

THE PERSISTENT VOICE

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Signs of the Times

Where Are We Now?

The Persistent Voice soon begins its 18th year. Our mission statement remains the same:

A networking newsletter working toward the full inclusion of women in ministry and working toward full partnership of women and men in the church.

Have the issues changed? Well, "yes" and "no." When we began there were no women bishops in the ELCA. Now 7 of the 65 are women. Today half of Wartburg's students are women. Women routinely serve as internship supervisors to male students.

Where are we now? Who is still waiting for call? Do some Lutheran churches still not ordain women? Are there new things we can learn from one another about shared power and partnership? About friendship?

Racism, classism, sexism remain in our society, oppressing in sometimes subtle, sometimes blatant ways. *The Persistent Voice*, with your help, will continue to explore these issues, using the lens of gender to examine all forms of discrimination, so that together in Christ we might live and serve in reconciled relationships.

The Global Scene

Australian Lutherans will not ordain women – yet.

By Tanya Wittwer,

Ceduna, S.A., Australia (WTS M.Div. 2003)

The Lutheran Church of Australia meeting in Toowooba, Queensland, voted October 3 not to ordain women. Even before Synod began we were dismayed. We had heard that only 51% of the Pastors' Conference had voted "that Scripture permits the ordination of women" (A two-thirds vote was needed to pass). Pastors make up a third of Synod, and their influence is larger than their numbers.

From the beginning of the proceedings it was apparent that the leadership had decided to keep a tight lid on Synod. The ordination question was clearly established as something to be debated, rather

than an issue that could be discussed collegially. On the Monday evening of Synod there was an "information evening" at which two seminary professors spoke – one presented the position that only men could be ordained, and the other responded. Unfortunately it was the *No* position that established the parameters of the "information" presented.

Later, I joined with others to share the points we thought were important to make the following morning, and to ensure that someone was prepared to raise them. I found it hard to believe we could cross the magical 67% line. But on Tuesday morning I felt a very faint glimmer of hope.

The chair urged people to abstain from voting if they had any doubts at all, or if they thought the time was not yet right. Then the votes were cast. When the result was announced that women would not be ordained (50.4% "That Scripture permits the ordination of women"), the business of Synod continued as if nothing had happened. On one level nothing had happened. However the tears and sadness of so many argued against that reality. Pastors were confused: how could they continue to minister when they could not support the official teaching of the church; but what else could they do? Lay-people were hurt: how could they stay in a church where this particular vote was but one symptom of an apparently increasing conservatism?

I felt surprisingly free – free to leave the LCA and join another denomination. The reaction surprised me, but after so many years of work it felt as if the part of the race I needed to run was complete.

When I woke on Wednesday morning, I had moved to a position of feeling free ... to stay, at least for a while. To stay and to support others in being the church we believed we needed to be.

"There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3.28)

Amen. May we live this reality.



The Stained Glass Ceiling

By Sandra Burroughs, M.Div. Senior

Rev. Jennifer Henry and Rev. Linda Keeter Schultz have chosen to listen to the callings and guidance of the Holy Spirit, even when it might conflict with a culture that dictates a "stained-glass ceiling" in the church for women.

Currently, Henry and Keeter Schultz serve together as Senior Pastor and Interim Associate Pastor, respectively, at Zion Lutheran Church, a congregation of about 300 members in Clinton, Iowa. When asked about the decision for two women to serve together, Keeter Schultz responded, "It was the Holy Spirit – I was definitely called to this place to do God's work." Even though they both realize it is very rare to have two women leading a congregation together, Henry said, "We don't live and work as if this is unusual; we just do ministry."

A recent New York Times article (8/26/06) reported, however, that female pastors today do still face a "stained-glass ceiling" that often keeps them from becoming senior pastors of larger congregations. In fact, according to the article, it seems to be easier for a woman to become a bishop than to become a senior pastor of a large congregation. A recent Duke University study states that while 51% of protestant seminary students today are women, only about 3% of senior pastors in large congregations are women. In the ELCA only 27 female senior pastors serve congregations with over 300 people worshipping.

In response to this article, the *Persistent Voice* invited Henry and Keeter Schultz to speak at Wartburg Theological Seminary on October 12. About 30 men and women gathered over lunch to hear them share their experiences and their vision of leadership in the church. Henry and Keeter Schultz talked about how they intentionally work collaboratively, taking into account their various gifts for ministry and the needs of the congregation. In speaking about the difference between leading by "power over" others and "power with" others, Henry said that, "Just because the dominant hierarchical model today is to exercise power over others, that doesn't mean we have to live and work that way." They prefer to utilize each others' gifts and strengths to grow and serve most effectively. They work closely together, checking in with each other every day.

