



Spring Workshop—Birthday Celebration

Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry held its annual Spring Workshop in March to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the founding of the organization. About forty women gathered at the Wilton Center of the University of Richmond for a birthday celebration, complete with decorated cake and balloons. The morning program was a workshop for ministers on using the Myers-Briggs profile, presented by Linda Schreiner, a human resources consultant.

After lunch and birthday cake, the group shared in worship. Judy Bailey, Lynda Weaver-Williams, and B.J. Seymour, the three women who had the vision to call women together in 1988 led in the afternoon worship, guiding the group in reflecting on the theme "What Do You Bring to the Table?"

The occasion was a great occasion for sharing, for renewing friendships and for getting acquainted with those who were new to the group.



A Birthday Party

Ordination Survey Report

At the present count, there are over 100 ordained Baptist women in Virginia. We are continuing to accumulate data and hope to compile a definitive report in the next few months. For the past several years participants in VBWIM events have been asked to complete a brief questionnaire concerning ministry roles, theological education and ordination. That information we have in hand. However, the VBWIM mailing list includes names secured from various sources. Some of those persons have never attended an event or completed the brief questionnaire. All this to say that our data is not complete.

Please help us in this way. Look at the mailing label on this newsletter. If the word "Rev." appears before your name, then we have counted you in the statistics. If it does not, then we ask you to let us know. If you have a doctorate and are ordained, we may have used the honorific and failed to note your ordination.

In any case, you may use the membership form found in this issue to bring your information up to date—*whether or not you wish to be a member of the organization*. We also wish to know what kind of ministry you do: church staff, music, teaching, chaplain, denominational, journalism, retired, volunteer, part time or full time, whatever.

Please note that in the context of Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry, we have defined a "minister" as anyone who considers what she does as ministry. In other words, a woman in ministry is self-defined. There is no authorizing agency but oneself.

To have this kind of information is very important. The data not only helps the researcher and the curious but the publication of the numbers indicates to the world at large just what our strength is. The facts help to reveal progress in numbers and influence. But also the facts present a united front before those who denigrate or reject a woman in ministry as an oxymoron! Let us know!

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Ex Cathedra

A Laughing Place

by Ellen Gwathmey, convener, VBWIM

Everybody needs a laughing place—a place where it's safe to laugh at adversity, at oneself, at the world's absurdities. I was reminded of this one week in June when I traveled with forty young people and five other adults to Passport/Disney. We spent three very long, very hot days learning about and discussing American freedom, other cultures and religions, and our relationship with and responsibility for our environment. We also spent some time playing (we were in Disney World, after all). Laughter rang through our days and nights. Even when we were exhausted, we found ourselves laughing at the antics of the jumping fountains, thrilling to the music accompanying the nightly fireworks, as well as spellbound by the illumination itself—enjoying the time spent round the pool, and praising God in worship.

Where does one find a laughing place? Brer Rabbit laughed in the briar patch. We laughed among friends, old and new, that week at Passport/Disney. Sarah laughed in her tent when she first heard that Yahweh would send her a child in her old age. David laughed when he sang and danced before the Ark of the covenant as it was carried into Jerusalem. We can imagine that Jairus' daughter probably laughed when Jesus raised her from the dead.

A laughing place can be a physical spot such as a building, a room, a garden, a meadow, a back porch. It can be found among friends. It can be found inside oneself. It is wherever one feels safe enough to really laugh, not just chuckle lightly or smile slightly but to laugh from deep down, to laugh until one cries with joy. A laughing place allows one to return to the world refreshed, filled with enthusiasm, and willing to see things in a new perspective.

I hope Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry is such a place for you. More than that, I challenge all of us to help our churches become such a place.

Everybody needs a laughing place.

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

Membership Report

Included in this newsletter is a membership and event registration form. If you are not currently a member, you are encouraged to return the form with the appropriate amount for the membership fee. Summertime registrations get a bonus in that the membership extends into the next year, expiring in November 1999. Please look at the address label on this newsletter where the year of your last membership is given. If the year shown is not '98, then you need to get current.

Get with the program!

Benefits of membership include a 10 percent discount on registration fees for the VBWIM events and copies of materials (such as bibliographies). One important benefit is the personal gain for the woman in ministry in being a part of a group of like-minded people.

[The receipt of SYNERGY is not a benefit of membership, since the newsletter is a tool for promotion and dissemination of information.]

Currently, the mailing list includes around 600 persons. Who are they? They are both women and men—campus ministers and denominational personnel, seminary students, chaplains, college and seminary professors, as well as the many women on church staffs. There are also some who may not fit in the usual category but who consider what they do to be ministry, such as volunteer work in a church or agency, social work, or free lance endeavors. As stated on page 1, the definition of a ministry is a self-definition.

So ... let us hear from you. Lend your support to an organization which upholds what you value. Return the completed membership form (on page 11) along with your check.

Help us create a climate of acceptance and high regard for the many women in ministry in Virginia. We need you. We think you need VBWIM!

SYNERGY, the newsletter of Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry, is published in Richmond, Va. Membership is \$20 per year (\$10, students). Memberships and manuscript submissions should be mailed to River Road Church, Baptist, 8000 River Road, Richmond, VA 23229. Editorial Board: Ellen Gwathmey, chair; Holly J. Irvin, treasurer; Barbara Jackson, newsletter editor; B.J. Seymour; Alana Woolley. ©1997

Thecla

by Stephanie Day Powell

During the past two centuries of American feminist activity, the question of the apostle Paul's views on gender and equality has frequently entered the debate. Quoting Paul, a married clergyman once berated suffragist Elizabeth Cady Stanton for speaking in public about the rights of women. "Paul enjoined silence upon women. Why don't you mind him?" he asked. Stanton, who was a student of the Bible as well as a shrewd debater, replied, "The apostle Paul also enjoined celibacy upon the clergy. Why don't you mind him?"

It is between these two early church issues—the role of marriage and the role of women—issues which still occupy our minds today—that we find the legendary figure Thecla. Virgin, missionary, and eventual saint, Thecla's story is recorded in *The Acts of Paul and Thecla*, a text within the larger *Acts of Paul*, a collection of apocryphal stories written down in the second and third centuries. The stories, tales of Paul's adventures in Syria, Asia Minor and Greece, were originally oral legends circulated primarily by women throughout Asia Minor. The story of Thecla introduces us to storytellers who spun the social and political interpretations of Paul's words as far back as A.D. 190.

