

# ANNA HOWARD SHAW CENTER NEWSLETTER



Boston University School of Theology Spring 1985 Vol.1, Nr.2

## THE WORD IS IN US!

March 14 and 15th Boston University School of Theology hosted the "Women and the Word" seminar sponsored by the Anna Howard Shaw Center. The opportunity to experience, name, and claim the unique gifts of women's preaching was enjoyed by over 130 clergy and lay women and men, students and faculty of various denominations representing all the northeastern states, North Carolina, and Ohio.

The Rev. Rebecca Wilson Dolch from the Western New York Conference of the UMC was the keynote preacher, preaching on "Standing on the Promises." Following her sermon, she set the context for the two day event speaking on the center, personality, environment, and theology of women's preaching.

Workshops Thursday afternoon and Friday morning began with 15 minute sermons by 14 different preachers, followed by small group discussion of the various aspects of women's preaching. Other highlights of the event included the Thursday dinner which provided opportunity for participants to talk informally, the worship service Friday morning with Inez James from the Maine Conference (UMC) preaching her "I've Got Your Back" sermon, the Friday afternoon plenary when the small groups reported on their "naming and claiming," and the closing communion service in which Anna Howard Shaw's own communion set given to her by her congregation on the occasion of her ordination was used. The corporate words of assurance provided by individuals within the congregation were symbolic of the mood of the entire event. A sense of affirmation and permission giving to "preach like a woman" was expressed by many of the participants. Sammie Maxwell-Pregeant, a graduating M.Div. student, was thankful

for "Women and the Word" because it "empowered me to be passionate, intimate, and intense in the pulpit. In short, to pull my life through the Word of life. To weave the humdrum of who I am with the Holy of God." The seminar was the third time that Molly Radley, an Episcopal priest who graduated from seminary in 1968, had heard a woman preach. She left Boston affirmed and excited.

The results of the plenary showed women's preaching shares recurrent themes of sorrow, promise, hope, vulnerability, relationship, mothering, nurturing, and sensual/sexual imaging. The sermons given were full of the stories of women's lives--personal testimonies to the feminine nature of God. One woman said, "Women may speak more softly or gently because our content is not abstract ideas as much as personal stories or exposure. This leads to an increased intimacy both affirming and challenging to preacher and listener." Another observed that "women have fewer role models, therefore, styles must come more from within--not from another man or woman, but from the place of divine love within."

It was observed that women feel more freedom in using mixed media as sermon. For example, one might use song, drama, audio-visual aids, or dance as ways of communicating the Word.

Tapes and texts are being prepared and will be available to interested persons through the Shaw Center. THANKS are given to the many preachers, facilitators, and participants who shared of their time and love in this event. As one participant noted, "Women in the pulpit automatically offer a unique vision of God." We all left "Women and the Word" rejoicing in this fresh, vital, and long-awaited vision.

Fall 1985: Courses Taught by Women Faculty Members

<u>Professor</u>	<u>Course</u>	<u>Day/Time</u>
Linda Clark	Hymnology Seminary Singers Worship and Music (with Horace Allen)	F 9-12 a.m. TTh 1-2 p.m. Th 3:30-5 p.m.
Carole Bohn	Life Span	Th 3:30-6:30 p.m.
Dana Robert	Modern Church in Third World Perspective Women in Mission	TWTh 8-9 a.m. TTh 11-12:15 a.m.
Shirley Lund	Greek Reading	TTh 3:30-5:00 p.m.
Kathe Darr	Hebrew I Hebrew I Post Exilic Judaism	TWTh 3:30-4:20 p.m. F 11-12:00 a.m. TWTh 9-10 a.m.
Elizabeth Bettenhausen	Christian Theological Ethics Systematic Theology (discussion group times vary)	TWTh 9-10 a.m. TWTh 11-12 a.m.
Eileen Nickerson (School of Education)	Seminar in Women's Issues Counselling Women**	TBA TBA

\*\* This course and "Action Oriented Therapies for Children, Adolescents, and Adults" will also be offered in Summer Session I May21-June28.  
For more information contact the School of Education.

