

Ἡ
ἀγία

ΤΡΙ
ἄς

Ἡ ΓΡΑΪΑ

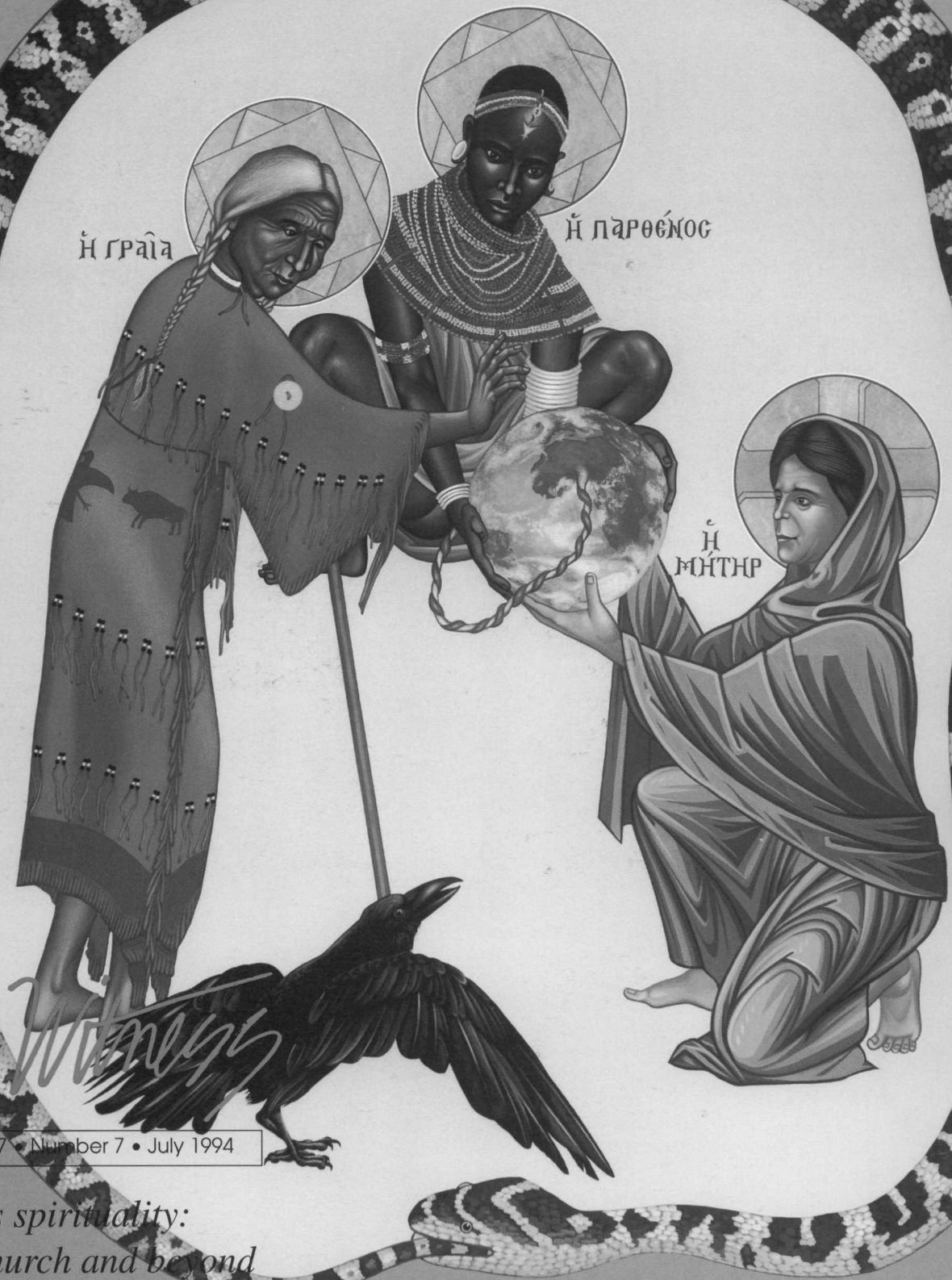
Ἡ ΠΑΡΘΕΝΟΣ

Ἡ
ΜΗΤΗΡ

Volume 77 • Number 7 • July 1994

*Women's spirituality:
In the church and beyond*

The Witness



Economic justice

I'M INSPIRED TO WRITE today because of my very positive response of mind and heart to Bill Wylie-Kellermann's article "Spiritual warfare and economic justice" (5/94). What an extraordinary coincidence to have just delivered in the pulpit this morning the Bishop's Pastoral Letter assigned on the "Sin of Racism" and soon after to read Bill's article which takes a very similar approach in analyzing the U.S. economic (virtually unconscious) sin, just as the bishops emphasized the unconscious character by which our culture is caught in the "principlality" of racism.

Both of these major sins are carried along with their own momentum. I think our blindness to the economic "mammon" tide is even more subtle and more powerfully dangerous to the spirit and direction of our culture. Of course an economic system which encourages free enterprise has done ever so much for the world, but without responsible human purpose and checks and balances limiting it, releasing it to its own independent value system, as Bill points out, is a true hidden danger for as Jesus puts it: "The love of money is the root of all evil."

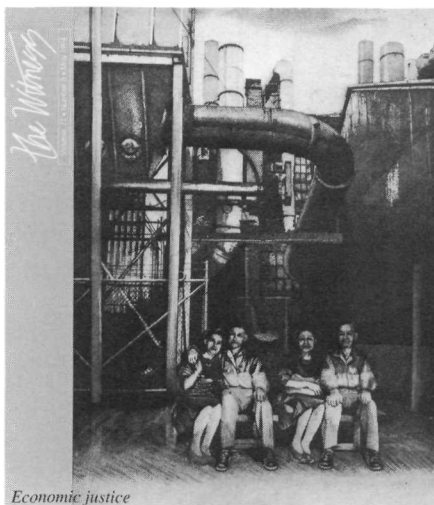
At the time of the race crisis in Virginia in the 1950s and 1960s it was regarded as heresy to the culture to speak out, but now one can do it in most places. To speak out about the economic situation, as Bill does, is clearly heresy to most people who assume the way we do it is right. Bill's article should some day be another Bishops' Pastoral Letter.

David Cammack
Baltimore, MD

Dialogue

THE APRIL DIALOGUE ISSUE IS A GEM. Like in all Anthony Trollop's novels, the STAR's dialogue with the Angel of death indicates that neither has the last word.

Frances Grauman
Watertown, NY



Economic justice

The Left

I ABSOLUTELY LOVED YOUR ISSUE on the left [Feb./March, 1994]. It was the most thought-provoking *Witness* ever. The courage of the writers who were willing to relinquish life-long ideologies and consider new and creative (and very humble) alternatives was so impressive it made me weep. I am in the same camp — ready to discard old patterns of politics and structures, but not able to envision what can replace them as yet. Generally I would say the consensus is to deal with what is in your own backyard!

Deirdre Luzwick
Cambridge, WI

Leaving the church

PLEASE STOP MY SUBSCRIPTION to *The Witness* because I no longer read it. For many years I subscribed and enjoyed the articles. Then last year, I worked on the WomanChurch conference in Albuquerque and experienced institutional religion as a major barrier against women accepting one another. I felt I had done my time in my denomination. I resigned my ordination and left my church.

Thank you for a well-done journal seeking to confront injustice in society and the Episcopal Church.

Alice Brasfield
Albuquerque, NM

Sharing the journey

AFTER READING *THE WITNESS*, I had the following dream which served to remind me that I am not so separated and distanced from my struggling sisters across the world as I had imagined:

I am with the exiled women — Palestinian/Israeli women. We have met, each gathering water at a central well. None of us have food. Our stomachs are empty. As we fill our cups with water, one for another, we verbally affirm our faith, saying to each other that we are filled. There is ritual in this. One woman asks another, "And is your basket full?" with the other responding, "Yes, sister, it is full," and in turn, passing the greeting along.

As observer in the dream, I wonder what can be the meaning in this verbal affirmation of fullness when the women's baskets are in reality empty. But there is in this greeting a powerful affirmation of solidarity as well as commitment. Faithfulness to the Truth and to one another is enough in that moment. We are bread to one another — living bread — manna in the wilderness. It is enough. It *will* be enough. *We* will be enough in our mutual commitment to stand together as one in speaking and living a reality that the world does not recognize. In the world's eyes — in the eyes of patriarchal culture — our baskets are empty of bread and our bodies are famished. And yet, we experience communion, genuine presence, Christ in ourselves, and thus in our midst, the true bread of life.

Discovering the richness of an inclusive journal such as *The Witness* has deepened my sense of community with other concerned, but frequently disenfranchised, Christians.

Leslie Smith Kendrick
Louisville, KY

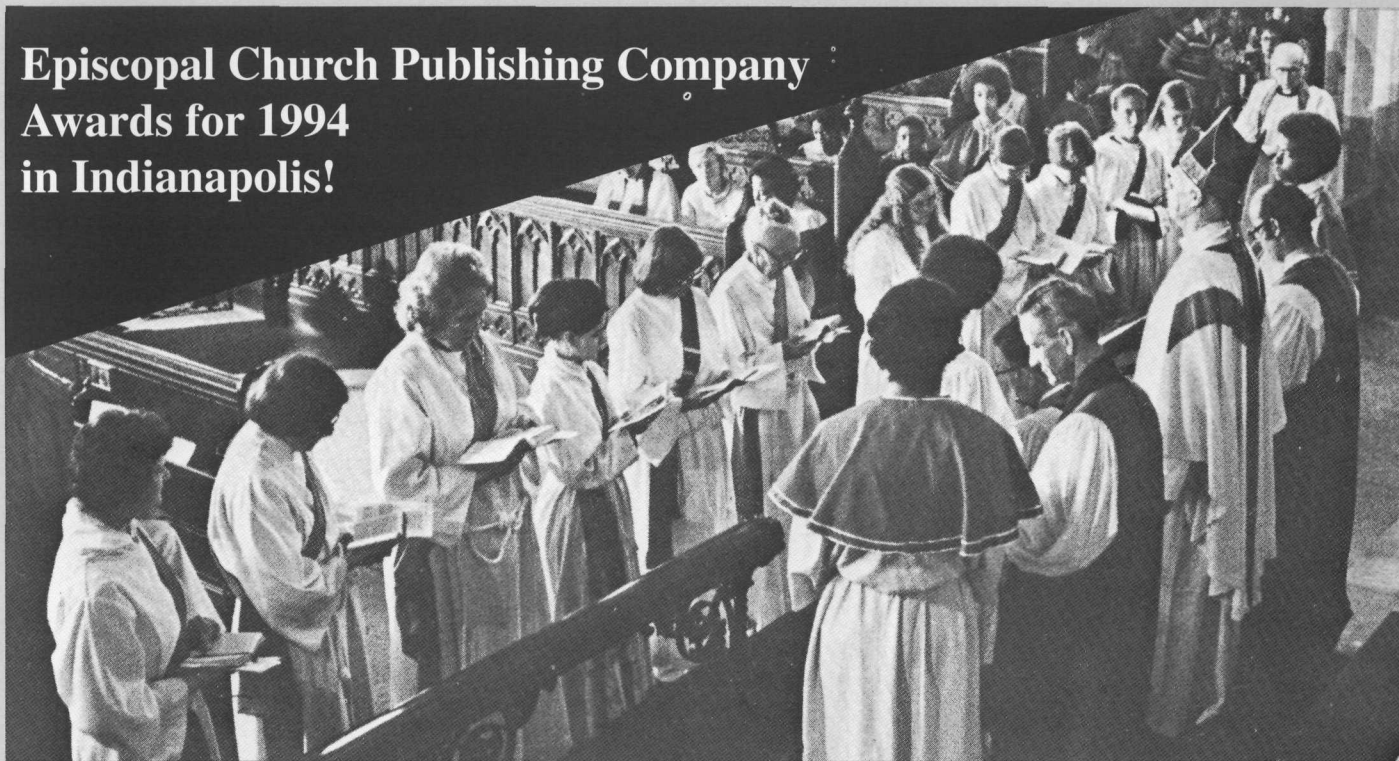
Witness praise

FOR THE PAST SEVERAL YEARS I have given a gift subscription to a friend. As she definitely wants to continue receiving *The Witness* (her words were: I gobble it up the minute it arrives!), I should like to reinstate her gift.

Alice H. Thompson
South Tamworth, NH

Letters

Episcopal Church Publishing Company Awards for 1994 in Indianapolis!



The Philadelphia ordination in 1974

The Philadelphia Inquirer

The 1994 Episcopal Church Publishing Company awards will go to the Philadelphia 11 and Washington 4, Hanan Ashrawi, Chung Hyun Kyung and Louie Crew!

The intent of the awards is to lift up people whose work contributes to justice.

The Philadelphia 11 are given the William Scarlett award for their courage in breaking the barriers of gender-bound ordination. This award is given in memory of Bishop Scarlett who also broke down barriers through his work in the Church League for Industrial Democracy.

The William Spofford award goes to Hanan Ashrawi, an Anglican woman representing the Palestinians in current peace talks. Given the climate in Israel/Palestine it is unlikely that Ashrawi can claim her award in person, but we salute her work.

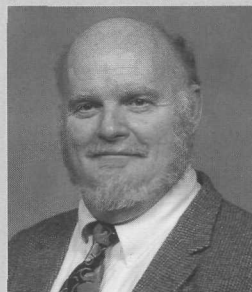
The Spofford award is given in honor of long-time *Witness* editor William Spofford who was an outspoken advo-

cate of labor.

Chung Hyun Kyung is to receive the Bill Stringfellow award. Chung is an Asian, feminist theologian who breaks the molds. We celebrate her imagination and vitality. The Stringfellow award is given in the spirit of its namesake who pushed theological and political bound-



Chung Hyun Kyung



Louie Crew

aries with wit and audaciousness.

Louie Crew, founder of Integrity, is honored with the Vida Scudder award in this 20th year

of Integrity's ministry to the church. Crew has worked within the church, through all available channels, to open it to the ministry and presence of gay and lesbian Christians. Similarly, Vida Scudder, a socialist active in the church through many decades, worked for justice and dignity.

The awards will be presented at our dinner on August 31. Steve Charleston, bishop of Alaska, will be our speaker. We will offer good ethnic food for \$30 a ticket, which includes transportation to the hall. We welcome early paid registrations.

Any *Witness* subscribers who wish to display books, tapes, cards or similar items (which they authored, crafted or produced) are welcome to display them on a designated table during the ECPC dinner.

Please let us know you are coming. It will be a wonderful occasion to see each other during this Convention dedicated to honoring women's ministries.

THE WITNESS

Since 1917

Editor/publisher Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann
Managing Editor Julie A. Wortman
Assistant Editor Marianne Arbogast
Promotion Manager Marietta Jaeger
Magazine Production Maria Catalfo
Book Review Editor Bill Wylie-Kellermann
Art Section Editors Virginia Maksymowicz
Blaise Tobia
Poetry Editor Michael Lauchlan
Accounting Roger Dage

Contributing Editors

Barbara C. Harris Ched Myers
Carter Heyward Butch Naters Gamarra
Gloria House Manana Dorothee Sölle
Manning Marable Walter Wink
Erika Meyer

Episcopal Church Publishing Co.

Board of Directors

President Douglas Theuner
Chair Andrew McThenia
Vice-Chair Maria Aris-Paul
Secretary Pamela W. Darling
Treasurer Robert Eckersley
Mary Alice Bird Richard Shimpfky
Reginald Blaxton Linda Strohmiier
Quentin Kolb Seiichi Michael Yasutake
William R. MacKaye

For more than 75 years *The Witness* has published articles addressing theological concerns as well as critiquing social issues from a faith perspective. The magazine is owned by the Episcopal Church Publishing Company but is an independent journal with an ecumenical readership. *The Witness* (ISSNO 197-8896) is published ten times annually with combined issues in June/July and January/February. *The Witness* is indexed in *Religious and Theological Abstracts* and the American Theological Library Association's *Religion Index One Periodicals*. University Microfilms International, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Mich., 48106, reproduces this publication in microform: microfiche and 16mm or 35mm film. Printed in U.S.A. Copyright 1993. SUBSCRIPTIONS: \$20 per year, \$2.50 per copy. Foreign subscriptions add \$5 per year. CHANGE OF ADDRESS: Please advise of changes at least 6 weeks in advance. Include your mailing label from the magazine and send it to Marietta Jaeger.

MANUSCRIPTS: *The Witness* welcomes unsolicited manuscripts and artwork. Writers will receive a response only if and when their work has been accepted for publication. Writers may submit their work to other publications concurrently.

Office: 1249 Washington Blvd., Suite 3115, Detroit, Mich., 48226-1822. Telephone: (313) 962-2650. Fax number: (313) 962-1012.

Contents

- 8 **Can women stay in the church?** by Rosemary Radford Ruether
Ruether sets a question before women — is female scapegoating a distortion or the rule?
- 12 **The spirit on the move** by Anne Cox
Reflecting on the difference women priests have made to the church
- 14 **The Philadelphia 11** by Ariel Miller
Where are they now?
- 18 **The second circle** by Jane Soyster Gould
The ordination of the Washington 5 was life-changing
- 20 **Winds of change** by Sally Bucklee
Celebrating the work of women from Australia to Brazil
- 22 **Misogyny in Scripture** by Lesley A. Northup
To many women, scriptural references to women are beyond redemption
- 24 **Post-Christian women** by Donna Schaper
Women at the Women's Theological Center in Boston move beyond Christian confines
- 26 **Re-imagining God** by Chung Hyun Kyung
With audacity, Chung weaves Asian goddesses into her understanding of the Trinity
- 32 **The costs of integrating** by Mary S. Donovan
When women were allowed into the corporate structure of the Episcopal Church, which institutions and leadership positions did they have to lay down?

