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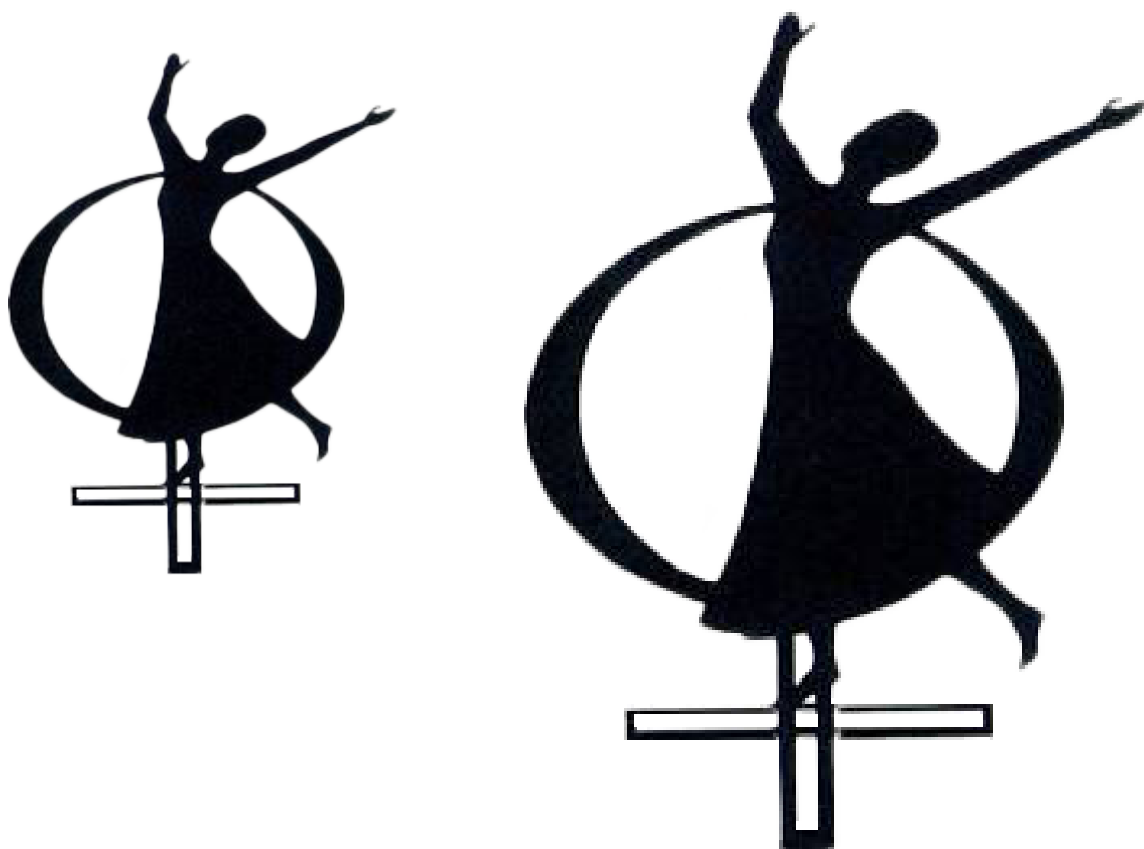
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Boston University School of Theology

ANNA HOWARD SHAW CENTER

Volume 42 Issue 2 Spring 2025

MANY STORIES, MANY CALLINGS: OUR DYNAMIC VOCATIONS



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Dear Friends of the Anna Howard Shaw Center,



In this unprecedented shifting higher education landscape, our commitment at the Anna Howard Shaw Center to serve women and femme leaders at Boston University School of Theology remains as relevant as ever. Back in 1978, when the Shaw Center began, the first woman priest in the Episcopal Church had only just been ordained the year prior, and The Methodist Church (precursor to the United Methodist Church) had granted women full clergy rights in 1956 — barely one generation of ordained women. Our progress in the intervening 47 years since our founding cannot be taken for granted.

