

THE PERSISTENT VOICE

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Signs of the Times

A Sign of Courage for Care

On the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, tribal president Cecelia Fire Thunder is taking a stand. Since South Dakota has recently passed a law banning all abortions, even in case of rape and incest, she is invoking the Oglala Lakota tribe's status as a sovereign nation to surpass state law by building a family planning clinic on the reservation.

Time to Celebrate

2006 commemorates the 50th anniversary of women's ordination in the United Methodist Church. On May 4, 1956, the General Conference opened candidacy to women. Twenty-two women took the initial steps that year. There are almost twelve thousand today. A new book, *Courageous Spirit: Voices from Women in Ministry* (Upper Room Books, 2006) celebrates their gifts.

Persistent Witness

Miriam Hoffman, a student at Wartburg who suffered a stroke last fall, just returned home. She can walk again and can, with her left hand, do art work and play the piano; she can speak only for a few words and phrases. Her name remains on the staff of *The Persistent Voice*. She persists in communicating with her eyes and with her smile. With her courage she ministers to those who have been caring for her.

Giving Voice a Place

The Tuesday morning chapel service at Wartburg on April 4 incorporated several facets of worship that gave voice to those who often go unheard in the Church. A new ambo was dedicated which was designed for use by people in wheelchairs. The unique piece of liturgical furniture was crafted by Carol Reed, a junior, who has extensive professional woodworking experience. She began the project at the request of Sandra Chapin, a middler, herself in a wheelchair, who dreamed of having a place to read aloud from the large community Bible.

As part of the dedication, a new hymn was introduced. The text, written by Sandra, speaks of God enabling all people to engage in worship, highlighting unseen activity by those whom society views as disabled. A visible reminder of how liturgy can be alternatively experienced was provided by Auna Lynn Nelson, spouse of a Wartburg senior. She interpreted some of the service in American Sign Language. The assembly was delighted by the impromptu addition of two young girls along side Auna, children of the Wartburg community, praising God with their own enthusiastic hands.



The Global Scene

Pioneering Latina Theologian at Wartburg

"We are all borderlands dwellers, but at different levels," said the Rev. Dr. Daisy L. Machado, Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean of Lexington Theological Seminary in Kentucky. The first Latino-American woman ordained in the Disciples of Christ Church, and the first Protestant Latina to earn a PhD in theology spoke at Wartburg April 20 on the topic of globalization and the mission of the church from the perspective of the Texas/Mexico borderlands.

"All of us cross borders," she said. Women cross borders into the dominant male culture, and need to find ways to "speak the language" and not be dismissed. "The border is a place of survival where you are not invisible, and where people do not image you differently than you are," said Machado. "Our calling as Christians is for the beloved community to create a place where people are safe."

Machado spoke passionately and gave the history of the "Borderlands," an "unnatural politically created boundary between the U.S. and Mexico from Brownsville, TX, to San Diego." It is an "open wound where the third world meets the first world and bleeds," she said. "Borderlands" is also wherever Latinas and Latinos meet the dominant Euro-American culture, including Iowa or any state, and in our churches.

Machado challenged Christians to confront powers and principalities. "We have to be vigilant, not silent. And we need to create alliances for there are places to which you have access that I do not." We can build bridges by telling our stories and listening to one another.

She told a story of being in elementary school in New York City. She and another child were punished for speaking Spanish to one another, that "dirty" language. Years later when Dr. Machado began teaching at Brite Divinity School a student on the first day of class "complemented" her on her fine ability to speak English, even though she had spoken it since childhood. She said, "I see myself in the mirror one way and my students see me otherwise. I am being imagined." Power resides with those who can define. She asked, "How do you define yourself?"



Learning for Living

By Laurie Veenendaal, M.Div. Middler

During the January term this year, The Appalachian Ministry Resource Council (AMERC) offered a 17-day immersion experience of five south-eastern Kentucky counties. Among the many educational, health-related, and social justice initiatives was a unique program targeting an often overlooked group of women. Called "The New Opportunity School for Women," this program provides a three-week residential program designed to improve the educational, financial, and personal circumstances of low-income, middle-aged women living in Kentucky or the south central Appalachian region.

The course is offered at no cost and funds for childcare and transportation are provided for women between the ages of 30 and 55. The curriculum includes computer basics, job search skills, leadership development, and positive self-esteem building. In addition, one-to-one career counseling includes Career Interest Inventories, interview coaching, and resume writing. Exploration of post-secondary school enrollment and the financial aid application process is available for those interested.

The three-week program is offered twice each year with room for 14 participants for each session. Upon program completion, graduates leave with a resume, interview suit, and goals for an optimistic future. Seventy-four percent of graduates are currently employed, enrolled in further education, or both.

