



VBWIM Plans Two Events

Saturday Morning Coffee

January 23, 1999, 10:30 a.m.
River Road Church, Richmond

All are invited to join for fellowship and a get-acquainted time. The purpose of the event is networking and dialog about the direction of Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry

Spring Workshop

February 20, 1999, 9 to 3

“Celtic Spirituality”

led by

Linda McKinnish Bridges
professor of New Testament at
Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond
Based on her sabbatical work in Ireland last year

Ex Cathedra

Happy Birthday, Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry! Whether you are a newcomer to the group or one who has been a member since the beginning or a member somewhere in between, you are part of the celebration. For ten years your organization has strived to be one that encourages, educates, and celebrates the joys, trials, and advancements of Virginia Baptist women in ministry and women ministers in general.

Most of these years have seen VBWIM hosting a conference in the spring or late winter and an annual dinner at the Baptist General Association of Virginia. The steering committee usually does its major planning at a workshop in January. This year we want to hear from you. We want and value your presence and input.

Where do we go from here? Is this an organization whose time has come? Does the steering committee need more statewide representations? Has the organization, as a statewide entity, outlived its usefulness? Has the annual conference become just another meeting to decide whether to attend or not? What do you want out of a conference? Is there a better time of year to hold conferences than February or March? What shape should future conferences take? Which speakers would you come to hear? What kinds of information and activities do you find helpful? Do we need to concentrate on regional groups rather than the entire state for workshops and conferences? Should SYNERGY and the fall dinner at the BGAV be the only statewide focus? What do you want? How active do you wish to be?

We need your ideas, suggestions, and your presence on Saturday, January 23, 1999, at River Road Church, Richmond. We'll be meeting in a reception room off of the kitchen in the church fellowship hall. There will be snacks, beverages, conversation, and an open forum in which to bounce ideas off one another. The steering committee looks forward to hearing from you.

The Rev. Ellen T. Gwathmey is minister of visitation and outreach, River Road Church, Richmond.

Directions to River Road Church, 8000 River Road, Richmond. From I-64 west of Richmond, take Parham Road exit and go south past all the shopping centers. Take the River Road exit ramp and turn left. From south of Richmond, take Chippenham Pwy. across Willey Bridge. Immediately take River Road exit ramp and turn left. Go a few miles. Church is on the left at the corner of River and Ridge roads. Meeting is in the fellowship hall building (next to Ridge Road).

❖ Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry shared a meal together on November 10 at Virginia Beach during the Baptist General Association of Virginia. About forty women, a few husbands, and two children joined in the celebration around the table.

During this anniversary year, VBWIM began the celebration last spring at a conference at the University of Richmond, during which participants examined the Myers-Briggs type indicator, cut a birthday cake, and worshiped together on the theme "What Do You Bring to the Table?"

In November at Virginia Beach, we continued that same theme with a discussion led by Judy Bailey, one of the founders of VBWIM. Each table formed a natural grouping and shared with one another something of their strengths and motivations. One person from each table reported back some of the ideas that had emerged among the group at their table.

❖ All women in ministry in Virginia are encouraged to attend the coffee at River Road Church in Richmond. [See the column by Ellen Gwathmey on this page.] *Reservations are not necessary.* After ten years, we felt it was time to reevaluate our purpose and future direction, and particularly want to hear from our constituents (the people who read this newsletter and who receive information from us), whether or not you are an official member!

Although we intend to use part of the time together to think about future direction, a primary purposes of the get-together is simply fellowship and networking. In other words, feel free to come for the opportunity to meet and renew old acquaintances, even if the organization itself is not a major interest.

What we heard at Virginia Beach was that people were eager to connect with other people who share their interests and calling in a setting where they could be themselves. We hope we can provide that kind of setting.

SYNERGY, the newsletter of Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry, is published in Richmond, Va. Membership is \$20 per year (\$10, students). Memberships and manuscript submissions should be mailed to River Road Church, Baptist, 8000 River Road, Richmond, VA 23229. Editorial Board: Ellen Gwathmey, chair; Holly J. Irvin, treasurer; Barbara Jackson, newsletter editor; B.J. Seymour; Alana Woolley. ©1998

A Pilgrimage

by Brenda Lee

I enjoy diversity and as my career has directed me to the Eastern Shore of Virginia, the Lord has surely supplied me with variety.

Having arrived at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary after concluding a summer youth minister's position, my direction quickly changed from youth ministry to senior adults! While at seminary, I enjoyed the partnership Wake Forest Baptist Church had with the local department of parks and recreation. I was hired as activity director for the senior adults who came to the church each day for lunch. Women came with their purses sharing news about grandchildren, new ailments, and good recipes. Men talked about the times they remembered seeing Arnold Palmer and others walking that former Wake Forest College campus, eating at downtown's famous Shorty's Restaurant. They especially enjoyed the times when Randall and Lou Lolley would join them at Hardee's for early morning coffee. Such unforgettable stories.

The world became bigger and bigger as I neared graduation—still without a plan. The Rev. Joe Vaughan, the Discipleship Training director for Virginia Baptist General Board, interviewed students on campus and soon I was chosen for the nine-month internship. Regrettably, I was to be the last intern; that year the intern programs for Discipleship Training, Communications, and Social Concerns were deleted from our state budget. Nearing the end of that job, still feeling no certain direction for ministry, I applied and was hired to work at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond.

Coupled with any normal, hectic seminary schedule, living through Southeastern's controversy had colored my perception of a theological education. I quickly learned what it was like to suppress what I call positive energy and goodwill for others. There, I was overcome with sadness throughout my firsthand experience with denominational turmoil. Having lived during the forced resignation of our president and dean at Southeastern, I had an overflowing well of suppressed positive energy. I felt that no one should have to live though what I had just experienced.

