Hands, Hearts, and Voices

Women Who Followed God's Call

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Dedications

Dedicated to my mother, Miriam Treacy Hunt, who not only gave me birth, but nurtured me in my Christian faith and provided a role model as a woman who balanced full-time work outside the home with care for her family and service to her church; and to my daughters, Pamela Ratmeyer Selthun and Lisa Ratmeyer Valderrama, who are taking their place in that company of women called by God as they teach children and adults and serve as deacons in their local congregations.

Miriam Hunt worked as a secretary to the executive of the Board of North American Missions of the Reformed Church in America for more than twenty-five years. During that time, she also took the minutes for annual General Synod meetings. Miriam Hunt served as an elder at Madison Square Presbyterian Church in New York City for many years before retiring to Florida. Widowed in 1994, she is the first woman to serve as an elder on the consistory of Hope Community Church (Reformed) in Orlando, Florida.

Pamela Selthun has just completed a term as deacon at Longview Reformed Church in Phoenix, Arizona, where she initiated and led a Bible study for women. Lisa Valderrama served one term as deacon at Brighton Heights Reformed Church in Staten Island, New York. Currently she and her sons, Michael and Kevin, are members of Huguenot Reformed Church, Staten Island, New York, where Lisa teaches vacation Bible school every summer and assists in the congregation's ministry with a shelter for homeless individuals.

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This collection of stories of some RCA women is an attempt to celebrate ministries of administration, evangelism, social/political activism and advocacy, healing, hospitality, interpretation of the Word, teaching, nurturing, generosity, the arts, and faithfulness.

Foreword

Significant movement toward the publication of the stories of women in the Reformed Church in America took place in 1975. This was the year of the 15th anniversary of the National Department of Women's Work, the 100th anniversary of the Women's Board of Foreign Missions, and the year designated by the United Nations as the International Year of the Woman. With events taking place across the denomination honoring these organizations, RCA members were asking for historical material about the role of women in the Reformed Church. Resources were minimal; requests were manifold.

A step toward the publishing of a book of stories came in the form of the General Synod Executive Committee's appointment of the Task Force on Women in 1975. This group served until 1978, was followed by the Ad Hoc Committee on Women, and finally by the Commission on Women (now known as the Commission for Women) in 1980. Each of these bodies expressed concern with the lack of information about the role women play in the Reformed Church in America.

Reformed Church Women, successor to the National Department of Women's Work, and the program agency for the women of the church, adopted a proposal in 1987 for the publication of "The Stories of Women in the Reformed Church in America." RCW shared the proposal with the Commission on Women, and both groups attempted to secure funding for the project. Annual reports on the progress of the book were made to the General Synod, which in 1988 recommended that the commission "disseminate the stories of women in ministry throughout the church that the history of women in the denomination may be known, understood, and appreciated fully" (*MGS* 1988, R-16, 183). Based on this recommendation, RCW (renamed Reformed Church Women's Ministries in 1993), the Commission for Women, and the publications department of the Reformed Church proceeded with the project.

In 1989 the World Council of Churches declared 1988-1998 to be the Ecumenical Decade: Churches in Solidarity with Women. The 1989 General Synod adopted a resolution to "support and endorse the Ecumenical Decade" and further to "call upon the members, churches, and leaders of the church to celebrate the visions and commitment of women in the struggles for justice, peace, and the integrity of creation in our wounded world...and to affirm women's perspectives and contributions in every setting that together we may all participate with God in transforming the world" (*MGS* 1989, 174-5).

It is only in recent history that women's gifts for ministry[1] in denominations like the RCA have been affirmed and celebrated. Church history books have traditionally focused on men; women's contributions to the faith and life of the church are mentioned rarely. Church school curriculum, sermon illustrations, and Bible studies have tended to applaud ministries of male heroes of the faith such as Moses, Gideon, Peter, and Paul, while paying scant attention to ministries of women such as Miriam, Deborah, Mary Magdalene, or Lydia. As Letha Scanzoni and Nancy Hardesty write in *All We're Meant to Be:*

> *To paraphrase John, there are also many other things which women have done in the church's history; were every one of them to be written, I suppose that the volumes would fill library shelves equal to those already devoted to the history of men's work in the church. Women have proven that God does call and empower them and that they are equal to the task. Their record has simply been ignored. (Scanzoni, 1976, 175).*

This collection of stories of some RCA women celebrates ministries of administration, evangelism, social/political

activism and advocacy, healing, hospitality, interpretation of the Word, teaching, nurturing, generosity, the arts, and faithfulness. Of course, there are hundreds of additional women whose stories could have been included in this book. Although each person's story is unique, readers may discover similarities in stories of women they may know or have known.

Each chapter begins with a short biblical narrative or description of a particular woman or women in the Old or New Testament and a few paragraphs introducing one of the eleven ministries. Biblical examples are important for several reasons: stories of women in the Bible have not been emphasized in the church, Christian women need to be encouraged by stories of their foremothers in the faith, and Christian men need to be reminded that the story of God's people includes accounts of women in leadership.

The biblical story is followed by stories of RCA women, most of whom were never ordained to one of the offices of ministry (elder, deacon, minister of the Word and sacrament, or professor of theology), and many whose ministries are known only to people in their local communities. Each woman whose story appears in this book stands for hundreds more who have made significant contributions to the Reformed Church in America and to the realm of God.

The stories in this book came from a variety of sources. Russell Gasero and Dr. John Beardslee were helpful in pointing me to sources in the New Brunswick Theological Seminary library and the RCA Archives. I am grateful to those who took time and effort to submit names of potential candidates and to send or tell me stories of RCA women. Sons and daughters have shared their mother's stories. Husbands wrote about their wives. Friends, colleagues, and pastors have written stories of women who were well-known to them. Others shared personal stories by writing or taping responses to an extensive questionnaire. All stories, completed questionnaires, interviews, tapes, videos, and other materials collected in the process of completing this project have been placed in the Archives of the Reformed Church in America, New Brunswick Theological Seminary, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

I am grateful to the many people who gave time, energy, enthusiasm, expertise, and money to get this book published. The idea for a book of women's stories began in 1987 with Beth Marcus, who, along with Diana Paulsen, Ken Bradsell, Kim Baker, Eloise Van Heest, and (later) Christina Van Eyl, formed a committee which kept the project moving forward. Norma Violante spent hours transcribing taped interviews and assisting with mailings. Eloise Van Heest was a great encourager as she edited each chapter and helped me tie up loose ends. The Reformed Church in America graciously gave me a three-month sabbatical, continuing to pay my salary as an editor and writer in the General Synod Council's Stewardship and Communication Unit, allowing me to work uninterrupted out of my home office. And thanks to my husband, Roland, who put up with inconveniences as he grew accustomed to hearing me say, "I don't have time right now. I have to work on this story, chapter, etc."

The "stories" which follow have been edited, for a variety of reasons including space limitations, but wherever possible, the women's own words have been used to tell their stories, because their voices need to be heard. As I read these stories, I marvelled at the courage of women who responded to God's call to them in a variety of ways, as the Holy Spirit led them. Discerning the will of God involves struggle and is often painful. Church leaders, who were more often than not male, did not always understand and, in some cases, frustrated the attempts women made to serve their Lord. But women of faith are not easily deterred from following God's call.

My hope is that you will enjoy and appreciate these stories. My prayer is that *Hands, Hearts, and Voices: Women Who Followed God's Call* will encourage and inspire readers, female and male, to use their gifts so that the church of Jesus Christ may grow, that understanding will be enhanced, and that people will turn to God.

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1. The term ministry as used in this book refers to a specific way a person has responded to God's call to exercise God's gifts both within and outside of the church.

