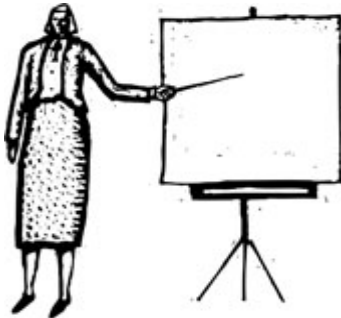


American Baptist Women in Ministry
Sunday Celebration
March 15, 2009



**"Whatever your hand finds to do,
do it with all your might..."
Ecclesiastes 9:10a**



DO WHAT YOU HAVE THE POWER TO DO

Mark 14:8-9

8 She has done what she could; she has anointed my body beforehand for burying. 9 And truly, I say to you, wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what she has done will be told in memory of her.

(Revised Standard Version)



Thank You American Baptist Women in Ministry

January 2009

Dear American Baptist Women in Ministry, Friends and Colleagues:

On March 15, 2009 American Baptist congregations will celebrate our annual Women in Ministry Sunday. The American Baptist Women in Ministry staff pray that this year's resource will provide you with times of grateful remembrance for the lives of faithful women who have served and do serve, *"doing what they have the power to do!"*

We are pleased to share this year's resource, and our theme, *"Do What You Have The Power To Do,"* based on Ecclesiastes 9:10a and Mark 14:3-9. The goal of our theme is to encourage and inspire the reader to know that each of us has the power and the gifts to impact and change the lives of others, by our service in Christian ministry.

ABWIM is utilizing our current technology to forward an electronic copy of this resource to you, which you may download. Hard copies of this resource may be requested for the cost of postage, via email vroyal@abc-usa.org or by phone 1-800-ABC-3USA, ext. 2070.

We invite you to reprint any portion of this resource for use in your bulletin. This resource is widely utilized for Women in Ministry Sunday, requested for use during retreats, conferences and for special Bible Studies. .

Grace and peace to you,



Rev. Valentine Royal Thomas
Executive Director

Thanks
ABWIM 2009 RESOURCE CONTRIBUTORS!

Alyson Breisch, RN, MSN
A Blessing Service, Pitt County Memorial Hospital.

Alan J. Copeland, Women of the Bible Series,
Galston Parish Church, June, 2008

Minister Sandra Lee
President, Asian Caucus, ABCUSA

Minister Khan Lolly
Missionary, City Team Ministries, Bay Area, California

Scot McKnight
Karl A. Olsson Professor in Religious Studies
North Park University (Chicago, Illinois).
Autumn 2008, Vol. 7, Issue 3, Christians for Biblical Equality

Diane Neu, Waterwheel, Winter 1989, adapted from "In Praise of Hands"

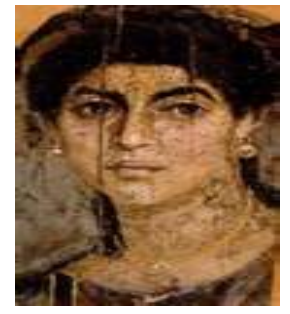
Rev. Marie Onwubuariri
Senior Pastor at MacArthur Community Baptist Church, San Pablo, CA

Helen Bruch Pearson, "Do What You Have The Power to Do"
Excerpt – Pages 44-48; 50-53. *(Permission Requested.)*
1992, Upper Room Books, Nashville, TN

Sue Wintz, BCC, Phoenix, Arizona , Scattering (dismissal)
A Blessing for Nurses from Boone Hospital Center, Columbia, Missouri.
(Used with permission of the writer – Sue Wintz, BCC, Phoenix, Arizona)

Women's Ministries, RCA
"Gathering Our Blessings," Worship Service for Blessing Boxes, May 4, 2008

Thank You for your generosity to
Phoebe's Purse
First Annual ABWIM Fund Drive
\$7315.00
Total January 29, 2009



Phoebe

Romans 16.1-3

So enter with me into Paul's world, of Roman rule, of a fledgling church, of wonder over God's great and surprising acts.

Paul ends the letter to the church in Rome with personal notes of various kinds. Right after the passage Paul asks that his greetings be given to Mary, and Andronicus, and Junia, and Ampliatus, and he goes on and on, listing many sisters and brothers in the faith. "Greet one another with the kiss of peace." he writes, "All Christ's churches send their greetings."

In this context of kind greeting and particular thanksgivings, Paul writes, "I commend to you Phoebe, a minister/fellow-Christian/deacon in the church at Cenchreae, so that you may welcome her in the Lord as is fitting for the saints, and help her in whatever she may require from you, for she has been a benefactor of many and of myself as well."

Notice what seems clear in any language. Paul seems to indicate that Phoebe is the one given the honor of physically carrying the letter to the actual community in Rome. Before the days of text messaging, and emails, even before the Royal Mail, folks had to figure out a way for correspondence to be delivered to another town. Paul must have trusted Phoebe a great deal, "I commend to you our sister Phoebe" he writes, suggesting she delivers the letter to the Roman community, and Paul commends her to that community upon her arrival.

Phoebe then, is likely a wealthy woman, perhaps in some sort of business herself. Maybe it's this business that calls her to Rome, but she certainly has enough funds to be a significant benefactor to Paul, and she intends to be generous to the Romans as well.

So from this one verse we can gather: Phoebe's wealthy, she's generous, she's greatly trusted by Paul, she's willing to fund a community of believers. Paul writes, "I commend to you our sister Phoebe" and then he uses the Greek word, δίακονος (diakonos). Now diakonos sounds like our English word, "deacon," but it also can also mean a servant, an office-holder, or one who is in charge.

Over the centuries, especially in the church of the 4th century onward, male translators who had an inaccurate view of the role of women in the early church caused by the sad chipping away of women's rights later in the first few centuries of Christianity, understood the word diakonos only with a view to the translators' own context. At this time, say the fourth century, the office of deaconess was a not particularly powerful specific church office, and the male translators figured that in Paul's day a deacon—a female deacon—must have been called to a lesser office than men. Women could not have played a significant role in the early church, they figured. Women definitely must not have been ordained.

Now in the New Testament, we read that women—some referred to by the word diakonos—were instrumental in the founding of churches, women had leadership roles in many churches, that women led public worship and women taught converts. And though we find this all in the New Testament, the early church, after a few hundred years, could only read these verses through their narrow lens of experience. Eventually, the male church leaders used unlikely definitions of "diakonos" to argue why women should not be in leadership roles.

