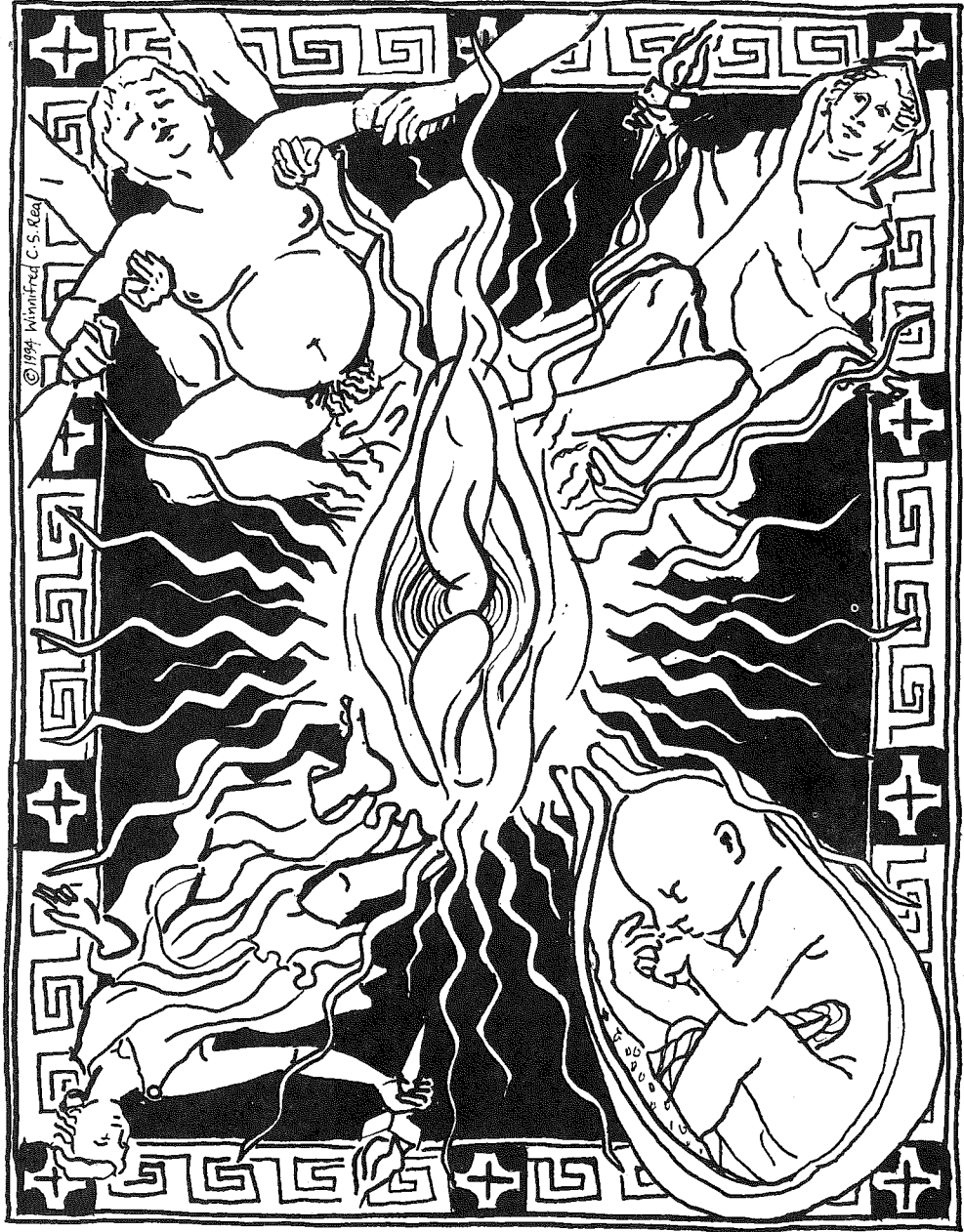


Re-Imagining

Quarterly Newsletter of the Re-Imagining Community Feb 1995 Issue 2



Re-Imagining: Body and Soul

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Feb 1995

Issue 2

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The Re-Imagining Community is a global, ecumenical community of acceptance where exploration, discussion, study, and practice of the Christian faith are carried out freely and responsibly to seek justice, honor creation, and call the Church into solidarity with all people of God.

The Re-Imagining Newsletter is published by the Coordinating Council of the Re-Imagining Community. Members are:

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Editorial: Reflections on Body and Soul

Body Wisdom

It was my first large Christian feminist gathering. It was the summer of 1981, and I was in Seattle attending the Evangelical Women's Caucus. Virginia Ramey Mollenkott, the featured speaker, focused on addressing God as She. I didn't get it. God is spirit, I said to myself. What difference does it make if we follow a language convention and say He? Everybody knows God is not a man, but it will be so awkward to start changing everything. Aren't there more important issues than this?

The musical leader for the conference was Ken Medema. On the second day he taught us a simple song. (I've tried to locate it since and have never found it. I wonder if it is in print or if it was a spontaneous inspiration.) The words were:

Come, Sweet Darkness,	Give me comfort;
Come enfold me;	Give me shelter
Come, my Mother,	From the burning
Come and hold me.	Of the day.

I learned the song with little enthusiasm. Then we sang it sweet and low, and to my dismay tears streamed down my face. In that brief moment I understood what it felt like not to be Other. I hadn't even known that I was missing something.

I think some women who came of age with my generation found solace in the dualism of body/spirit. Denying the body was one way to duck the issue of sexual commodity. Not knowing how to deal with the real issues of responsibility and ownership, it was easier to pursue purity, and it was not until the singing of this song that I began to understand the cost.

Imaging God as female is not a quick cure for body/spirit dualism. Male images of God have not protected men from splitting off from their bodies. Furthermore, images are nothing more than they pretend to be—symbols of a reality we find difficult to apprehend. But when I sang, Come, my Mother, I literally saw myself walk into the presence of God rather than floating in as a disembodied spirit. I was overwhelmed with sorrow for the loneliness I had endured while separated from myself.

Wrapped together with the address of God as Mother was the beauty of finding comfort in the dark. Most of you probably know that Ken Medema is blind, and I was profoundly moved that he could find Sweet Darkness and call upon it as a naming of the divine. All of my associations with fear of the dark, dark as female, despising my body, ratcheting myself tight toward perfection were washed together, and I was baptized with hot and holy tears into new possibilities.

I have pondered that moment many times over the years. The piece of it that is still a mystery to me is that I could not figure out in my head what my body knew. Hearing the discussion and reading the words of the song did not do it. Singing the song in good company did.

Since then I've been more respectful of the wisdom of

my body. Here are some of the lessons I'm learning:

1) Pay attention. Notice what is available through the senses and internally. Respond to everyday life the way I respond to poetry or music—feel it, track the feeling, and then ask what does it mean.

2) Accept change. The only way to defy the effects of gravity is to stand on my head for the next forty years, and that's not a realistic solution.

3) Play. Exercise is not about taking care of the body as if it is a separate object. Exercise is about freedom. It's getting in touch with joy and abandonment through movement, rhythm, and strength.

4) When words fail, try touch. When prayer seems unapproachable, try dance.

5) There is no immaculate anything. Conception, birth, and most all of life are messy, uncertain, and laden with the capacity to surprise.

6) What hurts today might not hurt tomorrow. Cultivate patience and wait on healing.

7) My sexuality is mine.

8) True love requires vulnerability. Don't attempt it without trust.

9) Time is precious, and ability is fleeting. Take that tap-dance class.

10) Celebrate the small stuff.

Last night I held my teenage daughter in my arms. Or at least I tried to. She's long and lanky; it's rather like trying to scoop up a filly. She's not a kid who likes to snuggle, but last night she was sad and frustrated. So she put her head against me, I put my arms around her, and we rocked back and forth on the edge of her bed. Now, this is small stuff. An everyday occurrence. But I savored every precious second. I tried to memorize the texture of her hair, her smell, and the weight of her body against mine. I thought of the passage in Isaiah where God says to the people Israel, "I will not forget you. I have carved you in the palms of my hands." I thought about God as an embodied God and us as an embodied people and how little we understand about what it all means.

There is much in this newsletter to challenge us. I am grateful to every contributor and all those whose work we were unable to print. We have much to do to uncover the goblins of bad theology and to recreate something whole and healing. But when all is said and done, I will remember the press of my daughter's body against mine, and I will call this love.

Pamela Carter Joern

Cover Art: Creatress/Created: Infant, Maiden, Mother, Crone
by Winn Rea

This drawing was harder to make than I thought it would be! It required me facing my own pains and history in terms of sexuality and spirituality. The first few attempts were more about ecstasy—and they were heterosexual and hierarchical at that. Even my patterns of light/dark set up a duality which reinforced the old spirituality/sexuality dichotomy.

The final image was born of my own current happy state (pregnant and about to deliver), reading a liturgy in Rosemary Radford Ruether's book *Women Church* (which retells the creation story in language that echoes the egg's development in the womb), and thinking about the Mother/Maiden/Crone trilogy to which I added Infant.

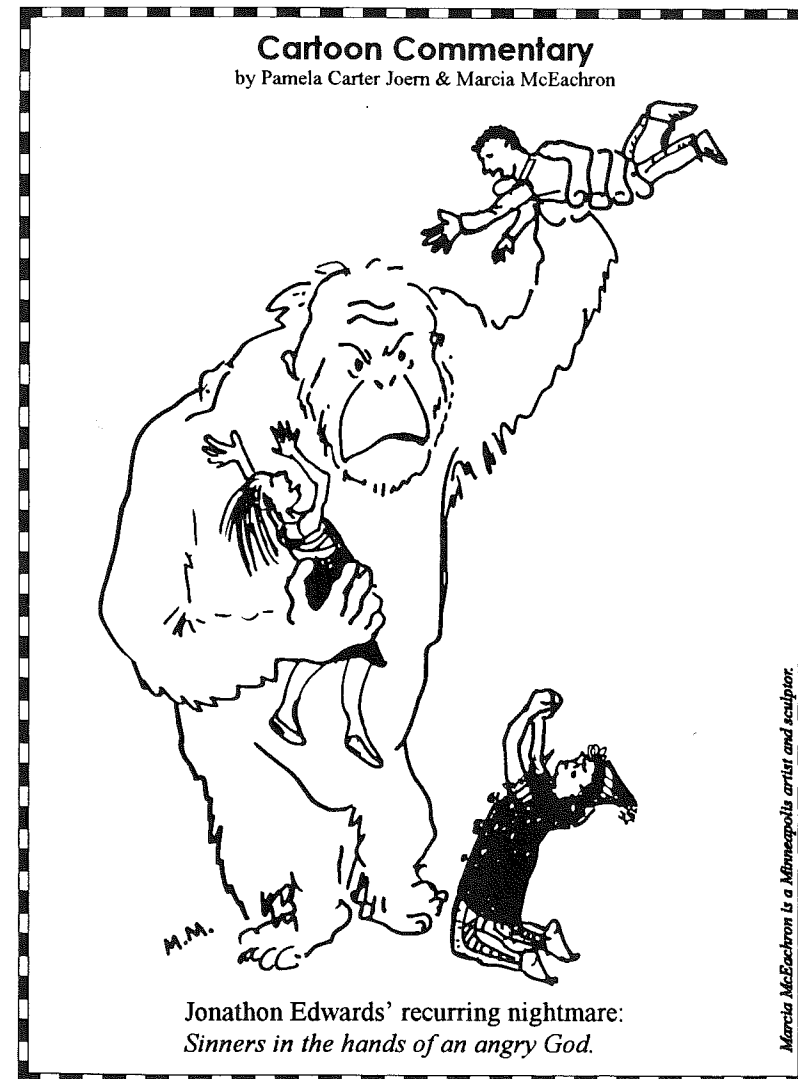
For a long time I felt being an artist helped me more clearly understand God

and the relationship of Creator/Created. Now, experiencing a baby growing inside, anticipating the wrenching separation of birth and the great love and hope I have for this child as it grows, I find the experience of being a woman an even closer link to knowing/naming/ understanding God.

