

ANNA HOWARD SHAW CENTER NEWSLETTER

Boston University School of Theology Fall 1987 Vol. 4, No. 1



STUDY SERIES: What Does It Mean to Be the Woman You Are?

On October 5, about forty-five women gathered in Wakefield, Massachusetts, for the first session of the 1987 Anna Howard Shaw Women's Study Series. Elizabeth Bettenhausen eloquently led us in our attempts to look at what it means to be a woman and, more specifically, what it means to be the women we are.

Elizabeth quoted from a poem by Nikki Giovanni called "Revolutionary Dream" (from The Women and the Men, 1975). The poem's last line is, "I dreamed a natural dream of being a natural woman doing natural things." This, indeed, is a revolutionary dream. As Elizabeth said, if we could all dream natural dreams of being natural women doing natural things, there would be a revolution, a change in the world as we know it.

The process of change, however, is not simple. Identifying our "natural dreams" is not a simple task. We must take our dreams into the world, where the answers to the questions "What does it mean to be a woman?" and "What is a natural dream?" have been created by men and a male-dominated society. Elizabeth quoted a 1980 list of recruiting and selection standards for hiring women in a national pharmaceutical corporation. These standards, consisting of lists of definitions of what a woman should wear, do, feel, and believe, were created by men to help the personnel department "understand" women. What vision of self or "natural dream" is possible when our selves are defined by men?

Through a mini-biology lesson about chromosomes and gonads, Elizabeth reminded us that "sex" and "gender" are not interchangeable words. "Sex" refers to the technical, genetic patterns of the chromosomes and reproductive organs of a person. Gender is a "humanly constructed interpretation of appropriate behavior for women and men." Sex is determined by one pair of chromosomes which affects less than 5 percent of our genetic material. Gender is determined by a societal attempt to define and restrict people, regardless of genetic composition. As Elizabeth said, "We are a gender-restricted society."

So what does this mean? Are men and women 95 percent the same? I came away from the study session knowing in my heart this is not true, nor is this the ultimate point. The point is that men and women have been defined differently. This is the truth with which we must work. The task ahead of us is to identify the definitions we have been given and seek to understand how those definitions limit, disempower, and separate us.

To me, the strongest sentences Elizabeth said were, "We must refuse to develop into isolated agents and work together to define what it is to be women. We have the right and the responsibility to participate in creating those meanings in the church, corporations, governments, schools, homes, and shopping malls. Unless we create the answers, pharmaceutical companies, the Pope, and others will."

WELLSPRINGS OF HOPE

"Wellsprings of Hope," the United Methodist Clergywomen's Consultation, met August 17-21, 1987, in Great Gorge, New Jersey. Around one thousand persons, including clergywomen, clergymen, seminarians, laity, and children, gathered to experience and explore the faith-life implications of the announced theme. I had not known what to expect of this conference, although the brochure caught my eye the first time I saw it posted. When I arrived, I received the program, the beautifully embossed cover a visual piece of artwork in itself. Within it I discovered the theme of Wellsprings had been further described as power, proclamation, prophecy, and prayer.

One of the more difficult choices to be made at the consultation was among the twelve proclamation sessions Wednesday morning. Each of these represented one aspect of our heritage in faith. Women from all over the globe, from a myriad of theological experiences and understandings, of all accents and shades, led us in worship.

I chose Francene Big Goose, Oklahoma-Indian Conference, who led us in a service of worship grounded in the Native American ways. Her sermon, on the text Joshua 24:14-15, 24-25, illustrated the necessity and possibility of translating the biblical material into the lives and histories of people today. She also gave a poignant plea for retaining the name "Father" for God.

I also worshipped in the Korean-American tradition. This service blended new songs in English with an autobiographical, bilingual sermon by Heisik Oh, California-Pacific Conference. The song, "We Are the Daughters," by Beverly Shamana, emphasizes that we are called to specific tasks for spe-

cific purposes, not in the abstract but in the concrete. The Reverend Heisek Oh's message addressed this theme. She challenged us to the "most important roles" of education and evangelism. Her description of the demonstrative marriage she and her clergyman husband embody for others was an exciting affirmation of equality as partnership.

So much happens at consultation which is not in the program. We greet friends from far-off places, make new friends, and discover new aspects of ourselves.

It is clear to me that the United Methodist Church has many within its leadership who are deeply committed to God. Some clergy were disturbed that "prayer" was listed last; others took for granted that prayer undergirded it all. As I spoke to the fifty-plus alumni at the B.U.S.Th. luncheon, I asked them for their prayers. I reminded them of the difficulties of seminary. I pledged them, women pastoring churches from North Dakota to Maryland to Michigan, Maine, New York, Massachusetts, and elsewhere, my prayers for them and their ministry.