Women and femmes called to ministry have long blazed their own paths. Navigating how to exist in spaces that were originally built for men, while wearing the multiple hats we are often expected to wear throughout our lives as pastors, leaders, preachers, daughters, siblings, parents, and/or caregivers for our parents, is among the many complexities that we as women and femmes experience in our vocational journeys. Since its founding, the Shaw Center has recognized the complex lives of our religious women leaders and has consistently sought ways to support them, sharing our solidarity with them.

Since last year, we have intentionally designed a program to collaborate with interfaith women leaders in the greater Boston area. Having received a Faith and Health Pipeline Grant Program from the Interfaith America organization, we have launched a new program, “Wellbeing of Women Religious Leaders in Interfaith Spaces.”

The purpose of this program is to listen to the needs of women and femmes in religious leadership, allowing them to share their experiences with one another, create space for their collective wellness, and enhance their leadership skills. To facilitate women’s wellness, it is essential to provide holistic care that addresses physical, psychological, and spiritual wellbeing. By offering educational opportunities to learn about their bodies, minds, and spirits, we aim to cultivate the wellbeing of women in religious leadership through holistic support programs. Ten interfaith women leaders were invited to form a support group and participate in this pilot program throughout this year.



Although this program is designed specifically to support interfaith women leaders in a small group setting, all lectures given during this program were public and livestreamed. You can find links to these lectures on page 13, and we hope you will give them a watch! Based on these workshops and lectures, our interfaith women leaders will share their reflections and insights at the Women in the World Conference on October 9, 2025. Please save the date and join us for our conference this fall.

The Anna Howard Shaw Center has also continued its weekly, monthly, and annual programming, amplifying one another's voices through the Thursday Lunch Lecture Series and celebrating one another's achievements. Our Spiritual Growth & Stress Support Group program remains a vital source of support for theology students in partnership with the Danielsen Institute.

Your generosity has enabled us to continue supporting women and femme students and alumni through our mission, resources, programming, and supportive, empowering presence on the third floor of the theology building.

Thank you for your ongoing support — because of you, we have not merely survived, but have thrived. Still, we acknowledge the financial crisis that has been a significant concern at the Shaw Center in recent years. Although the need to support women and their vocational callings is as great as ever, we are finding our resources increasingly limited. We need your help. We hope you will consider making a gift today to help us continue to survive and thrive for decades to come.



As the academic year comes to a close, please keep us in your prayers and remember us in your giving. We invite you to give online at <https://www.bu.edu/shaw/donations/> or by check payable to "Trustees of Boston University" with "STH- Shaw Center" in the memo field mailed to: Boston University Gift Processing c/o JPMorgan Chase & Co. PO Box 22605 New York, NY 10087-2605.

We cannot thank you enough for the difference your support makes for everyone who passes through the doors of the Anna Howard Shaw Center. Congratulations to all our graduates, and may you have a safe and joyous summer ahead!

Sincerely,

The Anna Howard Shaw Center, Boston University School of Theology

Thank you Donors!

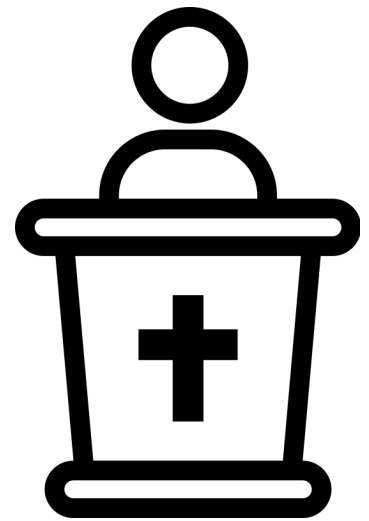
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HAI WOMAN, MAXIMIZE YOUR CALLING

Since I was a child, I have dreamed of becoming a female pastor and career woman (having other jobs outside the church). These two jobs are seen as things that should not go together in the eyes of Christians in Indonesia. According to Christian Indonesians, based on Matthew 6:24, “No one can serve two masters. Because if so, he will hate one and love the other, or he will be loyal to one and ignore the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” Therefore, they argue that a priest must not have any other job besides working in a local church. Many women pastors are expected to focus solely on supporting their husbands, adjusting his suit and tie for preaching, and managing the local congregation only.

