

ANNA HOWARD SHAW CENTER NEWSLETTER

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TWENTIETH-CENTURY CHRISTIAN WOMEN, THE CONVERSATION CONTINUES. . .

A group of twentieth-century Christian women attempted to look with ancient rabbinical eyes at the moving story of Ruth and Naomi during the first evening of the Anna Howard Shaw Center's 1986 Women's Study Series. Dr. Kathe Pfisterer Darr, assistant professor of Old Testament, led a presentation and discussion about the Book of Ruth which revealed new insights in the familiar story.

Shelley Matthews, a third-year M.Div. student, shared in the leadership of the session by asking -- and answering! -- the questions posed by the early Midrash rabbis. To modern Christian ears, the rabbinical conclusion sounded strange and often even amusing. For instance, the rabbis taught that there was a very good reason for the townsfolk of Bethlehem to have been gathered in the main square on the day Ruth and Naomi moved back from Moab. The reason? They were assembled for the funeral of Boaz's former wife!

Hearing the rabbinical exegesis provided more than comic relief, however. As Dr. Darr pointed out during the ensuing discussion, we Christians too often act as if Old Testament interpretations are only a Christian activity, completely ignoring the wealth of Jewish and rabbinical viewpoints on what is essentially a record of the Jewish faith.

Bringing a variety of perspectives to the story only serves to heighten its value for women and men in the 1980s. One participant pointed out that, no matter what the intent of the storyteller, each listener hears the story with her own ears. Each woman's presence was enriched by the opportunity to hear the story with more than one set of ears.

Sharing individual experiences and perspectives also proved instrumental in the second session, although on a very different topic. On September 29, Dr. Elizabeth Bettenhausen led a provocative discussion which had at its roots the question, "How do women make choices?" Dr. Bettenhausen, associate professor of social ethics and theology, gave the group a concrete ethical decision to use as a working model on making choices.

Each woman was given a copy of a referendum which would appear on the Massachusetts State Ballot in November. If approved, the legislation would grant the state the right to regulate and govern abortion. Dr. Bettenhausen's instructions were simple: decide whether to vote yes or no. Considerably less simple was the task of analyzing the process of making that decision. In small groups of four women each, the participants discussed a series of questions designed to pinpoint that process. Again, the participants discovered the value of each individual's background and of pooling the richly diverse perspectives.

That type of sharing is part of what has made the Shaw Center series so successful. Women of all ages, clergy and lay, professional and student: each brings her own issues and viewpoints and is enriched by those of the other participants. The topics are wonderfully diverse, yet each seems to serve as a catalyst for the kind of learning which happens when we teach each other. And so, the "conversation continues. . ."

(Tapes from Sessions 1 and 3 are currently available at the Anna Howard Shaw Center.)

Laura Jaquith

NEW FACULTY: PROFILES

Demaris Wehr and Jennifer Rike are the two new women faculty at BUSTh. The following profiles exemplify not only the caliber but the diversity of backgrounds women faculty bring to us.

Demaris Wehr brings with her a very diverse educational background. Prof. Wehr received her undergraduate education at Earlham College. Ambitiously, she earned two master's degrees: one in French at the University of Pennsylvania, and the other in Religion at Temple University. Prof. Wehr also earned her doctorate in philosophy of religion at Temple.

Currently, she teaches "Religion and Mental Health" and "Personality, Culture and Religious Development," and holds positions as staff member and therapist at the Danielsen Institute for Pastoral Counseling.

In the spring, she will be teaching "Advanced Psychology of Religion and Psychology of Mysticism." Her enthusiasm for the psychology of religion has prompted her concern about "issues of power and spirituality in therapeutic models."

In addition to her teaching responsibilities, Prof. Wehr is writing a book to be published in the fall of 1987 by Beacon Press entitled *Jung and Feminism: Liberation of Archetypes*. She is also co-authoring an essay with Polly Young-Eisendrath entitled "The Fallacy of Individualism and Roots of Violence Toward Women," which will appear in an anthology edited by Carole Bohn.

* * *

Jennifer Rike began her undergraduate work at Allegheny College in Meadville, Pennsylvania. A couple years of boredom in "that mushroom of a town" convinced her to spend her junior year abroad studying at the University of Edinburgh in Edinburgh, Scotland, and traveling around Europe.

