



## Congregations are Families Family Systems and Congregations is Theme for Spring Workshop

Ministering to congregations using the insights provided by family systems theory will be the focus of Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry when they meet Saturday, March 1, 1997, for the annual Spring Workshop.

The Rev. Betty Pugh will lead the conference based on doctor of ministry work done at the School of Theology at Virginia Union University. Formerly chair of Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry, Betty is minister of church and family life and associate pastor at Grace Baptist Church in Richmond. She is a graduate of the University of Richmond and Andover-Newton Theological School.



*The Rev. Betty Pugh*

The conference will begin with registration at 9:30 a.m., Lingle Hall, Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, 3406 Brook Road, Richmond, and will close at 3 p.m. Conference fee includes lunch.

A list of suggested reading is provided on page 6 of this paper for those interested in delving into the topic ahead of time. Some titles will be for sale at the Campus Bookstore.

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## Ex Cathedra

by Ellen Gwathmey, convener,  
Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry

Do you remember those machines that dispense coffee and hot chocolate in paper cups? You put your money in, make a selection, push the right buttons, a cup comes down and is filled with the beverage of your choice, and the machine cuts off at just the right moment—most of the time. Occasionally, the cup overflows, and so does the safety tray, and the liquid even runs onto the floor. It's a case of having too much too soon.

Sometimes the Bible seems like that to me. I open it, begin to read during morning prayers, evening devotions, Sunday school and sermon preparations, and the words pour over me, swamping me. Then along comes Lent, the season in the church year during which we're encouraged to make room for even more Bible study. Apparently I am not doing enough already! My initial reaction is simply to walk away. After all, if I'm overwhelmed by what I get now when I read, how shall I make sense out of even more? Do you ever feel this way?

Perhaps there is another way to survive the Lenten season. Read less. Instead of studying whole passages during the next forty days, study the words of Jesus one by one. Put a microscope to the Bible and discover, literally, what's in a word. Look at the word in its context. Meditate upon it. Seek to understand its particular significance and meaning.

In the rush of life and the busyness of daily routine, we have little time or space to know whether we are seeking anything. Yet, feelings of unease break through. We sense that there must be something more. A spiritual journey can only begin when we know what it is we are seeking.

"What do you seek?" Jesus asked in John 1:38 when he saw two of John the Baptist's disciples following him. These men were not just being curious or nosy. They were seeking something and were completely serious about their quest. Jesus recognized this seriousness. Until now these two had thought that John the Baptist was the one they sought, but he had pointed them away from himself toward another. So they followed him and Jesus challenged their search.

"What do you want? What do you seek?" he asked. This seeking is more than merely wanting, because sometimes we can't know what we want until we've set out on the search. It is as we look that we discover the possibilities. It is as we seek for deeper meaning and purpose that we discover a greater truth than ordinary life and experience have taught us. And as we seek, we can find encouragement in the thought that the answer to our search is at the same time seeking us. Did not Jesus say that "the Son of Man comes to seek and to save that which is lost?"

Sometimes Bible passages have become so familiar that they lose their meaning. I read them, just as I have so many times before, and yet I'd find no new insights. Perhaps by allowing Jesus' words to speak to me one at a time, I shall plumb new depths. Paul wrote to the church at Colosse, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (3:16a).

I'm going to try a different way of Bible study during Lent this year—one word of Jesus' each day. Maybe you'll journey with me or discover another way to enhance your study of the Word. However you choose to seek, may this Lenten season bring you deeper understanding and new illumination.

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

## Report of VBWIM Steering Committee

The steering committee of Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry met in January to formulate plans for 1997. Besides the Spring Conference on Family Systems publicized on the front of this paper, the group made plans for a breakfast drop-in at the March 16 session of Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Virginia when it meets at Huguenot Road Church in Richmond. This event was held last year in Lynchburg and proved to be a welcome venue for friendly conversation along with coffee and juice. While no program is planned, the breakfast is seen as an opportunity to build good will.

Other plans considered at the January steering committee concerned upcoming newsletters, memberships, applications for incorporation and non-profit status, and the fall dinner to be held in conjunction with the Baptist General Association, this year in Roanoke.

Anne Rosser agreed to serve as the membership chair. In that capacity she will contact old members for renewals, welcome new people, and coordinate membership campaigns. [See related story on page 5]

Creating excitement were considerations to involve persons around the state in a regional capacity. More about that later. If you are interested in being that kind of regional contact, please call Ellen Gwathmey and let her know. The steering committee meets only two or three times a year. Most work is done by individuals behind the scenes. The next meeting is June 12.

Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry is a professional and advocacy association for those who consider what they do to be ministry, and is open to both women and men. The work is supported by memberships and contributions from churches. Participation on VBWIM Steering Committee is open to anyone willing to give time to planning and coordinating projects.

SYNERGY, the newsletter of Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry, is published in Richmond, Va. Membership is \$20 per year (\$10, students). Manuscript submissions should be mailed to SYNERGY editor, 9211 Whitmont Dr., Richmond, VA 23294.

Editorial Board: Lisa Allison, Rhonda Biller, Ginny Brown; Ellen Gwathmey, chair; Holly J. Irvin, treasurer; Barbara Jackson, newsletter editor; Anne Rosser, memberships; B.J. Seymour; Patti Sunday-Winters; Alana Woolley. ©1997

## Her Story, My Story: The Power of Hearing and Telling

by Jessica C. Price

“Lawd,” Phoeby breathed out heavily, “Ah don growed ten feet higher from jus’ listenin’ tuh you, Janie. Ah ain’t satisfied wid mahself no mo”

—Zora Neale Hurston, *Our Eyes Were Watching God*.

In two short sentences, Phoebe encapsulates the essence and power of *story*. For centuries, stories have carried with them magic and mysticism. Stories, in oral and written tradition, in all languages and cultures, have been used to instruct, inflict pain, cleanse and heal. They bear all we as a people have been and dream to be.