There are many more questions I have; I look to the wise crones among us.

I hope this image serves well as a locus of unity among us as we wrestle with Re-Imagining: Body and Soul. Even as we face the injustice done as a result of the theological split between body and spirit, I hope this image embodies the power we have as women if we will reclaim it.

Winn Rea is an installation artist from Brooklyn, Iowa. She combines painting, sculpture, and multi-media in installations which address spiritual concerns.



Jonathon Edwards' recurring nightmare:
Sinners in the hands of an angry God.

Under the Influence of Particular Embodiment

by Nancy A. Richards

*I am white, therefore I am privileged.
I am female, therefore I am evil.
I am a survivor of incest, therefore I have experienced a dividing, mortal wound.*

How have the mixed messages evoked by my particular embodiment and life experience influenced my life?

The wounding of incest has had a great influence because it occurred so early in my life, between the ages of two or three and continuing until eleven. It caused severe amnesia, emotional numbness, numerous psychosomatic symptoms, and arrested psychosexual development for nearly fifty years. It prevented me from loving myself, claiming the validity of my experience, developing healthy relationships with others, and maturing in significant areas of personality.

On the positive end of the spectrum it also created a vulnerability (long denied) that gave access to the divine and eventually opened the door to remembering, feeling, healing, and maturing. Initially I did not hear as good news the message that the sword which wounded me so deeply was also both the entryway of the divine and the source of my healing. But I am finding it to be true that such paradox is inherent in the very nature of creation.

The Rev. Nancy A. Richards, from Missouri, has been on the fringe of the United Methodist connection while going through a major transition.

The Artichoke
by Kate Christianson

Washed, unsnipped,
tight
and full of
hard leaves. Still,

you put your hand inside my heart.

Kate Christianson is a Minneapolis mother, poet, and baker.

Can We Talk?

Participants in the dialogue:

*Joy Bussert is a Lutheran clergywoman who has worked on issues of violence against women and domestic violence for 21 years. She is the author of *Battered Women: From a Theology of Suffering to an Ethic of Empowerment*, Augsburg Fortress Press.*

James B. Nelson teaches Christian ethics at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities. He has particular interests in sexual theology and body theology and has written extensively in those areas.

*Joan Timmerman teaches theology at the College of St. Catherine. She also holds the Mona Riley Chair in Humanities. She teaches a course in *Sexuality and Spirituality* and has written *Sexuality and Spiritual Growth*.*

Pamela Carter Joern is an ordained member of American Baptist Churches, USA. She moderated the discussion and edited the final dialogue.

Notes from the defining of terms: Joan speaks of the *body* as function, a symbol without which the person cannot be present. *Spirit* has to do with dynamism, that which takes us beyond ourselves. *Sex appeal* is the capacity of the body to mediate the spirit. Jim reminds us that our culture reflects both the Greek influenced body/spirit dualism and the holistic understanding reflected in the Hebrew scripture. When we speak of a spirited horse, we do not mean a disembodied horse but rather a horse full of life and energy. A *dualism* is a split with hierarchy implied. Joy mentions integration (the connection of body and spirit) which we agree is a good way to think of *soul*. This gets problematic when talking about immortality of the soul (Greek) vs. resurrection of the body (Hebrew). Jim points out that the mysterious symbol of the resurrection of the body emphasizes that we are not disembodied spirits; whatever God loves, it is whole persons, and persons do not exist apart from embodiment.

Joan: The reason I would think that the doctrine of resurrection is significant to sexuality is that it suggests that the body as mediator between divine energy and human reality is significant. That it is temporary does not make it insignificant. The form may change, but these transformations assert again the significance and sacredness of body.

Jim: When we're starting to link sexuality and death and resurrection, I think there's much fertile ground that needs to be explored. Some psychologists and anthropologists have posited that the sexual controls that societies establish are directly connected to death fears. Our literature, for example, will often remind us of the interplay between Eros and Thanatos. The French word for orgasm means the little death. All of these connections may be vaguely present with us.

Pam: I remember reading in church history about male fears that the womb had teeth and would actually swallow men, so women's bodies were feared because they were seen as literally dangerous to men.

Jim: Tertullian said in his address to women, "you are the gate of Hell, you are the death that killed even the son of God." There was a direct identification of body—women—death. Some of the interesting work in body psychology these

days suggests that the more disconnected one seems to be from his/her body, the more likely one will think in oppositional terms, either good or bad, Republican or Democrat, black or white, heterosexual or homosexual, and so on. I think there's a direct connection between body integration and the ability to see the world holistically and to tolerate ambiguity.

Pam: It seems to me this connection between denial and inability to tolerate ambiguity or complexity is related to gender labels and God. If you see the world split between body and spirit, then male images for God make sense. Traditionally spirit goes with male, body goes with female; God is spirit, ergo God must be male. But what if we don't want the split?

Joy: I was just at our Lutheran Conference on Reforming Church: Gift and Task, and Diane Jacobson talked about the possibilities and pitfalls of Sophia imagery and wisdom imagery. She did a whole assessment Biblically, and then at the end she analyzed the difficulties with exclusive female imagery because in cultures where there was goddess imagery or female imagery for God, there is no indication that women's lives were better or that those projections were not projections of men. Were they men's or women's perceptions

of God? She said that the primary issue at this point in time is a pastoral question. There are women in the pews who are longing. There's a desire for a sense of being created in the image of God because women have been denied that access.

Joan: There are two points I have about God imagery, and one is I think there should be a deep understanding that no symbol of God will be adequate. We keep grieving that they're not adequate; we should be rejoicing that they're not adequate.

Jim: You're talking like a Puritan iconoclast.

Joan: No, a good old Roman Catholic sacramentality person. But the second thing also comes out of Roman Catholic sacramentality, which is that the only images that are going to deliver pastorally are ones that come out of our experience and that we care about enough to ritualize. You don't just throw them off in prayer and hope that you get zapped. After the experience comes the articulation of the symbol; that gets shared, the stories get told, but then the ritualization takes years to gather all the richness, and it can't be done all by oneself. Maybe it's an American thing—let's get an instant image for God, take it home, put water in, dilute it,

drink it down, and we've got it—our religious experience. The hard work is constructing communities and sharing and working with those symbols until they die.

Joy: As you were talking, you use the terminology of experience which is so controversial. There seems to be a need to distinguish between one's experience of God and the reality of God. We get into arguments at the seminary over whether women are reducing God to their own experience. I think that's a valid critique. I no longer want to think of God in male terms, but if we think of God in female terms we get into projecting all the same biology as destiny notions. That's another rut, and then rather than worshipping maleness and making that the object of idolatry, we are worshipping femaleness and making femaleness the object of idolatry. Both limit God, and both limit our potential to be connected to God. Yet how else do we personalize God?

Joan: I think Martin Buber said God should never be called anything other than You—that any third-person-word objectifies God, so "Dear You as You know Yourself to be." I think this is wonderful. God is always present, so therefore it's always discourteous to create an image.

Pam: What we're working on with these images is not about defining God, is it? It's about defining ourselves.

Joan: So we're using God?

Pam: I wouldn't say using. When we talk about images for God, it says more about who we are than who God is, that's all. How else can we approach God except through our experience?

Joan: We could rely on the wisdom of our predecessors.

Pam: But our knowledge and our participation in the history of the tradition are part of our experience.

Joan: For too few. I know very little of my own tradition. So I don't think I have

any sense of the wisdom that's there. I don't just need to move into my experience of Minneapolis, I need to move into the experience of Antioch and Alexandria and Rome and that story. I do think women tend to want to do it the easy way, just out of our own little lives without using the history, the archaeology, the skills, the work of predecessors.

Pam: That's right, but I think what's going on is that our lives have been so belittled; we are struggling to believe our little lives matter. I do think there's a tendency sometimes to discount all the previous work as male so we can just abandon it, and of course our whole sense of who we are is predicated on that past whether we claim it or not. I'd rather claim it...

Joan: ...and women made a social contract. Women were alive throughout history. Women made a contract with

“...the only images that are going to deliver pastorally are ones that come out of our experience and that we care enough about to ritualize.”

clear consent that that was how the church was going to be. Women were saying okay.

Joan: That's the equivalent of saying slaves chose to stay on the plantation. There are reasons—their mobility, their personhood had been so diminished that they were unable to make choices.

Joan: I did not mean to say that women at that time accepted their oppression. What I meant to say is that the things that came out of our tradition which women were the origins of may be locked in it yet. A lot of it is the mysticism, the oral tradition, the everyday life stuff which we haven't unpacked.

Pam: Let's try switching gears. What do you think are some of the problematic implications of body/spirit dualism and how do those implications get played out in larger ways than personal identity?

Joy: I have a lot of trouble around issues of complementarity. I may discover someday that there is something about the essential female or the essential male, but I don't see it. Most of what I see is a social construction. One of the implications of the dualism is violence toward women.

Much of the violence is projection of male rage onto what is repressed or unexpressed within themselves. There's an incredible rage in this culture that I think we see in advertising, pornography, rock music...rage against the female body and whatever we have construed as feminine. We reduce women to that carnal body.