When all is said and done, that is what the consultations are about--being in ministry, living God's love with justice in the world. We preach and teach in many languages, including sign. We are active in issues--social, political, and economic--because God has called us to ministry.

The Clergywomen's Consultation officially ended Friday shortly after noon as we spoke together a benediction which declared, "We have been empowered God's love and power are our security The love and power of God will undergird and strengthen us in great joy as we go."

Pamela Jean Estes

SHAW BOARD RESPONSES

The termination of Elizabeth Bettenhausen's teaching contract continues to be a pivotal event in the life of the School of Theology. Viewed in the context of other recent events, it has occasioned a critical time of self-reflection for this community, as well as an opportunity to look to the future and weigh what we value most.

In the midst of this concerned reflection, the Shaw Center continues its ministry to a diverse and deeply gifted community. The loss is real and the pain a reality. Still, as the welcome on Anna's door suggests, "Our hearts are open to you!" We seek to be supportive of all who are concerned and all who care about the ministry of women and our ongoing commitment to justice. Feel free to be in touch with us as you have need.

Lastly, we share with you the following letter to Jon Westling, Acting President, and to Dennis Berkey, Acting Provost. The letter was drafted by members of the Shaw Advisory Board and signed by a majority of its members.

Dear Mr. Westling:

The termination of the contract of Elizabeth Bettenhausen as Associate Professor of Social Ethics and Theology at the School of Theology at the end of the 1987-88 academic year shocked and outraged members of the Anna Howard Shaw Center Advisory Board. We cannot imagine a decision more detrimental to the future stability, growth and stature of Boston University School of Theology.

Professor Bettenhausen is highly respected by the students at the School of Theology. Her lectures, addresses, refereed articles on social ethics, papers and speeches in the previous year alone testify to her high standing in the world of the church and the realm of theological scholarship. Her clear and reasoned arguments in support of freedom and justice have been heard and appreciated by lay people in the Boston area, across the country and in other parts of the world. She is in effect a bridge between the academic world, the national church and the local parish. Not to reappoint a professor who was a finalist for the University's own Metcalf Award for Excellence in Teaching and who is a theological leader of such significance is unthinkable.

The Anna Howard Shaw Center Board of Directors is a group of women and men -- laity, clergy and faculty -- who have supported the Shaw Center with their time, energy and money for the past several years. We are concerned for the future of the School of Theology at Boston University. We feel entitled to an explanation as to why you have taken such a rash action in terminating the contract of Elizabeth Bettenhausen.

Anna Howard Shaw, a descendant of the "fighting Shaws," a graduate of the School of Theology in 1878, and the first woman ordained a Methodist minister, fought with rare courage, tenacity and eloquence for justice at the turn of the century. We as a Board are committed to her spirit and tradition. We look forward to your response before our next Board meeting, November 2, 1987.

Sincerely yours,

Florence Freeman, Chairperson
Priscilla Barnard
Lee Carpenter
Leslie Fairbank
Katrina Finley

The Reverend Shirley Hoover
Charlotte Luscombe
Martha G. Muelder
Imani-Sheila Newsome
Joyce Robinson

cc: Dr. D. Berkey, Dr. J. Scott, Jr., Dr. J. R. Silber, Dr. T. Trotter

women's retreat: A UNIVERSE OF STORIES

On September 11-12, thirty-five women journeyed to Rolling Ridge Retreat Center for the 4th Annual All-Women's Retreat. We spent almost twenty-four hours away from STH, getting to know each other and growing to appreciate what we have to share with each other.

Friday evening we introduced ourselves without mentioning "that place on Commonwealth Ave.!" This was a welcome break from the endless battery of introductions of the first two weeks of the semester, as well as a good way to share the parts of ourselves which might not always be so visible or obvious in our STH lives. We told stories about our childhoods, feasted on some great New England chowder, and relaxed around a beautiful, warm fireplace.

On Saturday we had a chance to walk around the old estate of Rolling Ridge, sing, and share stories about the women who have expanded our universe. We laughed and cried together as we created a collection of ourselves and our stories through an arrangement of rocks we had picked up during the retreat. It was very moving to experience a willingness to share, comfort, and support each other as we reaffirmed that the "universe is made up of stories, not atoms."

We grabbed a quick lunch before we headed back to the cityness of Boston and the many tasks ahead of us. We returned a renewed community of women, revitalized by the relaxation of the weekend and looking forward to the new year ahead.

Barb Lemmel and Kristy Klein

THIS YEAR'S SCHOLARSHIPS:

Two School of Theology students have been named the 1987 recipients of the Martha Muelder and Mary Lou Evans Scholarships. Susan Montgomery, a Kansas native, will receive the \$500 Martha Muelder Scholarship. Susan is a 1987 graduate of Emporia State University. She is a licensed local pastor in the Kansas East United Methodist Conference, and is currently pursuing a Master of Divinity degree. Former recipients of the Martha Muelder Scholarship are Betty Westhoven (1985) and Aida Fernandez (1986). This scholarship was founded in honor of Martha Muelder, wife of Dean Emeritus Walter Muelder, and is designed to assist women headed for ordained ministry.