### Telling Her Story—Jo Anna speaks:

#### “The Fable of the Unique Girl” (excerpts)

Once upon a time there lived a Unique Girl who believed in the myth of the perfect family. She believed that she would be able to make everything right for her children in spite of the fact that the family she was growing up in was not only imperfect but oppressive. Her house had barbed-wire fences around it. Black iron bars covered the windows. Every day Unique Girl dreamed about breaking through those confinements. She planned her escape for fifteen long years, from the first day she remembered peering through the bars of her baby crib....

Unique Girl learned the hard way not to question rules. One day she learned that her brother had been disowned by Rigid Mother and Angry Father. He had been sent away to a far country, and Unique Girl didn’t know where he was....She realized that if she did not follow the rigid rules, she might also be banished to a far country. Unique Girl was afraid. Bur she told no one of her fear. Instead, she resolved to be good and perfect and especially to follow the rigid rules....Unique Girl learned that if Unique and Creative Children disobeyed house rules, the Prison-House Inspector could have them sent to an even worse place....

Fear of such a restrictive and punitive existence caused Unique Girl to create another place to live. This place existed in her fantasy world. There she created a perfect and loving family....Unique Girl’s fantasy kept her alive. When Rigid Mother’s rules and plans were too oppressive to bear, Unique Girl would pretend that she lived with the fantasy family who accepted her for exactly who she was. In the fantasy family, Unique Girl would not ... have to scrub Rigid Mother’s goose houses, collect the golden eggs, pick the garden greens....

Unique Girl decided very early that she wasn’t going to be like Rigid Mother when she grew up. She would be her own Unique, Creative Self. Rigid Mother was inflexible, domineering and insensitive. Unique Girl would be patient, kind, sensitive, open-minded, gentle, understanding, calm, and considerate, just like her fantasy family members. She would teach her children love and

*Jessica Price is a student at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond. She wrote this article for the class taught by Linda Bridges on “Women in the Church.” The assignment was to write on the most influential Baptist woman in one’s own life. Jessica chose to write about her mother.*

*Jo Anna Price is a pastoral counselor at Peninsula Pastoral Counseling Center in Newport News. She is also active in Williamsburg Baptist Church, where her husband, W. Wayne Price, is pastor. A former French teacher, she is a graduate of Carson-Newman College in Tennessee, with a doctorate in French from the University of Kentucky and a master’s in education and counseling from William and Mary.*

sharing; she would tell them stories about other unique children, and she would laugh when they sang....

Then, Older Daughter arrived at adolescence, faced with the generational dilemma—to stay or to leave, to escape into a fantasy world or to reveal the iron bars and barbed wire fences that she saw but no one else seemed aware of. The decisions weighed heavily ... and her choices sent echoes and reverberations throughout the Perfect Family for many years. And her choices forced [the Perfect Family] to make certain choices ... either another escape from severe restrictions, or a cooperative effort at rearranging Unique Girl’s fantasy so that all of them could help create a good world for themselves—together.

—“Foreword” by Jo Anna Price, from W. Wayne Price, *Confessions of a Perfect Parent* (used by permission)

## MENTORING

### Telling Her Story—Jessica speaks

[Ed. note: This section of the paper is omitted because of space limitations. Here, Jessica sketches her mother’s life, recounting her childhood as a foster child, the insecurities and harsh experiences, the devastation of losing her foster brother when he left home. Here too is recorded her mother’s attempts to be the model daughter, her accomplishments in music and education, her honors in college, her joint ministry in her husband’s pastorates, her drive and ambition to achieve.]

Jessica writes: “Currently, Jo Anna is a pastoral counselor, mediator, play therapist and often, dietitian. She counsels families, heterosexual and homosexual couples, singles, teenagers, children,

(please turn to page 4)

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**(Price...from page 3)**

the molested and raped, the mentally deficient and deranged, alcoholics, those with eating disorders and multiple personality disorders, and so on. She is also a conference leader and public speaker, women's studies and Sunday school teacher, substitute organist, etc. Still solidly grounded in her background as a Baptist woman, she continues to seek wholeness in Christ for herself and all with whom she comes into contact."

*How did this happen? And how did Jo Anna's story become Jessica's story?*

**Her Story, My Story: Jessica speaks**

If you have not made the connection, Jo Anna Sellman Saegusa Price is my mother. The dictates of proper, literary etiquette insist upon the impropriety of writing a formal paper about one's relatives; it is, after all, too easy and personal! Nevertheless, in the face of the assignment to write about the most influential Baptist woman to me, I cannot write about any other woman. I have been fortunate, for there have been many Baptist women, both historical and contemporary, who have shaped and molded my own personhood. Each deserves her own paper; but it proves no contest to pick just one.

Day in, day out, all 22 years of my life, I "mentored" under a woman more Christ-like than any I have ever met. Jo Anna is unique, unassuming, thoughtful and constantly giving, spiritually seeking, open, loving, ingenious and intelligent, gentle, forgiving but firm, determined and always working, creative, committed and so much more. It stands an amazing fact that given her life story she has retained and refined all of these qualities. What a model for any person; as at Christ's table, everyone is welcomed to Jo Anna's "table!"

I have observed and taken note of my mother's actions, choices, joys, and struggles on a daily basis. I have traveled with her to search the painful family history she never wanted to know; I have taken daily walks with her and worked as her secretary; I have fought with her and made peace with her. Jointly we have listened and watched each other as the task of womanhood bore down on each of us. When my mother is no longer here as my model, I will have only my reflection; what faces me in the mirror will, to a great degree, be measured by her being.

Innumerable authors and artists have attempted to capture the mystery of familial cords. I struggle to explain this same phenomenon. I find it difficult to make my mother's story my own while at the same time maintaining my own autonomy. As an illustration of this dilemma I mention an incident when I was just seven.

It was close to dinner time and I was hungry. My mother told me I could not have anything to eat, but I was determined. I stole a stack of saltine crackers while she had her back turned and ran with them. Discovering what I had done, my mother chased me in circles around the house. The chase went on until I ran into the piano bench and dropped the crackers. My mother snatched them up. To this day, I am still trying to get my crackers back!

