

A Word From Susie Stanley

“Drops of water eventually become a river.” This quotation which I saw on a Japanese calendar serves as the inspiration for this column. Yes, I’m writing from Tokyo where my first grandchild was born on January 20. I had made arrangements to arrive January 26 so my timing was perfect. I have thoroughly enjoyed four days getting acquainted with my grandson Kai. So for those of you who may have wondered, I do have a life apart from WHWC!

Back to the “drops of water” theme. WHWC will be celebrating its tenth anniversary next year. The ideas or “drops of water” from several people merged to become a stream that carried the idea of a conference to fruition. During one light moment at the 1992 planning session for the first conference, the board brainstormed the possibility of hosting the conference aboard a cruise ship. We haven’t gathered enough water for that idea yet!

Other streams have flowed from the ongoing conferences. The organization now hosts a list serv, a web site and this newsletter. We sell booklets we’ve published and merchandise with our logo. The popular t shirt “Real Men Marry Preachers” has even been

Mission Statement

“The mission of Wesleyan/ Holiness Women Clergy is to equip and encourage divinely-called women in vocational ministry and professional leadership positions.”

purchased by moderate former Southern Baptists to indicate their approval of

women in ministry. By the way, these t shirts have also been spotted at ministers’ meeting and camp meetings. All this to say that our numerous streams are converging into a river. Upcoming newsletters will report on the progress of the initiatives we adopted at the last conference.

The drops of water that symbolize the beginning of WHWC and our Come to the Water conferences have multiplied immensely. Join us in praying that we will be open to the Holy Spirit’s guidance as we determine the course of our organization in the future.

Susie Stanley is Executive Director of WHWC.

NOTE: Information on ordering the t-shirts mentioned above is available on our web site www.messiah.edu/whwc. †

Jesus, Remover of Barriers

by Janet Peifer, editor

The story of the Samaritan woman could vie for the most misrepresented narrative ever preached from a pulpit. I was well into my forties before I was aware of the significant substance of this account (John 4:4-42). First of all, it is the longest recorded conversation Jesus had with any person-man or woman. While the gospel writers do overtly describe a few women as “sinful” that word is not used in this narrative. More often than not, this story is used as a text to speak out against loose living. Our conditioning to think that the Samaritan woman was a prostitute needs some “unlearning.”

Women in that day were not allowed to divorce their husbands. Only husbands could divorce their wives. So this woman had been divorced by five husbands, or she had the misfortune of losing some or all to death. But likely she was a rejected woman, perhaps because she could not bear children, or perhaps she was not beautiful enough or could not cook well enough. A man could divorce his wife for any act which displeased him. If she had been an adulterous woman, she would have been a candidate for being stoned to death since the Samaritans honored the Pentateuch as the final word of God. And

finally, most likely she was not a prostitute since prostitutes rarely bother with marriage.

Contrary to the popular idiom that this woman was trying to change the subject to get Jesus to stop talking about her immoral life, the Samaritan woman was sensing Jesus’ acceptance of her as a person. Even his statement about the current husband not being hers was one of understanding and compassion. She was at the well at an unusual time-maybe because she wanted to protect herself from the speculation of the crowd that came later in the day. Beyond that, the timing of this event had providential implications.

In this one narrative Jesus summarily did away with seven barriers that keep people in bondage. First, he broke the racial barrier by deliberately going into Samaria and by deliberately talking to a “despised” Samaritan. He broke cultural barriers by saying with his actions and words that family name, hometown and sub-cultural idiosyncrasies do not preclude one from being accepted by the Christ. He broke religious worship barriers by saying that the day was nearly here that people would

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Jesus, Remover of Barriers

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worship in churches "without walls." Those who worship in Spirit and in truth could do that any place.

Jesus clearly obliterated strong gender barriers in this encounter. Men did not talk to women in public, not even their own wives. Rabbis especially did not talk to women in public, nor would they ever be served by women when they sat at tables to eat. At the well, Jesus invited a despised Samaritan woman to serve a drink of water and held an important conversation with her unashamedly. He broke class and lifestyle barriers by demonstrating that no matter how society views us, we will not be rejected by him. He intentionally saw value in all persons.