For more information, you can contact E. Jeneene Estridge at jestridge@nosw.org or www.NOWS.org.

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Book Review

My Red Couch and Other Stories on Seeking a Feminist Faith

Claire Bischoff and Rachel Gaffon, editors
Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 2005 225 p
Reviewed by Laurie Veenendaal, M.Div. Middler

This is a collection of essays written by and for a "young, feminist, progressive Christian." The writers, in the words of Rita Nakashima Brock, bring a "complex, nuanced, and less polemicized feminism" to the struggle to integrate feminist ideology with Christian faith and life. The essays are organized into four aspects of this struggle: integrity, community, creativity, and what the editors term "tensegrity," a term coined by architect Buckminster Fuller to describe "the paradoxical integrity of opposing forces."

Today's young feminists, single, married, gay and straight, compose what the editors call the 4th wave of feminism. The first wave began in 1848. After a 72-year-long struggle women won the right to vote. The second wave encompassed the civil rights period of the 1960's, including legislation for equal voting right for African Americans. Women made educational, professional, and economic gains. The third wave involves contemporary women still struggling with issues of equal pay for equal work and related issues of "gender and sexuality." They are committed to being pro-choice Christians. The fourth wave "designates itself with a joyful, globally-inspired feminism that draws wisdom from women's spirituality."

The stories are taken from a wide variety of regions, cultures, and expressions of Christianity. The initial essay, "Conflict 101" expresses the frustration of a young woman teaching in a secular college where the majority of her colleagues are strong feminists and vocally non-Christian. The title essay, "My Red Couch," written by a 25-year-old Episcopal priest, describes her difficulty with her identity as a representative of a church whose history is "heavy with the damage it has done to people's lives."

The 23 essays in the book are brief and highly readable. The variety of contexts represented makes it a rich resource for its target audience, and anyone interested in gaining insight into the thinking and experience of these Christian women.

Stay the Course

By Steve Biehler, WTS Teem candidate

Our course is charted,
the direction set.
Off we go each day,
straight away and yet,
We get off course;
somehow losing our way.
We've lost our compass!
Help us Lord, we pray.

The compass isn't lost,
it's still right there,
Gimbaled and working,
turning as we stare.
Give Jesus the control;
wheel or tiller,
He is the answer for a life,
richer and fuller.

There is no reason
to ever be lost,
God gave us the map
at a very dear cost.
God sent Jesus to love,
to save, to guide.
Listen for Christ;
he's always at our side.



Stay the course,
the way is very clear,
Though storm's bright flashing
gives us fear
And thick fog surrounds
like death's shroud,
God's Son Jesus carries us
thru every cloud.



Full versions of some articles are on the web.

www.wartburgseminary.edu.

Scroll under "Resources"

for **The Persistent Voice**

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God's Humor at 59 Newhouse Road

By Brandon Newton, M.Div Junior

I struggled through the door with my oversized luggage. "This should be interesting," I thought as an elderly woman gave me a tour of her home where I would be staying for the next year while serving a Methodist church in Heywood, England. I wondered, do I need to make an effort to become a close acquaintance of my new host? These anxieties were washed away by God's sense of humor as a nineteen-year-old man found a best friend in an 82-year-old woman.

She eagerly served me her "plain" English cuisine, apologizing for the blandness. Yet, Vera's table took the form of the Lord's Table, where I went daily to be nourished. I always got up from the table feeling full—not just of food, but of life.

Vera embodied the term "fullness of life." She had a fullness of life in years, but it was more than that. She lived Paul's words to rejoice in our sufferings. She had been married for *five days*, and then didn't see her husband for four years due to the war.

My supervisor didn't give me much time off. He insisted I could not take a trip with Vera to Leicester. Vera politely knocked on his office door. When invited in, she stepped forward, firmly planted her fist on his desk, and said, "Our young man has spent a lot of time and energy in this place. I trust you will see fit for him to come with me for a much needed rest." With that, I was on a train with Vera in Leicester.

My favorite time of day was after supper. Vera would sit in her comfy chair and my 6'3" frame would make full use of the sofa. She worked on crossword puzzles, and I would read, watch TV, or interject words from my American vocabulary to help with her crossword. I took great joy in preparing Vera's evening hot cocoa. It was my way of saying "Thanks for all you've done."

My last morning there, we said our good-byes through tear-filled eyes. She said something that utterly surprised me: "Thanks for all you've given me." All I had done was generate laundry and an empty stomach. Sure, I had shown her a few salsa dance steps, but what had I given her? The answer came as she squeezed my hand as I departed...friendship.

We still write regularly. I use Vera's recipe to make English pancakes. For some reason they just don't taste the same.

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