



Ready to Listen: College Women Gathering to Explore a Call to Ministry

Ready To Listen Conference Explores Calling to Ministry

College women considering a call to ministry are invited to the conference on calling. The conference will be held at the Omni Hotel in Charlottesville on February 13–14, 2004. Lodging and meals are provided at no cost to the participant. The only expense is transportation to and from Charlottesville. The conference begins at 6:30 p.m. Friday and concludes after lunch on Saturday.

The “Ready to Listen” conference is sponsored by Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry in cooperation with the Samuel Project of Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond. Conference expenses are covered by the Samuel Project. Additional information and a nomination form may be found at the Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry website: baptistwomeninministry.org

The conference is designed to help college women considering career options and ministry possibilities to explore the many dimensions of a religious calling, seminary study, ministerial identity and roles and various avenues for service in a non-threatening setting among others facing some of the same questions and decisions. Leaders will be women currently engaged in various ministerial roles, who can serve as models, sources of information, and encouragers.

Nominations may be made by pastors, church staff, church leaders and teachers, parents, campus ministers, or by the young woman herself. Nominations are due by Dec. 1. Interested persons are encouraged to download the form from the VBWIM website and return it by Dec. 1. Participants will be notified by Dec. 15, and will be asked to confirm their participation by January 5, 2004. For further information, call Judy Bailey (804-740-4037) or email Judith@bledsoebailey.com

November Meeting Is Planned

Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry will meet for dinner and fellowship on Nov. 13, 5:30 p.m., at the Marriott Hotel in downtown Richmond during the annual Baptist General Association of Virginia. There will be a brief program and business session.

Earlene Jessee, executive director of Woman’s Missionary Union of Virginia, will speak on denominational leadership: “Opening the Windows in the Stained Glass Ceiling.” One of the purposes of VBWIM is to encourage the participation of women in all aspects of ministry, which includes denominational service as well as other varied avenues including church staff, chaplaincy and teaching.

Nominees for new members of VBWIM steering committee will be presented for election. Additional persons may be nominated at that time. [Nominees are listed in Judy Bailey’s column on the next page.]

Reservations for the dinner are necessary and may be made until Nov. 10. Please use the form in this newsletter or the recent flyer.

Inside

- 2 *Ex Cathedra*
- 3 *A Musician’s Call*
- 4 *My Call: A Work in Progress*
- 5 *Another Take on Call*
- 6 *An Open-Ended Calling*
- 7 *Meeting the Explosions of Life*
- 8 *Editorial*
- 9 *Resources*
- 10 *Word Study*
- 11 *Calendar*
- 11 *Membership Form*
- 12 *Women in the News*

Ex Cathedra

Looking Back and Looking Forward

By Judith B. Bailey

This is our second issue on “calling” this year. We wanted to hear from women who were not in pastoral roles and who reflect the great “varieties of gifts” that God has called forth. And so, as I end my second term as Chair, I want to recognize those whose calling includes serving on the Steering Committee, or “Board,” as we often call it. Without the commitment of time, energy and gifts on the part of those who serve, we obviously would not have an association of women in ministry.

Our organization along with ones in North Carolina and Georgia are the only three statewide Baptist women in ministry groups active in the country. It is significant that Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry has been a force for the recognition of women’s gifts for thirteen years, since 1988.

We established a rotation system three years ago in hopes of keeping the organization fresh and creative and to give different women an opportunity to be more involved. This year there are six of us who will leave the Committee, with the option of returning after one year. Joining me in leaving is Barbara Jackson who has served continuously since its inception. Barbara will continue to edit *Synergy*, but other publicity will be the responsibility of someone else.

Others who are leaving: Alana Woolley after serving for seven years; Brenda Lee, three years; Sandra Hack-Polaski, three years; Diane Smith, three years. Marylee Sturgis served for two years and rotated off last year. I want to thank these women who, along with others remaining on the Committee—Susan Blanchard, Ellen Gwathmey, Sheryl Johnson, Betty Pugh, Deb Loftis, Leslie Straw and Helen Wood—have been the best group

I have ever worked with. Together we have dreamed and planned and accomplished a great deal.

We are excited about our nominees for the Steering Committee. They will be presented for election at the November dinner meeting. Nominees are: Amy Holtz, former youth minister and now “stay-at-home mom”; Ana Karim, B TSR graduate and pastor of Richmond Menno-nite Fellowship; Sheila Russ, M.Div. student at B TSR; and Ann Charles-Craft, chaplain at MCV Hospital. B. J. Seymour, recently retired professor at Randolph Macon College, will be returning after a year’s absence. With the exception of last year, B. J. has served continuously since 1988. Deb Loftis has been nominated as new chair of the Steering Committee, and I know she will fulfill the position with great skill, energy and commitment.

We would like to have one more person become part of the Committee and I will ask for nominations at our dinner. Be thinking about your gifts and whether they would fit here, or nominate someone else.

The dinner is November 13, 5:30 P.M. at the Richmond Marriott. The cost is \$25, (\$23 for our 60 to 70 members). For reservations call Helen Wood: (804) 762-9635) or e-mail: woodrudy@hotmail.com

Join us—at dinner and in membership. More information is on our website: www.baptistwomeninministry.org.