How To Use This Book

This volume is more than a historic record. It is a resource that can be used to chart your own spiritual journey. It can be a source of inspiration, of celebration, or introspection for individuals or for small groups.

1. As you read the stories, journal your reaction to these women and how their lives parallel or differ from yours.

2. Use the book for small-group discussion. To assist the process, consider these questions.

a. By which story do you feel most engaged? Why?
b. Who has been your model in living out her Christian call?
c. How have you been a model to someone else?
d. How do you build your own courage when faced with difficult circumstances?
e. When and how have you challenged assumptions about the place of women? Do you see a progression in your life in your efforts to understand or confront inequalities between women and men?
f. Have you encountered any efforts within your church family or workplace to restrict the offering of women's gifts? How have you responded?
g. What does it mean to be a good Christian in professional or commercial settings?
h. What is your present ministry and how does it contribute to the mission of the church?
i. Do you have a biblical role model? Who is it, and why do you relate to that individual?
j. In what ways does female leadership in today's church resemble that of the biblical stories?
k. What are your hopes for women in the church in the future? How will you help these hopes to be realized?

3. Do an in depth study of the Scripture passages used as models.

4. Contact TRAVARCA, the RCA's media resource center, for videos on women.

5. Consider presenting one or more of these women at an all-church program. Write a skit or dramatic reading based upon her life.

6. Invite one of the women to speak in person.

7. Use the stories as sermon illustrations; use short clips as filler for church communications like bulletins and newsletters.

8. Dedicate one Sunday each year to celebrate the gifts of women in the Bible, in the denomination, and in your congregation. The following week, celebrate the gifts of men.

9. Form a prayer group specifically to uphold women in your congregation or denomination you are engaged in ministry.

10. Tell some of the stories to children in Sunday school. Let them illustrate the story.

11. Invite all the members of your congregation to write their stories, or assign younger members to interview older members. Put the stories on computer disk or bind them in book form for posterity.

12. Write your own story, your mother's story, your grandmother's story. They will be treasured for generations to come.

Codes Used in This Book

Information contained in some parentheses (author, date of publication, and page of quote) refers to items listed in the bibliography. Information in other parentheses refers to person(s) who submitted particular stories. The asterisk (*) following the name of the person who submitted the story means that most quotes in the story are from this source. These sources are **not** listed in the bibliography.

Endnotes (indicated by superscript numbers) contain further information relating to material in the story. The following abbreviations appear frequently throughout the book:

MGS	*Minutes of General Synod*
WBDM	Women's Board of Domestic Missions
Exec. Comm. WBDM	Minutes of Executive Committee of the Women's Board of Domestic Missions
WBFM	Woman's Board of Foreign Missions

Chapter One

Taking the Lead

Deborah

(Judges 4:4, 5; 5:7)

During the historical period between the conquest and settlement of Canaan and the establishment of the monarchy, Israel's loose confederation of tribes was led by heroic leaders called judges. One of those judges was Deborah, a prophetess called to proclaim God's word of judgment and promise. Deborah was a person to be reckoned with. "She used to sit under the palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim; and the Israelites came up to her for judgment" (Judges. 4:5). Barak, a tribal leader, came to Deborah to get directions about where to lead his troops into battle. Not only did she tell him God's plan to give Sisera, the enemy general, into Barak's hand, she also agreed to go to Mount Tabor to be with Barak and his ten thousand warriors as they pursued Sisera's chariots and army. When Sisera was defeated, Deborah and Barak sang a victory song, praising God (Judges 5).

Lydia

(Acts 16:14, 15)

Lydia, a seller and dealer of purple cloth, was a Gentile who found comfort in the prayers of a community of Jewish women. When the apostle Paul visited the city of Philippi, he went to the river on the Sabbath, because he supposed that Jews would gather there to pray. There he found Lydia and the other women worshiping God. As Paul spoke about Christ, the Lord opened Lydia's heart to listen eagerly to what Paul was saying. After she and her household were baptized, she facilitated the growth of a Christian congregation in Philippi. She opened her home to Paul and probably to other Christian visitors. She, no doubt, used both her resources and her business connections to help the Philippian church.

Early in Reformed Church history women took little leadership in the church for the most part. Their lives were consumed with homemaking. As in the Philippian church, however, more women attended worship than men. "Pew assignments at the early Dutch churches in both Albany and Schenectady [New York] reveal that approximately two-thirds of the pews were occupied by women."[1]

By 1800 women had more time and energy to devote to the church as a result of technological advances and limited families. During the Civil War women had taken on responsibilities previously assigned to men. "The ministry of women to soldiers in the war had proved that [women] possessed great executive ability and an amount of energy which, once set free, could not be and ought not to be suppressed" (Chamberlain, 1925, 8).

Women in the Reformed Church in America put that energy to good use by using their gifts of leadership with women and children in the local congregation, in the community, and in the denomination.

Sarah Platt Haines Doremus

(1802-1877)

Sarah Platt Haines was born into a wealthy New York City family. It is said that her mother's concern for the salvation of a lost world made an impression that stayed with her throughout her life. A Presbyterian before her marriage to Thomas C. Doremus, a doctor from an equally distinguished family, Sarah joined South Church (Reformed) in New York City, where Thomas was an elder. Sarah's life was demanding but fulfilling. "Rising early, she attended to the affairs of her own household. Retiring late, she carried on an endless correspondence with those who were doing the world's work. . . . She is said to have entered fully and intelligently into all the interests of her nine children. . . . Painting, sewing, embroidering, modelling in wax, telling stories, inventing games, she was their adored playmate. She was a perfect hostess. . . . As we read of the peace and harmony which flowed from her presence we feel that her dwelling must have been the fit emblem of her life and character" (Chamberlain, 1925, 6).

R. Pierce Beaver calls Sarah Doremus "the most remarkable laywoman in the whole history of American Protestantism" (Beaver, 1980, 90). D. T. W. Chambers, of the Collegiate Church in New York City, speaking at South Church's services of commemoration held in 1887, said of her:

> *This church has the credit of having produced what I take to be the most distinguished ornament*

to Christianity, of the female sex, which this country has seen or is likely to see....Every good enterprise, no matter of what name or under whose auspices, found in her a wise adviser and an efficient helper (Historical Sketch, South Church, NYC, 1887, 41).

When Dr. David Abeel, RCA missionary to China, endeavored to establish a women's foreign missionary society in New York City in 1834, he sought out Sarah Doremus. He knew that women of all denominations gathered in her parlors and that she could be instrumental in establishing a "Society for Promoting Female Education in China and the East" similar to that which he had helped to organize earlier that year in London. Sarah "held several meetings of interested and committed women, principally Reformed, and the group prepared to organize." However, at the final meeting, Dr. Rufus Anderson of the American Board (of which the Reformed Church was an auxiliary member) sent the women a letter asking them "to defer indefinitely." Perhaps the American Board feared that a women's missionary society would divert funds from its own work. Some, such as Joanna Bethune, were for moving ahead. In a letter written in 1876 to the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions, Sarah Doremus reported that Mrs. Bethune had exclaimed, "What! Is the American Board afraid the ladies will get ahead of them?" (Chamberlain, 1925, 7). Finally, to the deep sorrow of David Abeel, the majority abandoned the project until a later date.

