

NEW HORIZONS

Resources for Nazarene Clergywomen

November 2012
Volume 8, Issue 1

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"New Horizons" for Women Clergy

compiled by Rev. Dr. Vicki Copp

Our theme for this Fall 2012 issue of *New Horizons* is Ministerial Licensing and Credentialing. Many on our USA/Canada Nazarene Women Clergy Council serve on District Boards of Ministry and share their expertise in my compilation of their comments on page 4.

In our other articles, Joy Wisheart writes about her own licensing process during mid-life. Carol Rittenhouse, from the Clergy Development Office, shares resources that all pastors should know about in order to assist local ministry candidates. Lori Niles, formerly of MNU, tells about going the full circle with some of her ministry students. Our book review this issue is written by Susan Welch Armstrong who enjoyed Mary Rearick Paul's new book, *Women Who Lead*.

Tracy Ogden Johnson, who is new on our board from the MVNU region, tells us about

a required class for the course of study on their

district that gives biblical foundations for the denomination's stance on women clergy. Carla Sunberg shares some good news in regard to the meeting with the Board of General Superintendents that she and Rondy Smith attended.

We also are proud to introduce our new USA/Canada Nazarene Women Clergy Council members. We invite you to locate your representative and help her connect Nazarene women clergy all over your region.

Finally, we include a story from our Global Ministry Center, Carla Sunberg is elected Co-District Superintendent with her husband, Chuck, for the East Ohio District. ✝



Board of General Superintendents Express Concrete Support for Women Clergy

Since the "Come to the Water" conference in 2011, the Lord has been moving and helping women clergy to continue to press forward in the Church of the Nazarene. On May 27, of that year, Rondy Smith, chair

of USA/Canada Nazarene Women Clergy Council, and Carla Sunberg President of Wesleyan Holiness Women Clergy, had the privilege of being invited to meet with the Board of General Superintendents (BGS) for

the express purpose of discussing the issue of women clergy in the Church of the Nazarene. The support and encouragement of the BGS was genuinely present. God is raising up

*("Concrete Support"
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We're on the Web!

www.nazarenepastor.org



at "Nazarene Women Clergy"

Concrete Support

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women all over the church as we see the number of female ordinands increasing! While this is good, we all recognize that it also creates a certain tension. The reality is that we, as a church, have not embraced actions on a systemic level to bring about change to help with issues of placement for the women that God is calling. The USA/Canada Nazarene Women Clergy Council, together with the BGS, is committed to intentional and purposeful change within the church culture that will foster an environment that embraces women with a vocational call to ministry.

Changing a culture takes time! It took years for a culture to creep into the church that was not supportive of women clergy -- it will also take time for us to turn this culture around. However, we are committed to the time and energy necessary for this to occur. The focus of the meeting with the BGS was on the following two recommendations:

**"Changing a" culture
"takes time."**

Recommendation #1: That a requirement be added to all educational curricula for ordination preparation that ensures competency in articulating the theological and biblical foundations for women in ministry.

Recommendation #2: That comprehensive training be provided to District Superintendents at the next available District Superintendent's Leadership Development Program conference. This training is to include the theological and biblical foundations for women in ministry, as well as practical inclusive-language training and pragmatic strategies for increasing the placement of women clergy.

We are pleased to share that the week following our meeting with the BGS the USA Course of Study Committee (RCOSAC) met in Kansas City. Dr. Dan Copp shared with the committee that Rony and Carla had been able to meet with the BGS and that the General Superintendents expressed their support for action to be taken in support of our women clergy. Dr. Jeanne Serrão, Dean of School of Theology and Philosophy at MVNU, and Carla were able to bring a proposal to the committee for specific changes to the outcome statements for the course of study for ordination. The outcome statements identify the desired learning objectives for all of those studying for ordination in the Church of the Nazarene. The proposed changes are very specific, so that everyone who goes through the ordination process will be required to have studied the biblical and theological foundations for women in ministry in the Wesleyan tradition. Not only did the committee unanimously approve the revised outcome statements, but went on to request that we develop a class to be added to the Modular Course of Study on the very same topic. These are exciting developments.

Remember, it does take time to change a culture! The recommended changes to our outcome statements are now approved by the USA - Regional Course of Study Committee (RCOSAC) but, as we are part of a global church, must be ratified by the International Course of Study Committee (ICOSAC). In addition, the plan is to present the new Modular Course to the USA Course of Study Committee at their meeting in June 2013.

Dr. Dan Copp and Dr. Bob Broadbooks have also met with the USA/Canada District Superintendent's Advisory Committee to plan the inclusion of Recommendation #2. This paved the way for training for all District Superintendents during the February 2012 USA/Canada Superintendents' Retreat with the Board of General Superintendents, as well as including this material in the orientation for all new USA/Canada District Superintendents.