A few hundred years after Paul commended Phoebe, the Latin church had narrowed women's roles significantly, eventually causing them to lose any ordained status whatever. This evolution reflected neither an open Biblical understanding nor a trust of God's surprising and new work in the world, but a retreat to inequality, fear, and sin.

Making a very long and confusing story short, through poor translation and a narrow reading of history, this verse about Phoebe was, and continues to be, an arrow in the quiver of those who argue against women's full participation in all ministries of the church.

So what can we today take from the story of Phoebe, once a respected, trusted, benefactor of Paul who somehow became co-opted in the argument against women's ordination?

From Phoebe we can learn the importance of gathering in community, a community of men and women. If we're always gathering in groups of only men, or only women, we can easily accept the stereotypes given to us by our culture. In some denominations, years ago when folks gathered for worship the men sat on one side of the sanctuary, the women on the other. I'm afraid these practices lead to unfaithful gender stereotyping, just like that of those old male translators. When we gather in community, men and women together, we can enjoy the gifts of each—no matter one's sex—and follow God in our diversity.

From Phoebe, we can also learn the importance of reading the Bible and discussing scripture in community. If those male translators had discussed the word "diakonos" with their wives, their eyes may have been opened and saved the church from centuries of repression. The Bible is a book that from its very beginning was meant to be read in community and openly discussed.

Finally, from Phoebe we can learn that God is one who breaks boundaries, who overcomes our measly human understandings, who opens us up and uses us in ways we could never imagine. As Paul reminds us again and again, in Christ, God has made all things new. Or as one learned theologian puts it, "God's new things always scare the socks off us."

Friends in Christ, let us not forget the story of Phoebe, generous benefactor and trusted companion of Paul. For the story of Phoebe calls us to new community, a community of conversation, friendship, a community open to God's surprising works of love and inclusion for all God's children, women and men.

By Adam J. Copeland, June 1, 2008 - Galston Parish Church - Women of the Bible Series



THE POWER TO DO

MEDITATION

THE WOMAN WHO ANOINTED JESUS

MARK 14:3-9

It was just two days before the Jewish Passover and the feast of the Unleavened Bread. All of Jerusalem was in the midst of preparation. Anticipation floated in the air and mingled with the aromas of a city that was getting ready to celebrate the most holy of all holy days. This was the time for the rehearsal of Israel's long religious history. There would be feasting and singing and praying. Generations would speak to one another about what it was like when God covenanted with Israel to be God's chosen people. And the nation would remember again how God had promised them a messiah—an anointed one—who would lead them to victory and triumph!

In the midst of the preparation and excitement, Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on the back of a colt. Many people gathered and cheered while others laid their cloaks down to make a highway for Jesus as he approached. Some waved leafy branches they had cut from the fields. As Jesus rode forth into the city, the people shouted, "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David!"

On this festive occasion Jesus was accompanied by his disciples and other faithful men and women, who followed him wherever he went. Not everyone joined the festivities, however, afraid of Jesus because the crowds seemed to be spellbound by his teaching. Whether anyone else recognized him or not, the chief priests and scribes suspected that Jesus might truly be the long-expected messiah. Instead of embracing John the baptizer's message of Jesus as the fulfillment of prophecy, they were deeply shaken, for they perceived that this Jesus would turn everything upside down—including their status and security.

Jesus was too dangerous. He interfered with the hard-earned relationship that they had slowly established over the years with the local Roman officials. Just when life had become more predictable and bearable, Jesus began to upset the delicate balance of their power and authority by what he said and did. He eroded their favored positions of privilege by his very presence. And besides, he had insulted them in public and made them look foolish. They could not save face many more times,

for they continued to be outsmarted by his quick wit and verbal attacks.

"Beware of the scribes," Jesus most recently had proclaimed, "for they devour widows' houses and for the sake of appearance say long prayers. They will receive the greater condemnation!" There was no question about it—something had to be done with this man. If he was the messiah, God would take care of him! So the chief priests and scribes went about looking for a way to arrest Jesus and kill him.

During this critical time the disciples of Jesus seemed to become more confused about his purpose and mission. Jesus had told them on three different occasions that he would suffer and die. Apparently they missed the implications of what Jesus meant. They thought Jesus worked miracles, was invincible. Suffering and cross bearing and death surely could not be a part of the equation for discipleship. They protested. They became anxious. And they argued about who would be given the best place of honor.

Misunderstood by his disciples and threatened with imminent arrest by the chief priests and scribes, Jesus felt lonely and isolated. His heart ached for love and companionship. His body must have been tired and weary. Perhaps Simon's invitation to dinner should be accepted. Simon the leper had a reputation for his hospitality. It could be that a dinner party was what they all needed to relieve some of the tension that had been building. It would provide a time for fellowship and refreshment. So he went.

Jesus went to Bethany and while he was eating dinner at the house of Simon the leper, this woman appeared out of nowhere. She burst in—uninvited and unwanted! She was breaking the Jewish custom that women were not allowed to enter the dining room when men were present. As if this was not enough to anger any righteous man among them, the woman did another completely unexpected thing. In front of the astounded and indignant male guests she broke the alabaster jar she carried and anointed the head of Jesus!

A solitary figure, the woman was as bold and

unashamed as she was tender and compassionate. Whether the woman had met Jesus before is unimportant. It was what she did in the unsolicited act of anointing that remains unforgettable. Apparently she was familiar with his teachings and took seriously the message about the new age that Jesus proclaimed—where all the old values would be turned upside down. Perhaps she had heard about the announcements he made about his own death and the plans of the chief priests and scribes. Perhaps her faith enabled her to discern the gravity of the situation. Whatever prompted her action, the woman willingly went against the accepted place of women in her religion and culture, for she realized that the time to do something for Jesus was soon to be no more. Out of her resources and possessions, *she did what she had the power to do*. She poured a senseless amount of precious perfumed ointment over Jesus' head. This was not the common, ordinary ointment that was used every day. It was pure nard.