Beth Bidlack, a Master of Theological Studies student, will receive the \$500 Mary Lou Evans Scholarship. Beth is a 1987 graduate of Urbana University. Following the completion of the M.T.S., she intends to pursue a Ph.D. degree, with the hope of teaching at a liberal arts college. Former recipients of the Mary Lou Evans Scholarship are Mary Elizabeth Gannon (1985) and Laura Jaquith (1986). In honoring Mary Lou Evans, a lay woman who has been active with three annual conferences as well as the general conference of the United Methodist Church, this scholarship is designed to assist lay women in their theological education.

Mary Lou Greenwood

FACULTY NEWS & PUBLICATIONS

Kathe Pfisterer Darr's article, "Wall Around Paradise: Ezekelian Ideas About the Future," was published in Vetus Testamentum vol. 37 (1987): 271-279.

Linda Clark's article, "Aesthetic Value in Church Music," was published in Liturgy: The Song of All Creation, Winter 1987. Linda has also been given a Lilly endowment award for study of "Music in Churches" in Episcopal and United Methodist Churches in New England.

Jennifer Rike's critique of Ordering Wisdom: The Hierarchy of Philosophical Discourses in Aquinas will be published in Religious Studies Review in 1988.

Carole Bohn is coediting a book with Joanne Brown entitled Christianity, Patriarchy, and Abuse. It will be published by Pilgrim Press this fall.

Elizabeth Bettenhausen has had four articles published recently: "The Concept of Justice and a Feminist Lutheran Social Ethic," in The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics, 1986; "Dependence, Liberation, and Justification," in Word and World, Vol. VII, No. 1, Winter 1987; "Hagar Revisited: Surrogacy, Alienation, and Motherhood," in Christianity and Crisis, Vol. 47, No. 7, May 4, 1987; and "Hospital as Foreign Country: Ethics for Strangers," in Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy (forthcoming). Last summer she was a visiting faculty member at Graduate Theological Union, Berkeley, California, teaching "Women's Ways of Knowing and Choosing." She also addressed the 1987 United Methodist Clergywomen's Consultation in Great Gorge, New Jersey, in August.

Our Library Expands...

The following books have been added to the Shaw Center Collection. Please come and enjoy these wonderful new additions to our library!

Ash, Mary Kay

Mary Kay

Atwood, Margaret

The Handmaid's Tale

Back, Gloria Guss

Are You Still My Mother?

Carrol, Jackson W.

The Mists of Avalon

Chernin, Kim

The Obsession

The Hungry Self

Daniel, Robert L.

American Women in the 20th Century

Dietering, Carolyn

The Liturgy of Dance

Gilmore, G. Don

No Matter How Dark the Valley

Grahn, Judy

Another Mother Tongue

Israele, Martin

Smoldering Fire

Jullion, Jeanne

One Way Home

Lerner, Gerder

The Female Experience

Mollenkott, Virginia Raney

Godding

Women of Faith in Dialogue

Morris, Joan

The Lady Was a Bishop

Nugent, Robert

A Challenge to Love

Ruether, Rosemary Radford

Religion and Sexism

Russell, Letty M.

Household of Freedom

Schaefer, Anne Wilson

When Society Becomes an Addict

Weidman, Judith

Christian Feminism

Winter, Miriam Therese

Woman Prayer Woman Song

Wold, Margaret

The Shalom Woman

Zanotti, Barbara

A Faith of One's Own

Upcoming Events

Jan 21-22, 1988, 1 p.m.-1 p.m.: **Bien-nial New England Gathering of the Network for UCC Clergywomen.** THE WISDOM OF THE SPIRIT: Called and Sent as Prophet, Priest, and Pastor. At Oblate Retreat House, Hudson, NH. Contact The Reverend Marilyn Washburn, 21 Front Street; Box 97; Exeter, NH 03883.

March 17-18, 1988: **Women and the Word Event,** Sponsored by the Anna Howard Shaw Center. Boston School of Theology. Among those providing leadership will be Maria Harris, well-known for her work in Christian education. She has done extensive work on the role of imagination. More details in the next newsletter.

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Greenwood, Kristy Klein, Barb Lemmel,
Margaret Wiborg

Congratulations Terry Scherf!

Terry Scherf, Director of Field Education at STH, successfully defended her doctoral dissertation at Marquette University on May 13, 1987. She received her Ph.D. in August. Her dissertation was entitled Monasticism As Church: The Taize Rule in the Light of the Western Monastic Tradition.

Congratulations, Terry.