Since the time of our meeting a number of members of the BGS have communicated with Rony and Carla regarding the number of women they are ordaining this year. They are encouraged by what they are seeing, and we are encouraged by their notes! May we continue to press on for the work of the kingdom! ✝

A Nazarene “First”

Wife-husband team appointed co-district superintendents

Our Board of General Superintendents announced Tuesday, September 27, 2011, the appointment of **Carla D. and Chuck H. Sunberg** as co-district superintendents of the East Ohio District. This is the first time a wife-husband team has been officially appointed co-district superintendents in the Church of the Nazarene. General Superintendent Jerry D. Porter made the appointment with approval from the Board of General Superintendents and in consultation with a district committee. The appointment will take effect November 1, 2011.



While their gifts are similar, they are unique and permit the perspective and benefit of individual leaders.

At the time, the Sunbergs were pastoring at Fort Wayne Grace Point Church of the Nazarene in Indiana; Chuck as senior pastor and Carla as evangelism pastor. They began serving at the church in 2005.

The couple has modeled team ministry since their days as missionaries and field directors in Russia (1992-2005). They helped generate the exceptional growth of the Church of the Nazarene in the former Soviet Union. Churches, compassionate ministry centers, and clergy education centers are flourishing throughout the Commonwealth of Independent States as a result of their ministries.

While both Carla and Chuck are gifted in their own right, together they have combined God-given talents and aptitudes for ministry in innovative ways. The result is a singular response to God’s call, identifying them as effective servant-leaders. While their gifts are similar, they are unique and permit the perspective and benefit of individual leaders. Porter offered his congratulations to the East Ohio District for their visionary response, foreseeing great days ahead. ✝

Adapted from Nazarene News

Women Clergy Council Bio



Sherri Walker felt a call to ministry at the age of 15. She has since seen God work in amazing ways as he prepared her to accept and live out the call. Sherri is married to Nathan Walker since 2002 and has two beautiful children, Calais and Beckett. Her most recent assignment was Associate Pastor of Connection and Leadership Development at Real Life Community Church of the Nazarene in Nampa, ID. She has devoted her time coaching people with *StrengthFinders*, encouraging church leaders to think about the perception of their church through www.churchbrandingblog.com, and helping find ways to empower those living in generational poverty in her local community.

Word to the Wise

by Rev. Dr. Vicki Copp



This article is intended to help women candidates as they interview with Boards of Ministry in order that they will be aware of challenges and avoid some pitfalls that women sometimes encounter. The women who contributed to this article are Council Members **Nancy Clayton** (North California), **Carla Sunberg** (East Ohio), **Rondy Smith** (Tennessee), **Donna Wilson** (Ontario Canada), **Shirley Goodman** (Philadelphia), and **Tracy Johnson** (East Ohio).

When asked what general observations they could offer about the interviews of women for District Licenses, one council member observed, "There seems to be more suspicion when a lady comes to interview." This member felt that women candidates were asked more questions about the validity of their calls in contrast to men for whom calls are often taken for granted. The upside to this scrutiny is that it prepares the female candidate for the challenges she will face in future ministry.

Donna commented that "women tend to be very anxious when they come in for interviews." She remembers her own experience of feeling the pressure of crossing an invisible barrier as a called

woman of God. If she had known then how God would faithfully prepare the way and use her in ministry, she would have been much more confident. She has real empathy for women who are truly called by God, but not acknowledged by the church.

Another council member feels that women often need another voice to affirm their calls to preach. When she claimed a call to preach in one of her interviews, she was asked if she would be willing to take a lead pastor position. Her pastor spoke up and reminded the committee that she was preaching each week to the children of their congregation. She says, "Later he told me that he had spoken directly to this group of three pastors regarding the inappropriate question that was asked of me." She was able to offer the same type of advocacy to a children's pastor candidate on whose committee she served recently.

Shirley's district includes in the credentialing process a Ministry Assessment Weekend. It "allows our candidates to come to interviews with some level of relationship with many of the Board Members." She asserts that this Assessment Weekend opens up communication in many helpful ways.

"The upside to this scrutiny is that it prepares the female candidate for the challenges she will face in future ministry."

One member admits that "overall, women are treated fairly and with respect on my district, but the process can sometimes just be awkward." Sometimes she is embarrassed by the things that are said to the women candidates, like "finally, a rose among the thorns,"

that are meant to make them comfortable, but instead sound patronizing. She has also noticed that there are many more questions regarding spousal support and family balance for the women. She has also seen a bias regarding the potential for "sexual" issues to emerge. She was personally warned that both men and women would "fall in love" with her and asked how she would respond.

Tracy hasn't noticed any real differences in the interviews of men and women. She says, "Some excel. Some are embarrassing. It's all in the individual."

