

the Wellspring

newsletter
Winter 2010

Wesleyan Holiness Women Clergy

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True to Our Call

Rev. Carla Sunberg

In the midst of an eye exam the doctor asked me about my work, “What do you do?” I explained that I am a minister at the local church down the street. However, something inside me wondered what stereotypes were conjured up in his mind the minute I mentioned I am a minister. Somehow I thought there must be a footnote to my response that explains who I am and why I feel that it is appropriate for me to be in ministry.

In this volume of *Wellspring* we hear the stories of four women who have found their way in ministry.


Historically, Stan Ingersol brings us the stories of Jarena Lee and

Julia Foote, two young African American women who were obedient to the call of God on their hearts.

Beth Cullison shares the personal struggle of the “call.” God does not call us all to the same type of ministry—service to God can be lived out in many different ways.

Lucia Delamarter reminds us that along the way, we should not give up our femininity. While we may be serving God in a male-dominated vocation, we need to remember who He created us to be!

Obedience to the call of God often means we go against the cultural norms of our day. Paul spoke of this long ago when he told us that in

Christ there is no longer any “slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). This message was counter-cultural in Paul’s day. This may be true in regard to our calling, or even in regard to our daily walk with Christ. Let us not be critical of the walk that God may have given to another, but let us encourage one another and build each other up in the calling they have received. 

Carla Sunberg is an ordained elder in the Church of the Nazarene and serves as the Pastor of Evangelism and Discipleship at Grace Point Church of the Nazarene in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Spiritual Sisters: Jarena Lee and Julia Foote

African American Women in Our Heritage

Stan Ingersol

The holiness movement’s standard histories often neglect African American participation, and the stories of Jarena Lee and Julia Foote particularly need to be reclaimed by Wesleyan holiness people.

Jarena Lee was born in Cape May, New Jersey, in 1783. She grew up working as a servant in the home of a rich family. Upon adulthood she moved to Philadelphia, where Richard Allen, founder of the African Methodist Episcopal Church (AME), was influential in her conversion.

Some months later, a man asked about her spiritual welfare. She later wrote: “He inquired if the Lord had justified my soul. I answered yes. He then asked if he had sanctified me. I answered no; that I did not

know what that was. He then undertook to instruct me further in the knowledge of the Lord respecting this blessing.” She sought and experienced the grace of entire sanctification.

Several years later she sensed a call to preach. She spoke to Allen, who told her that she could exhort sinners or conduct women’s prayer meetings but noted that the Methodist Discipline did not permit women to preach. Relieved, she returned home but was burdened by the call to preach.

In 1811 she married Joseph Lee, pastor of a Methodist society in Snow Hill, outside Philadelphia. He died six years later, leaving her with two infant children.

Eight years after first approaching Allen, Lee restated her case to him. Allen authorized her to conduct a home prayer meeting and within weeks the flock that gathered for prayer was so large that it filled her small house.

A few weeks later she attended



Bethel A.M.E. Church in Philadelphia. The preacher was reading from Jonah when Lee leapt to her feet and cried out that she

felt like that prophet, for God had called her years earlier and she still

Maintaining Feminity

Rev. Lucia Delamarter

I was visiting a house church in Strasbourg, France. Around the table sat young professionals struggling to maintain evangelical faith in the midst of a secular society. We opened the Word together and prayed for each other in our native tongues.

It was time for questions. I haven't learned yet not to be surprised by the "why a woman" question. But this time, the emphasis was different. "How can a woman leader keep from becoming . . . (he struggled for an English word, then chose) *hard*?"

Although women in leadership is not uncommon either in France or America, we must admit, as I believe this young man saw, women leaders still work in predominantly male professions. Our role models for women in organizational leadership come mostly from men and mostly from the business world. These leaders are often perceived as assertive, perhaps even manipulative. Rarely does one think of a business leader as nurturing or collaborative.

