



THE POWER OF CALL

The idea of a call to divine service is one of the most powerful forces operating on human beings. Calling has given meaning and purpose to life for millions.

Jacob's call founded the nation of Israel. Saul who became Paul institutionalized a sect of Judaism and transformed it into a new religion for people of all races. The maid of Orleans led the French to victory over the English and changed European history. William Carey was called to go to India and inaugurated a course of Christian missions that spread around the world—and in so doing guaranteed that Christianity was not confined to a nation or a culture but belonged to all people everywhere.

Some questions.

What does it mean to be called? Where does a call come from? Why does it happen? Who are the instruments of communicating God's call? Is call a good thing? Is call different from vocation? Why some people and not others? Why me? Are only ministers called? Are laypeople called as well? Is a call specific to a place or a function? Can one be called to go to Africa or North Dakota? Or is the place incidental? Are all Christians called?

This issue of SYNERGY devotes space to considering these questions. We will read about some biblical calls, theological dimensions of a call, individual pilgrimages, a woman in history who was called, and a word study. You will also find listed some resources for individual study.

Influences

Help in discerning one's call is often crucial. There are teachers and mentors, examples and role models. There are books and study and prayer. There are events and natural phenomena that weigh in. There are opportunities and lack of them. There are open doors and shut doors. There are gatekeepers and officials, employers and bureaucrats. There are health issues, handicaps, anger and depression that may work against fulfilling one's promise.

In assessing one's call, we are often advised to evaluate our talents and gifts. We are advised to ask if what we are doing or where we are headed are within God's will—God's will for His kingdom, God's will for our own lives, God's will for mankind. Heady stuff, that!

For many of us, God's call was laid upon our hearts during teenage years, a time when young people are assessing plans for career and education. How many of us heard God's call during a missionary sermon at Ridgecrest or Eagle Eyrie or RA camp or through study about missions in GAs or Training Union? Those particular vehicles for challenging young people to consider God's call may have changed over the years, but the process is the same. Someone suggests a possibility that God may have a plan and that you as a person with some gifts may fit into His plan. And you respond because you seek meaning and purpose for your life.

There are other scenarios: Bible study, prayer, reading, meditation, or some other avenue of spirituality leads to an inner conviction. In this scenario, intercession or suggestions from another person are not necessarily factors. Think about Martin Luther, who came to understand through prayer and Bible study that "faith alone" was more efficacious than the institutional church. His courage led to the Protestant Reformation and forever changed history.

The fact is, everyone, whether Christian or not, contemplates the meaning of life and the possibility that he or she can contribute something of significance, if not to mankind in general, at least to one's passion. Joseph Campbell suggests that we each seek to find our bliss, the thing that makes us happy and gives meaning to life.

The idea of call is not only one of the most powerful forces in life, it is also one of the most complicated. It is not likely that this journal can adequately treat such an important issue comprehensively and clearly. But at least let's start.

—Barbara Jackson

Inside

- 2 *Ex Cathedra*
- 3 *Called by God*
- 4 *Calling and Theology*
- 6 *Book Review*
- 7 *Called and Recalled*
- 9 *Word Study*
- 11 *Women in the News*
- 12 *Calendar*

Ex Cathedra

Looking Back On My Calling

by Ellen Gwathmey

Call (kol) n. 56. A mystic experience of divine appointment to a vocation or service: [She] had a call to become a minister.

This is how the 1996 *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language* defines it.

In "Sister Act" when the nuns are discussing when and where each was called to her vocation, Sister Mary Clarence, played by Whoopie Goldberg, pretends to have gotten her call in Las Vegas "And you don't know how hard it is to get the call in Vegas," she says. Most of us, however, do not need the distractions of a gambling town to keep us from hearing the call. Often, the everyday, ordinary business of living is enough to keep us from hearing clearly. It is easier to hear as a child when distractions are fewer and time seems to stretch out forever to the horizon.

When I was 12, I felt called to foreign missions, but I had no clear sense of where or in what capacity I was to serve. I "knew" that I was to go to Asia. After all, we had had a Japanese exchange student living with us for a year; I'd read *Anna and the King of Siam*, and my cousin had been a missionary to China—so where else would God send me but somewhere in Asia? When I was 16, I learned one Sunday evening in Baptist Training Union, about the Journeyman Program, and something clicked. That was what I was to do right after college. I did. I traveled to Japan and lived there and taught English as a second language for two years at Seinan Jo Gakuin (Southwest Girls' Academy), and I loved every minute of it (well, almost every minute).

I returned to the United States in 1974. That first year back I did a lot of speaking throughout Virginia and tried to be open to a call to full-time mission work, but nothing happened. In 1975, therefore, I began teaching high school English and doing a lot of volunteer work in my home church and association. Occasionally, I wondered if there were some place else I should be or some other role I should undertake, but I was happy with what I was doing and so did not give full-time ministry much thought, that is, until the summer of 1984.

At the end of the summer, two weeks before the schools opened, my teaching assignment was changed unexpectedly and

without my requesting it. Although I enjoyed my new classes, this change caused me to do some soul-searching. I felt I had reached a fork in the road, so to speak, and needed either to devote myself to full-time Christian ministry or to cut back a little on volunteer church work and do a better job of teaching. This led, after four months of prayer and pondering, to my resignation as a teacher and enrollment in seminary. I entered Southern Baptist Theological Seminary with the idea that, upon graduation, I could, perhaps seek employment as a faculty member at a Baptist school.

Basically, I knew that God had called me into full-time Christian service but exactly where that would be I did not know. Little did I dream that I would follow God's call to River Road Church and find such a wonderful place in which to minister and to be ministered.

For some, God's call comes early and clearly. For others it is like running at full speed into a brick wall where just a moment ago they thought they saw an open doorway. For some of us that call steals over us so quietly that we only gradually become aware of the "still, small voice" guiding our steps as we reach each crossroad.

In looking back, I can see people that God put into my life who counseled me, modeled Christian service for me, prayed with me and for me, and helped me find my way. I can see how prayer, Bible study, church, Sunday school, Training Union, WMU, and worship and camp experiences played their parts in guiding me toward this vocation. I can pinpoint the times and places I heard God's clear call. Mostly, I see how my family, especially my parents, gave me the freedom to hear and to follow my Lord. Their example of discipleship continues to model for me a lifestyle balanced between spiritual devotion and growth and service to others in the name of Jesus. They are among those who truly are Christ's hands, feet, eyes, ears, and voice in this world. May each of us become more and more such a one as we daily follow God's will in our lives.

