

NEW HORIZONS

Resources for Nazarene Clergywomen

Fall 2002

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Attitudes of Nazarene Women Clergy on Gender Issues and Ministry

By Linda Beail and Greg Crow

In the fall of 2000, as part of a project involving clergy from 22 denominations and religious groups, we surveyed several hundred Nazarene pastors about their political attitudes and activities during that year's presidential election.¹ Some of our general findings from the survey were reported in the previous issue of this newsletter.

In this follow-up research note, we focus on the responses of the women clergy that we studied, and on Nazarene pastors' attitudes toward issues of women in ministry.

One hallmark of the Nazarene denomination has been the affirmation of women in all leadership roles since its founding, including preaching and pastoring. However, only 3% (n=20) of the senior pastors in our study were women. Thus, while the findings below provide some interesting insights, we



want to caution readers that it is difficult and statistically unreliable to generalize from such a small sub-sample.

In general, we found that women pastors have similar spiritual and political beliefs as their male counterparts. Women are just as orthodox on the theological issues (nearly unanimous agreement by both sexes that "Jesus was born of a virgin" and "there is no other way to salvation but through belief in Jesus Christ," for example). Like the men, Nazarene clergywomen overwhelmingly reject feminist theology (see table). Nor do women clergy differ from men in their political views. Nearly 90% of both sexes identify as Republicans, voted for George W. Bush for president, and label themselves ideologically as "conservative." On public policy issues, there are no striking gender differences.

Though in practice the number of women in pastoral roles has been shrinking since the early decades of the twentieth century, the doctrine allowing women access to ordained ministry remains unchanged. As the table below shows, a large majority of both men and women Nazarene pastors agree that all clergy positions should be open to women.

However, there is a gender difference in the intensity of this belief. Seventy-five percent of the women senior pastors *strongly* agree with that statement, while only 35% of men give their wholehearted assent. In fact, 21% of men have some doubts about this position. Though this represents the thinking of but a small fraction of

¹ The random sample of 1200 was drawn from the complete list of 5103 senior pastors in the United States given to the researchers by the General Secretary of the Church of the Nazarene. The response rate was 51.1% (602 pastors), quite good for a questionnaire administered via mail.

ministers, we are concerned about the implications of this eroded support for women clergy. Is this perhaps evidence of the growing influence of fundamentalism? Might it signal the beginning of a shift in denominational attitudes toward women and ministry, or is it simply aberrant thinking on the part of a few clergy? This may be an important issue to monitor into the future.

While the differences are not large, Nazarene women clergy do display a bit more concern about discrimination against women than their male counterparts. Over a third of women pastors see a need for more legislation protecting women’s rights, compared to a mere 14% of men. Even more interestingly, nearly 37% of women pastors say they feel personally disadvantaged by their gender when it comes to moving up the career ladder in the denomination. These women pastors clearly have some sense that the vestiges of sex discrimination may still remain, at least in their workplace.

Perhaps this perception comes from the context in which they minister. Women have less seniority in the ministry than men (median 8 years, compared to a median 19 for men), and they serve significantly smaller churches (median attendance of 28 people in Sunday morning worship, versus 80 for men). On a positive note, these women pastors perceive themselves as welcomed and accepted by the flocks they serve. Ninety percent feel that their congregations support women in ministry, while over a third of male pastors have doubts about their congregations’ welcome for women pastors. One possible explanation is that resistance toward female clergy that may well exist, but that seems to fade when congregations actually gain firsthand experience with a woman pastor.

	Strongly Agree or Agree	
	Female	Male
All clergy positions should be open to women.	95%	79%
We still need more legislation to protect women’s rights.	35%	14%
My gender puts me at a disadvantage when it comes to upward mobility in my denomination.	37%	5%
My congregation is mostly supportive of women in the ministry.	90%	62%
Feminist theology provides valuable insights about being a Christian.	11%	6%

When compared to other evangelical denominations in the study, Nazarene pastors are much more supportive of women in ministry. Yet the senior pastorate is overwhelmingly male (97%). The few women pastors we found seemed to express both great confidence in their call and awareness of real challenges that they may encounter in this role.