The Legend of Thecla

The Acts of Paul and Thecla opens with Paul's arrival in Thecla's hometown of Iconium. The young and beautiful Thecla is betrothed to the wealthy Thamyris. On the eve of the wedding day, she and other women, married and unmarried, gather to listen to Paul, who is preaching a Christian message of redemption through sexual purity:

Blessed are those who have kept the flesh pure, for they shall become a temple of God.

Blessed are the continent, for to them will God speak ...

Blessed are the bodies of virgin, for they shall be well pleasing to God, and shall not lose the reward for their purity ...

Entranced, Thecla sits with Paul for three days and nights, refusing food or water.

When Thamyris gets word of Thecla's newfound devotion, he instigates a public trial. Paul is flogged and sent out of the city, but Thecla is sentenced, with the approval of her mother, to be burned at the stake as a warning to other women. Just as the fire is lit, however, a miraculous hailstorm ensues and Thecla escapes.

Liberated, Thecla finds Paul and they travel to Antioch of Pisidia. Thecla pleads with Paul to baptize her and allow her to cut her hair short like a man's, but Paul is not yet convinced of her commitment to the life of a disciple.

In Antioch Thecla is once again put to the test. She encounters a powerful Syrian, Alexander, who falls in love with her at first sight. Confident in his conquest, Alexander embraces her in the street, but Thecla cries out and defiantly rips his cloak. Shamed, he takes her to the governor who condemns her to face beasts in the games.

The women of Antioch, including the queen, Tryphaena, a relative to Caesar, show compassion and protest the punishment unsuccessfully. Thecla fears being raped before the games begin, so Queen Tryphaena gives her refuge overnight.

In the arena, Thecla is tied to a lioness and attacked by a series of fierce animals. A pool of seals appears and Thecla throws herself in the water in an act of self-baptism. A protective cloud of fire then enshrouds her and wards off the beasts. At this sight, Tryphaena faints, and the people think their queen is dead.

Fearing Caesar's retribution for his kinswoman's death, the governor releases Thecla and pronounces her "the pious handmaid of God." Still alive, Tryphaena brings Thecla into her household to instruct all of the women in the gospel.

Thecla emerges from this second trial a stalwart of faith. Amazed at these events, Paul ordains her to teach. Thecla sells her possessions and sews her clothing in the style of a man. She returns to Iconium and makes peace with her mother, then journeys forward to bear witness to others.

The Legend Endures

The legendary Thecla was venerated as a local saint in South Central Asia Minor as late as the sixth century. It is unknown whether the woman Thecla ever truly existed, and there is no substantial evidence to authenticate the legend. The story's geography, however, and the mention of a Queen Tryphaena, a real life contemporary of Paul who ruled in Pontus, gives the story an authentic regional context.

Interestingly though, the name Thecla consistently appeared among the lists of saints recorded by church writers throughout the first millennium, including the third century historian Tertullian, who denounced the legend as fiction. Thecla may have been a prominent church leader, but no doubt the popularity of the myth propelled her status. In the fifth century a shrine was erected and a cult established in the name of St. Thecla in the city of Seleucia, where, according to the legend, Thecla began her ministry.

HISTORY OR LEGEND?

Thecla's model of sexual asceticism was inviting to women of antiquity. The chaste life allowed women to rebel against the limitations of marriage within the context of a calling that conferred respect. Women who ministered in Asia Minor enjoyed the freedom to travel, to create community with other women, and to make autonomous decisions about their physical bodies. Thecla's courageous act of placing her virginal body between Antioch and the wrath of Caesar made her an empowering figure to emulate.

What might Paul have thought of the Thecla legend? We know that he developed many interpersonal relationships with women

(please turn to page 4)

Powell ... from page 3

during his ministry—some, like Phoebe whom he commissioned to Ephesus as a deacon, others like Priscilla and Aquila who were said to have “risked their necks” for his life.

The Legend of Paul and Thecla may have been an attempt in story to depict Paul as he was understood by his contemporaries, a social radical who affirmed female leadership.

Or perhaps the story itself was a form of rebellion—told and retold to challenge the growing structural conservatism of the early church. Early church fathers embraced Paul the social conformist over Paul the radical sectarian.

Although Thecla was not canonized, the astute Elizabeth Cady Stanton saw fit to include her when she penned her infamous *The Woman's Bible* in 1895.

Thecla's legend enriches our understanding of antiquity and suggests that women have a great heritage still left to uncover.

Sources: *The Legend and the Apostle: The Battle for Paul in Story and Canon*, by Dennis MacDonald, 1983 (Westminster). *The Writings of St. Paul* by Wayne A. Meeks, ed., 1972 (Norton). *The Woman's Bible*, by Elizabeth Cady Stanton (1895), 1993 (Northeastern Univ. Press). *Wild Women: Crusaders, Curmudgeons and Completely Corsetless Ladies in the Otherwise Virtuous Victorian Era*, by Autumn Stephens, 1992 (Conari).

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Some Biblical Women

Elizabeth Cady Stanton's "Top Ten"

In Elizabeth Cady Stanton's controversial biblical commentary, *The Woman's Bible*, she heralded many forgotten women of the Bible.

