

Femailings



Womaen's Caucus Church of the Brethren

One Woman, All Women

June 2015

Silent Auction Items

Every year at our Annual Conference luncheon, Caucus holds a silent auction to raise funds for the work we do. This is our largest fundraising event of the year and one of the best ways to help support us. We auction off any item gratefully such as jewelry, shirts, handcrafts, cards, art, quilts and anything you would fancy buying yourself. If you are not attending Annual Conference but you wish to send something for the silent auction or if you don't think your auction item will be easy for you to get to conference yourself. Please send them to this address:

Womaen's Caucus Auction
c/o Kathy Gingrich
308 E. Brown Street
West Chicago, IL 60185



Rainbow Handcrafts AC 2015

Caucus will be providing rainbow handcrafts again at this year's conference in Tampa. They can be found at the booth. If you are curious why we provide rainbow handcrafts please find the section titled Rainbow Handcrafts on our website devoted to this issue. If you would like to make some and bring them, please do! You may also send them to the address for the auction items if you are unable to attend but would like to support this effort.

Prayer for Women on the Ballot

We will be holding a prayer for the women on the ballot to support them again this year. It will take place **Monday, July 13th** at **9:20** in the **East Hall**. We understand that the process of putting your name forward can be emotionally taxing and we would like to acknowledge that with prayer.

Conversations at the Booth

Because of the success with last year's conversations at the booth, this year Womaen's Caucus will be hosting conversations at our booth. Our conversation this year is titled Conversations with Women in Ministry. We will have a panel of newly ordained and licensed women and learn about their struggles, joys and the advice they would give to those who are interested in the ministry. This will take place at our booth in the Exhibit Hall on **Sunday July 12th at 3pm**.

Annual Conference Luncheon: "Left on the Vine"

MONDAY JULY 13TH ROOMS 24 AND 25

Womaen's Caucus continues to celebrate its 40th anniversary with 10 years of remembering some of the founding women of caucus. This year Carol Wise, the Executive Director of Brethren Mennonite Council for LGBT Interests, will be our featured speaker. Her talk titled, "Left on the Vine", will cover the under-value of women within the church.



Carol has a long history with Caucus, having served on the Steering Committee and as the Convener for several years. Highlights for her during her time on the Steering Committee include the Women Doing Theology Conference, Dancing at the Wall and Dancing at the Water's Edge Conferences, and the invitation to Martin Rock to speak at the Annual Conference Caucus luncheon. Carol currently lives in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and worships with the Common Spirit Minneapolis congregation. We are very much looking forward to seeing those of you who will join us in person in Tampa, Florida and feeling the support from the wider community of Womaen's Caucus.

Annual Conference Insight Session

We would like to highlight the insight session at Annual Conference called **Moving Beyond Shame—Spiritual Care for Survivors of Domestic Violence** which will be co-facilitated by Laura Whitman and Kathy Gingrich. This session will focus on living through abuse and manipulation, many domestic violence survivors feel an array of emotions, including shame, guilt, anger and self-blame. In a society that is prone to blame the victim, abuse survivors need churches and clergy that do not perpetuate blame. Resolving spiritual distress through guidance and spiritual care promotes healing. At this insight session we will take about what churches can do to help these women and men, including discussing the spiritual questions that may weigh on their minds., resources that churches can use, and how congregations can create a service of healing for survivors. It will take place on **Sunday, July 12th** from **9 to 10pm** in **Room 20**.

Let the Spirit Move Us

by Elizabeth Bay

I want the spirit to move at annual conference. I sit with my Grandma and my Mother at these gatherings waiting for God to speak through those around me. I look to those microphones on the floor, hopeful every time to hear the spirit and feel the love of God come through those words. In the Brethren church we often don't look to our officials and office bearers for leadership as we don't want to consolidate power. So I expect the power of the spirit on the floor.

The 2014 conference was moderated by Nancy Sollenberger, with the last female moderator being Belita Mitchell in 2007. I spent much of last year's conference taking note of who went up to the microphones on the floor of conference. Based on a majority of the business sessions (a half hour of unfinished business 1 - Ministerial leadership - and a bit of during or after the Climate Change debate was missed), and I made some assumptions about gender presentation and secondary sex characteristics. I recorded a list of the gender of microphone speakers. By my counting men spoke at the microphones 2/3rds of the time at the 2014 Annual Conference.

Now, I don't think the spirit is moving more in men than it is in women, nor do I think it moves less in the queer and non-binary folks I know. Men speaking at the microphones more is probably due to social enculturation.