There is a story in each of us that must be told and retold in order to receive inner peace or salvation. By giving voice to the story of my mother, I give voice to my own inner battles and search for God's continual grace. The circular chase goes on as I attempt to win back my crackers.

My mother's fable is autobiography, the story of a baby born and treated as a societal nothing. In the fable she remembers what she does not want to forget. She has, through love and example, worked to better herself and pass those things on to her loved ones and children—remaining all the while an active, committed leader, a Baptist woman to celebrate and emulate.

More specifically, why is her story magical, mystical and able to make me feel "ten feet higher?"

My mother has served in almost every major role of women in the Baptist denomination: counselor, circle member, committee chair and member, choir director and member, conference leader and participant, deacon, hostess, minister's wife, nursery director and worker, organist and pianist, student, teacher, and so on. Not only has she served in all of these positions and more, she has done so consistently. I remember only one Sunday my mother was not in church. That Sunday she was home to take care of a sick child: me.

When asked, my mother admitted that her theme throughout life has been, "I can do better than that (referring to the work of another person or organization)!" Her continual search for her own truth and her

commitment to the Christian faith—despite the fact that many times her immediate family, her husband's family, her church and her community were unsupportive or ignorant of her efforts—laid for me the kind of model I saw in no other woman.

For instance, when my mother was writing her dissertation, she left my sister in the nursery after Sunday school and went home to work for an hour before her family returned. One of the women in the nursery told her that she had never heard of a minister's wife doing such a thing. Apparently that woman never wrote a dissertation!

And again, when my mother went back to school for a counseling degree, she did it alone, working full time and rearing a family—while at the same time trying to both uphold and battle societal expectations of a minister's wife and mother.

As a child I expected my mother to be like most of friends' mothers: June Cleaver housewives who made cookies and cleaned house, always at the beck and call of their families. She cooked and attempted to keep up with her family and house the best she was able, but my mother's mind was and is ever on the all-important search for something more important than putting together a dish for a pot-luck supper or finding the right bed linen for her guest room—which I might add she did anyway! She carried out the mundane tasks of life with a spiritual distraction that has always separated her from the mediocre and the best. My mother has little interest in practicality and facts; her interests lie in healing people and their pain through God's grace. She is constantly reading a new book or watching the latest film on people and relationships, always figuring out new ways to help people help themselves, then waiting for the salvation to come.

I am reminded of the story of the woman who goes to the water's edge and is urged to follow the example of locusts who make a bridge with their bodies so that the rest can cross over safely. The woman asks, "Who will pass?" and is answered, "The whole human race." The woman turns down the dark path to the river. That woman could be my mother.

In seeking to bridge the stream of life and make the way clear for those who follow, my

*(please turn to page 11)*

## Editorial

### Mentoring

by Barbara Jackson

This newsletter carries several messages about the importance of mentoring. By happenstance, the national Baptist Women in Ministry journal featured an article on the same topic. [See below] I guess great minds run together.

No, the reality is that mentoring is an important issue. To answer the question, “who are your role models?” is to a great extent to reveal yourself. Your mother ... your teacher ... your friend ... your colleague? What characteristics do you emulate? What are your goals? Mentors come in all shapes and fill several functions.

As the older child, I felt I had a mentoring role with my little sister when we growing up, to help her understand things, to be her advocate. Yet today when she is a grown-up professional woman with responsibilities, a leader and recipient of recognitions, our respective roles with each other are not so clear. She could mentor me. We continually joke about “role reversal.”

When I was starting out in the working world, one of the standards I was expected to meet was the ability to work under supervision. That means I needed to be teachable. No one likes a smart aleck who knows everything. Nor can the smart aleck accomplish much if she does not know her strengths or recognize where she is lacking. So, the mentor not only helps in self-understanding, the mentor helps one to see ahead, to formulate goals, to see possibilities, to point a direction.

Another theme in this issue of *Synergy* is the upcoming conference on Ministering to Churches and Congregations as Family Systems. Roles within families—roles within churches. So alike! Bicker at home? ... troublemaker at church. Peacemaker at home ... probably one who eases tensions at church. And so on. Want to know more? Come to the conference and learn.

**Folio, the newsletter for Baptist Women in Ministry** (Winter 1997) featured an article on mentoring, “Blossoming Forth: Women in Ministry and Mentoring,” by Lela Hendrix, staff development coordinator for University of Mississippi Medical Center in Jackson. In her article she described a variety of mentoring relationships: teacher, sponsor, coach, etc., and some common traits of the mentor. The article is well worth reading for the insights it provides on such an important relationship.

For further information about the national Baptist Women in Ministry organization, write 741 N. 31st Street, Kansas City, KS 66102. The yearly membership is \$30 (regular) or \$20 (student/retired) and includes *Folio*. Subscription to *Folio* only is \$15. Baptist Women in Ministry is located on the campus of Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City.

The third theme of this newsletter is community. Of course, you see the connection. It’s not really a separate theme. It’s what we are all about: creating bonds of relationship. Getting to know each other. Establishing friendships, knowing who could be a mentor, a learner, a friend. Creating a oneness in the faith, a *koinonia*.

The women of the early church and later knew that in community there is strength. The anchorites, the abbesses, the mystics, as well as the lay persons who fled to the convents for refuge and succor, knew that women together could accomplish much. They could find a oneness with God, a community with each other, a respite from despair.

Today women ministers and women who are not clergy but who see what they do as ministry (and I am one of those) need each other. We need to learn from each other. We need the friendships. We need to present a united face when we are beset by forces we cannot control. We need to help each other alter the attitudes of those who do not understand our motives, our sense of calling. We need to speak out for injustice and ignorance.

We are thankful for each other. We are community.