Jesus broke intellectual barriers. Not only did he hold a long theological discussion with her, but by doing

so he demonstrated that a woman from an upbringing different from the Jewish people could learn and understand what he was saying. Jesus revealed to her that he was the Messiah they were looking for, to which she responded in faith. His declaration to the woman, "I am He," was a clearer revelation of himself than he had as yet granted anyone. And it was made to one who had been a failure.

The seventh barrier which Jesus broke is the age-old traditional church question, "Who can proclaim the gospel to the few or to the masses?" This woman would have been seen as a most unlikely person to bring any authentic tidings about the matters of which she spoke. But she impressed her neighbors enough to make them stream out to see if there was anything to her story—an apt description of an evangelist! The Samaritan woman was a model showing that it is He (Christ) who gives woman a chance, who sees her possibilities, and discovers her value. †

What Women Said When Asked to Name the Two Most Significant Barriers Which Continue to Keep Women From Receiving Calls to Serve in Pastoral Leadership

by Janet Peifer

By email I invited women to respond to the above question. Twenty-five sent their responses. There were 16 barriers named by the 25 women. The number in brackets indicates how many women named that barrier.

- Faulty/poor biblical interpretation regarding the call of women to church leadership and ministry [10]
- Lack of pastoral and church members' support in the congregation for young girls and women who obviously have gifts of leadership (if they were male, encouragement would come from many places) [7]
- Lack of courage from denominational leaders to assertively pioneer change (what is said and what is done are two different things) [5]
- Misperceptions about women's ability to lead with integrity and strength (questioning her qualifications) [5]
- Women who believe women should not be pastors [3]
- Inability of men to accept a situation where a woman may have a public, spiritual leadership role which seems to eclipse that of the male (male intimidated by a female leader or husbands who are unwilling to encourage wife to pursue ministry) [3]
- Too few women observed in pastoral leadership positions to model their ability to do a good job [3]
- Inadequate educational processes to prepare lay women to be ministerial candidates [2]
- Congregational church board members and church members who lack training and development regarding women in ministry [2]
- Fear on the part of women who sense a call to ministry (is it worth the effort to prepare; will there be a position for me?) [2]

- Lack of understanding or appreciation by men of the leadership style in which many women function (authoritarian versus team approach) [2]
- Lack of active support from denominational leaders for women who are preparing for ministry [2]
- Women whose aggression and vocal demands have hindered acceptance of women in leadership [1]
- Women who are educated and called (called by God to ministry) whose husbands are in pastoral ministry may be overtly overlooked for a pastoral position because of the husband's congregational assignment [1]
- Fear on the part of male church leaders [1]
- Defensiveness which is the response to fear by men or women [1] †

Need a Teaching Tool to Help Take Down the Barriers?

Purchase *ABLAZE with LOVE*—a documentary video produced by Rev. Janine Metcalf, Senior Pastor of El Cajon Church of the Nazarene, El Cajon, CA.

A documentary about women who stepped beyond church and cultural barriers to heed God's call. One section of the video includes teaching on The Biblical Basis for Women in Ministry.

Contact Beacon Hill Books at 1-800-877-0700 or www.beaconhillbooks.com

New Doctoral Thesis Explores the Role of Women in Ministry

written by Dr. Keith Springer, Associate Professor of Religion, Indiana Wesleyan University

Dr. Springer recently completed his doctoral work at Northern Baptist Theological Seminary in Lombard, Illinois. The title of his doctoral thesis was "Exploring Resistance to the Placement of Female Graduates of Indiana Wesleyan University in Full-time Ministry Positions in the Wesleyan Church."

At Indiana Wesleyan University, one-third of the 380 students with majors in the Religion Division are female. However, only 5% of Wesleyan pastors are female. This is especially curious since the Wesleyan denomination is fully committed to the equal eligibility of men and women for ministerial ordination and service. Luther Lee, co-founder of the Wesleyan Methodist Church, preached the sermon at the ordination of the first woman ordained in the United States and women have been ordained by the denomination since the 1860s. Several recent General Conferences have reaffirmed this equal support for men and women in eligibility for the ministerial office.

