storm of the season rolling in. We thought it would be fun to race the storm home to see if we could make it without getting wet. As we ran the storm followed us, and as we

Questions for Reflection

1. Jenny's favourite Bible verse is Micah 6:8, "What does the LORD require of you but to do justice and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God." How is your congregation offering "kids" opportunities to experience "doing justice"?
2. How is your congregation connected to children in international missionary families? Consider how you, as part of their wider family in faith, might learn more about these Missionary Kids, or others, and support and encourage them.
3. Mandla speaks of his "non-tolerance of ignorance that I feel so many people possess about other cultures and lifestyles." How might/ does your congregation enable young members to have opportunities to grow in tolerance, such as cross-cultural experiences?

Prayer Opportunities

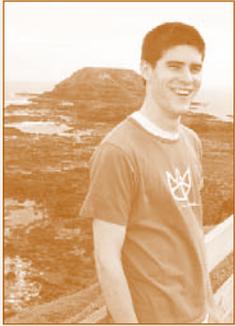
- for children of Global Ministries missionaries serving around the world.
- for parents helping children straddle two or more cultures
- For church families around the world who welcome children of all shapes, colours, nationalities, sizes and identities.

stepped under the roof of our porch, the rain hit the zinc with a roar, deafening our excitement at having beat the rain. The beginning of rainy season was always my favorite time of year. hot and humid around the end of November. I was not so excited by it in March though, when everything in my closet went moldy and we all smelled of mildew."

Let us celebrate the lives of Jenny, Katie and Mandla and of all the Missionary Kids – past, present and future – who add such a vibrant dimension to the international work of our church!

¹ Jenny Dale, "What is a TCK?", paper written for Grinnell College (quote from David C. Pollock & Ruthy E. Van Reken, *The Third Culture Kid Experience: Growing Up Among Worlds*, (Yarmouth, MA: Intercultural Press, 1999)).

Poetry Page



Mandla (Mandlenkosi)
Gobledale

Statement of Intention: My main influence for this piece was my experience living in Southern Africa. I felt writing about leaving a friend would be appropriate as it is something that many people can relate to. Also, the purpose is to raise awareness of racism and its stupidity as well as to express my personal views on some experiences in my life. Enjoy.

I Cry for Apartheid

Memories, so subtle at first
An incident, a place, a tune, a face
A car parked under an acacia tree
Bags loaded into the back of the Toyota.

Hugs and kisses all around
Perhaps we'll never meet again.
Tears of joy for time spent together
Tears for the future of time spent apart

I am quiet, taking in my surroundings
for the last time. The last time?
Too young to understand
Too proud to cry

Emotions swell up in my stomach,
but I clench my teeth and fight back,
The tears.
I am leaving my first memories behind.
My mother holds me, a face appears.
Dark, with short cropped hair
A boy my age, my friend, my companion
Bo is his name.

Memories suddenly fill my mind.
The subtlety is gone. They play back
Like film on a projector
No sound, only image.

Bo is my best friend.
We have played together,
Fought together, and forged a bond
That only two small boys of three and a half
Can have.

"Mama, angivuna isiphiqo makhaya."
I don't want to leave our home.
I don't want to leave this place.
I don't want to leave Africa.
I don't want to leave Bo.

I embrace my friend
Containing my emotions no more.
The taut muscle in my gut gives
And I burst into tears on my friend's shoulder.

The scene is touching.
My sun-bleached blonde hair falls
Next to Bo's dark, short curls.
My pale white arms embrace him
And his dark shoulders sag
As tears fall from his black eyes.

We are brought together as friends.
We speak the same language.
We use the same currency.
We live in the same village.
We live and play together
And show love and caring towards one another,

And yet, and yet, in 1990
The South African Government
Feels that this is illegal
Because Bo is black
And I am white.

I break our embrace. I run to the car.
We leave in a cloud of dust.
Bo vanishes in the distance.
I leave a best friend.
I cry because of it.

At the age of three, I did not cry for Apartheid.
I cried because I had to leave my home and friends.
Today I cry for Apartheid.
Ripped away from all that was important to me
Because some white people didn't like other white people
living with blacks.

Today I cry for Apartheid.

I have conquered memories.
They are no longer mysteries,
difficult to comprehend or understand.
They are now locked into my mind,
For life.

Thinking back, this place, here, now
Seems familiar.
A car parked under a mango tree,
Bags loaded into the back of the Mazda.

(continued page 27)



Throughout our lives, we are interrupted by calls from God. As in "This Little Light of Mine," we are often called to share our light, Christ's light, with others in various ways. And when our life is ending, our faith gives the assurance that we shall be comforted and called by that same God of grace and love. (See also article, "push...plant...pray...offer presence")

You Call Me

c 2/2006

You call me
Though I am unworthy;
You love me
And ask me to care.
You call me,
And I venture forth in your name.
You fill me,
And my cup overflows.
You call me,
And I let go of my fears.
You strengthen me,
And I want to do your will.

You call me,
And I answer, Here am I.
You feed me,
And I strive to share your Good News.
You call me,
And I try to act justly and love mercy.
You hold me,
And I know I am loved.
You call me,
And I pray that you found me faithful.

*Ah, yes, moving day. I have done it before.
Three, maybe four times now.
My memory does not fail me.
I can recall each one...but it's been awhile.*

*It has never been easy.
This time feels extra hard.
I have bonded with the land, the people
and the culture. This is my home.*

*Unlike South Africa, in Zimbabwe
I have gone to school
Five and a half years.
I have made friends, no enemies.
I would stay forever.
Memories arise as hugs and kisses all around.
"Perhaps we'll never meet again."
Tears of joy for the time spent together
And sorrow for the future separation.*

*There was a service this time
Church, singing, clapping,
preaching, singing.
All overwhelming*

*"Mandla, Andy Moyo has arrived."
I go out to meet my friend
Under the uxlaguxlagu tree.
Memories of climbing it together
Fill me with happy thoughts.*

*"I have brought you a gift."
"So have I, but for you."
Comics are exchanged.
Tintin, Asterix, Batman, Dr. Strange*

*The African sun is hot,
But we take no notice
As we sit
Together for the last time.*

*"Mandla, it is time to go."
I rise and for the second time
I embrace my African companion,
My best friend.*

*And yet, and yet in the year 2000
The Zimbabwean Government has made it clear
That my family and I are not welcome.
We are a threat, an enemy
Because we are white.*

*Why am I welcome and given a home
Brought into a family to not be alone
And then made to leave by the powers that be
Because we don't come from the same family tree?
Are we that different? I think we're the same
Regardless from where it was that you came
And deep in my heart I pray we can be
An open and loving, non-judgmental, caring
Peaceful, welcoming, beautiful, kind society.*

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