With each year I am even more convinced of the untapped power of women and the need for us to recognize our strength in working together, acknowledging our differences, for greater justice and appreciation. The Steering Committee changes, people change, society changes. Surely negative constructs about the role of women in the church can change as well. That is my hope and my prayer.

The Rev. Judith B. Bailey was formerly co-pastor of Taylorsville Church and is a PhD student at William and Mary.

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Board Members: Judy Bailey, chair; Helen Wood, secretary-treasurer; Barbara Jackson, newsletter editor; Susan Blanchard; Ellen Gwathmey; Sheryl Johnson; Sandra Hack Polaski; Betty Pugh; Deborah Loftis; Diane Smith; Leslie Straw; Alana Woolley.

A Musician's Call

By Deborah Carlton Loftis

I have often described my ministry in terms of an “evolving” sense of call. It seems that God has used the voices of people close to me to shape and even redirect my call to ministry. I was fourteen when I answered God’s call to devote my life to Christian ministry. Loving adults who worked with my youth group told us that God had a plan for each of us. I listened. When I responded to God’s call, they affirmed me and my plan to follow college with seminary. At that point, I figured it would have something to do with children. I had been helping with children’s groups and enjoyed that very much.

One day near the end of my college years, I was chiding my best friend about not practicing and wasting her God-given talent for playing the organ, she turned and asked indignantly, “Well, you’re a pretty good singer. What are you doing with that talent?” I promised to check into taking voice lessons when I arrived at Southern Seminary in Louisville later that year. Living up to my promise, I made an appointment to see the dean of the School of Church Music. I was really nervous. On the way over I prayed fervently for God to reveal the right course to me. Has anyone ever told you to be careful what you pray for?

Somehow, by the time I finished meeting with the Dean, I had transferred to the School of Church Music! Did I mention that my college degree was in history? Even though I was a little flummoxed by the process, I knew right away that I had come “home.” My ministry would be centered in music. What was I doing with those children during my high school days? Music, of course. I just hadn’t put it together. With tremendous enthusiasm and a burst of energy, I crammed a two-year Master of Church Music program into FOUR years, full-time. Well . . . I *did* have a bit of catching up to do. Throughout my degree work, my professors challenged and encouraged me, giving me new insights into the myriad facets of music ministry and helped me hone my gifts to answer God’s call.

Along the way, I served an inner-city congregation as minister of music. This small but feisty group of believers pushed me to new tasks and new understandings of my call.

They ordained me—a process they initiated when *they* thought I was ready. Our associate pastor resigned and as we began the search for a replacement, the others of us on the staff picked up extra work to keep things moving at church.

One dear lady started walking right up to me week after week and declaring, “I think you should be our associate pastor!” I explained to her that I was *already* on the staff, but this did not deter her. Finally, others began to say it as well, so I reluctantly agreed to take on the second job. I had some misgivings about my abilities—my degree was in music, not divinity—but these folk had proved trustworthy in the past so I trusted them again. This church helped me to see and embrace the *pastoral* role of the church musician.

There have been obstacles and roadblocks over the years. Being an ordained woman in Baptist life is no easier in the field of music than in education or the pastorate. I have not always had a ministry job. There has always been, however, an opportunity to serve and to live out my call.

Now, after twenty plus years of serving churches in music ministry, I’m back in seminary. This time, however, on the other side of the lectern. God’s call to this ministry came through the voices of colleagues who challenged and

CALLING

encouraged me to take up the work of teaching. Now my task is to help others unfold and flesh out their call as they prepare for music ministry. It’s a wonderful adventure, often outside my comfort zone, but always rewarding.

It’s been nearly forty years since I first felt God’s call to ministry. The call was clear when I was a teenager; the shape of the call was not. At critical points, the people of God pushed and pulled, challenged and affirmed me as I tried to understand and live out the call. It has taken time; there have been some surprises and much joy; and I have a pretty good idea that this dance is not over yet.

Dr. Deborah Carlton Loftis is associate professor of church music, Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond.

My Call: A Work-in-Progress

by Barbara B. Boggs

Thinking about my call, I realize it is a series of calls. I definitely understand the Lord directs my life's path. *"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."* *Prov. 3:6* As a child I was aware that I wanted God to lead in whatever direction my life might take. The underlying platform was: my life must be used to serve Jesus.

When I was seven years old my father answered his call to be a minister, and our family moved to an apartment on the campus of Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville, Ky. For the rest of my childhood years I was a preacher's kid.

At age nine I accepted Christ as my Savior and was baptized on Easter Sunday morning. Then, around the age of sixteen my mother and I were having a discussion about what I would do with my life. I said "Perhaps God is calling me to be a pastor's wife." I felt this probably came from my deep admiration for my mother and my father. While attending Youth Week at Caswell in Southport, N.C., when I was seventeen, I went forward and answered the call to give my life to full-time Christian service.