1. Abigail (I Samuel 25). "This story of Nahal centres in the tact of Abigail in saving their lives and possessions from threatened destruction owing to the folly and the ignorance of her husband." —ECS

2. Achsah (Joshua 15). "She did not humbly accept what was given her, but bravely asked for more. We should give to our rulers, our sires and sons no rest until all our rights—social, civil and political—are fully accorded." —ECS

3. Phebe and Prisca (Roman 16). "No question of women's activity and prominence in the early ministry. Paul not only virtually pronounces Priscilla a fellow-apostle and fellow bishop (vv.3-5), but specially commends Phebe, a Greek woman, as a minister (*diakonos*), which, as we have seen, may be legitimately interpreted either presbyter, bishop, or Apostle." —ECS

4. Daughters of Zelophehad (Numbers 27 and 36). "These daughters ... were allowed to plead their own case in person before the lawgivers, the priests, and the princes, the rulers in State and Church, and all the congregation." —ECS

5. Deborah and Jael (Judges 4). "The song of Deborah and Barak, in their triumph over Sisera, has been sung in cathedrals and oratorios and celebrated in all time for its beauty and pathos. The great generals did not forget in the hour of victory to place the crown of honor on the brow of Jael for what they considered a deed of heroism." —ECS

6. Jephthah's daughter (Judges 11). "This Jewish maiden is known in history only as Jephthah's daughter—she belongs to the no-name series. The father owns her absolutely, having her life even at his disposal." —ECS

7. Manoah's wife (Judges 13). "One would suppose that this woman, so honored of God, worthy to converse with angels on the most delicate of her domestic relations, might have had a name to designate her personality instead of being mentioned merely as the wife of Manoah or the mother of Samson." —ECS

8. Miriam (Exodus 15). "Miriam and the women expressed their [gratitude]. If their

gratitude is to be measured by the length of their expression, the women were only one-tenth as grateful as the men. It must always be a wonder to us, that in view of their degradation, they ever felt like singing or dancing, for what desirable change was there in their lives—the same hard work or bondage they suffered in Egypt." —ECS

9. Rahab (Joshua 2 and 6). "Rahab was supposed to have been a great sinner, her life in many respects questionable; but seeing that victory was with the Israelites, she cast her lot with them.... It is interesting to see that in all national emergencies, leading men are quite willing to avail themselves of the craft and cunning of women." —ECS

10. Zipporah (Exodus 2 and 4). "The reason the Lord met them and sought to kill the son, was readily divined by Zipporah; her son had not been circumcised; so with woman's quick intuition and natural courage to save the life of her husband, she skillfully performed the necessary operation, and the travellers went on their way.... It is worthy of remark that its prominence as religious observance means a disparagement of all female life, unfit for offerings, and unfit to take part in religious service, incapable of consecration." —ECS

Quoted excerpts are taken from The Woman's Bible, published in 1895, 47 years after the famous Woman's Rights Convention, held in Seneca Falls, New York, in 1848. The Woman's Bible was conceived in reaction to the publication of the Revised Version published in 1870 by the Church of England. That undertaking excluded women biblical scholars and so was deprived of their insight—a fault deemed inexcusable by Elizabeth Cady Stanton. She therefore assembled a group of qualified persons to comment on the sections of the Bible which referred to women—one-tenth of the biblical text. The Woman's Bible is fascinating for its insight, not only into biblical matters but also into the minds of women of that era, the women who wrote the commentaries and essays.

A modern-day commentary for women, The Women's Bible Commentary, Carol Newsom and Sharon H. Ringe, eds., was published in 1992 by Westminster Press. It follows the pattern set by its predecessor of examining the texts that deal with women and offering commentary. It is interesting to compare Stanton's comments with those of Newsom and Ringe on the same stories. The newer book, of course, had the advantage of modern scholarship. You may order either or both books from your local bookseller. —editor

Editorial

What is a Baptist?

I am a Baptist but not a Southern Baptist any more. My church and its members are no longer affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention. My church affirms women in ministry, women deacons, and equality in leadership. We examine scripture in organized Bible study and seek to discover the meaning for our lives and society. We are not told what to believe but are encouraged to think for ourselves. My church values free academic inquiry and discussion of religious ideas. I am grateful my family has had the opportunity of enlightened religious education and leadership.

In contrast, the antiquated and unenlightened Southern Baptist Convention in the recent statement on the role of women struck another blow against religious integrity, freedom of thought and on women as a segment of society. The idea of the relegation of women in a Christian home to “gracious submission,” is, to say the least, insidious and evil.

The whole notion conjures up visions of cavewomen being dragged off to do their conjugal duty, witness the editorial cartoon in the Richmond newspaper! Presumably the framers of the creedal amendment in question had no concept of the sexual innuendoes to be derived from the language! Nor did they care what ridicule the action would call down upon Baptists of whatever stripe. Pity the ignorance!

We Baptists need to get behind the surface, however, to the real meaning. The stated intent is to restore traditional family values in the Christian home and in society. Nothing wrong there—except between the lines. The real intent is to put women down, to put them “in their place,” and to return to a time when women had few opportunities for education, advancement in employment, control over their persons, or leadership in church or society. The real purpose is to reverse the gains of the women’s movement.

Back to our question: What is a Baptist? Despite its name, the Southern Baptist Convention is not Baptist as historically defined nor does it stand for Baptist ideals.

The Southern Baptist Convention is no longer Baptist, now that it has been captured by the religious right. The fundamentalists or the conservatives—whatever they wish to call themselves—are not Baptist in the historical understanding of the label. Witness the fact that Jerry Falwell now considers himself a Southern Baptist. Fundamentalists and “independent” Baptists now own the convention, legally won in a high stakes poker game where the investors, the people who put up the ante, you and me and our forebears, were beat out.

The recent action clarifies what we have long known, namely, that the religious right is not about faith, but about power. The fundamentalists have taken over the institutions, assets and financial structure of the SBC. They have captured the political process of leadership, duping the people with false prophecy about biblical literalism and so-called inerrancy, or, in a word, “snake oil and miracle cures!” They have redefined what it means to be Baptist, and in the process have disenfranchised millions of

historical Baptists. They have substituted party line for academic inquiry, and destroyed seminaries and uprooted the lives of scholars of integrity.

What is a Baptist? Historically speaking, Baptists were dissenters. First, in England of the 17th century in reaction to the theocracy of Puritanism, and then in the New World, again resisting theocracy. In colonial Virginia of the 18th century, Baptists were the dissenters to the established church. They were the voices who helped secure the First Amendment rights all citizens now enjoy. That’s the kind of Baptist I claim as my model.

The fundamentalists in the new SBC, as partners in the religious right, want to establish a new theocracy: a society where government legislates morals, where church and state are bedfellows, where women are subject to the power and authority of autocratic religious leaders, where authority issues from the top instead of from the people, a society where people are told what to believe.

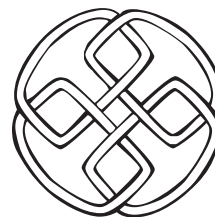
Fundamentalism by definition calls for adherence to a specific set of beliefs prescribed hierarchically in an authoritarian mode of leadership. Fundamentalism by definition refutes academic inquiry and honest scholarship. Fundamentalism denies the ability of persons to think for themselves. Fundamentalism is the opposite of historic Baptist principles.