Jim: I agree, Joy. A quotation from your book lingers in my mind: "men batter as a substitute for their tears." That seems to point right back to men's fear of the body, their identification of bodiliness with women, and men's need to control what they fear. I do want to add something, though. If we press social constructionism too far and claim that it is the whole truth, then I fear we get right back into a body/spirit split. Our sexual bodies are important, and they are different. I'm drawing the common distinction between sex and gender. Sex is biological—female or male. Gender is what we are taught as the social meanings of our sex. While gender meanings are social constructions, they are based on something. And that something is a sexed, physical body. So, I do think that there are some general tendencies that humans have depending on whether they are female-bodied or male-bodied, and we can recognize these without getting into biological determinism or "anatomy is destiny." For example, I think that male-bodied people have a tendency toward performance anxieties in life, and that has some direct connection with their genital experience. To be considered successful sexually men have to be genitally erect and perform, and impotence is a very scary thing for most men.

Joy: Is social construction a denial of the bodily experience, or is it seeing it for what it is...

Joan: ...that all of our experience comes through our language and our conditioning.

Pam: I think you're saying we should focus more on what we have in common as human.

Jim: And that is my desire too. But I fear the tendency of some social

constructionists to discount the bodily experience, to say gender is everything and it doesn't matter what kind of body you have. Talk to a person with severe disability and ask that person if bodily experience means anything. Two similarly disabled persons can have radically different experiences and views of the world, but they are both dealing with and through the body, not ignoring it.

Joy: But how is it different to be male or female compared to being tall or short? Clearly tall people are related to differently than short people. Is sex more significant than those bodily characteristics?

Jim: I've been reading some feminist women in terms of their interpretations of their menstrual experience. I'm intrigued that regularly experiencing radical bodily change opens one to something about life that the absence of that radical bodily change does not. As a male, unless I have experienced traumatic illness or some kind of disfiguring or disabling accident, I don't know much about bodily change in the way I assume women from their testimony do. Death is the most radical bodily change of all, and I'm unprepared for it. We can also say that death is the final defeat of typical masculine cultural values such as competition, lack of vulnerability, winning, and control-over. But, I think there is some biological reality that makes men more susceptible to death fear, and it's not entirely an accident of social construction that a still male dominated medical profession is a very death-fearing profession.

Joan: It could be as far into the dark deep of the biology as the dispensability of men. I mean, you only need one in the whole town. Men are quite dispensable...you send your young men to war...and that has to be part of the male experience. That biological fact, the number of eggs and the number of sperm, suggests that men are right on the pipeline to non-being. But about this gender stuff...I'm not that interested in our private experience of gender, but I am interested in social structures. It seems to me that the big problem was when sex got harnessed to reproduction. Reproduction got harnessed to certain social needs, like agriculture, building

cities, then the need to control (this is Gerda Lerner's thesis), but the need to control was not to control women, it was to control women's reproductive capacities. Until we had a separation between the ability to conceive and having sex, sexuality had to be controlled around reproductive productivity, and then it almost made sense that women would be reduced to their reproductive capacity.

Joy: And their sexuality would be denied and repressed.

Joan: Yes, but by accident almost, women became unequal. Even today in some quarters, if women are willing to reject their sexuality, they have no problem competing.

Pam: Do you think that the birth control pill liberated women from that?

Joan: It became a way of unmasking that; I think that's all it's done. But it unmasked the fact that because reproductivity was necessary to society and because it was tied to sexual expression, a whole set-up structure was created. Once you untie reproductivity and sexuality, then you have all sorts of options. Sex as a mystery should never

become a means to another end. Sex should be seen as an end in itself.

Jim: Let me turn social constructionist for a moment. I am persuaded by that kind of thesis, Joan, and I think that the significant religious change started with the reformation and gathered steam in the 17th century among certain groups of Puritans and Quakers and Anglicans who began to preach and teach that God's fundamental purpose in creating us sexual was not to make babies but to make love. That was a shift of perception, a social construction of theological interpretation of momentous importance. It is still incomplete, but it is an enormous shift to begin to see that reproduction is not central to the meaning of sexuality; it is love, companionship, mutuality, eros.

Pam: Not all religious folk of that period were making that shift. What about the Victorian period where, at least among the middle and upper classes in America, there was extreme repression of sexuality?

Jim: I think the Victorian period in certain parts of this society and certain parts of Europe had some distinctive characteristics which are relevant to the stuff we're talking about. The classic



The Rev. Sherron Hughes-Tremper, a clinical pastoral education supervisor in Oklahoma City, is an ordained Evangelical Covenant pastor since 1978.

spirit/body dualism got a new twist on it with the pedestalization of the eternal feminine, the woman who is less bodily, though still carnal...

Pam: ...she has children, but doesn't enjoy sex.

Jim: I think our churches still live with that kind of Victorian legacy in terms of the privatizing of religion and morality. Women are identified as more spiritual, more religious, more moral than men, but theirs is the private sphere of home and family. Men live in the public world, which is man's world. Religion then becomes feminized and devalued. Male clergy become the chaplains of the home and the chaplains of women, children, the elderly, and the ill. Still today when churches get into the public arena, there is a deep uneasiness which is really a perception of gender role confusion.

Joan: "Since they're women, they ought to stay at home."

Jim: "Churches ought to stay at home where they belong, not be involved in the public sector." I think there's a real sexual dynamic there that has not been labeled.

Pam: Let's go back. If sex is so important to society, why did we devalue it? It was okay within marriage, is that the deal?

Joan: I think Beverly Harrison might say it became an idol! I would say theology follows practice. Once something is valuable to society, it's very likely that religion will sacralize it. Sex within marriage and reproduction were definitely sacralized as the image of God's creation which is a legitimate function of religion. But there's that other legitimate function of religion which is to be prophetic. Where were the voices saying sex is not just for reproduction, sex is to honor God, sex is to worship, to experience beauty and meaning? Those prophetic voices in religion went underground regarding sex. And where did they come up? They came up on other issues. They started to point to the sinfulness of material gain and the whole anti-intellectual bias.

Pam: You wonder... this is supposed to be a much freer society today, but there's a lot of misinformation and lack of information.

Joan: I think what would empower both women and men is information—about the range of sexuality, hormonal development, expectations with regard to our own bodies and human expression. That's not available, from religion it certainly isn't, and in our books, generally it's not. We give them inspiration and shoulds and shouldn'ts

and cans and can'ts, but the basic information that makes you feel you own this reality and that you have the voice for it—that's not there.

Jim: I agree very much with that. There are also some gender differences in terms of body feelings and body knowledge. I think of that enormously popular book by the Boston Women's Health Collective years ago, *Our Bodies, Our Selves*, now in whatever umpteenth revision and still selling well. But such a significant title! Very soon after the first edition came out, a group of men, seeing how well this was doing, got together and wrote one for men, and the title was enormously revealing: *Man's Body: An Owner's Manual*.

Joan: So it is mechanistic, rather than integrated.

Jim: Your body's a machine, here's a manual that will tell you about it, keep it well tuned, but it's still alien. You are in control of it.

Pam: That says a lot about how we approach the earth.

Jim: I believe the ecological crisis is a sexual crisis.

Joan: One of the obstacles to spiritual growth in this society is sexual

commodification. People get the impression that because there's the Oprah show and lots of talk about sexuality that it's education, and it's not. It does not evoke freedom or honesty. It gives an opportunity for further alienation and dissociation from the reality of one's body, so that's as great a social problem as the patriarchal dominance issue about structures. It's at least as great because it's more masked.

Pam: I wish you'd say a bit about esteem issues. It would be interesting to know, Jim, how this is for men. For women, we know it's related to eating disorders, body hatred, it's the commodity thing, you can never have a good enough body.

Jim: I think it is different. In some ways men have it easier in a still patriarchal society. Men don't have anorexia and bulimia, but I think self-body dissociation is rampant among men.

Joan: How would it show itself—in not taking care of the body, not seeking medical help?

Jim: It's not a smooth or coherent picture. Some men pride themselves on the machine and want to keep it well oiled and tuned up and pump a lot of iron doing it, but that's still a minority. But probably a majority of men have difficulty knowing viscerally what they

are feeling much of the time. That's a body dissociation issue. Ask a man what he's feeling, and he might tell you what he's thinking, but it'll be harder for him to tell you what he's feeling.

Joan: Would that likely be blamed on women, or would that be internalized as "I'm not good enough"? In my experience, it's blamed on women.

Jim: Yes, I think typically it is blamed on women. Among the "newer sensitive males" emerging, there's some

shame going on because "I can't get in touch with my tears readily enough" kind of thing. But in terms of self-esteem, I'd like to take this on a theological tack. In a male dominated theological tradition, in the Christianized West, self-love has gotten a very bad press. Self-love has been identified with Eros. One book written a generation ago has had an enormous impact on male theologians, *Agape and Eros*. Anders Nygren, a Swedish theologian, pitted the two over against each other: Agape is the good stuff, that's self-giving love; Eros is the bad stuff, that's acquisitive, self-seeking, and also self-loving. We get an either-or patterning in our theology that is very much a gender related issue.

Joy: A transcendent God is a gender

related idea.

Jim: Yes. Some feminist readings of the Protestant Reformation point to that. In some ways the Protestant reformers were reacting against what they perceived as a growing feminization of the church: courtly love, Mariology, all the smells and bells. Zwingli went around smashing stained glass windows and church organs

because they were too sensuous, i.e. feminine and immanent. The corrective was divine sovereignty and transcendence.

Joan: Remember the "Faith and Ferment" study, that ecumenical study done in Minnesota? I was amazed to discover that a much higher percentage of men saw themselves as sinful than women did. It surprised me, in that the theory should be that women with low self-esteem would see themselves as sinful. But then, knowing that churches don't preach what women know they do wrong, they preach pride and stuff, it made sense in a funny way that women did not have a sense of sin. However, women had a greater sense of guilt. Men felt that they could disregard the rules of their churches and follow their consciences without any guilt. Women said they had to violate their consciences in order to continue living their lives, and

Not Frederick

by Helen Betenbaugh

Frederick.

That's the name they picked out for this baby of theirs, soon to be born.

Frederick this only child would be, to carry on his father's name.

It's surely a boy, the doctor said.

Sonograms not even dreamt of, he still was sure:

Oh yes;

the heartbeat is so strong.

But then at birth the baby's plumbing was all wrong;

and she first knew the meaning of being Other in her physical being,

in her embodiment.

It was to be only after 46 long years of trying, unknowingly, to make up to

parents—to the whole world—for being wrong, Other, that she would

come to know this consciously.

But the Holy One, in her gracious wisdom,

seemed not to notice this disability,

seemed not to notice that she failed the test.

God called Not-Frederick to ministry.

to music ministry in the church.

In college, doing a favor for friends,
her spine was broken.

But the doctor trusted his x-rays,
improperly taken by a student technician,
showing no part of the area which was fractured.

And so he told her to take aspirin,
take hot baths,
wear a girdle,
and don't get constipated.
So she denied the pain which made her back and legs scream,
and she tried to make up to the world for not being able to walk
right.