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

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. ©1999

Called by God

by Judith B. Bailey

These days when I think of being called by God, my mind connects my own sense of call with that of women in history. For the past three years I have been researching women who were preachers during the first decades of the nineteenth century. My focus has been upon a New Hampshire native, Nancy Towle, who wrote her memoirs in 1832. It was the story of her conversion, her call to preach and eleven years of itinerant ministry. Her autobiography is more than anything, however, a protest of the exclusion of females from preaching. The dissenting groups, particularly Methodists, Christians and Freewill Baptists, welcomed female preachers and exhorters in the formative years following the Revolution until the late 1820s. But as they grew in numbers and influence, leaders organized the egalitarian vision of community into hierarchical structures that excluded female ecclesiastical leadership.

In the concluding pages of her book, *Vicissitudes Illustrated in the Experience of Nancy Towle in Europe and America*, Towle describes the gender inequity. She had traveled thousands of miles, often without money, preaching “from six to eight times a week, for months in succession; and seldom, less than one hour upon the stretch.” She had kept a diary, written hundreds of letters, provided for her own clothing, and then helped with the household chores in the homes she stayed. After arriving in a place, she had to walk to her preaching engagements. Unpaid, dependent upon friends and limited publishing for support, after all those years she did not have “one single farthing laid up in store.”

In contrast, male evangelists always had their clothing, transportation and financial needs provided. “Of the other sex, though three-fold the natural vigor, whereof to boast, it is seldom expected that they will go without some suitable mode of conveyance or without purse and script at hand. Nor is it expected that after their strength is quite exhausted for the good of souls that they then, to appear decent, must make clean or repair some article of apparel for themselves before renewing again the heavy struggle. Male itinerants did not have to daily contend with the clergy who objected to this preaching. They were not asked to help with chores. They were not, like Towle, “left alone, destitute, no house, no home, no friend, that dares to advocate their cause....” (p. 229)

Why would a woman endure such hardship? Nancy Towle’s answer is the point of this article: “My conversion has been to me as much a reality as my existence, and my call to public testimony equally as sure. So that I can now say, in the review of my past life, that after all the storms and tempests I have had to encounter and for which I have nothing to show as a recompense: it has never, once, entered my heart to repent of the undertaking to sound salvation: neither has the idea, ever been indulged of leaving the work, but from the clearest conviction of duty.” (p. 239)

Being called by God—for Nancy Towle and countless other women across the ages, has been the motivation for incredible courage, determination, effectiveness and faithfulness. Other factors enter into anyone’s vocational decision—family, historical context,

availability of role models, education, ability. But with women who endure there is a clarity of call that transcends the boundaries of context. Basic to this call is the Spirit of God connecting them with a “love which will not let us go”—the love of Christ.

We know from experience that calling does not ensure success or even access to ecclesiastical systems. Often the most dedicated and capable women are overlooked and a man is employed. Or, capable women serve for years with little affirmation even though they work harder and succeed on a level equal to or superior than their male colleagues.

It is enough to make us doubt our calling, isn’t it? How can I be called to do ministry with people who do not want me? Is it worth the struggle? Some will question and turn away, knowing that there are other ways to live out a Christian life. Others will continue, protesting by their presence to keep alive the concept of female minister. Hopefully none of us will become so bitter that we give up our call, but will use our influence either to open the doors for women in conventional settings, or to find alternative ways of being “church.”

Nancy Towle had to find an alternative way of living out her call. Faced with increasing opposition to her preaching, she reached the lowest point in her life. But while writing her memoirs she identified a new direction for the future. Originally called by God to preach spiritual salvation, she would in the future preach and write to save women from social and spiritual subjugation. She vowed to “deliver up my life, a sacrifice, for one, towards remedying these evils; and seal my testimony, as with my blood, in vindication of the rights of woman.” (p. 241) As if aware that history would forget these early preachers, she published her memoirs and two other books. She began to publish a journal, *The Female Religious Advocate*, though it did not survive long.

More than one hundred fifty years later, Catherine Brekus, a Ph.D. student at Yale University, read *Vicissitudes*. She writes that it “seized my imagination in a way that is difficult to explain.” In the

Called by God

following years Brekus’ research revealed more than one hundred women who were preaching between 1749–1845. Twenty of them wrote their memoirs or articles defending female preaching.

Called by God? You are in good company. You are “surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses,” who did what they could in their generation. Thanks to their faithfulness, we have models for living in difficult times.

Judith B. Bailey is co-pastor of Taylorsville Baptist Church

SOURCES: Nancy Towle, *Vicissitudes Illustrated in the Life of Nancy Towle in Europe and America* (Charleston, S.C.: James L. Burgess, 1832). Catherine Brekus, *Strangers and Pilgrims, Female Preaching in America, 1740-1845* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

Calling: Some Theological Considerations

by Barbara Jackson

The quintessential controversy concerning the role of women in the Christian church focuses on the issue of call. Are women called to serve God in the church? Some people think not. If they are, who says so? And if they are, must the church accept their ministry?

Perhaps you saw on television the Bill Moyers interview with W.A. Criswell in which Moyers posed the question, "But what about women who say they have been called by God . . ." They were talking about the pastoral role and ordination. Criswell's response was that women who claimed they were called and entitled to ordination were simply mistaken. God doesn't call women to be pastors.

His comment, however, is germane to our understanding of call. Is calling a wholly subjective experience without standards of measure? Can another entity affirm or veto one's sense of calling? Should there be a gatekeeper such as a bishop or board administrator or staff search committee in determining who is called or where a person may serve? Is calling a reflection of cultural norms, and if women are excelling in the work force, does the church likewise have a responsibility to open up places of leadership and service?

In a study of religious calling we must step back and take a broad look. We have questions about calling, what it means and how we should respond.

There are theological and biblical sources that provide some insight. William Barclay, in his book *New Testament Words*, has a chapter that is helpful. (pp. 145-151) He examines the Greek *kalein* (verb), *kletos* (noun), *klesis* (adj.). The various forms have four main usages: 1. calling by a name; 2. summoning to an office, a task, a responsibility or an honor; 3. inviting to a meal or to be a guest; and 4. summoning to law courts.

Barclay expounds on the second usage as the relevant idea. We summarize: The Christian is the one who hears the summons of God and has the responsibility of answering or not answering, of accepting or rejecting. What is the summons? The summons is to a task or duty and is an invitation to be of use. The summons is to privilege and fellowship with God. And the summons is to judgment, a call to account.