Baptists, on the other hand, affirm the historic principles that our forebears went to jail for. Those principles are soul freedom, congregational autonomy, priesthood of the believer, and separation of church and state.

Fundamentalists stand for everything I abhor.

Tyranny lives on!

Barbara Jackson is a free lance writer and the editor of Synergy



BOOK REVIEW

To Love as God Loves: Conversations with the Early Church

a book by Roberta C. Bondi

reviewed by Alana Woolley

Roberta C. Bondi has taught church history since 1978 at the Candler School of Theology of Emory University. She holds degrees from Southern Methodist University (B.A.) and the University of Oxford (M.S., D. Phil). Prior to her arrival at Candler, she taught at Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, the University of Notre Dame, and the University of Oxford.

Bondi is the author of four books. Her first, *To Love as God Loves*, is reviewed in this article. In it, conversations with the early church help us to learn more about our lives as Christians. *To Pray and to Love* continues the conversation with the early church, and focuses directly on the specific subject of prayer. In her third book, *Memories of God*, Bondi provides us with theological reflections on life, the ways by which storytelling helps us reflect on the spiritual dimensions of our everyday life. *In Ordinary Time* is a collection of letters to a fictional friend and to us, giving guidance in our attempts at reflection and prayer.

To Love as God Loves: Conversations with the Early Church.

In our modern times, we often dismiss the wisdom of the past as outdated and irrelevant. For Roberta Bondi quite the opposite is true. It is in the writings of the early church that she found the Christianity that brought her heart and her head together as one before God. It was here that she found what for her it meant to be a Christian, to love God and other human beings and to pray. She wrote this book in hopes that the gift of insight and helpfulness that she found there would be a gift to us also.

In the back of the book, she provides a bibliography of the English translations of the early church writings that form the basis of this written conversation. Bondi does acknowledge that we do have numerous differences from those with whom we share this dialogue. In spite of these differences, she shows us the common ground that we share with the early church.

In the text, Bondi does not provide a historically or theologically detailed study of the beliefs and reasons for those beliefs. But instead, as she says, we are given interactive dialogue on significant themes of importance to early Christians as well as to the church today. That dialogue is brought to focus in the idea of love as the common goal. The common goal does not negate the fact that we are diverse people. And yet it provides the focus of our common heritage. The early Christians provide us with “their insights into Christian life, presented to us in such a way that we may mull them over, consider them, use them or discard them as they speak to us.”

In discussing love, Bondi contrasts love with self-righteousness. In order to love, we begin with our understanding of God’s love. Our understanding of that love can be contrasted with Bondi’s discussion of Gregory of Nyssa’s presentation of the stages of the life of a monk. “At the beginning, she or he serves God out of fear, like a slave; next, the service of God stems from the desire for a reward, like that of a hired hand. Only in the final stage does this person serve God out of friendship with God, or out of the pure love of God, as a child of God’s household.”

Bondi’s discussion of love brings our effort together with God’s grace. “God will not change our hearts without a real participation on our parts.” As part of this discussion, she presents the metaphor used by Origen of Alexandria, the sailing ship. Sailors bring skill, energy and attention to the task of sailing. But these are of no use without the addition of the wind. The wind represents God’s help and grace.

The basis of our love is formed from our humility. Bondi prefaces her discussion of humility by looking at false views of humility. Humility rightly understood is built upon repentance and forgiveness. Relating humility to the early church, we are shown the example of the early monks. The monks allowed confession to be an experience of freeing themselves from the past, which allowed them to “begin each

day as the start of a new unburdened life.” Such humility also allowed the people of the early church to avoid the temptation of passing judgment on the actions and lives of others. Bondi teaches us that true humility is not passive. It is difficult. But genuine humility is the source of true Christian power in contrast to power as described by the secular world.

In the chapter called “The Passions,” Bondi discusses passion as understood in the early church. In addition to passion as a strong emotion, it can also be understood as a state of mind or as a habitual action. There is a review of the understanding of ancient psychology. Bondi discusses the interrelationship of passion and sin. Also in this section, she reviews the thought of early church monastics on gluttony, avarice, impurity, depression, anger, sloth, vain-glory, and pride.

Following the discussion of passions, psychology and sin, she proceeds in the chapter on prayer to a review of introspection. In the Christian experience, introspection naturally leads to prayer. Bondi understands the function of prayer to be the fundamental activity of the Christian life. In our conversation with the early church, prayer is discussed in relation to the use of the Psalms as book of prayer. In this dialogue, we are then encouraged to see the Psalms as a resource for our own private prayer.

Based upon this dialogue with the early church, Bondi’s concluding chapter presents a look at our understanding of God. God as love is marked in part by the humility of God. Bondi expresses that God’s humility is expressed in its “gentleness and its refusal to bully us or violate the integrity of our choices.”

As her title indicates, the early Christian monastics had a goal to love as God loves. Bondi concludes by challenging us to the same goal. She tells us that “being a Christian means learning to love with God’s love.”

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

To Love as God Loves: Conversations with the Early Church. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987.

'SAINTS' AND HEROES'

Elizabeth Cady Stanton

by Barbara Jackson

A century and a half ago, women began the movement to reclaim rights which they claimed were theirs because of self-evident truths—a radical notion for that day. In mid-19th century America women couldn't vote, testify in court, own property, attend college, or retain custody of children in the event of divorce.

The modern women's movement evolved as an outgrowth of the passion for abolition and temperance. Elizabeth Cady Stanton inaugurated her life of activism as one of several women in the temperance and anti-slavery causes. Women in the 19th century lent their dedication and considerable talents for organization to speak out on the injustices of slavery and the adverse effects of drinking on wives and families. Then they began to fight for themselves, for women's rights.

Elizabeth Cady was born in Johnstown, New York, in 1815 and died in 1902. She had an exceptional education for the times, studying Greek, Latin, and mathematics. She attended a female academy since no college was admitting women. After graduation she studied law with her father, but could not gain admittance to the bar. It was during that period she was made aware of the legal restrictions against women.