You are welcome to visit the School of Theology anytime . In addition to visitors, the School of Theology welcomes Special Students each semester. Special Students include persons interested in religious work but not a theological degree or persons interested in investigating the possibilities of a theological degree. All Special Students are enrolled in courses for credit unless they receive permission to audit courses and they must reapply each semester before registration day to renew their Special Student status. The cost for registration as a Special Student is \$432 per semester (4 credits) or \$108 per credit. For further information contact The Rev. Earl R. Beane, Director of Admissions, at 617/353-3036.

Persons 60 years of age or older are eligible to audit School of Theology courses through the Evergreen Program at Boston University: cost per course is \$10.00. For further information regarding courses through the Evergreen Program, please contact Rebecca Alssid, Director of Continuing Education, 118 Bay State Road, Boston, MA 02215, at 617/353-4128.

AN AFRICAN EPIPHANY by Dr. Dana L. Robert, Asst. Professor of Mission

On January 6, 1985, I boarded a plane for Harare, Zimbabwe on my way to attend a meeting of the International Association for Mission Studies, a professional organization for missiologists and professors of mission. The Feast of the Epiphany was on my mind--the image of the wise men from the east discovering the baby Jesus. What would I, a female pilgrim from the west, find in Africa?

Two days later, I arrived dirty and tired at the Harare airport. After a bus trip through the dark African countryside I found the conference in progress at the University of Zimbabwe. In Christian fellowship, one hundred-seventy of us from six continents gathered to explore urgent issues in the church's mission. We met for a week at the university--a beautiful, sprawling campus formerly known as the University of Rhodesia.

The theme of the conference was "Christian Mission and Human Transformation." The Reverend Canaan Banana, President of Zimbabwe and Methodist theologian, gave the keynote address. Since winning the revolution against the white-controlled Rhodesian government, Banana explained, Zimbabwe has attempted to combine "scientific socialism" with Christianity. This African brand of socialism is not anti-religious like Soviet communism. Rather, it is based upon traditional, communal tribal values and gospel ethics. President Banana set the tone of the conference by reproaching the Christian church and its missions for failing to side with people during their liberation struggles.

Apartheid dominated the hearts and minds of the conference participants. The conference location outside of South Africa permitted black, white, and "coloured" South African scholars to meet in relative freedom from police informers. In private conversation with blacks and anti-apartheid Afrikaners, I learned of the daily pain of being a Christian in a racist state. Even the smallest acts of Christian charity, such as greeting an acquaintance of another color or visiting a person in prison, are considered acts of subversion by the South Af-

rican government. Several American conferees visited the black homelands in South Africa as part of a conference "exposure experience." They reported their shock at seeing the barren and brutal conditions under which blacks must live in the land of their birth. During the last day of the conference, we passed a resolution condemning apartheid. The passage of such resolutions at a conference attended by Afrikaners indicated that white South Africans of conscience realize that apartheid is a sin that must be eradicated immediately.

The lack of women at the conference was annoying. Although women have constituted the majority of the American mission forces since the 1890's, the number of female professors of mission can be counted on one hand. Without the Maryknoll sisters, there would be virtually no female missiologists today. Unfortunately, the conference did not address the issue that though as much as 80% of the African church is composed of women, only one African woman attended the conference.

The most startling effect the conference had on my work was the graphic evidence that the numerical and spiritual power of the church has shifted to the Third World. By the year 2000, the continent with the largest number of Christians will be South America. With over three hundred million Christians, Africa will lead North America in Christian membership. Some of the delegates from Sri Lanka, India, and Zimbabwe were the finest Christians I have met. I left the conference convinced that Americans must "internationalize" theological education or stand to be left in an academic ghetto as other parts of the world take the lead in theology and spirituality.