Twenty-seven years later, in February 1861, the first women's missionary organization in the United States—the Women's Union Missionary Society for Heathen Lands—was formed. This was the first separate and distinct society to send and support women as missionaries. Sarah Doremus was the society's first president and remained in office until her death in 1877. "Her personal influence was very powerful in arousing missionary zeal, and her enthusiasm inspired the women of our churches."[2]

Founding this missionary society is usually the only thing for which Sarah Doremus is noted. But she did so much more. In the 1830s she began holding Sunday services in the city prison of New York City. She served as the first director of the Women's Prison Association and inspired released prisoners as they worked to be rehabilitated at the association's Home for Discharged Female Convicts. Much of the embroidery and needlework she did was sold for the benefit of missions. She was instrumental in the opening of the Woman's Hospital in 1855. She helped organize the Presbyterian Home for Aged Women. She showed her concern for poor women and their children by founding the New York House and School of Industry, which provided work for the women and schooling for the children. She also helped found the Nursery and Child's Hospital, which provided day and hospital care for poor children. She served on boards of the City Mission and Tract Society and the City Bible Society. During the Civil War she was active in services to soldiers.

At her memorial service it was said: "Mrs. Doremus gave the whole of herself to the Lord; the whole of herself to the church; the whole of herself to every suffering heart she met, and yet the whole of herself to her home and children" (Chamberlain, 1925, 7).

It is true that the women of the Reformed Church were slow to organize their own missionary society. Instead, the records tell us that the women directed their offerings through the Synod's board and gave

to missions through their local churches. What seems to have precipitated the organization in 1875 of the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions was a concern that gifts were being diverted into the ecumenical Woman's Union Society and the schools established by the Reformed Church were being neglected. In response to a request from the General Synod of 1874, calling upon the women of the church to organize a woman's board of foreign missions as an auxiliary to Synod's board, thirteen women (whose names were not recorded by Dr. Ferris, then the secretary of Synod's Board who took the minutes) met on January 7, 1875, at Marble Collegiate Church. They established the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions to promote the work of the Reformed Church "among the women and children of heathen lands" (*Constitution*, WBFM, adopted in 1875).

During the final decades of the nineteenth century and on into the beginning of the twentieth century, women in the Reformed Church were searching for and finding a place where they could find their own voice. The *Mission Gleaner*, the "bi-monthly magazine devoted entirely to the work of the Woman's Board," which sold for "the modest sum of 25 cents a year," may have helped church women and girls to find their voice.

Matilda Van Zandt Cobb

(1840?-1910)

Matilda Van Zandt, daughter of Matthew Thomas and Maria Suydam Van Zandt married Henry N. Cobb, a graduate of Union Seminary in New York City, in 1860. After his ordination in the Presbyterian Church, the couple served as missionaries in Persia and Koordistan for two years before returning to the United States. They lived in the parsonage of the Reformed Church in Millbrook, New York, where Henry served as pastor from 1866-1881.

Matilda Cobb was a charter member of the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions, which she served as one of its honorary vice-presidents. She also served as the board's president for one year and was deeply interested in all its work. In 1883 the Cobb family, which included a son and a daughter,[3] moved to East Orange, New Jersey. Henry became corresponding secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Reformed Church in America, a position he held until his death on April 17, 1910.

Following their move to New Jersey, Matilda immersed herself in the work of the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions. She became the first editor of the *Mission Gleaner*, which "was established [in 1883] at her suggestion and through her efforts" (*Christian Intelligencer*, May 18, 1910, p. 305), and which continued until 1917. This publication, which was written for women and by women, consisted of letters from women missionaries in Japan, India, China, and Arabia, which the WBFM supported; poems and short stories on mission themes; and practical tips on how to maintain interest in and gain support for RCA missionaries and the work they were doing. Matilda Cobb not only edited the magazine, she also wrote articles and stories.

In "The Story of a Carpet," Matilda Cobb wrote of her family's "old, old carpet, which was transformed by some magic into one bright and beautiful" (Cobb, *Mission Gleaner*, November/December 1988, 9). Matilda had saved her household money, planning to replace their worn out, shabby carpet, which was an embarrassment. Just as Matilda had decided to purchase a new carpet, "the appeals for foreign work came home with more and more force, and there was a mental struggle." Matilda sent her carpet funds to the board, thinking she had made a great sacrifice. "Not so!" she discovered, for her "old worn carpet has become bright with beautiful lessons." The

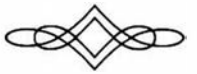
shabby carpet reminded Matilda that her "little self-denial" might assist a school where some Japanese girl would learn "precious truths"; might give "little ones of China, unwelcome at birth, with little feet tortured and bound in youth" a brighter future; might bring relief "one step nearer the poor little child widows of India." Her carpet had been magically transformed. In each step Matilda took on her old carpet she heard the voices of her far away sisters. "Mingling with them," she said, "I hear a silvery voice which, like a theme in music, now louder, now soft and low, but ever sustained, ever recurring...it sings: 'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these, ye have done it unto me'" (Cobb, *Mission Gleaner*, November/December 1988, 9-11).

> ***Matilda Van Zandt Cobb's life was "full of those uncatalogued, unremembered, many of them nameless deeds of kindness and of love to her friends, to her parishioners, to our missionaries, their wives, and their children. . . .Hers was the beauty of an unobtrusive but distinct and large usefulness in the service of her Lord. She shared the work of her husband with him."***
>
> ***—spoken by the Rev. John G. Fagg at Matilda Cobb's funeral***

For twenty-three years Matilda Cobb served as the *Gleaner's* "able and efficient manager of its business affairs" (Chamberlain, 1925, 35). In her editorials she cajoled the women of the church to use their gifts in leading auxiliaries and raising their voices in prayer, she encouraged women to teach children about the church's mission, and she persuaded women to give their money to support the board's programs and personnel.

Forced to give up active work, including the editorship of the *Mission Gleaner*, in 1906 due to failing health, Matilda continued to encourage Reformed Church women engaged in mission. When Matilda Cobb died on May 11, 1910, a *Mission Gleaner* editorial noted: "we have constantly felt the inspiration of her sympathy and her clear and comprehensive acquaintance with all of our work" (*Mission Gleaner*, June 1910, 1). At her funeral, the Rev. John G. Fagg said:

Her life was full of those uncatalogued, unremembered, many of them nameless deeds of kindness and of love to her friends, to her parishioners, to our missionaries, their wives, and their children. . . .Hers was the beauty of an unobtrusive but distinct and large usefulness in the service of her Lord. She shared the work of her husband with him (Chamberlain, 1925, 189).



The Women's Executive Committee of the Board of Domestic Missions was formed in 1882 as a counterpart to the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions (WBFM). Amelia Van Lent (Mrs. Paul Van Cleef) accepted the presidency of the Women's Executive Committee of the Board of Domestic Missions, even though she was already active on the WBFM. (She had served as the board's first vice-president since its beginnings.) "The two organizations, realizing that their work was essentially one work having in view one object, that of making Christ known at home and abroad, worked side by side in the spirit of closest fellowship, united under one official head, Mrs. Paul Van Cleef" (Chamberlain, 1925, 37f).

In 1909 the women's board incorporated under the name of Women's Board of Domestic Missions of the

Reformed Church in America to promote the growth of the RCA "by building parsonages, furnishing churches, and supporting missionaries" (*Golden Years in Miniature*, 1932, 79). The women of the Reformed Church were very successful in their efforts. In his book, *A People In Mission: Their Expanding Dream*, Eugene Heideman notes: "They had auxiliaries in almost every congregation. Women were working, studying, dreaming, planning, and giving" (1984, 34). By the 1930s women of churches in a classis would hold semi-annual conferences. These Women's Missionary Unions gave opportunity for women to hear missionary speakers and to mobilize joint efforts in service.

Although their nation denied them the right to vote and their church prohibited their participation in its organizational structure, Reformed Church women continued to pour their energy into creating and working in organizations which assisted missionaries in their work of spreading the gospel to both women and men at home and abroad. In fact, in *History of the Reformed Church in America*, 1628-1928, Willard Dayton Brown wrote: "If the whole church could be organized for the benevolent work of the denomination as the women of the churches are organized, much more could probably be accomplished than is the case now" (Brown, 1928, 112).