She became interested in the temperance and anti-slavery movements. She married a well-known abolitionist, Henry Brewster Stanton, in 1840, and that year accompanied him to the world anti-slavery convention in London. She was 25.

In London Stanton and the other women delegates from America were refused admittance, an experience that convinced her of the need to work for women's rights. She and Lucretia Mott made plans to call a women's rights convention to seek redress in the United States.

In July 1848 in Seneca Falls, N.Y., the convention for women's rights brought together around 300 women to explore ways to combat the discriminations and inequalities women faced. Lucretia Mott, a Quaker minister and experienced public speaker, was the advertised speaker for the meeting, but Elizabeth Cady Stanton at the age of 33 was the organizer and moving

force. The meeting was called to consider "the social, civil and religious condition and rights of woman,"

Out of that meeting came the single most important document of the woman's movement of the nineteenth century, the Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions. Prior to the meeting Stanton, Mott and others drew up a document for consideration patterned after the Declaration of Independence:

"When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one portion of the family of man to assume among the people of the earth a position different from that which they have hitherto occupied, but one which the laws of nature and nature's god entitle them ... "

and then the declaration goes on to recite the list of grievances— legal, religious, and social. The list of 12 resolutions called for change in laws, change in public opinion, change in women's attitudes and rejection of an acceptance of the *status quo*, and most notably, a call for the elective franchise—the vote.

Stanton became known as a dangerous radical for her stand on woman's suffrage, for the rights of women to control their own property, and for the right of divorce on the grounds of brutality and abuse. In 1851 she persuaded Susan Anthony, a temperance reformer, to join forces. Together they published a magazine, *The Revolution*, for which Stanton wrote articles and editorials.

Throughout her life she continued to speak, write articles and participate in women's organizations. She was president of the National Woman Suffrage Association in 1869, and in 1890 at age 75 was president of National American Woman Suffrage Association.

Stanton's efforts led to the introduction in 1878 of a constitutional amendment for woman suffrage which eventually became law in 1919 as the 19th Amendment.

One of the most significant developments in Stanton's life was her growing understanding of religion itself as an oppressor of women. She collaborated with several women in the publication of *The*



B.J. Seymour in costume for her portrayal of Elizabeth Cady Stanton

Woman's Bible in 1895. The volume was a unique expression of radical biblical commentary and biblical criticism. The book excerpted passages in which women figured and reinterpreted them in the light of then-known biblical criticism. The commentary was written in an irreverent tone and sought to challenge women to think critically. As the book was written by committee, it made no pretensions to serious scholarship, but to place the imprint of the woman's point of view on the reader. Stanton's radical opinions consequently alienated the leaders of the women's movement, who disavowed the book.

From all reports Elizabeth Cady Stanton was a charming person, and experienced a tranquil home life. She had seven children, and later in her speaking career traveled and spoke on behalf of family life and the raising of children.

She wrote her memoirs in 1898, entitled *Eighty Years and More*. She died at age 87.

This year is the anniversary of the Seneca Fall Convention. Exactly 150 years ago women in America raised their voices to demand the fulfillment of the promise inherent in the Declaration of Independence. The struggle is not over.

Sources: *Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony: Correspondence, Writings, Speeches*, by Ellen C. DuBois, ed. (Schocken, 1981); "Elizabeth Cady Stanton," *Encyclopedia Britannica*; *Feminism: The Essential Historical Writings*, by M. Schneir, ed. (Random House, 1972); *The Creation of Feminist Consciousness*, by G. Lerner (Oxford, 1993).

Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond. The sixth graduating class was its largest with 37 receiving Master of Divinity degrees in May 1998. There were 13 women and 24 men graduates. **Linda McKinnish Bridges**, professor of New Testament, has been on sabbatical and traveled to Scotland and Ireland to study Celtic Christianity. **Marilyn Nelson**, professor of Christian Ministry, is a mentor in the Virginia Baptist Resource Center's Young Leaders Program.

Wake Forest University School of Divinity. **Phyllis Tribble** has been appointed as professor of Biblical studies and associate dean and will design the school's curriculum. The first class will enter Fall 1999. The divinity school faculty will also teach in the undergraduate religion dept. during 1998-99. **Phyllis Rodgers Pleasants**, formerly on the faculty of the International Seminary in Prague, Czech Republic, has also been appointed to teach in the religion department for the coming school year. She is a native of Richmond. Dean of the Divinity School **Bill Leonard** was featured in an article of *Folio*, the newsletter of Baptist Women in Ministry, in which he reflected on the courage of women who follow their calling into ministry.

Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. Announced a new four-year college program and two new degree programs, one for those with undergraduate degrees in biblical studies and one in women's studies. The women's studies degree is targeted for women who will be trained to teach women, women who will serve in churches and in the denomination, and those who marry a man in the equipping ministry.

Mrs. Dorothy Patterson, who has a doctorate from Luther Rice Seminary, expects to teach full time in the program. She was quoted in a recent seminary publication: "I want to be able to provide for women who would like to enter the marketplace of ideas, who would like to be involved in intellectual studies, research and debate, who can interact with feminist theologians. The course of study includes in the curriculum classes in biblical theology of womanhood, women in church history, biblical interpretation for women, marriage enrichment, and family life education.

BOOKSHELF

Voices of Our Sisters, by Kathy Manis Findley. Smyth & Helwys, 1996. Tales of biblical women that "encourage us to weep our sorrows, acknowledge our doubts, sing our joys ..." Twelve meditations on the daughter of Jephthah, Rahab, Miriam, Hagar, Naomi, Martha, and others.

Sister to Sister: Women Write About the Unbreakable Bond, by Patricia Foster, ed. Doubleday, 1995. Twenty poignant essays recounting the sister relationship each had experienced, describing closeness, rivalry, home abuse, death, and intimacy.

A Woman's Book of Life: The Biology, Psychology, and Spirituality of the Feminine Life Cycle, by Joan Borysenko. Putnam, 1996. Chapters are arranged by stages in life, each analyzing the relevant psychological stresses and spiritual resources.

Out of the Garden: Women Writers on the Bible, by Christian Buckmann and Celina Spiegel, eds. Fawcett Columbine, 1994. The biblical stories analyzed from the point of view of women's biblical criticism answers some of the questions raised by Elizabeth Cady Stanton nearly a century ago.