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Women Clergy Council Bio

Aimee Mulder was called to preach at age 15, denied her call out of fear and finally started preparing her life's calling at age 25 upon entering seminary. She's a Texan residing in Muskegon, Michigan as Sr. Co-Pastor with her husband, Devin at Breakwater Church of the Nazarene. They have three boys, Ford (4), Cooper(2) and Tucker (6 months). Aimee can be found changing diapers before board meetings and fuels her activity level with expresso and the power of the Holy Spirit.



Word to the Wise

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When asked the ratio of men to women on the boards and interviewing committees on which they have served and how it impacts the women who are interviewed, most members of our council tell of wide discrepancies. One hopeful comment comes from Donna Wilson who says, "We are blessed with a growing number of women on the Board of Ministry on which I serve, Canada Central District." The board is comprised of five Women Clergy and ten Male Clergy. She says, "When we split into interviewing committees, our DS, Rev. Ian Fitzpatrick, places a woman clergy in each group." She says that women clergy have mentioned how encouraging it is to see another woman as they enter the room for an interview.

Another district represented on our council has one woman to five or six men on their board. She has noticed that because of her presence, at times, men will defer to her for questions. She thinks it makes them feel a little self-conscious to have a woman on the board. Another council member admits, "Usually I am one among a dozen or more men. One time, one other woman served with me on the Credentials Board. I serve as chairperson of the Ministerial Studies Board, and I have only men serving with me on the committee."

The present Ministry Board on another district represented on our council has nineteen men and two women. The interview committee on which this member sits is assigned most of the women candidates. There are arguments on both positive

and negative sides of this particular practice. Another council member has similar imbalance with twenty-three men and two women on her board. However, she says, "It is my experience that even one female reduces the anxiety for the candidate and her spouse."

One of our council members says, "I am one of three women appointed to our board, but the other two never come!" One is a senior pastor on her district who doesn't seem to understand the importance of her visibility and significant mentoring/modeling role on the board. She says, "The women who come through tell me how great it is to see me there and wish that there were women on *all* of the Interviewing Committees. The ones who get to come through my committee express feeling much



more comfortable because they feel affirmed and understood. I have asked our administrative leadership to try to send as many of the women as possible through my committee for that reason, but sometimes the logistics just don't allow it because we have so many women interviewing."

Some of the challenges that these boards and committees face in regard to interviewing women include the fact that they have never interviewed women before. Also, as one of our

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Women Clergy Council Bio



Donna Wilson answered God's call to full time pastoral service during a Nazarene Missions Convention in 1999, Canada Central District, graduated from seminary, MDiv in 2006, and was ordained in 2008. She and her husband Darryl, are blessed with three wonderful children Laura ('94), Peter ('96), and Lisa ('03). Currently she serves as Pastor of Erie Street Community Church of the Nazarene, Collingwood, ON, Canada (since 2005). It is her desire to see people come to know Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior and to encourage His servants, both men and women to discover and follow their call.

"I am one of three women appointed to our board, but the other two never come!"

Word to the Wise

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council members reflects, “many of the younger women who come in to be interviewed have more education than many of the men on the boards. This inequity causes some defensiveness from the men.”

Another challenge is the women candidates’ understanding of the nature of their calls. One council member suggests, “It seems as though there is more ambiguity involved in the direction of their calls, (where to serve, with which gifts...teaching, counseling, preaching) perhaps contributed by the factor some women are not given opportunities to preach in their home churches. I interviewed several women this spring who had completed their course of study but did who not have a placement on the horizon where they could flesh out their calls to preach and teach.”

She continues, “Committees need to set gender aside as they assess the gifts and graces of the person before them. The focus needs to be on the call, not the gender, and on how we as a church recognize and nurture those who are called, to lead our church into the future.” Many of the women who are interviewed do not have current

assignments. Nancy adds, “Dialogues and evaluations regarding the call to preach are very difficult to determine because of the present ministry roles females hold.”

**“Committees need to
set gender aside
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gifts and graces of
the person before**

Another challenge is when the interview becomes too personal or gender-biased, for example, “How will you be a minister and take care of your children?” This is not a question generally asked of men. A council member says, “We have made great strides in avoiding this as the women on the board have educated the men on what not to ask. When I first came onto the board, most of the male members had very little experience interviewing women. This is no longer the case, and it’s making the process better every year. They have found our women to be capable and committed.”

There are common mistakes or blunders that those being interviewed make. When women candidates are asked questions that they think are inappropriate, “it is important to try and keep calm. Men react very negatively to women whom they believe are ‘angry.’” Our council member suggests, “There must be a conscious decision made by the one going into interview that they need to take a deep breath and respond as positively and kindly as possible.”