By the time it got to the New Jersey State Supreme Court,
by the time it was written up in the *Journal* of the A.M.A. as a
warning to physicians to exercise proper care,
by then it was too late. The damage was done.
But she survived.

Oh yes;
the heartbeat is strong.

Years and years and doctors and more doctors.

Tests and more tests.

Town after town, state after state,

the search for relief.

And the mind-body split was secure:
Deny the body, seat of evil, seat of pain.
All the saints knew that.

The church taught her that.

But the body demanded, raged, screamed.

And the doctors patted her on the head.

Finally came a team: a concerted effort.

But in their labors,

three times she went to the operating room wide awake,

wide awake to tell them where and what and how

as they worked their tortures on her spine.

Two of those three times—

in different hospitals in different states—

they forgot the only thing which could help her survive,

massive doses of pre-operative Valium.

But she survived.

Oh yes;

the heartbeat is so strong.

But disease had crept in,

undetected amidst all the other,

and had eaten at the nerves which allowed her brain

to talk with her limbs.

They marked dots on her and inserted needles

Needles connected to wires

Wires which they shot with electricity.

Their machines showed loss.

And sadly they shook their heads.

"You will become more and more Other."

The guru at the Mayo Clinic railed at her in anger,

"Why do you come to me for help?

Do you think I'm God or something?"

"Never you mind," she said.

"My mind can will it."

And so Not-Frederick, knowing how to do it,

set out.

Two hours—unsuccessfully—trying to get up one step.

Seventeen—count them—seventeen traffic lights

to cross a side street.

Abusing that body

in the name of the mind.

in the cause of not being Other,

in apology to the world for being Other,

now doubly Other.

And she wondered why her heart beat at all.

Years passed. Years of fulfilling ministry.

so women were living with guilt. Now, which is more destructive? It seems to me that having to go on violating your conscience is much more destructive. That's maybe a theological piece to the self-esteem issue, and among Catholics at that time it was surfaced by birth control.

Pam: Sexuality, guilt, forced to violate your conscience—this brings up another issue. Let's talk about homophobia.

Jim: Well, it's very gender related, and it's more of a male issue in our society than it is a female issue.

Joy: You mean men are more resistant to accepting homosexual people?

Joan: And more resistant to gays than to lesbians.

Jim: Yes. It's related to misogyny. I think Bev Harrison's pioneering article on this some years ago, "Misogyny and Homophobia," was right on the mark. The social construction of masculinity is over against that which is perceived as feminine, so gay males are perceived as ill-defined males, as receptors not penetrators, and so on. Lesbians can threaten a straight male, too, by being a living demonstration of the woman who does not need a man to complete her, but it doesn't carry the same weight. Look at the soft-porn magazines, "Playboy" or

"Penthouse." They almost always have a lesbian fantasy pictorial. If they did that with a gay male picture spread their subscriptions would fall through the floor. The lesbian symbolism in that context is seen as women trivializing their sexuality in order to please men.

Joy: I remember Jim once saying in a lecture that the reason straight males are so angry at gay men is that they see men enjoying an intimacy that they do not have.

Joan: Except in a way that's not as threatening, maybe in the military, in a sport... in a ritualized way that's not related to sex. A gay friend of mine says he thinks the reason straight men are afraid or intimidated by gays is because they know the aggressiveness of male sexuality, and they see it doubled. And that's scary. He thinks it's not the receptivity or female side being played out, but it's the double shot of aggression.

Jim: And the aggressor threatens to turn the straight male into a woman. I think that's the reason a lot of straight men react with rage when they think they've been propositioned by another

male. They've been womanized, treated as a sex object, as a body—precisely the way women are treated.

Pam: That's related to coaches chastising young boys for "playing like girls."

Jim: Oh, sure. When I was in the army in basic training 40 some years ago, the ways recruits were socialized to become warriors was very sexual, and it was in terms very denigrating of both women and gay males.

Joy: And that's the way you became a man.

Jim: It's over against. To be not those. And that's still, I fear, a major emphasis in our social construction of masculinity. It's largely negative. Men can be



Years of pain and struggle, of embarrassment and shame. Of finally deciding she was not worthless if she parked in blue-people parking, or used blue-people bathrooms. Of red upholstery on her first wheelchair, "So people will know there's still life in the old girl yet," she said. She was thirty-four.

The church told her if she'd pray maybe she'd get better. The church told her she was blocking God's healing power. The church told her she must have done something terrible when she was a youngster. The church told her now she had *carte blanche* to sin away, her penance obviously being completed beforehand. The church told her God was testing her. The church told her it knew *she* thought God had rejected her. The scriptures of the church told her that a lame man should not approach the altar¹. The scriptures of the church told her that God's punishment of her was a good sign, "For when he punishes you it proves that he loves you. When he whips you it proves you really are his child."²

She, who had to take and to ask, heard, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." And she was thrice cursed. Again and again she'd failed the test. But she survived. Oh yes; the heartbeat is so strong.

Wisdom called to her in the streets. Not-Frederick pretended not to hear. Ministry is ministry. The Holy One called again and again, and found the line busy—busy, with no call waiting. Finally, after years of pretending the phone wasn't ringing, she picked it up; like Sarah, she laughed, but she presented herself: wheels, divorce, gray hair and all, to the church. Hear the words of the bishop: "Unemployable. Where would I send her? Who'd want *that*?"

uncertain of who they are, but at least they know who they are not.

Pam: What is going on in the churches with such fear of homosexuality? We can't even talk about it in most of our denominations. It's taboo.

Joy: I wish we had an answer to that. I'm on the task force for the ELCA statement, and I have often thought if we could get to the basis of what it

is, what is the source of the resistance, we would have a different strategy or we would figure out what is the source of this rage and fear. It's fear, and you can say, well, it is the fear of difference, but there's something else.

Jim: I think the fears are multiple, but I think there is some kind of a core fear that Larry Rasmussen was talking about at your Lutheran conference, the fear of loss of community and moral relativism. The whole gay/lesbian/bisexual issue has become a very convenient symbol for that precisely because of all of our religious history.

Joy: So it's scapegoating.

Jim: Sure. Much of the debate about homosexuality is not really about homosexuality as such. It's about loss of authority, loss of control, loss of

certainty, loss of community.

Pam: Somehow sexuality seems very basic to people, so if we give up certainty about that, it's very threatening. But I have wondered, it's almost as if those of us who are straight and married—even in the church where some are trying to say

that's the best model—must not believe it's much of a life. We're afraid if we allow options, no one would choose marriage.

Joy: One of the reasons there is so much resistance to homosexuality is because of unresolved issues around heterosexuality. Gay people are getting scapegoated because heterosexual relationships are violent or so repressed. How much healthy sexuality goes on with the average person in our churches who is in a traditional marriage? Probably not a lot.

Jim: I want to get back to the body/spirit dualism and to that insight of the body psychologists that the more we split off our bodily realities from our consciousness, the more we dichotomize reality. Current research says we are all more sexually ambiguous in terms of orientation than any either-or categorizing would lead us to believe.

Joy: But if people feel good about their own sexuality, if they're integrated,

embodied, and feel good about their own sexual relationship, why wouldn't they celebrate someone else having a good relationship?

Jim: I think that people generally do if feeling good means being happy and satisfied with their own sexual ambiguity. Then they know they may be more inclined one way or the other, but they also know how richly complex they are. When people embrace that, they're not projecting the fear about a part of themselves onto somebody else and scapegoating the other person.

Joan: Many people function out of anxiety with regard to sexuality rather than out of consent, I mean out of real honesty and loving and free self-giving. I would like to see members of religious communities not depend so much on authorities, not call on authorities to reform, but to call each other to cultivate their erotic capacities and see it as a holy project. It's not going to happen anywhere else. Member calls member, to education, to liberation, to erotic expression.

Pam: A holy project to cultivate erotic capacities! Sounds like a good ending to me, or maybe a good beginning. Thank you all very much.

And so, in the beautiful il-logic which only a woman could understand, she put her college daughter in a dorm, packed up her things and her high school daughter, borrowed money to move 300 miles away to work in a job for which she was not trained so she could borrow more money to go to a seminary outside her denomination; a seminary which was almost completely inaccessible, so a new bishop in a new diocese could say—hear the words of the bishop: "Unemployable. Where would I send her? Who'd want *that*?"

In those hallowed halls she heard: "And this is love, that we walk after his commandments."³ "And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spoke."⁴ "The light of the body is the eye."⁵ "Hear, and your soul shall live."⁶ "They are also chastened with pain upon their beds, and with continual strife in their bones."⁷ "And immediately the man was made whole, and he took up his bed and walked."⁸

And the community sang: "Are Ye Able?" "How Shall They Hear the Word of God?" "The Voice of God Is Calling" "Heal Me, Hands of Jesus" "Precious Lord, Take My Hand" "All Things Bright and Beautiful" "We Would See Jesus" "Go, Tell It on the Mountain" "I Love to Tell the Story" "O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee" "Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus" "I Want to Walk as a Child of Light" "Walk On, O People of God" "Marching to Zion"

Other-ness was pushed to its extreme. And she entered fully into the depths of what it meant to be Woman. Other. And in that extremity came awakening, came the claiming of the power, the life blood,

Questions for Dialogue

1. What do we mean by body/spirit dualism?
2. What are the implications of body/spirit dualism concerning personal lives, social constructions, violence in society, the environment, etc.?
3. What constitutes a healthy attitude toward sexuality?
4. How does body/spirit dualism relate to images of God? To discomfort with sexuality issues in our churches? To the role of women? To inclusiveness of gays and lesbians?
5. What does it mean that we are created male and female? Are we essentially different? Are differences socially constructed? How does our sexual embodiment affect our experience?
6. Cultural acceptance of body/spirit dualism seems fairly widespread. Give some examples. How do we work to unravel it? Where do we begin: media, schools, churches, families, legislation?
7. If we unravel body/spirit dualism, what do we replace it with? What is the basis for a more holistic theology?
8. Some women are expressing the importance of a female image as their primary image of God. What do you think this means for the future of the church?

For Relational Sharing:

1. Tell of an early body awareness experience.
2. Tell of one gender socialization experience.
3. How did you learn about sex?

the milk of life,
that is Woman.

And she entered fully into the depths of what it meant to be disabled,
handicapped, crippled, physically challenged, differently abled.
Other.

And in that extremity came empowerment,
came the awakening that she, too, was made *imago Dei*,
and that meant her imperfection was joined
with the imperfections of all,
transformed into the wholeness of God's perfection.
In that wholeness was healing—
Not cure, but healing.

In that wholeness, there is no test to pass.
"She found God in herself and she loved her,
she loved her fiercely."¹

The journey to the depths of Woman,
the journey to the depths of Disability,
gave new meaning to "take up your cross and follow me."
The occasional friend who chooses to sit by her
while others are standing for the singing of the hymns
gives new meaning to what Jesus must have felt
when Simon helped him carry the cross.