As the BTSR associate for development, I remember working in the downstairs unairconditioned rooms at Northminster Baptist Church, Richmond. The Rev. Frank Goare, CPA and director of development, and I set up donor files and mailed out letters of appreciation. Daily visits to the post office and the bank were exhilarating! The summer was hot. Fans we brought from home stirred the sultry air. It was the beginning of a new world—literally from the ground up—for those who would seek theological training without the threat of chaos between trustees, administration and faculty. There not everything went as I had hoped and nine months later I found myself forced to search for a new place of ministry. I never, ever, lost the zeal for my own ministerial call. However, I became more cautious in who I now chose to "side with." It was a hard lesson, a rude awakening.

After a lot of soul searching and prayer, I applied for Clinical Pastoral Education at the Medical College of Virginia. There, in 1991 I completed a fall unit. It was the most healing experience I have had to date. Everything came to a head and I grew more than I

ever thought possible. By the end of the semester, I had shared deep feelings I harbored concerning the seminary controversy, a broken engagement, and forced termination, all with others who displayed their wounds. Together we burst out of tight cocoons and rose above our suffering like newborn butterflies. We birthed new lives. CPE can be positive.

Charting My Course

Still trying to find my career niche, through prayer I began to realize that the years I spent in GAs would help chart my course. I applied for and was accepted as a Russian language student in the Cooperative Services international program with the FMB (now International Mission Board). I went for what was to be a six-month assignment to Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, a Republic of the former Soviet Union. Having arrived there in February, I was to leave in July. On the night before I was to depart, I made the decision to stay. That evening I felt God's presence and reassurance; it was my best night's sleep I had had since my arrival. Surprisingly enough, when I called my brother, Joe, he knew I had decided to extend before I had a chance to share my news. He said he had even told our parents not to be surprised if I did extend.

Months passed and I started a Bible study in the home of a local couple. We tripled in attendance and two weeks later moved to the art museum. We became known as Agape Church. The most memorable day? In the middle of March, in Russia, with new Christians seeking baptism, I was stumped. All bodies of water were frozen. I called my home pastor, the Rev. Jim Pardue (It was cheap, I was paying rubles). I remember our conversation concerning my dilemma. "The only body of water I can find is my bath tub," I told him. I remember us giggling a bit and then coming to the consensus that that was just fine.

A PILGRIMAGE

I had the privilege to minister among new Christians who hid their Bibles from family members, longing for the day when they could share their faith. Kyrgyzstan is Muslim. One man told me about reading his Bible at night by flashlight with closed blinds, an ingrained fear from the days of Lenin.

The day came for me to leave; it was not without many tears. As much as I cared for these people, I knew God had new plans for me. I returned to America and enrolled in a second CPE unit at MCV, and went on to complete a residency in Greensboro, N.C. Maurice and Laurie Graham called and told me that Northampton-Accomack

(please turn to page 4)

Brenda Lee ... from page 3

Memorial Hospital, (now Shore Memorial Hospital), was advertising in the Richmond TIMES-DISPATCH for a chaplain. I applied and after two interviews, on January 9, 1995, was hired as this hospital's first full-time director of pastoral care.

My experiences recounted in this article continually shape me and influence my ministry as I reach out and minister to the hospital staff, patients, family members, and the Eastern Shore community. Here the opportunities for ministry are wide open. Responding after individuals who care for someone full time expressed their need for a support group, the Pastoral Care department formed Shore Care Givers. The hospital is blessed with area pastors who daily volunteer as chaplains. I am fortunate to work with this team.

My position takes me out of the hospital as I serve our community through various organizations. I am a member of the Tidewater Regional Perinatal Loss Bereavement Council, and was able to assist in establishing such a group here on the Shore.

Although I feel stretched and a bit awkward in the pulpit, I do enjoy invitations to supply for area Baptist, Methodist, Episcopal, and Presbyterian churches. As an ambassador for Shore Memorial, I have also been invited to the Wallops Island prayer group, Episcopal Church Women's convocation speaker, and other civic and denominational groups.

Acknowledging events in my life as gifts helps me be a more compassionate person as I fulfill the role of chaplain each day. I am thankful to be serving others.

The Rev. Brenda Lee is director of pastoral care at Shore Memorial Hospital on the Eastern Shore of Virginia.

Brenda Lee was among the chaplains endorsed by the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship in May 1998. A native of Richmond, she graduated from Averett College and Southeastern Baptist Seminary and was trained in clinical pastoral care at Medical College of Virginia. She was ordained to the ministry by her home church, Bon Air Baptist in Richmond.

Devotional

Tis the Season

by Sheryl A.M. Johnson

I thought Fall had finally come. The nights were cool and refreshing. The days could only manage temperatures into the 70s. Yellow school buses could be seen making their rounds. Yep, the signs sure seemed to be pointing to the end of Summer and the beginning of autumn.

Then look what happened. Temperatures climbed back into the 90s. Air conditioning was again a much desired commodity. Yellow saunas disguised as school buses could be seen making their rounds. Summer weather had come back for an encore.

I'll admit I was fooled. Those few days of beautiful fall weather had me lulled into thinking that the changing of the seasons was finally upon us. I saw evidence that led me to the conclusion I wanted, so I disregarded or didn't even look for reasons to think anything else. But no harm done. I hadn't quite yet packed my summer clothes (except for those white shoes, of course.). Fall will come, after all. I just have to be a little more patient for it.

You know how that is. You're looking forward to something, wanting something to happen, and you let any little bit of evidence convince you that it's ready to happen. Or maybe you work things the other way. You've convinced yourself something isn't going to happen, and so you let the smallest thing confirm your pessimism and persuade you into thinking the worst. Either way, it's easy to be anxious and jump the gun ... or miss the race entirely.