Another council member concurs that showing too much emotion is a problem. “Women tend to break down and from studies done on how men relate to women; this could be a barrier to male clergy as they assess the gifts and graces of a female candidate. At the point of District Licensing, women clergy should be able to clearly and confidently express their calls, their experiences in ministry, and the vision the Lord has given to them as they move forward in their ministries. I do not feel we need to set our femininity aside for interview purposes but I do believe we need to stand firm as a called women of God, try to put a few emotions aside, and focus on the call and the role of a minister.”

Another common blunder mentioned by a council member is lack of professional dress. “Our wardrobe should be up-to-date and not too casual. *The people in the room are likely the pastors who will decide whether to hire you or not.* You never get a second chance to make a first impression! We want to see a good presentation as well as hear one. Do everything you can

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Women Clergy Council Bio

Shirley Goodman responded to God’s call to the ministry by leaving an eighteen year corporate career in sales and marketing. She has been a pastor for sixteen years, and presently serves as Senior Pastor of the West Chester (PA) Church of the Nazarene. Shirley holds a B.A. in Organizational Management and an M.A. in Organizational Leadership from Eastern University. She is married to Ron, and they have three children and five grandchildren.



Word to the Wise

(Continued from page 6)

to present yourself as a knowledgeable, up-to-date resource in every regard. And be on time!”

Nancy observes, “Most of the time, women come in timidly and are hesitant to share *how* God is using them in ministry; they tell us role assignments rather than ministry stories.” Related to this is the problem of clergy couple interviews. Tracy suggests that “If a husband and wife are being interviewed together, the woman should not always defer to the man to answer.” This problem can be solved by treating the couple as individuals in their process until the ordination interview.

Advice that our council members would give women who are going to interviews include, “Dress femininely! Relax and be a girl – and don’t go in fighting. Be yourself.” Donna shares, “Be confident in your call. I was told from the first minister who mentored me in 1999, that if I didn’t have a story, a real call, I would never survive as a minister. It is the call that sees us through the low points of preparation and ministry and each crisis as it arises. At the point of District licensing, candidates have had their gifts and graces assessed by a local congregation and have reviewed their call with their pastor. I would encourage them to go into an interview with confidence knowing the Lord will speak through this experience to them. As a practical step, candidates could take time before their interview, to focus on the passage the Lord used to set them apart, and to pray for God’s guidance and wisdom in the process.”

“Be absolutely confident in your call from God and be as specific as possible when describing that call.”



Another council member offers, “Be gracious. We are a broken people relying on the Holy Spirit to speak through us and miscommunication does occur on the part of the committee and candidates. Be patient with those who are asking the probing questions and take time to answer. Ask for clarification when needed. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you to know how to answer. Remember aside from what is said, God is in ultimate control and when you rely on him, God will make a way even if the interview does not produce the desired result.”

Nancy adds, “Before your first interview, talk with a trusted person who has already completed this process on your district. Districts vary in the

settings, questions and expectations.” Don’t carry a negative experience from a previous district into a new one. Go with an open mind. Remember that the board is here to help you, not to inhibit the process.

“Be absolutely confident in your call from God and be as *specific* as possible when describing that call. Even if you are unsure of exactly what ministry role in which you might land, be able to clearly articulate your passions, gifts, graces, and particular skills.” Rondy suggests, “Try to envision how that might look in a local ministry. People need to be able to ‘see’ women in ministry, so help them ‘see’ *you!*”

“Find assistance for ‘nerve control’ prior to the interview. We interviewed a candidate who just froze up in the interview process. Our board was pretty certain it was primarily nerves, but it opens up doubt as to knowledge or experience of a candidate, and becomes a point of contention.” Tracy warns, “Anyone who has great anxiety in those kinds of interviews should talk with a counsellor or receive some kind of assistance to help handle a stressful environment prior to being in that setting.”

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Women Clergy Council Bio

Jennifer Chapman is the pastor of Nexus Community Church of the Nazarene, planted in November of 2010. She has a Bachelor of Arts in Ministry and Theology from Southern Nazarene University and a Master of Divinity from Nazarene Theological Seminary. Jennifer and her husband, John, live and minister in Dallas, Texas.



Word to the Wise

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There are themes that we hear among the women that we interview. Carla says, "There are two different groups which come into interviews. There are the young women who come in and are rather idealistic about where they are going to be able to serve in the future. Then, there are the second-career women. Many of them are already involved in ministry in a church. So, the themes are different for these two groups. The first group is looking for more of a senior pastor position and so this is their focus. The second group feels called to their ministry and may or may not think that ordination is very important. They are going to do ministry in their local church whether they are ordained or not. So, they are more laid-back about the process."