The cost of the ointment, pure nard, was worth a year's wages for a laborer. Nard made from flowers of the spikenard plant that grew on the slopes of the Himalayan Mountains far from Jerusalem, was usually transported overland by caravans. From Egypt to China, this fragrance was found on the cosmetic shelf of any woman who could afford it. Nard was a very costly item that would never be used in excess. Mostly it was touched to the skin in occasional and deliberate dabs or driplets. To break open a container and pour it all out was an extravagant act that verged on prodigality! In fact, the woman's excessive response was not so unlike the extravagant behavior of a father toward his son in a story that Jesus had been known to tell.

It was the woman, not Simon or the male guests and disciples who was doing, acting, caring, touching, anointing, giving and risking. And Jesus accepted her silent acts of intimacy and devotion with profound respect and reverent silence. Perhaps Jesus longed for the warmth and comfort of another's touch. Perhaps the cool ointment cascading down from his head over his face and neck was like a baptism of sorts. Perhaps this tender act of mercy brought healing to his heavy heart. Perhaps just once, it felt good to receive. To sit and be passive. To let someone minister to him. Perhaps to be cared for and loved was a balm to his soul. Perhaps this anointing was an act of emancipation for both Jesus and the woman. Jesus was not ashamed or embarrassed or defensive.

He did not rebuke or resist or reject her. Rather, Jesus affirmed the woman for who she was and what she did.

The response of the disciples at this occasion must have been a disappointment to Jesus. After all, they had been with him for a long time. They had heard the words he had spoken about his suffering and death, and yet they did not perceive his weariness and deep sorrow. And as soon as the woman entered the room, they saw and heard only what their culture expected them to see and hear.

They saw a woman who had spent too much money to do a foolish thing. The ointment she bought was too costly—too luxurious. They were concerned about how the money could have been spent to forward their cause; so it was high finances and social utility that prompted their berating comments. They were offended not only by her presence but by her action as well. To them, it was Jesus who seemed not to understand the gravity of the situation. This was the time to plan a revolution—not to sit around and be pampered! It must have confused the disciples even more when Jesus scolded and rebuked them, and then praised the woman and delighted in what she did. At the moment, they could neither hear his reproach nor see the woman's act of ministry.

Afterward, all the disciples would remember the dinner party at Simon's house. They would remember the woman and what she did. They would remember Jesus and what he had told them about suffering and death and drinking from the same cup. Most of all, they would remember the great price one disciple paid for the ointment she used to anointing Jesus' head and the small price another disciple accepted from the chief priests for Jesus' betrayal.

Close to 2,000 years later, we also remember. We remember her because this unnamed woman confronts us still. She will not let us take the easy way out. She remains a model for us because she was not afraid to give what was uniquely hers to give. In remembering her, we are challenged to do what we have the power to do. It may be only a little that we can do—or it may be much. This is not even the question. To do what we have the power to do is more than enough. It is everything God asks!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1) “She did what was in her power to do.”
How do you react to the word *power*? Do you like the idea of having power? Does the possibility of having no power frighten you? Some persons describe power as good. Others feel strongly that power is bad and corrupts. Still others think that power is neutral. What do you think?
- 2) It is important to distinguish the nature of power from the techniques that are used to exercise power. Coercion, manipulation, oppression and control are some techniques of the misuse of power. Can you think of other examples? What are some of the positive techniques that are used to exercise power? Do the most positive uses of power also have the greatest possibilities for misuse?
- 3) What are some of the social/economic/political/religious institutions that discount and devalue persons in our society? For example, what are some of the institutions that devalue and discount the elderly, the unwed teenage mother or father, the divorcee, the homeless, the sick, women? What do *you have the power to do*, to transform such institutions?

Claiming the Memories

Name ten women, living or dead, who have significantly influenced and shaped your life. There may be some important women who were less than positive influences and shapers for you, but through a negative relationship, you were empowered. Do not forget them. Develop a “ten most wanted” list. If possible, locate and share a photo of the woman you want to celebrate..

What can you remember about them? Where they all “anointers”? How did they help empower you to do what you have the power to do? Through positive or negative examples? What values did they hold that have become your values? Is it important to pass these values on to future generations? Why? Why not? How many of the women on your list are well known or world famous?

Celebrating The Lives of Special Women

Choose one woman from your “ten most wanted” list. Share briefly the story of that woman, of her witness, and how that has empowered your life and the lives of others. A time limit should be established. If your group is large, you may want to divide into several small groups.

If you are using this as an individual Bible study, take time to reflect in depth about one of the women included in your list. Find a way to tell someone else about the importance of this witness in your life. Speak this woman’s name out loud. Bring forth her witness. Learn from her again, and sing her new song of life.

A Unison Reading of Commitment

I will sing a new song. As difficult as it is, I must learn the new song that is capable of meeting the new need. I must fashion new words, born of all the new growth of my life, my mind and my spirit. I must prepare for new melodies that have never been mine before, that all that is within me may lift my voice unto God. How I love the old familiarity of the wearied melody—how I shrink from the harsh-discords of the new untried harmonies.

Teach me—that I might learn the abandonment and enthusiasm of Jesus, the fresh new accent of renewed commitment, and the untried melody. I will sing this day, a new song unto Thee, O God.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

O Loving God, we thank you for the gift of lives so freely given. We thank you for these women. (*Call the names of women for whom you are thankful*). We ask that you be with each of us, as you have been with them, guiding us in your way and empowering us to live lives of faithful witness and service. We ask this in the name of one who is the gift we have all received. Jesus the Anointed One. Amen

A Unison Sending Forth

We have each received different gifts, but they are empowered by the same Spirit. Remembering, women

everywhere, named and unnamed, living and dead, let us go forth to use our different gifts to serve God in different ways. This day, we will sing a new song!

We go into the world celebrating and remembering—for we have been anointed this day to do what we have the power to do! AMEN

(Excerpt from 'DO WHAT YOU HAVE THE POWER TO DO.' by Helen Bruch Pearson, Pages 44-48; 50-53. Permission Requested.)

Women In Ministry - Women Ministering

Door-Opening Hands



Biblical battles tend to reveal the importance of Scripture in church life. We may not like to admit it, but sometimes it is the Bible (and therefore the church) that loses in our biblical battles. The Bible and the church lose when we fail to read the whole Bible on debatable topics, when we fail to read the Bible as connected to a historical and cultural context, or when we are simply too lazy or worn down by debates to spend the time necessary to truly think through a subject. Many of us tire of old debates, finding it easier simply to give in to the first person who comes along with a sense of conviction in what they believe. We've been there, done that, and we often feel as if we have nothing new to offer.