*Barbara Jackson is the editor of SYNERGY*

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### Anne Rosser joins VBWIM Steering Committee

Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry hopes to accelerate efforts to involve Virginia women ministers and supporters in the organization. Anne Rosser joins hands with the Steering Committee in this new ministry direction. In addition to heading planned membership campaigns, Anne will also be available for correspondence and counsel in a mentoring and friendship relationship.

The Rev. Dr. Anne Rosser was the associate pastor at Hampton Baptist Church until her retirement. She and her husband, the late Aubrey (Buddy) Rosser, Sr., became co-pastors at Bainbridge-Southampton Baptist Church in Richmond soon after her completion of graduate work at Union Seminary in Richmond. She was the first Southern Baptist woman to earn a Doctor of Ministry degree. Anne pioneered the ministry role for women in Virginia and created a model for many others to follow.

Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry is delighted that Anne is willing to lend her talents to further the goals of the organization and to help young women become community with each other in the context of ministry.

# RESOURCES

## Winter Extravaganza

by Sharon James

Each year in the dead, dull days of winter, Franklin Baptist Church has a Winter Extravaganza. It is an all-day retreat held on a Saturday in February and designed to address one specific topic. The education committee begins work on the extravaganza in September by developing a theme for the day and a topic of discussion. The theme is carried out with appropriate costumes and decorations. The planning is as much fun as the retreat—with committee members brainstorming outlandish ideas that often find their way into the retreat agenda.

In 1995 the committee decided to create "Discovery Land," a place where participants could explore how gifts of personality enhance spiritual gifts. Amid theme park decorations, an assortment of midway games set the mood for the day. "Monte Hall," assisted by his glamorous sidekicks, energized the crowd with his versions of "Let's Find a Gift."

And then, down to work. Using the Keirsey Temperament Sorter (found in *Please Understand Me* by David Keirsey and Marilyn Bates), everyone determined his/her personality type. Using overhead cells and small and large group discussion, we delved into how personalities work together and against each other: What irritates each type? How does each type irritate others? What does each type appreciate and how do they express appreciation? How does each type work as part of a group? Who are the loners?

In the afternoon session, the group was given *An Inventory of Spiritual Gifts*, a self-assessment of spiritual abilities created by our pastor Dr. Roy De Brand. Again using overhead cells and small and

large group discussion, we looked at the definition of the spiritual gifts and which were our dominant gifts.

Finally, it was time for The Question: What connections do you see between your personality type and your spiritual gifts? The flood gates opened. People began to see why they felt comfortable with some kinds of ministry by not with others. They talked about how they related to other people on their committees, which spiritual gifts they should develop in light of their personality, why they could work with some church members but not with others. Their insights were not superficial or trite. Many vowed to approach church work differently, to get involved in places they had not been before.

The connections between personality type and spiritual gifts are not one hundred percent foolproof. But our folks walked away from the retreat with two truths under their belts. First, every person is fundamentally different. One key to a successful church is in recognizing and celebrating those God-given differences. Secondly, there are spiritual gifts that are immediately apparent and spiritual gifts that have yet to be developed. Knowing which gifts to develop depends on knowing who we are.

What is our Winter Extravaganza for 1997? We are off to the Wild West with cowboys and cowgirls, horses, wagons, saloon keepers and honky-tonk music. Amid the cactus and the tumbleweeds, we'll study anger and its effects on our lives. Happy trails!

*Sharon James is minister of education at Franklin Baptist Church, Franklin*

## The Bookshelf

### Suggested Books

### Ministering to Churches as Family Systems

Bowen, Murray. *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice*. Aronson, 1978.

Cosgrove, Charles H. & Dennie D. Hatfield. *Church Conflict: The Hidden Systems Behind the Fights*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994.

Friedman, Edwin H. *Generation to Generation: Family Process in Church and Synagogue*. New York: The Guilford Press, 1985.

Friedman, Edwin H. *Friedman's Fables*. The Guilford Press, 1990.

Gilbert, Roberta M. *Extraordinary Relationships*. Chronimed Publishing, 1992.

Kerr, Michael E. & Murray Bowen. *Family Evaluation*. Norton, 1988.

McGoldrick, Monica & Randy Gerson. *Genograms in Family Assessment*. W.W. Norton & Co., 1985.

Parsons, George & S. B. Leas. *Understanding Your Congregation as a System: Congregational Systems Inventory*. Alban Institute, 1993.

Richardson, Ronald W. *Family Ties That Bind: A Self-Help Guide to Change Through Family of Origin Therapy*. Washington, Self-Counsel Press, 1987.

Richardson, R. W. *Birth Order and You: How Your Sex and Position in the Family Affects Your Personality and Relationships*. Self-Counsel Press, 1990.

Richardson, R. W. *Creating a Healthier Church: Family Systems Theory:*

*Leadership, and Congregational Life*. Fortress-Augsburg, 1996.

Satir, Virginia. *Peoplemaking*. Palo Alto, Science & Behavior Books, 1976.

Steinke, Peter L. *How Your Church Family System Works: Understanding Congregations As Emotional Systems*. Alban Institute, 1994.

Steinke, Peter L. *Healthy Congregations: A Systems Approach*. Alban Institute, 1996.

Wheatley, Margaret J. *Leadership and the New Science: Learning About Organizations from an Orderly Universe*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publ. 1992.

—Bibliography provided by Betty Pugh

# SAINTS AND HEROES

## Hildegard of Bingen (1098 – 1179)

Hildegard of Bingen—abbess, mystic, musician, artist, theologian, writer—was one of a long line of religious ascetics. The antecedents of Christian asceticism arose in the first centuries of the religion as the early believers sought to live a life of spiritual growth while preparing for the next world through self-denial and prayer. By the time of Hildegard the monastic movement was in full flower. Convents and monasteries dotted the landscape of Europe.

The twelfth century was an era of great Christian expansion and influence. Chartres Cathedral was built. Eleanor of Aquitaine, Thomas à Becket, Frederick Barbarossa, Bernard of Clairvaux, Heloise and Abelard were important names in politics and church during the period.

