

## **I'm Every Woman: Pastor And Wife – 1<sup>st</sup> Quarterly Report**

The purpose of the group is to strengthen clergy women who are faced with the challenging demands of full time ministry and caring for a home and family by offering support, encouragement and accountability through spiritual disciplines, theological reflections, recreation and relaxation. The anticipated outcome is for us to learn how to overcome obstacles that adversely affect our homes and ministries.

The following were in attendance for our first meeting: Revs. Mary Hull-Lovett, Karen Walker-McClure, Bonnie Cassida, Margaret Redmond, Fran Schnarre and Betsy Happel, Valerie Thornton was unable to attend.

We met on February 15, 2010 at the Daniel Boone Regional Library in Columbia, Missouri, at 12:00 p.m. The meeting was opened with a prayer and blessing of the food. Introductions were made over lunch.

I'm Every Woman is a group of women who are senior pastors from various denominations, ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Mary Hull-Lovett and Margaret Redmond are Pastors of African Methodist Episcopal Churches. Karen Walker-McClure and Valerie Thornton are pastors of Christian Methodist Episcopal Churches. Bonnie Cassida is an American Baptist Pastor. Fran Schnarre is a Disciples of Christ Pastor and Betsy Happel is the pastor of a United Church of Christ. The churches are located in Columbia, Jefferson City, Paris (a very small rural town), Warrensburg and St. Louis, Missouri. Ethnically the group is African American and Caucasian.

In addition to denominational, ethnic and cultural diversity, the time span of the member's marriages and marital status is even more diverse. One has been married 38 years, one has only been married two months and one is divorced (but wants to remarry) The women in the group have so many things in common, yet we are all so uniquely different. One common thread between us is our love for Jesus Christ and God's people. Yet we even express our faith in different ways. We also have a sincere desire to hear each others stories, to respect each others opinion (without being judgmental) and to support each other through prayer and counsel.

After introductions were made, we reviewed our "purpose statement" and answered the question, "What is marriage to me?" These are some of the answers that were given:

- Two people willingly deciding to share their lives together.
- Sharing life in a way that brings out the best in each other.
- Iron sharpening iron.
- Being transparent to each other. Allowing each other to see our strengths, weaknesses, illnesses and fears.
- A ministry. Ministering to each other for the purpose of building God's kingdom on earth.
- Re-deciding or a changing of roles. After being married for several years, sometimes the roles change.

We also discussed some challenges that female senior pastors encounter:

- When a woman receives the call to pastor after she is married, it presents more challenges. The husband might have a difficult time deciding whether or not he wants to be married to a pastor (which happened to one of the women).
- Not being sure how to live your life out in front of the congregation.
- The resentment some husbands feel because their pastor wife has found a vocation that gives her joy when he hasn't found his to be quite so fulfilling.
- The difficulties of being a pastor in an unhealthy marriage.
- The congregation's expectation for you to have a perfect marriage because you are the pastor.
- Not allowing the congregation to force the role of pastor onto your husband.
- Where does a male spouse fit in?

### **Our Group Picture**



Left to right: Revs. Mary Hull-Lovett, Betsy Happel,  
Bonnie Cassida, Karen Walker-McClure,  
Fran Schnarre, Margaret Redmond

Testimonies from two members:

Bonnie Cassida

I found the first meeting of I'm Every Woman educational and fun. It was nice to meet three fellow clergy women that I did not know and to reconnect with friends. I found it helpful to hear others express some of the same joys and frustrations that I experience in the ministry. I anticipate that as we get to know each other better the group will become even more helpful.

Rev. Betsy Happel

I found the first meeting of I'm Every Woman to be both inspirational and comforting. During our time together we had the opportunity to begin hearing each other's stories - about our calls to ministry, current relationships, relationships of the past, and how difficult it is to balance marriage with being a parish minister. I learned things about my colleagues that I did not know, from some who I'd known for years. I realized that others share many of the challenges I face, and believe that this kindred spirit we share will provide me with a special kind of support that cannot be found elsewhere.

It was liberating to share with others my fears, and perhaps even embarrassment, about my husband's relationship with the church I serve and its members. These are women who understand in ways no others could. I'm grateful for this group and look forward to our next meeting on March 15<sup>th</sup>!

Our meeting concluded with prayer.

I'M EVERY WOMAN: PASTOR AND WIFE



FIRST QUARTERLY REPORT

BY: REVEREND KAREN WALKER-MCCLURE, GROUP FACILITATOR

March 13, 2010