Her story is not over, but is just beginning.
How many bishops will it take before one lays his hands on her?
She will persist.
Oh yes,

God's House

by Linda Stiles

Life has fled God's house, flown the way of birds,
away from souls sobbing through organ pipes
as color fades from windows of stained glass,
from the skin of the last who stayed.

Of the last who stayed, it is said, one trained her eye
on a chalice, a promise made, to live no matter what
befell those who sought truth in darker days
and were met with flames, betrayed by faith.

Betrayed by faith, as power's passion raged, no mercy
for those disgraced with unrelenting shame,
tears searing crimson on many a dying face,
she swore one day they would know her name.

One day we will know her name, it is said,
among those sifting ash, pondering redemption
in echoing, vaulted halls still ruled by decree
of a lineage that speaks half the divine story.

Linda Stiles is from Washington D.C.

the heartbeat is so strong.

Not-Frederick is Helen Louise;
like Abraham—no—Sarah!—
I am blessed to be a blessing.
I claim the courage my sisters have nurtured in me;
courage not as balls,
courage not as guts, but courage as *coeur*, the French for "heart,"
Of that I am sure. Oh yes;
my heartbeat is still so strong.

Helen R. Betenbaugh, after a distinguished 30+ year career as a
church musician earned an M.Div. with Honors from Perkins School of
Theology, SMU, in 1993. She is a Postulant for Holy Orders to the
Episcopal priesthood in the Diocese of Dallas and is a D. Min. student
at Perkins. She has used a wheelchair for seventeen years.

1. Leviticus 21:18
2. Hebrews 12:6; quoting Proverbs 3:11-12
3. 2 John 1:6
4. Matthew 9:33
5. Matthew 6:22
6. Isaiah 55:3
7. Job 33:19
8. John 5:9
9. Ntozake Shange. *For Colored Girls Who Have Considered Suicide When the Rainbow Is Unuf*. NY: Bantam Books, p.67.

Building the Body, Building the Spirit

by Nadean Bishop

The twenty-five gay men in our
congregation have gorgeous bodies,
sculpted at the health club. In their
joking together at our church retreat they
talk of incredible sex, taking time to
reassure me as their pastor that it is
always protected, always in a committed
relationship. I sometimes flick a
disbelieving look just for fun, but I listen.
Their love-making, like mine, includes
foreplay, ecstasy, after-glow. Their
experience, like mine, is that sometimes
it brings them close to God, sometimes it
seems more like a warm handshake.

What is undeniably different is that
their sex lives are constantly linked to the
threat of AIDS, the closeness of
inevitable death. In popular culture
presentations, such as the film *Pulp
Fiction*, gay male sex is dramatized as
the worst horror any straight man can
imagine. The radical religious right
exploits these horrific images and
snippets from gay rights rallies to raise
money for reactionary causes. Yet gay
men have much to teach the straight
world about the body and the spirit.

"Being HIV+ is the best thing that
ever happened to me," says Ken, the
muscular young man in the Newcomers
class. "I knew my body, loved my body,
but I ignored the spirit. Now I'm
building both." Unusual? Yes.
Unbelievable? No. Ken teaches us all

about living every day to the full. His job
is at Agape Home, a foster care facility
for people living with AIDS. One of the
guys Ken nurses at Agape Home was as
strong and virile as Ken when he came
in seven months ago. Today he is blind,
paralyzed on his left side because of a
stroke, and some days he disappears into
dementia. Better off dead? Not yet,
thanks. Because alternate days he's
clowning around with his team of
caregivers, sharing his ebullient spirit.

Ken's passion is building support
circles of friends for himself and the
dying, teaching us all how to love.
Knowing he's living on a speeding train
rushing toward God, he prays twice as
much as most of us, earnestly seeks out
conversations about God and the life of
resurrection. He cajoles parents and
friends out of their own grief at the
HIV+ diagnosis to join in the
accelerated journey toward wholeness.

Dan is a gay architect in the Twin
Cities who has nurtured two dozen
friends through their dying with AIDS.
"Some fight so ferociously against every
symptom; others 'go gently into that
good night.'" Phil was one of the
fighters. Dan and his partner conspired
with me to run into them at the Como
Park Conservatory on my day off so I
could finally meet Phil, for whom we
had prayed for so long, to talk with him

about God. A passionate gardener, Phil
had roused himself from a coma to be
surrounded by beauty one last time. In
twenty minutes he told me eloquently
what he knew of God's created world. It
was unforgettable. "The force that
through the green fuse drives the
flower,"² surged in Phil that sunny
winter afternoon.

Novelist Armisted Maupin,
speaking at the Gay Games finale in
New York last year, put it forcefully:
"Too many people think having AIDS
means dying. What do you do when
you're living with AIDS? You write the
best book of your life. What do you do
when you are living with AIDS? You
create the ballet you've always dreamed
of. What do you do when you're living
with AIDS? You show the world how to
live."

Gay men are bringing a powerful
witness to a cynical world. Like those
observing early Christians, we would
marvel: "See how they love one
another."

The Rev. Dr. Nadean Bishop is pastor of
University Baptist Church in Minneapolis.

1. Dylan Thomas. *The Collected Poems of Dylan Thomas*. New Directions, 1952.
2. Ibid.

Beckon

by Bette L. Bates

My graphite drawings begin with random
marks and shapes of light and dark. The eraser
is used as a drawing tool as much as the pencil.
The adding and subtracting create layers of
marks and leave remnants of the process of
finding the image. To find imagery in the
chaotic marks, I look for connecting shapes and
analogies of form, for example, tree branches
that look like fingers. The visual analogies
symbolize the interconnectedness of human life
and nature.

It seems as though western culture's
notion of the separation of spirit and nature has
left us in a lonely world and in the strange
position of picturing ourselves disconnected
from nature. My work expresses hope that we
see ourselves more a part of than apart.

Bette L. Bates is an artist who teaches at the
University of North Carolina at Asheville.



Embodied Prayers: Hands

by Jill Hartwell Geoffrion

Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith, in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and teaching. Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you. I Timothy 4:12-14

"I don't think I need to give you a charge, you already seem very charged up!" It was a humorous way to express the truth of the moment as my pastor began his words of advice to the ordinands, my husband and me, in 1984. Truly I was keenly feeling the excitement of the day. Still, the vows of ordination I was about to speak frightened me. If the words, "... God being my helper," had not preceded each "I will do so," I could never have agreed. Charged up, yes I was! But I yearned for new expressions of spiritual empowerment. The prayers which would be said on my behalf loomed large in my mind. I was counting on them to undergird my ministries and to help me be open to God in the ways that would be needed.

I walked to the front of the familiar sanctuary and knelt. Awe gave way to shock as I realized that only those who had been ordained previously could place their hands on me in prayer. Hairy hands, their thick fingers and short fingernails protruding from suitcoats, came to rest on me. I had expected them on my head; I knew how much wisdom and knowledge I lacked! But they landed on my shoulders, on my back, as well as on my hair, ears and forehead. The words that were spoken to God in that ordination prayer comforted me, but how uncomfortable were the sensations of those hands. I knew they belonged to those who supported me and believed in me, but the descending pressure of them seemed so heavy.

While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off. Acts 13:2-3

When had we started to use our hands to pray? I couldn't remember. Every once in a while when someone at the Tuesday morning women's Bible study was in tremendous pain or deep need we would stop our discussion and all focus audible prayers in her direction for as long as seemed appropriate. One day we gathered around a member who was sick, placing our hands on her as we talked with God about her situation. Since then, the ten of us had laid hands on each other many times. So it didn't seem at all out of place on a Spring morning in 1992 for someone to suggest, "Jill, why don't you kneel and we'll gather around to pray for you."

It was time for good-byes. I was formally concluding my pastoral ministry at the church in order to go back to school. My going-away present was to be a time of prayer bridging our shared experience and my future work in Christian Spiritualities and Women's Studies.

I can't remember the words that were spoken on my behalf although they moved me to tears. What I recall most clearly is how gently, yet firmly, the women laid their hands upon me. So much was expressed through their hands: love, faith, care, pain at separation, hope, and gratitude. My body assured me that their spiritual desires for me and my work were resting securely both in God's loving hands and within me.

How could the laying on of hands by those who had no special calling or training feel so much more empowering than the laying on of hands of the ordained? Just the thought of it seemed almost blasphemous. But it felt true in a deep and hallowed place.

...I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. II Timothy 1:5b-7

Recently I met with my doctoral committee. When the five hours of discussion were completed, the necessary forms signed, and the tape recorder

turned off, the scholars orchestrated a body-centered response. Gifting me in the most beautiful way I can imagine, one said, "We want to commission you to continue to do your work in the name of women everywhere and for the soul of the Church." They formed a circle around me placing their hands on my body. Each woman spoke such beautiful desires into those moments of spoken and sung prayer, but it's not the words that have stayed with me; it's their touch, full of expectation, nurture, faith, and accountability.

And in praying do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard for their many words. Matthew 6:7

The embodied certainty that God touches people has allowed me to be open to using my hands as I experience and express God's love in prayer. Having asked, "Are you comfortable holding hands as we pray?" I rest my cool palm in someone's warm hand as we bring our deep longings before God; the words we speak seem supported by the physical connection we're sharing. What deep love and hope wells up and flows over as I place my hand on my sons' heads as a silent blessing before they head off to first and third grade in the morning. I even find myself growing more accustomed to the warmth I often feel as my hands rest prayerfully on the body of a person in need and the exhilaration I experience after singing praises to God, when my hands tingle inviting and reminding me to extend God's love!

As a child I was taught to pray with my hands together. When I assume that familiar position I feel present to myself and close to God. I'm glad I've learned to pray with extended hands, too. As I reach out to God I also experience God moving through me connecting me in sacred ways with others.

Jill Hartwell Geoffrion is an active member of the Re-Imagining Community in Minnesota.



Community News

Gift and Task

by Randy Nelson

Seven hundred persons gathered in Minneapolis in November 1994 at a theological conference titled *A Reforming Church: Gift and Task*. Organized by a volunteer group of Lutherans (ELCA) the conference attracted men and women, lay and clergy, the curious and the committed, but above all it attracted those drawn by a concern for the well-being of the church and for contributing to dialogue about issues of ethics and justice in a time of uncertainty and confusion.