Donna adds, "Some question the possibility of their future placement in ministry. The process is long, and as candidates become weary in the process, I encourage them to remember that God has called them to minister to a broken world. They do well to remember this whenever and wherever they are placed during their years of preparation. Adequate compensation must not be our ultimate goal as ministers. We need to minister where God places us. I also encourage young candidates to gain complimentary skills to prepare to work bi-vocationally when needed. Secular work may open more doors to ministry and connections in our community."

Here are some final thoughts our council would like to share with our readers from their experience on Boards of Ministry. Carla says, "The language of the meeting is often completely masculine. It is sometimes helpful to remind those there – in a non-threatening way, or joking, about inclusive language." Terms like "guys" should be avoided when referring to mixed gender groups.



Women who are planning to serve as Children's Pastors or Worship Leaders are often steered toward ordination as Deacon. However, as Tracy explains, "All areas of leadership still break forth the Word of God, just in varying ways. Preaching to children just looks different!" She adds parenthetically, "Why don't males who

intend to serve as youth pastors ever seem to have this issue?" Tracy has also seen inequities in regard to payment and believes that ministry partners "should be treated equally in all areas."

Rondy suggests, "Ministry Boards need to engage in more 'outside the box' thinking regarding ministry roles, especially as placement opportunities in traditional roles may be dwindling.

Often, the burden is on the candidate to convince the board of both call and the potential for their placement. Future candidates may face the need to more proactively locate places to serve in order to demonstrate their tenacity to the call regardless of obstacles. This may seem unfair, but seems a stark reality. Learning how to be confident and

passionately convincing while also being submissive to those in authority over us is also important. Be prayed up! It truly helps when your heart is where it needs to be, regardless of past hurts. Sometimes, the real test of our character occurs during adversity. You are being observed in every circumstance ... remember that." ✝

"Ministry Boards need to engage in more 'outside the box' thinking regarding ministry roles, especially as placement opportunities in traditional roles may be dwindling."

Local, District, Ordination, ... Oh My!

In 1999 I was given my first local minister's license. My lead pastor at the time, Rev. Kevin Dunlop, had approached me and affirmed that he saw the gifts and graces of ministry in my life. I was honored but had absolutely no idea of the journey ahead. I asked a lot of questions and received answers intended to be helpful but were essentially vague and unhelpful. I was often directed to the *Manual* whose answers seemed nearly as difficult to interpret. I asked questions like "What is the next step?" and "Do I need to go to seminary now?" "What if I'm not called to preach – does that mean I am not really called to ministry?" and "How long will the process take?" And those were the questions I could actually verbalize!

Having gone through the process of local licensing, district licensing, and ordination, I see a 10-year process in my rear view mirror. I am grateful for the time invested in me but still wish I had been more aware of the resources available to me along the way.

In 2007 I began working in the office of Clergy Development at the Global Ministry Center and discovered many



resources available to women and men who are seeking to fulfill God's call to pursue full time Christian

ministry. My hope is that the resources listed below will be helpful no matter which stage of ministry preparation you find yourself. If you are already beyond the phase of ministry preparation, the information below could be valuable to those with whom you come in contact desiring to fulfill God's call.

There are two primary websites that everyone preparing for ministry should access:

www.nazarenepastor.org

www.nazarenepastor.org/clergyeducation

The first site provides resources for pastors. Understanding that many pastors of congregations are still in the licensing process and/or not yet ordained, this website will give helpful tools for ministry.

The second site is vital for anyone interested in preparing for ministry in the Church of the Nazarene. Let me say it a different way. The information provided on the second website (www.nazarenepastor.org/clergyeducation) is essential to understanding and navigating the licensing/ordination process.

Clergy Education Website Resources

- **Handbook for Christian Ministry** – this document helps one determine God's call and how strong that call is. It helps guide the person through some exercises that will help give confidence that God is leading them on a journey toward ministry preparation.
- **Responding to the Call of God to Ministry** – this link takes one to the steps through letting the appropriate people know about their call. The site offers a Q & A of sorts to help determine what it means to have the call to ministry and how to answer that call.
- **Educational Preparation** – It is required for all who are locally and district licensed to embark on a course of study. What does that mean? The explanation is on this website. The bottom line is that there are many ways for one to complete a validated course of study (a course of study approved by an international committee and the Board of General Superintendents). Seminary is a wonderful option, maybe even a preferred option, but not the only option for preparing for ministry.
- **Lifelong Learning** – is a part of many professions: teaching, medicine, accounting, etc. The desire for ministers in the Church of the Nazarene to continue learning is very strongly encouraged. The general Church of the Nazarene offers some opportunities and there are opportunities for continuing education on the district level. The rationale for lifelong learning and the process of getting credits applied to your pastoral "resume" can be found on this link.