My husband and I got ordained as youth pastors in a local Pentecostal Church in Eastern Indonesia a year before my son was born. In Eastern Indonesia, normally churches have four to five days of worship services weekly. It seems very busy, so the pastor is advised to only work in the church. However, in fact, the worship services are held in the evening time. This means that we can have free time in the morning until the afternoon. Therefore, finding myself doing nothing during the day, I accepted a job offer from an NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) that focuses on Christian-based human development.



My work included helping women who have never received formal education to learn to write and read, and teaching English to children using Christian approaches. After working with this NGO for two years, I received another offer to work part-time with a second NGO that focuses on Christian youth development. Through Christian-based education programs, this NGO helps young people find their calling and discover their true purpose in life.

Seeing myself so busy, yet able to impact so many people, both in church and outside it, without leaving my duties as a mother and wife, I admit that there is a certain satisfaction. I can maximize myself to help others, earn more income for my family, and see my dreams come true.



HAI WOMAN, MAXIMIZE YOUR CALLING



If I only work in the church, then I will impact a few people, but through the other two jobs I can help more people. Inspiring others to pursue their dreams and find God's calling in themselves is a very satisfying experience. Seeing women who can read and write, children who can speak English, and young people who get scholarships to study in Europe, all make me feel priceless satisfaction.

I see that through all the work I do, my life has been a blessing to many people, and it does not violate God's commandments. Working more than one job is not a sin. So, the understanding that pastors should not have other jobs may need to be reconsidered. The most important thing is that pastors do not leave their main duties in the church. Moreover, it turns out that women have the energy to grow and do many things in their lives. It is very unfortunate if the potential in us must be buried because it is locked up by the common understanding that married women or woman pastors can only work at home and in a local church. I want to inspire other women by showing that even as wives, mothers, and pastors, we can still be a part of anything in the wider community according to the potential God gives us. Don't ever give up on your dream. Believe in yourself. Embrace the best version of you. Maximize your calling.



Elsyina R. Pararem (MTS, 25) hails from West Papua, located in Eastern Indonesia. This coastal region is renowned for its stunning beaches, crystal-clear blue oceans, and an abundance of sunny days throughout the year. In her free time, Elsyina enjoys swimming at the beach, spending quality moments with her family, and watching Netflix. She has a keen interest in homiletical studies, as well as the identity and leadership of Asian women. In addition to her roles as a pastor and preacher, she aspires to become an educator in the future.



WE BRING OUR FULL SELVES: REFLECTIONS ON BECOMING A MOTHER AT STH

As I come toward the end of my studies at BUSTH, I have been reflecting on my two callings of ministry and motherhood. These journeys have been intricately intertwined for me.

Exactly one month into my first semester at STH, I found out I was pregnant. This welcome surprise was both exciting and — honestly — a bit unsettling. My husband and I had just moved across the country so that I could complete my MDiv at BU, something I had dreamed about for a long time. We had just left our friends, family, church, house, and neighborhood behind in Minnesota. We didn't know anyone yet in Boston. It was big news to process in the midst of an already big transition.



There was so much to adjust to: a new city, new school, courses, and the realization that I was no longer alone, that my body was undergoing a not-yet-visible transformation that would generate new life, and forever change my own. I felt full of anticipation that both of my dreams were coming true at the same time: motherhood and ministry.

Becoming a mother is a theological project all its own. The Incarnation takes on new meaning. We can debate homoosious. Or we could take the leap and proudly proclaim “Jesus was breastfed!”