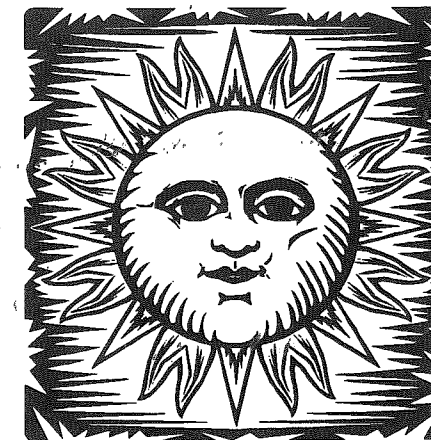
Plenary presentations, small group discussions, and multiple daily worship services gave plenty of opportunity for spirited interaction around issues and concerns that in recent years have proven to be difficult for the church to discuss. The conference encouraged participants to attend to issues of inclusivity and sexuality not out of fear but in light of the reforming spirit that is characteristic of Lutheranism. The conference was marked by excitement and enthusiasm and no small amount of laughter as an antidote to the all too common hostility that has characterized recent conversation around such issues in the church.

Although clearly designed by Lutherans and with a Lutheran audience

as its primary target, the conference picked up on themes that have troubled other churches as well: How do we talk about God in inclusive terms? How are we to understand ourselves as sexual persons in all our diversity and variety? What is the nature of biblical authority? How can the historically voiceless be heard? What does it mean to be accountable to one's own experience? Can we claim (or reclaim) neglected images?

This conference, like some others of recent memory known to members of the Re-Imagining Community, wanted to provide a forum for conversation and discussion. That did, in fact, happen; let the conversation continue.

The Rev. Randy Nelson is a professor of contextual education at Luther Seminary.



My Home Is on a Rock by Kate Christianson

My home is on a rock, which is good, but it's only ten feet back from the Pacific Ocean. I am who I am. In morning sun, I stand outside the front door and face waves, deflecting them to heaven. They come one at a time. Jesus stays inside to wash the windows.



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Minnesota Small Groups

Minnesota has been forging ahead with the development of small groups. At the October local Re-Imagining event, Small Group Coordinator Carrie Dorfman asked participants to generate a list of topics. The areas of interest that surfaced were:

- transforming ourselves and our communities
- transforming the local church
- theologizing in new ways
- explorations of scripture
- exploring holistic worship
- spiritualities
- expressions by change-making women/men

Once these topics were generated by the community participants, a mailing went out to Re-Imagining Minnesotans who had not been present. At this point, nearly 250 people are registered in 25 different small groups meeting throughout the state. Each group is taking its own shape and developing an agenda around the interests and needs of the group members.

Our goal is to develop mentoring packets that outline our process as an example (not a blueprint). If you are developing groups in your area, please let us know what is working for you so that

we might include other ideas and examples in the packet.

Information about your small groups may be sent to:
 Carrie Dorfman
 Coordinator of Small Groups
 Re-Imagining
 122 West Franklin Ave.
 Minneapolis, MN 55404

The Rev. Carrie Dorfman is Presbyterian and works in a variety of specialized ministries.



Submitting Items for the Newsletter

For this issue of *Re-Imagining: Body and Soul*, we received about 25 unsolicited manuscripts. All of them were thoughtful, many were profound in insight and feeling. We heard from survivors of abuse, a recovering alcoholic, a woman working to ritualize menstruation in a positive way, a man

who made interesting analogies between humans and computers. We received articles, poems, drawings, and a few sermons. We appreciate hearing from you and regret that we cannot publish everyone's work.

We hope you will keep sending us your work. As we evolve and figure out policy, you can help us by taking note of these things:

- Keep your submissions short. We cannot print 8-10 page articles or sermons. We need pieces that are 1-4 pages double-spaced or 250-1000 words.
 - Send submissions early. You might wish to suggest an idea before doing the work. We will be happy to consider all queries, but we are planning several months ahead of each issue, so please look ahead at topics.
 - Include your name, address, and phone number. Also include a one-line description we can use to identify you to readers.
 - Send a SASE for response and include sufficient postage if you also wish your manuscript returned.
 - Artwork must be black and white.
- Thank you for your efforts and your patience as we work this out together.

The Editorial Board

Resources

Ritual for Sharing

Laying Hands on the Vessel of God

by Harriet Gleeson and Nancy Chinn

Following is a ritual of bathing as an act of prayer. Its focus is thanksgiving and reverence for one's body as a home for God.

The Setting:

Prepare a shower or bath by ordering and cleaning the space. Put out fresh towels, a fresh bar of soap, place candles, light incense, place fresh flowers, oils, mirrors, set nearby favorite music: do whatever makes this a special place for you. Take the phone off the hook and ask those who may live with you to give you a half hour of quiet time alone.

The Ritual:

Rest quietly becoming more and more conscious of your breath. Cross over into sacred time. Do whatever you are comfortable with to move toward a sacred core, a center, where your God is within. When you are there, greet God and know that at this moment your body is sacred because it is here you can meet that God. Disrobe when you are ready and enter the bath or shower.

Stepping in, give thanks for the water. Recall waters of the past: chaos, desert springs of Mariba, the waters of floods, the waters of the Red Sea liberation, the waters of baptism. Recall the waters of our bodily fluids: secretions, streams, reservoirs, lubrications. Pour water over yourself, giving thanks for the Waters of Life.

Reverently and consciously soap and clean every part of your body. As you clean, bless each part giving thanks for what it does. Take care as you wash to remember that you are cleansing a home of God. Give thanks also for the God who became Flesh and for the God who dwells within and acts now in your body. Ask for healing for the parts that need repair or renewal.

When you have finished this, recline in the water as the womb water of God or stand quietly feeling the warmth of God pouring over you in the shower.

The Closing:

When you sense you are ready, leave the water and take time to carefully towel and anoint your body, clothing it to celebrate and protect it. Emerge, and cross over with strength into common time.

Nancy Chinn and Harriet Gleeson are artists and passionate about women's spirituality.



Mystery in Darkness

text: Joan Prefontaine
 tune: Adoro te Devote

Mystery in darkness,
 feel the Spirit's breath.
 Praise light's holy absence,
 granting space for rest.
 Sing for those who sleep now,
 all who dream and sigh,
 Source of ev'ry comfort,
 healing dark, abide.

Cats' eyes favor nightfall,
 sunset disappears,
 Owls in midnight branches
 perch without a fear.
 Sing for those who sleep now,
 all who dream and sigh,
 Source of ev'ry comfort,
 healing dark, abide.

Moth in silky covering,
 baby spider's home,
 Tender seeds are sprouting
 under richest loam.
 Sing for those who sleep now,
 all who dream and sigh,
 Source of ev'ry comfort,
 healing dark, abide.

Starfish on the sea-floor,
 half-moon in the sky,
 Mirror on the water,
 moon's lamp passes by.
 Sing for those who sleep now,
 all who dream and sigh,
 Comfort and affirm us,
 healing strength abide.

Joan Prefontaine is a M.A. student in Theology and the Arts at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities.

No place big enough for my thoughts
 No place at all.
 Some place big enough for my feelings
 With you — my sister.

Sherron Hughes - Tremper

#1830 Sweatshirt Order Form:

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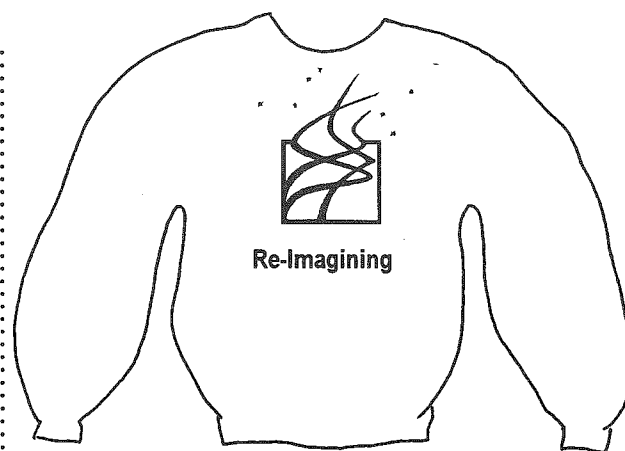
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Book Reviews

Sexuality and the Sacred

Sexuality and the Sacred: Sources for Theological Reflection, eds. James B. Nelson and Sandra Longfellow, Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1994. Reviewed by Jerie Robison Smith.

The genius of this important book edited by James B. Nelson and Sandra Longfellow is the wonderful assortment of articles from many thoughtful people. We have long needed such a resource in the church. Each of us in the narrowness of our traditions has sought a voice to tell our story. Too often those courageous voices have been ostracized. Now Nelson and Longfellow have provided a source for us to learn from each other in order to make sense of sexuality. This book may be the position paper that no individual church body has been able to achieve. It offers both food for thought for the cultural task of ethical formation and personal challenge to stretch beyond one's comfort zones.

The individual authors who season this book with their wisdom are women and men of differing experience, color, culture, and sexual preference. Each article has something important to say, but I have space only to mention four.

In "Lovingly Lesbian," Mary H. Hunt describes her sexual ethic as that of "friendship," including the qualities of mutuality, community seeking, honesty about sexuality, non-exclusivity, flexibility, and other directedness. Hunt says, "these characteristics will transform our culture and create the preconditions for the possibility of the reign of God... It is more adequate because it acknowledges that it is not sexuality per se but friendship which determines what the quality of life can be."

Philip Culbertson, in "Explaining Men," says "Men yearn to find the father who was never there and they fear intimacy with men, for that intimacy implies that they themselves are feminine... Men become so fearful of homosexuality that they cut off a large portion of their innate potential for both growth and intimacy... Men get so used

to competing with each other that they do not know how to nurture each other. Or they mistake male-bonding and the tenuous loyalty that goes with it for intimacy."

Audre Lorde, in "Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power," says "...when we look away from ourselves as we satisfy our erotic needs in concert with others, we use each other as objects of satisfaction rather than share our joy in satisfying... To refuse to be conscious of what we are feeling at the time... is to deny a large part of our experience and to allow ourselves to be reduced to the pornographic, the abused, and the absurd."

Last and maybe most confronting, L. William Countryman, in "New Testament Sexual Ethics and Today's World," says "The creation of its own purity code has been one of several ways in which the church has at times allowed itself to become a barrier to the gospel of God's grace... Will they hang onto their own self-defined purity and so hold themselves aloof from those excluded by it, or will they proclaim the grace of God which plays no favorites?... The Christian is free to be repelled by any or all of these and may continue to practice her or his own purity code in relation to them. What we are not free to do is impose our codes on others."

Maybe the only negative thing that can be said is that this book comes later than is necessary, but maybe not too late for all of us who desire communication, challenge, and connection, no matter what our tradition is, to make of sexuality that sacred and whole act the authors presume it to be. In my opinion, this book belongs on the shelf of every thinking Christian right next to *Embodiment*, also by James B. Nelson. Long ago Nelson wrote an article for a Lutheran Campus Ministry journal in which he acknowledged a wish that he had shown more courage when he wrote *Embodiment*. Those words of his have often conjured up courage for me when dealing with difficult issues of sexuality. In this new volume, James B. Nelson and Sandra Longfellow have shown great courage.