The Sourcebook on Ordination is a comprehensive manual detailing the entire process of licensing and ordination. It will be a useful tool in helping to discern the proper path toward preparation for ministry. It can be found at this website: <http://nazarenepastor.org/ClergyEducation/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=mfodQjGaojo%3d&tabid=74&mid=500> †

Mid-Life Call *by Joy Wisheart*

When I was younger, how did I ever get the idea that we were to find God's will in high school or college, get on that path and stay there until we went to Heaven. Silly me. As you know, many of us have two to three different careers in our lifetime, some never even resembling our beginning career. And God leads us to them all.

After graduating from college with a degree in Elementary education, I began teaching first grade and loved that age. I assumed this was the career from which I would someday retire. But God had other ideas...

I have always loved the church and had a passion for ministry so when I married my husband, Lenny, together we spent our first seventeen years traveling in fulltime evangelism and later pastoring three churches. Being in evangelism and for the past 20 years pastoring, I found myself at age 50 feeling a strong call to a new direction in my ministry. I knew He was calling me to seminary in preparation for a more specific, particular ministry. Now at midlife, I was wrestling with God about what exactly that looked like.



I was sure God was wrong. I tried to help Him see that the call to seminary was a poor idea because after 50, some of our brain cells have already died, so how could I possibly do all that was required to complete my Masters of Divinity?

As He and I were continuing our discussion, I felt the Holy Spirit breathing on Isaiah 61:1, "The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach the good news...to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners..." He made it personal to my heart. I spent days in that passage. Not long after that encounter with God, we were invited over to our mentors' house and even though they had walked through a lot with us, I had not shared with them what I was thinking. After finishing our meal, Don said to me, Joy, I have a scripture for you. He began reading the same words that the Spirit had burned on my heart, Isaiah 61:1, and it served as a confirmation to me that, yes, this was the Lord calling ME to a change point in my ministry vocation. So I began the seminary experience, graduated and was ordained in 2007.

So what is it like for a woman to experience a 'midlife call'?

There are joys and adjustments, but the joys certainly outweigh the adjustments, whatever our age.

One advantage of being called later in life is, if you have had children, your children may be gone from home, which gives you more time for study than when the children were under foot. An adult learner is usually a more serious learner and that was my experience-I was more serious about learning at this age in my life. In my case, however, our last child was still at home. Our daughter was finishing up high school so the challenge was balance between supporting her, maintaining a home, encouraging my husband, working part time and completing my studies.

Another advantage I discovered was I had a different filter through which I listened because of the years of working in church. I had a more serious approach to education.

Women Clergy Council Bio



Diane Leclerc graduated from Eastern Nazarene College (B.A. in 1985), Nazarene Theological Seminary (M.Div in 1989) and after four years of pastoral ministry, she attended Drew University and received her M.Phil. and Ph.D. degrees. She began teaching at Northwest Nazarene University in 1998.

She has particular interest in the study of women in the history of Christianity. She pastored a Nazarene congregation in Maine, and was ordained in 1991.

She has published many chapters, articles, and four books, including *Discovering Christian Holiness*. She married her husband Paul in 1992 and has a 15 year old son, Ethan Wesley.

Mid-life *(Continued from page 10)*

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Application was immediate. I wasn't trying to imagine a "someday in ministry" since I already had ministry experience. I took my education seriously and wasn't distracted by the social scene we experience in college. I found I wasn't looking at guys or trying to get a date since I gave all that dating up several years ago when I married Lenny.

"Don't approach this call as a 'lone ranger.' Be sure your pastor, district superintendent, and family and friends know the path to which God has called you."

It may be difficult to pursue a call at midlife if you don't have family or ministerial contacts to encourage you. Some district superintendents may have an idea of the support and guidance needed. Some, however, may not have any idea of the feelings of isolation and the encouragement needed as you pursue your calling as a woman clergy. Don't approach this call as a "lone ranger". Be sure your pastor, district superintendent,

and family and friends know the path to which God has called you. Speak into some of those significant people what you need from them. My experience was that instead of those people coming to me to offer encouragement, I had to seek them out.

There were times when it was very confusing to figure out "what was next" for credentialing. Some women may have had this if they had received their call in their youth or the college years. Just know that often this is one difference in getting a call in midlife.

Being called to seminary was the passage to which God called me. There are many paths, whether its online education, district credentialing or seminary, the way is good. It is good because God has chosen and called you and that is the fact that sustains.