2	Letters	30	Art & Society
5	Editorials	34	Vital Signs
7	Poetry	37	Book review
25	Short Takes	38	Witness profile

Cover: Celtic Trinity by Robert Lentz, Bridge Building Images, P.O. Box 1048, Burlington, VT 05402. Lentz writes, "Celtic tradition saw God as a trinity of others." In this image the Masai maiden gives birth to the earth, the Irish mother receives and protects it, while the Plains Indian wise old woman reminds us of endings and renewal.

Back cover: Water by Meinrad Craighead, from *The Mother's Songs: Images of God the Mother*, Paulist Press, NY, 1986.

Daughters of prophecy

by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann

Twenty years ago, 11 women were ordained priests in an exciting and scary service. They lowered their heads to the hands of bishops with the apostolic authority to ordain in a church that would not receive them.

Today, women are embracing images and words that are fiery, strong and female in pursuit of a deeper relationship with God. Their spirituality is vibrant.

Whether they are singing hymns in harmony or chanting under the full moon, they are claiming their faith in an incarnational way. Many remain within the church and consider Scripture and Jesus integral to who they are, but they are not waiting for mainstream Sunday services to catch up with the breadth of love they feel for themselves, their bodies and God's activity in their lives. Much of the worship that is most important to them happens outside the walls of the church in a friend's house church, in the woods, in the desert.

This issue is a tribute to such women. Women who are learning Buddhist meditation, cleansing themselves with sage and cedar, memorizing Celtic prayers, fasting, or gathering outdoors to dance and cry and sing. Their hearts are strong, their commitments to one another deep and their intent to engage God and learn from the holy spirit impeccable.

A friend who recently engaged in a night of prayer and fasting heard a voice say, "The heart of our women is so strong. When the heart of the women is strong, it is good for the people."

This is true, which is why we present

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann is editor/publisher of *The Witness*.

the voices in this issue. The staff does not concur with every voice. For instance, we do not consider scripture "irredeemably" violent (page 22). Nor are we of one mind concerning Chung Hyun Kyung's article (see page 26). I'm not crazy about the prayer to Sophia, which greeted wisdom with explicit references to the entire female anatomy, at the Re-imagining God conference held by women in Minneapolis last fall (page 10).

But the work is important. In this culture women are raised in embarrassment about their bodies. They abuse them, neglect them, preen them, manipulate people with them, sell them.

Consecrating every aspect of our bodies, including the blood flow that makes us distinct from men and which gives life is critical. Offering this flow back to the earth and to God is at the heart of our knowing ourselves as daughters.

Many women artists and poets are weaving these prayers into art. Meinrad Craighead's work in *The Mother's Song* (Paulist Press, 1986) is wonderful. She paints and writes gracefully about breast milk, eggs and blood. Of eggs she says,

"My infant body contained all the eggs which would spill out during the months of the fertile years. So too, some childhood experiences contained the shape of my future years.

"The first picture I can remember coming out of my imagination was of a snake and a bird bound together. My mother recalled a time, one summer in my third year, when I spent each morning rolling balls of mud in my hands. She said I called them "eggs" which were "full of things." I remember the cardboard box I filled with these eggs, the muddy hole I sat in, the hot Texas sun on my body.

"I have never conceived, but whether or not a woman does conceive, she carries the germinative ocean within her and the essential eggs. We have a spirituality, full from within. Whether we are weaving tissue in the womb or pictures in the imagination, we create out of our bodies."

Boundaries are being pushed. Women are celebrating their bodies and their lives in a variety of tongues. In the midst of the celebration, we have to practice discernment to know that we are in relationship to Yahweh, the God of Abraham and Sarah, Peter and Mary Magdalene. We also need to approach our faith with courage and acknowledge that God is more alive, greater and more demanding than we imagine. Settling for Sunday services is probably inadequate.

The backlash that is greeting this vibrant spirituality is remarkable. Rosemary Radford Ruether writes in this issue of the angry denunciations of the Re-imagining conference (page 8). Ruether puts the question to us clearly, "Are the patriarchal female scapegoating patterns of Christianity essential and irreformable, or are they a distortion that can be critiqued in the light of a more authentic vision of the Gospel?"

If patriarchy is woven irrevocably through the fabric of the church, women should leave. But she concludes that if an alternative vision, rooted in the gospel promise of barriers between people being brought down, can be sustained, then we must fight for the soul of the church.

We offer this issue as evidence that when the heart of the women is strong, it is good for the soul of the church.



editor's note

Outside the tradition

by Chude Pamela Allen

My father's dream was that one of his sons would become an Episcopal priest. Yet the closest he ever came to seeing one of his children preach was a day in early June, 1964 when his second daughter stood before the parishioners of their church and spoke of going to Mississippi.

It seemed such a radical thought when I first broached it to my parents — a young woman speaking in church! Trinity Church was a country parish. My grandfather was one of those who had come to the stone church to preach and serve the sacraments. But the Episcopal Church didn't allow women to be priests and we seldom heard a woman's voice during a service.

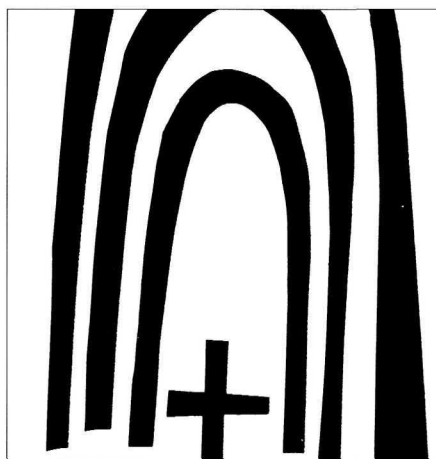
I was 20 that summer, about to go south to be a freedom school teacher in the Mississippi Summer Project, part of the campaign to end the racist terror in that state. I needed to raise \$450 and I also wanted their prayers. My minister gave me permission to speak.

I stood not in the pulpit but in front of the pews, grateful our minister would allow even that. I spoke of my reasons for going to Mississippi. I asked the parishioners to pray for me and for the people in Mississippi who would welcome us, and for my own family, living through the summer with the strain of worry about my safety.

I stood with my back to the altar, facing my neighbors, my parents' friends,

Chude Pamela Allen, a *Witness* subscriber in San Francisco, is interviewed in *Freedom is a Constant Struggle: An Anthology of the Mississippi Civil Rights Movement*, Cultural Center for Social Change, 3133 Connecticut Ave., N.W., Suite 432, Washington, D.C. 20008. Artist Mignon lives in Chicago, Ill.

people I'd known almost all my life, and I shared my heart. I allowed that energy which I call God's love to flow through me, sharing my commitment and my love, and they responded, giving me the money I needed.



Mignon

Throughout that summer my parents circulated copies of my letters from Mississippi. But when I returned at the end of the summer I was not invited to share what I'd experienced.

There were other speaking engagements and articles to write. Yet the people who had supported me, financially and in their prayers, never got to hear how my relationship with God sustained me through that summer of terror, loss and grief. I had no opportunity to share with the community that had nurtured me my anger or my confusion about how to keep loving violent and even apathetic white people. It was the beginning of a separation for me between social activism and spirituality.

In 1966 I left the Episcopal Church because women were not allowed to be priests. A year later I joined the Women's Liberation Movement. However, in leav-

ing the church I also turned away from my own spirituality. The political movement I helped to build was secular and, as such, it was a movement that could not nurture my spirituality.

Women are now being ordained in the Episcopal Church and I sometimes grieve that I am not among their number. I have wondered what my life would be like if I'd gone to seminary as I once thought of doing, prepared myself for ordination and become a priest, perhaps one of that first group of women who forced the question in the Episcopal Church. During my radical activist days I considered myself lucky that the Church's sexism prevented me from choosing a socially acceptable way to serve the cause of justice and equality. But now in middle age I am aware of the cost, of the deep hurt I sustained because of this schism between social activism and spiritual community.

I know there are those in the Episcopal Church and the larger Christian community who believe as I do in the cause of justice and a world free of greed and exploitation. I read their writings and sometimes listen to their speeches. I have been nurtured by their spiritual depth as well as heartened by their work in the world. Sometimes I cry in gratitude and mourning.

Middle-class protestant and of Anglo-Saxon heritage, I once knew the privilege of belonging. With my rebellion against white supremacy and then patriarchy, I began to live a life marginal to the institutions I was raised to serve. I do not challenge those who have chosen to work for change from within. Nor do I question the difficulties and isolation they face.

I embrace that girl who spoke with such passion and conviction in the country church. My reclaiming a spiritual life, however, has necessitated an exploration outside a traditional framework. I have not found a home. **TW**

Those Who Come After

will never say of us:
what wonderful myths they had.
There will never rise, dripping, from our midst
figures whose wings open, dry in the sun,
completed by being
more us than ourselves; what we leave
is all that can be
dredged up from wrecked harbors –
history's debris. So
in the end, it is not the beautiful figures
draped in the white silk togas of dream
nor the muscular thoughts stalking the peaks
in the golden proportions of Greece
with the lightning clenched in their fists,
nor the animal-gods with the eyes of hawks
and the delicate fingers of girls,
no, only what broke in our hands
when our voyages – like the stick in the paw
of the monkey, extending the grasp –
ended in the slow grip
of possession, as a continent's shore is
swallowed by sea, making an infinite
coastline, the in and out of an edge
endlessly nibbled and gnawed. That
is the line we leave behind us,
the infinity of rat-tooth,
the posterity of loss ...

But when they say of us
what we have done, perhaps they will speak
kindly of those who, near the century's
end, pried open the hand;
of the way the wind lifted the lovely
gray spirals of ash, until our hands
were empty as the cloudless sky,
empty as altars whose offerings
have been acceptable; perhaps they will
say that there were those
who took down the harps
hung in the sorrowing trees, having lost
the taste for conquest and revenge,
and made a song
that rose in the air
as smoke rises –
at first a line, and then,
slow eddies, the spirals
endless, unwinding
the sky's blue
spool.

by Eleanor Wilner

Eleanor Wilner lives in Philadelphia.



Can women stay in the church?

by Rosemary Radford Ruether

When we discuss women and Christianity, we are faced with a contradiction. At least since the 1880s, western Christian culture has seen women as more naturally pious than men. Demographic studies of the church have shown that at least since the 1500s, perhaps for all of Christian history, women have outnumbered men practically two to one as the active members of local congregations.

Today ordained ministry is opening up to women in mainstream Protestantism and women are flocking to attend theological seminaries in close to equal numbers with men. Yet, many feminists, deeply committed to Christianity, suspect that Christianity is still the major cultural force in our society justifying the subordination of women and that perhaps women will never be allowed into its top leadership in more than token numbers.

Their suspicion is reinforced by major expressions of backlash in the churches today against feminist theology, against the slightest possibility that the presence of women as ministers and theological educators might effect a real transformation in the patriarchal symbols of "God and man," or in the way in which male and female are symbolized and organized in the Christian churches.

Christianity was shaped from its earliest years by patriarchal social, political,

Rosemary Radford Ruether is a professor at Garrett Theological Seminary. Her reflections were central to the 1974 issue of *The Witness* on the ordination of women. This article is drawn from a recent talk in Philadelphia, the first in a series celebrating the 20th anniversary of the ordination of women. Artist **Eleanor Mill** is syndicated from Hartford, Conn.

legal and cultural systems. Patriarchy is defined as basically being the rule of the father, the rule of the male head of the family, over the subordinate members of the family — wife, wives, children, servants, slaves, animals and land. This is the way that *pater familias* was defined in Roman law.

The religious symbols for God that we have received have been deeply shaped by patriarchal relationships. We have modeled God after the patriarchal lord and master, and modeled the earth, the community, after those subordinate under that *pater familias*. So we might say the wife, the sons, the daughters and servants become the major metaphors for the community relationship to God.

This kind of patriarchal symbolism has functioned as a deep theological, cultural and psychological ratification of female subordination as the order of creation and the will of God. Male headship comes to be seen as naturally the way things should be, the basis of right order in society and family. Women are defined as both naturally subordinate and naturally insubordinate: It is within their nature to be subordinate to their husbands, but they also have a built-in sinful resistance to this subordination and therefore have caused sin and the fall.

From the second generation Christianity, one had a Christianity that made central to its doctrine of both sin and salvation what I would call a scapegoating view of women.

The key question for women in the

church generally is whether this kind of patriarchal female scapegoating is essential to Christianity. Is there a genuine alternative tradition that is a more authentic view in the light of which the patriarchal scapegoating patterns can be rejected as a distortion? It seems to me that the very possibility of a feminist Christianity that is healthy, liberating, and redemptive for women, and for male/female relationships, rests on the possibility of saying yes to this question.

Otherwise, Mary Daly is right: the post-Christian is the only alternative for women. "Christian feminism" becomes a contradiction in terms. If this is the case, then get out of Christianity and look for some really healthy, liberating, and redemptive religion for women and for men and for male/female relationships.

If there is an alternative liberating tradition in Christianity, it must be rooted in biblical points of reference. The first of

Many feminists, deeply committed to Christianity, suspect that Christianity is still the major cultural force in our society justifying the subordination of women.

these is the affirmation that in the authentic order of creation, men and women share equally in the image of God. Secondly, that equality in the image of God is restored in Christ. This is

suggested in the Galatians 3:28 passage where it said that in Christ, all the hierarchies of male and female, slave and free, Jew and Greek have been overcome for the new humanity of shared worth in Christ. The third point of reference is Pentecost, the liberating birthday of the church, where the Spirit of God has been poured out and has overturned all of the patriarchal hierarchies. "Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your menservants and your maidservants."

For scholars such as Elizabeth Fiorenza, the earliest Christianity was a

prophetic egalitarian counter-culture. She speaks of the earliest church as womanchurch, as a female-identified community of men and women who were counter-culture to the dominant patriarchal society. In her view, there was a gradual marginalization of the prophetic Christianity by a patriarchal Christianity that regarded the patriarchal pattern of the family as the order of church government and identified with patriarchal imperial structures of the dominant Roman society. Here one has the thunderous voices of 1 Timothy, 1 Peter and others, seeking to reinforce not only patriarchal but slave-holding society: Women, keep silence! Wives, obey your husbands. Slaves, obey your masters. Children, obey your parents.

And yet, in spite of this gradual marginalization, repression and silencing, a more liberative Christianity never entirely disappears. It is driven underground. It is driven to the margins, but it never entirely disappears. And it is resurgent again and again in renewal movements. It is resurgent in mystical traditions — particularly in female monasticism, where you also have a vision of women's spiritual authority and a vision of a Sophia-understanding of Christ.

There's also a counter-cultural tradition that constantly rises up in what I would call the popular prophetic tradition, from the Donatists in the second century on through the Waldensians of the twelfth century and then to Anabaptist counter-cultural movements during the Reformation.

In this regard, I am very fond of the Quaker tradition. I see the movement of

the Society of Friends in the 17th century as a resurgence and new formulation of this prophetic egalitarian tradition by some very extraordinary women leaders

ian traditions, which have begun to bring women into the mainstream of the church. One of those traditions is the counter-cultural Christian tradition. The other is Enlightenment humanism. In Enlightenment humanism in the 18th century and early 19th century, you have a reworking of the idea of the order of creation. The traditional view was that the order of creation was hierarchical, but in the Enlightenment view the original order of creation is egalitarian.

It's in that period, when women demanded the right to vote and full equality in society, that the first ordination movement begins. In the Seneca Falls Declaration in 1848, the final statement was brought forward by Lucretia Mott, demanding an overthrow of the male monopoly of the pulpit.

In 1853, Antoinette Brown was the first woman ordained in the Congregational tradition. The Congregationalists, Unitarians, Universalists, some Methodist Protestants began to ordain women. Then, after 1878, there's a long period of repression of women's ordination. Mainstream Protestants marginalize the issue, judging women to be weak and delicate. Rather than allowing women to be parish ministers, Protestants sent them to the inner cities and to distant mission fields. They founded the deaconess movement as a way of giving women an alternative ministry. But,

in due time, there's a new struggle for the ordination of women after the Second World War.

So there's quite a long period of struggle between the first women's ordination movement in the 1850s through the 1880s and the 1950s to the 1960s, when women begin to be ordained in the Lutheran churches and the Reformed



Women clergy

Eleanor Mill

who developed a biblical, exegetical base for this vision. For Quakers, there was a sense that the patriarchal, hierarchical system of the church was not the authentic order of creation or the church. The authentic church was the prophetic counter-cultural community.

From the 18th century to the present time, we've seen a fusion of two egalitar-

Churches in Germany and Scandinavia , and then in the Methodist Church, and the Northern Presbyterians in the United States (Presbyterian Church USA), until you come to the present time. We now have enough women in ministry to begin reconstructing the patriarchal pattern of ministry itself. We might think of the minister more as a kind of animator of the ministry of the community rather than monopolizing the work of ministry. This

raises questions of language for worship and style.

Much development of women's ministry has taken place in the last couple of decades, but we also see a backlash. We have a Protestant backlash in the fundamentalist movement. Much of the stuff about the "family" in American society is essentially an effort to revive the patriarchal family as normative.