I didn't mean to get into a race metaphor, but now that I have, let me quote a writer who used the race metaphor quite some time ago:

There, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witness, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us. [Hebrews 12:1 NRSV]

The key here is to run the race that is set before us. Not somebody else's race, not a race we weren't asked to run, not a race that is out of our league, not a race that might not even be held, but the race set before us, the race we were called to run.

We can play the "What if?" game all day. It's especially fun and tempting when we are confronted with something new. "What if they don't offer me that job?" "What if they do?" "What if I never meet that special someone?" "What if they ask me to serve on that committee?" Although many of "What if?" questions reflect legitimate fears and concerns—bridges that someday may need to be crossed—too many times we "see the signs" and race to a conclusion before it's warranted.

One of my favorite quotes comes from G. K. Chesterton and with which I will conclude:

"The bridges you cross before you come to them are over rivers that aren't there."

Think about it.

The Rev. Sheryl Ann Mitchell Johnson served as interim campus minister at the University of Richmond for the fall term. She is a graduate of Union/PSCE in Richmond and was ordained in May by her home church, First Baptist, Annandale.

SAINTS AND HEROES

Remembering Nancy

by Kelly Sisson

It was the third week of advent. Like most of my colleagues, I was preparing for the “Joy” Sunday. Lectionary readings and commentaries aside, I attended the memorial service for the Rev. Nancy Foil, pastor of Baptist Temple of Alexandria. Not exactly how I had planned to prepare for the Joy Sunday, but she was the first ministerial “peer” I have known to die.

With warmth and playfulness, mourners were greeted: “Welcome to the service of remembrance for our irreverent reverend...” People smiled. Memories poured out. The service was a lovely tribute to her life, her music, her art ... most of all, her ministry!

Back at home, I described Nancy to my own congregation by suggesting that if Mae West had entered Christian ministry, she would have been the embodiment of Nancy Foil. But, I cannot pretend that Nancy and I were close. The extent of our friendship centered around post-meeting gatherings at Baptist conferences and conventions, where we expressed continual thoughts that, “We really should get together and talk ‘art.’” That never happened. But, in the dozens of times I was in the presence of this creative icon, several memories are more vivid than the others.

At a time in my own ministry when I was dealing with a difficult senior pastor, I was lamenting to her over his constantly chastising me about my right-brained approach to homiletics, “Why can’t you just be normal?”

Without missing a beat, Nancy declared, “Good Lord, why would anyone want to ‘just be normal’?” Nancy was a pastor when one was needed.

Sitting next to her at conventions usually prompted her honest commentary about the speakers ... like the time she asked of a much too wordy sermon, “Is it possible to be any more bored with Jesus?” Or, the time she not-so-quietly whispered, “She has good content, but her delivery is devoid of all joy.” Nancy was a prophet when one was needed.

Nancy understood a joy-filled life. She knew how to have a good time—outside and inside of the church. At the memorial service, the Rev. Connie Stinson, associate pastor at McLean Church, reminded the people of Baptist Temple, “Nancy loved you very, very much.”

She described a conversation they had when Nancy expressed concern, “Do you think there is something wrong with me, Connie?” She went on to say, “I have no professional goals, no ministerial aspirations ... I love my church! I love my life just the way it is! ... Is there something wrong with me?” Nancy Foil knew how to celebrate every moment of life.

This year, the “Joy” Sunday would have been Nancy’s forty-fourth birthday, and the seventeenth anniversary of her ordination. Days later, and now on the heels of the festival of the Epiphany, words the Rev. Paul Duke wrote for Nancy on the day of

her ordination seem timely as we remember one of our contemporary wisdom seekers:

Darkness grows on you.

If you’re not accustomed to light,
you generally don’t want any.
So when Jesus blazed into the world,
some covered their eyes and
some scrambled to put him out.
But others refused to flee
his shining. With blinking
eyes and faltering
steps they faced the light
and followed it — and
discovered something amazing.

In the light they saw
not only his radiant face, but
their own faces turning radiant too.
They found out that in his
light you not only see, you shine.
In his dazzling, piercing presence
we are strangely gifted with
“power to become God’s children.”
we are graced with light enough to
be born in.

Light grows on you too.

Nancy, you shined ... and how you shined! We will miss you.

*The Rev. Kelly M. Sisson is pastor of
Glade Church, Blacksburg*

The Rev. Nancy Foil was pastor of Baptist Temple Church in Alexandria, Virginia. A native of Louisiana, she was associate pastor from 1986 until 1996, when she became pastor. She died of complications from cancer. She was 43.

BOOK REVIEW

To Pray And To Love: Conversations on Prayer with the Early Church

a book by **Roberta C. Bondi**
reviewed by **Alana Woolley**

Roberta Bondi continues the tradition begun in her first book, *To Love as God Loves*. It was reviewed in the last issue of SYNERGY. Now Bondi continues her dialogue with the early church focusing on the area of prayer. The discussion of prayer is based upon the understanding of love that was developed in the first book.

Prayer must be based upon the goal of the Christian life being the love of God and love of neighbor. While that goal is the basis of our prayer, it is important to understand that prayer is a fundamental reality of our lives as Christians. It is an important part of the task of learning to love. Bondi's understanding of prayer comes into clearer focus in the definition she presents. Her definition is in three parts.

First, prayer is setting aside a time each day for specific interaction with God. This may involve reading scripture, listening to God and praying for others. But Bondi goes on to emphasize that "prayer and our life must be all of a piece." This leads to the other two parts of her definition of prayer.

Second, prayer is composed of thinking and reflecting. This reflection is directly related to the goal of love. It is a reflection on the people in our lives, our ability and inability to love them. It is about the nature of our own behavior and whether it is an expression of love.

Based upon this thinking and reflection, the third aspect of prayer is the "development and practice of loving ways of being." In this third step, Bondi is calling upon us to take responsibility for our behavior. Some of the ways we are called to do this are:

1. Apologizing for our unwarranted irritability
2. Going out of our way to listen carefully to what someone else we do not care for is saying to us
3. Sharing ourselves and our resources with others

Each of these three steps already should be a part of our Christian life. But Roberta Bondi teaches us that the early church saw these three as being woven together in the practice of prayer.