The fleshy fact that Jesus' mother was a poor, Jewish, Palestinian woman living under the thumb of empire is increasingly important to name. The stakes have never been higher for how we do theology. I am grateful for the chance to do theology from the perspective of a birthing body.

Seminary is a transformative time for many of us. We are changed and shaped by the experience. We read, we write, we question, we deconstruct, we write our way back, we pray, we worship, we eat together, we debate, we preach, we try our best to tend to one another's spirits. We walk the halls of the prophets. We lean in to listen carefully for that “sound of the genuine” that Thurman said would beckon our attention.

And some of us gestate new dreams, new life, new possibilities.

My son was born at the end of my first year at STH. Becoming a mother while in seminary has been the greatest gift and the greatest challenge. (At the time of this writing, I have slept through the night exactly six times in the last 10 months).



WE BRING OUR FULL SELVES: REFLECTIONS ON BECOMING A MOTHER AT STH

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Motherhood has rocked my world and opened up my heart in ways that I did not know were possible. I feel that there has been an entire village surrounding me and my son at STH. To the friends and faculty who have been part of my journey: thank you. Thank you for babysitting, bringing food, sharing in my joys and my struggles. Thank you for accommodating us both when I returned to school this year. Thank you for holding my son, for loving him, for showing him that the world is a beautiful, caring place.

The greatest gift has been building community with other STH parents, many of whom are fellow mothers. The anthropologist Victor Turner coined the term *comunitas*, which refers to an organic community that arises when several people go through a similar life transition. To the other mamas: thank you for the *comunitas* of baby showers, of heart to hearts in the lactation room (yes, we have one!), for the hand-me-down baby gear, and every encouraging conversation. At a time when women in the highest religious offices are openly degraded and dismissed for preaching the basics of Christian theology, we need each other all the more. I'd like to think that when we show up as our full selves, often with our babies in tow, we are fulfilling a dream that Anna Howard Shaw could never have even imagined. I bet she smiles when she sees our children play together in the Center that bears her name.

Each of us brings a depth of life experience to our work as scholars, pastors, community organizers, researchers, chaplains, social workers, and educators. Some life experiences are more obvious (like a pregnant body), but each of us has a richness of life experiences that we bring to this place where we dare to study theology. The intellectual work that we do here can never — should never — be separate from the reality of our lives. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to show up with all parts of myself, and to have had the creative space to become a new person during my time here at STH.

Whatever your calling, whatever your vocations, may we build communities where every person can fully flourish. Thank you for allowing me to flourish here among you.

Anna Jeide-Detweiler (MDiv '26) is an MDiv student focusing on Religion and Conflict Transformation at BUSTH. She's a UCC-Congregationalist by birth and a Mennonite by marriage. She lives in Boston with her family and hopes to become an ordained UCC minister. She thinks a lot about parenting as spiritual practice, sabbath as an act of justice, and nonviolence as a way of life.



BALANCING FAMILY, WORK, MINISTRY, AND SCHOOLING

As a married Ugandan mother of four, a professional, and an associate pastor, balancing family, work, ministry, and schooling has been a multifaceted challenge throughout my journey, shaped by role conflict, time constraints, emotional strain, and other deeply personal struggles. Each aspect of my life demanded a different part of me, and navigating these demands often felt overwhelming.

While my children, Tracy, Ernest, and Faith, are now in their adolescence and Damalie is a young adult, there were seasons when they needed intense care. Role conflict was one of my most significant challenges. As a teacher, associate pastor, mother, and student, I often felt stretched thin by the competing demands of these roles. Teaching college students demanded intellectual engagement and preparation, while ministry required spiritual and emotional investment. Simultaneously, motherhood called for nurturing and availability, and my studies necessitated focus and discipline. These roles often clashed, leaving me questioning whether I was doing enough in any area.