Here are the realities of my leadership role: I serve as a conference (district) superintendent. Assertiveness is a job requirement. I have the awesome responsibility of working with churches during some of the

most difficult times of their corporate lives—when a pastor fails, when a church fails, when the worst of human nature shows up (back-biting, negativity, control for power), when closure looms like an approaching storm. I choose to walk into these problems and face them down.

Spiritual warfare is hard, dirty work. Like Rosie the Riveter, I come




home covered with the grime of my job. I've developed strong spiritual muscles wrestling and battling these issues. I've become "hard" against the machinations of unspiritual people. But for the sake of the Church of Jesus Christ and His kingdom, for which I am highly ambitious (another "hard" leadership trait) I must work in this manner.

When I go to battle, fight, wrestle, plow through, and ascend the mountain, I'm not becoming hard or in danger of losing my femininity; I am first of all a woman. I have been enculturated in nurture and collabo-

ration. I try to lead from those values.

I keep from becoming shrewish. I maintain my femininity. I stay centered as a daughter of the King. As women, we must have a strategy for staying true to ourselves when we are in leadership. We must know ourselves. I cannot emphasize enough the need to ruthlessly be self-aware. We must know what pushes our buttons and why. We must know deeply what we want, what we like and what we will not allow into our lives or the lives of those we love.

Each of us will have to find the little daily ways to remind ourselves that we are different from the men with whom we share leadership. We could cry regularly (I'd rather not, but I do), bring cookies to meetings (I serve gourmet meals), have group hugs (not me), send birthday cards (I send to the spouses, too), or paint our offices (mine is red).

My personal favorite: I'm the only woman in this position in the Free Methodist Church. At superintendent meetings, we all dress casually; we all wear pants, but I'm the one with the cute shoes! 


Lucia Delamarter is an ordained elder in the Free Methodist Church, serving as the Gateway Conference Superintendent since 2006.

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The Millennium Hotel

Contentment

Rev. Beth Cullison

I picked up an old hymnal with a rusted-stapled binding published in 1902. The 2009 purchase price from Goodwill was more than the hymnal cost when it was first published—10 cents.

A random opening took me to the hymn, “I’ll Go Where You Want Me To Go.” *Wow, it’s been a long time since I’ve sung that song.* It reminds me of concluding camp meeting services. You might remember the first line yourself: “It may not be on the mountain’s height or over the stormy sea. It may not be at the battle’s front my Lord will have need of me ...” The hymn writer leads the singer to the chorus: “I’ll go where you want me to go dear Lord.”

The Lord’s pastoral calling on my life was refined during my three years of missionary service in Europe. Involved in church planting, I

pictured my pastoral calling culminating in an appointment to local church ministry. Oddly, since ordination, I’ve been appointed to denominational service. The “pastorate” doesn’t look like I pictured it. It doesn’t look like most people picture it. And of course, because it doesn’t look ordinary, some disqualify it as ordained ministry.

Our enemy, the Accuser, wants to rob us of the joy God has given us in the ministry where He has placed

us. The Accuser loves to minimize our worth—always eager to downplay the significant role we have in God’s wonderful kingdom.

Consider Stephen’s story

from Acts 6-7 (NLT). Stephen was described as “well respected ... full of the Spirit and wisdom ... full of faith ... full of God’s grace and power, [he] performed amazing mira-

cles and signs among the people.” Despite the lying witnesses, Stephen’s face was as bright as an angel’s.

Picture this. The Scriptures say Jesus is seated at the right hand of God the Father. But Acts 7 says as Stephen, the table waiter, endured the anger and rage of others he saw Jesus *standing* at God’s right hand! I wonder if Jesus was clapping for Stephen, saying, “Stephen, good job. I’m so proud of you.”

The third verse of the old hymn concludes with the assurance there is a place of service: “In earth’s harvest fields so wide, where [we] may labor through life’s short day for Jesus the crucified.” The worth of our ministry for Jesus is not in the glamour of a location, or the title of our ministry assignment. The worth of our ministry is in our faithfulness to Jesus. *W*

Beth Cullison is an ordained elder in the Free Methodist Church and Executive Administrative Assistant to the Board of Bishops.



