

NEW HORIZONS

Resources for Nazarene Clergywomen

April/May 2002

Inside this Issue

- 1 **Come to the Water Women's Clergy Conference**
- 3 **Book Notes**
- 3 **What's Happening**
- 4 **Political Attitudes and Activities among Nazarene Ministers at the Turn of the Millennium: Summary of Preliminary Findings**

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Come to the Water Women's Clergy Conference

By Janine Metcalf

"Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom, hope, power, and ministry."

These profound truths, taken from 2 Corinthians 3:17-4:15, comprised the theme and driving message of this year's *Come to the Water Women's Clergy Conference*. More than 500 women (and 23 men) attended the Wesleyan/Holiness Women's Clergy gathering, April 17-21 in Colorado Springs. The women registrants included senior pastors, associates, church planters, chaplains, missionaries, students, and a host of women waiting for ministry doors to open. I was among the sisters "in between" assignments. In many ways, this personal state of uncertainty and anticipation made the conference more relevant than ever before.

It was difficult to assess the value of this biannual gathering of women servants. The genuine spirit of the worship services, quality of the ministry workshops, opportunities for prayer, and vital connection catapulted the conference to a "higher plain." There was an unspoken bond between participants, a common call from God that was cherished and celebrated. Even those who had been wounded or ignored by their denominations found solace in the company of sisters with similar

struggles. More often than not, the burdens carried in eventually give way to God's tenacious love. That was because the conference's ultimate focus was not on our personal ministries, suffering, or triumphs. It was on the One who redeemed us, called us, and is in the process of transforming us into Spirit-filled servants.

Point Loma Nazarene University representative Sylvia Cortez claims the conference had a profound impact on her twelve students. She observed, "We were deeply awakened to the rich heritage we have in those who have walked before us; those who are helping to pave the way, and those who are still willing to stand in the gap for the sake of the call."

Those "standing in the gap" include Dr. Estelle Gross, who pastors a church in



Capital Heights, Maryland. She says the conference opened her eyes and challenged her to reach out to women around and behind her. "My world opened and I now see the need to become an active

part of the struggles of other sisters. May God grant me wisdom to participate in opening doors of service for others."

As an ordained minister currently seeking a senior pastorate, I personally needed to "come to the water." My spirit was dry and disheartened by a series of positive church interviews with no results. Thus I determined to absorb all the conference had to offer, not as our Nazarene representative to the

planning board, but as a thirsty participant. Thankfully, conference teachers, preachers, and discussion leaders did not allow dialogue to descend into a pity party. They acknowledged the sickness of sexism within the church, but at the same time inspired us to pray up and embrace our calls with holy boldness. This year's Nazarene speakers included:

- Dr. Diane Leclerc and Reverend Zena Toussaint, who offered inspiring sermons on Abigail's courageous intervention to save her family,
- Reverends Kim Purl and Nancy Clayton, who addressed the challenges and opportunities associated with tokenism,
- Reverends Patricia Litten, ReAnn Hyde, Gretchen Rotz, and Diana Cisneros, who shared their experiences as solo senior pastors,
- Reverend Karen Jones who reviewed the theological and ministerial distinctives that identify us as Wesleyan/holiness women, and
- Dr. Robin Smith whose keynote message and testimony spurred a profound response in evening worship.

More than 150 Nazarene women attended this year's event. They were greeted by Nazarene Clergy Services Director, Ron Blake who described the conference as totally uplifting. "The preaching was powerful. The workshops were helpful and practical. It was a real highlight for me to be able to attend."

Blake was so impressed that he hopes a Nazarene general superintendent will attend the next *Come to the Water* conference, April 15-18, 2004 in Cincinnati.

Rev. Janine Metcalf is an adjunct professor at Nazarene Theological Seminary, evangelist, and a former broadcast journalist.



Nazarene students from universities and seminary



Janine Metcalf leads prayers



Our group of Nazarene Women

Book Notes

The Secret Life of Bees

By Rebecca Laird

Sometimes, especially when summer approaches, all I want to read is a good novel. When I heard that Sue Monk Kidd, a truly wonderful writer, had finished her first novel, I immediately bought it. If the weeks ahead hold a few spare hours to let you feed your imagination, pick up a copy of *The Secret Life of Bees* (published by Viking Penguin Putnam, 2002).

All Lily Owens, the novel's main character, has of her mother fits into a brittle paper bag discovered in the attic. A photograph, some gloves and a small wooden picture of a black Madonna are the spare clues this Southern fourteen-year-old must unpack to make sense of her secret-riddled past. Add some bees, introduce the irresistible beekeeping Boatwright sisters, stir in some honey-laden Southern cooking, and you'll have the recipe for *The Secret Life of Bees*.