We also have the Catholic or Vatican

version of backlash, which is a broad-based backlash against all the democratic and liberationist movements which have been unleashed since 1965. The Vatican backlash is expressed in the decree against the ordination of women of 1976, that amazing piece of theology and biblical exegesis which declared that women could not be ordained because only men image Christ.

The Vatican has also tried to force

Trashing the Re-imagining God conference

Members of the Institute for Religion and Democracy are urging mainline Christians to withhold money from their denominations and to purge their churches of "heresy" in the wake of the Re-Imagining God conference held in Minneapolis last November.

In ubiquitous pamphlets and mailings, IRD members (whom you may remember for their virulent support of the Contra war against the Sandinistas in Nicaragua) criticize the women who spoke as if they represent the convictions of all who attended. They are outraged that Delores Williams considers the atonement bad theology and Melanie Morrison believes lesbianism should be celebrated. They are confused that women would make tobacco offerings and recite a Native American prayer. They are upset that Chung Hyun Kyung believes that when one feels depleted one can "go to a big tree and ask it to 'give me some of your life energy.'" They are unsettled by feminist theologians' denunciations of the patriarchy and their focus on the immanence of God.

Perhaps the most radical moment of the conference, which was attended by 2,200 women, occurred during a

worship service when women raised cups of milk and honey and proclaimed, in part, "Our sweet Sophia, we are women in your image; With nectar between our thighs we invite a lover, we birth a child; With our warm body fluids we remind the world of its pleasures and sensations...."

Katherine Kersten, an attorney and member of the board of the IRD and Lutherans for Political Freedom, observed that "The Re-Imagining participants were happily engaged in that most modern of enterprises: worshiping themselves, right down to the "bodily fluids" that figure so prominently in their prayers.

"Clearly, Sophia is the answer to the prayers of a multi-cultural, therapeutic world. She is 'tolerant' — she does not judge, nor does she recognize any sin but the corporate transgressions of racism, sexism and classism." She goes on to condemn "pow-wows" like this.

Since critics interpret women's attempt to find something of themselves in God as self-worship, one wonders why the corollary — that a God defined as only male may involve idolatry — is less obvious.

The fallout is significant. Mary Ann Lundy, a Presbyterian church official who helped plan the conference, left her job July 1. The Presbyterian Church, which

contributed \$66,000 to the conference — the largest donation, anticipates a \$2.4 to \$4 million loss due to withholding.

Parker Williamson, executive editor of *The Presbyterian Layman*, recommends that all staff members be "placed under scrutiny" and desires a "method to determine" their beliefs on issues of faith.

Retired United Methodist Bishop Earl G. Hunt says "No comparable heresy has appeared in the church in the last 15 centuries."

But a United Methodist communications director, Laura Okumu, says the UM Women's Division, which helped fund the conference, is better insulated from the attacks. Its members are not alarmist. They are in communication with the Division, she said. Likewise, the denomination is protected from the current furor because it convenes nationally only once every four years and isn't scheduled to meet again until 1996.

Robert McAfee Brown insists that the backlash against the conference is organized by "a tiny, militant faction that will not be appeased until it can remake the church in ways that destroy it." — J.W.-K.

women's religious orders to return to traditional hierarchical patterns and to force them out of political and social leadership. There is the effort to exclude women in Catholic seminaries, both as students and as teachers. And there is the attack on women's reproductive rights, on abortion, birth control, and on homosexuality. All this has led

many Catholic women to conclude that ordination is not only not imminent, but was probably not a very appropriate thing to be looking for anyway.

Since the 1970s and 1980s, women's spirituality has become a very feminist, creative base-community movement operating outside the edge of traditional Christianity, communicating with Christian symbols but also in dialogue with post-Christian symbols.

This also means that the new way of attacking Christian feminists is to say that they're pagan. And if you're pagan, it is assumed that you're also a witch and a devil-worshipper. So literally a witch persecution movement has become quite typical of the assault — both from Protestant Evangelicals and from right-wing Catholics.

It's interesting that these people don't bother with goddess people themselves. They're not really interested in those people. What they go after is well-established feminists in the church who are said to be not really Christian but actually witches, worshiping pagan goddesses under the cover of church.

There's a Catholic expression of this in Donna Steichen's book, *Ungodly Rage*. She plays on conspiratorial and paranoid fears, and virtually every leading feminist, including some fairly mainstream male theologians, are named as part of

the conspiracy. You get a similar version of that in conservative Protestantism — the Methodist "Good News" group, and the counterparts among Lutherans and Presbyterians.

There has been a concerted attack on all the Methodist seminaries as hot-houses of "paganism." We should be so interesting! All of this plays on fear and ignorance.

Now, this kind of attack has come in the assault on the Minneapolis Re-imagining conference. A group of Lutheran women seminarians report that this is becoming a litmus test for women who are looking for jobs — Were you at the Re-imagining conference? This is extremely upsetting. I got a call from a Presbyterian woman from Seattle who told me that a lot of the concerted attack on the conference was coordinated through the Institute for Religion and Democracy, led by Richard Neuhaus and Michael Novak. This raises questions because there has been a high-level effort to negotiate an alliance between this kind of right-wing Catholic and conservative Evangelicals.

What I'm suggesting here is that we do not face spontaneous responses. We're facing an organized effort to smear Christian feminists, to drive some established leadership out to the margins and to make it very difficult to even talk about basic issues, such as inclusive language.

The key question is whether feminists in the churches will be silenced, lower their profile, feel that they can only sur-

vive by appearing more conventional. Or whether feminists will see this as the critical teaching moment, the time when it becomes essential for feminists to bond together across denominations, to organize some very well-done, clear, pastoral communication that would go out both to church leadership and to ordinary parishes? In other words, to enter the struggle for the soul of the church?

We must ask, what is the essential vision of this community? Is its essential vision that of patriarchal hierarchy in which women are subordinate members of the Christian community, or is its essential vision that of a liberating, transformative, healthy and redemptive community? And if the Christian community isn't about being a healthy, redemptive community, then what is it about?

So that brings me back to what I see as the critical question. Are the patriarchal female-scapegoating patterns of Christianity essential and irreformable, or are they a distortion that can be critiqued in the light of a more authentic vision of the Gospel?

The question is whether feminists in the churches will be silenced or will they see this as the critical teaching moment, the time to struggle for the soul of the church?

For me this question cannot simply be answered by some kind of examination of the earliest history or by *a priori* theological assertions. This

question will be answered in praxis, in the actual doing. Will those who have deep faith and courage of their convictions, both men and women who have caught an alternative vision of the church, be able to communicate, to organize, and to sustain an authentic understanding of the true vision of Christ, the true spirit of the good news, as one in which we are indeed all transformed into a community of mutual flourishing? ■

The spirit on the move

by Anne Cox

My mother tells me that when I was 14 she took me to hear one of the controversial Philadelphia 11, Carter Heyward, preach at Chapel of the Cross in Chapel Hill, N.C. But while I remember other events from 1974 — such as Nixon resigning from office—I don't remember what Heyward had to say or even hearing her preach.

Perhaps I don't remember this experience because it occurred during the "I-hate-going-to-church" phase of my life when I was especially resistant to sermons of any kind.

But I also think the occasion probably did not mean very much to me because I didn't consider it so very unusual to see an ordained woman in a church pulpit. This was the era of the Equal Rights Amendment, *Roe v. Wade* and "You've come a long way, baby," a period when many all-male bastions, such as military academies, private clubs, and a variety of professions were opening to women. As a result, I assumed that being female would not limit my—or anyone else's—vocational choices.

And, indeed, 10 years later, when I decided to pursue ordination to the priesthood, I encountered few difficulties either in the ordination process (in the Diocese of Michigan) or in later obtaining my first job (in the Diocese of Newark).

Maybe it is because of this background that I never thought I had much of a place in the history of women's ordination, a history characterized, I know, by a pro-

found and painful struggle for acceptance. But I have been well aware that as an ordained woman I belong to a group of people—deacons, priests and bishops—who are making a difference in the church just because we are women serving in the ordained role.

What kind of difference have we made?

"There are two primary differences," said Meredith Potter, a priest in the Diocese of Chicago, at a recent gathering of ordained women from the church's midwestern dioceses held in honor of the 1974 Philadelphia ordinations. "One is the fact that we still have a church *at all*—witness those women—and men—who are leaving the Roman Catholic church in droves. The other is the fact that the church is becoming healthy—particularly as we deal with the old secrets of sexual abuse and harassment."

A number of other women attending the conference immediately agreed, adding that ordained women have shown leadership in putting matters of sexuality before the church.

"In the last 10 years I have heard sermons mentioning sexual abuse, homosexuality, etc.—not so the previous 50," said Jo Gillespie of the Episcopal Women's History Project, one of the conference speakers. "Surely the presence of ordained women has something to do with this shift."

We ordained women also know we have been able to minister to other women in ways men might not. Cynthia Black, from Western Michigan, tells about a woman who, for various medical reasons, was facing an abortion at the end of her second trimester of pregnancy, and who wanted to have the child—who-would-not-be-born baptized. She went to a

woman priest because, she told Black, she felt she could not trust that a male priest would understand or be willing to respond to this request.

And I have worked with women and men encountering the pain of incest and childhood sexual abuse who feel free talking to me because I am a woman, but who feel unable to go to male clergy because the abuse they suffered was inflicted by men.

Women in the priesthood also seem to give lay women a greater sense of belonging to the church. Ginny Hiber, a member of my congregation, has told me, "The difference ordained women in the church makes for me is that I no longer feel like a second-class citizen."

I've talked with at least two dozen other women who echo this new feeling of belonging, especially the first time they experience a woman celebrating the eucharist.

Maybe, in addition, what women bring to the centuries-old role of priest is that the way we live out this role has not yet been solidified, so people still see us as people, as individuals, and not as symbols of power or church hierarchy.

Nancy Wittig, also one of the Philadelphia 11, says women are having a profound effect on the life of the church because "We're being human in our roles."

In this vein, I remember hearing that Penelope Jamieson, the Bishop of Dunedin in New Zealand, once said that the thing she's noticed about being a woman in the episcopate is that people tend not to mistake her for God.

This sign of humanity that women bring to the ordained ministry seeps through and has its effect in little ways. Obviously, "father" is not an appropriate appellation for women (though I was once called "Miss Father Anne"); "mother" offers a connection to Roman Catholic tradition (Mother Superiors,

Anne Cox is rector of Nativity Episcopal Church in Bloomfield Township, Mich. She was ordained to the priesthood in 1988. Artist Claudia Bach lives in Sarasota, Fla.

etc.), which is problematic for many people.

In addition, I find that male parishioners do not feel comfortable according me parental-like authority. Maybe in our fumbling efforts to address ordained women, we'll finally realize how patronizing and infantilizing the title "father" can be.

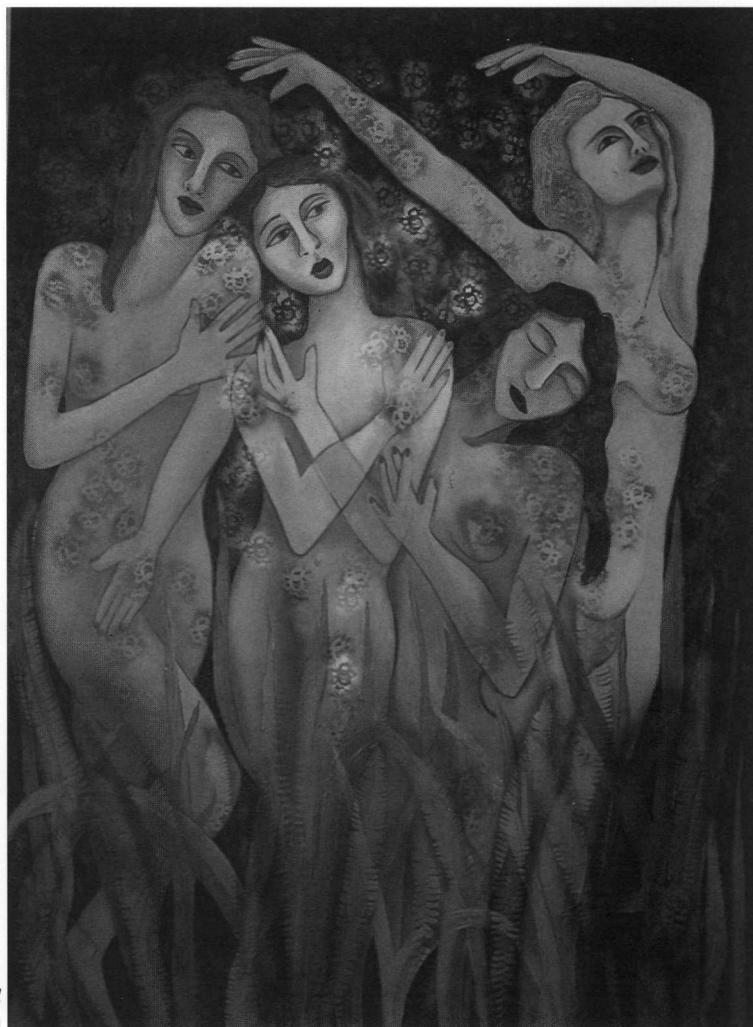
Sartorial decorum is another simple way in which ordained women are humanizing the face of the "official" church. At my first clergy day in the Diocese of Newark seven years ago, only four of the 60-70 clergy there were women. They were easy to spot by their jackets: bright green, hot pink, red, and a bright plaid, all immediately visible in a sea of black suits and grey tweed.

Women, it is clear, do not fit readily into the existing expectations for male clergy and, as a result, we are more able to raise questions about those expectations and even about ordination itself.

I once wrote an article in our parish newsletter about the dilemma that surrounds wearing a clergy collar (this reflection had been prompted by the fact that I had misplaced my collar one Sunday and found myself feeling uncomfortable showing up at church without it). I acknowledged that I wear my collar particularly when I know I will be around my male colleagues, occasions when power and authority seem to be an issue.

I got phone calls about that article from several of these men who took issue with my observation that the clerical collar is a symbol of power and that they as clergy have any ascribed power (one man said he wore his collar as a sign of humility and vulnerability, not power). I think it takes women to recognize and name what men have taken for granted or ignored for all of these years.

Our church needs significant numbers of ordained women so we can truly know who we are as an institution. And now



Dance of the Soul
by Claudia Bach

that we comprise at least 12 percent of the ordained leadership of the church and close to 50 percent of the seminary population, we have a certain level of credibility as we begin to encounter the challenges ahead of us.

The challenge now is not so much to gain access to ordination (although in a handful of dioceses this still is an overwhelming challenge), but to deal with the issue of ordination altogether. What difference does ordained leadership — period — make in the church? Do we need it? Are there better ways of structuring ourselves and taking seriously the ministry of all the baptized?

In my experience, women — lay and ordained — are asking these questions. Perhaps we are the only ones who can ask them because we have had less time to become comfortable in our institutional roles.

While ordination itself was not a painful struggle for me personally, I now know that I am part of the ongoing struggle that women in our church have been pursuing.

The struggle I am part of is that of reforming the church, an effort that promises to be no less painful now than it was when those first ordinations took place when I was 14 years old. **TW**

The Philadelphia 11

by Ariel Miller

Twenty years ago on the Feast of Mary and Martha, eleven women stood before the altar at Philadelphia's Church of the Advocate. Facing them was a little band of bishops who had resolved to heal the church's paralysis by ordaining women to the priesthood even though General Convention had not yet voted it "legal." With them in body or spirit were thousands of witnesses ready to say AMEN as women with a vocation to be priests were affirmed for the first time in the history of the Episcopal Church in America.

The Philadelphia ordinations on July 29, 1974 were a crest in the tide of justice which continues to surge and ebb in a church still deeply ambivalent about the role of women, as it is about homosexuals and people of color.

And each of those groups have shared each other's pain and struggle. White Episcopal women had gradually become aware of their own disenfranchisement in the church, as they worked side by side with black Episcopalians through the civil rights movement. Each of the ordinands was white, but it was a black parish, the Church of the Advocate, which offered itself as the sanctuary for their ordinations. Barbara Harris, a black laywoman who would eventually be elected the first woman bishop in the Anglican Communion, was the senior warden. Many of the women ordained then and since have spoken out in defense of the dignity and rights of gay and lesbian people, and they have suffered for it.

The prophetic act of the Philadelphia 11, their sponsors, and the ordaining bish-

ops had come in the wake of two successive General Conventions of the Episcopal Church that had failed to legislate the ordination of women priests despite a majority of yes votes in both houses. It had taken a quarter century of campaigning before the first women delegates were seated in General Convention in 1970. When approval of women priests failed passage by only a handful of votes in 1973 to meet the required super-majority, retired bishops had begun meeting with women deacons to discuss an "irregular" ordination to break the impasse.

Within a month of the ordinations, the House of Bishops met in emergency session and declared them not only irregular but invalid. Five more women would be ordained in Washington in 1975. All 16 would endure years more of controversy and rejection approaching psychological excommunication until and even after General Convention recognized their ordination in 1976. Not until 1977 were women "legally" ordained to the Episcopal priesthood.

As Suzanne Hiatt, a leader of the struggle, points out, ordination was only the beginning of the work. Many of the first women ordained have been called to aid and hearten others whose gifts are shunned or disregarded. Two have decided for compelling reasons to work outside the institutional church. But equally vital is the unique ministry each has developed and given to the community of the faithful.