Hildegard was placed in the care of a Benedictine monastery in Germany when she was eight years old. As a novice she was given an exceptional education by her teacher, the abbess Jutta. At eighteen, she took vows and upon Jutta's death, Hildegard at age thirty-eight became abbess. At age forty-nine, Hildegard and eighteen of her nuns left to form a new convent, Rupertsberg near Bingen.

Although she professed to have experienced visions throughout childhood, she said, "I kept it hidden until God in His grace willed to have it made manifest." She was forty when she began to write.

Her first book was *Scivias* (*Knowing the Ways*), completed in 1151. The book established her authority as a prophet and interpreter of God's visions. Using visual imagery, she described the divine life, creation and judgment. Her assistant, Richardis, and other nuns did the manuscript and exquisite illuminations based on Hildegard's designs.

Her second book of visions, *Book of Divine Words*, was finished in 1173. It too was based on her visions of the harmony of the universe and the interrelationship between humans and the cosmos. She also wrote books on medicine and natural science, allegories of vices and virtues, and a symphony composed of seventy-seven

*In this space we feature women who were forces in their own day, yet are unknown outside of theological or historical circles. Traditionally, the historian consistently dealt with politics, war and economics. Because history has ignored women in favor of the activities of the larger society, women and men working in feminist theology have sought to recover the voice of women in the church, and to bring to light women who contributed in service, spirituality and intellectual depth.*

songs arranged as devotional music for performance on feast days.

Her writings eventually came to the attention of the Pope. Bernard of Clairvaux, the leader of the Cistercians, urged Pope Eugenius to designate her a prophet. In 1148, a group of churchmen under the auspices of the Pope confirmed that God was the author of her visions and that she indeed had the gift of prophecy.

Unlike other mystics of the era, she did not live as a recluse or practice in isolation. She carried on an extensive correspondence. Men of power sought her advice. She toured towns in Germany and Switzerland preaching monastic and clerical reform. She wrote a tract against the Cathar heresy, and admonished religious and secular leaders against corruption and bad government.

In the last year of her life, she found herself in opposition to the local Church

officials in Mainz over the burial of a nobleman in the abbey cemetery. The abbey was placed in interdict. It was only through her appeal to Rome and references to her visions concerning the rightness of her action that the condemnation was lifted. Hildegard's reputation and her acknowledged access to the divine gave her the moral authority to oppose the ecclesiastical powers.

Hildegard of Bingen died in 1179. By the 14th century she was revered as a saint in the Catholic Church though not formally canonized. Today her writings are source materials for women's studies and scholarly research. Her music has been recorded and today is in demand. She is regarded as one of the most important religious writers and leading feminist theorist of medieval times.

Sources: Anderson & Zinsser, *A History of Their Own*, Vol. 1, 1988; *Illuminations of Hildegard of Bingen*, Bear & Co. 1985; Cahill, *Wise Women*, 1996; Lerner, *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness*, 1993.

*"I say to you: Since God is good, why do you despise to know his goodness? For you have eyes for seeing, ears for hearing, a heart for reflecting, hands for working, feet for walking. Through all these gifts you are capable of lifting yourself up or casting yourself down, of being asleep or awake, of eating or of fasting. Thus God created you ... But you say: 'I am not able to do good works.' And I will respond: 'You are able.... Learn to fight against yourself.'"*

—Hildegard of Bingen

# NEWS BRIEFS

■ The spring issue of the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary scholarly journal was cancelled because of denominational politics. Seminary president Ken Hemphill said the seminary journal should not serve as a forum for former faculty from other seminaries without a balanced response. Professors Molly Marshall, William Hendricks and Bill Leonard, who are moderates, had been scheduled to examine the *Baptist Faith and Message* statement in the publication in conjunction with the annual spring doctrinal study sponsored by the Sunday School Board. This year the study focuses on the *Baptist Faith and Message*, the SBC's 1963 confession of faith.

—(adapted from Associated Baptist Press)

■ The 1993 ordination of family counselor Angie Flack has led to the ouster of the counseling service of Kentucky Baptist Homes from its location in the offices of the Little Bethel Baptist Association in Madison, Ky. The ministry has moved to new quarters. And for the same reason, nearby Muhlenberg Association has taken action against Drakesburg Baptist Church, where Flack's husband is pastor. Mrs. Flack does not hold office in the church and does not consider herself to be a pastor. Opponents say her presence in that association could "open the door to other problems," such as encouraging other women to be ordained as ministers or deacons. The vote to expel the church received a majority but fell seven votes short of the necessary two-thirds.

—(adapted from Associated Baptist Press)

■ Moderates in Kentucky have taken steps to form a new Kentucky seminary to accommodate those opposed to the conservative stronghold on Southern Baptist seminaries. Paul Simmons, former professor of Christian Ethics at Southern and chair of the theological education committee of the Kentucky Baptist Fellowship, announced that the initial filing for articles of incorporation has been done. Further steps include finding a location and securing funding

—(adapted from Associated Baptist Press).

■ Molly T. Marshall received tenure and a permanent appointment to the faculty of Central Baptist Theological Seminary, to begin August 1997. She has been teaching on the faculty of Central since August 1995 as visiting professor of theology, worship and spiritual formation. Prior to 1995 she was on the faculty at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky.

—(adapted from Associated Baptist Press)

■ Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in North Carolina announced the formation of a women's studies program structured as a biblically based alternative to secular feminist programs. Mrs. Dorothy Patterson, wife of seminary president Paige Patterson, presented her plan for developing the curriculum in the recent seminary journal. She proposed an interdisciplinary program integrating theology, scripture, philosophy and history with a biblical doctrine of womanhood. Mrs. Patterson stated, "Those women who go through the women's studies program at Southeastern will be better wives and mothers and more effective women's ministry leaders."