Barclay points out that the calling comes not because we deserve it but because God wills it as an act of grace: "It is not as if God chose us because we stood out because of special goodness or special attainment. It is out of the goodness of his heart that God calls us who never deserved to be called." (p.148)

Barclay says another essential idea is the call to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, to walk in a way worthy of our calling, to seek holiness—not to make us deserve to be called by God but to be counted worthy. This call includes the responsibility of service to others, a mission to spread the word of the Kingdom, and by extension, a call to serve the larger goals of the Church.

Biblical calls

In the Bible we find stories of God calling ordinary people to do extraordinary things. Jacob wrestled with God, was wounded and received a new name. Moses was tending his flock when God spoke to him out of the burning bush.

Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord saying, *Whom shall I send and who will go for us?* He answered: *Here am I, Lord.* Mary likewise responded to the angel of the Lord: *Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.*

God called Jesus, and at his baptism Jesus declared: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me....* Jesus called the disciples and gave them a commission: *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations....* Paul turned from persecuting the followers of Jesus to spreading the good news throughout the region.

There are many other biblical persons we could cite: Jonah, who had a vision to take the message to Nineveh; Lydia, the business-woman who was led to use her financial resources to undergird the work of the young church; Ruth, who was called to follow the faith of her new family. The idea of call is central to the message of scripture.

Individuals in the Bible who experienced God's call suggest to us that there are some common elements. The called ones may be ordinary people who come to have extraordinary vision. Those who are called have not earned the distinction but have it thrust upon them.

In some cases, the called person is forever changed: by a new name, by a physical or spiritual wounding that serves to emphasize

"... calling comes not because we deserve it but because God wills it as an act of grace ..."

a dependence upon God, by a new understanding of God and his plan for the world and one's own role in making that plan happen.

Modern-day calls

Even though biblical calls are instructive for underscoring some essential theological themes, we know that God still calls people even today. We point out the many women and men who are pastor or missionary, musician or youth leader, those who minister in churches and in agencies. And even the lay volunteer in a church.

We are particularly aware of women who have been called and must continually fight to have their callings validated by useful assignments and ministry positions, equitable pay, or even by ordination. We can name names. Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry boasts about 600 women in Virginia who are self-described ministers (whether ordained or not). Nationally and across denominational lines, statistics are hard to come by, mainly because of differences in definition and inconsistency in collecting data. They number in the thousands in this country alone. We know women are ministers in many capacities in many denominations.

And so are men. And so are laypeople—men and women. In saying that calling is not limited to the professional clergy, we are

affirming that laypeople are called—a ministry of the laity. What is a ministry of the laity? Well, it includes the men and women who are church leaders: the deacon, the teacher, the singer, the youth leader, the businessman and financial expert—all who use their expertise to keep the wheels of church turning.

Ministry of the laity also includes those who minister outside the walls: to the homeless, the refugee, the victims of abuse or disaster. These lay ministers are the men and women, the volunteers who build houses, sponsor families, collect food, or lead study groups or workshops on how to do these things. Such activity may be an organized outreach of the church, such as WMU or men's groups. But lay ministry may also be an individual thing: the person who can listen and be a friend, the one who can help someone find a job. The possibilities are unlimited. The followers of Jesus are called to show love in relationship—to be priests to each other.

God's call is universal

The concept of call is greater than a religious vocation. God issues the call. Those who respond become the called out. All are called: to faith, to follow, to devotion to something greater than self, to discovery of meaning in life.

Yet even as we acknowledge that all are called, there continues to be a place for specialized ministries, for the building up and equipping of the saints. And so, we distinguish in some way those who serve the institutional church. The church met the need for such a setting apart with the rite of ordination. In the hands of church leaders, then, ordination is more than a holy rite, it is an instrument of power. It is a method of assuring succession, of control, a defining the in-group. Ordination functions to preserve the patriarchy and is an important tool in keeping women under control. Knowing this helps us understand why ordination is an issue in the women's movement.

Despite the abuses of ordination through the ages, we acknowledge the need for gifted persons to minister in a religious setting in ways appropriate for the times. For women in the Middle Ages, that person might have been an anchorite or a healing sister. In today's world, that person might be a missionary to a people group or a chaplain in a prison or a youth leader, a musician or a curriculum writer—or even a preacher. You get the idea.

Calling is not confined to one gender. In the Bible (Gal. 3:28) we read that there is neither Jew nor Greek, neither slave nor free, male nor female, but all are one in Christ Jesus. The struggle to find acceptance in the institutional church is a primary goal for women ministers.

Nor is the call restricted to persons of exalted gifts or unusual piety. Jacob was a rascal. The disciples were ordinary fishermen.

(please turn to page 6)

All Are Called: A Summary Statement

What does it mean to be called? The one essential calling is the call to be a Christian. God calls all men and women to discipleship, to commitment to a Person. To limit the call to the missionary or the pastor is a serious perversion of the gospel. All believers are called to a life of commitment, with the responsibilities which go with it. Responsibilities include worship and fellowship with other believers, serving and ministering, teaching, witnessing by word, deed, and total life.

The vocation to follow Christ means to be a Christian in all aspects of life: a relationship with people based on love and concern, an attitude of service, a dedication of mind and abilities, and an understanding of self as an agent of reconciliation in communicating love, justice, salvation.

The call to salvation, commitment, discipleship, and the call to serve in a particular way in a particular place must be seen in the context of the fellowship of believers who welcome the decisions, affirm its validity, and provide spiritual and material support and guidelines consistent with the aims of the church.

Today's concept of a division between clergy and laity is not found in the scriptures. This is an arbitrary distinction that developed late in Christian history. Further, the concept of religious vs. secular is contrary to biblical thought. To the Hebrew and to the Christian all of life is of God—created, sustained and directed by him.

Hence, though there are many occupations and professions, there is only one calling: to follow Christ in commitment in our family life, our church responsibilities, our daily toil. One's occupation is thus seen as an arena for living out one's faith as one accepts responsibility and discipline, as problems are faced ethically, and as persons are dealt with as friends and brothers and sisters.

There are provisions for specialized ministry in the Scripture (Ephesians 4). These are for the "equipping of the saints (i.e., all believers), the work of ministering, and for building up the body of Christ." Today, missionaries, pastors, teachers, and other specialists continue to be called because of the need presented, the possession of spiritual gifts, and the empowering of the spirit. And so, the call to ministry and missions is not the primary call but is a call to a role and a location—an arena, a place of self-fulfillment and service to a world in need of the gospel.