The process begins by our living in the image of God. The early church believed that the basis of all human love was in God's love for us and that learning how to love is the work of daily prayer. It is the image of God that brings us together in love. Sin in our life is what distorts the image of God. It creates difficulty in our ability to love. The virtues that we develop in the life of prayer are what allow us to overcome temptation. These virtues reconcile us to God, to others, and to ourselves. Bondi develops these themes by interacting with the writings of the early church.

The viewpoint of the early church in its understanding of prayer allows us to develop our own concept of prayer today. But as Christians, we have to move beyond prayer as a concept. The way of prayer for each individual is unique.

And we must find it by praying our way into it. Our prayer is an expression of our own unique relationship with God. Bondi tells us that "learning to pray means finding a way of prayer that suits us in a particular way." But we can build upon basic principles of prayer.

Just as our faith experience is a journey and changes throughout our life, our time of prayer is a journey and may take different twists and turns during our life experiences. Bondi helps us with our journey by focusing on several elements or issues regarding prayer. These include time to pray, dispositions for prayer, scripture, silence in prayer, religious experience, persistence, and fortitude.

Having thoroughly developed the understanding of prayer, Roberta Bondi moves to focus our thinking on God, our neighbors and ourselves. She begins this process with ourselves. The early monastics understood that we cannot love God or others if there is not a self to do the loving. If we give up ourselves entirely than there is

no self left to offer love. Our self is a gift from God and should be seen as such. Bondi helps us to understand the meaning of self by developing the themes of need for approval, perfectionism, naming myself as victim, claiming ourselves in God, and praying for ourselves. Praying for ourselves may be a difficult process but it can lead us to a deeper understanding of who we are.

Roberta Bondi's discussion moves from the self to our neighbor. Loving our neighbor may not occur in a natural way. The process of love involves developing "whole patterns and habits of acting, seeing, and listening to other people on a day-to-day basis." These patterns of love are developed from the base of prayer.

Our actions are based upon our ability to discern what may be needed. We should remember that we are not alone on this journey that we must live in consultation with other Christians. Knowing ourselves to be sinners, we must be willing to forgive ourselves as we offer forgiveness to others.

Roberta Bondi closes her discussion by returning to our focus on God. She reminds us that "the root of all prayer, and indeed all life itself, is desire for God."

Desiring relationship with God also brings us to a discussion of friendship with God. Bondi develops this understanding of friendship with God by discussing friendship as "wanting the same things; freedom of speech and lack of fear; holding each other accountable; mutuality of need."

Roberta Bondi has much to contribute to our full understanding of prayer. She sees the journey of prayer and the journey of faith in a complete and full manner. Prayer for her is not as much a part of the life of faith but is the life of faith. She contributes to us a mature understanding of prayer.

The Rev. Alana Woolley is a telecommunications consultant and a member of River Road Church, Richmond.

Bondi, Roberta C. *To Pray And To Love: Conversations on Prayer with the Early Church*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991.

Editorial

True Colors

by Barbara Jackson

As we approached the end of the year, all around we were blessed with the blazing colors of autumn—glorious, riotous, gleaming shades of gold and magenta, a thousand shades of yellow and orange, and a few remaining tints of green fringing the edges of leaves. Towering maples and poplars, shrubby sumacs, ash and redbud shouted at us to “look here” as they dropped their leaves in tantalizing drifts or blowing gusts! The ubiquitous dogwood offered their beauty along with a bounty of berries and a promise of next year’s flower curled inside little balls. What a glorious fall!

There were those who said the colors would be off because of the summer drought. How wrong they were.

During that period I was a visitor in a church where the minister called the children to come forward and gather around him for a children’s sermon. The object lesson that day was fall leaves; he had broken a few branches off and showed them to the children and asked what the leaves reminded them of. I don’t remember what the children said, but I do remember his points. He said the dying leaves were sad. He made a connection with the death of a grandparent and the sadness such an event evoked. He then went on to talk about going to be with Jesus and the absence of sadness in the prospect of being with a loved one when they went to heaven. Then he talked about resurrection and the sacrifice of Jesus for our salvation. The children ranged in age from four to ten.

My friend and I looked at each other. She asked me later what I would have done with that scenario. On the face of it, there was nothing wrong with teaching children about life after death and resurrection. Certainly, the ideas are scripturally based and theologically sound. Yet I think I would have taken a different approach.

In the first place, to me the colorful, crisp leaves are not sad. The prospect of winter which the fall of leaves portends is not a dreaded occurrence. On the contrary, the cycle of seasons is a blessing—bringing a variety that prevents boredom and complacency and provides conditions for wintertime fun, spring flowers, a garden, summer swimming, and so on. Life in the tropics or even subtropics has no appeal for me. Living in the mid-Atlantic climate zone suits me just fine.

On a more practical note, science tells us that the dropping of leaves is a coping strategy to enable the deciduous tree to survive the cold. Without leaves, energy from sun, water and soil can be concentrated in the underground root system to sustain and enable growth of the essential cell structure of the living tree itself. What appears dead to the unpracticed eye is in fact very much alive—just waiting for the right conditions of sun angle and temperature to trigger new growth. Perhaps in Sunday school you have cut into a dried-looking tulip or lily bulb to demonstrate such a fact to young children. Inside the tulip or lily bulb is the flower intact. The ugly bulb holds the nascent flower. Of course, we all know that—for Christians the lily has long been a symbol of resurrection.

A more basic object lesson to be derived from colorful fall leaves is related to the color itself. Why does the leaf turn orange or yellow or brown? The answer of course is that those colors are its true colors. The natural pigments are masked by the growing chlorophyll in the process of photosynthesis. When the chlorophyll disappears with the coming of colder weather and slanting sunlight, what remains is the natural, true color of the tree’s leaves.