Spiritual Sisters, continued

had not carried out her commission. The people were shocked at her outburst, but Bishop Allen rose and confirmed Lee’s testimony.

Jarena Lee preached her first sermon the next Sunday. A few days later she began a revival meeting in a friend’s home that lasted for several months. Her ministry began in earnest after this. Initially she only preached in homes in the Philadelphia area. Later she conducted services in courthouses and churches. She never became a pastor, nor was she ever ordained, but she per-

formed the work of an evangelist for the next thirty years until her death.

Her preaching took her to Cape May where her elderly mother still lived, and to Long Island where she preached in a barn to a racially integrated congregation that included physicians and lawyers. She preached at Bethel A.M.E. Church—“mother church” of the A.M.E. denomination—and in many other places. She joined the crusade against slavery and the movement to give women rights within the Christian church.

Christian holiness was a frequent preaching theme. She wrote of an incident that occurred in the early 1820s: “I now traveled to Cecil County, Md., and the first evening spoke to a large congregation. The pastor afterwards baptized some adult persons—and we all experienced the cleansing and purifying power. We had a baptism within and without.”

Lee recorded these and other incidents near the end of her life in her autobiography, *Religious Experience and Journal of Mrs. Jarena Lee*

Spiritual Sisters, continued

(1849). She died a year or so later.

Lee's ministry was in full bloom when Julia Foote was born in 1823 in Schenectady, New York. Her parents, freed slaves, had earlier made their way North. Foote was converted at 15 and united with the A.M.E. Church. She sought and found the grace of entire sanctification.

She married and moved to

Boston, uniting with a congregation of the A.M.E. Zion Church, a denomination similar to but separate from the A.M.E. Church. She began visiting

"the poor and forsaken ones" in homes and hospitals.

She opposed the idea of women preaching, so it was a complete surprise when she sensed a divine call

to this work in the late 1840s. She struggled with the call, and her pastor discouraged her from pursuing it, but eventually she yielded to it and was expelled from her congregation.

Foote's husband and father both died in the spring of 1849. This harsh blow, however, opened the way for her ministry. Childless, and single again, her ministry expanded into an ever-widening circle that carried her from eastern Canada to California. Her center of ministry, though, was New York, Ohio, and Michigan. Despite prejudice against women clergy, she found sufficient open doors in A.M.E. and A.M.E. Zion congregations.

Christian holiness was one of her indispensable sermon themes. Her autobiography is placed with the theme and its final chapter is "How to Obtain Sanctification." Her sermon on "Christian Perfection" was recently republished in a significant study of black women

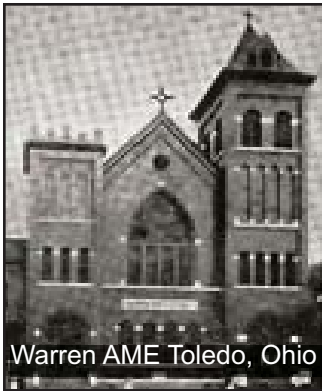
preachers.

The A.M.E. Zion Church (AMEZ) eventually affirmed her call to ministry. Foote joined the household of one of her bishops in 1884 and lived with his family until her death in 1901. In 1894 she was the first A.M.E.Z. woman ordained a deacon, and in 1900 the second to be ordained an elder.

Sources: Julia A. Foote, *A Brand Plucked from the Fire: An Autobiographical Sketch* (1886). Jarena Lee, *Religious Experience and Journal of Mrs. Jarena Lee* (1849), esp. pp. 8-10; quotes on pp. 17 and 27. Also see: Bettye Collier-Thomas, *Daughters of Thunder: Black Women Preachers and Their Sermons, 1850-1979* (1998).

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Stan Ingersol serves as the Archivist for the Church of the Nazarene in Lenexa, Kansas.



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