Sara-Helene Trompen Beltman

(1894-1994)

Sara-Helene Trompen was born on August 24, 1894, into a well-to-do Christian family. Her father, a leader in Fifth Reformed Church, was one of the pioneer Dutch retail merchants in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Sara-Helene and her sister Dorothy graduated from Hope College in an age when getting a college degree was not the norm for a female. Sara-Helene also received a master's degree in English literature from the University of Colorado. She was offered a position on the faculty of that university, but declined the offer. Instead she married Henry Beltman in 1920 and went with him to China, where they served as RCA missionaries until 1926 (Trudi Amerkhanian, story submitted to Beth Marcus, 1989*).

Sara-Helene's health began to deteriorate after three years in China, until finally the Beltmans decided to return to the United States. In 1928 Sara-Helene and Henry settled in Grand Haven, Michigan. After serving Second Reformed Church in that city for three years, they moved to the West Coast. Sara-Helene used her mission experience as a springboard for her involvement with women's ministries in churches that her husband was instrumental in organizing. Her innovation and vision brought life to women's ministries in each of the seven congregations this couple served.

In 1936 Sara-Helene Beltman helped organize the Women's Missionary Union of the Classis of California. In a history of that organization, which Sara-Helene wrote, she said:

> *After the Classis of California had been duly organized in 1935, there was a great spirit of joy and happiness amongst the ladies of the classis to organize a Women's Classical Union, such as many of them remembered having in their churches back East. The call [to form such an organization] came from the women themselves, not from the pastors, not from headquarters in New York. God put this spirit of joy and desire to work within our hearts that drew these newly-organized churches into a close friendship and fellowship (Beltman, undated, 1).*

When Sara-Helene Beltman was elected to serve

as president (an office she held for ten years), she expressed surprise.

> *I was stunned with the responsibility put upon me...this was a new experience [for me], but I was determined with God's help and wisdom to make this a joyful and fulfilling service for Christ's kingdom and for the dear women of our churches in California (Beltman, undated, 1).*

Sara-Helene's style was to work with her board and the women of the California churches. She said, "I never made a move without consulting...the women of our churches and union." She used her connections in foreign and domestic missions to secure missionary speakers from China, other Asian countries, and New Mexico.

From 1973 to 1984 she served with her husband at the Crystal Cathedral in Garden Grove, California, as minister to senior citizens. In 1984 her husband wrote of her, "No one had a better helpmate than I."

Her daughter Judith writes:

> *My mother's lifelong desire was to serve and glorify her Lord. She did this and was a role model to all up until the moment of her death. Her many years of service to the Reformed Church were outstanding. She was totally dedicated and committed (J. Beltman, letter to author, April 1994).*

In July of 1993 Sara-Helene Beltman became a resident of the Long Term Care Facility at the Orange City, Iowa, Hospital. When she died on January 14, 1994, she was 99 years old.

Years before the 1972 General Synod action permitting the ordination of women to the offices of elder and deacon, women had served on denominational staff, although never in great numbers. Ruth Ransom (1893-1975), a member of the St. Nicholas Collegiate Church in New York City, served as the capable general secretary of the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions from 1944 until the women's board merged with General Synod's board in 1946. From that year until her retirement in June 1960, Ruth Ransom was an executive secretary of the new board, the first woman to serve as an executive of an official Reformed Church board. Her responsibilities included supervision of RCA work in the Philippines, promotion, and organization of the Department of Women's Work.

Ruth Ransom also carried responsibilities in the new structure for personnel. She had been a missionary in Peru with the Methodist Church for six years and had served that denomination as head of their department of missionary personnel. On her retirement the board noted that "those whom she has recruited and trained and placed in service will continue their witness around the world in loyalty to our common Lord and Master" (Annual Report, Board for Christian World Mission, 1960, foreword).

The General Synod's boards and the women's boards merged in 1946 (foreign missions) and 1951 (domestic missions). In 1967 both these boards, which had been renamed World Missions and North American Missions, became part of the General Program Council of the Reformed Church in America.

Ruth Stafford Peale

(1906-)

Ruth Stafford was the daughter of a Methodist minister who vowed never to marry a minister. However, as a student at Syracuse University in New York, where she was studying to become a mathematics teacher, she met Norman Vincent Peale, the dynamic energetic Methodist minister of the University Church, and her vow was pushed aside. They were married in 1930. Two years later the couple moved to New York City, where they began a fifty-two-year ministry at Marble Collegiate Church and with the Reformed Church in America (Ruth Peale, taped interview with author, Aug. 1994*).

While Norman was working in the local church, Ruth found a way to give time to a denominational board. She told Norman, "That way I can find out what is happening in the church at large and bring that back to you while you're working in the local church." She was elected to the Women's Board of Domestic Missions and after some time was elected to serve as president of the board, a position she held for ten years (1936-46). She says: "I seemed to have a mind that focused on administration, running an organization. That's where my skill was. I considered myself a volunteer with a great deal of interest. My volunteer work was a job. I was at it all the time.

"I spent hours with that board, but I always made time for the children. We lived in the city and I brought my children—Margaret, John, and Elizabeth—up in the city, which is not easy. I had two rules. No matter how busy I was, I was always available for the events in their lives, and I always told the children what I was doing. In fact, we have a family story about our son, who was a youngster at that time. I would tell him, as I left in the morning, 'I'm going to the board rooms.' He told people that I was working at a lumber yard."

After the General Synod of 1950 voted to merge the Women's Board of Domestic Missions with the Board of Domestic Missions, Ruth Stafford Peale continued to serve on the new board, which included twenty-eight men and twenty-one women. In 1955 she was the first woman elected to serve as president of a denominational board which included men and women. As president of the board, she was often invited to speak at classical union meetings. She says, "I would always form my presentation around the needs and let them know how much money we needed to either build a chapel on an Indian reservation or help support the work at the school in Kentucky."[4]

Ruth Stafford Peale is still in demand as a speaker. In 1994 the International Platform Association, one of the oldest associations of professional speakers in the United States, conferred on her the Norman Vincent Peale Award as a communicator.

Through the years Ruth Stafford Peale has served on the boards of a number of organizations, including the National Council of Churches of Christ, the American Bible Society, Cook Christian Training School, Hope College, the General Program Council of the RCA, the Lord's Day Alliance, New York Theological Seminary, and the Council of Churches of the City of New York. Ruth Peale was one of nine delegates representing the Reformed Church at the constituting convention of the National Council of Churches of Christ in Cleveland, Ohio (1950), and served as the council's vice-president at large (1952-54). She has chaired countless committees and boards including Home Missions Council of North America (1942-44) and Board of Domestic Missions of the RCA (1955-56). She was on the committee which planned the Interchurch Center (TIC) building, where the Reformed Church is a tenant. When the cornerstone was laid in

1960, Ruth Peale was present, along with U. S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower. She served on TIC's board for thirty years, and was chair from 1982-90.

Ruth Stafford Peale is associated with two long-term ministries: the Peale Center for Christian Living, which publishes *Plus* magazine and distributes thirty million pieces of literature a year; and *Guideposts* magazine. The center grew out of Ruth's idea in 1940 to print Norman's sermons, which were in great demand. The first *Guideposts* magazine was printed in 1945. Today it is the twelfth largest magazine of any kind in the United States. Ruth Stafford Peale chairs both organizations.

This dynamic woman credits prayer for giving her energy and the power to accomplish all she does. "Prayer is the center of our ministry. More things are wrought by prayer than anything else. We believe in that, and we know it is true."