Aha! Here then is the useful object lesson we might convey. When hard times (such as winter) come, our true colors prevail. Adversity brings to the forefront the qualities of character that enable one to face problems with equanimity and courage, or conversely, adversity brings out the worst in us: vindictiveness, resentment, backbiting, lying, sulkiness, self-pity, and so on. None is immune to the tests of character that come our way.

Winter follows fall. This year we faced a freezing rain fairyland of incredible beauty that masked great peril. The ice-coated twigs and individual blades of grass cast a prism of sunlight glinting in all directions. But underneath the beauty was a treacherous slick, glassy surface that threatened to topple even the most sure-footed.

Great care is demanded to navigate the winter. Before the days of supermarkets people had to lay in store supplies to carry them through the cold days when all was dormant. They stored potatoes and apples and canned summer vegetables and killed the hog or cattle. But only enough for the dormant months. They knew the winter would not last forever.

The ancients knew that winter would yield to spring. Mythology tells us that elaborate calendars and priesthoods existed in many ancient cultures so that people could predict the sun’s rising and its daily path and would know when to plant. Joseph Campbell, the cultural mythologist who died a few years back, pointed out that the early agricultural societies provided the earliest prototype of the dying and rising god and embodied those ideas in their religion and mythology. Isis and Osiris in ancient Egypt is one such mythology. It is important to note, however, that the mythology reflected reality as demonstrated in natural processes. The dying plant left its seeds so that it might continue the cycle year after year.

The lily contains within itself the new flower. Tiny seeds buried in the earth will yield new wheat and corn, zinnias and nasturtiums. The tree now bereft of leaves will soon bud out new leaves to soak up the energy from the sun and soil and water. While photosynthesis will enable that process of growth and chlorophyll provides the green color, the true colors of the leaves are inside—the essential character of the living entity.

When the tests of adversity come our way, what will our true colors be? Will we demonstrate innate traits of integrity and courage—or resentment and vindictiveness? Will the temptations to play God that power brings show a disregard for individual worth—or will we remember that Jesus’ temptation to be king was refused in favor of the cross.

Barbara Jackson is a freelance writer and the editor of Synergy.

❖ **The Spring Workshop** will be held on February 20, 1999, from 9 a.m. to 3 in the afternoon, in Richmond. Please note the date change from the previously announced date. Because of several schedule conflicts we find ourselves meeting in February instead of March. More than likely the "spring" meeting will encounter winter weather. But that should not prevent a warm camaraderie for those who brave the elements.

Lunch will be provided and will be included in the registration fee. Watch for further information in the flyer to be mailed later this month.

The program will be on the topic "Celtic Spirituality," led by Linda McKinnish Bridges, professor of New Testament and Greek at BTSR, and will be based on her research while on sabbatical in Ireland.

Dr. Bridges was recently featured in an article in the Dec. 24 *Religious Herald* (and presumably in other papers which picked up the Associated Baptist Press article). The story reported on the Summer 1998 issue of *Review and Expositor*, a scholarly journal now supported by moderate Baptist schools.

Bridges postulated that women were leaders in early Christianity but were later "excised" to make institutional Christianity credible in a male-dominated culture. She goes on to point out that today the cultural pressures are opposite, and that to remain culturally relevant, churches will have to take the role of women seriously. She said, "Conditions are right for women's inclusion in the church."

❖ Some of you smart people will notice that this issue of SYNERGY is dated Fall, 1998 but is actually coming to you in 1999. And you will notice that some of the articles were written during the Fall season.

The editor is entirely responsible for the timing of this newsletter, and has no real excuse for its late arrival—except that I like everyone else I know got caught up in end-of-the-year holiday affairs which took on a life of their own. One of these days I will get organized! In the meantime please bear with me.

The next SYNERGY will be dated No. 1, 1999. —bdj

❖ The Center for Women in Christian Leadership is the recipient of a \$3000 grant from The Alliance of Baptists. The Center, based in Richmond, is on the campus of Union/PSCE and ministers to women students enrolled in the several schools of the theological consortium. A part of the grant will be used for a computer system to communicate programs, schedules and activities. The Center produces a newsletter, *The Water Jar*. The director is Katheryne L. Goodman.

The Center for Women, Inc., was begun in 1993 by women students and faculty of BTSR, and later became ecumenical when it expanded to involve the other nearby schools. Their program includes workshops, seminars, preaching symposium, opportunities for dialog, scholarly research, study of gender issues, a mentoring program, and support groups for women students and for faculty.

Individuals and churches are invited to become members with a gift of \$30 (\$15,

students) or supporters with a larger tax-deductible gift. For information, call (804) 353-1233.

❖ Anne Davis, former dean of the Carver School of Church Social Work at Southern Seminary, who retired in 1995, is consultant for a new master's program in social work at Baylor University. She is to work with university officials in developing the new graduate social work curriculum. The program will prepare social work students to work in religious organizations as well as other helping professions. Davis is a native of Virginia and a graduate of the University of Richmond.

❖ A recent issue of *Virginia Capital Connections* featured Virginia women in politics and particularly women who pioneered in Virginia in the 1920s after women's suffrage was secured. For copies call David Bailey at 804-653-5554.

The Bookshelf

Amazing Grace; A Vocabulary of Faith, by Kathleen Norris. Penguin Putnam, 1998. Essays on the essential language of faith, written in a personal, meditative approach.

Hidden Voices: Biblical Women and Our Christian Heritage, by Heidi Bright Parales. Smyth & Helwys, 1998. Combines historical vignettes and modern scholarship to portray biblical women of courage and instruction.

Southern Cross: The Beginnings of the Bible Belt, by Christine Leigh Heyrman. Knopf, 1998. A historical social analysis that will aid the reader in understanding today's Southern culture.