However, we must acknowledge the existence of these debates. We know that Galatians 3:28 tells us that we are all "one" in Christ and that there is "in Christ" neither male and/or female. In our honest moments, we know 1 Timothy 2:12 reads "I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over men; she is to keep silent." No matter what we'd like the Bible to say, maintaining honesty leads us to at least some tension between these texts. It is because of texts like these, especially when laid side by side on the table of conversation, that there is debate today.

But I think there is firm ground on which we can stand, and it is ground we might too often abandon in order to carry on the debate surrounding controversial texts.

Women in Ministry vs. Women Ministering

Let me put it this way: there may be a debate about "women in ministry" but there is not — or should not be — a debate about "women ministering" in the Bible. The debate about women in ministry concerns ordination, public affirmation, credentials, preaching, and pastoring. Because it concerns these topics, debate often revolves around those texts in the Bible that "appear" to be about the "ordained ministry" of pastoring and preaching. Now I put quotations around "appear" because it is not at all clear just what "ordain" means in the New Testament, since that word is not used for either males or females in ministry. Still, there are some texts — like 1 Corinthians 14:34 and 1 Timothy 2:8-15 — that seem to put some clamps down on women in ministry. We must all be committed to studying such biblical texts, but last fall, in preparation for a class called "Women, Mary, and Jesus," I came to the conclusion that the more we focus on texts like these, the harder it is to see another collection of biblical texts that lead us to think texts like 1 Corinthians and 1 Timothy might be far more conditional than what many think. Paul may have told women to be silent (although the text in 1 Corinthians 14 may not have been in his original manuscript), and he did say something about a restriction of female teachers in Ephesus, but if we read each of these statements in the context of the entire Bible, then we may come to an altogether different conclusion.

Instead of focusing on these "women in ministry" texts, I suggest that we should look again at texts that show "women ministering." Instead of asking "What *should* women do in ministry?" we might ask also "What did women *do* when ministering?"

Collision Corner

In my own culture in the United States, different influences are constantly clashing. At the intersection in front of every church in the USA there are collisions. From the West comes "Tradition", the view that women have almost never been involved in the pastoral ministry. From the South comes the classic view of the "women in ministry" texts, which many think restrict God's calling for women in the church. From the East comes "Culture", with its emphasis on rights and equality. But there is also a vehicle from the North, which is larger than most recognize. This vehicle runs quietly, but must be reckoned with, because it animates an effective Christian presence. This vehicle offers evidence of women ministering both in the pages of the Bible and in the history of the church. The "Women Ministering" vehicle has three rows of seats – in the front seats are the Old Testament triumvirate; in the second row of seats the New Testament triumvirate, and in the third row of seats Mary, mother of Jesus, and Jesus, the "Boundary Breaker."

These four vehicles often collide in front of the church, creating harmful impacts to the body of Christ.

I'd like to suggest we need some new traffic control. Each of the four vehicles needs to be able to arrive in the church's parking lot, and each vehicle has members of the church that deserve to be worshipping together. However, I think it is very possible that the vehicle from the North might bring the word of peace we all need.

The Vehicle from the North

In the vehicle from the North are three groups of riders. In the front row, the Old Testament triumvirate, are Miriam, Deborah and Huldah, three great examples of women ministering. What we need to look at is *what they did*. And they clearly *ministered* to the nation of Israel. Miriam was a prophet who offered what has to be considered one of the most potent interpretations of what God did at the Exodus (Exodus 15:20-21). Deborah was judge of Israel (Judges 4-5). And Huldah also served as a prophet (2 Kings 22:14). In the second row we find the New Testament triumvirate: Priscilla, Junia and Phoebe. Priscilla was a teacher of the gospel, a "co-worker" of Paul —this is a virtual title for a distinct group of apostolic ministers of the gospel—and a leader of the church (Acts 18:18-19, 26; Rom. 16:3-5; 1 Cor. 16:19; 2 Tim. 4:19). Junia, and this is now a consensus among scholars, was an "apostle" (Rom.16:7). We might try to minimize the word "apostle" to "missionary," but we do so only out of prejudice. And Phoebe is called a "deacon" (not "deaconess") and an *epistatis*, which might mean "benefactor" or "president" (Rom. 16:1-2).

In the third row sit Jesus and Mary. Jesus has an abundance of things to say about including women in his ministry, and we need look no further than Luke 8:1-3 to realize their significance for Jesus' ministry. Because as Protestants we are often so biased against Mary, we have failed even to look at what Mary *did* to see that she exercised more than a little influence in the earliest Jerusalem church. (I have written about Mary's life in *The Real Mary*.)

Are We Truly Biblical?

When we ask the question of women in ministry, the debate almost immediately gravitates to traditional "women in ministry" texts. But I'd like us to ask another question — one both more biblical and more answerable: Do women *do* in your church what Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Priscilla, Junia, and Phoebe did? Do they *do* what Mary did? Do they *do* what Jesus encouraged women to do?

These are the questions that we need to ask one more time. Once we look at these texts, texts that are often neglected and which frame the teachings of the apostle Paul, and which in many ways show what can be said and what can't be said in the meaning of 1 Timothy 2, we will have a more complete view of what we need to consider when we think both about "women in ministry" as well as "women ministering."

Scot McKnight is a widely-recognized authority on the New Testament, early Christianity, and the historical Jesus. He is the Karl A. Olsson Professor in Religious Studies at North Park University (Chicago, Illinois). Dr. McKnight obtained his Ph.D. at the University of Nottingham (1986). Autumn 2008, Vol. 7, Issue 3

LITURGY FOR WORSHIP

Gathering

Leader: We come to this service of celebration and blessing and invite Our God to be with us.

People: God of all that is good, be with us in this time of blessing;

Leader: We come to this service of worship and thanksgiving and invite the Spirit of God to inhabit our praise;

People: God of our witness, be with us in this time of worship.

Leader: We come to this service of renewal and recognition and invite the Son of God, Jesus, to empower us for continued service;

UNISON: God of our call, God of our courage, God of our commitment, let everything we say and do, remind us of our love for You! AMEN

Unison Psalm of Blessing

Blessed be the works of your hands, O Holy One.