In April of 1957 the first delegated assembly of RCA women convened at Buck Hill Falls, Pennsylvania. "The delegates left convinced that all work of the church is mission" (Mina Buys, delegate, interview with Eloise Van Heest, Jan. 1995). The June 1957 General Synod approved a recommendation:

> *1. That a National Department of Women's Work be established to promote the work of the Program Boards of General Synod.*
>
> *2. That the purpose of the National Department of Women's Work shall be to unite all the women of the RCA in Christian fellowship; to make Christ known throughout the world; to deepen the spiritual life of each of its members; and to develop a sense of personal responsibility for the whole mission of the church through a program of education, service, prayer and giving.*
>
> *3. That the year 1958 be used as a year of education, and that the year 1959 be used as a year of preparation and promotion, and the organization begin to function January 1, 1960 (MGS 1957, 328).*

Leaders across the denomination explained the new organization to existing local RCA women's organizations. By the end of 1961 there were 606 guilds for Christian service accompanied by smaller Bible study circles in the then 935 churches in the RCA. Anita Welwood served as the first director of the National Department of Women's Work from 1957-72. She led the RCA women through those first years of their organization with great gentleness.

The first Triennial Assembly was held in Holland, Michigan, in 1962, with 1,500 women attending. Every three years a non-delegated Triennial is held so that RCA women from many places and circumstances have an opportunity to grow as they mingle in Christian fellowship.

In 1973 the National Department of Women's Work changed its name to Reformed Church Women; twenty years later RCW became Reformed Church Women's Ministries (RCWM), "thus making clear the emphasis on mission and ministry which had characterized the organization from the very beginning" ("RCWM and Mission: The Tradition Begins," 1994, 3).

A woman who has given leadership in a variety of staff positions and continues to serve the Reformed Church in America is Beth E. Marcus.

Beth Marcus

(1920-)

Beth E. Marcus was the second child born to

Jacob and Etta Marcus. Her family, which included an older brother and younger sister, was close-knit. Her father, who had come from the Netherlands when he was nine months old, met Beth's mother at church (Christian Reformed). After Jacob and Etta were married they helped start two new Christian Reformed (CRC) congregations, but left the CRC and joined Third Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan, when Beth was a youngster (Beth Marcus, written responses to author, July 1994*).

Beth notes that she "began to sense a calling to some kind of Christian vocation" when she served as president of Third Church's Christian Endeavor Society and later in the city and state societies. During high school she volunteered with the American Red Cross, which filled her need and desire to help people. Hope College prepared her to teach, which she did for a year, but God had other plans for Beth Marcus.

> *I had spent so many hours in the office of the Ottawa County Chapter of the American Red Cross, working with the executive director, that when she resigned, the chairman offered me the position, saying, "You probably know as much as anybody about the job." I was twenty-three years old, and the thought of accepting that much responsibility rather overwhelmed me, but with the encouragement of my family and friends, and after much prayer through which I sensed God's strong leading, I accepted the position.*
>
> *The next ten years were some of the happiest of my life. There was constant challenge and excitement as I worked closely with servicemen and women and their families. I learned how to work with a board of directors, to recruit volunteers, supervise and train volunteers, how to build a budget and raise money to cover expenses. Although I didn't know it, I was being trained for the next chapter in my life.*

When Beth Marcus was invited to join the staff of the Board of Domestic Missions and move to New York City in 1953, she suggested that they look elsewhere, but they persisted. Beth wrestled and prayed for weeks. She still had not made up her mind when she and her sister stopped in a Miami motel on the way back from a Caribbean vacation. "Sitting on the bed in that motel," she says, "it suddenly became absolutely clear to me that I had to go to New York. I knew that God was telling me to go."

> *When I first came to denominational headquarters, I came to a recently merged board. I sensed some feeling on the part of the women on the Board of Domestic Missions that I should have the same title as the male executive, the Rev. Richard Vanden Berg. Within months of my coming to the position, the women on the board proposed equal status for the woman executive. The women's board had brought a considerable amount of money to this board and was more acquainted with the North American ministries than those who had worked with Synod's board, and they were determined that I would not be simply an associate. I am sure there was considerable discussion, but with proponents like Ruth S. Peale, Mary Brinig, Lillian Pool, Catherine Hoffman, and Carol Hageman, the case was won, and I became a full executive.*

Beth Marcus spent fifteen exciting, growing, fulfilling years with the Board of Domestic/North American Missions, working with men and women who ministered with people living in inner city areas of major U.S. cities, in the hills of Kentucky, on Native American reservations, and at a high school for African-Americans in Brewton, Alabama.

She earned a master's degree (in education) from the University of Michigan and did graduate study

at Western Michigan University, New York University, Union Theological Seminary, and New York Theological Seminary. In 1960 Hope College conferred on her an honorary law degree.

When the denominational organization was restructured in 1968, Beth Marcus became director of Promotion and Communication, working with a staff to produce written and audiovisual resources and to schedule mission speakers. Three years later she accepted the challenge of opening an Office of Adult Voluntary Services, matching volunteers to needs in established ministries and providing people to assist in disaster areas and to serve in a multitude of ways.

In 1973 she accepted an additional responsibility on a part-time basis as director of the National Department of Women's Work, upon the retirement of Anita Welwood. That same year, the organization changed its name to Reformed Church Women (RCW). Beth soon found that the two offices worked well together. She says, "Women have the best communication system in the church, so when volunteers were needed, all we had to do was inform the women. It soon became apparent that I had two full-time jobs, but since both were challenging and fulfilling, I continued with both until I retired in 1986, when two people were hired to replace me."

During her tenure as executive director of Reformed Church Women, Beth Marcus initiated and facilitated "Women in Leadership" seminars. She also served as a member of the RCA Commission on Women from 1986-92.

Beth says that one of the biggest surprises in her life took place at the General Synod in 1991 where, as an elder delegate from Holland (Michigan) Classis, she was elected Synod vice-president. She says: "I realize that there were some who were unable to vote for me because they do not accept women in leadership. However, I do believe that God placed me in the right place at the right time and that I was elected because I had spent so much time in the church that I was a known quantity. I am grateful for the opportunity given to me to serve first as vice-president and then as president. I know that I tried to serve with honor and praise to God."

General Synod 1993 adopted a resolution conveying "sincere and deep appreciation to Dr. Beth Marcus for her spirit-filled historic term of service as General Synod president." The Synod also "enthusiastically thanked her for her tireless, lifetime effort in serving the Reformed Church in America and the cause of Christ" (*MGS* 1993, R-4, 455).

In 1978 the Beth E. Marcus Scholarship Fund was established to assist women studying for the ministry. That fund is still helping women seminarians pay a portion of their theological education.

RCW's "Women in Leadership" seminars in the seventies helped RCA women discover and affirm their worth in the church by equipping them "to be effective, competent, and caring leaders in all areas of life" (*MGS* 1989, 112). In the process of leading these seminars in the United States and Canada, Beth Marcus, Pat Stere, Eloise Van Heest, and later a corps of trained facilitators, became acutely aware of the barriers many women faced as they attempted to use their gifts for ministry in local congregations, classes, and regional synods. In 1975 RCW suggested that General Synod appoint a Task Force on Women to study the extent to which women are involved in the program and policy-making decisions in the church, to review the language in the *Book of Church*

Order (BCO) and Liturgy in light of the issue of the role of women in the denomination, and to develop an awareness of the issues of the involvement of women in the life of the denomination and changes needed (*MGS* 1975, 106). The 1978 General Synod, prompted by its president, the Rev. Albertus Bossenbroek, in his report to Synod, established the Ad Hoc Committee on Women (*MGS* 1978, R-8, 31).

Eloise Van Heest co-chaired the Committee on Sexist Bias in the RCA Liturgy with her husband, the Rev. Gerard Van Heest, and she was the facilitator of the Task Force on Women.