Unable to face Meadville again, she transferred to the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, where she completed an interdisciplinary major in religious studies with a concentration in philosophy. Wanting to continue her studies in philosophy of religion, she entered the M.A./Ph.D. program in theology at the University of Chicago Divinity School, and completed her Ph.D. in March 1986.

In recent years, Rike's interests have coursed down two paths. First, she has been startled by the frequently casual use of various types of language to speak of God, and has wondered on what grounds we dare be so bold as to claim to know and speak of God. Frustrated with the ambiguities of Tillichian God-language, she spent several years studying the arguments of Thomism on this issue. Indeed, her doctoral dissertation was on analogy (the classic Roman Catholic way of thinking about these things) in the thought of Karl Rahner and David Burrell. Spring semester she will be teaching a course which reflects on how *what* we attempt to say about God/the divine affects *how* we say it. It will be entitled "Metaphor, Symbol and Analogy: The Linguistic Expression of Belief."

Second, Prof. Rike's experience teaching feminist theology in the Chicago Cluster of Theological Schools confirmed her own feminism, and led her to reflect on the incipient sexism of many interpretations of classical Christian doctrines, especially the traditional Christian doctrines of love. As a result, she has an ongoing project to reformulate/reconstruct the Christian doctrine of love from a self-consciously feminist perspective. During the upcoming spring intercession, she will be teaching a course dealing with this and related issues entitled "Contemporary Issues in the Christian Doctrine of Love." She will also be teaching "Systematic Theology" next semester.

Shaw Center News

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WOMEN'S RETREAT: WEAVING OUR JOURNEY'S WEB

The following is an excerpt from the homily given at the September 25 chapel service when the All Women's Retreat participants gathered to share with the community their retreat experiences.

* * *

The most important aspect of the Anna Howard Shaw Center's Women's Retreat was just being with each other. From Friday afternoon, when we first arrived, and we shared the evening meal, to Saturday after lunch, we were able to take the time to be together, to share our journeys, whether we were there because we were students, staff or faculty, or because of our loved ones.

[On the] weekend [of September 20], about 35 women came together. [Although] we came together not knowing each other very well, we left knowing each other quite well. There were many things that made the change possible: we shared our life journeys with each other; we shared about the women from our lives who influenced us; and we worshipped together at a service in which we all had a part. I'd like to touch briefly on these three areas.

Since this was a retreat and not an academic exercise, we were able to do something a little different in relating our journeys. We didn't write an autobiography, we drew one. Using colors and symbols we drew our life journeys. Then we gathered into small groups and shared more intimately with each other the meaning of these colorful, wordless designs. We shared our joys and our tragedies. We listened and affirmed each other's journeys. To be heard, and accepted are very empowering experiences. To listen and affirm are very loving acts. Sharing from the heart like this creates relationship and redeems us from isolation.

The second activity which brought us closer together took place on Saturday morning. We gathered in a circle and remembered those women who had spoken to our lives. They were grandmothers, mothers, aunts, sisters, daughters, friends, teachers, guides, and ministers. One by one each of us held a colorful ball of yarn as we shared with the others the name of the one (or two or three) very special women who had influenced

us, supported us, guided us, been there with us, respected us, loved us. When we were finished sharing the memories, we took hold of the end of the yarn, then tossed the ball to someone across the circle. With each loving memory the strands of yarn criss-crossed and interwove, forming a great, magnificent web of color, a net of strength and safety that connected us to each other and to a whole cloud of loving witnesses. In our sharing with each other, we created a structure which symbolized community. When one person moved slightly, the whole web would quiver in response. We affect each other.

Finally, we shared in worship. We gathered . . . to share some of what we did, to share the possibilities of relationship, to encourage this community to share its stories, to remember the women and men who have supported us, been with us in that special, loving way. This network of relationships that we create with one another is what makes this journey a home.