As I entered Wake Forest College, I decided the best way to answer my call was to prepare to become a minister of education. It was during this year that Southeastern Baptist Seminary opened on the Wake Forest campus. My sophomore year I began dating a first-year seminary student. Looking back on the trials and tribulations of a pastor's family, I had decided that no matter what I thought at sixteen, there was no way I would marry a minister! I was quick to tell the ministerial student this on our second or third date. But, God had other plans. A couple of years later we were married. I was strongly aware of God's direction in this important step in life. Since in those days it was unlikely a woman could be a minister of education in the same church her husband served as pastor, I believed then I was led by the Lord to become a French and mathematics teacher.

Our first years were ones in which my husband was "the pastor," I was "the pastor's wife" and "the school teacher," then was added "the mother." There was no doubt that God was directing our lives. These were the years of school racial integration. My husband and I felt that God had placed us in a strategic place as pastor/pastor's wife/co-presidents of the elementary school's PTA to have a voice in one of the most significant events of our generation.

When the children were all in school, we worked it out for me to earn an MA/Ed. in Guidance & Counseling from Wake Forest and become a school guidance counselor. Again, it was a step in which I felt the Lord led me, and I would be using the gifts He had given me to serve Him. The step was personally fulfilling, and the work opened doors that allowed my husband and me to see the world without the interference of the "stained-glass windows," a different world than we saw as pastor and pastor's wife. We also noticed that when a member of a married couple grows, the marriage can grow and become different. We knew our growth was of God.

Years later my husband and I were called to a church that was just going through a Sunday school enlargement campaign. The director of the campaign suggested the church needed a minister of education, and that I would be the perfect candidate. The suggestion stirred something deep inside both my husband and myself. There was that earlier feeling before our marriage of a call to be a minister of education, and for years we had felt that we should work professionally side by side as a team. Had we come to this point a few years later, perhaps we would have been co-

CALLING

pastors, as others are doing today. But in that time and in that place, we were "pastor and minister of education." Following the call from God we worked together in this relationship at that church until retirement.

Then I prayed, "Lord, what would you have us do now?" Just a few months after retirement the Dover Baptist Association asked us to serve as associates for ministry to church leaders and to church leaders families. Again, the Lord called.

The Lord continues His call. There is no greater peace than being in the will of God, fulfilling His call whenever and wherever it comes. I know the Lord will have a call for me until He calls me home.

Barbara Beals Boggs is associate, Ministry to Church Leader Families, Dover Baptist Association

Another Take on Call

by Sheryl Johnson

There are many different ways to define “call” let alone many different callings to which a person may find themselves drawn. I shall attempt, in this short article, to give you yet another take on call by giving you a glimpse of mine. Before I go much further, I think it prudent to let you in on how I define call. I certainly don’t reserve the term simply for those whom God has chosen to serve in the ordained ministry or in various ministries by and through churches or their agencies. My vision of God working God’s purposes in the world is too large to be confined by that. Frederick Buechner said, “Your vocation in life is where your greatest joy meets the world’s greatest need.” I suppose that is a pretty good definition of calling, but I would like to tweak it just a bit.

First, I’m a little hesitant to use the term “greatest.” Superlatives can get one into trouble. One dictionary listed the definition of greatest as “not to be surpassed,” then followed it up with “highest in quality.” I know people who might question their call on account of not knowing if the joy they chose to pursue truly was not to be surpassed, or wondering if there was another need of higher quality that they could find joy in meeting.

Next, although I certainly like the term joy, I would choose to use the term passion. Do not think that I am using the terms synonymously, as what we are passionate about often—but not always—brings us joy. When we are passionate about something, the disappointments we encounter in the face of that passion are often the most sorrowful. But it is our passion, the fact that we think what we are doing is important, that allows us to overcome and continue to strive to meet that need.

But identifying a need and feeling passionate about it is not enough. I would like to add a third item of intersection—abilities. One might choose to talk about gifts or skills or talents instead of abilities; it matters not the term you choose to use. The point is that it is fine to be passionate about a cause, but without the ability to do something about it, that passion will be of no use. (And sometimes the ability to do something needs only the will to take action.)

So, if I were to define calling, I would say one’s calling in life is where one’s passion, one’s abilities, and the world’s need come together. Now, that’s not as poetic as Buechner, but I think it might go a long way in helping people see that

a call can happen to anyone, at any time, in any place. You see, these three things—passion, ability, and need—might actually have little or nothing to do with one another except that they come together in you. I suppose one might look at what I’m doing right now and say that is the case with me.

I should tell you, (in case you missed my byline) that I am currently a PhD candidate in Biblical Studies at Union-PSCE. (Yes, I hang out with Presbyterians, but they aren’t all bad.) You should also know, that my vocational aspirations include teaching at an institution of higher learning. I would even say I feel called to be a professor and I am working hard to make that happen some day.

Some day. That’s where a lot of us get bogged down. Some day. “Some day I’ll get my degree and get a call from a church.” “Some day I’ll have time to volunteer for that organization I hear such good things about.” And while it is often true that such aspirations have to wait for another day and that we have to take some concrete steps now before we can hope to do those things later, we miss the fact that there is a calling we *can* answer right now, in this place, at this time. It may have very little to nothing to do with our so-called “long range call,” but it may be no less important. In fact, one might say it is even more important because it is now. The kingdom of God is at hand.