Scientist Jeannette Piccard, ordained at the age of 79, is the only one of the Philadelphia 11 who has died. The others, ranging in age from the forties to the early seventies, are vitally engaged in ministry in contexts as varied as their

own unique gifts. Intellectually and spiritually robust, canny, compassionate, seasoned, and wise, they are spiritual mentors at the height of generativity.

What follows is a sojourn — far too brief! — with each of these remarkable women, who shared with *The Witness* a glimpse both of their current work and of their concerns for church and society.

Merrill Bittner

Merrill Bittner declined to be interviewed but sent this message:

"Going to Philadelphia was a natural extension of saying yes to the call to ordained ministry: Here am I. Send me. It was a profound experience of the community of the faithful rejoicing in the power of the Spirit.

"When I left the Episcopal Church as an active priest in March of 1976, it was like leaving my homeland. The pain of that loss remains with me. It is a part of my personal landscape, a wound that will always inform my life.

"I have no more patience with the Episcopal Church's reluctance to affirm the gifts of all of its members. The Episcopal Church still abides by what I call the WWHAMM Factor: White Western Heterosexual Ablebodied Middle-class Middle-aged Males define what is acceptable. All others must wait for permission.

"My joy today begins with the fact that the institutional church no longer stands in my way of doing ministry. I work with our local adult education program as an educational and vocational counselor. I'm doing what I love: working with people in vocational crisis, encouraging them to honor who they know themselves to be as they make vocational choices.

"My faith is nurtured now by the Maine woods where I live and tend the land, by the love of my partner of 17 years, Nancy Noppa, and by the community of people who grace my days. For all of this, I am most truly thankful."

Ariel Miller is an Episcopalian and freelance writer in Cincinnati.



Left to right: Nancy Wittig, Alison Cheek, Betty Schiess, Betty Powell, Carter Heyward, Marie Moorfield Fleischer, Alla Bozarth, Suzanne Hiatt, Alison Palmer, Antonio Ramos, Emily Hewitt, Merrill Bittner, George Barrett, Lee McGee. Not pictured: Katrina Swanson, Diane Tiehill, Jeanette Piccard (deceased), Robert DeWitt, Daniel Corrigan, Edward Welles (deceased).

Alla Bozarth

Poet, contemplative, companion of bee, bear, and tree, Alla Bozarth describes herself as “the soul-tender in residence” of Wisdom House, a spiritual community she founded in Oregon. Clients come to her for spiritual counsel and refreshment in the afternoons; she sets aside the night for contemplation and creative work until just before dawn. Writing, dance, yoga are at the heart of her prayer and ministry, with her thirteenth book to be published later this year. Five of those books are poetry — an art of soul insight which, as she points out, the culture devalues. But “poetry is my true vocation, even as a priest,” she says in her gentle, merry voice. “As a poet I understand the language of the soul in dreams.”

Bozarth’s poem “Transfiguration,” together with work by an artist-collaborator is enshrined at the Peace Memorial Garden in Hiroshima.

Alison Cheek

Born in Australia, Alison Cheek has been midwife to the struggle of women for equality there as well as here, serving as a consultant to the Australian women’s ordination movement. Now, to her great delight, she is working as director of Feminist Liberation Theology Studies at the Episcopal Divinity School. “What I try to keep alive and well is looking at

issues with a systemic analysis,” she reports. “There is wonderful work being done by students here, pushing the boundaries. Women are working at spirituality not with a narrow focus, but doing very integrative work.”

Contrasting her two homelands, Cheek says, “In the church in Australia there hasn’t been raised consciousness as in the U.S. Going through the civil rights movement sensitized people to oppression here.”

Marie Moorefield Fleischer

Marie Moorefield Fleischer, then working as a chaplain, sought ordination in 1974 “in response,” she explains, “to what I understood to be my call to the priesthood and out of concern for the hospital patients in need of pastoral care who turned to me for Word and Sacrament.” Since then her vocation has taken her to West Virginia, Maryland, and New York, providing pastoral care to individuals and congregations. Today she is a canon and Deputy for Ministry in the Diocese of Western New York, her work focusing primarily on congregational development and leadership training.

Carter Heyward

A professor of theology at Episcopal Divinity School since 1975, Carter Heyward teaches feminist liberation theology,

Christology, ethics, and healing from abuse and addiction. She speaks joyously of the chance to teach and nurture seminarians. But prejudice and exclusion continue in the church. “So many of our students who have the deepest connection to the Spirit get turned down for ordination,” she says, “either because they are gay or lesbian or because they express their faith in ways that don’t sound orthodox.” She points out that inclusivity saves Christology from being a caricature of Christ. Women’s ordination is a case in point, Heyward makes clear: “If the priest is a woman the power of the Risen Christ in history cannot be confined to fathers and sons. The power is not just from his masculinity but from his humanness, which women share.”

Emily Hewitt

Emily Hewitt took her law boards two days before she was ordained, graduated with honors from Harvard Law School. At the peak of a thriving law career she was appointed general counsel to the General Services Administration last summer. Looking at the growing backlash against women both in the church and in the wider culture in 1974, she had concluded “the church was going to have a little trouble with those who did this shake-up.” Hewitt went into law as a way to be a good steward of her abilities,

which would probably have been underused in the church. She has relished her career. "Though I'm temporally retired from institutional service in the church, that changes nothing of my basic interests. 'Do justice, love mercy, walk humbly with your God' — there's nothing more than that," she says firmly. "The job description is to humanize the world wherever you are."

Suzanne Hiatt

Suzanne Radley Hiatt entered seminary in 1961 "clear about my vocation even if the seminary and the church were not." In the ensuing years she earned a master's in social work as well as the M.Div., well aware that she would need a way to earn her livelihood. Emerging as a seasoned community organizer through the civil rights and peace movement, she went on to lead the long struggle to bring the Episcopal Church to affirm women's vocation to the priesthood. Hiatt is now John Sealy Stone Professor of Homiletics and Pastoral Theology at Episcopal Divinity School, where the majority of the students today — as at Protestant seminaries in general — are women. But once out of seminary, women continue to be marginalized. Hiatt warns against the complacency of the church, which would like to gloss over past and present inequity. "Don't be lulled into thinking that the struggle is over," she warned women in England as their ordination drew closer. "The radical women who fought injustice will be shunted aside — there's an enormous urge to soothe the pain of the boys who have been 'hurt.'"

"Remember the history!" she urges. [See profile on page 38.]

Betty Bone Schiess

"I take the church very seriously, and its potential to influence society very seriously," says Betty Schiess. She has served as a rector as well as chaplain at Syracuse and Cornell, but "ordination was *not* a

career move," she says with a rueful laugh. "The vocation I felt called to was to change the way the church sees women." Now officially retired, she continues to labor hard for that goal through work like her advocacy as member of a state bioethics task force. She sees this work as virtually invisible to a complacent church where the shaky gains made by women are eroding. Women clergy, she points out, are still less well paid, serve in more marginalized congregations, have fewer resources to deploy.

"The church has not yet decided that sexism may be the most horrible oppression in the world today," she says. "The ordination of women made it so that our fathers in God could lick their chops and say, 'Aren't we wonderful!' and not deal with the fact that so much sexism is unresolved."

Katrina Swanson

Katrina Swanson has been rector of St. John's, Union City, N.J. for 16 years — long enough to see children grow into adulthood. A small, non-affluent church, it is richly multinational: members come from England, India, and Latin America. "It has been wonderful to be able to be in the same congregation for so long, to have the privilege of celebrating the sacraments and sharing people's lives in a meaningful way," Swanson says. "That continuity also makes me more effective

as a community person, and more effective mediating the community to the parish." The small congregation — so marginalized in the church — has much to teach, she points out: "In such a church we can know each other and be intimate, even though the American culture is trying to divide us."

Nancy Hatch Wittig

Rector of St. Andrew-in-the-Field in the suburbs of Philadelphia, Nancy Hatch Wittig has been named a dean, the honorary canon of a cathedral, rector twice over, and Fellow of the College of Preachers. But this utterly unstuffy minister recognizes "the ladder of success" as a distraction from some real treasures. Ordained women, so often working in marginalized congregations, have shown the church "that valid ministry can occur on those fringes," Wittig explains. "They have been willing to take on hard ministry without the sense that 'I'm going to move on.'"

"Parish ministry will continue to be valid, but it must change for both men and women," she predicts. "One reason is economic. We can't depend on parishes being able to afford full-time clergy. The outcome will be both the clergy taking up healthy leadership but also empowering laity to be about ministry, not just by reading lessons on Sunday but taking their faith into the workplace." **TW**

Alison Cheek, Carter Heyward and Jeanette Piccard celebrating the eucharist at Riverside Church in defiance of a House of Bishops declaration that their orders were invalid. Religious News Service





Bone Woman, etching 18" x 24"

Judith Anderson

*Within us is the old one who collects bones.
Within us there are the soul-bones of Wild
Woman.*

*Within us is the potential to be fleshed out
again
as the creature we once were. Within us are
the
bones to change ourselves and our world...
You wish psychoanalytic advice? Go gather
bones.*

*from Women Who Run With the
Wolves, by Clarissa Pinkola.*

Judith Anderson is an artist in East Lansing,
Mich.

I've always been intrigued by bones. They are inside and hidden. The great paradox is that we cannot see and appreciate bones and their functional underpinning of life except in a confrontation with dissolution and death. In this etching, Bone Woman is not preoccupied with death. This is rather a meditation on life, on the debris and compost and the past from which life arises continually.

Bone Woman is an archetype, and yet she is of course myself, as is the child beside her blessing the image of the mother and three children in the swirling of her head. The image is from a photo-

graph in 1967 when Sam was three years and two months, Jessica was 15 months, and Laura was two months old, a time for me of great preoccupation with mothering. Life was then full of interruptions and busy moments, leaving little possibility of time for reflection and meditation. It is curious to be still holding that memory now when the children are away from me, grown and thriving.

Bone Woman is calm and at rest in her contemplation. In this half-light of dawn or dusk, or of dreamtime, there is a great silence.

— Judith Anderson

The second circle

by Jane Soyster Gould

Every Sunday of my life my mother took herself and her girls to church. For most of my early years we attended St. John's Church in McLean, Virginia where my sisters and I sang in the Junior Choir, attended Sunday School, and were confirmed. My mother worshipped, only occasionally showing her annoyance with the conservative Southern clergy, and voted all-women slates for the vestry. No woman ever won but my mother maintained her silent protest.

At home we never talked about church or God. We never said grace before meals and prayers were not part of our bedtime ritual. The 23rd psalm and a UTO box sat on my mother's bureau and I suspect that prayer helped her through many dark nights and difficult days. For her, I guess church provided time and space for quiet reflection and connection with the divine. But for me, church simply was something I did.

When I was 12, my mother decided that she could no longer tolerate our parish church. It was 1968; change was happening in our world, our nation, our church and our family life. St. John's in McLean responded to none of these changes, so we left. We spent the summer visiting every Episcopal church within a 20-minute drive of our house. We made a scorecard for the churches on which every member of the family rated each church on such items as hymns, preaching, clergy, congregational participation, decor and munchies after the service. At

the end of August we tabulated the results of our survey and transferred our membership to St. John's Church in Georgetown.

On September 7, 1975, the Sunday before I was to head back to college for pre-season hockey, I went to church with my mother. My sister, Elizabeth, walked up from her house in Georgetown. The rector was in the hospital, so John, his associate, was in charge of the service.

As John entered the sanctuary we all could feel a powerful passion and pain in him. It was clear he had been crying and that he had not had much sleep. We wondered what had unsettled his spirit. The tension in the church was palpable.

When he delivered his homily, we

learned what was troubling him. John had agreed to present a friend, a woman deacon named Alison Palmer, for ordination in the Episcopal Church at an irregular service of ordination that was to take place that afternoon at St. Stephen and the Incarnation in Washington. On July 29, 1974, 11 woman deacons had been priested in a tremendous celebration in Philadelphia. In a storm of protest, praise and media hysteria the Philadelphia 11 had spent the year attempting to live out their prophetic priestly ministries. By the first anniversary of Philadelphia, the ordaining bishops had been chastised and the validity of the women's orders denied; the institutional church had not changed and no more women had been ordained. Many had begun to believe — either in hope or in fear — that the storm would subside. But that would and could not be. People were gathering in Washington to ordain four more women dea-



From left: Lee McGee, George Barrett, Alison Palmer, Diane Tickell and Betty Rosenberg.

Jane Soyster Gould was ordained a priest in 1987. She will begin work as chaplain at M.I.T. in Cambridge, Mass. this fall.

cons to the priesthood.

Before coming to church I'd known nothing of the plan to ordain Lee McGee, Betty Rosenberg, Diane Tickell, and Alison Palmer as priests. Excitement filled me as I contemplated more women priests and my own minister standing with them. Distracted by my own joy, I almost missed the words that followed. Only John's cracking voice and halting speech brought me back to the sermon.

From his hospital bed the rector, who had come to the church five years earlier as a very hip and cool young associate, informed his associate that if he attended the ordination, he would not have a job when he came back. John told us that he knew that presenting Alison for ordination was what God intended and wanted him to do. Yet, he had to think of the security of his family. He needed his job; he would not go.

As he spoke, I knew that I would go. The warden's reading of a letter from the bishop, asking that we all stay away from the unauthorized service, merely confirmed my intention. John's tear-filled eyes had opened mine. Being Christian was not a benign activity safely confined to the sanctuary on Sunday mornings. It meant speaking out, taking risks, standing for something. In my flash of 19-year-old anger and idealism I knew that the rector was wrong; the bishop was wrong; the whole church was wrong. The true church was gathering that afternoon at St. Stephen and the Incarnation and I would be there.

My sister Elizabeth and I didn't know what to expect as we walked up the steps

of the church later that day. Would there be diocesan guards trying to prevent us from attending? Would there be people protesting the ordination? We encountered no opposition as we entered the rapidly filling church. Women and men, old and young, black and white; we were a community of the faithful gathered to sing and pray and celebrate that day. John was not there but his wife was; we were; God was. As the crucifer led the long

In my flash of 19-year-old anger and idealism I knew that the rector was wrong; the bishop was wrong; the whole church was wrong. The true church was gathering that afternoon at St. Stephen and the Incarnation and I would be there.

procession up one aisle and down another while we sang "I Bind Unto Myself This Day," I experienced the power of the Holy Spirit in a way I had never felt her before. I sensed that the power of God was going to burst out of the building just as Christ came forth from

the tomb. The feeling was so potent it seemed that the church could not possibly contain it or us and that its walls would crack.

St. Stephen and the Incarnation stood firm, but it does seem that the edifice of the church cracked a bit that day. Phila-

delphia was not an isolated event; women were called to be priests, and bishops and congregations would gather to ordain them. Out of a sense of order, if not justice or faithfulness, the institutional church had to respond. The patriarchal walls were far from crumbling, but cracks weakened them and bits of light could shine through.

I could no longer confine God to the sanctuary. I returned to college where I encountered Robert McAfee teaching a course on liberation theology. I began to know Jesus as the one walking with me as I joined protests against reinstitution of draft registration, apartheid in South Africa, U.S. involvement in Central America, nuclear proliferation; as I registered voters, lobbied for women's rights on Capitol Hill, taught and counseled adolescents; worked with homeless people. For the first time in my life I felt connected to the source of my being and knew why I did the work I did.

There is no doubt that the life-giving spirit of God moved, filled up, and burst open the church on that Sunday afternoon in September 19 years ago. In the midst of it all the cross stood secure, showing our pain and challenging us to go forward. There it stands — inviting us not to squeeze through the cracks but to open up the walls.

Water Women by Alla Renéé Bozarth

We do not want
to rock the boat,
you say, mistaking
our new poise
for something safe.

We smile secretly
at each other,
sharing the reality
that for some time
we have not been
in the boat.

We jumped
or were pushed
or fell
and some leaped
overboard.

Our bodies form
a freedom fleet
our dolphin grace
is power.

We learn and teach
and as we go
each woman sings;
each woman's hands
are water wings.

Some of us have become
mermaids or Amazon
whales
and are swimming for our
lives.

Some of us do not know
how to swim.
We walk on water.

Winds of change

by Sally M. Bucklee

The crusade for women's ordination over the past 30 years has been a unifying force for women across the Anglican Church and beyond. At the numerous ordinations of women in England this past spring, for example, people came from every nook, cranny and denomination to be in celebrative solidarity with their English sisters, just as they came for Barbara Harris' consecration as suffragan bishop of Massachusetts in 1989.

Increasingly, many who show up at such events know each other. Not only has the reduced time and expense of international travel made face-to-face meetings more feasible, but communication systems are also linking women by FAX, telephone and a computer network that includes international, ecumenical and denominational subgroupings. While scholarly males continue to debate what issues should be discussed by ecumenical councils, women long ago simply started to meet and work together — at first through the ecumenical Church Women United and more recently through such international events as the worldwide Anglican Encounter held in Brazil in 1992 which attracted women and men from 52 nations and 25 tribes to celebrate “the voices, truth and song of women.”

An exercise I learned in Brazil demonstrates what is bringing Christian women together around the globe. It involves

forming a pyramid in which one person stands on the top, two people stand in the next row and seven people form the base. When ten crackers are distributed among them, the top person, a white-skinned English-speaking male, gets seven, the next two each receive one, and the remaining seven must split one cracker among themselves.

Much of the world is ordered according to this triangle of inverse relationships. The global economy and the distribution of food are the most dramatic examples. But women and persons of color know that churches are also ordered according to this pyramid, with Number One controlling the Bible and the prayer book. And because the top chaps have been interpreting Scripture, God and worship forms for so long, the Eurocentric, white-male perspective is deeply rooted and sincerely sexist. Combining androcentrism (a male-centered ideology and vision of how everything should be organized) with the pyramid structure institutionalizes a male-centered, patriarchal view of the whole organization.