Like the wise men who had seen the Christ child, I left reluctantly. After only a week in Zimbabwe, I felt more at home than I do at times in Boston. I turned down an invitation to go elephant-hunting and tiger-fishing on the Zambezi River to get back for spring term at STH. But the vision I experienced of Christian unity across racial and political barriers was for me an epiphany. Christ had come down to Africa. Now I must spread the Good News.

The Fourth Estate A History of Women in the Middle Ages. Shulamith Shahar. Methuen, 1983. Book Review by Peggy Huff

In her foreword, Shulamith Shahar discusses its genesis, which led her "...to take up the comparison between the general image of women both in medieval theology, in the texts dealing with the structure of society, and in literature, and her actual position in medieval society." Thus she uses the records of secular and ecclesial courts, secular legal codes, canon law, the didactic writings of theologians and laity, formal literature and folk tales, and business records of manors, guilds and towns to glean the place of women in the High and Late Middle Ages. Her narrative style results in a very readable book which is both informing and entertaining.

Shahar recognizes that the role of women very much depended upon which class they were in, as well as whether they were married or single, nun or laity. She starts her investigation with a general statement of the public and legal rights which pertained to all women, regardless of class or marital status. Her study reveals that both in terms of public rights and legal rights, women's rights were restricted in comparison to men's. The exact nature of and justifications for some of the restrictions are surprising. Needless to say, the duties, particularly those of paying taxes, fell on women with complete equality.

Chapters three and four deal with nuns and married women, respectively; these two states also include representatives from the various social classes. Very few nuns came from the peasant class, lacking the meager education required, as well as the money for a dowry. The theological positions regarding women are stated in the chapter on nuns, as well as the emerging position of the Virgin Mary as the feminine element of the divinity. Shahar deals with women in the heretical sects and with witches in the final chapter, so only briefly mentions women in heterodox sects in this chapter, primarily the Beguines. The chapter on married women discusses both secular and ecclesial regulations of marriage and the rights of wives. The various attitudes toward children and reproduction are covered here.

Chapters five, six and seven deal with women in the nobility, the towns and the peasantry. Shahar traces the roles of these three classes of women as members of the secular societal structure, as wives and mothers, and as under the authority of the church. The picture which emerges is of a marginalized group whose civil rights depend on the economic needs of the society as a whole. Women's ecclesial rights, or, rather, lack thereof, were consistent, not responding to external pressures. Townswomen seem to have been in a position to exercise the most control over their own lives, particularly those who belonged to guilds. However, the roles of male and female peasants were more nearly inclusive; except that women were paid less than men. And, despite the fact that they began to do physical labor at a very early age, the children of peasants seem to have been the most loved, in the sense that we think of parental love in 1985.

The final chapter discusses the theological positions of women in the Waldenses and the Cathars, as well as the persecution of witches toward the end of the fifteenth century. Neither theological position improved the status of women, but their position in the two sects was more nearly equal than in the orthodox church. Shahar suggests that the reason for this was the necessity for the sects to include women more completely for the security this provided for all members against the persecution of orthodoxy. The discussion of witches is included as representing the culmination of ideas about women which had been developing throughout the Middle Ages, particularly in theological writings.

Shahar's conclusions are that women did, in fact, constitute a separate class in the Middle Ages, this class being defined primarily by two contradictory attitudes in the church. While the attitude represented in the church by the devotion to Mary was echoed in the courtly romances and some other aspects of secular society, the prevalent theological attitude toward women, based on the second in order of creation and the Original Sin arguments, was the primary determiner of the status of women during the period.

Shulamith Shahar's book presents a thorough discussion of the various roles of women in the Middle Ages in an accessible

fashion. She quotes statistics but also recounts anecdotes which illustrate those statistics. She develops the general state of women and acknowledges the exceptions. She has reclaimed some of the history of our foremothers and has uncovered the roots and/or age of some of our contemporary attitudes toward women and women's roles. While some of her material substantiated ideas I already had, other evidence she produced was surprising. I find it helpful to discover when notions which, in our recent history, have been considered "natural" actually emerged, particularly when those attitudes reflect the usurpation of agency which had been previously exercised by women. Therefore, I recommend this book to those of you who are interested in the history of women, the history of particular ideas about women, and the refutation of some of the current ideas about what "has always been this way."