So, just what is my “right now” call? I found it in a very unexpected place, the Virginia Department of Education Summer Residential Governor’s School. When I graduated from college, I spent the summer before I started seminary as a resident advisor at a summer program (the Governor’s School) for gifted high school students. At the time, it was an interesting, challenging, and fun way to make a little money to help support my ministry habit. The next summer I was getting married, and I thought that would certainly be the end of my association with the Governor’s School, for one of the unique characteristics of the program is that everybody—students, faculty, and staff—are in residence at the University of Richmond all four weeks.

That first summer with the Governor’s School was a memorable one. I met some amazing students, worked with some incredible people, and saw 450 people become a community in 28 short days. It was an experience that took over my life for four weeks in July. It was an experience that changed lives. Students were told at the start that it would be the best summer of their lives, and gosh darn it if on that final day they didn’t say we were right. Corny, but right.

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An Open-Ended Calling

by Helen Siner Wood

God called. That I know, although I cannot give a specific time or place. The calling was not an instantaneous event, but rather a growing awareness from childhood that evolved into a certainty by the time I was a teenager. Neither was the calling to a particular ministry, despite my sometimes desperate seeking for that in prayer.

I grew up in church; some of my earliest memories are of church activities as a preschooler. My salvation experience was also gradual, quite unlike that of Paul.

In the eighth grade we were required to select a course of study. There was great consternation when my parents learned I had chosen a college preparatory course instead of the business course. They both were factory workers, no one on either side of the family had been to college, and they knew there was no money for college. Yet, I believed my calling was to a church-related vocation and that a college education would be essential.

When I was growing up, I had no role models of women in ministry, so I had no idea as to what my calling meant. All the pastors and preachers I had ever seen or heard were men. We had a woman choir leader, but she had to be persuaded to do it and seemed not to have experienced any call. Two women campus ministers during college were inspirational and it seemed to me as I observed them at work that at last my vocation might be taking shape; I would find my ministry with university students.

In seminary I sensed the calling taking different form. Missions beckoned and I replied with a firm yes and for 15 years I found a fulfilling ministry overseas. It involved many avenues, among them mother, pastor's wife, Bible study leader for women's groups, English-as-a-Second Language teacher.

When we returned to Virginia, I was asked to serve on the staff at the Baptist Foreign Mission Board (now the International Mission Board), working with university students, overseeing the summer/semester missions program. For 10 years that ministry took me throughout the United States as well as abroad several times. Then WMU of Virginia invited me to work with the women across the Commonwealth, helping them to develop a missions lifestyle, still yet a different type of ministry. Opportunities to write opened from time to time. None of these roles of ministry have required my ordination, although I would have gladly sought ordination had that been the case.

Must a calling be defined or can it be open-ended? For me, it has been open-ended, an adventure, but no less real. I have never doubted my call and I have never felt the loss of God's presence, even in those dark times of the soul which come to all of us on occasion. Our callings are each unique, but for the same purpose: to bring glory to God and to serve within the Kingdom.

Helen Siner Wood is part-time consultant with Woman's Missionary Union of Virginia

Johnson ... from page 5

The next summer I got married as planned and got ready to begin my second year of seminary. The previous year I had served as youth minister and church pianist at a small church south of Richmond but was now looking for some part-time employment a little closer to home. I happened across an ad for a position with the Governor's school to provide year-round clerical support. I was intrigued. After all, the program was only four weeks during the summer. What could there possibly be to occupy somebody year-round? Well, I learned and I learned fast. And in the interceding years, I went from sending out letters and returning phone calls, to developing student handbooks and overseeing hiring. I began to no longer see my work with the Governor's School as something I do "in the meantime" until "some day" when I get my PhD and move on to my "real calling" as a professional educator. I

began to see that my passion for education, my administrative abilities, and the needs of a program designed to enrich and expand the educational and artistic horizons of gifted and talented high school students had indeed come together. Not only was I called, I was hooked.

My title is now associate director. It is still a part-time job, it still takes over my life every year for four weeks in July (and sometimes a few weeks in between). Some day I suppose I will cease to be a perpetual student and will find myself teaching full time. But I hope to find that my work with the Governor's School holds promise not only for my present call but also for the call to come ... some day.

Sheryl Johnson is doctoral candidate at Union-PSCE Seminary in Richmond and associate director, Governor's School, Richmond.

Meeting the Explosions of Life

By Susan Goins-Eplee

It all began with an explosion. Well, not really—it began long before that, but the explosion story is a nice dramatic beginning to my call to ministry.

The summer that I decided that I was going into the ministry I survived a literal explosion. I was 20 years old, preparing for my senior year in college and working as a lifeguard. We were chlorinating the pool and I mixed two different types of chlorine in a bucket on the deck. When it started to bubble, I decided that I should add water to the mixture. The second the water hit the bucket, I saw a bright light and heard the first part of the KABOOM. The bucket was blown beyond recognition, the concrete was cracked, the sides of the building and the fence 30 feet away were bleached—and I walked away. At first, I was not sure if I was dead or alive, but after being checked out at the hospital, I was fine, temporarily deaf, but fine.