Jerie Robison Smith is a lay campus minister, lover, seeker, and friend.

Sexuality and Spiritual Growth

Sexuality and Spiritual Growth, by Joan H. Timmerman, New York: Crossroad, 1992. Reviewed by Sandra Longfellow.

In this book Joan Timmerman, Professor of Theology at the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul, makes a major contribution toward reclaiming the goodness of the interconnection of bodily life with life in the Spirit. *Sexuality and Spiritual Growth* expands the premise of her earlier work, *The Mardi Gras Syndrome* (Crossroad, 1984): "Sexuality is integral to spiritual growth and depends on it." Writing in the language of Catholic theology and locating herself clearly within that tradition, Timmerman undertakes the creative and important work of suggesting a possible theology of the relationship between spirituality and sexuality.

Understandings of our human sexuality that have been handed down to us by the church, the medical establishment, and popular culture have split body from spirit. Our Christian tradition, deeply affected by the dualisms of the classical world, has viewed spirit as essentially different from and superior to the sexual body. The question is, What do sexuality and spirituality have to do with each other? Timmerman's response is, I am my sexuality and my spirituality. "I am not dual, body in opposition to spirit; nor am I simple; I am multifaceted, living out multiple aspects of life in the only way possible to finite being, one at a time" (16). Amidst all the popular body-denying spiritualities and the dry, de-spirited sex studies and surveys, Timmerman's work is a very hopeful sign.

The book's introductory essay invites the reader into the process of constructing a theology of the relationship between sexuality and spirituality. There is in Timmerman's writing a wit, a creative playfulness that I find engaging—"One entertains ideas, to see what happens; one does not force them into service or order them out of the house if they can't fix things" (3).

She offers helpful definitions of both terms. She describes "sexuality" as "the entire range of feelings and behaviors which human beings have and use as

embodied persons in the world, expressing relationship to themselves and others through look, touch, word, and action. It includes the combination of our gender (identity and role) and sex (anatomy and physiology) and is coextensive with personality" (9). I am in agreement with Timmerman that there is a both/and quality to our human sexuality—there is a givenness, inherent in individual persons, and at the same time, we take active roles as human agents forming and defining our sexual meanings and values within our cultures. Her definition of "spirituality" is "the response of the whole person, body, mind, feelings, relationships, to the perceived presence of the holy in the here and now" (9).

As the title suggests, the author takes a developmental approach to sexuality and spiritual growth. This model is most fully developed in two complementary chapters, "Stages in Spiritual Growth" and "Cycles of Change." In the first, the author places herself within the New Testament tradition of viewing spiritual development as progress toward maturity. She traces our human development, looking at ways our lives are shaped by our sexual histories which, in turn, shape our spiritual struggles. In the second, her emphasis is on repeated cycles of change and transition that are predictably part of our personal life journeys, affirming that "sexual-spiritual growth takes place by shedding taboos, accepting ambiguity and finally, celebrating a new way of being" (87).

A limitation of developmental models is that they can be excessively linear and hierarchical. Timmerman, however, offers a subtler approach, focusing on cycles of changes rather than a straight line of progress. She suggests that a model of orderly development can be used flexibly

and creatively as a guide to self-knowledge, self-acceptance, and self-transcendence. Her use of the metaphor of Penelope's robe (recall the story of Penelope weaving, unraveling and reweaving a garment on her loom as she awaits Ulysses' return) images the sexual-spiritual life as "an interwoven fabric in which a strand, once begun, is never completely left behind, but becomes part of the larger 'robe' one weaves" (3).

There are other rich chapters in this book, in particular chapter two, "The Sexuality of Jesus and the Human Vocation" which offers a survey of the shifting historical interpretations of what it means to affirm that Jesus is truly human and raises the issue of our need for "a credible theological way of relating the sexual with the holy" (30).

The book concludes with a chapter titled "Being and Doing" which offers a number of essays on formation, self-worth and body image, friendship, and ministry of and to people with HIV/AIDS, all of which touch on our beliefs about our bodily lives and the holy.

Sexuality and Spiritual Growth affirms sexuality as a source of religious experience, suggesting ways we as readers can identify and celebrate the interrelationships between our sexuality and our connections with the Divine. This work is well worth our time and attention, and Timmerman is a welcome guide.

Sandra Longfellow is a theological writer and editor; she is assistant editor of ARTS: The Arts in Religious and Theological Studies and recently co-edited (with James B. Nelson) Sexuality and the Sacred: Sources for Theological Reflection.

My Inside

by Kate Christianson

My inside, which has never known the light, waits like a midnight seabed for your hand to brush me. Explore me with your truth, even though it might be cold and dark. I am your mother.

Rattling Dry Bones

Rattling Those Dry Bones: Women Changing the Church, ed. by June Steffensen Hagen, San Diego: Lura Media, 1995. Reviewed by Jo Ringgenberg.

In the hustle and bustle of the holiday season I volunteered. I thought I probably could read enough of *Rattling Those Dry Bones* to do a review. I read it all—the introduction and twenty-two chapters.

It was easy reading. I found no six syllable theological words to stumble over. Yet there is theology from cover to cover.

It was intriguing. Chapter titles such as "Thursday Morning Muffins" or "Have Some More, Darlings, There's Plenty" kept me going.

The book is divided into five sections with four or five stories to each section. The writers within each section share a common role: writers, educators, stewards, pastors, and theologians. I found it possible to pick and choose, reading two or three chapters at a time from anywhere in the book, thus accommodating my reading schedule.

Editor June Steffensen Hagen did what many of us would like to do. She asked more than seventy of today's noted churchwomen about their decision to be leaders in describing and doing feminist theology within the church. She not only wanted to hear why they stayed but also to use their answers to speak to others who may be deciding whether to stay or leave. And she lets the stories speak.

There is no one answer, no attempt to draw conclusions, no offering of a pattern to follow. There are just marvelous conversations with twenty-two of the women—conversations because one does tend to talk to the book!

Picking the "Dry Bones" I offer these appetizers:

Virginia Ramey Mollenkott says, "Those of us who are currently alive do not have the luxury of waiting until the dust settles in order to practice our faith. We are forced to decide now concerning how we will survive this major crisis in the life of the church. I understand this book to be a kind of survival handbook" (184).

The earnestness of Susan Cole is riveting as she describes her relationship

with Sophia in "From Crisis to Creative Energy." This is one of the longer and more lecture mode responses, but so filled with Sophia information and relevance that it is one I have already re-read.

Madeline L'Engle perhaps set the tone that led to the book's title. In her article titled "Bones," she asks, "Why? I sometimes ask myself. Why am I trying to hang in there, where I sometimes feel trapped between a wishy-washy liberalism where everything is permissible and a rigid fundamentalism where all questions are answered, all rules are absolute, and forgiveness is overruled by judgmentalism?" (18).

"When I look in my dictionary," says Mary E. (Polly) Wheat, "I see that 'should' comes from *sollen*, 'to be indebted.' Here, for me, is an opening. Indebtedness implies gift, something I have received. If my life is full of 'shoulds,' then perhaps it is also filled with gifts. Deep within myself, at the center of the spiral, the external obligation of should spins to show its other side, the acceptance of gift, and gratitude for the particulars of my life" (116).

Margaret Guenther's "Have Some More, Darlings, There's Plenty" tells of her journey and recognizes the struggle of women in many roles in the church. She counsels, "So when I counsel subversion, I do not mean infiltration of diocesan offices... nor do I mean overthrow of the institution as we know it... Rather, I counsel a fearless and joyful exploration downward into the neglected and unknown depths of a woman's faith. I urge my sisters to get acquainted (or reacquainted) with the saints. There are some strong, beautiful, eccentric, powerful women in the family album" (136). Guenther's title is her ending declaration of hope.

The other contributors are as engaging and insightful as these. You may not know all the names, but once you read the book you will know an important part of each of their lives.

Jo Ringgenberg is a Presbyterian laywoman.



Other Suggested Readings

Bordo, Susan. *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

Brown, Joanne Carlson and Carole R. Bohn, eds. *Christianity, Patriarchy and Abuse: a Feminist Critique*. NY: Pilgrim Press, 1989.

Cooley, Paula M., Sharon Farmer and Mary Ellen Ross, eds. *Embodied Love: Sensuality and Relationship as Feminist Values*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987.

Foster, Patricia, ed. *Minding the Body: Women Writers on Body and Soul*. New York: Doubleday, 1994.

Heyward, Carter. *Touching Our Strength: the Erotic as Power and the Love of God*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989.

Mollenkott, Virginia Ramey. *Sensuous Spirituality: Out From Fundamentalism*. New York: Crossroad, 1992.

Nelson, James B. *Body Theology*. Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox, 1992.

Nelson, James B. *Embodiment*. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1978.



New Publications

The following are recently published works that we have not previewed but have been brought to our attention.

Sunday School Manifesto: In the Image of her? by Elizabeth Dodson Gray proclaims that unless the church changes to become woman-affirming it cannot be a good place for our children. This book is a reprint of Dodson Gray's chapter in *Theologies of Religious Education*, ed. by Randolph Crump Miller. Elizabeth Dodson Gray is the author of several books and is Coordinator of the Theological Opportunities Program at Harvard. For information or to order, contact Roundtable Press, 1-(800) 726-5320.

In Search of Christ-Sophia by Jann Aldredge-Clanton combines theological scholarship with pastoral sensitivity. The final chapter contains resources for worship that focus on inclusivity and the liberating image of Christ-Sophia. Jann Aldredge-Clanton is an ordained Baptist pastor serving as chaplain coordinator for oncology and as a member of the Institutional Ethics Committee at Baylor University Medical Center. Books may be ordered from Twenty-Third Publications, 1-(800) 321-0411.

Cleaning Up BIASED Language: Toward Creating an Inclusive Society is an educational pamphlet published by the 8th Day Center for Justice, a Roman Catholic organization founded in 1974 to work for justice. In addition to making a case for the need to change biased language, the pamphlet offers practical solutions for how to go about it. Copies may be ordered from 8th Day Center for Justice, 205 W. Monroe, Chicago, IL 60606. \$4.00 plus handling; \$3.00 if 10 copies or more. Call (312) 641-5151.

A new *Journal of Sacred Feminine Wisdom* is being launched by editor Sue Perz. The publication is dedicated to advocacy for women and art. The first issue will include two pages of full-color art that can be taken out and framed; the second issue will include a sample compact disc of women's music. \$30.00 for two issues the first year. To order or send contributions of art, poetry, articles, or music, send to *Journal of Sacred Feminine Wisdom*, P.O. Box 159356, Nashville, TN 37215.