Before turning to fiction, Sue Monk Kidd authored the widely acclaimed *When the Heart Waits: Spiritual Direction for Life's Sacred Questions* and *Dance of the Dissent Daughter: A Woman's Journey from Christian Tradition to the Sacred Feminine*. Her previous books showcased her first-rate storytelling skills as she explored spiritual disciplines, Jungian psychology, and the sacred feminine. Now the content of her previous books has become the air breathed by Sue's fully-drawn characters. My favorite is May, a woman so vulnerable that she builds her own private wailing wall where she can tuck in scraps of paper to mourn her wounded life and suffering world. Only Rosaleen, Lily's nanny

who sets their journey in motion when she tries to register to vote, remains an enigmatic character—one whose audacity and childlikeness seem at odds within her abundant skin. August Boatwright, the chief beekeeper, is worthy of every book lover's admiration. In many ways, August is the archetypal mother in human form.

The story is set in the South in 1964 just as the Civil Rights Act is passed. Race, gender, and coming of age in a time of turmoil provide a verdant backdrop for this classic tale of a motherless child who goes in search of love and nurture in an often unforgiving world. Lily's voice provides a perfect mix



of innocence and humor for describing the pains of self-discovery and spiritual longings that just aren't always met in her father's Baptist church. When Lily first sees the three-foot tall statue of Mary in the Boatwright's living room, Lily says, "The lips on the statue had a beautiful, bossy half smile, the sight of which caused me to move both my hands up to my throat. Everything about that smile said, Lily Owens, I know you down to the core."

The film rights to this first novel have been optioned, and I for one can't wait for the movie. Seeing August move among her bees could be something near to a mystical experience. An abridged audio version of the book is available and Kidd's lyric use of language should make this a pleasure to hear as well as read. More about the author's own spiritual journey and how the story bubbled up from her imagination can be found at www.suemonkkidd.com.

Let me know what you are reading. Send email comments or short reviews to rlairdmc@aol.com.

Rebecca Laird is the editor of *Sacred Journey*, an ordained minister in the Church of the Nazarene, and regularly conducts retreats on prayer and spiritual practice.

What's Happening

Hope on the Horizon

By Vicki Copp

In 1998, Point Loma Nazarene University's Church Relations Department began a program called, "Pastoral Care Symposium." It was in response to some alarming data they had gathered concerning the tenure and needs of pastors and their families. The latest in the series of symposiums (January 21-23) included a component on Women Clergy. The sessions were attended by about eighty clergy, faculty and students. We heard the inspirational stories of Pattie Litten who has pastored the Fillmore church in California for eleven years, Diana Cisneros who pastors a Latino congregation at the Maywood, California church, and Karen Evans who has pastored the Los Alamos, New Mexico church for four years. We viewed *Ablaze with Love* (Janine Metcalf's video documentary on women in the church) and discussed issues concerning women in ministry. It was an exciting time of meeting women clergy from across the region and an encouraging effort of PLNU's Director of Church Relations, Rev. Ron Fay, to address pressing issues for women clergy.

In a recent letter to district superintendents, Ed Robinson, Dean of the Faculty at NTS, said, "Please note that we have a number of women who have a call to pastoral and general associate ministry. These are quality people who deserve an opportunity to fulfill God's call in their lives. I

commend them to you.” The senior roster, a booklet prepared for district superintendents and church leaders, lists students who are graduating and ready for assignments. I thought you might be interested in knowing about the women clergy who are ready to join us. There were seven single women, three who are headed toward missions, one toward associate work, one unknown, and two who want to be senior pastors. There were five women married to non-students. Two are desiring missions assignments, two want associate assignments, and one is going into teaching. There are three student couples. In one, both want to pastor, in one the wife wants to pastor, and in the other the husband wants to pastor. The women graduates are fifteen out of a total of sixty-eight. The freshman class of 2001 was forty percent female, so the number of women graduates will obviously continue to rise.



from approximately 100 countries discussed the four themes: Memory, Mission, Holiness, and Hope. One particular joy of this conference for me was being able to meet women leaders from all over the globe. Although I was limited to using English, I was able to converse with some of them, and others were introduced via a translator.

In the next issues of *New Horizons*, I hope to introduce you to some of these women who have so much in common with those of us in North America, and who need our support and prayers.

To learn more about the conference, check out the following website: <http://wesley.nnu.edu/2002-GNTC>

If you have something or someone that you think we all would benefit from knowing about, please email me at dvcopp@aol.com

Rev. Vicki Copp was ordained as elder and received her M.A. in Theology from Point Loma Nazarene University in 1997. She preaches and speaks at retreats, women’s ministries functions, and has written for *Holiness Today*.

Political Attitudes and Activities among Nazarene Ministers at the Turn of the Millennium: Summary of Preliminary Findings

By Linda Beail and Greg Crow

In November 2000, we surveyed a random sample of 1200 Nazarene pastors about their political attitudes and activities. Our response rate was 51.1%

(n=602), which is quite good for a mail survey.