—*The Olive Press*, Southeastern Seminary, Winter 1997

## A LITTLE HUMOR

*Gleaned from the Internet:*

### • Actual headlines •

**Drunk Gets Nine Months in Violin Case**

**Survivor of Siamese Twins Joins Parents**

**Iraqi Head Seeks Arms**

**Panda Mating Fails; Veterinarian Takes Over**

**Lung Cancer in Women Mushrooms**

**Squad Helps Dog Bite Victim**

**Juvenile Court to Try Shooting Defendant**

**If Strike isn't Settled Quickly, It May Last a While**

**Red Tape Holds Up New Bridge**

**Typhoon Rips Through Cemetery; Hundreds Dead**

**Kids Make Nutritious Snacks**

**Man Minus Ear Waives Hearing**

**Old School Pillars are Replaced by Alumni**

**Hospitals are Sued by 7 Foot Doctors**

**Some Pieces of Rock Hudson Sold at Auction**

**Sex Education Delayed, Teachers Request Training**

**Deaf Mute Gets New Hearing in Killing**

**Two Convicts Evade Noose, Jury Hung**



# WORD STUDY

## THE LAST WORD

### Communion—Fellowship— Koinonia

by Barbara Jackson

We had Communion today. We prayed together and partook of the bread and the wine (grape juice!) and sang “Blest Be the Tie.” I was a bit relaxed and comfortable in going through the rituals—after all, I have done this hundreds or thousands of times. My mind wandered. And then the minister said, “... if you are in love and fellowship with your neighbor you are invited to the table ...” That got my attention! For I was still stewing over some slight, some petty resentment—not even a new problem, a matter some months old. Was I to be the one to break the fellowship today?

And what does “to be in fellowship” mean, anyhow? I looked over the congregation, that microcosm of the church universal, and saw my neighbors. There was my friend who lost her husband last year ... and the one who is having a baby soon ... and the one who ... I could go on. Each one has a story, a private grief, a triumph, a gift of ministry or a need to be ministered. The hymn today was “For All the Saints,” a poignant reminder of the unbroken line of saints throughout the centuries who lived their faith or betrayed their faith—believers all. Just like today—the checkerboard array of faces surrounding me in church, saints all, believers all. My petty matter receded as I contemplated the enormous significance of our presence together today. I was in fellowship. We were community, a fellowship, a *koinonia*.

These three words—**community**, **fellowship**, *koinonia*—are among the rich words that Christians claim as their own. We think we know what the words mean. But let’s take a closer look.

#### Community

*Community* is defined as a group of people who share common goals, purposes and opinions. We think of a town or a neighborhood, the people of a church, the arts community, the business community, the academic community. As you see, the term can be applied to most any group.

Folk etymology would suggest that community means “a coming together as one,” a compound of *com-* and *-une*. That is not the case. Community is derived from the Latin *communis*, itself a compound derived from *com-* (together, mutual) and the root word *mei-*, meaning change, go, or move. Thus, an exchange of goods or services, a mutual exchange. Several other words derived from *mei-* have the sense of change or movement, such as *migrate*, *mutate*, *permeate*, while the words with the “exchange” sense include *municipal*, *remunerate*, and *immune*, as well as *mutual*, *common* and *community*.

Let us focus now on **community** and its many variations, which include *commune* (both verb and noun), *communism*, *communication*, *communion* and *communicant*.

In all these words the basic idea is “sharing.”

*To commune* with one another, with nature or with God is to become attuned to the rhythms, the thought processes, the reality of the other—a vital element of both friendship and spirituality. It is to be on the same wave length, singing the same song. To commune is a two-way street, a back and forth process, a mutuality.

The noun *commune* is a place where persons live sharing all things, while *communism* is a style of government in which “sharing” has been institutionalized into a politico-economic system.

The *commune* came into public awareness during the ’60s as an alternative lifestyle for hippies. The commune as an idea, however, is much more ancient. The Essenes in ancient Palestine, for instance, whom we associate with the Dead Sea scrolls, were an ascetic sect who lived apart from society.

Monasteries and convents are also examples of communes. It is at this point that the concept relates specifically to women. The convent of the Middle Ages was an assemblage of religious women devoted to service to God, the poor and the sick. It was also a safe refuge for lay women who needed help. More significantly, it was a nurturing environment

which allowed women to develop skills and intellect. The famous religious women of the Middle Ages, such as Hildegard of Bingen and Dame Julian of Norwich, were thinkers and writers, counselors and models of piety and service, whose contributions were enhanced or made possible by the convent life.

The several *communication* words, including *communicative*, *communiqué* (a message), *communicable* (diseases), have to do with imparting ideas (or germs!). The communications industry in today’s society defines the Information Age and encompasses the technological and entertainment worlds of printing and books, film and television, computers, satellites and telephones, as well as the entire scope of education.

Imparting ideas is important in religion, as well—it’s the whole purpose of sermons and Christian education, religious scholarship and missions. To communicate the gospel is to change lives.

Finally, *communion* and *communicant*—words with a specifically religious meaning. *Communion* refers to the Lord’s Supper or *Eucharist*. The word *eucharist*, from the Greek, means “good gifts,” or thanksgiving for God’s favor. A *communicant* is a person who partakes of (shares) the Lord’s Supper. At the Lord’s table believers share in the bread and wine which symbolize the body and blood of Jesus and his sacrificial act of

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**“When we come to the table  
we are one with Martha and  
Lydia, Peter and John, St.  
Teresa and St. Francis ...”**

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atonement. Atonement—aha! here is the word that means “coming together as one” (at-one-ness), the hope of believers to be one with God.

The communion of the saints refers to the spiritual union of Christians of all ages throughout all time. When we come to the table we are one with Martha and Lydia, Peter and John, St. Teresa and St. Francis,

(Please turn to page 10)

## Communion ... from page 9

Roger Williams and Lottie Moon, and all the unknown believers along the way and in the future to come. At the Lord's table, there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, neither male nor female (Gal. 3:28). At the Lord's table we are all equal.