This image of weaving the web of relationships with the strands of our journeys describes very much how the Divine is active in our lives. Jesus said, "Fear not, little flock." Don't spend a lot of energy securing your future. Rather, spend your energy in cherishing the community, helping to nurture the atmosphere of love. Where your treasure is, that is where your heart is. To make this precious web our treasure is to invest ourselves in a very living, empowering, holy thing. The story of Ruth always moves me when she declares her commitment to Naomi. Ruth chose the course of her life not by what would bring her wealth, or security, or fame, or children, or knowledge. She chose according to love. Her relationship to Naomi was the strand that drew her to a new place, a new family, a new god. I find Ruth's choice a very affirming one. Let our hearts guide us in the treasures we seek, in the paths we choose, in the webs we weave. May our journeys be blessed and our relationships be strengthened by that Holy Power which was created in our mother's womb and restores our raveled selves. Amen.

Deborah Snyder

THE RAPE OF TAMAR (II Samuel 13:1-20; 14:27)

by Deborah Snyder

She was the object of desire
and the object of his hate
she was Tamar, object only--
Is she everywoman's fate?

No princess was more lovely
than the sister of Absalom.
Daughter of King David,
she was loved by her brother, Amnon.

Amnon sickened with desire
as he craved her virginity,
but to have her was impossible
for quite protected was she.

She was the object of desire
and the object of his hate
she was Tamar, object only--
Is she everywoman's fate?

"Why are you so haggard?"
asked his cousin, Jonadab.
"Tamar, the sister of Absalom,
my brother, I must have."

"Pretend that you have fallen ill,
and when your father sees,
he'll gladly do whatever you wish.
You'll have Tamar here with ease."

King David came as predicted
and Amnon, from his sickbed, said,
"Pray, let my sister Tamar come
and bake me her special bread."

The king sent home to Tamar
saying, "Go to your brother, he's ill."
And she put on her robe with long sleeves,
for she was a virgin still.

Tamar went to Amnon's house,
where he was lying down,
and went to work on his supper,
first tying an apron on.

She took the dough and kneaded it
then set it up to rise.
She baked the bread, then sliced the bread,
all under his watchful eyes.

She was the object of desire
and the object of his hate
she was Tamar, object only--
Is she everywoman's fate?

With one quick word the servants left
and Tamar was alone.
She heard her brother's husky voice
which chilled her to the bone.

"Bring the bread into my room,
that I may eat from your hand."
Her heart was pounding, her vision blurred,
as she answered his demand.

When she brought the bread to eat
he grabbed her by the wrist.
"Come lie with me, my sister dear,"
into her ear he hissed.

"No!" she cried, pulling quickly away,
"Such a thing is not done!
I am the king's daughter,
and you are his eldest son.

I am still a virgin--
you must respect that claim--
for if you force yourself on me
where could I carry my shame?

"And as for you, you'd be a fool,
for there's something easier to do:
Why don't you simply speak to the king--
for he will not keep me from you."

He listened not, but sprang to his feet,
tearing off her gown.
Amidst her screams in an empty room
he raped her, then threw her down.

She was the object of desire
and the object of his hate
she was Tamar, object only--
Is she everywoman's fate?

He hated Tamar, lying there,
crying and gathering her clothes.
"Get out," he said, "Get out," he said.
Slowly she arose.

"No," she said, gathering strength,
"you shall not do this thing.
The wrong in sending me away right now
is worse than the other thing."

He listened not, but called his man,
pushing Tamar out the door.
"Keep this woman out of my sight--
she's not allowed here anymore."

She was the object of desire
and the object of his hate
she was Tamar, object only--
Is she everywoman's fate?

Tamar rubbed ashes into her hair
and cursed the day she was born.
She hated herself and all his lies
and rocked as she wept and mourned.

With a sudden cry she tore her robe
as she herself had been torn.
No longer a virgin, no longer a sister,
she rocked as she wept and mourned.

She was the object of desire
and the object of his hate
she was Tamar, object only--
Is she everywoman's fate?

Her brother Absalom found her
and knew what Amnon had done
and in his heart he swore revenge
on Amnon, his father's son.

Until that time he left her
with his wife and their three sons
in a home where she was protected,
in a place where she wasn't shunned.

No princess was more lovely
than this beautiful Tamar
so when a girl was born to Absalom
he named the child Tamar.

Not the object of desire
not the object of his hate
she is Tamar, child only--
But what is this child's fate?