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What’s Happening

By Vicki Copp

The Story of Rev. Bessie Tshambe

In the last issue of *New Horizons*, I told you about the Global Nazarene Theological Conference and that one particular joy of the conference for me was being able to meet women leaders from all over the globe. In this issue, we are introduced to Rev. Bessie

Tshambe. I learned of Bessie gradually through church leaders and periodicals. My interest in her grew as she was one of the pastors highlighted on the video, *Ablaze with Love*. When I asked about her at the conference, I was told that she was not in attendance, but that her son was there. A tall and handsome young man was pointed out to me by a knowledgeable person and I approached and introduced myself. He smiled broadly when I mentioned his mother. Would he be willing to tell his mother’s story to other women clergy? He replied that he would do it with pride. Here then is his account of his mother:

Bessie Tshambe is Pastor of the Central Church in the Maputo District, the largest church of the Nazarene in Africa. Church membership at the moment is 1825 plus over 500 candidates to membership. The Central Church in the Maputo District has seen attendance of over 2200 several Sundays.

Rev. Bessie Luisa Tshambe was born in Mozambique in 1945. Her father was a minister in the church (he is now gone home to be with the Lord). She was born at the Nazarene hospital at the first mission station of the Church of the Nazarene in Mozambique in Tavane (Gaza), where her father was staying. The mission station had primary school, Bible school, hospital, residences, chapel, etc.

In June of 1966, Bessie felt that God was calling her into full time ministry. In September of 1966, she registered as a student at the Bible School in Tavane - Mozambique. While at school, she met Rev. Manuel Tshambe, and they married in January 1969. Rev. Manuel Tshambe was then transferred to minister in Maputo, so Bessie did not finish her studies. They moved to Maputo to pastor a church and to work in the church offices in the Capital city of Mozambique Maputo. Because of the civil war that lasted 17 years, she was not able to continue with her ministerial studies until 1988 when the training re-opened.



Rev. Bessie Tshambe

Her first years of ministry were at home as mother of five boys and one girl. She has been a wonderful and godly mother and she continues to be to all of us. She ministered as pastor's wife, preached often on evangelistic campaigns, ladies' meetings and church revivals, as well as seminars for pastors wives and married couples. In 1989, she felt it was time for her to pastor a church. She began in a new area called Boane, and planted a church there. It was not easy because in that particular area there were many broken families as a result of drugs and alcohol. It was also an area of so much manifestation of demonic powers. However, she trusted in God, continued to preach and teach, and the church was planted. By 1990, several families were reconciled, and some people found freedom from demonic powers, alcohol, and other destructive things. Her church began to grow in numbers, and it became very evident in the district that she was gifted in the area of evangelism. She had so many calls from various churches to speak, making more people aware of her ministry. In 1992, the pastor of the Central Church

resigned to go full time into education (ministerial training), and the church called Rev. Bessie Tshambe to be the pastor. She has been the pastor of the Central church for ten years now, and the church has grown in quantity and quality. Under her leadership, other churches were planted, with a total membership of 200 to 500.

The Central Church of the Nazarene in Maputo has four associate pastors: Senior Pastor Rev. B. Tshambe, a children's pastor, youth pastor, and a pastor who is in charge of the adults' ministry. Rev. Tshambe has a staff of 25 members who help leader prayer meetings and Bible studies in 25 different settings during the week.

She believes that the secret to her success is prayer and a good relationship with the leadership team and the church as a whole. She believes that the prayers of the believers around the world are very important, because even during the days of difficulties, she can still sense the hand of God moving and strengthening her.

I am proud of my mother!

Filimao Chambo (Tshambe) is a graduate of Nazarene Theological College in South Africa with a Bachelors of Theology. He has also completed a Masters degree in Biblical Theology through Rands Afrikaans University in South Africa. An ordained minister in the Church of the Nazarene and the pastor of a church of 600 in membership, he is also Assistant Director for the Theological Extension Education in the Africa Lusophone field. Filimao is married to Pastor Samantha Chambo and has one child (daughter), Tsakani Gabriella Chambo.

Open Doors by Vicki Copp

In the last year, I have seen doors open for several of my good friends. It has been an encouragement for me, and I want to share them with you. At General Assembly, I was trying to sell the remaining *Ablaze with Love* videos so I wouldn't have to cart them home. When I tried the hard sell with Ron Greeno, District Superintendent in Sacramento, California, the conversation went to deeper things. Things had not worked out well the times he had placed women as senior pastors and he wasn't sure he wanted to try again. About four months later, Ron wrote and asked if I knew Rev. ReeAnn Hyde. I tried to not go over-board in my glowing recommendation... In December, ReeAnn was installed as the senior pastor at New Covenant Church of the Nazarene on Florin Road in Sacramento. She is having the time of her life.