Thus, the general call to follow Christ in commitment becomes specific in terms of occupation, the location of service, and finally, in terms of the day-to-day decisions that must be made.

Jackson ... from page 5

Call falls into the category of “mystery.” For this brief essay, I find it impossible to answer all the questions I raised at the start. Some questions cannot be answered; some mysteries must remain mysteries.

A Personal Note

In thinking about my own call, I wonder why I felt called to serve in a religious setting. There were influences, of course—home church, parents, youth leaders, BSU experiences, reading, etc. But I have not ended up where I thought I might.

Yet as I affirm my belief that all are called, I am compelled to say that a rational response to God’s call and a humble assessment of gifts might have led me to be a teacher (which I have done), a social worker (which I have done), a homemaker and mother (which I am), a writer (which I am)—or perhaps a dozen other expressions of ability or creativity. To pursue any of those avenues of usefulness outside the church would have been valid.

So I look back and ask was the call real? Have I pursued the call that was issued, or have I chased a will o’ the wisp? Have I made a contribution to the world, to the Kingdom? Have I made a difference? Or am I still working it out?

I come back to Buechner’s words: “The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”

Freedom and call

And so, the final point I would make is that call is freely issued and freely answered. While the theological concept of election has a place in any consideration of call, my personal beliefs do not include predestination or fate or reluctant bending to God’s will. A person struggling with a call may feel a need or compulsion to follow a particular course. But, in the end, that person always has a choice.

Freedom to be. Freedom to choose. Freedom to decide. Freedom to say no. Freedom to weigh alternatives.

A concomitant notion is the expectation that God will take care of one who devotes her life to him. That too can be a delusion. God does not guarantee personal safety from danger or immunity from disease or natural disaster. God does not protect his servants from sexual or financial temptation. God does not lead such a person to success or positions of excellence. There are no guarantees.

Intentionality is a useful word. The called one must be intentional in choosing paths. It is never helpful to assume that “God will provide” or God will lead, and therefore I don’t really have to make a decision. To “go with the flow” is not usually a good idea.

To be intentional is to carefully assess your gifts and to know what your passion is. To be intentional is to pursue an appropriate education or training for what one feels called to do. To be intentional is to make decisions at the proper time and not leave things to chance. To be intentional is to achieve balance between the ideal and the actual, between fun and duty, between one set of obligations, such as family, and another, such as job or church or a cause.

The reverse of freedom and intentionality is coercion and guilt. And the by-products of guilt are unhappiness and failure. What is the use of piety if there is no passion, no pleasure!

I offer the accompanying statement, entitled “All Are Called,” for your consideration as you seek to understand the implications of your own call and as you assist young people in accepting a call. I wrote this material in 1971 in my role as counselor to young people exploring missions as their calling. Some of them would serve, but many would find themselves following another path. It was my conviction then and still is today that guilt has no place in the Christian’s response to God’s call.

A Blessing

The person who hears God’s call and responds with affirmation and enthusiasm is one of the blessed. To know that you have found meaning and significance in your life is all any of us wants. To have a passion for a cause, for people with emptiness and needs, for a vision of what could be—that is a blessing. To live in beauty, to create beauty, to find order in the world and know it is good—that is a blessing. To face disorder and human need with a cup of cool water or a word of hope—that too is a blessing.

A calling is good. The woman minister who is called is blessed. But so are a lot of good people who live ordinary lives. Their lives are good because they have found a passion and pursue their course.

The plumber, the carpenter, the decorator—who achieve excellence in what they do. The teacher, the counselor, the nurse, the salesman—who meet people’s needs. The artist, the tailor, the woodworker, the gardener—who create beauty. They too have a calling.

Their calling is where their deepest hunger, their passion, meets the world’s deepest need—the demands of life.

Barbara Jackson is the editor of Synergy

SOURCES: William Barclay, *New Testament Words*, SCM Press, 1964; Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC*. HarperCollins, 1973.

Resources

Carol E. Becker, *Leading Women: How Church Women Can Avoid Leadership Traps and Negotiate the Gender Maze*. Abingdon, 1996.

Verna Dozier, ed., *The Calling of the Laity*. Alban Institute, 1988. Anthology of articles exploring the meaning of ministry.

June S. Hagen, ed., *Rattling Those Dry Bones: Women Changing the Church*. LuraMedia, 1995.

Heidi Bright Parales, *Hidden Voices: Biblical Women and Our Christian Heritage*. Smyth & Helwys, 1998. Interpretation of biblical texts through feminist scholarship.

Bob Roth, *God’s Call and Your Vocation: A Look at Christian Calls and Church Occupations*. United Methodist General Board, Nashville, 1998. Study book for youth with leader’s guide.

Nelvin Vox, *Seven Days A Week: Faith in Action*. Fortress, 1985. A book for laypeople seeking to relate faith and daily life, calling and ministry.

Zikmund, Lummis, and Chang. *Clergy Women: An Uphill Calling*. Westminster John Knox, 1998. Useful study containing primary data and statistics.

BOOK REVIEW

The Chronicles of Noah and Her Sisters: Genesis and Exodus According to Women by Miriam Therese Winter

Reviewed by Stephanie Day Powell

What if Noah had been a woman, or if Eve had had daughters? How might the Bible be different if it had been written by women? In *The Chronicles of Noah and Her Sisters: Genesis and Exodus According to Women*, Miriam Therese Winter invites the reader to imagine the biblical world recreated through the eyes of women.

In *Chronicles* and Winter's earlier work, *The Gospel According to Mary: A New Testament for Women*, Winter draws from the ancient Jewish tradition of midrash to give birth to a series of myths that illuminate the cultural and spiritual sphere of women's lives. In midrash genre, the rabbi becomes a storyteller, embellishing the text, often in dramatic ways, and moving beyond the original context in search of hidden truths and deeper meanings.

Chronicles relates the ancient history of the Hebrew people through three women called Noah, each one constructed from a blend of fact and fiction. First, there is the Noah of King Solomon's court, one of many Hebrew women who were likely joined in marriage to Solomon to secure political alliances. Renowned for her storytelling abilities, Noah gathers the women of the royal harem to pass down the tales of her ancestors. This Noah narrates the text we read.

Great-grandmother to the Noah of Solomon's court, the second Noah originates from the biblical text. A survivor of the exodus, she is one of the daughters of Zelophehad (Numbers 27:1-11) who plead their case to Moses when their father dies with no male heir. She can draw her lineage back to another mythical figure, the Noah of Genesis, a pronouncer of oracles who rescues her family from the great flood.