The Nazarene pastors we surveyed are overwhelmingly white (93%) and male (97%). They tend to be married (98%) and middle-aged (both the mean and median are 50 years of age). They are fairly well-educated: 32% indicate that they have a bachelor’s degree and 44.6% have gone on to do some post-graduate work. Of those who are seminary graduates, most pursued theological education within their own tradition; nearly 82% of them were educated at the denomination’s own Nazarene Theological Seminary in Kansas City. On average they have been in the ministry for 20 years (with quite a wide range of service among respondents, from less than one year to 60 years). The median length of service is 4 years, and most pastors (80%) have been in their present churches for ten years or less. Their congregations are located mainly in rural areas or small towns (62.8% indicate they live in communities of 50,000 people or less). Most congregations are also small: the median church attendance on a Sunday morning is 80.

Nazarene pastors report being *very* interested in politics (80.2%). More than half (53.2%) would like personally to be more involved in social and political issues, and nearly 60% say the denomination should be more involved as well. In terms of their political identities, Nazarene pastors are overwhelmingly conservative (86.5%); only 10% call themselves moderate, and merely 3.5% identify themselves as liberal. They are 87.8% Republican, and in the 2000 presidential race 90% voted for George W. Bush (only 3% reported not voting at all).

Nazarene clergy take a positive view of most types of political activism. They are especially supportive of activities that involve them in their official

In April, I was privileged to attend the first Global Nazarene Theological Conference in Guatemala City, Guatemala. Three hundred participants

capacity as pastors. A large majority (about two-thirds) approve of publicly taking a stand and preaching on moral and political issues. Over 75% urged their congregations to register and vote. A majority also reported praying publicly about issues and candidates and mentioning controversial issues in a sermon. The issues they report addressing most often are abortion, alcohol and drug abuse, pornography, hunger and poverty, decline of the nuclear family, and homosexuality. Those they rarely addressed include health care, capital punishment, gun laws, environmental problems, and immigration.

When asked about their policy preferences on a wide range of social and political issues, Nazarene pastors display a consistently conservative worldview. Most believe that government is too big (64%). They see little need for more environmental protection (16%), affirmative action (22%), national health insurance (24%), or women's rights legislation (15%). They support school vouchers (62%), capital punishment (72%), teaching creationism (83%), and the current welfare reform (58%), while opposing gun control (71%). As for foreign policy, they are somewhat suspicious of the rest of the world: most support increases in defense spending (68%), think the U.S. should be careful in its dealings with Russia (77%), and oppose giving China most-favored-nation trading status (85%).

The issues that seem to really energize these clergy are sexuality and abortion. Ninety-five percent believe that sex education in public schools should be abstinence-based, with 63.6% *strongly* agreeing with that statement. They are also emphatic about the need for a constitutional amendment banning

abortion, with 88.6% agreeing and 56.4% taking the strongest possible stance in favor. (A smaller majority, 51%, also opposes civil rights for gays.)

These energetic responses probably make sense in light of the Holiness theology that stresses purity of heart, mind and activity. These are issues that deal with individual choices and behavior, not reforming institutions, and which tap directly into the concept of purity and holy living. Thus these are the policy issues that these clergy seem to be most concerned with and on which they have the greatest certainty about their positions.

Nazarene pastors hold very orthodox views on theological questions: they are nearly unanimous in their belief in the virgin birth, the existence of the Devil, the second coming and salvation only through Jesus Christ. They are also quite united in their opposition to homosexual clergy, evolutionary theory, and both feminist and liberation theology. But Wesleyan beliefs may also be evident in their less emphatic agreement with the Biblical literalism question. Only 61% *strongly* agree that the Bible is completely inerrant. And 89.7% reject a fundamentalist reading of Scripture that prohibits women from positions of church leadership and ordination.

Nazarene ministers also overwhelmingly agree (96.8%) that the church should stress individual sanctification more than transforming the social order, which is not surprising since personal "heart holiness" is a mainstay of the tradition. However, further analysis of questions juxtaposing social and individual morality may yield somewhat more complex responses, given Nazarenes' historical pattern of taking stands against certain social ills

such as alcoholism and gambling. The emphasis on individual sanctification may come not at the expense of social transformation, but as a necessary



precursor to it in the minds of these Nazarene clergy. Nearly two-thirds of them agree, "If enough people were brought to Christ, social issues would take care of themselves." And there is some evidence that they seek to balance personal salvation with social transformation: almost 61% agree, "Social justice is at the heart of the Gospel."

Nazarene ministers report paying a great deal of attention to the 2000 campaign, and most of them got their information from network television news and newspapers. They also rely on Christian media over a third (37%) report getting "a lot" of information from Christian radio, 21 % from Christian magazines, and 13% from Christian TV.

In summary, Nazarene clergy in the year 2000 were politically active from the pulpit, but in a conservative/Republican direction and with particular interest in issues of sexuality and "traditional family values." They adhere to a Wesleyan theology that stresses personal holiness of heart and life, situated within an orthodox evangelical context, leading to a more individualistic and less systemic orientation toward political issues.

Drs. Beail and Crow teach at Point Loma Nazarene University in San Diego, California. Linda Beail is an Associate Professor of Political Science and teaches courses on American government, Congress and the presidency, campaigns & elections, Western and American political thought, the politics of race, class & gender, and women and politics. Greg Crow is a Professor of Mathematics, specializing in statistics.