It was the summer that I was deciding where I would go after college. I remember my mother saying to me that if I ever had any doubt that I was on this earth for a purpose, it should have been confirmed that day. Now, I am not certain that I have found that God works that way in my life, making something bad happen to try and tell me something. However, an experience like that makes one think about life, about who we are, what we are created to be, and how we serve others. A friend of mine, who is a singer/songwriter and a brain tumor survivor says it another way. He says, “If you woke up this morning, God has something for you to do.”

Calling is such a funny notion when you think about it. How does God *call* us to anything? Is it a sign, an experience we cannot deny or a natural leading? To be honest, I answer the question of how I was called to chaplaincy differently each time I am asked. Sometimes I talk about my church family who taught me how to take a personal experience of faith and learn to love the world. Other times I talk about having majors in pre-med and religion and realizing that I like to socialize too much to buckle down in medical school. And other times I talk about early mentors in chaplaincy—I wanted to be like them.

But, I am not sure those explanations capture the life journey that takes a middle class woman from North Carolina and lands her in a trailer park with an elderly man with a past a mile long and a heart the size of Alaska and sharing

communion in the last days of his life. Those answers don't account for the nights I, like other chaplains, have had weary, heart-heavy walks to the car after having watched a family's life altered forever by a diagnosis or death and thinking, *how exactly did I get here?* Nor do they explain the tremendous feeling of honor that a chaplain has for the invitation into the intimate experience of another's life, an experience that defines hope and faith in ways that defy words.

I have the privilege of being the chaplain in the University of Virginia Cancer Center in the outpatient clinics. Every day, I meet people who are dealing with cancer and its devastating impact on their lives. In this setting, we know for months and years our patients, their families, their pets, their hobbies, their dreams, their disappointments. Helping them to work through spiritual questions that cancer inevitably brings is a profound and life focusing experience. I may not be able to fundamentally define calling, but I do know that most of the lessons I have learned about where I have been and where I am going as a chaplain have come from the patients I have encountered in my ministry.

One of the patients I met early in my chaplaincy was Billy. He was a taxi driver. When he walked into our cancer support group and started telling the patients corny jokes, I wanted to kindly and quietly kick him out of the group. Little did I know that Billy had walked into that group not only to care for his fellow cancer patients, not only to make us all love him through the balance of his life, but he walked into that group to become a spiritual guide for me.

Billy began by reminding me of the gift of laughter. Where I might be working to help a patient or family member to express their anticipatory grief, as I was taught in seminary or CPE, Billy was reaching out to fellow cancer patients of all walks of life and all ages, saying, “welcome to the family,” telling them some stupid joke that suddenly made the fear drain right out of their faces. From this, Billy taught me that we should never take ourselves too seriously. Whether we are driving a taxi or having prayer with a frightened patient, life is to be lived, fully, with joy less we lose what helps us get up and face each new day.

The next surprise Billy had for us was the beautiful artwork he brought to support group after he decided that advanced cancer was not going to stop him from taking an

(continued on page 9)

Isabel and Krakatoa

By Barbara Jackson

Hurricane Isabel turned some lives upside down. Broken trees, broken houses, no water, no power, alfresco cooking or no cooking, cold water baths or no baths! The inconveniences were myriad, the devastation widespread. Some sections of Richmond looked like a war zone, coastal areas were swept clean, and flooding was widespread. Some people who did not heed warnings to evacuate found their lives in peril.

Our family's attention to disasters, here or elsewhere, is a long-standing preoccupation since my husband is one of the many Baptist saints who turn to those in need of food or shelter after flood or hurricane. This year, it was Virginia's turn to be on the receiving end. This year, it was "our hurricane." Baptists from all over converged on Virginia to fix meals, clear debris, cut trees, and probably will be assisting in rebuilding for months to come.

Such a scenario prompted many thoughts and theologizing. Here are some of my thoughts.

Natural disaster is no respecter of persons. The ill wind blows on the good and the bad. Those who ask, "why me?" are personalizing impersonal forces. Storm damage seemed to be entirely random. We learn from Job that God did not will that one person would suffer and another not. God does not protect Christian believers from peril, despite the prayers from believers such as Pat

"Natural disaster is no respecter of persons. The ill wind blows on the good and the bad. Those who ask, 'why me?' are personalizing impersonal forces."

Robertson. Unfortunately, he was not able to persuade God to deflect the storm from his headquarters in Virginia Beach.

We sometimes call such events, at least the insurance industry does, "acts of God" — in contrast to willful destruction, vandalism, acts of war or terrorist devastation. And there are those who term violent storms the work of "Mother Nature." That kind of thinking is probably more on target, for no doubt storms arise because of heat over the Atlantic, the rotation and tilt of the planet, the dipping or not dipping of the jet stream, and so forth.

In recent years, I have become a weather junkie. The satellite pictures from outer space of the earth are truly a marvel of this era. On television we could see the widespread spiral pattern of the hurricane, note the position of the eye, chart the progression of its movement by latitude and longitude and predict landfall.