VBWIM NEWS

Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry Steering Committee met in May to plan the direction of the organization for the coming year. Under the leadership of convener Ellen Gwathmey, minister of visitation and outreach at River Road Church in Richmond, the group laid the foundation for several events in the coming months.

Dinner at BGAV. The annual VBWIM dinner will be held November 10, 1998, in connection with the Baptist General Association in Virginia Beach. The dinner will be at the Pavilion Convention Center. The program will focus on the birthday and 10th year anniversary theme. Cost of the meal will be \$15, with a discount offered to members. Flyers and other announcements will be circulated later this fall.

1999 Workshop. A one-day conference on the theme "Spirituality" is planned for February 27, 1999, instead of in March as in previous years.

CBFV Breakfast. VBWIM sponsored a continental breakfast at the Virginia CBF annual meeting in Falls Church in March and plans to continue that practice in 1999 at the CBFV meeting in Vinton on March 20. This is a good opportunity to publicize VBWIM and to create good will.

Exhibits and Publicity. For the March 1998 Workshop and birthday celebration, the occasion and the space afforded an opportunity to showcase the displays that have been used during the past ten years at various conventions—providing participants a historical look back. Photographs taken at various meetings brought back good memories.

For the CBFV meeting in March and the WMU convention in May, the VBWIM exhibit featured a birthday theme as well as photos and highlights of the VBWIM activities during our ten years. For the upcoming BGAV annual meeting a new exhibit will be assembled and some new brochures produced to climax the birthday year.

Other Plans. The steering committee discussed plans for a membership drive and ordination survey [see articles on pages 1 and 2], future SYNERGY themes and writers, and possibilities due to the successful conclusion of our application to the IRS for non-profit status.

Also, the Steering Committee is open to adding persons to the committee to assist with future plans. Interested? Call Ellen Gwathmey (804-288-1131) and volunteer. We need your input. Want to write for SYNERGY? Call Barbara Jackson (804-270-2903). We need your ideas.

THE LAST WORD

But It's Me, O Lord!

by Barbara Jackson

Father ...mother ...brother ... sister, etc. These words indicate relationships within family. They do not tell us the personality or talent or life's work of the person. They do not reveal innermost thoughts or ambitions or contributions to humanity. These words have meaning only as they refer to one person's relationship to another.

Am I my *brother's* keeper? said Cain. Abraham prepared to sacrifice his *son* Isaac. Rachel envied her *sister* Leah. Mary sat at Jesus' feet while her *sister* Martha prepared to serve him. Whoever does the will of God is my *brother and sister and mother*; I and the *Father* are one, said Jesus.

To generalize, we could guess that in every family we might find a Mary and Martha dichotomy. In every family we can find in varying degrees envy and rivalry and in some, even betrayal. And every family knows the intimacy and closeness of mother and child, of father and daughter, of sister to sister.

The church has taken the words of family relationships to describe the relationship of God to humanity. God is father, we affirm. And though found in the scriptural record, the mothering aspect of God has been diminished throughout history. Even so there are specific images of God with feminine attributes to be found in scripture: God the caretaker, the mother hen, the comforter—just to name a few. While God is spirit, God's essence is *like* both father and mother, metaphoric dimensions which portray the creative and caring dimensions of God's character.

The words of relationship remain part of religious language. We refer to the mother church, the church Fathers, the brotherhood as organization or generically the brotherhood of mankind, "brother" or "sister" as terms of address to fellow church members or to members of a mendicant order. And who could forget the spiritual, "Not my brother or my sister, but it's me, O Lord!" an emotional outpouring which underscores the personal nature of God's relationship with each person.

The Record of Hymnody

The fatherhood of God is celebrated in hymns. We sing "Faith of Our Fathers," "God of Our Fathers, Whose Almighty Hand," "This is My Father's World" "Great is Thy Faithfulness, O God My Father," and one of my favorites, "Eternal Father, Strong to Save." In contrast, reference to women, mothers and other female relationships are practically nonexistent in hymnody, except for the glorification of Mary as mother of the infant Jesus, the most famous of which is the *Magnificat* in its various settings.

While there are hymns praising the Christian home, marriage, and the blessings of children, even the famous missionary hymn, "O Zion, Haste," implores "Give of thy sons to bear the message glorious." Daughters are not mentioned.

One notable exception to the rule of omission is "Brethren, We Have Met to Worship," a wonderful gospel hymn that manages to refer to mothers, sisters and children as well as brethren.

Words of relationship

Let's look more closely at the words for the nuggets of insight we might gain.

Father. A male parent, a name for God, a person of the Trinity, an old man, a respectful term of address, an originator of something (... of his country), a source or creator of a process or invention, prototype, a priest, a leader (as, city fathers), a father figure, Father Christmas—all good usages.

The word is found in all Indo-European (IE) languages, from the root IE *pater*, seen also in Greek and Latin and which becomes *père* in French, *padre* in Spanish and Italian. In Germanic languages, the consonant shifts to *fater* and father. English uses the Germanic suffixes fatherly (*-lich*=like) and fatherhood (*-heit*=condition of). The Spanish *padre*, a priest in the Catholic church, is now widely used in English to refer to an armed forces chaplain of any denomination.

Words derived from Latin include: paternal and paternity, patron, patronize, the perpetrator who "fathers" a crime, the expatriate who is separated from the fatherland, repatriate, patricide, and

patrimonial. The patron who commissions work provides an example for the artisan to copy, thus pattern.

Patrician is from the Latin adjective for senators (the fathers) and thus came to mean wellborn. By extension, the word was applied to the Church Fathers in the early centuries of the church, and the study of their lives, writings and doctrines is called Patristics.

Also, from Latin we find *Pater Noster*, "Our Father" (...which art in heaven). From the rapid recitation of the paternoster in the mass, we get patter (to chatter or mumble).

Derivations from Greek include patriarch (from *patra*, lineage, and *arkhos*, chief or leader), patriarchy, and patriarchal. Other Greek words include: patronymic (family name), patriot (inhabitant) devoted to the fatherland, and papa.

While papa is a nursery variant, it came to be used in the sense of "bishop" early in church history, and leads to English papacy, papism, and of course, pope. Such words denote a *fatherly* role for the church leader in the same sense that tribal elders are both the repository of wisdom and the issuers of justice and final decisions. The pope even today fills that role.