Blessed be these hands that have touched life.

Blessed be these hands that have nurtured creativity.

Blessed be these hands that have held pain.

Blessed be these hands that have embraced with passion.

Blessed be these hands that have tended your people.

Blessed be these hands that have closed in anger.

Blessed be these hands that have flown open and upraised in praise.

Blessed be these hands that have carried out endless tasks as part of caring for our community.

Blessed be these hands that have reached out and been received.

Blessed be the hands that pray the promises of the future.

Blessed be the works of your hands, O Holy One.

Litany

Leader: This is Holy ground.

People: We're standing on Holy ground.

Leader: For God is present.

People: And where God is, is Holy.

Leader: These are Holy hands.

People: God's given us Holy hands.

Leader: God works through these hands.

People: And so these hands are Holy.

Leader: Where God is, is Holy.

People: The work of our hands is Holy work.

Blessing of the Oil (to be used during an anointing service)

Leader: Holy God, as oil was used as a base for medicine in ancient times, we ask you to bless our use of this oil today. May its texture remind us that the soothing work of our hands is also pleasing to you. Amen.

Blessing of the Hands (select one appropriate to setting)

May the work of your hands bring healing to all the people you touch. [or]

May the God who formed these hands guide them to bring the healing touch of life. [or]

Holy God, bless these hands to be instruments of healing. [or]

Blessings and appreciation of the many tasks these hands can do.

Litany of Thanksgiving

- One: As we bring these offerings we remember our foremothers through the ages who have responded with faith to challenge and change. We gratefully claim our heritage as women in the ministries of American Baptist Churches and pray that you will keep us ever mindful that we are the foremothers of future generations.
- All: Generous and loving God, thank you.
- One: We celebrate with thanksgiving the women who have served as leaders in the midst of difficult lives and limited resources. Grant us their gift to find abundance where reason sees only scarcity.
- All: Generous and loving God, thank you.
- One: With grateful hearts we acknowledge and celebrate the gifts and ministry of lay women, who make up the vast majority of women everywhere.
- All: Generous and loving God, thank you.
- One: We are grateful for women who have accepted your call to ordained ministry. Theirs is a ministry of courage, obedience and pioneering spirit.
- All: Generous and loving God, thank you.
- One: We remember with heartfelt thanks our mentors in faith. Guide us in our gratitude to be mentors to others.
- All: Generous and loving God, thank you.
- One: As partners in mission, we give thanks for all who serve in you name, even ourselves.
- All: Generous and loving God, thank you.
- One: Creator God, you have called us by name.
- All: Grant us grace for the days ahead, that we may meet challenge with courage and receive your blessings with deep, deep thanks. AMEN

Benedictions

Scattering (dismissal)

- Leader: God blesses our hands for service.
- People: We receive the strength offered by our Creator.
- Leader: Let us also receive the vision to see with the eyes of our hearts
- People: And the courage to persevere in difficult times.
- Leader: May all whose lives we touch come to know God's love.
- People: May that same love be a consolation to us.
- Leader: Let us return to our ministries with blessed hands and hearts that are joyously spontaneous.
- People: We go, renewed and refreshed, dedicating our hands, our heart, and our sense of God's purpose to bring healing to those we meet.

A Blessing Prayer

- May you be blessed with a spirit of gentleness and a heart that is tender.
- May you be blessed with a spirit of strength shining within you.
- May you be blessed with a spirit of compassion and a fervent love.
- May you be blessed with a spirit of courage, daring to be who you are.
- May you be blessed with a spirit of openness, understanding, respect, and consecrated service.
- May the Body of Christ hold you.
- May the God of Peace lift you ever up.
- May the Christ of our praise draw and warm you.
- May the Spirit who empowers soothe your soul.

(adapted from "In Praise of Hands" by Diann Neu, Waterwheel, Winter, 1989)

(adapted from A Blessing Service from Pitt County Memorial Hospital (thanks to Alyson Breisch, RN, MSN)

DOING WHAT WE HAVE THE POWER TO DO

Trusting Hands



Absence Makes the Will Grow Stronger
By Rev. Marie Onwubuariri

Ecclesiastes 9:10 "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do [it] with thy might;..."

As a Generation X-er female, I can say that fortunately I have not had to face overt battles for women's rights or equality. Starting off my career in the retail industry, there were plenty opportunities to climb the career ladder. Even since leaving that industry and answering the call to Christian ministry I have been blessed by opportunities to serve. So when I am asked to describe my journey as a female minister or even to reflect upon the difficulties of being a female minister, I am more often struck with the absence, rather than the memories, of hardship...Praise the Lord!

This surely does not mean that I do not believe that road blocks exist for women in ministry that do not equally apply to men, nor does it mean that I have been spared from subtle (and sometimes not-so-subtle) unequal treatment, acknowledgement or expectation. Yet I believe that the absence of voices in my life telling me, "You can't..." or "It will be difficult..." or "Women are supposed to or not supposed to..." has given me the will—the confidence—to do with might whatever my hand shall find to do. I thank my mother who never ingrained in me limitations. I also acknowledge the many female teachers, professional bosses and Christian mentors and colleagues throughout my life who exemplified the will to do with might, rather than the will to fight for what is due. I attribute my opportunities to the many generations of women who tuned out the "No's" and were propelled by the "Yes's," if even they only heard them in their own head. And of course, without the grace and faithfulness of God, I would probably dwell on feelings of insufficiency and unpreparedness.

I believe many know the power of a positive word in building up one's confidence, but I realize now that we also must not underestimate the power of the absence of a negative word. In retrospect, I do not remember being told time and time again that the sky is the limit, or that I can do anything I set my mind to, or even that I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. What I do know is that I was never told, "You can't."

If we fail to give all the encouragement we can to future generations of gifted women through our words or our example, I hope we can at least spare them from unproductive bitterness and cynicism. Though such feelings may very well be legitimate to a past or current generation, they might give words to the voice which extends the glass ceiling that would not exist otherwise in the will of hopeful. God promises to provide for those whom God calls. Who are we to tell "The Called" anything different?

Rev. Marie Onwubuariri, Senior Pastor at MacArthur Community Baptist Church, San Pablo, CA

Ministering Hands



My name is Khan Lolly. I live in Berkeley with my husband, Jonathan Zingkhai who is a missionary with CityTeam Ministries. We have a 20 month old son, Wungsem Zingkhai and we had our second child in May 2008.