Then there are the beautiful and costly volumes we find in the library of photographs taken from space that show earth in all its manifestations: oceans, mountains, rivers, green verdant farmland, bleak orange desert. We can even note the positions of fault lines such as the San Andreas. The photographs of planetary detail are truly awe-inspiring.

I am reading a book now called *Krakatoa*, by Simon Winchester, about the volcano in Java that exploded in 1883. That event marked the beginning, the author stated, of the phenomenon that would later be termed the "global village," that is, the understanding that all inhabitants on the globe share a common air, a common economy, and a common humanity. We share the lifeboat we call Earth. One reason that the eruption can be termed the beginning of global thinking is that it occurred shortly after the laying of the transoceanic cable, which made possible instantaneous reporting of the event and its devastation. The volcanic event was widely reported in both tabloids and solid newspapers all around the world.

Krakatoa was one of the largest volcanoes in the world before it blew its top. Ashes from the eruption were cast into the upper atmosphere and affected weather patterns for decades by lowering the planet's temperature worldwide: crops failed, winter dipped into southern regions, atmospheric particles obscured the sun and produced colorful sunsets.

There have been other such catastrophic events. For instance, the 1815 eruption of Tambora (also in Indonesia) caused a worldwide lowering of average temperature that led New England farmers to claim "the year without summer." Such worldwide disruptions caused crop failures around the world and contributed to the floods of immigrants fleeing famine and seeking to save their families. Think of Joseph's father and brothers going to Egypt during a famine to secure food. Another example might be the island of Thera in the Mediterranean which blew its top in the second millennium B.C. Some attribute the parting of the Red Sea to its resulting tsunami. Others think Thera might have been the prototype of Atlantis. Such speculation may yield to research some day.

For years science has concentrated on the *microcosm*: cells, infectious agents, subatomic particles, biological and chemical processes. Now new technological marvels and breakthrough understandings have enabled a look at the *macrocosm*: the planet and the cosmos. We know now about plate tectonics, fault lines, convection and subduction of the earth's crust. We know what causes hurricanes and volcanic eruptions. We know the importance of rapid communication made possible now not so much by transoceanic cables but by wireless phones, satellite dishes, the internet and email. The worldwide web (www...) is truly worldwide in its far-reaching tentacles.

My final thought is how interconnected we are as people. When Iraqis bleed, we bleed. When Christians pray to God (an English word for the supreme being) we share a spirituality with the Muslim who prays to God (Arabic word for God is Allah). Our God is the creator and sustainer. Allah is creator and sustainer. People of every culture and every generation exercise a spirituality that has honored the creator and sustainer. To be sure, Christians believe that God has revealed Himself as good and benevolent rather than angry and vindictive. However, the macrocosmic look demands an appreciation for multiculturalism in understandings of deity and tolerance of differences of expression of spirituality.

Barbara Jackson is the editor of Synergy.

The Bookshelf

Mercer University Press announces three new publications related to Baptist history and theology, two of which will be of interest to historians of 19th century religious thought and particularly of women's influence. The third is a treatise on the theology of John Smyth, 17th century Separatist whose leadership paved the way for the first General Baptist Church in England. Mercer Press offers a 20% discount on orders placed over the internet [www.mupress.org]. The web page for its Baptist series focuses on the academic study of Baptists.

Southern Baptist Sisters in Search of Status, 1845–2000, by David T. Morgan. "When in 1845 the Southern Baptist Convention became the biggest Protestant splinter group in history—over the issue of slave ownership—women were expected to occupy a place subordinate to men. Since they were to be silent in church, giving their money was the only way for Southern Baptist women to make a contribution.... The author documents that in the new millennium Southern Baptist women are officially back where they started more than 150 years ago."

The Influential Spiritual Writings of Anne Dutton, Eighteenth-Century British Baptist Woman Writer. Letters, Volume 1. Joann Ford Watson, compiler and editor. "Women theologians in the eighteenth century were a rarity.... This alone would make her literary legacy significant.... She became known on both sides of

the Atlantic through her extensive writings, including tracts, treatises, poems, hymns, and letters." For those who had a scruple about the lawfulness of printing anything written by a woman, she stated that she "wrote not for herself but only for the glory of God and the good of souls." Her works impacted evangelical revival in England and America.

The Theology of John Smyth: Puritan, Separatist, Baptist, Mennonite, by Jason K. Lee. "During a writing career of only ten years, Smyth successively produced works of Puritan, Separatist, Baptist, and Mennonite thought. After accepting Mennonite beliefs, Smyth and a majority of his congregation petitioned to join the Mennonites in Amsterdam. However, before the union could be achieved, Smyth died of tuberculosis. Under Thomas Helwys's leadership, the portion of Smyth's congregation that did not join the Mennonites returned to England and established the first General Baptist Church. While most studies of Smyth and his successors have approached the material with predominantly historical concerns, ... Jason Lee is the first scholar to investigate Smyth's theology." Lee provides an analysis of Smyth's understanding of Scripture, covenant, atonement, Christology, and Church-state relations.