Frederick Buechner refers to "... all the company of heaven" and goes on to describe the glorious act of communion as being like the great sound and light show at Versailles "when all the fountains are turned on at once and the night is ablaze with fireworks. It must sound a little like the last movement of Beethoven's *Choral Symphony* or the Atlantic in a gale.... Whatever other reasons we have for coming to such a place, if we come also to give each other our love and to give God our love, then together with Gabriel and Michael, ... and Teresa in her ecstasy, we are the communion of saints." [Buechner, pp. 30-31]

## Fellowship

*Fellowship*, in its origins back in the mists of history, denoted a partnership of persons who put down money, a business arrangement, a joint venture. Those who did this were *fellows* (partners). The word derives from *feoh*, cattle (property or money), cattle being the oldest form of movable wealth.

The basic idea then is "a group or community of interest."

The group can include both females and males. By extension, a *fellow* is a member of such a group. The word is used in academic circles to denote a scholar, male or female, a recipient of a money award. The word is also a generic word for males.

In the Christian community, *fellowship* is used to denote the association of believers. Fellowship is more than the group itself, however; it is a description of the nature of the relationship. In Christian use, the word describes the relation of Christians to each other as they come together to worship, pray, minister to others, socialize and share food. In fact, the building devoted to communal activities is often called the *fellowship hall*. Various subgroups may be termed a fellowship, such as the *youth fellowship*. In welcoming new members, we speak of "extending the right hand of fellowship."

Clearly, in Christian use, the word has moved far beyond its source as a financial arrangement.

## Koinonia

*Koinonia* is the Christian understanding of community. Thus, one might say, "In building our church we aim to create *koinonia*," by which we mean we wish to recreate the closeness characteristic of the early followers of Jesus. We read in I John 1:7, "But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship (*koinonia*) with one another ..."

The basic idea is "a close and intimate relationship."

**"But if we walk in the light,  
as he is in the light, we have  
fellowship (*koinonia*) with one  
another ..."**

In the New Testament, the word occurs 18 times. Often translated fellowship, the Greek word *koinonia* in the New Testament is used to speak of friendship (I John 1:3), sharing with others (II Cor. 8:4), partnership in the task of Kingdom building (Phil. 1:5), oneness in the Holy Spirit (II Cor. 13:14) and oneness with each other in the faith (Acts 2:42).

Such a rich word demands a closer look. The word was already in wide use before New Testament times, but with its application to the work of the Christian church and the life of believers, the word took on new dimensions of meaning.

In classical Greek, the word had long been used to refer to human society, unselfish sharing, and the relationship between women and men. Plato used the word in describing the education of women with men, or coeducation. In the wider Greek culture, *koinonia* denoted the marriage contract where the married partners agree to a joint participation in the necessities of life, the possession of things in common. Another use referred to a business partnership. *Koinonia* also denoted the relationship of humans with God; the ancient writer Epictetus spoke of religion as aiming to have *koinonia* with Zeus.

Two related words are also found in the New Testament: the verb *koinonein*, to have

a share in a thing; and the noun *koinonos*, a companion or joint owner. Both words were common in secular Greek, but were used in a religious sense in the New Testament for the sharing of possessions as well as sharing experiences.

The scholar William Barclay wrote, "The Christian ... shares in the common experience of joy and tears; he shares in the things divine and in the glory that shall be; and all his life he must be a sharer of all he has, for he knows that his true wealth lies in what he gives away." [Barclay, pp. 173-6]

A related word, *Koine*, the "common" language, is the name given to the vernacular Greek language used by the people in everyday life in Jesus' day. It is the language in which the New Testament was written. *Koine* Greek was different from the classical Greek used by writers like Plato and Aristotle, just as vernacular French and Italian were different from the classical and ecclesiastical Latin of the Catholic Church.

Because *Koine* Greek was a living language in New Testament times, the words written in the New Testament have a vibrancy and immediacy that we can recognize as being real. Although Jesus spoke Aramaic in his public teachings and daily conversations with his disciples, he knew Greek, for that was the language of commerce and culture. He spoke to Greek-speaking audiences in such places as Galilee, and his trial with Pilate was undoubtedly in Greek.

Greek was the universal language, the *lingua franca* of that day, widely used in the Mediterranean basin for commerce and diplomacy, just as English is today around the world. The conquests of Alexander the Great in the 4th century B.C. created conditions for the spread of Greek culture throughout Asia Minor, Egypt and beyond.

The fact of common culture and common language made possible the rapid growth of Christianity during the early church period. Communication enabled the Christian faith to spread from town to town, from country to country. *Koinonia* was the defining experience for the early Christians. *Koinonia* is our hope as well.

Sources: Barclay, *New Testament Words*, 1964; Buechner, *Whistling in the Dark*, 1988; Claiborne, *The Roots of English*, 1989; Wuest, *Word Studies in the Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament*, 1945.

*Barbara Jackson is the editor of Synergy*

# BOOK REVIEW

## *The Preaching Life* by Barbara Brown Taylor

reviewed by Alana Woolley

In the opening section of *The Preaching Life* we learn about the author, Barbara Brown Taylor. An introduction by Fred Craddock describes her as both preacher and teacher. He demonstrates how Taylor leads us through the “biblical text, great literature, and life itself.” But through it all Taylor is primarily a worshiper: “The offering of the right word, the appropriate word,” he says, “is not solely to the reader: it is to God.”

Taylor’s book is structured into two parts. The first, “The Life of Faith,” describes her philosophy of preaching and of life. The second, “The Preaching of the Word,” presents her sermons.

In the first section, the underlying theme is the interconnectedness of life, faith, and preaching. She discusses the role of the church in our day. “In this age of a million choices, we are the remnant, the sometimes faithful, sometimes unfaithful family of a difficult and glorious God, called to seek and proclaim God’s presence in a disillusioned world.”