Eloise Hinkamp Van Heest

(1930-)

Eloise Hinkamp Van Heest is the daughter of an RCA minister, the wife of an RCA minister, the daughter-in-law of an RCA minister, and the mother of an RCA minister. She says: "Serving God in the family and the community as well as the church, was not only the foundation I received but the environment in which I have lived. I learned by observation and experience the joy that life in Christ brings" (Eloise Van Heest, written responses to author, Aug. 1994*).

As a shy student at Hope College, Eloise was asked to give leadership or was elected to positions for which she felt inadequate. With affirmation from her future husband, fellow students, and faculty, she gradually overcame her reticence and acknowledged that she had abilities which could benefit others.

Designing, writing, and editing educational resources and workshops was a major opportunity for Eloise. Under contract with various Reformed Church agencies, she wrote over twenty-five seminars on topics ranging from "Being Assertive" to "Your Child's Growing Faith." She was project director and editor of the RCA's Heritage and Hope series and edited or co-authored other educational materials. For two years (1982-84), when the RCA could not fund a staff person in the area of Education and Faith Development, she coordinated the Council for Christian Education and served as liaison for Christian education to other groups in the RCA and other denominations.

As a program associate for the Synod of Albany, Eloise provided teacher and leadership training. She developed and used her gifts in the classis, synod, and denomination as RCW consultant for Albany, as a member of the Board of North American Missions, and on the executive committee of the General Program Council.

> *Throughout those years of balancing being a minister's wife, mother of three children, and growing into church leadership, my husband gently encouraged and enabled me to accept those tasks to which God called me. I think that my years coincided with the "healthy and growing" aspects of women's liberation in society and church. Homemaking and motherhood was in high esteem in my early adult years. When society urged women to work outside the home, our children were in school, and I was able to volunteer and work in challenging situations.*

Eloise's most fulfilling and joyful experience was the work she did at Hope Church in Holland, Michigan. Shortly after she was elected an elder there in 1982, the church created the position of administrator, a job in which she supervised all non-ordained staff and enabled volunteers to experience fulfillment and effectiveness in the use of their gifts. The last three years before retiring in 1994, she also served as the church's Christian educator. That year Eloise was also elected president of CERCA

(Christian Educators of the Reformed Church in America).

She served as secretary of the Board of Trustees of Western Theological Seminary for seven years and for two years was the vice-moderator of the Board of Theological Education (BTE). In 1989 a young male attorney was elected moderator. She recalls: "Within minutes, members of the BTE realized that their continual talk of allowing the gifts of women to be contributed to the life of the church had been ignored in their action. Through proper procedures, the election took place again, and I was named the moderator of the BTE, serving for the next two years. In that hour I briefly experienced what so many other women have experienced—being overlooked. Women in theological education and female clergy still face many barriers. I hope that my presence and that of other women on the board make a difference for them."

Slowly women are being selected to take leadership positions on committees, task forces, and commissions of the Reformed Church in America. Carol Myers, a person with a gift for administration, an eye for detail, and a deep appreciation for the church's liturgy, was the first lay person to serve as moderator of General Synod's Commission on Worship, long the stronghold of male clergy.

Carol Peterkin Myers

(1943-)

"My sense of calling has been a long evolutionary process. I think I first named it with certainty when Hope Church in Holland [Michigan] did a gifts discernment process with the consistory. This helped name what I had long experienced as a calling to serve as a lay person within church structures in both the local congregation and beyond" (Carol Myers, written responses to author, March 1994*).

Carol Peterkin first became aware of her calling to use her gifts in God's service when she was a youngster in Sumner, Washington, where her family lived. She remembers: "When I was in fourth grade I woke in the night with the moon streaming in the window. I heard God call me to a life of commitment. (I thought at the time it was to be a missionary to the Navajo people.) The details may have been vague and shifting, but the sense of responsibility was not."

She grew up in "a staunchly Presbyterian family" which faithfully attended morning and evening services, church school, and family night suppers. Her mother was the church organist. Her father, who served on the church session, sang in the choir. So Carol and her sister sat with "Grammie," their maternal grandmother, in church every week. "Grammie, who was superintendent of the Sunday school, made her own flannelgraph Bible stories. She was a fine storyteller who went all over telling Bible stories. She modeled being active, concerned, faithful, and effective in many areas of life. Perhaps most importantly, she modeled faithful commitment to the church through thick and thin."

Carol's love for church structure and liturgy was born at Presbyterian Youth Synod meetings, which met at the same time as the synod (which must have been mostly men in those days) and synodical (women's organization). She was a delegate to the Youth Synod of Washington-Alaska three times because no one else from her church wanted to go. She says: "The combined worship of synod, synodical, and youth synod intro-

duced me to a level of worship quite other than found in a small town church. The sheer power and wonder of a large assembly singing the strong hymns of the church (e.g., "Be Thou My Vision" and "Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise") accompanied by fine organs changed my life. I caught a vision for the church beyond the local congregation which I've never lost."

Carol met her husband, David G. Myers, a social psychologist, Hope College professor, and author, at Whitworth College, a Presbyterian school in Spokane, Washington. They were married while both were students at the college. Carol completed work on her degree in English at the University of Iowa in 1965, the same year the couple's son, Peter, was born. The Myers family also includes Andrew (1970) and Laura (1976).

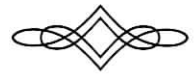
The Myers family moved to Holland, Michigan, in 1967. For eight years they belonged to First Presbyterian Church; they joined Hope Church in 1975. Carol's pastor, Marlin Vander Wilt, enouraged her to stretch and do things she had never done before, such as speaking to a mothers' group on celebrating the church year.

Leading a workshop at a 1977 family life conference in Holland and writing a booklet on family celebrations based on the church year began to give Carol a sense of call. In 1981 Carol was elected to serve on the RCA Worship Commission, and in 1986 she was chosen to be moderator of the commission. During her two years as moderator, Carol was instrumental in developing a new process for producing and presenting liturgy to the church.

Ordination as an elder in 1988 provided another important part of Carol's developing identity. From 1990-92 she served on the Task Force on Tithing, where she had a significant role in preparing tithing materials for use by the wider church. Currently, she is serving as the first woman president of Holland Classis, a board member of New Brunswick Theological Seminary, member of the RCA's Task Force to Revise Disciplinary and Judicial Procedures, board member of the Ecumenical Center for Stewardship Studies, trustee and chair of the Distribution Committee of the Holland Community Foundation, and president of the David and Carol Myers Foundation.

Whenever Carol takes on a new responsibility, she does her homework. She takes relevant resources, such as the *Book of Church Order*, to meetings. She consults and tests ideas with friends/associates before taking action. "I've developed an extensive library on liturgy, church year, RCA materials, Christian educational and stewardship resources. Security comes from having information at my fingertips."

She also stays connected to God through regular prayer times and faithful attendance to the means of grace. And before doing something of a public or leadership nature, she repeats Psalm 115:1: "Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory; because of your steadfast love and your faithfulness," which Carol says "is a wonderful reminder of whom we serve and the purpose of our activity. It helps keep a level head when doing heady things!"



Some RCA congregations have long recognized and employed the leadership gifts of women. In the following stories you will meet two women who are long-time members of congregations in New York. The first woman has served First Church in Albany as deacon, church school teacher, and elder. She has also served the wider church on a number of boards. The second woman, a member of the Japanese American United Church in New York City, has

been the pastor's right hand for many years. She has also represented her congregation on CPAAM, the Council on Pacific and Asian American Ministries.

Marian Irvis Hughes

(1920-)

Until her mother died at the age of fifty-one, Marian Irvis Hughes attended an African Methodist Episcopal (AME) Church, her mother's church, with her parents. After her mother's death, Marian's father, who had been brought up by a Reformed Church minister's family in Upper Red Hook, New York, went back to worshiping in the Reformed Church. Marian and her husband, Paul, joined him at First Church in Albany, where they soon became members. Several years later their children Paul and Diane were baptized at First Church (Marian Hughes, taped interview with author, July 1994*).