[Annotations excerpted from the Mercer University Press email announcement.]

Goins-Eplee... from page 7

art class at the Senior Center. From this, came a lesson in dreams. We are all born with gifts and talents and abilities. Life in its complexities can derail our dreams or cause us to lose focus of our passions. As long as we are alive and are healthy enough, we need to keep returning and renewing our dreams and passions.

I think that being called into the ministry is just that. It is taking a good hard look at *who am I?* and using that information to reach out, care and try to make a difference in the world.

Then, just when we thought we had gotten to know Billy, he surprised us by explaining that he had been a scoundrel most of his life. His new goals were to heal the broken relationships with his family and help anyone who needed him. He helped group members who were too sick or too alone with anything from moving their apartment to driving to doctor's appointments.

This third lesson from Billy is what I have come to believe is the secret of life. Billy could have sunk into despair as a result of his cancer diagnosis. He could have

shriveled up in shame and disgrace that his life had not been a reflection of goodness and caring. But his faith taught him grace. And grace made him reach out from his own tragedy and care for others.

Faith and grace have everything to do with calling, whether it is to chaplaincy or anything else. A calling is not a static, one-time experience that determines someone's life once and forever. Calling is dynamic and messy and sometimes involves making mistakes and starting over. Calling is throwing ourselves into life, honing our skills and talents and genuinely learning that calling is not about "me" but about the person in front of me that needs my care. It is about what makes us laugh and love. It is about finding our gifts and dreams and turning them into a life path and then, sometimes, doing it all over again.

My prayer: may our journeys have a deep base of faith and the flexibility to follow the explosions that life throws our way with courage, creativity and hope.

Susan Goins-Eplee is chaplain at University of Virginia Cancer Center, Charlottesville

WORD STUDY

THE LAST WORD

Woman Words

By Barbara Jackson

In his poem, Robert Browning asks “How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.” In like manner, in this essay I ask, Woman, how do I call thee? Let me count the ways.

There are hundreds of words that refer to woman, words that describe, disparage, caricature, idealize, satirize, demean, adore, put down, elevate—and so on.

A book that came to my attention recently, not new but new to me, is *Womanwords: A Dictionary of Words About Women* (Henry Holt & Co., 1992) by Jane Mills, a London writer. The book attempts to depict in encyclopedic format the relation between society, culture and language. The words related to woman are explored through a comprehensive definition, an exploration of etymology and related words, and a thorough survey of uses and connotations throughout history and in current usage.

To provide a structure for examination, the author attempts to categorize *womanwords* according to their function. For instance, some words depict woman as animal: *bat, bird, bitch, cow, filly, minx, nag, sow, vixen*, to name just a few. You get the concept. Or how about woman and her appearance: *bag, broad, dish, floozy, hag, jezebel, pig, slattern, tawdry, trollop*. There is woman as clothing: *bloomer, petticoat, skirt*. In the book the author designates nearly forty of such categories: woman as deceiver, woman as destroyer, as edible, as emasculator, as goddess, woman and the home, woman as property, woman infantilized, old, promiscuous, temptress, virgin, whore, wife, witch.

Naming and defining is a prerogative of power. Many of the words used for women were given by men to trivialize and insult, to give a pejorative connotation, to degrade and smirk—uses that in recent years have been called “sexism.” Sexist language has long been a target for change by women who strive for dignity and rewards in the marketplace and in society.

We look now at a few words. Some words we have touched upon in this space in previous essays. But always there is more to learn, new nuances, new connections.

Woman. Woman is from Old English *wifman*, (*wif*, meaning woman, and *man*, meaning humankind), that is, an adult female person. Such a construct is prone to false etymologies. There are those that see in the compound justification for the view that woman has no being apart from a husband. Another false etymology is that *wif* is formed from the word meaning to weave: thus proving that a woman’s place was in the home and at her loom. In like manner, the 15th century witch hunters claim that *femina*, meaning woman, derived from *fe* (faith) and *minus* because their faith was less strong than the male.

Whether to use the word woman, female, or lady remains a problem even today. I am reminded of the Saturday Night Live skits that featured “Church Lady.” I ask, why are we called women at work or home or in literature, but at church we are ladies? Beats me!

Chaste/chastity. The development of *chastity* as an ideal is related to the history of Christianity and to that of women’s economic position. In a patrilineal society, chastity becomes a most valued possession. Chastity was expressed as humility and interpreted as submissiveness. The purpose was the need for men to have no legal doubts about the legitimacy of their heirs to property or title. The chastity belt came into use in the 13th century as a device to ensure the fidelity of the wife. The horror, pain and infection the instruments caused are unimaginable today. The obsession with female chastity was not only a matter of control of women, who were thought generally to be more lascivious than men, but a man’s honor was at stake as well. A wife’s lack of chastity cast a slur on the man’s virility and his lack of ability to run his own household.