SHAW LOOKS TO THE FUTURE

Campaign goals for the Anna Howard Shaw Center were discussed and approved at the September meeting of the Shaw Advisory Board. Recognizing the need to take responsibility for the Center's future, a four-year Capital Funds Campaign goal of \$400,000 in endowed funds was approved. Half of this sum will be designated for the endowment of programming and operating expenses for the Center, and the remaining \$200,000 will be designated for the endowment of the Director's salary.

Although the goal may seem an ambitious one, to maintain and expand the quality programming Shaw has been providing over the past several years, it is a necessary one. Programming the Women's Study Series, the Women and the Word Preaching Event, and continual resourcing of programs for clergy and laity in the local church need to continue. Building the book and tape library which is available to students and the public is crucial. Networking at various conferences brings new life to everyone involved here. The Women's History project is in its initial stages.

How can you help? We are asking each individual to consider making a pledge of \$250 a year for four years. If 200 people pledge that amount and 400 pledge \$125 for each of four years, our goal would be reached. We are also undergirded by some bequest intentions and a life insurance policy.

The proposed tax rate revisions make the remaining months of 1986 the most beneficial time to make a gift to the Shaw Center. Currently, non-itemized charitable gifts can be deducted at their face value.

For friends of the Shaw Center who are able to consider larger donations, 1986 is also the most tax-wise time to consider deferred giving by setting up an annuity or joining a pooled income fund, each of which will return a charitable gift tax deduction and a partially tax-free income in addition to helping the Shaw Center. Deferred giving plans can be tailored to the individual's income and tax needs. If this avenue is a possibility for you or if you know someone who might be interested, please contact the Shaw Center.

***** Detach Here *****

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

My gift will be made in the following way:

1. _____ Pledge in the amount of \$1000 to be paid in \$250 installments during the period from _____ to _____
2. _____ Pledge in the amount of \$500 to be paid in \$125 installments during the period from _____ to _____
3. _____ Cash in the amount of \$ _____
4. _____ Other:

I am interested in talking with someone about planned giving (life insurance, bequest, annuity, trust, pooled income fund or a gift of property.)

CLERGYWOMEN: A SURVEY

One of the projects of the Parish Ministry class this past year was a questionnaire/survey. This survey was sent out to all the women M.Div. graduates over the past twenty-five years. The purpose of this questionnaire was to assess women's experiences in the ministry since graduation.

There were 98 surveys sent out, and 51 responses. The information that was received was very interesting. It has been correlated and will prove to be quite beneficial to many departments of BUSTh. The results of the survey were presented at a faculty meeting. Copies of the results were also given to the Shaw Center, the admissions office, the office of student development, and Dr. Simon Parker's office.

It is an impossibility to reprint the entire survey and responses; the following, however, are just a few.

* * *

What difficulties have you encountered being a female in a traditionally male profession?

- women feel that they are not being taken seriously by their colleagues or various church boards;
- single mothers felt discriminated against;
- some women expressed concerns about security;
- and a few women said they had encountered no difficulties in their position.

From the time that you graduated from BUSTh, how long was it before you obtained a parish position?

PUBLICATIONS

Congratulations to Imani-Sheila Newsome, a third-year M.Div. student, who has just received notice that her article entitled "Work My Soul Must Have . . ." has been accepted by *Sage, A Scholarly Journal on Black Women*. The article will be printed in the Workers' Issue. Ms. Newsome's first draft of this article was written for her "Women in Parish Ministry" class.

Carole Bohn and Demaris Wehr are both contributing chapters to a book entitled *Christianity, Patriarchy and*

- 7 responded "one month";
- 2 responded "less than six months";
- 20 responded "six months to one year";
- 1 has not obtained a parish position;
- 8 have not sought a parish position;
- 2 are no longer seeking a position.

If you were to return to BUSTh for continuing education, what sources would be most useful?

- 32 responded "parish management";
- 32 responded "spiritual direction";
- 25 responded "women's preaching";
- 20 responded "Biblical studies."

We realize this survey is not indicative of the realm of attitudes or concerns of all women graduates of the BUSTh. However, we must recognize that women in ministry cut across cultural, philosophical, and theological barriers, and this demands that women be accountable to other women insofar as sharing information on the challenges of actual ministerial experiences is concerned.