When I traveled to South Africa for further studies in 2000, leaving my two-year-old daughter Tracy behind, the tension between being a committed student and a present mother became acute. Although my husband stepped into the primary caregiving role, I felt the emotional toll of not being physically present during her formative years.



Being physically away from my family added an element of loneliness to my challenges. While technology allowed me to stay connected, it was no substitute for my family's physical presence and emotional support. Time was a scarce resource in my life. In 2015, I was ordained as an associate pastor at Lungujja Miracle Center Church. Balancing the demands of family, a full-time teaching position, and pastoral responsibilities left little room for rest or personal time.



The struggle became particularly intense in 2019, when I started my Master of Divinity as an online student at Denver Seminary, where school added another layer of complexity to my already packed schedule. Nights spent preparing sermons or grading papers often bled into the time I had hoped to dedicate to my family. Even with careful planning, there were not enough hours in the day to meet all the demands placed upon me. Perhaps one of the most pervasive challenges was the guilt I felt, particularly as a mother. When my youngest daughter asked why I was preoccupied with schoolwork instead of spending time with her, it pierced my heart.



BALANCING FAMILY, WORK, MINISTRY, AND SCHOOLING

Furthermore, the emotional strain of trying to excel in multiple roles was another challenge. There were moments when I felt I was failing to give my family the attention they deserved, meet my students' academic needs, fulfill my ministry obligations, or engage meaningfully with my coursework. Boundary issues compounded this emotional strain. As an associate pastor, I often found myself on call for congregants, even during times meant for family or study.

Prayer was the cornerstone of my approach to balancing these commitments. Prayer grounded me in God's presence, helping me to discern priorities and find strength during overwhelming times. Whether preparing for a demanding lecture, sermon, or family decision, prayer became my lifeline to a sense of peace and divine purpose.

Effective time management and prioritization were also essential for navigating my multifaceted roles. I created detailed schedules to allocate time for teaching, studying, ministry, and family.



Prioritization required discernment; for instance, I focused on academic responsibilities during exam periods while postponing non-urgent ministry tasks. Similarly, I set aside specific times for family, ensuring that I remained present despite the competing demands on my time.

Thirdly, effective communication was vital, particularly with my husband and extended family. My husband took on significant parenting responsibilities during my absences, demonstrating the shared nature of our commitment to family and vocation. My extended family also stepped in during crucial moments, providing emotional and practical help.

Self-care became a non-negotiable part of my strategy. Recognizing the emotional toll of my responsibilities, I intentionally set aside time for rest, reflection, and activities that renewed my spirit. This meant finding joy in small moments, whether through a walk or sharing laughter with my children.

Ultimately, my strategies were underpinned by my faith and the belief that God called me to this path. This helped me to navigate the moments when balancing everything seemed impossible. Through prayer, I discovered strategies that helped me manage my responsibilities and deepened my resilience. These practices continue to shape how I approach challenges, reaffirming that balance is possible through intentionality and reliance on God's grace.



BALANCING FAMILY, WORK, MINISTRY, AND SCHOOLING

While balancing family, work, ministry, and schooling was wrought with challenges, it was deeply fulfilling. Each role—though demanding—brought a sense of purpose and joy that reaffirmed my calling and enriched my life. This fulfillment is particularly evident in my relationships with my children, ministry, career, and academic pursuits.



Despite the pressures of my commitments, the moments I spent with my children were life-giving. These moments of connection and love were fulfilling and a source of strength, motivating me to persevere in my other roles. Watching them grow, learn, and thrive has brought immeasurable joy and reminded me of the sacred vocation of parenting. Tracy is now a medical doctor, Ernest is studying pharmacy, Faith is completing her nursing degree, and Damalie is in tenth grade.