Marian Hughes is a retired teacher and administrator who began her teaching career in Albany at a time when there were no African-Americans teaching in the city's public school system.[5] She had been trained to teach—four years in the university and an additional year getting a master's degree in elementary education. The superintendent tried to convince Marian to get a job in the south, but with the help of the Urban League, she persisted. She says, "We sat it out. I worked for the welfare department in social services, and every lunch time I went and sat in the lobby of the superintendent's office and looked through the door to see him working and hearing him say, 'Tell her I'm not here.' That was a very difficult period." Marian, who never thought of herself as a person who was leading the way for anyone else, says: "I simply thought of myself as a person who was trained to teach, and I didn't see any reason why I shouldn't teach."

Eventually she was accepted by a principal of an Albany public school, where she taught for nine years. She went on to teach in the Schenectady public school system. She has also taught classes at the State University of New York at Oneonta, Hudson Valley Community College in Troy (NY), and the College of St. Rose in Albany. At the same time she taught junior and senior highs in First Church's Sunday school. More recently, she has also taught adult short courses at the church. "I try my best never to say no if I can possibly say yes."

Marian has said yes many times to her local congregation, where she has served as a deacon and an elder. She has also said yes to the wider church by serving on a number of boards, including the Board of Theological Education and Hope College. She has served as president of the Board of Trustees for Southern Normal School in Brewton, Alabama, and on presidential search committees for Western and New Brunswick seminaries. "I had the pleasure and honor of approving Howard Hageman and John Hesselink, and also Bob White."

In 1960 Marian Hughes said yes to a request that changed her family's life. For many years Paul and Marian Hughes had entertained Nigerian guests who came to Albany's international center. When they asked the couple to travel to Nigeria to celebrate their independence, Paul didn't care to go, but Marian went. The Schenectady school system gave her its blessing and supported her with a camera, film, and an expense account, so she could bring the experience of Nigerian independence back to the Schenectady school system, which she did.

The following year she returned to Nigeria with her husband and seven-year-old son. They spent six years in Nigeria. The first year she worked with the Ministry of Education helping them to upgrade teacher training institutions, and the last five years she was principal of the girls' school "with 600 lovely youngsters." Her hus-

band was chairman of the economics department of the boys' high school. She says: "First Church in Albany adopted us as their missionary project for two of the six years we were in Nigeria. They sent books to my school; the youngsters had pen pals; they sent hymnals because we always started our school day with devotions. They were tremendously supportive."

Marian helped build the first high school for girls in Abeokuta, Nigeria. When she was there for independence they showed her schools for boys but none for girls. So she asked, "Where are your girls' schools?" They told her, "Girls don't need higher education. They are just going to be cooking, keeping the house, and having children." Marian says, "I must have convinced them they were centuries behind educationally. I told them, 'Girls are important to this country. They, too, are going to be your leaders, and your leaders need to be educated.'"

Educating young men and women has been Marian Hughes' life, but as she says, "I believe we are put here on earth to do something worthwhile, to help others, and to use the abilities God gives us."

Emiko Shimizu Akiyama

(1916-)

Emiko (Emi) Shimizu Akiyama was born in New York City to the Rev. Sojiro and Mrs. Tomi Shimizu.[6] Her parents served at the Japanese Christian Church (later called the Japanese Christian Institute, Inc.) in Manhattan. The institute, which was incorporated by the state of New York in 1916, began as a mission church under the Women's Board of Domestic Missions of the Reformed Church in America. In 1953 it merged with two other Japanese congregations—one Reformed and one Methodist—to form the present Japanese American United Church.[7]

I've always been connected to the church because I'm a minister's daughter. Japanese services were held on Sunday night at my father's church. There was no problem with traveling at night in those days. It was very safe. Today we do everything in our church [Japanese American United] all day Sunday so that people don't have to come out to evening meetings. But in those days we had Thursday night prayer meetings and Sunday night services, after which people stayed to enjoy tea and a social time.

The Japanese American United Church has been part of my life since the merger. For many years I have worked closely with the pastor, and for the last five years I have been chairperson of the congregation's Board of Directors. This group of twelve people was formed at the time of the merger and, although we aren't called elders, we function in the same way as a consistory in the Reformed Church (Emi Akiyama, taped interview with author, April 1994).*

Because Emi's father felt the church's young people should get their training in English at English-speaking churches, Emi and her two sisters went to Christ Methodist Church, at the time when Dr. Ralph Sockman was senior pastor. Emi and her sisters spent Saturdays in the Japanese church, learning Japanese language and culture. They also learned Japanese songs and English hymns such as "Jesus Loves Me," which were translated into Japanese.

The Women's Board of Domestic Missions granted Emi a $300 per year scholarship to study vocal music at Beaver College in Glenside, Pennsylvania. Income from the Frances Lincoln Jenkins Memorial Fund was "used for the education of exceptional students" (Annual Report, WBDM, 1933, 16). Emi, the first recipient of these funds, was "the youngest member of her class and

the only Japanese girl in the school born in America" (Minutes of Exec. Comm., WBDM, Feb. 14, 1933, 2).

Unable to find a job when she graduated from college, Emi helped her parents as they worked with the relocated Japanese people.[8] The fact that she was Japanese wasn't a problem. Something else was.

> *I wanted to work in a publishing company, but everywhere I went I was asked, "Can you type?" Although the question annoyed me, my mother calmly suggested that I learn to type. What wisdom she had! I am one of the few people in our church who can type, so I end up doing much of the typing at the church. This is important, because we put out a bi-weekly newsletter. I type the English. Then the church secretary, who is bilingual, puts it into the computer in English and Japanese.*

Through her father's connections with a professor in the Japanese department at Columbia University, Emi got a job in the library. She received fifty cents an hour typing (in English) three by five library cards, leaving space on the cards for the beautifully written Japanese characters that the librarian in the Japanese library would add later.

> *I enjoyed library work so much that I returned to school and got a degree in library science. After my marriage I worked at Columbia until I had my first child. When she was two years old, my daughter contracted meningitis and overnight she was dead. I went back to work because it was a way of keeping my mind off the loss of our child.*
>
> *After the birth of another daughter, Yone, I stayed at home until she was eight years old. At first I volunteered, then worked part-time, and finally full-time as a medical librarian at Cornell Medical College Library in New York City for twenty-seven years before retiring in 1989.*

Emi Akiyama worked closely with Ella White (now Campbell) when they were both representatives on the Reformed Church's Council of Pacific and Asian American Ministries. Ella Campbell is a woman who has shared her gifts in teaching, writing, music, and administration with the Reformed Church in America and the National Council of Churches.

Ella Kikuno Campbell

(1945-)

Ella Kikuno Campbell is a third generation Japanese-American who was born in Hawaii. All four of her grandparents had come to Hawaii from the island of Kyushu (Japan). Her parents, who were Shinto and Buddhist, had an arranged marriage which took place when Ella's mother was in her mid-twenties and her father was almost thirty. Ella and her twin sister Edie were the last of four girls born to them (Ella Campbell, taped response to author, March 1994*).

When she was very young, Ella remembers watching her grandmother sit in front of her little Buddhist shrine and chant sutras from a little book. In her early teens, Ella realized that the devotion of Buddhism and Shintoism didn't make sense to her, so she started going to Sunday school at the Congregational Church, where her older sister played piano for the afternoon Issei (Japanese language) service. She was baptized and joined the church on Palm Sunday the year she was fifteen. In high school she decided to work in Christian education.