I come from Manipur, North-East India. I belong to a tribe called Tangkhul Nagas. I was born and raised in a Christian home. I accepted Jesus as my Lord and Savior when I was fifteen years old. I attended a youth camp organized by Manipur Baptist Convention and there, the preacher of the camp led me to Christ. I never thought I would be in full-time ministry. I wanted to become a medical doctor and I tried for more than two years to get into medical school in India. However, God did not open the door for me. I was angry and mad at God and I started asking what God wanted me to do. In the year 1996, I got an opportunity to work with short-term missionaries from San Diego, California to share the gospel with the Hindus in my state. I was asked to be one of the interpreters and I readily said, "Yes". I have never done anything quite like this. It was my first experience going door-to-door sharing the love of Jesus. I was shocked and surprised by the many positive responses we received the first day of our evangelism. The Holy Spirit convicted my heart about the vast ripe field in my country and I decided to serve God as a missionary.

One of my passions is also children's ministry. I love to help children in need. Jonathan and I started a school in 2004 in his village where there is no school. We have now more than 80 children in our school including ten children from Burma. My heart also goes out to widows and orphans in our society. I pray and ask God that one day I can open an orphanage home in my home country for the children affected by AIDS/HIV. Jonathan and I just started a widow support group for 10 women.

My heart always hurts to see the homeless people in this country. I think we have a great responsibility as individuals in the community to help rebuild the lives of others and give them a second chance.

One of the people who really influenced me is my aunt, Moala Kashung, who is a dynamic leader, excellent preacher and a good administrator. She is the co-founder and assistant director of Leadership Training Center in India. Over 300 staff work under this leadership program. She really nurtured me in my first three years of ministry. She is a woman of prayer and a hard worker. She knows how to influence men, women, youth and children in this generation.

Minister Khan Lolly, Missionary, City Team Ministries, Bay Area, California

Praying Hands



IN THE WORDS OF GOD'S HANDMAIDEN –REV. RONNY LANIER

For ten years I was an ABC Home Missionary (now National Ministries) in several Christian centers. In August of 1964 I came home to New England for my vacation and went to have my yearly check up on my first day home. Imagine my surprise and disappointment when my doctor put me in the hospital immediately. While receiving the third of eight blood transfusions I suffered a very severe heart attack and was given thirty minutes to live according to my doctor.

Prayer is my response to all things! Prayer!? What is it?

Prayer is total dependence upon God and all the persons who love you and pray, pray, and pray some more that Ronny Lanier will recover and be able to continue to be a servant for her Lord.

One late night while in the hospital Jesus Christ came to visit me, a never to be forgotten meeting. We walked hand in hand through a big field of white daisies with yellow centers. As we walked together it was as if we were floating instead of stepping. Laughing, talking, enjoying. Finally Jesus let go of my hand, but he kept going and every once in a while he would turn around and wave to me with a smile. He did this several times and the last time he waved I began to get better immediately.

Prayer! If it is in the will of God, prayer can and will accomplish anything that God wants. I believe this with all of my being. I am sure that persons in my life were put there by my Lord to give me love, caring, thoughtfulness, kindness, encouragement, etc. Thank you God. You are so wonderful for permitting me to be one of your servants. Help me to always do my best for you and others.

Five years ago it took me one entire year to finally have seven-hour back surgery to cut two bones that were hitting a nerve. After five days I was sent to a rehabilitation hospital for therapy. A doctor came to check my vital signs, however he never touched me, never asked me any questions. He just looked and looked some more. Finally he went to the telephone and said to whomever answered, "you had better come and get this lady or you will not have her." Before I could blink, I was in the ICU ward with a blood clot on my lung. What did that doctor see? He never said. Faith! What is it? It is when we can lean heavily upon our Lord for the strength we need in all ways, physically, mentally, and spiritually. Jesus said if we had faith the size of a mustard seed it would be enough to sustain us. WOW! WOW! WOW! Thank you God. You are so wonderful.

Now, I take no medication, I have no pain, and I am still a servant for my Lord. Help me to be the best servant I can for you and for others.

How do I stay in touch with my Lord? I have many favorite Bible verses that mean much, however, the one by which I strive to live each day of my life, I quote from the New Testament, The Gospel John, Chapter 16, verse 33. (John 16:33)

"In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer I have overcome the world."

I quote this verse several times during my day. Sometimes it is said silently, sometimes it is said out loud. The words give me such a lift in all ways for whatever is my task at that particular time. Thank you God. You are so wonderful.

I will continue to keep my hand clasped tightly in yours as I walk in your footsteps and try to follow you to the best of my ability with your help. Thank you, Lord. Be of Good Cheer.

Helping Hands



Ecclesiastes 9:10 "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do [it] with thy might;..."

I never planned on going into pastoral ministry. I just have what one of my friends calls, the gift of the "helps". I was very happy serving in church, just the way I already did. I taught Sunday School for several years, starting with 5th grade class, and eventually went on to teach middle school, high school and young adults. I served happily on the Department of Educational Ministries, the Long Range Planning Committee, the Pastoral Relations Committee, several search committees, and even volunteered for several years with Men's Fellowship to help cook and serve when their declining and aging membership made it more difficult for them to prepare their monthly breakfasts for the church. They were not bothered by a young woman offering to help them out. In fact they were so gracious and appreciative of my work and support of their efforts that they eventually offered me a leadership role in their group. I was greatly touched, but cheerily declined as I couldn't picture myself, a young woman, holding an office in the Men's Fellowship!

That was just one of the many ways I've served in the local church. I was almost always available when any help was needed, whether planning, setting up, cleaning up, it didn't even have to be one of my specific responsibilities. I just wanted to give help where it was needed. It was as natural as breathing and I thought that was what I was supposed to do. In fact, I thought that was what everyone did! But I didn't just serve because I thought I ought to do it. I served because I loved it. I had great joy in serving in the church in different ways. It felt right and one of my pastors said to me that I seemed to "come alive" in a special way when I was serving at church. I loved serving, but I never thought of being a pastor. After all, that was only for other people, people who had those special gifts, whatever they might be, and I certainly didn't have those gifts!