Studies have shown, for example, that persons under 50 want worship language that at once enhances their understanding of God and encompasses more people and their cultures. So do women and non-Anglo ethnic groups. And they will wait no longer for legislative bodies to lumber on for years revising prayer books, hymnals and lectionaries. They are creating, praying, singing and reading what is meaningful to them now. Yet, according to the 1994 report of the Episcopal Church's Committee on the Status of Women to the General Convention, “a full third of diocesan bishops did not authorize or encourage use of the [1991]

Supplemental Liturgical Materials or use inclusive language in diocesan publications.” The worship of the church in the West has trapped God in a tight little triangle, restricting people's vision to how the man with seven crackers imagines God. But women know that if they are created in God's image, God has some feminine characteristics, too. These images can be found in the Bible and are celebrated in the Eastern church. Women know the central themes of Scripture are not about domination or oppression. The common denominators found in all Jesus' parables about the Kingdom or Household of God are inclusivity and equality. And so the 10 people trapped in the triangle must find a way round to soften that structure's angles and round them into a circle, a structure that has neither top nor bottom and which embraces all.

Forming circles of faith, in fact, is what Christian women across the globe have committed themselves to doing, despite hierarchically imposed barriers.

Patriarchalism oppresses all women, all children and some men, especially those of color. It came as a shock to many at the Anglican Encounter in Brazil to learn that domestic violence lives in the homes of affluent North American women and children. We, in turn, learned how others experience violence and sexual exploitation and how deeply entrenched both are in our religious and secular cultures. We discovered how little interest male church leaders have in these offenses against women and children, except as they affect the financial stability of the church, collegiality among male leaders or the reputation of the clergy. The system is so daunting and uncaring that it inhibits the victimized within the faith community from coming forward.

Violence against women is, in fact, the most common, pervasive and universal human rights violation there is. Violence is woven into social institutions like the

Sally Bucklee is president of the Episcopal Women's Caucus, a deputy to the General Convention and a member of the Episcopal Church's national Executive Council. She was an organizer of the International Women's Witnessing Community at the 1988 Lambeth Conference of Bishops. Artist **Patricia Lay Dorsey** lives in Grosse Pointe, Mich.

family, ensuring cover-ups for incest, marital rape, dowry burning, mental and physical abuse and neglect. In Asia, where male children have long been preferred, the discarding of daughters both pre- and post-natally happens regularly. Very young Asian girls are sold by their families into the international sex market. In Latin America and many other parts of the world the girl child has lower status and less food, health care and education. Fewer boys worldwide die of measles, malnutrition, diarrhea and dysentery — more receive immunizations.

With little control over their own bodies and little health care, half a million women die in childbirth every year, leaving over one million motherless children. Two-thirds of the world's illiterates are women, the greatest number being in Latin America and the Caribbean.

During the Ecumenical Decade of Church in Solidarity with Women (1988-1998), violence has become a priority concern. The World Council of Churches (WCC) is holding consultations around the world to enable women to form networks and develop strategies for joint action against the myriad forms of violence concretized in economic, socio-cultural, political and religious structures. A January 1994 meeting of the WCC's Central Committee recommended that the WCC member churches commit themselves to reexamining basic theological formulations that have legitimized the violence against women; setting aside resources to support women in their efforts to build a just and violence-free world; and using their moral and spiritual resources to help men deal with male sexuality and male violence.

Just as violence has brought women together across denominational and national boundaries, women in many places are learning to hurdle barriers of race and ethnicity. Anyone who has known what it is to be powerless, to be the victim of

physical, economic, religious or political power, shares a common cause with others who are powerless. People of color and women have this bond. As provinces



Patricia Lay Dorsey

in Africa, Latin American and Asia voted to ordain women it became clear that this was not simply a Western or white women's agenda but a universal leading of the Holy Spirit. At the diocesan and national levels of several denominations, multicultural coalitions have formed to elect persons supportive of the agendas of people of color and women.

These alliances have brought new voices into church leadership, but empowering them to speak out has been gradual. The Center for the American Woman and Politics at Rutgers University determined that a lone woman among 10 men speaks differently than she does when in a room of 10 women. But as more women come into the group and some men depart, it is the men who start changing the way they talk — whether they know it or not. A majority of women is not required. The Center also found that if women hold fewer than 10 percent of the seats in a legislative body, laws serv-

ing women, children and families often fail to be passed. Once a legislative body is 20 to 30 percent female, a new awareness of being a significant subgroup hits women and they are more likely to organize across party lines on issues that affect women and their families.

If any more than 25 percent of the membership is women, males will not value participation. It is not surprising, therefore, than in most organizations — including the church — there is a glass ceiling that subconsciously limits the membership of women.

In 1987 across the Episcopal Church the percentage of women serving in leadership capacities averaged 22 percent nationwide. Within the 90 dioceses participating in the survey, percentages ranged from 11 to 41 percent, with the median at the same 22 percent as the national average. By 1991, it had inched up to 24 percent, despite women constituting a majority of the active membership of the church since its inception some 200 years ago. That same 1987 study showed that congregational vitality is also reported as higher in dioceses supportive of the ministries of ordained as well as lay women.

The Old Testament commentator, Walter Brueggeman has noted, "The world as we have known it is falling apart ... the great pastoral task now in our society is to help people see that the great white, male, western colonial agenda is over with" and help them pass "through the valley of the shadow of death into a new valley." Women have been dynamiting highways into that new valley year by year as they build a viable base in secular and ecclesiastical politics, in seminaries and on judicatory staffs; as authors, liturgists, denominational leaders, theologians, scholars, and pastors. The tidal wave they are creating is being hailed as the Second Reformation of the Christian church.

TW

Misogyny in Scripture

by Lesley A. Northup

In the fall of 1993 the Episcopal Church's Committee on the Status of Women held the last of a series of consultations on women and violence in New York. Lesley Northup, an Episcopal priest who is Assistant Professor of Religion and Culture at Florida International University in Miami, Fla., made a presentation on the culture of violence in the church's lectionary. This piece is based, in part, on that presentation. We present it here because it helps illustrate the frustration that has led many women to consider themselves post-Christian.

“[The Israelites] warred against Midian as the Lord commanded Moses, and slew every male. ... And Moses was angry with the officers of the army ... and said to them, ‘Have you let all the women live? Now therefore, kill every male among the little ones, and kill every woman who has known man by lying with him. But all the young girls who have not known man by lying with him, keep alive for yourselves.’ ... Now the booty remaining of the spoil that the men of war took was 675,000 sheep, 72,000 cattle, 61,000 asses, and 32,000 persons in all, women who had not known man by lying with him ... of which the Lord’s tribute was 32 persons.”
— Numbers 31:7-40 (excerpted)

We would be shocked and shamed to hear this read aloud in our churches. Over the years, as the lectionary has been formed and revised, we have grown careful to exclude this sort of thing — Scripture that wounds, degrades, or incites. We have shaped our readings to reflect a modern view of the dignity of human life, the essential equality of all persons, the scandal of our

inhumanity to each other.

Lectionary committees have taken pride in their efforts to sanitize the Bible for liturgical use, a practice fundamentalists and other traditionalists are quick to condemn, but which feminists have until recently generally endorsed. When scholars like Mary Daly and Rosemary Radford Ruether first wrote on Christian patriarchy, they began by identifying passages that reflected primitive cultural attitudes toward women and contributed to their oppression, then urged their omission from sets of public readings. A second wave of interpretation, articulated by women such as Marjorie Procter-Smith and Jean Campbell, has focused on restoring to liturgical reading the stories of strong, chosen women: Judith, Esther and Mary Magdalene. In the current phase of feminist biblical work, scholars like Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Phyllis Trible have attempted a new approach: instead of regulating lectionary selection, they seek to reimagine the role of women in the untold biblical story, recovering a lost, suppressed history.

These various attempts to reconsider the Bible bespeak an almost desperate effort to derive enough meaning and validity from Scripture to give women room to stay within the church. And, indeed, the stories of strong biblical women like Esther and Judith and the absence of passages reflecting the worst of ancient culture have given hope to some women and prolonged their struggle to remain Christians. But in that struggle, they must inevitably come face to face with a

painful and horrifying reality: the Bible as a whole both narrates and preaches an irredeemably abusive stance toward women — a stance that is difficult, with any intellectual or spiritual honesty, to explain away, despite centuries of theology attempting to do just that. No amount of lectionary tinkering, historical revisionism, or tiptoeing interpretation can ameliorate the culture of violence — physical, social, psychological, symbolic and theological — so long taught by the Bible and accepted by its believers.

The persistent refrain of women’s abuse pervades the Hebrew Scriptures. There is, for example, the story of Tamar (2 Sam. 13:1-22), the daughter of King David: Raped by her own brother, counseled to keep quiet to avoid a family scandal, rejected by a father who does not rebuke his rapist son, she lives the rest of her life “desolate.” Dinah, Jacob’s daughter, is also raped, an act which ends in terrible slaughter (Gen. 34). God does not step in to stop these horrors; indeed, God often contributes to them. Jephthah, for example, murders his only daughter in fulfillment of a deal with God for military victory.

Most of these “texts of terror,” as biblical scholar Phyllis Trible calls them, are not read from the lectern. While deci-

The Bible as a whole both narrates and preaches an irredeemably abusive stance toward women.

sions to avoid these stories have supposedly reflected sensitivity to women’s concerns, many women see the omissions as an

attempt to revise history, and to minimize what little record remains of the tradition’s sordid treatment of them.

But even in the texts that remain, women, good or bad, never achieve the status of full personhood. Women may be divorced, but may not choose divorce; if widowed, they have no identity; if they

fail to bear surviving sons, they are outcasts; if they take another man, they may be stoned. Or perhaps, as in Numbers 31, they are mere booty to be counted among the spoils of war, fit only for rape or mass extermination. Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel, Leah are mentioned solely because they are married to important men. Ruth is bartered and sold along with the rest of her father-in-law's property. Rahab, who bravely saves Joshua and his companions, escapes physical injury, but is always referred to dismissively as "the harlot," while Israel and Jerusalem, in their most wicked and godless periods, are likewise referred to as fallen women.

It would be comforting to assume that, in the New Dispensation, Jesus rejects this grotesque attitude and restores women to full partnership in the human enterprise. And indeed, the Gospel witnesses to his calling of women as friends and disciples: Mary Magdalene, the first apostle; strong, competent Martha; Joanna and Susanna, "who provided for [Jesus and the twelve] out of their means." But against this we must also cite Jesus' repeated dismissal of his mother ("Woman, what have you to do with me? [John 2:4]; "Who is my mother?" [Matt 12:46]) and his dire eschatological predictions that single out women: "Alas for those who are with child and for those who give suck in those days!" (Luke 21:23).

Again, while we recognize Paul's egalitarian manifesto in Galatians 3:28 ("In Christ . . . there is neither male nor female"), we cannot ignore the androcentric bias that perpetuates the model of male ownership of women and has been consistently used over the centuries as a biblical warrant for domestic abuse:

"Wives, be subject to your husbands" (Col. 3:18); "The head of a woman is her husband" (1 Cor. 11:3); "For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man" (1 Cor. 11:7).



Dierdre Luzwick

Behind these selective stories and sayings read in our churches lies a conceptual framework even more lethal to the aspirations of women for unbattered wholeness — the biblical story of our relationship with a supposedly salvific God, a story we are reluctant to gaze upon in its obvious, plain-sense fullness.

For the Good News seems to be that we are in thrall to a God whose prideful anger is appeased only through blood sacrifice — worse yet, only through infanticide. Indeed, the Bible teaches that only the death of Jesus, the son of God, could satisfy the Deity's requirements for reconciling Eve's sin (see Mark 10:45, Matt. 26:28, 1 Cor. 15:3, Col. 1:20, Rom.

3:25). The Divine Parent, who mandates this arrangement, is not held responsible; rather it is Eve, the first woman, whose disobedience forces God into the role of child abuser. And the death of the divine child was not all that God required. The son had to suffer in the process. It is precisely this aspect of the life of Jesus that Christian theology has traditionally emphasized. The savior brings salvation through suffering, willingly and without question. We are enjoined to follow his example, bearing our crosses in silence with an eye to heaven.

This "suffering servant" model has been used most consistently in Christian tradition to characterize the expected role of women. As Mary Daly has said in *Beyond God the Father*, "The qualities that Christianity idealizes, especially for women, are also those of a victim: sacrificial love, passive acceptance of suffering, humility, meekness, etc."

Theologians have, of necessity, rationalized the image of a barbarous male God, magnifying the concept of human (female) guilt to counterbalance the more horrifying story to which the Scriptures testify. The process of lectionary selection has continued this tradition. But the underlying theme, and its power to perpetuate the violent oppression of women, is ineradicable. Theologically, the ugliness of liturgical scripture that reflects the pain of abused women should call Christians to repentance and conversion, and thus to the radical rebuilding of society. Practically, it has often served merely to confirm patriarchal security in the warrant of biblical history. The question is not whether the Bible tells a tale of abuse, but whether there is any way for Christian women to live with that witness and remain faithful.



Post-Christian women

by Donna Schaper

The Women's Theological Center in Boston has been slowly moving beyond a position of dissent on the edge of Christendom towards one of providing a post-Christian alternative.

"You can only protest and try to get in for so long," says Donna Bivens, co-director. "Then you start thinking about what you can do and how you can live without the institutional church."

At an April, 1992 conference sponsored by the WTC, Emily Culpepper, who teaches at the University of the Redlands, described her experience of calling herself post-Christian as unsatisfying.

"I have struggled with how to come to terms with my Christian past," Culpepper said. "Something wimpy like post-Christian or post-Protestant or any of those white-bread terms — that doesn't do it for me."

Culpepper landed on the term "compost" to describe her theological mood and moment: "Christianity is not just my roots. The roots are integral with the tree and it doesn't do justice to the fact that I choose to sever myself from my tradition. It's become compost, decaying and dying, once alive. So the first faith that I had, which I loved like a best friend, has died and I am seeking to compost it in ways

*The first faith that I had,
which I loved like a best
friend, has died and I am
seeking to compost it in ways
that are useful to myself and
to us all.*

— Emily Culpepper

Donna Schaper is pastor of First Congregational Church, Riverhead, NY.

that are useful to myself and to us all."

Meck Groot, on the staff at the WTC, distinguishes between cultural Christianity and believing Christianity. Raised in the Christian Reformed tradition, Meck had just returned from her grandfather's funeral. "I know my people by how they worship. We are linked by ethnicity. But the problem is, religion with them is a package deal. It means being heterosexual. It means believing that you can't change the world because people are bottom-line bad. I can't buy that any more."

The program at the Boston center raises all but \$46,000 of its \$172,500 budget. Its board is complete with Christian and post-Christian professors of theology, artists and therapists. Its class each year is composed of about 12 people. WTC describes itself as half institution and half experiment.

Alice Walker says that feminist is to womanist as lavender is to purple; making those politics personal is what makes the WTC unique. Race gets as much concern as gender, joined by class. The most popular workshop at the 1991 annual gathering of women was a workshop

on blue-collar feminism.

Ever since the clash at Canberra in the World Council of Churches 1991 meeting, where the WTC's most famous graduate, Chung Hyun Kyung, a Presbyterian theologian

from South Korea, addressed the 3,500 delegates from 100 nations, the WTC has grown increasingly popular with Asian

women. Last year's Study-Action, a year-long intensive internship, had 12 students, six of whom were of Asian origin.

Chung brought down the wrath of the World Council conservatives when she invoked spirits beyond the spirits of Jesus Christ. Reading at Canberra from a rice-paper scroll, Chung invoked the spirits of women and men oppressed through the ages. "Come, spirit of Hagar, Egyptian black slave woman exploited and abandoned by Abraham and Sarah, the ancestors of our faith. ... Come, spirit of the Amazon rain forest, come earth, air, water, raped, tortured and exploited by human greed." She did not leave out Jesus. "Come," she concluded, "spirit of the Liberator, our brother Jesus."

Has it been hard to stay alive institutionally on the edge of the church?

"You bet," says Nancy Richardson. "We are the only organization I can think of that provides a credentialed, excellent, experientially based theological education, especially for women — who are, after all, the growing constituency within seminaries — that has never been able to get a grant from the Lilly Endowment." The Lilly Foundation is the chief funder of the theological education and its auxiliaries.

Richardson believes that the answer to this discrimination lies in institutional fear of the kind of revelations women experience when they worship outside rather than inside the church. "When we read our own bible, and experience our own God, people don't like to hear what is revealed to us. Like the possibility that there is more to the Godhead than Jesus, like the possibility that God loves homosexuals and heterosexuals, like God being larger than what the institution has discovered."

Donna Bivens calls WTC "our place by the water." Others are ready to call for a name that doesn't look back. **TW**

Haitian trauma

In Haiti it is common to see naked male children. The heat is oppressive, so the fewer clothes the better. However, even in the sweltering slum of Cite Soleil, the genitals of female children are covered. According to students of the culture, this practice honors the "birth part" of females as the "pathway of life." Such respect, they say, was largely responsible for there being so few rapes in Haiti.

But that's changed. Since September 1991 when the democratically elected president Jean-Bertrand Aristide was ousted by a military coup, incidents of rape of women and female children have increased alarmingly. And these rapes have a specific purpose. My research confirms the May 19 statement of the UN/OAS International Civilian Mission that "rape has emerged as a tool of political repression in Haiti."