Leading Women, by Carol E. Becker and Norman Sawchuck. Abingdon, 1996. A book of practical insights on how women and men can work together; how to communicate and influence decisions in a male world; how to avoid gender traps; and how to devise communication strategies.

Ruth and Naomi, by Ellen van Wolde. Smyth & Helwys, 1998. Commentary on the book of Ruth. Offers examinations of the story through the eyes of each character.

Witchcraze: A New History of European Witch Hunts, by Anne Barstow. Harper Collins, 1994.

Witches & Neighbors: The Social and Cultural Context of European Witchcraft, by Robin Briggs. Viking, 1996

Position Open: Associate Pastor for Children

Dynamic, creative, outreach-oriented minister sought to revitalize our children and preschool program, including Sunday school and children's worship. M.C.E., ability to relate well with parents and children, and experience with a growing Sunday school are preferred. We are a strong moderate church of 1300 resident members and have virtually unlimited growth potential. Send résumés to: Dr. Mark J. Olson, pastor. Thalia Lynn Baptist Church, 4392 Virginia Beach Blvd., Virginia Beach, VA 23462

THE LAST WORD

Magic, Music and Mystery

by Barbara Jackson

Magic, music and mystery, words that evoke the senses. The sense of wonder and awe, the elevation of the spirit to heights of rapture, the engagement of a person's mind and emotion. The world of religion comprises elements of these three words in its rituals, worship forms, symbolism and belief systems. The original professional practitioners of religion, the ancient shamans, were masters of all three. So, too, today's practitioners of religion. Let's take a look.

Magic

Magic and witchcraft have existed as phenomena for millennia—ancient texts reveal the existence and practice of magic in ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, as well as in China and India. In the biblical account of Jesus' temptations he was urged to use magic to establish himself as messiah. We read of the witch of Endor in the bible and we learn of the eradication of the witches of Salem in our own country in a more recent time. European magicians cast spells on princesses and frogs as recounted in the fairy tales. And we see today demonstrations of magic on television and in the circus ring as pure entertainment.

Surely the most widely known historical practitioners of magic were the Magi of Persia, the Three Wise Men who showed up in the nativity story.

The English word *magic* is derived from the same word as Magi. The Magi were members of the priestly caste in Persia, who were seers or wise men, masters of knowledge, the scholars of astronomy and all knowledge. They interpreted dreams, read the signs in the sky, and practiced divination. They were the *magos* (or in Latin, plural, *magi*), sorcerers. The Greeks spoke of *magiké tekhné*, magical arts, a term which became *magice* in Latin, *magique* in French and hence, *magic* in English.

The ultimate source of the word is found in the Indo-European (IE) root, *magh-*, to be able or to have power. Some related words are might (power), may (be able), dismay (remove someone's power), machine (device of power), mechanism, and mechanic.

Magic could be good or evil. Medieval ecclesiastics categorized magic as white or black. White magic was good and involved the intelligent use of both natural and unnatural forces. Modern science and medicine are founded on knowledge that was once called white magic. On the other hand, black magic was bad and included such terms as sorcery, enchantment, incantation, sympathetic magic and witchcraft. Let's examine each word.

Sorcery is the use of power by controlling evil spirits. The word derives from Latin (L) *sort*, lot or fate, itself from the IE *ser-*, to line up or arrange in a series. Related words are assort (arrange by sorts), consort (one who shares your lot), desert (unjoined or abandoned), and even the sermon (a joined set of statements).

Enchantment and incantation both refer to the rituals of magic and are derived from Latin (L) *incantare*, to recite a spell over someone, which of course is related to *cantare*, to sing. These rituals include blessings and curses, taboos and spells. Exorcism is the attempt to negate evil magic by the recitation of a sacred formula or name.

Sympathetic magic is the effort to induce a desired result by mimicking the event, such as doing a rain dance or pouring water on the ground to evoke rain, or by including the person's name or a replica of someone in the ritual, as in a voodoo doll. And of course, even prayer can be treated as magic if its purpose is to influence events. I am reminded of the movie, *Patton*, in which the general commands the chaplain to offer up a weather prayer!

Divination is the attempt to predict the future by interpreting dreams, casting lots, r

reading the arrangement of entrails or the pattern in a flight of birds, or through necromancy (consulting the dead). The ordeal is another form of divination by which the guilt or innocence of someone is established by undergoing a trial in which the person triumphs or survives (e.g., innocent) or fails (e.g., guilty).

A look at scripture reveals how pervasive magic was during the biblical period. Despite the admonitions of the prophets to shun magic and soothsayers, even so, some of the magical practices survived and were ritualized as religious acts, such as the use of holy water to purify, or incense to stave off evil spirits.

Witchcraft is a form of magic that has particular meaning for women because of the widespread persecutions and executions of women during the 15th and 16th centuries in Europe and colonial America.

Witchcraft is the craft (skill or cunning) of a witch, originally a man or woman who practiced magic through divination, sorcery and so on. A wizard was simply "wise person (Middle English, *wys*, wise) and was usually male. The word "witch" finally came to be applied to women only. Targeted women were those who demonstrated spiritual strength or charismatic leadership, women who were independent

Even prayer can be magic if its purpose is to control events

or single and poor, women who were midwives or medicine women or herbalists.

Studies of witchcraft show that many of the women who were persecuted fell into these categories, and were often old (the hag or crone). Many were proved to be witches in public trials by examination of

(Please turn to page 10)

Word Study ... from page 9

their physical bodies to discover any anomaly such as a wart, a growth or genital difference such as enlarged labia or torn clitoris. Birth of a deformed child was *prima facie* evidence of the mother's identification as a witch. Abortions, miscarriages and infanticide were further proofs of evil. Witches were thought to be in league with Satan and were generally viewed as over-sexed and a threat to men.