As they spoke of the fears people often have that two women can't work together without getting into "cat fights," they shared their vision for a team ministry that is encouraging, empowering, and non-competitive. "Ministry isn't a competitive sport," said Henry. Rather than seeing

(Continued on page 2, column 2)

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Book Review

Rediscovering Friendship: Awakening to the Promise and Power of Women's Friendships



By Elisabeth Moltmann-Wendel
Augsburg Fortress, 2001, 126pp
Reviewed by Ann Klavano, M.Div. Intern

I highly recommend this book as a way to develop new images and models of God and the interrelation between humans and God. This book is written from a feminist perspective. I think many of the ideas can be applied to both sexes. However, since women have historically been identified with their roles of wife and mother, and their friendships devalued, this will likely resonate more strongly for women. In the early part of the book Moltmann-Wendel shows that while the idea of God as friend has been a current in theological thought, it has generally been submerged in the idea of God as omnipotent, distant father.

In the chapter, "The Last Supper as a Meal of Friendship," the author invites us to replace the image of Christ's atonement and sacrifice with that of self-surrender and giving of himself for his friends. This image emphasizes the element of choice, and also that Christ's death was the climax of a life filled with sacrifice for others. I have read other writers, such as Rita Brock, who have criticized our glorification of suffering in traditional atonement theories. Moltmann-Wendel's understanding of Christ's suffering is helpful to me.

The author explores the role of Mary Magdalene, tracing her experiences having a different role than the male disciples who follow and then betray Jesus. Instead she is understood as a friend to Jesus. She is the one who did not abandon him and became the first proclaimer of the resurrection. Moltmann-Wendel celebrates Mary's independence from traditional female roles, instead of turning her into wife and mother as in *The Da Vinci Code*.

While this is a slim volume, it covers a lot of topics, including how to be a friend with your body and a friend with the earth. The writing style is accessible; the volume is dense with ideas. Buy a copy to read several times and to loan to friends.

Indian Summer

By Barbara J. Simon
WTS Enrollment Services Coordinator

Burnt by sun and kissed by frost,
summer trees exchange
their faded clothes
for blazing cloaks of gold, crimson,
and nameless colors so striking,
they aren't seen as much as inhaled
and embedded in my memory
with the smell of leaves aging to soil
kicked up beneath my feet --
my ears drowned by their crackle
as they gently collide
to create raspy music of autumn
carried through the air
on Indian Summer's breeze
against a sky that summons
all the blue it possesses
to revel in itself while it can.



The Stained Glass Ceiling continued

each other as threats, they want to support and strengthen each other. Keeter Schultz said, "We live and minister out of a theology of God's abundance, believing that God gives us what we need."

However, Henry and Keeter Schultz also spoke realistically about the fact that this model of having two female pastors will not yet work in all settings. For example, Clinton, Iowa, has had an African-American female mayor since 1995, a sign that the town is more open to seeing women and minorities in positions of leadership. They recognized some places still have difficulty seeing a woman as a senior pastor. Whenever a paradigm shifts like this, there is a lot of groundwork that needs to be done.



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THE VOICES OF TWO WOMEN WAITING FOR CALL

The Voice of Sandi Decker, WTS 2006

Persistent Voice began in the fall of 1989 with the voice of a woman awaiting call. At the time of this writing, six members of my 2006 M.Div class still await first calls (5 women and 1 man). My family has been fortunate. My husband remains employed in Dubuque and we live on campus.

The other day I attended chapel at Wartburg. I heard the resounding message that Christ is with me regardless. Then I realized this community, that I am hesitant to consider my own any longer, is also with me regardless.

Many of the after chapel conversations began with *me* reassuring *them*. I received a number of the furrowed brow, caring and intent eyes, serious look, hand-touching-my-arm greetings that expressed deep interest and concern about how I am doing. I know these looks were meant well. Yet, someday, I hope I remember not to give the same look as I greet someone awaiting call.

The Voice of Stacy Grau, WTS 2006

(interview by The Persistent Voice staff)

Persistent Voice: How are you? How is it going?

Stacy Grau: I feel supported, but my experience of late has been people questioning me about what I'm doing wrong in the interview.

PV: If I may ask, how are you doing financially?

SG: It's been a struggle, but when things get bad, an interview mileage reimbursement check comes through or someone calls me about a Sunday pulpit supply.

PV: What can we do to help you feel a part of things while you wait?

SG: It's kind of "out of sight, out of mind." People say, "I'm so glad to see you but I don't know what to say." I *do* know the phrase that is not helpful is: "We will pray for you." Not that I don't want people's prayers, but saying only that feels like they are discounting me. I have, however, learned the value of networking. And I know I have people that I can count on, a list of people whom I could call when I need them. That means a great deal.



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