From paying so much attention I found I noticed new things:

I was most offended when a young man came up and said he spoke for the young people. Who was he representing? Did he have their consent? I know that I personally have done that before reading a document that was generated from a young adult meeting, and while it was not perfect it was from collaboration and there was a majority of consent or blessing for the content. (The statement was about unity in being not of one mind in 2012.)

There are also people who come up to the microphone multiple times, maybe 3-4 folk speaking 2-3 times. And I thought about how I sensor myself, only trying to speak once at annual conference if I feel called. Some of the repeats came from the table set-up. People were empowered by their table to go the microphone and speak. Speakers show what is possible and what is acceptable on the floor of conference.

I want to encourage people to be engaged in the conference discussion. At annual conference all members are equal and blessed with ministry, and anyone who feels called should come to the microphone to speak. And to help this is how you start: "Sister/Brother Moderator, I am ____, and I am from the ____ Church from the ____ district, and I am speaking" in favor or of against or about such and such topic.

I know some of us are more comfortable with public speaking, some more shy, but really if you are concerned about the business item ask some friends near by, practice what you want to say, and speak up if you can. For those of us who step up more often it still doesn't hurt to share and improve our message with the help of the gathered. Women, or women leaning folk, I invite you to join me in participating, in engaging, in growing this church through our love and care.

Womaen's Caucus at NOAC

This year Womaen's Caucus is delighted to be leading an interest group at this year's National Older Adult Conference. Our group is titled **What is your Story?** We will be exploring women's stories within the Bible and looking at them in conjunction with our own stories of being women in the church. NOAC will take place at Lake Junaluska in North Carolina on September 7th through the 11th.



Art by Kay Guyer
Photo Elizabeth Bay

Who is God, Anyway

excerpt by Rev. Dr. Velma M. Shearer
submitted by granddaughter Daisy Schmidt

I cannot argue for a moment that God is not real. We cannot see God, but we do have the reality of the God-presence every day. No human words, no human formulas and no human religious systems will ever capture that reality fully.

We can speak of God only in human words. We have no other. But we can see where God has been. We will note again: that the God of the Hebrew Testament is said to have "walked with Adam and Eve in the cool of the evening," to have warned Noah to prepare for the coming flood by building an ark, to have chosen Abraham to be the father of a new people, to have called and led Moses in being the agent of freedom from slavery. We here note again: the God-presence in Jesus who brought a whole new concept of living to humans as detailed in the Christian Testament. Church history has brought an insight into human progress in developing their religious systems, along with highs and lows, as humans progressed through the periods of reformation, reason and scientific development. Our present time along with our decisions in our religious life, can bring progress or stalemate. I believe God is waiting for us to seize opportunities to be the presenters of the God-presence. Only as we go forward meaningfully and with depth, will we be able to open to humanity the fullness of the God-presence in meeting the challenges in our living, and in our world.

We can experience God by being communitarian. We can know God by sharing God's love without boundaries. The reality of the God-presence is touchable and reachable as we search, listen, and respond.



The Stately Oak

The stately oak
 A treasure tall
 Broad sturdy arms
 From which acorns fall

The sinews of wood
 The envy of man
 Became braces and beams
 For the human clan.

From this great tree
 And its treasure store
 The Creator's wisdom
 Is brought to the fore.

Would that human wisdom
 Were as strong
 To withstand temptation
 And violent wrong.

Our strength is synonymous
 With the fibers of the oak
 If our link to God's strength
 Through prayer provoke.
 — Velma M. Shearer

Article Submissions

If you would like to write something for a Femailings issue, feel free to submit anytime to womaenscaucuscob@gmail.com or by mail to Womaens Caucus 818 SW 3rd Street #1299, Portland, OR 97204. The deadline for the September issue, which will be an Annual Conference wrap up is **August 28th, 2015**.

Would you like to become a part of Womaen's Caucus? Are you passionate about women's issues within the church and the wider world? We would love to have you! Please contact us through our email: womaenscaucuscob@gmail.com

Womaen's Caucus Steering Committee

Mary Kay Ogden, Convener
 Sara Davis
 Karen Duhai
 Kathy Gingrich
 Jennifer Scarr
 Daisy Schmidt



Womaen's Caucus Needs Your Financial Support to Continue

With your continued support Womaen's Caucus can do so much to help further our mission of decreasing prejudice within the Church, empowering women and advocating for people on the margins. This year we have stepped up our Femailings from sporadic to four times a year, you will see an issue in September and December. We are holding a NOAC interest group and have expanded our Steering Committee to six. We appreciate your support and look forward to hearing from you!

Complete the form below or donate online through our website at www.womaenscaucus.org

Make checks out to: *Womaen's Caucus*

Cut & mail to: *Womaen's Caucus 818 SW 3rd Ave. #1299 Portland, OR 97204*

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