We would like to extend our personal appreciation to all those who participated in this survey. Your time and thoughtfulness in answering the questions has been very beneficial.

For more information on the results of this survey, please contact the Anna Howard Shaw Center.

Brenda Lifland
Carole Calhoun

Abuse, edited by Carole Bohn and Joanne Brown (BU alumnae), to be published by Pilgrim Press in spring 1987.

"The Concept of Justice and a Feminist Lutheran Social Ethic," by Elizabeth Bettenhausen, will be published in *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics*, 1986.

"Dependence, Liberation and Justification," by Elizabeth Bettenhausen, will be published in *Word and World*, winter 1986.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Becoming One, a hymn collection, has recently been published by Boston University School of Theology. Edited by Ruth Duck, under the direction of Linda Clark, it includes many new hymn texts from the BUSTh community, some new tunes, and hymns from black, Korean, and Swedish traditions. There are 98 hymns in all. The editing committee includes Horace Allen, Ruth Clements, Hal McSwain, Imani-Sheila Newsome, and Melvin Wilson, as well as Clark and Duck.

Orders may be placed with Sandra Rehe, Room B25, Boston University School of Theology, 745 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, MA 02215. The cost of \$5.00 includes postage; please make checks payable to BUSTh.

CALENDAR

October

16: Dr. Demaris Wehr and her husband, Dr. David Hart, will be speaking at Harvard Divinity School in the Braun Room concerning "Power in Couple Relationships."

17-19: Dr. Elizabeth Bettenhausen will be reading a paper at the Feminist Ethics Consultation at Andover-Newton.

24-25: Dr. Elizabeth Bettenhausen will be presenting a paper at the BTI Consultation on Theologies of Liberation.

28: Dr. Elizabeth Bettenhausen will give the Keynote Address at "Aging: Clergy Coping with New Demands; A Conference for Boston's Clergy," at Boston University.

November

17-18: The Anna Howard Shaw Center will be sponsoring a phon-a-thon to raise funds for the Shaw Center. If you're interested in calling, stop by the Shaw Center or phone 353-3075 for more information.

19-22: Dr. Elizabeth Bettenhausen will be a panel member for the Kairos Convocation in Chicago.

Danskinectics combines the fun and exhilaration of dancing with a complete cardio-conditioning program to build stamina, increase flexibility, tune the muscle system, and enhance personal growth and freedom for fully expressing yourself. Learn to move from within as you explore a repertoire of dance techniques, aerobic exercises, and Kripalu Yoga. Cost per session is a donation of \$3.00 or what one can afford. Body work session will also be available.

For more information call: Nancy Ginty, M.Div. student, at 236-1663. Nancy is a certified Danskinectics and energetics instructor, and a trained bodyworker certified by Kripalu Yoga and Health Center.

December

6: Dr. Elizabeth Bettenhausen will be making a presentation as a member of the panel on "Abortion Ethics and the Development of Communitarian Values," at the Conference on Ethical Issues in Reproduction Health: Religious Perspective, in Washington, D.C.

March 1987: Women and the Word

19-20: Shaw Center presents the Third Annual "Women and the Word" Preaching Seminar. U.C.C. Minister Ansley Throckmorton will be the Keynote Preacher. Continuing education credits will be available. More information will follow in the next newsletter, but please put these dates on your calendar now and mention them to a friend.

Ongoing Events, 1986-87

Each Tuesday and Friday evening from 5:30 to 7:00 p.m. Danskinectics classes are taught at the Community Church of Boston, 565 Boylston Street, at Copley Square, Boston, MA. Call for information: 236-1163.

Among the new tapes in the Shaw collection is an eleven-part lecture series on "Famous Women in Church History," donated by Dr. E. Kent Brown. Also available are the tapes from the 1986 Women's Inter-Seminary Conference, which include Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, Jacqueline Grant, and Beverly Wildung-Harrison. Tapes are available for loan from AHSC or can be mailed to your address for postage and handling fees.

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The Shaw Center News encourages you to submit articles, photos, and other items of interest to the community. We cannot, however, guarantee publication. Materials may be submitted to the following address: Anna Howard Shaw Center Newsletter, Boston University School of Theology, 745 Commonwealth Ave., Boston, MA 02215.