Happenings

Women, the Church, and the Law:

Women and the Church Conferences will host *Women, the Church, and the Law* from 8:00-4:30 on Saturday, June 10 at the Hyatt Regency DFW, inside Dallas/Fort Worth Airport. The conference will bring together religious and legal experts to address the legality of church employment practices relative to women. These experts, including Prof. Anita Hill of the University of Oklahoma, Professor Milner S. Ball of Georgia University School of Law, and Dr. Mary J. Kuhns, an ordained Presbyterian minister and pastoral counselor, will present prepared remarks and engage in open discussion about questions prompted by the repercussions of the Re-Imagining Conference. Cost is \$59 (\$49 if also reserving conference hotel rooms). You may register by credit card by calling the conference registration hotline, 1-(800) 780-6960. A portion of the proceeds will go toward research on women and the law at the University of Oklahoma Law School.

Women and the Church Conferences was founded in 1994 by Rev. Becky Hebert and Rev. Randy Riddle to specialize in professional/educational conferences for those interested in content-laden seminars at a reasonable cost.

Nelle Morton Lecture Day at Drew University:

The theme for this day of discussion is *Sophia: Three Perspectives*. Afternoon small group discussions will begin at 2:00 followed by a pot-luck supper and a panel presentation at 7:30 p.m. The three panelists are Drew faculty members. Dr. Virginia Burrus is Assistant Professor of Early Church History and specializes in areas concerning authority, heresy, and gender. Dr. Joan Engelsman is a Jungian psychologist whose work, *The Feminine Dimension of the Divine: A Study of Sophia and Feminine Images in Religion*, is in its third edition. Dr. Catherine Keller teaches constructive theology and has written *Apocalypse Now and Then: A Feminist Perspective on the End of the World*. Admission is free and open to all.

Women's Ordination Conference—20th Anniversary Celebration:

Discipleship of Equals: Breaking Bread/Doing Justice is the theme for this conference to be held Nov 10-12, 1995 at the Marriot Crystal Gateway Hotel in Washington D.C. The conference will make visible and celebrate the diversity and range of women's ministries around the world; it will insist that women be admitted to all offices in the church including the episcopacy; and it will endeavor to model a discipleship of equals, that is, an assembly which is inclusive, participatory, and engaged in the struggle for justice. Program and materials will be bilingual, English and Spanish. For information, write WOC, P. O. Box 2693, Fairfax, VA 22031 (703) 352-1006. FAX 703-352-5181.

Notes

Job Opportunity:

Two Pastors in Co-Ministry. St. Luke Presbyterian Church is seeking two pastors as joint heads of staff to work in co-ministry. St. Luke is located in a western suburb twenty minutes from the heart of Minneapolis. Our 414-member congregation is comprised of individuals and families who are drawn together by a common commitment to peace and justice. We are seeking co-pastors whose preaching and teaching reflect creative, critical thinking with a solid base in spirituality. St. Luke is a Sanctuary Church, a More Light Church, and supports Re-Imagining. Individuals or pairs may apply. Have PIF sent to: PNC, St. Luke Presbyterian Church, 3121 Groveland School Road, Wayzata, MN 55391.

Missing Art:

Nancy Chinn requests that we help locate her six missing banners from the 1993 conference. The five American banners and one black Japanese banner are missing. If you have information, please contact Re-Imagining (612) 879-8036.

Networking

Persons interested in Re-Imagining concerns who live in Florida, Georgia, South Carolina, Alabama, Mississippi, Louisiana, Texas, or other southeastern states, contact Diana Reed Jackson, The Women's Multi-Faith Center in the South, 325 Lake Seminary Circle, Maitland, Florida, 32751 (407) 831-5922.

Writers in the Twin Cities area who are interested in working on liturgy, hymnody, or spiritual themes in poetry or fiction, contact Kate Christianson, (612) 377-9618.

If you live in the north-of-San Francisco area, contact Donna Wiuff, 9394 Lakewood Drive, Windsor CA 95492-9548, (707) 837-8768.

Anyone in the Quad Cities area (Iowa and Illinois) may contact Rachel Rae Mueller, 1251 State Highway 94, Aledo, IL 61231 (309) 582-3204.

Theme for May Newsletter

Re-Imagining: Ritual in Community

What is the purpose of ritual in the life of a community?
How do we develop rituals?
What specific rituals are meaningful to you?

Send us your thoughts, letters, stories, poems. We need art, small black and white drawings especially. Please enclose a SASE for response and add sufficient postage if you wish your manuscript returned.

If you have community news, happenings to announce, networking, new publications, send by April 15 to:

Re-Imagining
Editor: Pamela Carter Joern
122 W. Franklin Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55404
(612) 879-8036

Letters

Thank you so much for your newsletter and for BEING! I am so alienated from the church, and yet I once called it home. I would like to have it be home someday again.

I loved *Why Christology* by Jean Mohrig, even though I don't really know or care what Christology means.

All best wishes—the spirit is with and in us.

Jane Hope
Louisville, Kentucky

I do indeed want to be a member of the Re-Imagining Community. (In fact, I think I have been a member since the day I was born 61 years ago!)

When I attended the Minneapolis Conference November 1993, I felt like I had lived my whole life for that weekend.

Since then small groups of women have been meeting in my home for blocks of 6-10 weeks (once a week) to listen to one of the taped presentations. We start by making holy space, then the Sophia blessing, listen to the presentations, talking together time, and a closing musical ritual. All told about two hours. Very simple.

These women are varying ages and backgrounds, many with deep and very painful connections to a variety of church denominations. Some have decided they cannot continue to come to listen because as one very devout woman put it, "These women (presenters) are pushing me where I do not want to go." And that is fair enough.

I believe it is terribly important for Re-Imagining to continue. The world-wide increase of fundamentalism in all religions has a tremendous appeal and power as the women's movement continues to question and defy the underpinnings of patriarchy and name its own agenda in all areas of human endeavors. We must accept such reaction and keep the faith that the Spirit is moving over the face of the earth and pushing us all where we might not want to go.

Blessed be.

May Deller
Brandon, Manitoba

I am late reading your complimentary November 1994 issue but want to tell you that I appreciate it, especially the Brock, Friend-Jones, Pharr dialogue.

Aldean Newcomb
Tulsa, Oklahoma

Enclosed is my check for membership in the Re-Imagining Community, a community that feels more vital to me than anything I have thus far experienced within the church. Your efforts—now, our efforts—are critical for the lives and future of us all, especially our daughters.

Recent election results bring us dangerously close to Margaret Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale*. The role of religion in our nation's turn to the right is powerful and scary. I think it is also blasphemy. We were talking about female images of the deity and Sophia/wisdom as divine when I was in seminary over twelve years ago! As hard as it is to believe, we have gone backwards since then.

I believe the misogyny at the root of opposition to the Re-Imagining Conference is the same as that which is at the root of the anti-abortion/family planning and anti-welfare mother priorities of the religious right agenda. We have to join together to protect and nourish women. Thank you for doing that. Thank you for your courage and your vision. Thank you for providing us an avenue for joining your efforts.

Peace,

Rev. Carol Burnett
Ocean Springs, Missouri

You don't expect me to cut up my newsletter to use the membership coupon, do you? Impossible!

Enclosed is \$20.00 for my membership in the Re-Imagining Community. It feels so good to say that, "Re-Imagining Community." I like it!

Marilyn Harvey
Brigantine, New Jersey

I attended the Re-Imagining Conference (November 1993) and it brought me new hope and joy and stimulated a much broader vision. I'm profoundly grateful for that experience and for all the work you there in Minnesota are doing to continue the process.

I have not personally suffered from my participation, at least here locally, except the pain of being disregarded and ignored. I did try to do my part by writing a letter to *Presbyterian Outlook* which was picked up and printed by *Horizons Magazine*. At least those like Sally Hill, Mary Ann Lundy, etc. can have the satisfaction of knowing their voices were heard and noted. But at such a price!

I'm pretty much in an isolated part of the church as far as feminist theology/liturgy

is concerned. I very much need the support of the newsletter and rejoice in its birth and future work.

Cheers from Arkansas!

Ann W. Young
Little Rock, Arkansas

From the Editorial Board:

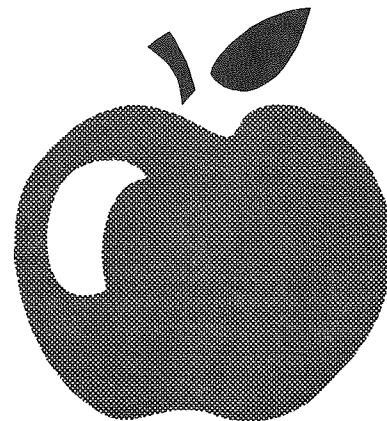
As we send this to the printer, we think we have received memberships from each of the 50 states in the U.S. We have memberships in Canada and several other countries.

Two errors occurred in last month's newsletter that we know of. (I once subscribed to a publication that gave awards to readers for finding errors. Perhaps we should try that?) Two additional names should have been added to the list of members of the Re-Imagining Coordinating Council: Rev. Judith Allen Kim and Sue Seid-Martin. Also, Nadean Bishop's identifying line at the end of her book review was incomplete. The Rev. Dr. Nadean Bishop is pastor of University Baptist Church.

Let us know how we are doing. One way to continue the dialogue on specific themes is through this letter department. We'd like to know your responses to the various articles and reflections presented in this issue.

Thank you for your memberships and support. Shalom.

Pamela Carter Joern, Editor



Invitation
to become a

BIRTHGIVER

The Re-Imagining Community is a gift of the Spirit as women and men come together to continue reforming the church.

In real life terms, it takes our dollars to continue this important work.

How can we become BIRTHGIVERS?

Amount: Give \$5 - \$500. No donation categories, all gifts will be accepted with gratitude.

Idea: Give a gift in the name of a dear friend! Be among the first to give!

How: Send your check made out to Re-Imagining. Mail to:

Re-Imagining
122 West Frankling Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55404

Each of us can be a BIRTHGIVER!

Any questions? Call us at (612) 879-8036.

If you would like to give to the Re-Imagining Community in honor or memory of a friend, we will send a notification to your honoree on your behalf. We will also publish a list of givers and honorees (no amounts) in subsequent newsletters.

I, _____, would like to give a gift of \$ _____

to honor _____.

Your Name:

Address:

Honoree's Name:

Address:

I would like my gift listed in the newsletter.

I would like my honoree listed in the newsletter, but please do not list my name.

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In This Issue:

Re-Imagining: Body and Soul

Upcoming Issues:

Re-Imagining:

May - Ritual in Community
Aug - Death and After Death
Nov - Word

**How do we sustain hope?
How do we stay connected?
How do we nurture our faith in God?**

Be Part of The Re-Imagining Community

Re-Imagining

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