I just returned from Haiti where, with the help of an anthropologist who has worked in Haiti for 10 years on women's reproductive health, I was able to enter neighborhoods and videotape the testimonies of some of the women. All were assaulted by members of the military, the police or the newly formed anti-democratic political party known as FRAPH (in Haitian creole, "to hit"). Many were told during assaults that they were being raped because they or their male partners participated in democratic activities.

The women who came forward took an enormous risk. They knew I could not help them to leave Haiti. They understood they would not be financially compensated. Because of the constant presence of FRAPH in these neighborhoods, I went in as a health care worker with a camcorder hidden in my bag. Women guarded the doors. When FRAPH members appeared, the women would sing, signaling us to turn out the camera light and be quiet.

In one account, Jacqueline's husband was a pro-democracy activist who refused to remove Aristide's poster from his wall. When the military came after him, he went into hiding. Jacqueline was living with her aunt when seven members of the

military broke into their tin and cardboard shack. They accused her of knowing where her boyfriend was, voting for Aristide and being in the resistance. Then each man raped her. They told her they would return. Her aunt, afraid for her own safety, will no longer hide her. Jacqueline seeks shelter each night in the shacks of others.

As unimaginable as the living conditions are for the poor in Haiti, the fear that engulfs them is worse, especially at night when the military takes to the streets in its trucks.

— Anna Hamilton Phelan

A member of Artists for Democracy in Haiti, Phelan is the screenwriter of "Gorillas in the Mist."



Cellist Vedran Smailovic played with the Sarajevo Opera. After the national theater and concert halls were destroyed, Smailovic played, in full concert dress, in the streets, commemorating those who had been killed. He is pictured here playing at an anti-handgun vigil in Detroit. He has also played in Ireland.

Racketeering and C.D.

On January 24th, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in National Organization of Women v. Joseph M. Scheidler that the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt organization Act (RICO) can be applied to activities of various anti-abortion groups even though no financial gain is involved.

Contrary to assertions made by NOW's Legal Defense Fund, the impact of expanding RICO will not be limited to violent activity. It can and will be applied to a broad spectrum of non-violent civil disobedience. The application of federal racketeering laws against protestors is a frightful assault against First Amendment guarantees of free speech.

Signers include: Bernice A. King, Ramsey Clark, Henri Nouwen, Daniel Berrigan, Liz McAlister and Wendell Berry
— excerpted from **New York Times** ad 3/27/94

Land mines

It is estimated that right now there may be as many as 120 million live landmines deployed around the earth, mainly in 21 developing countries. They have become third-world weapons manufactured by and purchased from first-world companies. Some remain from World War II; in fact, every year 30-40 people, mostly children, are killed in Poland. They represent the killing of wars that have no end. Now, in addition to battlefield use, landmines are used for refugee control and long-term terrorism.

Advanced technology makes the mines extremely difficult to detect and remove. The "bounding type" of mine bounces up and explodes at a height of five feet. Plastic fragments in a wound are invisible to x-rays making treatment of injuries very difficult. The indiscriminate effect of landmines on civilian populations is one of the reasons countries have sought to limit their use through the 1980 U.N. resolution on conventional weapons, which has not been ratified by the U.S.

— Lester Hartman,
Massachusetts chapter,
Episcopal Peace Fellowship

Short takes

Re-imagining God

by Chung Hyun Kyung

I want to share about my image of God, because when we talk about image of God, it is basically talking about who we are in relation to ourselves in this entire cosmos. Speaking of God is speaking of the unspeakable. Sometimes I feel stupid. I talk about God, even though I cannot see God. I cannot name God. Why do I still speak about God? Speaking about God is affirming our meaning of life. Speaking of God is coming to terms with why we are here at this very moment in this place. Therefore, speaking of God is asking where we came from, where we are and where we are going.

As an Asian, feminist, liberation theologian I always ask this question: "What's God got to do with this reality of the third world? What's God got to do with the reality of Asia? And what's God got to do with the reality of being a woman? When I raise this question, the language of God — God's language — becomes highly charged political language and highly charged metaphorical language.

What does it mean to talk about God when the world is full of suffering, especially when I read of Asian women's struggle in this world and this whole 500 years of western colonization and the whole tradition of foot-binding and wife-burning and using comfort woman and using Asian woman as a last paradise of

feminine women? What does it mean to talk about God? What does God have to do with this brokenness, this oppression, colonialism, capitalism?

Also, I am asking another question: what does it mean to talk about God as an Asian? I was educated as a Christian



Chung Hyun Kyung

theologian, but every Asian Christian theologian must come to terms with what it means to be an Asian 100 percent and to be a Christian 100 percent, because when I look at our history of religion, we have more than 5,000 years of shamanism and 2,000 years of Taoism and almost 2,000 years of Buddhism and 700 years of Confucianism and only 100 years of Protestantism in Korea. Therefore whenever I go to the Buddhist temples and look at Buddha, I feel so young. I came from the youngest family of this whole community.

I'm not doing just an interreligious dialogue with Buddhists, Confucianists and Taoists, because all of them are within me. As my friend introduced me I feel like my bowel is shamanist, and my heart is Buddhist, and my right brain is Confucianist and my left brain is Christian. I need an archeology of spirituality within me because at every layer I can see all these people screaming and shouting at each other. This is like a symphony of gods. I call it a family of gods.

In Asia, the population of Christianity is only less than three percent. Therefore we are talking about 97 percent of people in Asia who do not articulate their faith in Christian language and metaphors. In this setting, what does it mean to do theology with Asian sensitivity and Asian heart and Asian body? Can you really get out of this cultural imperialism so I can be fully Asian to celebrate divinity within our people?

And a third question is: What has God got to do with my reality of being a woman? Many Korean churches still do not ordain women and the reason they do not ordain women was "See, Jesus was a man." And "Women, you menstruate and when you menstruate you are not clean, so how dare you stand up in the holy altar and talk about God's words?" We have a pastor — a very brave pastor — who responded to these male ministers. They said when a woman minister gets pregnant, her stomach will be so big everybody will know she had sex. But this minister stood up and said "Brother, listen! Many of you, the pastors of big churches, because you are fed so well by your congregation, all of you have a big stomach hanging there, and when we see your big stomach is just mere fat, is it Okay? But when you see a woman's big stomach with light, with a baby, it isn't Okay? What kind of thinking are you having?" So we all shouted and screamed and left. But that's the reality of the

Chung Hyun Kyung is a Korean theologian, with a doctorate from Union Theological Seminary. She teaches at Ewha Women's University in Seoul, Korea. She is the recipient of the 1994 Scarlett award to be presented at the Episcopal Church Publishing Company dinner at General Convention in Indianapolis.

Christian church.

The Christian church has been very patriarchal and that's why we are here, in order to destroy this patriarchal idolatry of Christianity.

To talk about God we really get into the place of mystery. God is in the silence. That's why I have a problem with a personalized God, even the best images — God as friend, God as mother, God as lover — they are still persons. But many Asians, we see God in the wind, in the fire, in the tree, in the ocean. We are living with God. It's energy — life-giving energy. And I also learn much from Zen Buddhists. They say God is pure emptiness, so you cannot talk about God. When I look at Christian tradition like Meister Eckhart and Thomas Merton, Catherine of Sienna, they also talk about God as silence, God as nothingness and God as pure emptiness. Therefore talking about God is like writing poetry. In the depths of the poetry, we meet the aliveness of life and what it means to be human.

I want to share with you what we are doing in Asia, especially in the women's theological community.

This is a book I brought from Korea. You can see the shamanistic mother-God image in the cover of this book. This is a new book published by the Korean Association of Women Theologians. This is our post-colonial, post-patriarchal, post-western project. What we do here is feminine theological reflection on goddesses in Korean folk religions.

Trinity of Asian goddesses

So we look at all these images of goddesses in order to find our relation to the world, our relation to nature, and our relation to ourselves and problems of the world through these images of goddesses. I want to share three images of God so striking in Asia and how these three images of God transformed my Christianity and my theological understanding of God.

The three goddesses I want to share with you this morning are *Kali*, *Kuan-yin* and *Ina*. These are my new trinity: *Kali*,



Kali

Ramgarh, 12th century

Kuan-yin and *Ina*. I got to know about their presence through my participation in the Asian women's movement. I wanted to know in what situation I encountered these goddesses.

Two years ago, I went to Sri Lanka. Many third-world theologians gathered to name the spirituality which is based on the cosmos — not just patriarchal spirituality, but spirituality based on our every-

day life and our cosmos.

Kali and revenge

Our conference center was in front of the *Kali* temple. One day I witnessed 3,000 Sri Lankan mothers marching toward the temple. They all wore white dresses and I asked, "Who are they?" And they said "There is a real, big racial conflict in Sri Lanka between the majority government and the minority. Many young men got killed by the government. These are the mothers of the slain young men — 3,000 of them." They marched toward the temple, so I marched with them. My heart was right there with them. And they had this ritual which was very simple and very striking. This representative of this young man's mother, she read all the names of the government officers who are considered to have killed their sons, they researched their names and they called all these men's names and after calling all these names, she said only one thing. No more elaboration, she said, "*Kali*, punish them." Then what happened after was, these 3,000 women bring coconuts — one coconut each — and in front of *Kali* they smashed the coconuts on the ground. And I asked, "What is this? Why are people smashing coconuts?" A woman answered, "This is an offering to *Kali*." But as an outsider, when I look at it, I really witnessed all these men's heads smashed there.

People say revenge is bad. In Christian tradition, we talk about forgiveness and

I claim Kali as the goddess of justice. She is fierce. She's uncontrollable. She is fiery. She is wild. Her power is not acceptable power, but she used this power to claim justice, to do justice.

reconciliation. I like forgiveness. I like reconciliation, but I want to know who says forgiveness and who says reconciliation, because when there is no change in power and oppression, talking about reconciliation and

forgiveness is so superficial. So these poor women, what they needed was the strong justice of *Kali*. They really wanted their sons' deaths not to be in vain. They want justice done to their sons' deaths and to their own life. Therefore, I claim *Kali*, usually located in India and Sri Lanka, the Hindu image of goddess, as the goddess of justice. She is fierce. She is uncontrollable. She is fiery. She is wild. Her power is not acceptable power, but she used this power to claim justice, to do justice.

And then I dreamed about myself breaking coconuts in front of the IMF [International Monetary Fund] and the World Bank and the Vatican. So I thought all these women should go to these places and 3,000 of us should bring our coconuts and smash them in front of them and say, "Let them be punished!" so this 500 years of colonialism can have a real meaning of jubilee, not just a metaphorical meaning.

Kuan-yin and compassion

The second image I encountered in Asia was of *Kuan-yin*. *Kuan-yin* is the Buddhist image of goddess located in north-east Asia, like China, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Sri Lanka and those places. The literal meaning of *Kuan-yin* means "one who hears the cry." And when I look at

Kuan-yin she is a beautiful woman. She is riding a dragon. The dragon is a very wonderful symbol in Asia, not like here — you call a bad woman a dragon-lady here, right? But in Asia the dragon is a very holy object.

Kuan-yin is riding a dragon. She is riding the very, very turbulent ocean, but she is very calm. She has this branch of a tree in her left hand and in her right hand she has this medicine box — real healing potion. So when she drops this potion, people get healed, get whole again. But *Kuan-yin* is a *Bodhisattva*. *Bodhisattva* in Buddhist tradition is an enlightened being. She or he can go to *Nirvana* any time, but they refuse to go because they say there are so many people suffering in this turbulent water, not just people — mountains, water, air, animals — they are suffering. They rather want to stay here in this turbulent water in order to get enlightened with us. *Kuan-yin* prays for abolition of Hell itself! It's a very different kind of spirituality, but when I read more about *Kuan-yin* — especially from Chinese folklore — *Kuan-yin* is a woman, just an ordinary woman. And because of her wisdom and compassion, she becomes this level of goddess.

So in Asia, in many parts of Asia,

incarnation always comes from the bottom to top. God's son or daughter never just drops in here and becomes God. Rather, it's a very organic process. You come and you experience all the things in this world and because of the way you lived, the way you shared your life, you become god and goddess one day. So Korean-Asian feminist theologians, especially Korean feminist theologians say, "We don't believe in Christology from above. We only believe in Christology from the love."

Ina and earth

The third image I got came from the Philippines. Her name is *Ina*. *Ina* means mother and *Ina* means earth. So she is an indigenous goddess of the Philippines. Now when the Spanish government conquered the Philippines and they converted Filipino people, they emphasized this docile, very obedient image of Mary who looks at the sky and says, "Thy will be done. Do whatever you want to me." What Filipino people did, they started to call Mary *Ina*, so when they go to the Catholic Church they call Mary and they say dear *Ina*. So from the Spanish perspective they say "Oh, finally we've converted the Filipinos." But what they did is, they converted Christianity into their

Witness debate

The Witness staff debated Chung Hyun Kyung's theology at length before recommending her for the Episcopal Church Publishing Company's 1994 Stringfellow award.

Marianne Arbogast and Marietta Jaeger feel that the demonstration outside the Kali temple is essentially violent. They are concerned that her account of the smashing of coconuts will contribute to a spirit of vengeance already dominant in our culture which

allows people to pray for mercy for those they love and cruelty or execution for those with whom they disagree.

Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann and Julie A. Wortman, on the other hand, feel the women's actions released their rage (rather than turning it inward) and offered the final vengeance to God, in whose hands it belongs. They find the anger within the trinity reassuring, liberating and humbling.

An irony was noted by Bill Wylie-Kellermann who observed that many feminist theologians have dismissed the angry father God concept, but Chung is

restoring an angry parent to the trinity. It may be that, while the atonement poses some potentially bad theology, anger mixed with compassion is a necessary component of God.

Mary Carter, who typed Chung's article, believes Chung can't be called a Christian and probably shouldn't be designing her own trinity.

In recommending Chung, the staff is raising her up as someone whose faith is alive and engaging, breaking our faith out of complacency. We welcome her voice in the theological arena.

— J.W.-K.

own religion. I can see in this the peoples' active resistance.

Ina is very meaningful for us today because this earth itself is *Ina*. So we are not taking care of the earth, the earth is taking care of us. So when we have this JPIC (Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation) conference in Korea, Korean theologians made it very clear that when we do theology we have to remember that the earth is fine without us, but we cannot survive without earth. We're visitors to this earth and earth is welcoming us and taking care of us. So what we are emphasizing — there is a new tongue coming out of this theology, geo-piety.

We need a piety to the earth. What many Korean theologians try to do nowadays is to make a connection between the spirit of earth and our Christian theology. There's a philosophy behind the land in Korea — we call it the theory of philosophy of wind, mountain and water, because you don't just live everywhere. You have to find the exact place you should live. Your energy, your personal energy must suit this land energy. If you have too much *yang* in you, you have to live in inland and if you have too much *yin* in you, you live in yangland, so you cannot make war. You cannot go crazy. You cannot be so greedy. We say if you have the brokenness of your energy balance, you do all kinds of bad things. So you have to be very careful where you live. But you know what they said? It's very interesting. According to this philosophy of wind, water and mountain and how to discern the energy — we call it *chi*, energy of life — the best energy of land comes from the land shape, but that land shape is the womb shape and the powerpoint is the

vagina of that land. The people really try to find this opening of the womb in many lands, because we know the sacred power resides in the land.

When you live with this kind of awareness, it is very hard to destroy the land.

What does it mean to bring in this trinity of goddesses in my Christian tradi-

tion? What does *Kuan-yin*, *Kali* and *Ina* have to do with my Christian theology? I have asked this question. After learning about their qualities, imagination and creativity comes with these fusions of different horizons. The more radically different it is, the more imagination, the more creativity you could find in it. You have to struggle with it, because conflict is so high. Therefore what I discovered after

studying all these goddesses is I start to look at a different image of God in Christian tradition. In Christian tradition we say, we all come from the earth. It means we all come from *Ina*; we have that tradition, but suddenly it becomes so clear to me. About *Kuan-yin*, this human being with her compassion and wisdom, I can find in John's gospel. Jesus said "I will go, but the Holy Spirit will come, but when the Holy Spirit comes, you will do something greater than what I did." I think we forgot about it totally. I don't think many of us think we can do something greater than Jesus did.

And what is this tradition of *Kali*? I can see in Acts where there is in the Christian community, some people hiding a sum of their money and they didn't give it to the community. They perished! So those kind of images I reclaim in Christian tradition.

The other God who is not connected with our life, who just sits there and controls us, must go. That kind of God doesn't empower Asian women throughout history, so we need to find a God who is actively present with us. What I discovered from all this search is a God/goddess, who is not power over us, this power of domination, the power of this military and the power of this capitalism, but God of healing, God of caring, God of persistence, God of resilience and God of affirming life. Therefore I want to invite all of you to find in your own tradition these ancient and new and future images of God who will enable us to be together and to heal this earth and to heal ourselves and to heal this world. And we participate in her body and in her spirit. Therefore we all can share in her divinity in our everyday life.



Kuan-yin, goddess of Mercy

National Palace Museum, Taipei, Taiwan

TVV

Challenging the canons

by Blaise Tobia and Virginia Maksymowicz

The term “canon” is one that is common in both ecclesiastical and art circles. From the Latin *canon*, meaning measuring line or model, and from the Greek *kanon*, meaning rod or rule, the word is used to signify “that which is institutionally approved” (presumably measured against a set of standards). “Canon” may refer to a set of religious rituals, beliefs and regulations, or, in a different context, to the central

group of artists who have come to be included in the pages of art-history text books. The acceptance of a “canon” relies upon an acceptance of the standards upon which it is based; in recent years, and with women at the forefront of the inquiry, the issue of just who it was who created those standards—in both religious and artistic contexts—has been called into question.