Maid/maiden. *Maiden* was first used in English around the tenth century to denote girl or young unmarried woman and later a female virgin. At first the term connoted rank and dignity and was applied to the Virgin Mary. By the end of the 14th century *maid* had degenerated and was applied to female domestic servants. The primary qualities of a maid or maiden were chastity and virginity. Other attributes of a maiden were coyness, modesty, timidity, kindness, and submission. A related word is **maidenhead** to indicate a young woman’s inexperience and unviolated sexuality. Maiden as adjective implies inexperience and is used in “maiden voyage (i.e., first), maiden soil or metal (i.e., unworked or unsullied).

A related idea is the “**old maid**,” to describe the unmarried woman, a term indicating the height of uselessness (to men). Synonyms are spinster, hag, crone. The old maid is thought to be prim, conservative, nervous, fussy, prudish or prude. Here then is the epitome of the double standard. The unmarried man may be a bachelor who prefers to live alone, may be homosexual, or a celibate who chooses a religious commitment, but the woman who is unmarried suffers the opprobrium of the castout who could not get a man or who could not share a life.

Another related idea has to do with “**maiden name**,” a usage that dates to the 16th century. By the 18th century, women began to lose their given names as well, as in “Mrs. Tom Jones.” It was Elizabeth Cady Stanton who insisted on retaining both her maiden name and her personal name when she married Mr. Stanton.

continued next page

CALENDAR

Jackson ... from page 10

In the slave society slaves had no name other than a personal name, and even those were carefully prescribed. For instance, slaves in the early days could not have a Christian name, such as Mary or John, but were given names from pagan sources, such as Plato or Sambo. When blacks took last names, they were often the name of their former master or chosen from national heroic figures (like Washington or Jackson). This is the reason in recent decades for the assumption by blacks of Muslim or African-sounding names or the addition of "X" to a name (e.g., Malcolm X). Feminist usage turned to the simple expedient of adding the husband's last name to the end of the birth, not "maiden," name.

There is much more fodder in *Womanwords* that could be used for this essay, but alas space is gone. The brief discussions of *madam, testify, witch and whore*, among other ideas, were fascinating. Maybe another time

SOURCE: *Womanwords: A Dictionary of Words About Women*, by Jane Mills. Henry Holt & Co., 1992.

Barbara Jackson is the editor of SYNERGY and a member of River Road Church, Richmond.

NOVEMBER

- 13 VBWIM annual meeting and dinner. 5:30 p.m., Marriott Hotel, Richmond. Earlene Jessee, speaker. \$25 non-members, \$23 members. Mail reservation to VBWIM, Box 70970, Richmond VA 23255.
- 13-14 Baptist General Association of Virginia annual meeting. VBWIM will have a booth in the exhibit hall.

2004

FEBRUARY

- 13-14 "Ready to Listen: College Women Gathering to Explore a Call to Ministry." Conference sponsored by VBWIM. Omni Hotel, Charlottesville. 6:30 p.m. Friday through lunch on Saturday. Expenses covered by the Samuel Project of BTSR. Attendance by nomination. Applications due by Dec. 1, 2003. See details inside.

MARCH

- 12-13 CBF of Virginia annual meeting. Manassas. VBWIM will have an exhibit booth.

MEMBERSHIP for 2004 Virginia Baptist women in ministry

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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

Reservation for Dinner on Nov. 13 _____
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 Membership for 2004
 Regular —\$20 (Student—\$10) _____
 Synergy book—\$12 (Nonmember —\$15) _____
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Membership fee is \$20 for one year (students, \$10). Members joining in summer or fall will be credited for the following year. Membership includes announcements of conferences and other events, and discounts on conferences. Please enclose check with this form and send to: VBWIM, Box 70970, Richmond, VA 23255. For information, telephone Judy Bailey, 804-740-4037, or email Judith@bledsoebailey.com

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SYNERGY

WOMEN IN THE NEWS

New Positions and Changes

Betsy and Jim Hill are directors of youth and children's ministries at First Church, Virginia Beach.

Katrina Salter is minister to children at Rosalind Hills Church, Roanoke.

Ashley and John Weeks are youth ministers at Floyd Church, Floyd.

Connie Madden was named interim associate pastor, North Riverside Church, Newport News.

Virginia White is associate pastor for outreach and spiritual development at Glencarlyn Road Church, Falls Church.

Andrea Sheppard is minister of music and children at First Church, Gate City.

Barbara Hollowell is minister to youth and single adults at First Church, Ashland.

Melody Irby is pastor of worship at Roanoke Valley Community Church, Roanoke.

Lisa Hague is minister of youth at Gwathmey Church, Ashland.

Dawn Bradley is minister of music and children at Tabernacle Church, Salem.

Bonnie Degnan is director of children's ministries at Plymouth Haven Church, Alexandria.

Glenda Inman is minister of music at Villa Heights Church, Martinsville.

Kathy Dresler is interim minister of students at First Church, Newport News.

Carolyn Krisha is director of children's ministries at Bonsack Church, Roanoke.

Louise Daniel is music director at First Church, Petersburg.

Amber Sloan is associate minister of youth and students at Central Church, Richmond.

Heather Miller is director of children's ministries at Branch's Church, Richmond.

Ordination

Kimberley New Wyatt was ordained to the gospel ministry on June 29. She and her husband Marc have served as missionaries with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.