Another time, one of our pastors suggested that I might want to check out the annual open house weekend at the American Baptist Seminary of the West. I agreed that might be interesting, but immediately was "too busy" once I found out the open house was that coming weekend. It was too soon, and I wasn't ready or willing to believe that God might be calling me. God had to work on me, bit by bit. It wasn't my heart that resisted as much as my mind. After all, while I knew God called some women, God couldn't be calling me! But God was calling me. I didn't wake up one morning hearing God say to me, "Daughter, get up now. I'm calling you to be a pastor". God knows me well enough to know I would have just thought I was still asleep and just dreaming. God called me gradually, the way God knew I would be willing to hear His call.

I had always had the heart to counsel people, and wanted God to be a part of that counseling. It came to me that pastors often counsel as part of their ministry. I loved teaching Sunday School and watching people grow in their faith. I loved serving in the church. And I finally put that love for God and for service in the church ahead of my fear of the unknown challenges of seminary and pastoral ministry.

It has only been a few years since I graduated from seminary and there still many days when I wonder why God called me. But in many ways and through many people, God continues to affirm my calling and I do not doubt that I have been called and I'm glad to serve Him in whatever way I am able to.

Even these days, when it has become more accepted that women can be called to the pastorate, I wonder how many of us are ready or daring enough to hear God's call? How many women do you know that have had their calling brought to their attention by others? Did your calling come in one moment? Or was your call more gradual? Did someone see something in you? Or do you see that spark in other women in your congregation?

Prayer: Lord, thank you for your patience in calling me, even when I don't seem to want to hear or know how to hear. Guide me as I continue to follow your call, and help me to affirm your call to my sisters as well! Amen

Minister Sandra Lee, President, Asian Caucus, ABCUSA

Steppin' Out

Guitar Capo 1: F E B^b A

O, I'm steppin' out, steppin' out on the prom - i - ses. O, I'm

steppin' out, steppin' out all the way. O, I'm

steppin' out steppin' out on the prom - i - ses.

I'm liv - ing to - mor - row to - day.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1. There are women who share their stories
There are women who shed their tears.
There are women who shelter our feelings and
There are women who soften our fears. <u>CHORUS</u></p> <p>2. O, our sisters alive come before us.
The hags and spinsters and crones.
Great processions of ancients have called us.
Singing "Stand tall, you're not alone." <u>CHORUS</u></p> | <p>3. There are voices from the past and present:
Miriam, Deborah, Harriett Tubman, too.
Sister Theresa, Alice Walker and others
Singing "Join us, the journey's for you!" <u>CHORUS</u></p> <p>4. Yes, we're going on, moving on with God's vision.
Making clear for the whole world to see
Peace and justice and love and equality,
So our daughters will be whole and free. <u>CHORUS</u></p> |
|--|--|

WORDS: st. 1-3, Susan R. Beehler; st. 4, Linda Coveleskie
MUSIC: Susan R. Beehler

Copyright © 2005 Susan R. Beehler. Published by The General Board of Discipleship, PO Box 340003, Nashville TN 37203-0003. Web site <http://www.gbod.org>. Permission is granted to copy and use this song in worship with the inclusion of the copyright clause on each copy or screen with the addition of the words "Used by permission." It may not be used for profit, sold, republished, changed, or placed on a web site.

It's God's Story We Tell

Swing 8th notes ♩ = 120

D G D Em Em/A D

It's God's sto-ry we tell, it's God's mu-sic we're sing - ing, it's God's spir-it with-in

Swing 8th notes ♩ = 120

D G D Em Em/A D

RH (simile)

6 Bm E7 A E7 A7 D Em7 D G

us fill ing our souls. It's God's chil-dren we serve, it's

Bm E7 A E7 A7 D Em7 D G

11 D/A F#7 Bm D/A G D/A A7 D G D

God's cre-a-tion we cher - ish; it's God's hope in our hearts to make the world whole.

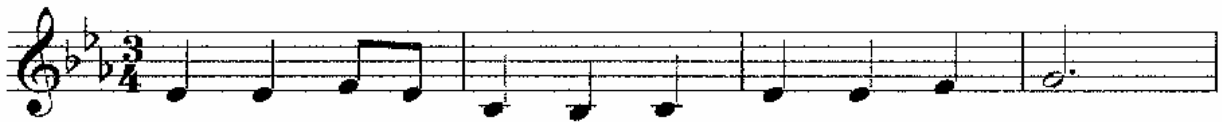
D/A F#7 Bm D/A G D/A A7 D G D

Words and music copyright © 2005 Barbara Bate. Published by The United Methodist General Board of Discipleship, PO Box 340003, Nashville TN 37203-0003. Web site <http://www.umcworship.org>. Telephone 877-899-2780, ext. 7070.

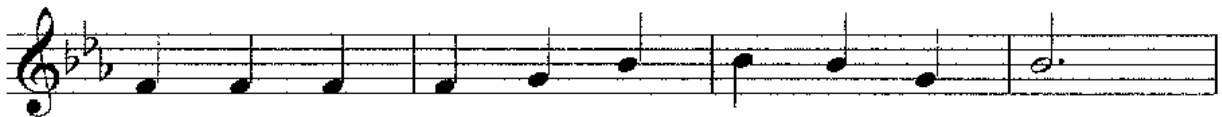
This music may be reproduced and used in congregational worship with the inclusion of the complete copyright citation and the added words, "Used by permission" on each copy. You are invited to write your own additional verses without further permission required. This song may not be used for profit, sold, republished, or placed on a web site.

Barbara Bate, 24908 Park Ave., Ocean Park WA, 98640. Telephone 360-665-4421. Email: bbqfish@willapabay.org.
Pastor, Grays River WA United Methodist Church.