Nancy Clayton, who was on staff with me at the Mission Valley Church of the Nazarene in San Diego, has been an associate with her husband, Jim in Palo Alto for about three years. At their recent Northern California district assembly, Nancy was elected as the clergy trustee for PLNU. The PLNU representative, Rev. Steve Seelig told her that he thought she might be the first female clergy trustee in the history of the school and that he was sure she was the first associate pastor elected to the position. Now Jim and I get to hang out with spouses of board members.

As many of you know, Janine Metcalf has been sensing that God was calling her to pastoral ministry. In a step of faith, she declined speaking engagements after June of 2002. Her husband, Ed did not renew his high school teaching contract for the 2002-2003 year. After a time of discouraging prospects and wondering if God wanted her to leave the Nazarene denomination,

the door finally opened on the Southern California district. District Superintendent John Denney installed her as senior pastor at the El Cajon Church of the Nazarene (near San Diego) on August 25th.



If you have something or someone that you think we all would benefit from knowing about, please email me at dvcopp@aol.com

These doors have opened after months, even years of prayer. May God give us perseverance as we continue to pray for open doors for women clergy and for the courage to walk through them.

Rev. Vicki Copp was ordained as elder and received her M.A. in Theology from Point Loma Nazarene University in 1997. She preaches and speaks at retreats, women’s ministries functions, and has written for *Holiness Today*.

Church of the Nazarene’s oldest root in New England. Hanscombe served as pastor of the church in Malden, Mass., of which she was the primary founder, from 1890 until her death in 1895.

The account above, then, is the second oldest record of women’s ordination in our denominational stream. It was the first such event among Nazarenes in the South, and it occurred in Milan, Tennessee, at the first connectional meeting of the congregations of the New Testament Church of Christ. It is also unique because two women were ordained: Mrs. R. L. Harris, better known by her later name, Mary Lee Cagle; and Mrs. E. J. Sheeks, wife of layman E. H. Sheeks.

The first woman ordained among Nazarenes on the West Coast occurred two and a half years later, in 1902, when Phineas Bresee ordained Elsie Wallace in Spokane.

This simple ceremony of ordination abounds in apostolic significance. First, no distinction was made between male and female. A man and two women were ordained as they knelt side by side.

In an earlier session of this first annual meeting, the New Testament Church of Christ had taken the position that if a woman “has the right to stand side by side with man in soul-saving work” then she is “entitled to all the rights and privileges of the gospel,” including the right to ordination.

Of course no individual person has the right to be ordained. The right of ordination is one of the church’s rights, not a person’s individual right. Ordination occurs when some portion of the community of Christ recognizes the gifts and graces of particular members and sets them apart for ministry. Or, in the specific words of the account, ordination is for those who have “stood the examination and have proven

Our Nazarene Foremothers

Proven and Faithful Ministers

By Stan Ingersol

“[Dec. 13, 1899]. G. M. Hammond, Mrs. R. L. Harris, and E. J. Sheeks, all members of this congregation, applied for ordination. Each one was examined as to their eligibility for ordination and stood the examination and have proven themselves as faithful ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ . . .

Dec. 14, nine o’clock a.m. . . . After singing and praying Bro. Ira H. Russel read Eph. 5:1-21 and made an earnest spiritual talk admonishing each one to live up to the standard contained in this chapter . . . Bro. Russel then read the qualifications of a Bishop or Elder in 1 Tim. 3:1-7, Tit. 1:5-9. He also read Acts 13:1-13 and by prayer and laying on of hands Bro. Hammond, Sisters Harris and Sheeks were ordained and set apart for the work whereunto the Holy Ghost had called them.”