At least partly as a result of this inquiry, the canons of Christianity are being revised, albeit slowly. While the first Episcopal women priests were ordained in the United States 20 years ago, it is only this year that the Anglican Church has voted to admit

women as clergy. The Roman Catholic Church still has a long way to go. Groups such as the Women’s Ordination Conference struggle to keep the issue alive.

In much the same way, the canons of art are being challenged. While “feminist” art engendered some excitement among the artworld’s “powers that be” (museums, galleries, art dealers, art publishers) during the 1970s, it seems less attractive to them today. As The Guerrilla Girls (an anonymous coalition of artists

that monitors sexism and racism in the artworld) have pointed out, the number of women having solo shows in major museums has been steadily decreasing.

Mary Beth Edelson is an artist who has been

challenging both canons for two decades. Her early performances and photographs were set in natural surroundings and



art and society

Blaise Tobia and Virginia Maksymowicz, Philadelphia artists, edit the Art & Society Section of *The Witness*.

The Witness wins praise

The Witness captured 16 awards at the recent Episcopal Communicators and Associated Church Press conference held at Kanuga in North Carolina.

The magazine took first place Polly Bond awards from the Episcopal competition for: editorial, “Transforming despair” [12/93] by Jeanie Wylie-Kellermann; news, “Coalminers’ cause goes to Canterbury” [9/93] by Jan Nunley; in-depth coverage, In defense of creation [6/93], the entire issue; interview, “Living into ambiguity with Verna Dozier” [3/93] by Julie A. Wortman; critical review, “Beyond the

New Deal” [4/93] by Danny Duncan Collum; reader response, “The Word in our hearts,” [12/93] by Craig Smith; humor, “Lift the ban?” [5/93] by Julie A. Wortman; theological reflection, articles by Ched Myers and Bill Wylie-Kellermann [4, 6, 11/93]; original graphic, “Midwives” [11/93] by Doris Klein; and for photography, “Holding to the light” [12/93] by Jim West.

We were awarded a second place prize for feature writing, “Living water of the Eno” [6/93] by Marianne Arbogast, and two honorable mentions for cover design [6/93], our rubber stamp environmental

cover by Julie A. Wortman, and layout, “Caesar and the orphans” [4/93] artwork by Dierdre Luzwick.

From the ACP, which fields many more competitors, we won second place prizes for editorial (same as above); biblical exposition for Ched Myers’ “In the courtyard with Peter” [4/93]; and for “Liturgy on Trumbull” [12/93] by poet Michael Lauchlan. The judges described *The Witness* as well-written, friendly and as using the format well. One judge added, “The enjoyable aspect of *The Witness* is its unpredictability.”



Some Living American Women Artists/Last Supper, 1972 by Mary Beth Edelson

transformed the artist's own body into mythical and goddess-like beings.

"The Catholic Church's argument . . . for not allowing women to be priests rests on the idea that, because Christ was a man, priests should also be men, so that people can relate to their priests as literal stand-ins for Christ," she has written. "In using my own body as a sacred being, I broke the stereotype that the male gender is the only gender that can identify in a firsthand way with the body, and by extension, the mind and spirit of a primary sacred being."

Edelson's work, *Some Living American Women Artists/Last Supper*, grew out of a meditation project involving a number of invited artists and her Jungian study group. The resulting alternative version of Leonardo Da Vinci's famous fresco encapsulated the artist's reaction to male domination in both art and religion. Edelson replaced the heads of Jesus and the twelve apostles with photographs of women artists (who at the time were

still living; a number have since died). She placed painter Georgia O'Keeffe in Christ's central place of honor, and portrayed sculptor Louise Nevelson as St. James. She used photographs of other women artists to frame the historic event. And by choosing an artwork with an overt Biblical reference, she hoped to defy "organized religion's penchant for cutting women out of positions of authority and power, and their widespread assumption that because of their gender, women do not have direct access to the sacred."

The image, first shown in 1972, has been reproduced widely, both in magazines and as a poster. The poster found its way into one of the "cathedrals" of the artworld—New York City's Museum of Modern Art—when,

in 1988, it was included in the exhibition "Committed to Print." It has become a familiar sight to a new generation of young women artists, as they begin their own battles with the canons of their profession.

"The rituals I performed in the 1970s," Edelson said recently, "still occupied mythic space in order to pull up their

"In using my own body as a sacred being, I broke the stereotype that the male gender is the only one that can identify in a firsthand way with a primary sacred being."

— Mary Beth Edelson

power . . . but another transformation has taken place, a transformation away from mythic space into real time." Edelson's current work is trying to blend what is both "mythical" and "real" about women in light of

contemporary feminist concerns: questions of nature and culture, power and violence, and the standards of "male" and "female" behavior.

TW

The cost of integrating

by Mary Sudman Donovan

Over the last 25 years, the dramatic events of the women's ordination movement in the Episcopal Church have obscured a quieter revolution occurring concurrently: the change in laywomen's position in the church.

Thirty years ago, the Episcopal Church was an institution rigidly segregated by gender. The church's governing body, the General Convention, was closed to women, as were most diocesan conventions. Some parishes were beginning to elect women to serve on vestries in the 1960s, but those were still the exception rather than the rule.

Denied access to this government, women built for themselves a parallel organization, the Episcopal Church Women (ECW) with a local, diocesan and national representational structure. Though the ECW had committees similar to those of the national church — Christian Education, Christian Social Relations, Communications, Missions — the two committee systems functioned independently. Women's work and men's work intersected only on the Executive Council where six women, representing the ECW, served alongside 39 men.

The advantage of this segregated system for women was that they were able to control their own organization. Having existed for over a century, the women's network was finely tuned. Officers knew their responsibilities; the chain of command was well-established. Women leaders emerged from the local parish and made their way into the diocesan and national structures. Support for the

church's mission remained the ECW's central focus, and that support was symbolized by the United Thank Offering (UTO). Advertising the offering, collecting it and then deciding how and where to distribute the funds took countless hours of woman-power — and tied the women together with a strong sense of common purpose.

However, by the late 1960s, many women felt that the advantages of being able to control one phase of the church's life were far outweighed by the disadvantage of having to operate within an overall system they had no power to change. At every General Convention from 1946 until 1967, a resolution to open membership in the House of Deputies to women was introduced; finally, in 1967, the measure passed. The constitutional change was validated by a second vote at the beginning of the 1970 General Convention, and 29 women took their seats as deputies.

The ECW leaders at the 1970 Triennial enthusiastically affirmed the decision to dismantle the organizational structure of the Episcopal Church Women by suspending the Triennial by-laws, *although the Triennial meetings themselves were to continue*. The General Division of Women's Work — the representative council that had governed the ECW between Triennials — was dissolved and the national staff officer was transferred to the office of "lay ministry." Even the selection of UTO committee members was transferred from the ECW to Provincial Synods, and the national UTO coor-

dinator was moved from the women's division to the world mission office.

The ECW leaders envisioned a church in which women and men participated with full equality. That vision, however, was hampered by the fact that most church committees still required equal numbers of bishops, priests, and laity. With women excluded from the first two categories, and vying with laymen for the third, female representation on the committees was far from equal. The experience of serving on such overwhelmingly men-dominated committees helped to transform many former ECW officers into avid supporters of women's ordination. Indeed, once women's ordination was passed, the addition of women priests to the General Convention's committee structure has gradually produced a far more balanced committee structure, and, hopefully, that process will accelerate as more women become bishops.

The acceptance of women's ordination set female aspirants for the priesthood on a path that was purposeful, but the accompanying dissolution of the ECW's structure left laywomen in a sort of limbo, not quite knowing their place in the church.

Some women moved quickly into the leadership structure of local parishes and dioceses, served on vestries and calling committees and worked on a wide variety of church-sponsored programs and projects. Many parishes and dioceses incorporated women's leadership into the overall structure with ease and grace, thankful for the broadened talent pool the women represented. At the coming General Convention in Indianapolis, almost 50 percent of the lay deputies will be women.

At the national level, the attempt to create a lay ministries department failed,

The advantage of a segregated system was that women were able to control their own organization.

Mary Sudman Donovan teaches at Hunter College in New York City. She specializes in women's history.

primarily because the church's laymen exhibited scant interest in developing lay ministries. Eventually a staff officer for women's ministries was once again appointed. However, without the power base that the ECW had provided, the staff officer's position was seen as programmatic rather than representational — she functions as one among many program officers rather than as *the* representative of the majority of the church's members — its women.

Ann Smith, the present director of Women in Mission and Ministry (WIMM), perceived, as she entered the office, that her task would be to prepare laywomen for the tremendous changes that were taking place *vis-à-vis* their role in the church. In conjunction with the ECW, the WIMM office developed a leadership training program called Women of Vision aimed at developing women leaders who, with a strong sense of self-confidence, are willing to work from within the system to challenge and reform that system. The WIMM-initiated Council for Women's Ministries has provided the church's women's organizations with a limited forum for addressing a broad spectrum of women's issues. Finally, the WIMM office has worked to strengthen the ties with worldwide women's religious networks, although meager funding has meant that the U.S. delegations to international meetings have been primarily of women who could afford to pay their own expenses.

Meanwhile, the women of the church groped for a new organizational model that would both validate the reality of women priests and deputies; but also recognize the continuing desire to retain a national women's organization. Finally, in 1985, the Triennial meeting adopted by-laws re-establishing the Episcopal Church Women, though the organization was now without the staffing and funding of the pre-1970 period.

Are Episcopal laywomen better off today than they were before women became deputies and priests? My answer would be "Yes, indeed," with one qualification. In local parishes and on the diocesan and national level, most offices



Eleanor Mill

are open to women and many women are using positions of responsibility to help shape a new vision of church life. Pam Chinnis, as President of the House of Deputies, models such a role with dedication and grace — and has also used her power of appointment to ensure women's presence on all the General Convention committees. Laywomen can choose from among a wide spectrum of women's organizations committed to a variety of specialized purposes. Diversity and freedom of expression characterize women's opportunities in the contemporary Episcopal Church.

To my mind, the resurgence of the

Episcopal Church Women has been advantageous. It validates a reality of parish life that we tried to ignore — the reality that there remain, within most congregations, women who find real fulfillment in meeting together and working on common projects. Theoretically, such groups could be composed of both men and women; in practice, they almost never are. I am not sure why this is so. In part, it is a carryover from an earlier generation in which many women had time for such activities because they were not employed outside the home. I suspect, too, as researchers such as Carol Gilligan have indicated, that there is within the psychological makeup of most women, a sense of caring that values interpersonal associations. Also significant is the disproportionately female make-up of the senior citizen segment of today's church which has the most leisure time. And yet there is a strong cross-generational aspect to many ECW groups — mothers with young children who enjoy meeting with women of their grandmothers' ages.

My only reservation is that the reality of a vital separate women's organization is not reflected in the national church office. Because the ECW, still the largest, most representative group of Episcopal women, is not connected by clear organizational ties to the national church, the ECW's effectiveness in communicating national programs to the local congregations is lost and the creativity of the church's women is often channeled to areas parallel to and competing with those of the national church. And the WIMM office, without the power base of an organized constituency, is trivialized and underfunded. My hope is that this is a temporary problem and that as more women take their places in the governmental councils of the Episcopal Church, they will focus church attention more clearly on issues of importance to women. The "silent majority" will be heard. **TW**

Indianapolis '94

Second-class priesthood: a matter of conscience?

by Sally M. Bucklee

Research conducted at Harvard University has indicated major differences between the career paths of women and men with the same education and experience ordained in the Episcopal Church between 1977 and 1987 (see *Episcopal Women*, Oxford, 1992). Today a man of color or a woman has a better chance of being elected suffragan bishop of a large urban diocese like Massachusetts or Los Angeles than of being elected rector of a prestigious, well-financed congregation in the same diocese.

In Australia, the Movement for the Ordination of Women (MOW) conducted a survey after "down-under" women had been priests for a year. "Many respondents identified discriminatory employment assumptions and practices by their dioceses which disadvantaged them," the survey report said. "It was often assumed ... that they would work for nothing, for less than the normal stipend, or without standard allowances. Women ... were often offered small, struggling parishes and their male peers had preference in appointments." While almost every woman reported strong affirmation from parishioners, half reported "personal experiences of discrimination or abuse of various kinds, from both clerical colleagues and lay people."

A majority, too, of the first batch of women priested by the Church of England were in non-stipendiary or part-time positions.

As these examples indicate, the church has been modelling and reinforcing the stereotype of women in assisting roles that lack authority, influence and power, a stereotype that prevailed in this and other

provinces of the Anglican Communion before women were made priests. In effect, the church has devised a second-class priesthood for women — just as it did earlier for men of color.

Opponents of women's ordination have used startling analogies. A protester at the ordination of the Philadelphia 11 in 1974 said that ordaining a woman is like ordaining "a stone"; an Australian clergyman, in a General Synod debate, said it is like ordaining "a meatpie"; and a letter-writer in a major Australian newspaper said it is like ordaining "a dog." This year an English priest, Anthony Kennedy, said that female priests are "bloody bitches" who should be burned at the stake. As a major 1987 research project across the Episcopal Church found, the ordination of women both defines and reflects attitudes about — and the acceptance of — women in the church. Within the Anglican Communion in general, and the Episcopal Church in particular, access to the ordained ministry is a defining characteristic of full membership. As long as any group's access to ordination is questioned or denied on the basis of the color or shape of their skin, they are not welcome as full members of the Body of Christ.

"The provisions of these canons for the admission of Candidates for Ordination to the three Orders ... shall be equally applicable to men and women," the Canons of the Episcopal Church have stated since 1976. The word "shall" means the canon is mandatory. Twice, in 1976 and 1979, the House of Bishops elected not to propose a "conscience" statement to the bicameral General Convention and in 1988 and 1991 the House of Deputies resisted the bishops' efforts to negotiate with "traditionalist" opponents of women's ordination. Concurrence of both houses is required for any action.

Nevertheless, a "Statement of Conscience" adopted by the House of Bishops on its own in 1977 sanctions discrimination against women while discrimination against opponents of women's ordination is officially outlawed. Intended to apply to both supporters and opponents of women's ordination, the

bishops have failed to ensure it is applied even-handedly — indeed, the conscience statement has rarely been used on behalf of supporters of women's ordination.

The Anglican Church of Canada enacted a simple "Conscience Clause" when it approved women's ordination in 1975, but rescinded it in 1986. The 1975 action had been an effective "grandfather clause" to see the church through a major change in its official policy, but by 1986 the Canadians had decided that discrimination on the grounds of sex could no longer be tolerated. A similar decision in the U.S. church is long overdue.

— Sally Bucklee is president of the Episcopal Women's Caucus.

The Episcopal Women's Caucus has produced an 80-page booklet, *"Equally Applicable": Conscience and Women's Ordination in the Episcopal Church, USA 1976-1994*, in an effort to assist bishops and deputies in making well-informed decisions on a variety of resolutions that will be addressing this topic at the church's upcoming 1994 General Convention in Indianapolis. The booklet examines "the issues resulting from the conscientious objection of some Episcopalians to the church's 1976 decision to authorize the inclusion of women in all orders of ministry" and provides a narrative history of the debate (along with the full texts of the relevant documents). Reflections from church leaders involved in creating and interpreting the texts and personal stories from those directly affected by the way "conscience" has been invoked to oppose women's ordination to the priesthood are also included.

Copies have been mailed to all bishops and deputies. Others may order copies prepaid for \$7 each (10 copies for \$65). Checks should be made payable to the Episcopal Women's Caucus and sent to the EWC at 19301 E. Gawne Rd., Stockton, CA 95215. The price includes postage and handling.



Vital Signs

In dialogue with an ESA bishop-elect

by Katie Sherrod

Keith L. Ackerman, a priest in the Diocese of Fort Worth, was elected Bishop of Quincy last January. Influenced by the Episcopal Synod of America (ESA), the Diocese of Quincy has no women priests. Since Ackerman is a longtime ESA supporter, many conservatives in the church immediately began positioning the election-consent process as a test of the church's sincerity about continuing to tolerate "traditionalists" opposed to women priests and bishops.

Ackerman had already been on record as opposing women's ordination. Many in Quincy believed he still did so, for letters soon began going out from Quincy's women's ordination supporters opposing his election on the grounds that he would continue the diocese's anti-women priests policy. By April it appeared that Ackerman might not get the needed consents to ratify his election and letters began appearing in various church publications complaining that conservatives were being shut out of the church.

In Fort Worth, the local chapter of the Episcopal Women's Caucus (EWC) was following the Ackerman consent process with interest, for we did not want Quincy to experience the pain and divisiveness our diocese continues to suffer as a result of decisions by our ESA bishops, Clarence Pope and Jack Iker, and clergy to shut out those in the diocese who desire the ministry of women priests. But before

formally opposing Ackerman's election, we decided that we should talk with Ackerman directly, to make certain we understood his views on women's ordination.

Several of our members met with Ackerman in his office at St. Mark's Church in Arlington, Tex., on April 13. He affirmed that he was now more open to the ministry of women than in the past and that he acknowledged the validity of the ordination of women. He also said he upheld the Constitutions and Canons of the Episcopal Church in this matter.