Using these three women as anchors, Winter weaves a vision of matriarchal culture. Heroic women take center stage, often struggling to preserve their traditions in the face of a dominant patriarchy. Contrary to the custom between fathers and sons in which the eldest son is favored, a mother passes down her blessing to her youngest daughter. Mothers offer this blessings in symbolic memory of Noah's covenant with "Godde" (as God is often referred to by women): "Have no dominion over others, but live as brothers and sisters with all that lives on earth."

With the mother's blessing, ancient women hand down ritualistic objects known as *teraphim*. Eve gives her youngest daughter the relics she has treasured during her lifetime—shells from the sea she collected before settling in Eden and a clay figurine she shaped from the mud of the river that flowed alongside the garden. *Teraphim* become the symbols of women's intimate connection to the earth and to Godde.

In the story of Rachel, her father Laban takes her *teraphim* and displays them with his other household gods. In the original text, Rachel is said to steal her father's household gods when she flees his house with Jacob (Gen. 31:19). Traditional interpretation of the text assumes that Rachel stole these objects to secure Jacob's claim

*The Chronicles of Noah and Her Sisters:
Genesis and Exodus According to Women*
by Miriam Therese Winter.

to his wives and property. In Winter's recreation, Rachel retrieves her *teraphim* to ensure that her matrilineal line will not be broken. Although Rachel does not give birth to a daughter, upon Rachel's death Leah hands down the *teraphim* to her own daughter, Dinah, in her sister's memory.

Along with their depiction of women's culture, Winter's stories explore the perplexities of gender. Eve is one who "[runs] with the wolves," exploring the caves and "wild places" along the river banks. Adam is captivated by this uninhibited woman and urges her to remain with him in the orderly world of his garden. When Adam hears Eve chanting rituals under the fruit-bearing tree, he reproaches her, telling her that his God has warned that the tree is dangerous. Eve responds that her Godde meets her there to teach her good from evil. Fearful, but deeply in love, Adam suppresses his objections and the two live together peacefully for a time, "transparent to each other, baring their deepest feelings, their fantasies and their fears."

When Eve gives birth to daughters, Adam, engrossed in his affection for her, relinquishes his fear of the tree, singing "sustain me with fruit, refresh me with apples, for I am faint with love." Soon, however, the bond Eve shares with her daughters becomes a source of pain for Adam. Eve teaches her children to revere Godde and celebrate the "seasons in the sacredness of their bodies," but Adam deems these things foolish. The pain of their separation and loneliness is the catalyst for their departure from Eden. Disillusioned, Adam allows Eve to lead him to a place beyond the garden.

Years later, the matriarch Sarah again confronts the pain of a divided humanity when Abraham circumcises Isaac against her wishes. With Isaac bearing the mark of the patriarch, she fears that her matrilineal line will be broken. Accepting her fate, she courageously proclaims, "For the sake of my son, for the sake of myself, I must reconcile two traditions, for there are both matriarchs and patriarchs in Isaac's ancestry. With abiding faith, Sarah struggles to believe that she and Abraham are guided by the same God, 'El Shaddai, 'god of the Mountain,' and Shaddai, 'Godde the Breasted one,' are they not s/he who is, now and always, everlasting love? Is not Shekinah the presence of Life in multitude of guises?"

A Catholic woman and professor of liturgy, worship, spirituality and feminist studies at Hartford Seminary, Miriam Therese Winter has written over ten books and produced 13 albums with the community she joined in 1955, the Medical Missions Sisters. Winter witnessed the power of alternative liturgy with the release of her first album, "Joy is Like the Rain," which had worldwide success. "I was always a kind of imaginative, poetry writing person," she explained in an interview with *Sojourners* in 1997. "It was the time of Peter, Paul and Mary, so I picked up a guitar and began to sing songs, taking the scripture of the day and applying it to our lives." Poetry and music have been the media through which

(please turn to page 11)

Called and Recalled: My Pilgrimage

By Sarah Sellers

Examples. Being called into ministry was easy for me as a child. There were no burning bushes in our yard to fear and only minor insomnia before a new musical played out at church. Growing up in a large congregation, in Nashville, Tennessee, I was surrounded by talented people, a few famous in ministry or in music. My dad was a deacon and Training Union director, my mother was a GA director, and my older sisters were in the youth choir. My biggest problem was how soon I could get the giant pink bow off my collar in beginners choir and be promoted. I drank lots of Tang hoping to get tall enough to stand in the baptistry.

Our church had a wonderful missionary family, the Dunnaways, commissioned to Africa where they built a school attached to a hospital in Rhodesia. We were happy when their children stayed home with us for several years to remain in school, while Mrs. D., a nursing instructor, found it thrilling to return to Africa. My cousin Donna knew that she felt called to foreign missions when she went to college. She has served in Chile, South America, for more than twenty years now.

Fear. Fear is often a part of calling. We learn fear for good reasons, such as safety issues; perhaps we fear the loss of love or acceptance from others. When we sang “Jeremiah was a Bullfrog” on the back of the church bus I learned that Jeremiah was a prophet. After he went to jail and people said nasty things about him, he did not want to be a minister at all anymore. The word of God burned in him like a fire (Jer. 20:7ff.) however, and he had to preach and teach once again.

I am recalled to ministry many times—not like the missionaries, more like an automobile in need of replacement parts. God heals me and finds me useful sometimes. When I played guitar and sang at church, my Sunday school teacher told me that my gift was from God, and that she knew He had a special plan for my life. I was willing to be an instrument for God, but I begged her not to say anything. I feared that this great and powerful congregation would say “Amen” and I would be on a boat to some mosquito island before I went to high school.

My friend Mike told me not to worry about where or how God would use me; we figured I could stay in music and he was planning to become a veterinarian. I am glad that he did not become an animal doctor; you may know him now as Michael Card, a talented Christian music artist. Our minister of youth, Miss McCoy, and our minister of music, Mr. Armstrong, provided remarkable pastoral care to our army of young people. They were the only authorities I cared about for many years. I lived for choir retreats, mission trips, youth camp and handbells.

Role models. Having had strong female role models in the church, I also met a female hospital chaplain during one of my mother’s hospitalizations. And when my dad had a triple bypass and mitral valve replacement, he told his doctor that I was a guitarist. The hospital had me play quietly for each patient in the

cardiac unit at regular intervals. They called it music therapy. Whether God could use me as a chaplain or a therapist, I remember feeling some confidence at fourteen.