I loved children and when I graduated with a degree in elementary education, I had no other intention than to teach primary students the rest of my life. Loving the students in that classroom was a tremendous ministry. I never dreamed I would be doing what I am presently doing. The life experiences one has at this age only enhances the call. But that is the adventure of following God who is so full of surprises that it makes this journey with Him so wonderful. ✝

East Ohio District Class on Biblical Support for Women Ministers

by Tracy Ogden Johnson

In 2004, I was invited to be a part of a Work and Witness trip to Kazakhstan, a part of the former Soviet Union, with Dr. David Downs and other East Ohio District pastors. The Church of the Nazarene was one of the earliest denominational groups to enter that country. Under the leadership of Rev. Michael Park, the work in Kazakhstan had not only begun, but was growing at such a rate that the training of pastors was imperative. The district team was invited to teach a New Testament survey class and to help work on the education building there in Kazakhstan.

Once the class gathered, Dr. Downs noticed that over half of the pastoral candidates were female. Knowing that they would undoubtedly face the introduction of other denominations with theological teaching contrary to our own Wesleyan-Holiness tradition, Dr. Downs asked me to teach a section of the class on the Biblical support and defense of women in ministry.

I spent about an hour tracing the Scripture story and sharing my own journey of my call to ministry. I grew up in the Church of the Nazarene. I was involved in all the activities that most Nazarene kids were a part of, from quizzing to talent, to youth group to camp. I have lots of wonderful memories, but one memory I will never forget. When I was about six or seven years old, I was sitting in one of the pews one Sunday, coloring my Sunday School pages, and I overheard two ladies sitting near me discussing whether it was acceptable for a woman to be a pastor. I remember thinking to myself, "Oh, that's an easy one; God just wouldn't call a woman to be a pastor!" Nice, easy solution for a kid, right? Until, of course, that same kid grows up, and at 16 years of age receives a call to ministry!

My journey was difficult. I KNEW God had called me to be a pastor, but each time I read Scripture (at least the passages everyone seemed to direct me to) it seemed that I MUST be hearing God incorrectly. It just didn't fit. I wrestled with the Word, wrestled

("District Class" ... Continued on page 13)

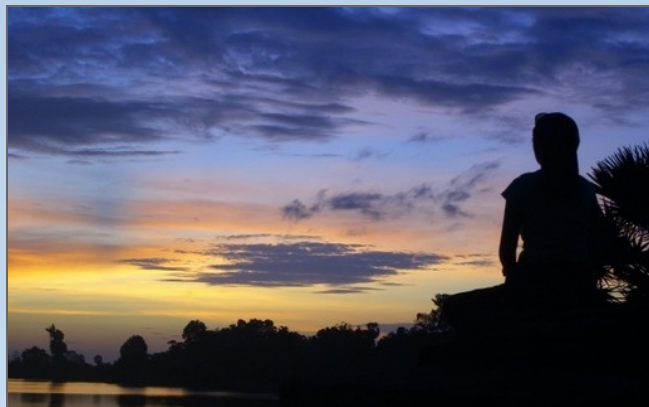
Ordination Reflection *by Lori Niles*

Each year's ordination service, like each wedding, is an invitation to reflect on our commitments — what launched the commitments, what engaged them, what is continuing to fulfill them.

My launch into ordained ministry was not smooth. I was resistant, confused, and untutored. For many years, I bristled at the need for a “piece of paper” to do what I was already doing. I was a little intimidated by the boys' club that carried out the processes, and no one built a case to help me see the significance of community confirmation of gifts and graces beyond the affirmation of the local congregation.

When I began to educate young people for ministry, the case for ordination began to reveal itself, and God began to mature my youthful arrogance, calling me to submission to the process. One of the key factors was recognizing that if young women refused to enter into the established patterns, they would not have the influence on the church that the church desperately needs from them. The other key factor was the recognition that if they had no models, it would be as hard for them to see the significance of ordination as it had been for me.

A member of my committee, knowing full well my mixed feelings about ordination and the long journey it had been, prophesied that I would understand the impact of the office when I actually experienced the laying on of hands. During the actual ordination, I was afraid that might not even happen until one of the ordained women on the district stepped forward and leaned in to touch my shoulder! Turns out my mentor was right. It was a powerful experience. After ordination, nothing about my ministry changed, but everything about my attitude did. I experienced a sense of having the full backing of my colleagues and centuries of pastoral authority to undergird my confidence to preach the word. The piece of paper was not the call, but it was confirmation of the call in concrete form.



Last night, six students I have had the privilege of partnering to educate over the last six years were

ordained. Four of them were women. Two of the women I have spent significant time mentoring beyond the classroom. Their stories are powerful, and their journey toward ordination has been linear. I have watched them and can wholeheartedly confirm both their calling and their conduct. I cannot describe the delight of being able to stand behind them, and pray for their own sense of confidence to preach the word, nurture the faith, and bind the wounds of the congregations God blesses them with.