For many years, I was convinced that this was the earliest account of a woman being ordained to the ministry by a parent body of the Church of the Nazarene. I was wrong. Eventually I learned of Anna S. Hanscombe, who was ordained in 1892 by the Central Evangelical Holiness Association, the

Linda Hardin, director of general Women’s Ministries, attended the Come to the Water Conference in Colorado Springs for the first time last April. In response to what she observed and learned, she has added a section on women as clergy to the general Women’s Ministries website found at the following address:

<http://www.nazarene.org/ssm/adult/women/clergy/index.html>

“Why is this section on the Women’s Ministries Website?” she asks as an introduction to the website. “Good question and one I’m glad you asked! The addition of this section is to address concerns of the Women’s Ministries General Council regarding the struggles many clergywomen encounter as they seek to fulfill their calls to ministry. The purpose of this portion of the Women’s Ministries website is education. Far too many people attending a Church of the Nazarene do not know the historical role of clergywomen in the early years of our denomination. Neither is there an adequate understanding of the denomination’s theological position regarding women as clergy.” Be sure to check out this encouraging addition to the Women’s Ministries website.

themselves as faithful ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Three different records of ministry took shape after this event.

George Hammond was a pastor and evangelist until 1948. His pastorates included Little Rock First Church of the Nazarene, Kansas City First, Grace Church (in Nashville), and Albuquerque First. He was active in prohibition politics and once ran as the Prohibition Party’s candidate for governor of Kentucky.

E. J. Sheeks was an energetic evangelist and church planter. She devoted the next twelve years to pastoring circuits of three or four churches in Arkansas and Tennessee and spent parts of each summer holding revivals. She was the primary force behind the creation of a home for unwed mothers established in Texarkana, Texas, as a joint project of the Arkansas and Dallas Districts. Later she earned a Bachelor of Theology degree and then a Bachelor of Arts degree. She devoted the second half of her career to teaching in the religion department of Bresee College in Hutchinson, Kansas, and retired when the college merged with the one in Bethany, Oklahoma, in 1939.

Mrs. R. L. Harris, or Mary Lee Cagle, was the church planter whose ministry in West Texas generated the nucleus of the Abilene District (now West Texas District) of the Church of the Nazarene. Journalist C. A. McConnell hailed her as “the mother of holiness in west Texas.” She served as an evangelist until the late 1940s, though she pastored churches for short periods. A Baptist observer once noted that her revival meetings were “as well run as any I’ve ever witnessed.” Her pulpit demeanor was dignified, and her fortitude under pressure was legendary. She was a



work-horse. She once apologized to the Abilene District assembly for taking two weeks off to rest and “only preaching three times” during that short hiatus. It is likely that more women were called to ministry *through her ministry* than through the influence of any other single woman in the church.

Three ordinations. Three records of service. Three proven and faithful ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Stan Ingersol has been manager of the Nazarene Archives at the international headquarters in Kansas City, Missouri, since 1985. He has a Ph.D. from Duke University and is a specialist in American religious history. He is married to the Rev. Cheryl Somers-Ingersol, a pastor in Overland Park, Kansas.

Book Notes

A Review of Protestantism in America by Randall Balmer and Lauren F. Winner published by Columbia University Press and *Legacy...Hymns and Faith*, a CD by Amy Grant

By Rebecca Laird

A wise spiritual director once saw tears threaten to spill from my eyes, raised her hand, and said gently: “Shhhh. No talking. Something holy is stirring. Pay attention even if it is painful.”

Twice recently I’ve had to unexpectedly heed her advice. The first time I was 30,000 feet in the air flying over Salt Lake City. I turned away from my seat mate and looked out the window at the huge expanse of water. I’d been reading *Protestantism in America*, a well-written introduction to that part of

Christianity that defines my faith and practice. I’d picked the book to read on a cross-country flight because of the authors: Randall Balmer is professor of American Religion at Columbia University and an oft-quoted expert on evangelicalism, and Lauren Winner is a twenty-something writer whose provocative writing has caught my eye in *Christianity Today*, “Books & Culture,” the *New York Times Book Review*, Focus on the Family’s webzine *Boundless*, and on *Beliefnet*.

Many histories of Protestantism focus on high steeple churches or tell the stories of denominations as they crossed the Atlantic and cross-pollinated on American soil. In the first two sections, the book does trace the history and varieties of American Protestantism, but it also takes us inside representative churches like New Life Family Fellowship in New Mexico and Harlem’s Abyssinian Baptist Church. These narrative case studies show how the inheritance of history has marked current church practice. The book also has a surprising bias toward evangelicals, “the most populous and most vibrant strain of American Protestantism.” This is not an approach taken by most histories published by University Presses.