There was an old house called “The 23rd Psalm” where guys with long hair sat around and wrote scripture songs. Before Opryland, most teenagers hung out in Centennial Park where Vanderbilt students played guitars and discussed lyrics. There were coffeehouses and a big nondenominational group that grew out of the sixties called “The Way.” I once rode their bus to Memphis, with “Joy for Jesus” painted on the back.

Television was depressing considering the Vietnam reports, leaders being assassinated and the drug culture booming. Nevertheless, there were safe places to go and land for the night. When the Hare Krishnas came briefly downtown, they were far outnumbered by the so-called Jesus Freaks who were allowed to camp due to their orderliness. My sisters were becoming single parents after divorce, and I worried about the children. Their safety became very important to me. Also I felt that God was making some way for me to go to college. Every beautician and waiter moving to Nashville thought that they might get a song published. I was always thankful to have plenty of music jobs or nightclub gigs to pay rent, not to mention tuition.

Anger. Anger can also be a part of calling for some ministers. When I was nineteen, I was no longer in college but was working at a club in the evenings, then at the hospital as a technician 11 to 7 a.m. There was a name famous to me on a patient list, Margaret Dunnaway, the medical missionary from my home church. Her husband was killed by guerrilla soldiers a few years earlier. She was suffering with a brain tumor and not expected to live much longer. God was not being very attentive or merciful to this saint, or so I thought. Although I knew myself to be more a heathen than a Christian, I thought that I could at least reintroduce myself and tell her that I would pray for her. Before I finished asking to enter her room, she called me not only by my family name but my first name. She told me that she felt no pain whatsoever and that I should come by again so that she would know how to pray more specifically *for me*. I was speechless.

I did not see her again before the night she died. I knew the room number to be hers when we heard the code. There was strange silence and a reverence that I had never witnessed from the night-shift crew. Everyone seemed to know that we were in the presence of a saint. The superintendent said that if I knew the family to be ready to receive or assist them. There was no chaplain around that time of day, so I went. These grown children had an abiding faith, much deeper than mine.

After this, I wanted to go back to school but I could not return to the school of music at that time. The Dominican sisters at the hospital helped to enroll at their college next door.

(please turn to page 10)

WORD STUDY

THE LAST WORD

Calling—Vocation—Disciple

Call is a very useful word. Call and its many usages and idioms take up a whole page in the big dictionary. We have call in and call on and call for, call up and call out and call off and call forth. We have call a spade a spade, call in question, call it a day, call one's bluff, call it quits, call time, call the shots, call the tune, and call to account.

The English word *call* as well as the Greek *kalein* and the Latin *calare* derive from the Indo-European (IE) root *gal-*, to speak, call out, voice.

Let's focus on our interest. The vocational sense of call, in contrast to the generic *call* (to call out), includes *calling* as well as *call*. A dictionary definition is: "1. A strong inner impulse toward a particular course of action esp. when accompanied by conviction of divine influence; a divine call to a religious life; 2. an entry into the priesthood or a religious order; 3. vocation or profession in which one customarily engages (occupation).

Call and *claim* come from the same root. The English word *claim* derives from both the Latin *calare*, to summon, and *clarus*, loud and clear. Some related words are claimant, exclaim and exclamation, declaim, acclaim and acclamation, disclaim, proclaim, reclaim, clamor. In contrast to the simple idea of call out or voice, an underlying note in these words is the idea of noise—crying out loudly.

And so we might say that a *calling* is a loud and clear summoning.

Vocation

Whereas an *occupation* is an activity that engages one's hands or mind and which may include job or vocation, *vocation* is a more specific concept. An occupation is something one undertakes (from the Lat., to seize) and implies self-direction, while vocation is a summoning and implies another actor, the one who calls.

The English word comes from the Latin *vocare*, to call and *vox*, voice, and ultimately from Sanskrit *vak-* and Indo-European *wekw-* to speak. *Vocare* has the varied meanings of to name, to address, to call, to invoke, or to issue a summons.

Vox and *vocare* are a rich source of English words. We have not only voice and vocal, but vocabulary, vowel and vocation, vouch, vociferation, epic, advocate, avow, convocation, equivocate, evoke, invocation, provoke, and revoke—just to name a few.

Vocation is only one meaning of the generic *occupation* and applies to all who pursue useful activity in whatever venue. In a religious context there are some specific meanings, such as those suggested in the dictionary definition of calling given above. The simplest meaning of vocation is "the work a person is called to do by God."

In discussing the idea of vocation, Frederick Buechner, in his book *Wishful Thinking*, points out that there are many voices calling you to different kinds of work. The problem is to find out which is the voice of God rather than that of society or the superego or self-interest.

Buechner suggests that a good rule for finding out is this. "The kind of work God usually calls you to is the kind of work (a) that you need most to do and (b) that the world most needs to have done." If you get a kick out of your work, you've met the first requirement, but if your work [is frivolous or useless], chances are you've missed requirement (b). On the other hand, if your work is being a doctor in a leper colony, the second requirement has been met. But if most of the time you are depressed or bored then you have not only bypassed (a), but aren't helping the patients either!

Buechner says, "Neither the hair shirt nor the soft berth will do. The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." (p. 95)

But there is more. There is a distinction between vocation as profession and vocation/calling as imperative from God.

Within the church, the priest or nun or minister of the gospel is said to have a vocation. That vocation is to serve God in the institution of the church. In this sense the vocation is viewed as a profession and occupation as well as a calling. That calling is subject to affirmation or oversight by a bishop or other authoritative figure. If in the view of such a figure, a person does not display the attributes needed to fill the role, he or she is deemed not to have the

vocation. For instance, in Catholicism, if a priest is unable to remain celibate, he does not have the vocation. If a young woman is in love or hopes to be, she does not have the vocation. If the man or woman cannot accept the discipline, there is no vocation.

That mechanism works in Protestant churches as well. If a would-be preacher does not have the vocal equipment, mental discipline to master the skills, sensitivity to the needs of others, or the attractive personality to make an effective preacher, he may be said to lack the vocation. Perhaps he or she may have a vocation in the religious sense for service in some other capacity that call for different gifts. In denominational service, the mission board administrator has to tell the young woman who cannot be appointed, for whatever reason, that her calling may be misunderstood and her vocation needs to be reevaluated.