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STILL CALLED TO GROW by Diane Rew

These words appear on the Invitation to Membership Pamphlet of United Methodist Women and they call to attention the journey of faith. These calling words remind us that the journey is one of direction toward growth and new life. The organization of United Methodist Women has a rich history of women committed to ministry; in particular, to ministry with women and children. Their strong commitment to mission and social justice, intellectual and spiritual growth has led and continues to lead this community of women (the world's largest women's organization!) in various activities and programs.

Across the country, again this summer, UMW will be sponsoring Schools of Christian Mission. For those to whom UMW is new or unfamiliar the school is a wonderful opportunity to become acquainted with program resources and activities of the organization as well as to share in fellowship with other dedicated women and men.

In most conferences a weekend and a weekday school is offered, in many cases child care is provided, and in every case women and men of all ages are welcome. The studies for this year are "The Native Peoples of North America," "Caring for God's Earth," and a study of the book of Daniel.

The School of Christian Mission provides an excellent opportunity for intellectual and spiritual growth in community. So this summer, plan to attend a school and join hundreds of other women in answering the call to grow.

Information on particular conference schools can be obtained from any UMW officer or from the Conference Office. Southern New England's SCM will be held at Westfield State University: weekend - July 19-21 and weekday - July 22-26.

(Diane Rew is a second year M.Div. student at STH and is interning with the Southern New England Conference United Methodist Women.)

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PARTICIPANT'S COMMENTS ON WOMEN AND THE WORD ADDRESSING THE QUESTION:

"What was helpful about this seminar?"

"This has freed me to develop my own unique style of preaching."

"Got to hear Inez James preach!"

"Being with other women in ministry in worship and informally."

"As a man, to experience being in a minority."

"The atmosphere was very warm."

"Being with other women, not feeling unusual."

"Rebecca Dolch spoke truth to my center."

"A wide variety of women participated- both preachers and listeners/participants theologically, vocationally, geographically."

"Boosted my self-esteem."

"Hearing different women preach from different religious traditions."

UPCOMING EVENTS

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THE SHAW CENTER PHONATHON

Women students, faculty, and staff will be calling all women BUSTH alumnae on April 8 and 9 from 6-9 p.m. EST. We will be asking for gifts to be designated to the ongoing program of the Anna Howard Shaw Center and will be happy to answer any questions you may have regarding life at the Alma Mater. We look forward to talking with you!

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ANGER WORKSHOP

A workshop on "Dealing with Anger" will be held at BUSTH in April. This one evening seminar, lead by Dr. Eileen Nickerson from the BU School of Education will be limited to twenty women and will take place April 23, at 6:30 p.m. For information contact the AHSC at (617) 353-3075.

Can you help us find these "missing" alums? We would like to put them on our mailing list. Thanks.

Ms. Kim Manning	STH '82
Ms. Pei-Chang Liu	STH '62
Mrs. Milton Marson	GRS '53
Ms. Lillian MacArthur	GRS '44
Rev. Patricia Bunce	STH '75
Beatrice A. Maclean	STH '62
Ms. Sylvia J. Burden	GRS '30
Rev. Phyllis Magnus	STH '66
Ms. Kathleen Allen	STH '78
Ms. Patrica Nickless	STH '81
Ms. April E. M. Evans	STH '82
Dr. Martha D. Niss	STH '69
Jean P. Foster	STH '76
Ms. Christin Robinson	STH '80
Rev. Cecelia Gerhardt	STH '74
Ms. Yolanda Schofield (Fiorentino)	STH '66
Mrs. David Hamblin	STH '48
Ms. Jean Gossett (Foster)	STH '51
Ms. Mildred F. Kirwin	STH '57
Ms. Betty J. Gray	STH '66
Rev. Gertruida Klijn	STH '67
Ms. Catherine Greelief	STH '74
Ms. Jane Lansberry	STH '64, GRS '71