Patriarchy and patriarchal are the words that have come to represent the repressive system that the women's movement seeks to redress. The words are identified with male authoritarianism in the society at large and especially in the church. In religious

Sister: (n.) one who is one's own

thinking, patriarchy is a point of dogma for modern-day fundamentalists who believe that men rule over women because women introduced sin in the world and that the arrangement is God-ordained and has biblical authority.

The rediscovered history of ancient religions has demonstrated that the religion

(Please turn to page 10)

Word Study ... from page 9

of the great goddess was widespread throughout the Mediterranean, Europe and the Middle East prior to the rise of male-centered religions in the late Neolithic period and continued alongside male “idol-worship” for centuries. It appears that the migration of Abraham from Ur to Canaan was impelled in part by his drive to practice the worship of his tribal God away from the influence of other gods and goddesses. And Moses viewed the pagan gods as a problem for the children of Israel upon their return from Egypt.

The centuries-long movement to establish a male-centered religion around a male deity is in stark contrast to the inclusiveness shown by Jesus toward women during his lifetime. The early Church Fathers were patently antifemale. From Patristics, we learn that Augustine declared woman was the source of sin and that sex itself was sinful. His legacy continues to haunt us. It is indeed an irony that dogma promulgated by the Church Fathers is accepted contrary to the demonstrated openness and inclusion which women received from Jesus himself.

The process of masculinization of religion has continued through the millenia. The current activity to curb women’s influence in religion can be understood as a “mid-course” correction in that process.

Mother. The root word for mother is IE *ma-*, a vocalization of an infant’s sucking motions, which is, of course, a universal phenomenon. The word occurs in many non-Indo-European languages around the world, including Chinese. *Ma-* also refers to breast, (Latin *mamma*), and is the source for mammal, mammalian, mama, mammy, mom or mum, and of course mammogram.

However, it is from the Greek *méter* and Latin *mater* that English derives mother. The principal words from Greek are metropolis (mother-city) and metropolitan, the metro (subway), and metro area. Also, from Greek, the goddess Demeter (perhaps may be read “mother of the gods”) is the goddess of the fruitful earth (not merely soil or ground) and of agriculture.

Latin derivatives are maternal, matron, matrimony, matrix, matriculate, matriarch.

The word matrix is interesting. It means literally womb, but has been used in science to refer to something out of which some-

thing else originates. For instance, the rock in which a fossil is embedded is the matrix. Matrix also refers to the mold from which a relief surface is carved (a piece of type, a woodcut, a cameo) or an impression is taken to be used in mass production (a phonograph record). By extension, matrix can be a place where a thing is developed. Some examples: The arts or religions develop in the matrix of society. The Great Awakening developed in the matrix of the frontier. The modern women’s movement developed in the matrix of wartime and postwar employment of women.

Related to matrix is the madrigal, from the Latin *matricalis*, meaning simple, primitive, coming from the womb. Thus, a madrigal is a simple unaccompanied song, such as might just have arisen out of the depths of feeling, the mother crooning her baby. Singers know the madrigal as a complex polyphonic composition. It is not simple at all. Go figure!

Another word thought to be derived from the root *ma-* is Amazon, which may mean *a-mazos* in Greek, “without breast.” According to legend as recounted by Hippocrates, the Amazons were Scythian warrior women who had only one breast, one having been removed to facilitate shooting with a bow. When Portuguese explorers found warrior women in the Brazilian rain forest, they named the area and its river accordingly—the Amazon. The word has become a metaphor for a strong woman—an athlete, a fighter, a woman with masculine traits, or a woman fearless before the world.

Brother. The source of brother is the IE *bhrat-*, a clansman, member of a brotherhood, and is found in all Indo-European languages: for example, German *bruder*, Irish: *brathir*,

In Greek and the Romance language, the consonants shifted. Thus, Greek *phrater* and Latin *frater*, from which English derives fraternal, fraternize. The French *frère*, in English becomes friar (a religious brother) and friary (a collection of friars), and then changes again to prior (the head of a monastery), priory, and prioress (female head of a religious order).

Throughout scripture brothers are depicted in many situations: Cain and Abel, Isaac and Esau, Simon Peter and Andrew, James and John, the sons of Zebedee. In religious language generally, believers are brothers in the faith. Brotherhood is also

used to refer to clubs and fraternities, especially trade unions. Brotherhood is an ideal state denoting good relations between the races or between Christians and Jews, or among humankind throughout the world. Brothers in families as a rule have a bond that neither time nor distance can sever. A brother is a good thing.

Sister. And now to the word of relationship that interests me the most. Out of the women’s movement has come an awareness of kinship between women as they struggle for equal opportunity and recognition of abilities—we are sisters, we declare. Women in ministry are sisters in the faith and sisters in our calling. We share similar concerns and understandings.

Sister has as its root word (IE) *swesor-*, which means “one’s own.” Variations in Germanic languages include: *Schwester*, *swester*, *systir*. The word became *soror* in Latin, from which English derives sorority. A related word is suicide, slaying oneself.

Scholars indicate that the -er ending denotes “one who is,” an agent. Thus sister is *one who is one’s own*.

Eric Partridge wrote a beautiful description of a sister: “She who is one’s own to every other member of the family: a delight to father, a second self and a constant aid to mother, a companion to the other daughters, a ready helper and intervener for the brothers; in her own quiet way, the friend and comforter and assistant of all the rest of the family: she who truly is one’s own.” [Partridge, *Adventuring Among Words*, p. 23]

I believe, however, that Partridge missed the point in his analysis. A sister may be called sister by virtue of her relationship to another—a father’s own, a mother’s own, etc. She is, however, *her own* person. She exists within her own personality as a separate entity, not merely the reflection of expectations from others.

Uses of the word sister in English encompass a broad range. Besides the family meaning (females who share a parent in common), sister also refers to a member of a religious order in the Catholic church; any woman in the context of a Christian church (“We will now hear from Sister Mary who will sing for us.”); a nurse (British); a woman of another country (e.g., my Korean sister); cities or schools which have something in common (sister cities); any woman or girl, particularly in African-

CALENDAR

Word Study ... from page 10

American culture, where it is used as a term of address; a member of a sorority; or a woman facetiously, (a "weak sister," a "sob sister").