In addition to studying the biblical and historical bases for this equality, the thesis explored some possible causes for the resistance to the placement of women in full-time ministry positions in many Wesleyan churches. During the course of this research, 571 questionnaires were mailed to representative samples of each of the following groups: (1) Male Wesleyan pastors; (2) Female Wesleyan pastors; (3) Lay leaders in local Wesleyan churches; and (4) Female students enrolled in the Religion Division at Indiana Wesleyan University. The first fifty questionnaires returned from each group were used as the research sample.

The questionnaires revealed that: (1) Many members of the Wesleyan Church lack an understanding of the biblical and historical bases for the denomination's position; (2) Many members of the Wesleyan Church have never observed a woman serving effectively as a pastor

or as a full-time staff member in a church; (3) Within the Wesleyan Church, there has been a backlash against the women's movement in society at large; (4) There has been a tendency in recent years for Wesleyans to incorporate ideas from other evangelical groups such as the Southern Baptists, The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, etc.

Other interesting results of this research include the following: (1) Among pastors and lay leaders, those from the south are most likely to believe that women should not serve as senior pastors; (2) Pastors and lay leaders with the most education are most likely to believe that women should be given equal opportunities for ministry; (3) Lay leaders (aged 25-54) are three times more likely to believe that their churches would consider hiring a woman as senior pastor than are male pastors (aged 25-54).

Original research was conducted on the numbers (and percentages) of female clergy in the various denominations which ordain women. It was interesting to learn that approximately one-half of the female ministers in the United States today come from three denominations: (1) The United Methodist Church (9,000 female ministers); (2) The Salvation Army (3,000 female ministers); and (3) The Assemblies of God (5,258 female ministers). All three of these denominations trace their roots either to John Wesley or to the Wesleyan/holiness revival.

The thesis contains some practical suggestions for increasing the acceptance and placement of women in full-time ministry positions. Copies of the thesis are available from Dr. Keith Springer, Associate Professor of Religion, Indiana Wesleyan university, 4201 South Washington, Marion, Indiana 46953 (or keith.springer@indwes.edu). †

Wesleyan/Holiness Women Clergy International Membership 2002–2004

Name _____

Address _____

Home Phone (____) _____ Fax (____) _____

Business Phone (____) _____ Email Address _____

Denomination/Organization _____

\$25.00 Membership \$15.00 Student/Senior (over 55) Contribution

I request scholarship assistance to pay for my membership dues.(Please pay what you can.)

Your membership card will be sent to the above address, unless otherwise specified. Mail this form and your check (made out to WHWC) to: Major Donna Hurula, The Salvation Army National Headquarters, 615 Slaters Lane. P.O. Box 269, Alexandria, VA 22313.

Please encourage others to join by sending a copy of this form. Thank you.

Did You Know ...

... that Dr. Susie Stanley recently celebrated the release of her newest book,

***Holy Boldness:
Women Preachers' Autobiographies
and the Sanctified Self***

(University of Tennessee Press, October 2002)

It is available from www.amazon.com
or www.utpress.org/

Look for a review of the book in the Summer 2003
issue of *Come to the Water Newsletter*.

Church of God (Anderson) 5th National Consultation for Women in Ministry and Mission

The Voices of Reconciliation and Leadership:
Speaking the Truth in Love

June 11-13, 2003
Park Place Church of God
Anderson, Indiana

For further information contact:
Rev. Dr. Christina Accornero
Phone: 765-622-9401
Email: caccornero@sbcglobal.net

A Date to Put on Your Calendar!

April 15-18, 2004

The Sixth International WHWC Conference

Cincinnati, Ohio

Theme
***Holy Boldness: By Faith...Without
Fear...Going Forth***

Don't miss this special 10th Anniversary
Celebration of the Come to the Water
Conference!

See the Web Site for Registration details
www.messiah.edu/WHWC

Conference brochure will be posted by
early summer.

**If you have announcements, news,
articles or any other information you'd
like to be included in this newsletter,
please contact the editor,
Rev. Dr. Janet Peifer
revjmp@equalworth.com**



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