The accusation of witchcraft came to be one of the primary tools of social control during the Inquisition and later in the American colonial era. Those who were accused had no recourse, no defense. They were tortured to secure confessions, were sometimes raped while in prison, and were always the object of public scorn. Estimates of the number of women killed run in the hundreds of thousands, perhaps even in the millions.

Interested in more details? The two books listed in the Book List on page 8 would be a good start. Witches are the epitome of the victim being blamed for the crime, the ultimate scapegoat for the ills of society. Sounds like today, doesn't it?

Music

The use of music in religion is universal. Found in every culture, every religion, every period of history, music is capable of transporting one into reverie, even ecstasy. Music is an expression of oneness with the divine, a paean of praise and exaltation, a verbalization of faith and beliefs.

The drum and tambourine of a simple society are just as powerful as a cathedral's mighty organ for the creation of religious feeling. Many people involved in religious professions are there because music led them there and many church people have real musical ability. Organized religion is a home for the musician, who finds the church a receptive place for performance, for publication and dissemination of musical compositions, for creation of beautiful sound through choirs and congregation.

The words related to music are more widely known to most people than the words of magic, so I will not go into as many specific detailed meanings, but we'll look at a few.

The word music derives from the Greek (Gk), *Mousa*, muse. In Greek myth there were nine goddesses, or Muses, who presided over song and poetry—the arts, one of them being *mousiké tekhné*, musical arts, or in English, the word music. Related words are museum (temple of the muses) and mosaic. The ultimate source is the IE *men-*, to think. Related words, of course, are mind, mental, mania, monument, and premonition, just to name a few.

Sacred music in the biblical record is accorded honor and detailed description. In the bible we have descriptions of musical instruments, words of songs and hymns, stories of the use of music in service and worship, accounts of hereditary music guilds, and of course the psalms themselves, many of which were sung.

The library of sacred music used in churches today and the record of hymnody is vast. I call to your attention the great music of Bach and Handel and Fauré, the voluminous printed and recorded music that is for sale, the choral anthems our choirs perform, the hymns sung by the people in the pew.

The hymnal itself is a sensual feast. How could I choose just one to feature on this page. But just to select one word as a starting point, I look for the word "sing." We find "Sing We Now of Christmas," "O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing," "Sing Praise to God who Reigns Above," and "Let All the World in Every Corner Sing." And let us all say, "Amen!"

Mystery

Religion itself is a mystery. Why do people believe in a god or gods? Why do people turn to god in time of distress and in times of rejoicing? Why is religion an organizing principle for societies or nations? And how is it that religion gets politicized so that people war over it? Catholics versus Protestants in Ireland. Christians versus Muslims in Bosnia. Christians versus Native Americans in our own land. And so on. It is a mystery.

Yet, in the forms and practices of religion, mystery is an element used deliberately to bind people to the faith. God is mysterious and unknowable, so we create metaphors to describe what God is like. We have the mystery of the mass. The mystery of prayer—how does prayer work? How do we know God hears our prayer? And how do

we know God has answered? The mystery of faith and belief.

A mystery is something beyond human understanding. Even in science, where facts are based on physical principles, there is much we do not yet understand. Mystery helps to create awe and wonder, encourages imagination and study, and calls for faith.

So-called mystery religions existed in the biblical and early church periods. There were pagan cults in Egypt, Canaan, Syria and Persia, and the Eleusinian mysteries of Greece, and Gnostic cults. Early Christian leaders sought to quash such competing philosophies, and targeted them particularly by enunciating creeds. The Nicene Creed is one such creed. A sharply articulated Christian credal statement was useful to counter the appeal of competing philosophies.

The word mystery is from the Greek *muein*, to close one's mouth or keep secret. It refers to an initiate in a secret society.

The word mystic is from the same source. A mystic is one who attains direct knowledge of God and spiritual truth through intuition or spiritual insight. Such persons have experiences of divine apprehension that ordinary persons do not. In the bible, the prophets were mystics. Church history records other individuals of unusual spiritual dimensions throughout successive eras.

Women are particularly interested in the female mystics during the Middle Ages who left writings describing their spiritual discernments. In particular, we think of Hildegard of Bingen and Julian of Norwich, whom we have featured in the pages of this journal in the past. The mystic is often a loner who practices spiritual discipline and finds solitude with God a satisfying life.

To summarize, a sense of mystery goes hand in hand with religion. The wise worship planner often creates a sense of mystery through judicious use of music, prayer, candles and ritual. Such worship helps do not diminish the efficacy of the experience, but rather enhance worship.

Sources: Barstow, *Witchcraze*; Claiborne, *The Roots of English*; Harper's *Bible Dictionary*; Partridge, *A Charm of Words*.

Barbara Jackson is the editor of Synergy.

CALENDAR

January 15 – 16

UTS/PSCE. "Jesus and Feminist Perspective," Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza. **Friday**, 7:30–9 p.m. at St. Paul's Episcopal Church, Richmond. Free. **Saturday**, 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., Lingle Hall, Union/PSCE. \$35 registration includes lunch. 804-278-4300 or 800-229-2990, Ext. 302.

January 23

VBWIM. Saturday morning coffee and fellowship. Dialog and discussion about VBWIM direction [see p.2]. Free. No reservation needed. 10 a.m., River Road Church, Richmond. Ellen Gwathmey, 804-288 1131.

February 20

VBWIM Workshop. "Celtic Spirituality," led by Linda M. Bridges. Registration includes lunch. 9:30 to 3. Call Ellen Gwathmey, 804-288-1131.

February 21

University of Richmond Founders Week Worship. Cannon Chapel, 11 a.m. UR chaplains' Office, 804-289-8500

Feb. 26, April 2, May 26

Labyrinth walk for meditation and spiritual discernment. St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 815 E. Grace St., Richmond.