In the chapter entitled “Call,” Taylor describes the experiences that led her to be the person she is today. Many of her experiences in the rural south are ones to which we can all relate. Although Taylor currently serves as an Episcopal priest, this section describes her early experience in the Baptist church. She wanted to learn how to “live an honorable life and avoid trouble.” The Baptist church promised to provide her with all the answers.

The next chapter describes how Taylor’s call led to a life of vocation. This might best be described in one of her statements about the church: “If the church is where we learn who and whose we are, the world is where we are called to put that knowledge to use.”

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### (Price ... from page 4)

mother has made a track to the water’s edge. The bridge she has built is well balanced and sturdy. Her track speaks to me. Grieve, it says, feel the fear and keep on going anyway. Reach toward interdependence and independence. Be angry, yet forgive. Work within the system and if that does or does not work, go outside of the system too. Continue to work toward goals, simultaneously asking for God’s strength and grace. Love unconditionally but with self-limitations. Dig deeper and deeper but be grateful for the simple. Seek answers but be thankful for the process of asking.

Jo Anna Sellman Saegusa Price has provided me well-made walking shoes for the journey and she has gone on ahead, searching for God. I will try to follow her track to the water’s edge.

*Jessica C. Price is church secretary, Derbyshire Church, Richmond, and part-time seminary student*

Most compelling to me is Barbara Taylor’s discussion of imagination. Affirming imagination as the church’s central task, she calls upon us to form mental pictures that envision new realities of ourselves, our neighbors and the world around us. The images that we possess come to us both from within and without. The images that we choose to embrace thus shape the way that we live in this world. Taylor defines imagination as “the human ability to form a mental image of something not present to the senses.” In the experience of the church, our imaginative encounters can lead to an experience of “revelation,” a faith experience. Taylor describes faith thus: “We imagine ourselves whole, imagine ourselves in love with our neighbors, imagine ourselves bathed and fed by God, imagine the creation at peace, imagine the breath of God coinciding with our own, imagine the heart of God beating at the heart of the world.”

It is our experience of the Bible and of worship that feeds this imagination. And as Taylor tells us, “preaching is, above all else, an act of faith.” She begins the process of sermon writing by reading, and reading, and reading again. She is waiting for the text to speak to her as an individual. Waiting for it to talk to her particular imagination.

In part two of Taylor’s book, she shares with us thirteen of her imaginative sermons.

The sermon, “Knowing Glimpse,” is a consideration of the sheep and goats passage in Matthew 25. Taylor’s treatment of this passage moves beyond our usual human bookkeeping of deeds and actions. She calls us to look into the eyes of Jesus. She calls us to relationship, to remember that we are not alone. We are in relationship both to Christ and to the least among us.

Taylor reminds us that we all have family stories. “Surviving Eden” helps us reflect on the family story in Genesis 3. It is our family story. The story reminds us of the ways we react to our own failure. Sometimes we find someone else to blame for what has happened. On other occasions, we blame ourselves. Or perhaps, what happens to us is really all God’s fault. But our family story in Genesis reminds us of God’s presence. It calls on us to look ahead to our wholeness in God.

It is interesting to examine other works by Barbara Brown Taylor. Another book of sermons is entitled *Mixed Blessings*. The section “The Cloud of Witnesses” shares the stories of Abram, Moses, Samuel, Bartimaeus, and Mary. “The Firstborn of All Creation” section gives us sermons for seven seasons, from Advent to All Saints’ Day. Doubt, service, prayer, faith and death are discussed in section called “The Inhabitants of Earth.”

Another book, *Women of the Word*, is a collection of sermons by women clergy in the Atlanta area, published in 1985. It contains three sermons by Barbara Brown Taylor for the season of Pentecost.

The reflections and sermons of Barbara Brown Taylor provide inspiration for us. They call us to new imagination in a life of faith.

[Taylor, Barbara Brown. *The Preaching Life*. Boston: Cowley Publications, 1993]

*The Rev. Alana Woolley is telecommunications consultant at the Foreign Mission Board, SBC*

## New Positions and Changes

**Elizabeth Emrey** is director of church and community development at Albemarle Association, Charlottesville.

**Janet Hogge** is minister of youth and children at Indian River Church, Chesapeake.

**Lori and Jonathan Lusk** are ministers of music and worship leaders at Stafford Church, Stafford.

**Alyssa and Dave Mathes** are youth directors at Dover Church, Manakin-Sabot.

**Stephanie and Steve McElroy** are youth ministers at First Church, Monroe.

**Janice Plympton** is minister to youth and children at Fort Lewis Church, Salem.

**Jennifer and Rick Smith** are youth ministers at Emmanuel Church, Roanoke.

**Elizabeth Wright** is minister to senior adults at Broadus Memorial Church, Richmond.

## Graduations

**Joan C. Lankford** of Norfolk, MA/ Christian Education from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

**Susan D. Finley** of Fieldale, Doctor of Ministry at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

## Liturgical Song: Antiphon 16 Love Overflows

*Love overflows into all things,  
From out of the depths to above the highest  
stars;*

*And so Love overflows into all best beloved,  
most loving things,*

*Because She has given to the highest King  
The Kiss of Peace.*

— Hildegard of Bingen

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## February

### February 24 – 25

**Ministers' Discussion Group.** Roslyn Retreat Center, Richmond. For information, call Phil Bailey (540) 675-3336.

## March

### March 1

**VBWIM Spring Conference.** Family Systems and Congregations, Betty Pugh, conference leader. 9:30 to 3 pm. Baptist Seminary at Richmond. For information, call Ellen Gwathmey, 804-288-1131.

### March 14 – 15

**Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Virginia General Assembly.** Huguenot Road Church, Richmond. Friday 7:30 and Saturday 9:30 am. Speakers are Daniel Vestal and Bill Leonard. Saturday brunch sponsored by VBWIM.

### March 14 – 16

**Alliance of Baptists Convocation,** Raleigh, N.C.

### June 26 – 28

**CBF General Assembly,** Louisville, Ky.

### November 11

**VBWIM Dinner and program.** Roanoke Civic Center, Roanoke