God of the Women



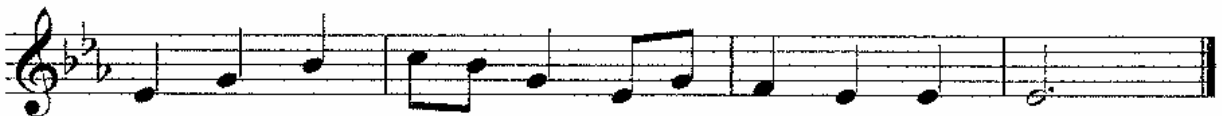
1. God of the wom - en who an - swered your call,
2. God of the wom - en who walked Je - sus' Way,
3. God of the wom - en long put to the test,
4. God of the wom - en who ran from the tomb,
5. O God of Poe - be and min - is - ters all,



trust - ing your pro - mis - es, giv - ing their all,
giv - ing their re - sourc - es, learn - ing to pray,
left out of stor - ies, for - got - ten, op - pressed,
prayed with the oth - ers in that up - per room,
may we be joy - ful in an - swering your call.



wom - en like Sar - ah and Han - nah and Ruth,
Ma - ry, Jo - an - na, Su - san - na, and more,
qui - et - ly ask - ing: "Who smiled at my birth?"
then felt your Spir - it on Pen - te - cost Day,
Give us the strength of your Spir - it so near



give us their cour - age to live in your truth.
may we give free - ly as they did be - fore.
In Je - sus' dy - ing you show us our worth.
may we so glad - ly pro - claim you to - day.
that we may share in your min - is - try here.

WORDS: Carolyn Winfrey Gillette, 1998
MUSIC: Traditional Irish melody

SLANE
10.10.10.10

Words copyright © 1998 Carolyn Winfrey Gillette. Published by The General Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church, PO Box 340003, Nashville TN 37203-0003. Telephone 877-899-2780, ext. 7070. Web site: <http://www.umcworship.org>.

This text may be reproduced and used in congregational worship with the inclusion of the complete copyright clause on each copy with the added words, "Used by permission." It may not be republished, used for profit, altered, or placed on a web site. This tune is widely available in hymns with the text, "Be Thou My Vision."



The Ministers Council in partnership with Interim Ministries, American Baptist Women in Ministry, and the Area Ministers Group will host Dr. Leonard Sweet at two pre-biennial events, at the Hilton Hotel.

Thursday, June 25, 2009

12:30 – 2:00 p.m. Women In Ministry, Lunch *

2:00 – 5:00 p.m. Dr. Leonard Sweet will speak to the topic “What’s A Guttenberg Groupie in a Google World Going to Do?” All Members of the Ministers Council, ministers in Interim Ministries, members of the Area Ministers Group, and all Women in Ministry are invited to participate.

*Women In Ministry, Lunch & Leonard Sweet \$58.00 (Lunch = \$28.00 / Leonard Sweet = \$30.00 per person.)

Friday, June 26, 2009

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon Dr. Leonard Sweet will address all who wish to attend. His title is “The Metaphorics of the 21st Century: Seven Metaphors that Can Transform the World.”

An offering will be received to help offset the costs.

5:00PM - 6:45PM

ABWIM FELLOWSHIP DINNER**

MUSIC:

Ms. Joyce Lake, Administrative Assistant, ABWIM

SPEAKER:

Dody Matthias: What Are You Gonna Say When You Meet Jesus?

What does it mean to live now in the post-racial, post-sexual, post-class, post-oppressive world that was declared and embodied in Jesus 2,000 years ago when he included by word and deed children, women, widows, Samaritans, tax collectors and sinners, people who were sick, poor or demon-possessed as part of the Kingdom of God while the system of the time repudiated that reality? In what ways are we structurally and systemically accountable to one another and therefore, to Christ, to be declaring and embodying that reality now?

Dody’s life and ministry is rooted in her growing awareness that she is a child of God through baptism. Nothing else matters outside this reality. To that end, Dody is supported in a community that is nourished by Word and sacrament, seeks to serve others and, through word and deed, to proclaim God’s Word of justice and peace.

** (The cost of the ABWIM Dinner is \$41.00 per person.)

Save These Dates! Check WomenWord for More Information

NEW ENGLAND ABWIM CONFERENCE – Thursday October 22 – Saturday October 24, 2009

ALLIANCE OF CLERGY WOMEN & ABWIM CONFERENCE – August, 2009

WOMEN IN MINISTRY SENIOR/SOLO PASTORS BY REGION (SEPTEMBER 2008)

Region	2008	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001	2000	1999	1998
Central	8	7	11	11	11	13	10	8	8
Chicago (Metro)	10	13	7	7	9	10	9	9	7
Cleveland	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0
Connecticut	10	8	5	9	8	5	7	7	7
Dakotas	6	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1
District of Columbia	14	13	11	14	10	7	4	7	4
Evergreen	3	3	2	2					
Great Rivers	14	11	15	14	14	13	13	8	10
Indiana/Kentucky	8	6	5	5	5	8	8	8	8
Indianapolis	3	2	5	5	4	4	4	2	3
Los Angeles	9	3	2	2	2	2	3	3	4
Massachusetts	38	43	33	33	30	28	30	21	19
Maine	12	15	12	14	14	9	9	10	8
Michigan	10	12	9	10	8	5	3	3	3
Mid-American	11	11	11	11	11	12	11	11	9
Metro New York	15	15	13	13	12	10	10	10	12
Nebraska	4	4	2	2	2	2	2	2	0
New Jersey	29	23	24	20	19	14	14	20	14
Northwest	7	5	5	5	7	6	6	5	8
New York State	39	29	35	32	36	38	40	39	40
Ohio	10	9	10	10	9	7	9	9	8
Oregon	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	2	2
PA & Delaware	22	7	13	11	13	11	9	9	8
Philadelphia	11	14	10	9	9	2	16	16	11
Pittsburgh		4	3	3	2	2	1	2	1
Puerto Rico	25	22	24	24	21	21	24	24	17
Pacific Southwest		4	5	3	3	3	5	4	5
Rhode Island	14	12	9	9	8	8	12	12	15
Rocky Mountain	5	2	2	3	2	2	3	3	2
Rochester/Genesee	8	3	4	2	4	4	5	6	6
South	21	20	15	15	12	5	8	8	7
Vermont/New Hampshire	24	23	31	23	26	30	26	25	24
Wisconsin	9	12	15	15	13	10	5	6	5
West	9	8	3	6	4	7	3	3	4
West Virginia	2	5	4	4	6	7	4	4	1
Alaska	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
TOTALS	413	374	361	352	339	310	319	310	282

PLEASE NOTE:

Historical data may include responses from Regional Surveys or strictly from ABCIS data, therefore fluctuations may occur from year-to-year depending on what information is available. The information presented in this table is best viewed as trend data over time versus individual point in time data.