Some thoughts about sisters

My daughter's two girls are three and six. They look so much alike that people stop and stare. "Are they twins," people ask. My daughter laughs, yes, but one is a foot taller! I love watching them play together: the older being the big sister and more adept at some things, the younger unaware that her skills are not yet developed, both interacting as equals, first one initiating play then the other. A beautiful sight. That sense of oneness will not stay the same, I know, as school and age-appropriate experiences continue to shape their identities. But for now ...

I have one sister and no brothers. My sister and I are so alike—and so different. What accounts for it? Genes, certainly. Birth order. Innate abilities. Shared father and shared mother. Participation in family relationships and experiences as we went through school and church together, growing up together. Shared ideals.

We now live two hours apart, get together two or three times a year. But when we do, it's as if no time has passed. We pick up where we left off. No secrets. She is my advocate, my mirror to reflect my anxieties, my triumphs. I am her advocate

July 28

University of Richmond Minister's Conference. "Transforming Study, Transforming Worship" Walter Wink and Welton Gaddy. 8:30-5 p.m. \$30. UR Chaplain's office, 804-289-8500.

October 9-10

UTS/PSCE. "Let There Be Light—Science, Theology and Aesthetic Experience of Earth: conference. 800-229-2990.

October 22-24

UTS/PSCE. "Laughing with Sarah: Joys and Challenges of Women's Ministries for the 21st Century." Union Theological Seminary /PSCE, Richmond, 804-353-1233.

November 10

Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry Dinner and Program. "What Do You Bring to the Table—Continuing the Celebration." Dinner \$15. Pavilion Center. Virginia Beach. Call Ellen Gwathmey, 804-288-2301.

February 27

SBWIM 1999 Workshop. "Spirituality." Place tba. Time: Saturday 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Call Ellen Gwathmey, 804-288-1131.

April 12-15

BTSR. Preaching and Worship Conference. Fred Craddock, speaker. 804-204-1241.

as well. I am her admirer. I bask in her triumphs. I think what I am describing is love. That's what sisters do.

Yet, she is not me. She approaches the demands of life from a different perspective, with competence and outgoingness and genuine appreciation for others.

Nor am I her. I am me. One who is one's own. And you are you. Sisters all—in shared gender. Shared femaleness and view of the world. Shared faith. Shared creator. But individual persons.

Sisterhood is an important concept in the modern women's movement. There have been many new volumes printed on the ideas prompted by the notion of sisterhood. For some "sister" books, see the book list on page 8.

Sources: Claiborne, *The Roots of English*; Partridge, *Adventuring in Words*; Partridge, *Origins*; Taylor, *The Prehistory of Sex: Four Million Years of Human Sexual Culture*, Ch. 8 "Shamans and Amazons."

Barbara Jackson is the editor of SYNERGY

MEMBERSHIP for 1998-1999 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:		
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Amount enclosed

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

WOMEN IN THE NEWS

New Positions and Changes

Lucy Dorr, who has been interim minister of children at Bon Air Church, Richmond, since 1995, was named minister of children.

Noreta Morgan is minister of internationals and multihousing ministries at Bon Air church, Richmond.

Elizabeth A. Wilkinson is director of youth ministries at Second Branch Church, Chesterfield.

Carrie Lynn Laughlin is youth director at Carmel Church in Ruther Glen.

Jennifer Elkins is youth minister at Walnut Grove Church, Mechanicsville.

Lisa Allison is minister of adults at Central Church, Richmond.

Dana Blanton is minister of music at New Bethesda Church, Mechanicsville.

Jessica Hensley is youth minister at Falmouth Church, Fredericksburg.

Kelly Garber is children's ministry coordinator at First Church, Waynesboro.

Marsha Davidson, formerly associate pastor, Mill Creek Church, Fincastle, appointed by the International Mission Board to serve in Dominican Republic.

Katrina Stipe Brooks is associate pastor of Bethel church, Scottsburg.

Eleanor Jane Harman is associate pastor of education and family life ministries at Hilton church, Newport News.

Valerie Carter has been named Christian Social Ministries Associate with Woman's Missionary Union of Virginia. She was director of the Hillside Baptist Center and missionary of the Richmond Baptist Association for 10 years.

Ordinations

Beth Toler, pastor for student and community ministries at Westwood Church, Springfield, was ordained to the gospel ministry on May 1 at Watts Street Church, Durham, N.C.

Sheryl Ann Mitchell Johnson, a member of River Road Church, Richmond, was ordained to the gospel ministry on May 17 by First Church, Annandale.

Helen Riley was ordained to the gospel ministry on May 24 by Melrose Church, Roanoke, where she is minister to adults.

Accolades

Alma Hunt, former executive director of the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union from 1948 to 1985, was honored in March when the annual Virginia Missions Offering was renamed the Alma Hunt Offering for Virginia Missions.

Judy Bailey, who announced her retirement as campus minister at the University of Richmond, was honored by a resolution of appreciation at the April meeting of the

Virginia Baptist Mission Board. She served in that position for more than 21 years. She was a founder and the first convener of Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry.

Kelly Bazemore, a student at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, was one of seven recipients of the Addie Davis Award, presented by Baptist Women in Ministry to recognize outstanding achievement by women at Baptist seminaries and divinity schools. The award, presented this year for the first time, is named for Addie Davis, a native of Abingdon, who was the first female to be ordained in the Southern Baptist Convention.

Brenda Lee, director of pastoral care at Shore Memorial Hospital in Nassawadox and Board certified with the College of Chaplains, was endorsed by the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship at the May council meeting in Atlanta. She is a native of Richmond and was ordained to the ministry by Bon Air Church, Richmond, in 1994.

Graduations

Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond: **Katrina Stipe Brooks**, Scottsburg; **Jennifer Shaver Clatterbuck**, Culpeper; **Mary Ellers**, Chester; **Toni Ewell**, Richmond; **Eleanor Hartman**, Hampton; **Jennifer Kelly**, Charlottesville; **Nicole Davis Patteson**, Richmond; **Valerie Burton**, Ashland.

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary: **Christi Ellen Lathan**, Fredericksburg.

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