Sponsored by The Chrysalis Group. Call 804-359-0384 or St. Paul's at 643-3589.

March 2 – 3

BTSR Hoover Lectures. "Dialog with Gordon and Mary Cosby." Founders of Church of the Saviour in Washington, D.C. Tues., 10 a.m. and 7 p.m.; Wed., 10 a.m. Call 804-355-8135

March 5 – 6

Richmond Hill. "Celtic Spirituality Retreat," led by Linda Bridges. \$65 registration fee. Richmond Hill, 2209 E. Grace St., Richmond. Call April Swofford, 804-783-7903 for reservation.

March 12 – 14

Alliance of Baptists 1999 convocation, Northminster Church and BTSR. Friday's opening session will feature scholar and writer Nancy Ammerman as speaker for the covenant address. Call or write Alliance of Baptists for registration and hotel information: 1328 16th St NW, Washington DC 20036, 202-745-7609.

March 15 – 17

Union/PSCE workshop. "Women as Preacher, Pastors, and Priests." led by Beverly Zink-Sawyer. Tuition \$200.

March 19 – 20

CBF of Virginia annual General Assembly. Vinton Baptist Church, Vinton. For information: CBFV, 804-213-0412.

April 12 – 15

BTSR. Preaching and Worship Conference. Fred Craddock, speaker. Other preachers include John Kinney and James Flamming, and seminars led by BTSR faculty. Call 804-204-1241 for registration and hotel information. Fee \$149 includes Tuesday banquet and two lunches.

May 13 – 16

"Voices Of Sophia." Plenary presenters include Dr. Isabel Rogers, Dr. Beverly Harris. 703 526-9513.

November 9

VBWIM dinner and program. At BGAV, Richmond. Time and place tba.

Nov. 29 – Dec. 1

Union/PSCE and Alban Institute workshop: "Women: Shaping Leadership Strategies in Ministry." Designed as a professional development event to enable women clergy to make career choices based on self-awareness and proactive role negotiation. Tuition \$200. Call Sheila Partin for hotel and registration information 800 - 229-2990, Ext 302, or 804-278-4302.

MEMBERSHIP for 1999 virginia baptist women in ministry

Name _____

Address _____ Zip _____

Place of Ministry _____ Position _____

The following information is requested for an ongoing statistical study. Please check:

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|------------|------------|--------------------|-------------------|----|
| Paid? | Unpaid? | Seminary Graduate? | yes | no |
| Full-time? | Part-time? | Name of degree: | | |
| Ordained? | yes | no | Name of seminary: | |

Amount enclosed

Membership fee is \$20 for one year (students, \$10). Membership includes announcements of conferences and other events, book lists and discounts on conferences. Please enclose check with this form and send to: VBWIM, 8000 River Road, Richmond, VA 23229.

WOMEN IN THE NEWS

New Positions and Changes

Nicole Davis Patteson, who is church development assistant for Richmond Baptist Association, was named contract consultant for Acteens with WMU of Virginia.

Pam McAlister is minister of youth and music at Goochland Church.

Charity Rouse is music minister at Four Mile Creek Church, Richmond.

Suzu George is director children's ministries at First Church, Galax.

Sheri Brown is minister of spiritual development at Mechanicsville Church, Gordonsville.

Rhonda Short is minister of music at Colonial Beach Church.

Catrina Wolfrey is director of youth and children's activities, Triangle Church, Triangle.

Ida Lee is music director at Harrowgate Church, Chester.

Terri Mason is music director at Woodlawn Church, Colonial Heights.

Nancy Coffee is minister of Christian childhood development at Rivermont Avenue Church, Lynchburg.

Ruth Finley is in the Clinical Pastoral Education program at the Hunter Holmes McGuire Medical Center, Richmond.

Deborah Upton is children's minister at First Church, Richmond.

Jeanne Anderson is minister with adults and missions at Fredericksburg Church.

Gail Pinnix is minister of preschool and children at Southview Church, Herndon.

Virginia C. Carroll is minister of music at Second Church, Petersburg.

Xenobia Joseph is minister of community missions at Bybees Road Church, Troy.

Mary Richerson is youth minister at Taylorsville Church, Doswell.

Ordinations

Nicole Davis Patteson was ordained to the gospel ministry on July 19 by Monument Heights Church, Richmond.

Eleanor Jane Hartman was ordained to the gospel ministry on Aug 30 by Hampton Church, Hampton. She is associate pastor of education and family life ministries at Hilton Church, Newport News.

Judy Edwards was ordained to the gospel ministry by Bedford Church, Bedford.

Sachiko Sakamoto, minister to Japanese at Bon Air Church, Richmond, was ordained to the gospel ministry on Nov 22 by Bon Air Church.

Susan Blanchard, Baptist campus minister at Mary Washington College was ordained on Nov 15 by First Church, Richmond.

Mary Ellers was ordained to the gospel ministry on Sept 13 by Chester Church, Chester.

Accolades

Lynda Weaver-Williams was the featured speaker on Aug 27 for the opening convocation at Virginia Intermont College. She is on the faculty at Virginia Commonwealth University and Randolph Macon College.

Wanda S. Fennell was honored by Grace Church, Richmond, on her 10th anniversary as minister of music.

Ellen Gwathmey, minister of outreach and visitation at River Road Church, Richmond, was elected second vice president of the Baptist General Association of Virginia at its annual convention in November. Gwathmey is also convener of Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry.

Carol Rippley-Moffitt, interim pastor of Westover Church, Arlington, was honored in October on the 20th anniversary of her ordination to the ministry.

Katrina Stipes Brooks, a May graduate of BTR, was featured in the Fall issue of *Folio*, Baptist Women in Ministry newsletter. She was the first recipient of the BWIM internship, a stipend that funded her position as associate pastor at Bethel Church in Scottsburg, where her husband is pastor.

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Richmond, VA 23229

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