Ordination

Ordination is the act of ordaining: "to invest officially with ministerial or priestly authority, as by the laying on of hands; to order by decree or law; to destine." Ordination derives from *order*, which of course means to arrange, to command, to regulate. The religious order is a community under a religious rule, such as the Franciscans or the Poor Clares.

The essential idea is authority. Through ordination, ecclesiastic establishment endows clergy with power to administer the sacraments, to control the rule of the church, to ordain others.

"The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."

Profession

A profession is public declaration, as in a profession of faith or publicly taking the vows of a religious community; any open claim of belief or faith; a calling requiring specialized knowledge and long academic preparation; any occupation or employment.

Clergy as a profession is distinguished from the laity by several standards: ordination which invests authority; academic

(Please turn to page 10)

Word Study ... from page 9

training and the possession of knowledge; calling which identifies one as committed to a cause or course of action; and professional behavior which exhibits desired characteristics, such as humility, devotion, ethical action, or scholarly achievements.

Disciple and Apostle

Apostle is one who is sent out for a specific task. In the New Testament and later in the early church, the term was applied to Jesus' disciples and later to Paul as well. The word is rarely used now to refer officially to any other "sent out" group, as the makeup of the original group of apostles is considered closed.

Disciple, on the other hand, is a very useful word, denoting not only the original followers of Jesus but anyone who follows Jesus or any other leader or teacher. A disciple is a learner, a pupil. A disciple is also one who helps to spread the doctrines of the teacher.

Both *disciple* and *discipline* derive from Lat., *discere*, to learn, which in turn is related to Lat., *docere*, to teach. Related words are doctrine, doctor, document, didactic, and docile (teachable).

This particular set of words is very interesting because of their relation to *science*. *Science* is from the Lat., *scire*, to know. Related words are conscious, conscience, omniscient, prescience.

All of these words ultimately derive from the IE *skei-*, to cut or split. Thus to know is to cut through or split, to separate or shed. Other related words are scissors, shingle, schedule, rescind, schism, and schizoid. The *sci-* stem is the clue; it means cutting.

We are reminded of II Tim, 2:15: "Present yourselves to God as one approved, a workman who has no need to be ashamed, rightly dividing (or handling) the word of truth." To know the truth is to cut through to the essential idea, to cut away falsity. The disciple is one who cuts away the extraneous to find the nugget of truth, to espouse the truth and to communicate the truth to others.

A disciple is one who has been called by the master to hear and accept the summons and to accept the mission.

Priest, saint, congregation

These words deserve their own treatment, but alas, we are out of space. Suffice to say that in the Protestant tradition, all three words refer to the women and men in the pew—believers, the called-out ones. And whereas before Luther *priest* denotes a professional clergy, afterwards among Protestants the emphasis is on the priesthood of the believer: we are "priests to each other."

Barbara Jackson is the editor of Synergy.

Sources: Eric Partridge, *Origins*, Crown Publishers, 1958. Halverson, ed., *A Handbook of Christian Theology*, Meridian, 1958.

Sellers ... from page 6

There was new music that called me back to church, I sang Baptist songs at folk mass and liturgical music at the Baptist church. I thought that if everyone could learn to read the Greek New Testament, maybe we would all have real church unity someday. Wow! One of the fine singers in my home church choir had surgery on her voice box and was no longer singing. I was not sure if God was watching.

The sisters taught me how to read and gave me the notion that I was quite teachable. They prepared me to return to Belmont University where I began. The faculty at Belmont treated me like a prodigal who was worthy of their attention. In psychology and religion, I read books by Wayne E. Oates concerning pastoral care. Ta-da! The Lord spoke to me and told me that this is what I must do for the whole care and the building up of the saints. I did not know if Dr. Oates was still alive or teaching or how anyone such as I would get into seminary, but I soon found myself there. I worked as chaplain in Nashville, then in Louisville. During internships and job opportunities, I was receiving more and more training in the area of mental health and substance abuse services. Ten years ago, Dr. Oates told me to find an enclave and to stay near those (Baptists) who were not so hostile about women in ministry. Given my choices, he then said: "Virginia is good."

Saints. Since we are all called away "from darkness into His marvelous light" (Eph. 2:9) and given various skills for specific tasks, I have always been aware that the Lord can use anyone to His good purpose. When I was a young adult, I asked (begged) God to give me more than just a saving kind of faith, but the kind that would sustain, if not move mountains, through any kind of grief. God has never failed to sustain, and given me far more than that. In

an effort to stay out of trouble, I gave up music as business a long time ago, but God gave music back to me in the form of church music that is far more therapeutic than any words I have to offer.

Righteous people, ministers, and teachers have taught and cared for me. As far as any pastoral care, the Lord still makes me useful in an office where I see people suffering every day with substance abuse problems, domestic violence and child abuse. There are days when I know it is only the presence of God sustaining my clients, regardless of which counselor they see. Then when you need it most, some saint invites you over for the ministry of hospitality, and you are strengthened for another day.

Ellen Gwathmey's mother died recently. Jean Gwathmey was the kind of saint who did the work of at least a dozen people in her church and in her community. She invited you over, took care of you if you were sick, encouraged you in the Lord's work with humility and kindness. She made you think that you were somehow special. When I drove past the place of her accident, there was that same unmistakable reverence and silence from so many people that I had not witnessed in over twenty years. The Gwathmey family still needs our prayers, but I can tell you that they continue to practice a profound faith in God and hope for the Church. May the rest of us feel called, or perhaps, recalled and refitted for some usefulness to God.

As I continue to live out my calling I only know that there are saints all around who can show us how to be imitators of Christ.

Sarah Sellers, LPC and member APA, is a licensed professional counselor in a community mental health clinic.

Deborah Loftis Shoenfeld was named assistant professor of church music at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond. She is the first faculty at B TSR in the area of church music and will have the responsibility of developing the program to begin in the fall. She was formerly minister of church music in Birmingham, Alabama.

Jeni Cook has been named director of the National Chaplain Center, Dept. of Veteran Affairs, in Hampton. She is the first Southern Baptist and the first woman to oversee chaplain work for the Dept. of Veterans Affairs hospitals. A 16-year federal employee as chaplain for Veteran Affairs and federal prisons, she is a graduate of University of Oklahoma, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and has a doctor's degree from Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University. She was ordained in 1980 by her home church, First Baptist of Enid, and was the first woman ordained as a Southern Baptist minister in Oklahoma.

Linda McKinnish Bridges has published a book entitled *The Church's Portrait of Jesus*. Bridges is professor of New Testament at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond.