My ministry work, while demanding, provided a deep sense of spiritual satisfaction. Preaching, teaching, and serving my community affirmed my calling to participate in God's work. Even during busy or overwhelming seasons, the knowledge that my efforts were making a difference in the lives of others brought a profound sense of purpose. Returning to school to pursue the Master of Divinity has been challenging and rewarding. Engaging with theological studies has deepened my faith and equipped me with new insights for ministry. Each assignment and class discussion has been an opportunity to grow spiritually and intellectually. Indeed, the fulfillment I have found in academic pursuit reminds me that God's calling often involves intense growth and learning periods.

Central to my theological vision for work and vocation is the belief that work and vocation are integrally tied to God's ongoing redemptive purposes in the world. Vocation is a dynamic, evolving journey that aligns our work with God's purposes. Whether in the classroom, pulpit, or with family, I see my roles as opportunities to reflect God's justice, mercy, and love. Through faithful engagement, even the simplest acts can become expressions of divine grace and agents of transformation.



Damalie Nakkazi Sentumbwe (MDiv '25) has been a lecturer at Makerere University and an associate pastor in Uganda. She is currently discerning a call to ordained ministry in the United Methodist Church.



THURSDAY LECTURE SERIES

Anna Howard Shaw Center

FREE LUNCH LECTURE
Every Thursday
@12:30pm
in STH 320

GUEST:
Rev. Dr. Choi, Hee An

TOPIC:
Ready to Re-Start



Anna Howard Shaw Center

FREE LUNCH LECTURE
Every Thursday
(2/6/2025) @12:30pm
in STH 320

GUEST:
Leo Roberts

TOPIC:
Healing through Movement



Anna Howard Shaw Center

FREE LUNCH LECTURE
Every Thursday
(2/13/2025) @12:30pm
in STH 320

GUEST:
Dr. Christopher Boyd Brown

TOPIC:
Midwives and the Reformation



Anna Howard Shaw Center

FREE LUNCH LECTURE
Every Thursday
(2/27/2025) @12:30pm
in STH 320

GUEST:
Rev. Dr. Charlene Zuill

TOPIC:
I am Hattie's Daughter



Anna Howard Shaw Center

FREE LUNCH LECTURE
Every Thursday
(3/6/2025) @12:30pm
in STH 320

GUEST:
Morgan Crago Melkonian

TOPIC:
Eunice de Sousa Gabbi Weaver & Public Health Practices in mid-20th Century Brazil



Anna Howard Shaw Center

FREE LUNCH LECTURE
Every Thursday
(3/20/2025) @12:30pm
in STH 320

GUEST:
Vivienne Kim

TOPIC:
Care of Beauty



Anna Howard Shaw Center

FREE LUNCH LECTURE
Every Thursday
(3/27/2025) @12:30pm
in STH 320

GUEST:
Rev. Andrew Kimble

TOPIC:
The Wisdom Surrounding Us



Anna Howard Shaw Center

FREE LUNCH LECTURE
Every Thursday
(4/3/2025) @12:30pm
in STH 320

GUEST:
Rev. Milka Gonzalez

TOPIC:
Uncover Your Unique Strength



Anna Howard Shaw Center

FREE LUNCH LECTURE
Every Thursday
(4/10/2025) @12:30pm
in STH 320

GUEST:
Medyatry Rafael

TOPIC:
How Can I Keep from Singing?



Anna Howard Shaw Center

FREE LUNCH LECTURE
Every Thursday
(4/17/2025) @12:30pm
in STH 320

GUEST:
Rebekah Neuberger

TOPIC:
Living the Mary - Martha Synthesis: Prioritizing Contemplation & Activism Together



Anna Howard Shaw Center

FREE LUNCH LECTURE
Every Thursday
(4/24/2025) @12:30pm
in STH 320

GUEST:
Kelsy Hillesheim

TOPIC:
Happenstance and Choices



Thank you to all the speakers and participants who attended our Spring 2025 lectures!!