What brought me to tears was the third section on “Challenges.” The first challenge Protestants continue to face is us—“What is to be done with the women?” The chapter “Protestants and Feminism” traces the rise of feminist theology from second-wave feminism. (It spends scant time on the earliest feminists and their religious impulses from which we take our clues, and neglects the often overlooked part holiness women played in entering the pulpit in the late 19th Century, but that’s why Wesleyan/Holiness Women Clergy keep self-publishing resources that uncover our forgotten foremothers.)

The differences between complementarians and egalitarians are sketched, and the fracas over the Sophia debates in mainline churches is retraced, but that’s all pretty far afield from the experience of most women in holiness churches. What is helpful about this both/and approach is that the evangelical and mainline gender struggles are both given voice rather than simply prioritizing one and trivializing the other.

I started to get a lump in my throat when I read what we’ve all known for more than a decade: “Although women are being ordained in record number, they do not always find desirable posts waiting for them after seminary.” I’ve been out of seminary for a dozen years and ordained for seven, and of the two church-related jobs actually offered to me, one couldn’t pay the bills, and the other was from another denomination. And I’ve lost track of the informal “initial conversations” that eventually led nowhere. But what turned that lump to tears was a phrase spoken by Linda McKinnish Bridges, professor of New Testament at Baptist Theological Seminary who urged other Baptist women ministers facing new restrictions to “travel on sister... “Leave home. You will be fine. There are other places waiting for your leadership.”

In recent months I’ve had similar words spoken to me or have had to say them to other women who’ve waited more than long enough for church doors to open. Fatigue seems to be setting in among some of us who’ve long been asking and living these hard questions. Sure, there are some positive movements. Every District Superintendent now has a copy of *Ablaze with Love*, the splendid video documentary on women in ministry by Janine Tartaglia Metcalf, and a short-take was shown at every



District Assembly this year. Good show! And recently, a General Superintendent took me aside and said, “Forgive us for being stupid and slow about women in ministry.” No top leader has ever spoken such words to me before. I could only thank him for his honesty and forthright advocacy. I kept thinking afterward that the denomination needs to learn the lesson taught by that modern-day sage Forrest Gump: “Stupid is as stupid does.”

Forrest knew, and so do I, that it is no sin to be stupid or slow. We all only know what we currently know, nothing more. But once awareness dawns, we are all judged by our converted actions. Can we now replace the “sorry to be... slow” part with honesty and steady advocacy?

We are members of God’s family, and as such, we need to know that there is a place of service equal to our gifts and callings in this Protestant clan. If there is no place, dear church, be clear. We may need to travel on, even if such partings will be made with tears and sadness. We know we go or stay with God—the Holy One who called us has promised not to leave or forsake us even if churches keep their doors shut.

The second time tears overwhelmed me, I was driving Garden State Parkway on a brilliant and breezy summer day. I pushed Amy Grant’s *Legacy* CD into my player and her easy-to-sing-with voice filled my Honda. Now I know that music holds memory, and hymns are the mother tongue understood by American Protestants (Gen-X evangelicals may not know this language as well), but I was astonished at how immediately these hymns unbolted my cynical heart. From the first phrase of “This is My Father’s World,” I was transported back in time Junior Church at Nampa First Church of the Nazarene. I was again sitting upright on white-plank pews,

swinging my legs, and singing this witness: “In the rustling grass, I hear Him pass, He speaks to me everywhere.” When a stanza of “How Great Thou Art” was sung, I felt the presence of my quiet grandfather who would stand up and wave his hands and shout, “Glory, Glory, Glory” whenever he got blessed. The third track “Softly and Tenderly” fast-forwarded me two decades to the Coming Home hospice in San Francisco’s Castro District. I sat stroking Johnny’s red hair as he cried on my shoulder. We had gathered to say a final farewell to his partner who had died of AIDS. “Come Home, Come Home, Ye Who Are Weary Come Home” was the anthem that led Johnny to our church in his grief. A year later we stood with his family at his grave as they tried to convince themselves that he had died of cancer. (The wrenching challenges of homosexuality and social justice are fodder for other chapters in *Protestantism in America*.)

Tears were flowing from behind my sunglasses when Amy’s voice sang: “Be still my soul./Thy God doth undertake/ To guide the future as He has the past/Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake/ All now mysterious will be bright at last.” I needed to know that summer day that God guides the future for me and for all of us who collectively are writing with our lives the next chapter in the history of American Protestantism.

Let me know what you are reading. Send email comments or short reviews to rlairdmc@aol.com.

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