Positions and Changes

Sonja Matthews is minister to singles and senior adults at Mount Vernon Church, Richmond.

Kristen Yerian is minister to youth and children at Walnut Grove Church, Mechanicsville.

Nancy Redding is minister of youth, music and children at Sycamore Church, Franklin.

Jennifer Kelly is interim pastor at Pleasant Grove Church, Barboursville.

Debbie Scott is minister to seniors and children at Colonial Avenue Church, Roanoke.

Donna Wooldridge is children's minister at Thalia Lynn Church in Virginia Beach.

Alba Beasley is minister of music and senior adults at Lynn Haven Church, Vinton.

Vanessa F. Walker-Wyand is music director at Deep Run Church, Richmond.

Melissa Hall Scott is director of youth and education at Colonial Avenue Church, Roanoke.

J. Renee Walker is minister of family life at First Church, South Hill.

Crystal Hall is director of resort ministry for the Norfolk Association.

Susan A. Joyce is associate minister at Farmville Church, Farmville.

Charity Rouse is minister of music and education at Beaver Dam Church, Troy.

Trudy Pecoul is director of youth and children's ministries at Rosalind Hills Church, Roanoke.

Jane Cherry is minister of education at Western Branch Church, Portsmouth.

Ordinations

Jamie Wood was ordained to the gospel ministry on March 21 at New Covenant Church, Richmond. She is church strategies consultant for the Richmond Baptist Association.

Tiffany Hamilton was ordained to the gospel ministry on May 2 by First Church, Gretna, where she has served as minister to children and youth for three years.

Accolades

Alma Hunt received an honorary doctor of divinity degree in May from the University of Richmond. She was executive director Woman's Missionary Union, SBC, from 1948 until her retirement in 1974. She is a resident of Roanoke where she is a member of First Baptist. Alma Hunt was the subject of feature articles written by Fred Anderson for his column in the *Religious Herald*.

Graduations

Southern: **Dana Michelle Pope** of Grundy, MA in Christian education; **Tamatha Williams of Spotsylvania**, MA in Christian education.

Southeastern: **Cynthia Buster** of Alexandria, MA in counseling ministry; **Jane Wiseman Cherry** of Portsmouth, MA in Christian education.

Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond: **Tiffany Hamilton** of Gretna, M.Div.; **Natalie Kline** of Lexington, M.Div.; **Michelle Myers** of Charlottesville, M.Div.; **Melissa Scott** of Roanoke, M.Div.

Powell, from page 6 ...

she has challenged the traditional teachings of the church, a process she describes as "erasing the lines and giving rise to the questions that were always there."

Readers who take Winter's Christian midrash seriously will be challenged to decide how far the stories will take them. Moving outside the boundaries of the often male-centered Old Testament stories that we have known since childhood feels refreshing but also a bit dangerous. As we read, we recognize that women's stories have not been fully told. As we yearn for a sacred text that is more inclusive, we begin, perhaps, to internalize these accounts as our own.

In her introduction to *Chronicles*, Winter writes, "while recommended for personal spiritual reading ... it is primarily intended for ritual use and is written to be read aloud." She argues that all authoritative liturgies derive their vitality from the power of story. "In the early days of Christianity," she told *Sojourners*, "we were probably among the most imaginative. We have a virgin birth and one who rises from the dead—the imagination of God run wild." *Chronicles* brings us a new liturgy that we can integrate with the stories we know. Winter depicts biblical women who are strong, compassionate, and faithful. *The Chronicles of Noah* is a *teraphim* of words, a blessing for our time

Stephanie Day Powell is a free-lance writer in Richmond

SOURCES: Winter, Miriam Therese. *The Chronicles of Noah and Her Sisters*. Originally published in 1995 by Medical Missions Sister. Reprinted by Crossroad Publishing, 1997. Winter, Miriam Therese. *The Gospel According to Mary: A New Testament for Women*. Crossroad, 1993. Polter, Julie and Anne Wayne. "From the Inside Out." *Sojourners*, Jul/Aug, 1997, pp. 16-21.

CALENDAR

July
27
University of Richmond Ministers Conference.
“Social Justice for the New Century Church”
Featuring Jim Wallis, editor, *Sojourners Magazine* and
Welton Gaddy. 9 am till 3 pm. Cokesbury Book Sales.
Jepson Center at UR. Fee \$35. Call UR Chaplains
office, 804-289-8500.

Sept.
24-26
Spiritual Development Weekend at Glade Baptist
Church, Blacksburg. “Celtic Spirituality” led by Linda
McKinnish Bridges. Art gallery open. Kelly Sisson,
pastor. For information, call 540-552-3394.

Sept.
23 -
Nov. 11
Fall course at Richmond Hill Retreat Center.
“Hildegard of Bingen: Companion of the Heart.”
Her life, writings, music and art through study, prayer,
videos, and meditation. Led by Linda Firestone and
Marilyn Robertson. Thursdays 3-5 pm. \$50 donation.
Call Richmond Hill, 804-783-7903

Fall
Events
The Center for Women, located on the campuses of
Union/PSCE and BTSR, will sponsor several fall
events: “Women Speaking with Authority in the
Church”; “Communication: Is Our Language
Inclusive?” “How to Get Your Joy Back: Spiritual
Enrichment;” Women & Men in Ministry Together;
Models that Work.” Watch for details.

Oct.
15-16
Regional Women’s Conference.” Into God’s Presence:
A Spiritual Journey for Women.” Worship leaders are
Barbara Joiner, Linda Bridges, and Jami Smith.
Manassas Baptist Church in Manassas. Sponsored by
Potomac Baptist Association. Friday 7-9 pm through
Sat. 9 am – 5 pm. \$30. Register by Sept. 11. Call
Potomac Assoc. 703-368-2005.

Nov.
9
Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry Dinner, in
conjunction with BGAV. Richmond. 5 pm. Kitty
Johnson is speaker. Details as to cost and location will
be sent out later with registration information. For
information, call Ellen Gwathmey, 804-288-1131

Nov.
29 -
Dec. 1
Union/PSCE and Alban Institute workshop. “Women:
Shaping Leadership Strategies in Ministry.” A
professional development event to enable women
clergy to make choices based on self-awareness and
proactive role negotiation. Tuition \$200. Call Shelia
Partin. 800-229-2990 or 804-278-4302.

MEMBERSHIP for 1999-2000 virginia baptist women in ministry

Name _____

Address _____ Zip _____

Place of Ministry _____ Position _____

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

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.