WOMEN'S HEALTH AND LEADERSHIP LECTURE SERIES

WOMEN'S HEALTH AND LEADERSHIP LECTURE SERIES

NAVIGATING BURNOUT: THE UNIQUE CHALLENGES FOR WOMEN LEADERS AND HOW TO OVERCOME THEM

SPEAKER: ELISE JI YOUNG CHOE, PH.D.

Academic Researcher and Staff Psychologist at the Danielsen Institute

FEBRUARY 28
1:00-2:30 PM
STH ROOM 325



ANNA HOWARD SHAW CENTER

Scan to view February 28th lecture (Dr. Elise Ji Young Choe):



Scan QR code to view April 25th lecture (Dr. Jin Hui Joo (MD):



Scan QR Code to view May 9th lecture (Dr. Gloria White-Hammond (MD):



WOMEN'S HEALTH AND LEADERSHIP LECTURE SERIES

HOW YOGA CAN SAVE OUR NERVOUS SYSTEMS

SPEAKER: JENNIFER LANE

Master of Divinity
Religion and Conflict
Transformation
Spirituality

MARCH 28
1:00-1:40 PM
STH ROOM 325



ANNA HOWARD SHAW CENTER

WOMEN'S HEALTH AND LEADERSHIP LECTURE SERIES

FACTORS IN WOMEN'S MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH THROUGH THE LIFE SPAN

SPEAKER: DR. JIN HUI JOO (MD)

Geriatric psychiatrist & health services researcher, Massachusetts General Hospital, Harvard Medical School

APRIL 25
1:00-2:30 PM
STH ROOM 325



ANNA HOWARD SHAW CENTER

WOMEN'S HEALTH AND LEADERSHIP LECTURE SERIES

WHOLE PERSON CARE: THE BIO-PSYCHO-SOCIAL-SPIRITUAL APPROACH

SPEAKER: REV. GLORIA E. WHITE-HAMMOND (MD)

Co-Pastor of Bethel AME Church, retired pediatrician, and co-founder of My Sister's Keeper

MAY 9
1:00-2:30 PM
STH ROOM 325



ANNA HOWARD SHAW CENTER

SAVE THE DATE!
OCTOBER 9, 2025

WOMEN IN THE WORLD CONFERENCE



THE WOMEN'S HEALTH AND LEADERSHIP LECTURE SERIES IS FUNDED BY A GENEROUS GRANT FROM INTERFAITH AMERICA.

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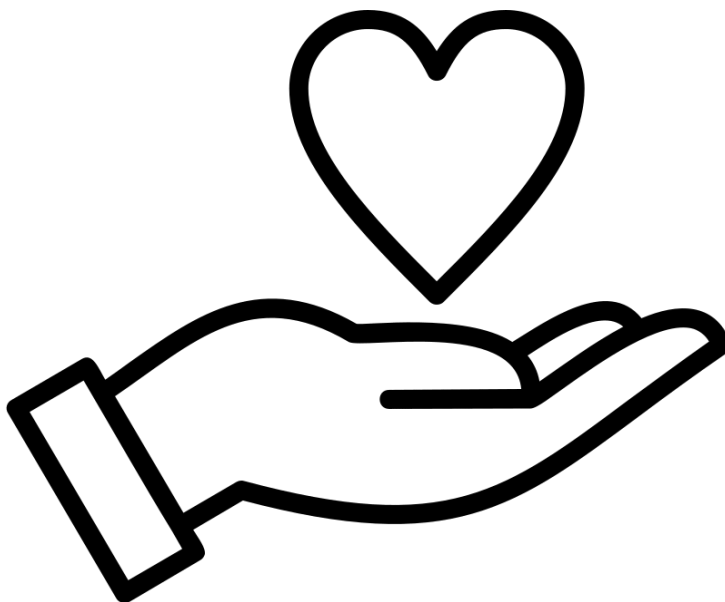
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ANNA HOWARD SHAW CENTER NEWSLETTER

Volume 42, Issue 2 Spring 2025

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Kelsy Hillesheim



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