**Sometimes, we plant.
Sometimes we water.
Sometimes we read and
study agriculture.
Sometimes we are mired
in weeds.
But this is God's increase,
and it is sweet.**

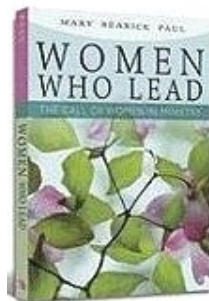
I am honored to know that we serve the same God along the same road, and that their presence will change the terrain! I also believe that their courage to pursue this path of ordained ministry will give others a wake to walk in, strengthening the Church's witness as a place where both women and men can exercise their Christian freedom to serve as equal partners in ministry.

So here is my reflection: Sometimes, we plant. Sometimes we water. Sometimes we read and study agriculture. Sometimes we are mired in weeds. But this is God's increase, and it is sweet. ✝

BOOK REVIEW

Women Who Lead: The Call of Women in Ministry

by Mary Rearick Paul



This wonderful book should be read by every woman in ministry. It is a significant addition to the literature for and about women called of God to lead the people of God. Mary Paul's stated intention is that her book will "explore the call of God on women to places of leadership ... investigate internal and external obstacles to that call ... [and be] a celebration of God's amazing call" (p. 14). She gives us all that she intended to give and more.

The twin stories of healing in Mark 5 (the hemorrhaging women and Jairus' daughter), with which she begins her book, serve as lenses through which to view the rest of the book. Dr. Paul helps us to hear in these miracle stories the voice of Jesus calling women today to respond in faith and obedience, just as these biblical women did, to "get up," to be made whole, to live out the purpose for which they were created, as leaders called of God.

Mary Paul's warm, confessional style draws you into her story as she shares the wisdom gained on her journey from pastor to university administrator. She looks honestly at the obstacles, struggles, and challenges that come with leading in arenas traditionally dominated by men. She also brings the experiences of other women whose journeys to fulfill God's call to leadership are rich and varied. This book is filled with "aha!" moments for women seeking to negotiate the often rocky road of their own journey in ministry.

Women Who Lead is steeped in Scripture and richly resourced. Dr. Paul gives insightful interpretations of passages from both Old and New Testaments which define servant leadership for women and men; her significant research gives depth to her discussions on the nature of power and the ways in which women lead. Dr. Paul argues convincingly for the necessity of women leaders in the church, while acknowledging that we are a long way from the ideal of collaboration and mutual empowerment possible when men and women work together to advance the kingdom.

My one criticism is that the amount of supporting research occasionally results in dissertation-like sections, citing authors whose works are never introduced. However, even these sections are interesting and useful.

Buy this book for yourself, read it, and then give it to your male pastor or District Superintendent. Let Mary's eloquent words speak for you the cry of all of our hearts, that those of us called by God to roles of leadership in the church will be encouraged and empowered to rise up and fulfill them. ✝

Dr. Susan Armstrong, Worship Pastor
Manteno Church of the Nazarene
Manteno, IL
✝

District Class

(Continued from page 11)

with my own understanding, questioned again and again if I were hearing correctly. Throughout this experience, I was blessed with some great mentors and friends, and I had a lot of them patiently working with me to show me that there were other ways to read and understanding the Word I was reading. They led me through a journey of discovery and acceptance that not only helped me see that it was okay for women to be pastors, but also that it was encouraged and a normal part of the New Testament life.

Following that basic and brief introductory course, Dr. Downs shared with me that he had graduated from three different Nazarene institutions, and he had never encountered any of this information. He soon became an advocate for women ministers. He asked me to teach my material at various pastors' events. With each event my seminar grew and developed in research and material, and it is now a full three or four hour experience that has helped people all across our region.

In 2009, with the support of Dr. Downs and the entire Ministerial Studies Board, the East Ohio District became the first District in the Church of the Nazarene that requires a Course for all ordination candidates on the Biblical Support for Women in Ministry. ✝

NEW HORIZONS

Resources for Nazarene Clergywomen

Women Clergy / Dept. of Clergy Development

Church of the Nazarene
Global Ministry Center
17001 Prairie Star Parkway
Lenexa, KS 66220

Women Clergy Council Bio



Tracy Ogden Johnson serves as pastor of the Ravenna First Church of the Nazarene in Ravenna, Ohio and has been pastoring for nearly 20 years. She serves as the director of the Certificate of Ministry

Preparation Program for the East Ohio District, is an instructor for MVNU, and also serves on the District Ministerial Credentials Board and Chairperson of the District Ministerial Studies Board. She received her M.Div. from Candler School of Theology in Atlanta, GA. She is married to Darryl Johnson, and has one son, Jason, and a granddaughter named Scarlett.

NEW HORIZONS

Resources for Nazarene Clergywomen

Editor, **Vicki Copp**

Managing Editor, **Basha Zackavich**

New Horizons is a ministry of
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