Encouraged by this response, we arranged with him to develop a statement of his positions that the Fort Worth EWC would circulate to diocesan standing committees. Ackerman even volunteered to pay for the mailing.

Rumors of our dialogue began to surface. Conservatives in Quincy angrily accused Ackerman of "selling out" and allowing the EWC to set his agenda. This affected how specific Ackerman was willing to be on certain points, but in the final statement we worked out with him he agreed to indicate that he recognized the validity of women deacons, priests and bishops and would be as supportive as possible of women seeking ordination in

Quincy. He also said he would extend normal courtesies to all visiting clergy and engage the diocese in open dialogue on the subject of the ordination of women.

In the end, however, the statement was never issued. Ackerman's election was ratified by a majority of standing committees in May, which made moot the need for a joint statement to standing committees.

Does this mean the dialogue was a failure? I think not. All who participated in

With the consecration of Keith Ackerman, the church will find itself not with yet another ESA bishop, but with a bishop in a state of growth and transition. Ackerman is no longer firmly locked in the ideological camp of the ESA.

it came to a better understanding of one another. It is clear that Ackerman is doing a great deal of thinking and praying about the issue of women's ordination. Indeed, his acceptance of the validity of women's ordination is more than either Fort Worth bishop has

been able to do. We celebrate Ackerman's openness and encourage more such dialogues. With the consecration of Keith Ackerman, the church will find itself not with yet another ESA bishop, but with a bishop in a state of growth and transition. Ackerman is no longer firmly locked in the ideological camp of the ESA.

The truth is, no matter what happens at this year's General Convention, the ESA is dead. ESA Executive Director Sam Edwards himself announced this spring during a speech in Fort Worth that the ESA is dying financially and by August will probably no longer exist as a formal organization. Ackerman has cast his lot with the larger church. It is such attitudes and actions that truly carry out our Baptismal Covenant to "strive for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being."

— Katie Sherrod is secretary of the Fort Worth chapter of the Episcopal Women's Caucus and a public television producer and commentator.

Women and the church calendar

A proposal to include Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Amelia Jenks Bloomer, Sojourner Truth and Harriet Tubman in the church calendar will be considered at the 1993 General Convention in Indianapolis. "In the 19th century," says the proposal's champion, Marsue Harris, "believers, particularly slaves and women, heard the message of liberation inherent in the Gospel and applied it to themselves. The women's

rights and abolitionist movements began in the churches, but churches both supported and suppressed their goals to end slavery and to emancipate women from white male authority and control." Harris believes that incorporating the witness of these women into "the collective memory of the church" will provide role models for women and men "engaged in church reform and social justice."

EcuTakes:

Presbyterian Church, USA

Louise Westfall is pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Birmingham, Mich. Women have been ordained in the Presbyterian Church since 1956. There are now about 2,000 ordained women and 20,000 men. Right now women students in seminaries are getting very close to 50 percent.

The overall climate is increasingly open and accepting of women, particularly in small-membership churches and associate-pastor positions. But there is still a kind of stained-glass barrier. There are very few women as senior pastors of large-membership churches. I've heard some pretty grim stories — not so much about getting the first call, when you're usually willing to take any position that comes along. But as you gain experience and skill your options may become somewhat more limited.

In the denominational structure there is pretty good parity. There is a strong commitment to equality and inclusiveness, on General Assembly committees and paid staff positions.

Search committees in local churches are required to have affirmative action and equal opportunity policies. They have to look at resumes of women.

Even though there are more and more women all the time, I've experienced comments like, "I've never heard a woman preach before," or "When I was told the candidate being suggested was a woman, I had my doubts." There certainly is still a pocket of resistance. It's a Catch-22 — oftentimes it takes a congregation having the experience of a woman pastor before they come to accept it.

United Church of Christ

Mary Sue Gast is Executive Director of the Coordinating Center for Women in Church and Society of the United Church of Christ.

We've been ordaining women since 1953. Right now 18 percent of ordained clergy in the UCC are women (out of 10,142 total

clergy). Our ratio of ordained women to ordained men is among the highest, but the placement process is still a difficulty.

Local churches do the calling of clergy. We're now at a point where ordained women just out of seminary do not have difficulty finding a call to a small church or an associate position. But after a few years, if they want to move to a mid-sized church, or a church which offers a higher salary or has more influence, it's very difficult. It's much easier for an ordained woman to move into a national or Conference position than to become a senior pastor in a multiple-staff congregation.

There are currently only eight women in the UCC who are senior pastors in churches with more than 500 members, and a couple more who are solo pastors of churches that size.

For women of color seeking placement it is very difficult. They experience strong difficulties as women finding placement in churches of their own ethnicity, and in other churches because of white racism.

Roman Catholic Church

Ruth Fitzpatrick is national coordinator of the Women's Ordination Conference, an international movement of women and men seeking the ordination of Roman Catholic women to "renewed priestly ministry."

I see hope because I see the whole patriarchal structure absolutely collapsing on our heads. For all the wrong reasons, they will probably be ordaining women and married men much sooner than anyone had in mind. The church is practical. They are closing down parishes, and there is a terrible dearth of male celibate priests.

There have been some positive things that have come out of the repression. We've been forced to the sidelines to do the analysis in a way that we might not have done if we had been ordained.

We've been better able to understand other forms of oppression. The linkage has been made between racism, sexism and classism.

The other good thing to have come out

of this is the WomenChurch movement. To me, that is like the liturgical experiments that were going on for years before the pope approved Mass in the vernacular. It is a gift for the whole church that women have been able to ritualize about their experience.

Also, with the growth of small base communities, one of the phenomena that has come bubbling to the surface is women in leadership positions.

We are working for women in *renewed* priestly ministry because right now the system is so patriarchal that women would either get chewed up in it, or they would get the worst jobs.

[We need] a strong systemic analysis that leads to working for justice and peace, the overcoming of all forms of domination, working in mutuality, and a strong ecumenical aspect. When we do eucharists the barriers are lowered, and the pluralism of various denominations is valued.

[Editor's note: Shortly before this issue of *The Witness* went to press, Pope John Paul II released a letter to the Roman Catholic bishops declaring the prohibition against ordaining women a "definitive" teaching of the church. Occasioned by concern that the exclusion of women is "considered still open to debate" or "to have a merely disciplinary force," the declaration does not attempt to further the theological discussion, but to close it.

Rember Weakland, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Milwaukee, issued a statement expressing "inner turmoil" over the letter. "What effect will this declaration have on so many women and men ... who still see this question as one of justice and equality, all protestations to the contrary notwithstanding?" Weakland asks. "...What effects will this declaration have on theologians who are still concerned about the theological underpinnings of the Pope's teaching? ... What effects will this declaration have on those men and women for whom the issue of the way in which the church exercises its authority is already a problem? ... What effects will this declaration have on ecumenical dialogue?"]

Cycle of challenge

by Ellen K. Wondra

New Wine: The Story of Women Transforming Leadership and Power in the Episcopal Church, by Pamela W. Darling, Cowley Publications, June 1994.

In a timely and consistently engaging new book, Pamela Darling traces the “cycle of challenge” that has characterized the recognition of women’s ministries in the Episcopal Church.

Darling divides this history into three stages. The first (from the mid-19th century through World War II) is characterized by gradual change. During this period, the official structures of the Episcopal Church gave little consideration to “women’s place,” despite widespread discussion and change in the larger society. Yet the church’s lack of interest allowed women to develop powerful unofficial structures. During this stage, Darling indicates, “women’s place” in the Episcopal Church changed because of three factors: officially recognized “shadow groups” (notably the Women’s Auxiliary), interest and action groups with no official standing in the church (such as CAIL, CLID, and the Companions of the Holy Cross), and changes in the overall ecclesiology and structure of the church itself.

During the second stage (from 1946 to the mid-1980s), a woman was elected a lay deputy to General Convention for the first time, but, by vote of each successive Convention, no women were actually

seated in the House of Deputies until 1970. Women’s hard-won access to the legislative process of General Convention was bought at a high price: women lost structural access and influence within the national church bureaucracy and women’s powerful independent “shadow groups” were brought under greater control by the national church.

In 1976, General Convention authorized the ordination of women to the priesthood and the episcopate, after decades of debate and, finally, direct action

“Pamela Darling brings sound sociological considerations to the early debates around women’s ordination. Also commendable is her analysis of power, her discussion of the role of the press, her reflections on bishops and collegiality, and her perspectives on authority. One of Darling’s major contributions is her realization that the conflict over the ordination of women has changed the way that the church carries out its business.”

Fredrica Harris Thompsett

“*New Wine* is a comprehensive and very enlightening survey of the role of women in the life and ministry of the Episcopal Church. Pamela Darling is to be commended for the fairness and objectivity with which she has handled a subject that elicits a wide range of convictions and stirs deep emotions.”

*James W. Montgomery,
Bishop of Chicago (ret.)*

that subverted institutional patterns of delay and spurred changes in policy and practice. Darling accurately notes that

the struggle did not end there. The priestly ministry of women and the anticipation of episcopal ministry made more evident the symbolic implications of the officially authorized ministry of women, and

book review

the struggle widened and deepened to include not only the ordination of women, but issues of deployment, language, authority, and sexuality.

In these times of widespread discussion and reorganization at every level of the church, Darling’s book suggests a number of patterns contemporary church members and activists would do well to heed. Among them: Historically marginalized groups are able to exert influence as they are able to organize both inside and outside the “official church.” Second, as historically marginalized groups gain influence and develop their own organizations that impinge on the “official” church in various ways, resistance to their influence intensifies; this resistance may find expression as much through “official church” reorganization plans as through direct legislative action. Finally, the Episcopal Church often finds it easier to deal with its diversity by hiding the substance of controversies under concerns for orderliness, collegiality among official representatives, and preservation of conventional authority.

Highly readable writing and generally short chapters in a well-organized sequence make this the ideal book to take along to or purchase at General Convention. All of us would do well to keep in mind the well-known axiom of Miguel de Unamuno: Those who do not learn from history may be doomed to repeat it. **TW**

Ellen K. Wondra is an assistant professor of theological studies at Colgate-Rochester Divinity School/ Bexley Hall/ Crozer Theological Seminary in Rochester, N.Y.

Suzanne Hiatt is a dangerous person and has been most of her adult life. Wherever she has worked, change has blossomed—change brought about not through grandstanding, but by calmly and quietly listening, counseling, networking and organizing.

Since 1975 Hiatt has been teaching pastoral theology at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, Mass., a seminary that has a history of pushing at the boundaries of the *status quo*. But her reputation as an organizer and revolutionary activist is rooted in her role in the “irregular” ordinations of the first 11 women (of which she was one) ordained to the priesthood in the Episcopal Church in 1974.

“Though we all played a part and it was a combined effort, Sue was instrumental in those ordinations,” says Nancy Wittig, another one of the “11” who is now a diocesan canon and rector of St. Andrews-in-the-Field in Philadelphia. “She was a prime mover.”

With characteristic reserve and wry humor, Hiatt does not set too much store by her “prime-mover” status. “I was the catalyst, but my organizing skill was one of the gifts I brought to the process. Each of us brought our different gifts.”

A native of Minnesota, Hiatt, 58, received her undergraduate degree from Radcliffe College. In 1964 she received her Masters of Divinity degree from the Episcopal Theological School in Philadelphia, which later merged with Cambridge Divinity School to become the present Episcopal Divinity School. A year later she earned a masters degree in social work from Boston University.

Returning to Philadelphia in 1967, Hiatt took a job working with women recipients of public assistance. “The best way to help the women seemed to be to

Susan E. Pierce, former managing editor of *The Witness*, is a freelance writer based in Philadelphia, Penn.

I realized that my vocation was not to eternally ask for permission to be a priest but to be a priest.



Suzanne Hiatt

Quiet revolutionary

by Susan E. Pierce

organize them, so that’s what I did,” Hiatt recalls. Out of their work together came the Philadelphia Welfare Rights Organization, which became a powerful lobbying group whose impact was felt throughout Pennsylvania and beyond.

However, while her education in social work had paid off in secular employment, Hiatt found the church less eager to benefit from her theological training. When Hiatt first approached Pennsylvania’s bishop, Robert DeWitt, about working in the diocese, he told her, “You don’t want to work in the church. It’s no place for a woman.” He believed that a woman would find it “painful and frustrating” to try to work in such a male-dominated institution.

Eventually, however, DeWitt changed his mind and asked Hiatt to join the diocesan staff. “The urban missionary [David Gracie] was so successful that I decided we also needed a suburban missionary,” DeWitt says. Hiatt accepted the post in

1968 and held it for the next four years.

One of Hiatt’s suburban missions was a very upper-crust church on the Main Line, one of the wealthiest areas bordering Philadelphia. Among the parishioners was Ann Robb Smith, now a priest and curate at the Church of the Advocate, where the Philadelphia 11 were ordained, but then a self-described “suburban housewife.”

Before long Hiatt was raising consciousnesses. “Sue was very unassuming, gentle, lady-like and very dangerous,” Smith says, laughing. “She was our Bible-study teacher. She got us radicalized. She educated us about civil rights and introduced us to black folks. Then we moved from civil rights to women’s issues.”

Hiatt acknowledges the connection. “The Philadelphia ordinations wouldn’t have been possible without the civil rights movement. Just as the 19th century women’s suffrage movement sprang from

the abolitionist movement, the women's movement in the church came from the struggle for civil rights."

In 1970, Hiatt approached DeWitt about ordaining her to the priesthood. "He and I were both excited about the prospect of simply processing me like any male postulant or candidate," Hiatt later recalled in a letter to an English friend.

"Canon law did not expressly state that such persons were to be male and we both thought a good case could be made for interpreting 'he' in the relevant canons generically."

But before they could act, the General Convention met and voted down (by a narrow margin in the clergy order) a resolution to admit women to all Holy Orders. The convention did admit women to the diaconate, however, and Hiatt was ordained a deacon in 1971.

For the next two years Hiatt worked to organize support for a measure to admit women to the priesthood at the 1973 General Convention in St. Louis, Mo. "We enlisted sympathetic bishops, priests and lay men, but the major work was done through the Episcopal Women's Caucus," Hiatt says. Still, the opposition was stronger than anticipated and the measure was defeated.

"After the defeat in Louisville I had run into Alice Emery, a widow of a bishop and wise in the ways of the church. She said she guessed that the ordination of women would become the perennial issue at future conventions, just as allow-

ing women to be voting delegates had been an issue at every convention from 1946 to 1970. Instantly I realized she was right — that my vocation was not to eternally ask for permission to be a priest but to *be* a priest."

Hiatt's resolve was further strengthened a few weeks later, at a meeting of women deacons and seminarians and some male mentors. "The men of course advised patience, charm and letting them plan the strategy 'for you girls,'" Hiatt recalls. "We who had worked for the change at two conventions quietly died inside. I decided I would not be part of such a humiliation."

The events of the next months — disappointing confrontations with bishops, an aborted attempt of five women deacons to be ordained priests in New York in December of 1973, and several strategic sermons calling for the immediate ordination of women priests the following June — finally came to fruition in the now-famous July 29 ordination service.

"Sue was very worried, but she still was so solid and so caring about the others," says DeWitt, who served as one of the ordaining bishops.

"In retrospect, to have been ordained 'irregularly' is the only way for women to have done it," Hiatt later reflected. "Our ordination was on our terms, not the church's terms."

Eighteen months of intense struggle ensued. The bishops declared the ordinations invalid. "After that we began functioning as priests whenever and wherever

we could," Hiatt recalls. Some of the clergy who allowed them to celebrate the eucharist in their parishes were brought to ecclesiastical trial. In September, 1975, four more women deacons — Lee McGee, Alison Palmer, Betty Rosenberg and Diane Tickell — were priested in Washington by retired bishop George Barrett. In 1976, the General Convention finally approved women priests and bishops.

Since then, Hiatt's involvement in the



women's ordination movement has taken her to all parts of the Anglican Communion. This spring, Hiatt was honored with a surprise ceremony during the Episcopal Divinity School celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Philadelphia ordinations. She was presented with a book of letters from people around the world, describing how profoundly she has influence their lives.

After all the struggle and attacks and roadblocks confronted over the last 20 years, would she go through it again? "Oh, yes. No one regrets having done it, but some of us are still really in pain about it," Hiatt said. "Women are still being turned down for ordination all the time, but at least now they get a chance to be turned down." RTW

August/September:

*Alternative ways
of doing church*

Welcome to The Witness!

If you are interested in subscribing, please send a check for \$20 to *The Witness*, 1249 Washington Boulevard, Suite 3115, Detroit, MI 48226-1868.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone number: _____

Check if this is a renewal



Ma, Amma, Ana, Nu, Mena, Mami, Mama, Mammu — ancient names for the Mother, watery sounds from all the children at her breasts. Sounding so like Memaw, my own name for my maternal grandmother.

I remember those blistering hot summer mornings in Little Rock. Every Monday, despite the heat, Memaw does the wash in the backyard. I do what I can to help her. I support the sagging lines with clothes poles. I fix the sheets and construct a white enclosure. I drag a zinc washtub into the center and fill it from the hose. I carry in handfuls of chinaberries and honeylocust pods and float them in the water. The dogs come in, wanting a drink. I will not allow the dogs to drink from the tub. It is holy water, I tell them. Through the hot afternoon I sit there, enclosed in the drying sheets, while Memaw sleeps on the front porch.

— Meinrad Craighead

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Detroit, MI
Permit No. 2966