After graduating from Whittier College, where

she majored in religion, she attended Garrett Theological Seminary in Evanston, Illinois. She met Jack White, her first husband, during her college days when they were both employed at Disneyland. They married in 1968 and moved to Jersey City, New Jersey, where Jack was pastor of Greenville Reformed Church.

Ella finished work on her master of arts in education with an emphasis on religious education at New York University, working with youth in Jersey City as on-the-job training. In 1974, when Jack accepted a call to St. Thomas Reformed Church, the couple and their two young children, Nalani and Peter, moved to the Virgin Islands. Jack and Ella started a Sunday school, and Ella began a church nursery program because Peter was an infant. She also taught music at the Little School House, a daycare school for young children. She says, "I used my guitar and sang with them. At first we sang nursery songs. Later I got creative and wrote songs according to whatever theme the teacher was emphasizing (e.g., transportation)."

In 1980 they moved back to the mainland and settled in the parsonage of Second Reformed Church of Hackensack, New Jersey. That was also the year the Council for Pacific and Asian American Ministries (CPAAM) was organized, and Ella began to get involved in both that organization and ecumenical Pacific and Asian American networking groups. She was also serving on the General Program Council, in addition to being a pastor's wife.

When Virstan Choy resigned as secretary of CPAAM, those of us on the executive committee felt a deep loss. At the same time, I sensed that I was being called to this position. The biblical story of Esther helped with my professional career in terms of giving me an impetus to take the job. In the beginning I questioned my ability to do the job, but people's affirmation of the work I was doing confirmed my calling.

In 1988 Jack White resigned as pastor of the Hackensack congregation when his severe health problems required hospitalization. During Jack's illness and after his death Ella continued to work while dealing with significant family issues.[9] Two and a half years later, in 1992, she married David Andrew Campbell, and relocated her office to Marysville, California.

I think that the most difficult thing that I've had to deal with in my job has been to understand and to do justice, to live out and to be prophetic. I don't always feel confident talking about continuing racism and violence against Asian Americans. There is a whole gamut of experience in the Reformed Church: some, including Asian Americans, at the point of denial; some who accept that these things occur but who don't want to make an issue of it; and others who feel that it needs to be addressed and something must be done about it.

As a Reformed Church laywoman I have been able to walk through doors which might have been slammed shut if I had been ordained. The Asians with whom I have worked accept me because they know that I am able to help them accomplish some things they have difficulty with in the denomination because of language and cultural barriers. I don't expect to be asked to preach by the Korean church, but I have enjoyed the few times I preached for the Taiwanese. I know that when young Asian women see me in action, they sense that they, too, can be leaders in their church. After one consultation a young Korean woman told me, "I feel empowered as a woman when I see how capably you staff the consultation."

When I think in terms of what I have been called

to do and say within the Reformed Church, my prophetic voice feels weak and sometimes nonexistent. I feel that council staff persons are constantly being challenged to remind the RCA that the church includes racial ethnic people, women, and people with disabilities, and so forth—all the marginalized. We [in the Reformed Church in America] keep saying we want to be an inclusive church, but we forget what our commitment to inclusivity is. It's a challenge to constantly remind the church about our commitment and that the church is not an authentic church until it is inclusive.

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1. Robert Alexander, "The Role of Women in the Church," unpublished manuscript, Albany, New York, 1990. In addition to their preponderance at worship, Alexander also notes that early in the 19th century women were instrumental in organizing Sunday schools.

2. A "Statement of the Work of the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions of the Reformed Church in America" reported: "Perhaps no woman in this country has done more than she has to promote the efficiency of such work." Minutes of the Annual Report of Woman's Board of Foreign Missions of the RCA, 1884, p. 19.

3. Rita Cobb Macleish, daughter of Henry and Matilda Cobb, apparently shared her parents' zeal for the Reformed Church in America. After their deaths in 1910, the Mission Gleaner noted that Rita was "well known throughout the church for her enthusiastic work among the young people of the church" (Mission Gleaner, June 1910, 1).

4. Unlike the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions, which did not carry out mission programs of its own, the Women's Board of Domestic Missions of the Reformed Church in America (which had incorporated in 1909 and adopted this new name) initiated and maintained a variety of separate mission programs, including missionary work among the American Indians; educational, medical, and evangelistic work in Jackson County, Kentucky; and Southern Normal School in Brewton, Alabama.

5. Marian Hughes was not the first African-American to teach in the Albany public school system. As early as 1840 the city school district maintained the Wilberforce School, a segregated school for colored children, and employed African-American teachers and principals for that school. In the early 1920s there were three African-American teachers working in the Albany school district, but between 1925 and 1947, when Marian Hughes was hired, there were no African-American teachers in Albany schools. These facts and several photos were discovered by Marian Hughes while she was researching material for a new book whose working title is Education Pioneers in Albany's African-American Community—1811-1920.

6. Mrs. Shimizu's story, as told by her daughters, appears in Chapter 2—Bearing Witness.

7. In 1994 the Japanese American United Church celebrated its one hundredth birthday. The congregation dates its beginning to 1894, when the Japanese Methodist church was organized in New York City.

8. A large number of people relocated to the New York metropolitan area after being released from West Coast detention centers around 1942. Because they were not allowed to return to their original homes in California, secular and religious organizations helped them relocate. At that time many mission boards of mainline denominations, including the Reformed Church in America, hired young women as secretaries or clerical assistants.

9. Jack Kenneth White died on May 8, 1990. Ella writes, "Jack's illness and death was a significant journey into the wilderness for me. Recalling my pain often brings tears, but this pain can be shared, and I think it can be helpful to others who are going through a vast array of painful wilderness experiences. It also helps me to be more convincing and effective in sharing faith."

Chapter Two

Bearing Witness

The Samaritan Woman

(John 4:1-42)

The Samaritan woman met Jesus when he stopped at a well to get a drink of water. She had had five husbands and was currently living with a sixth man. Jesus did not condemn her for going from man to man. Instead he invited her to seek salvation in Christ, "to drink of the water that I will give...gushing up to eternal life" (John 4:14).

This unnamed woman of Sychar was so affected by this person who seemed to see right into her very being, that she left her water jar and went back to the city a changed person. The Samaritan woman believed that Jesus was the Christ. In fact, she was so convinced that she proclaimed and bore witness to Jesus. "Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony" (John 4:39).

Her preaching convinced them to seek Jesus. Perhaps they wanted to check out for themselves what she had told them, or they may have wanted to know more about the promise of eternal life. In any case, because of the Samaritan woman they sought Jesus, to hear from him the message of salvation. The new believers then returned to the woman who had introduced them to Christ and told her, "We have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world" (John 4:42).

Evangelism is what the church is about. Jesus commanded his disciples to "Go and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19), promising that they would "receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Women understood Jesus' command and were eager to participate in Christ's mission. However, the Board of Foreign Missions of the Reformed Church in America enlisted their full participation as missionaries reluctantly.

> *Until 1900, the "missionaries" listed in the reports of the Board of Foreign Missions were all men, while the women were listed as "assistant missionaries." Their work was particularly concerned with improving the lives of women through medical and health care, education, and visitation in the homes of women (Heideman, 1980, 59).*

In 1901 four single women—Harriet M. Lansing, Anna K. Stryker, Anna B. Stout, and Sara M. Couch—were listed by the South Japan Mission as "missionaries."

Sara M. Couch
(1867-1946)

Sara Maria Couch, Reformed Church missionary in South Japan, was a small woman. At the time of her departure for Japan in September 1892 she stood at five feet two inches tall and weighed only ninety-nine pounds. Trained as an evangelist at Moody Bible Institute, Sara Couch spent much of her life doing educational work at Sturges Seminary in Nagasaki, but she never forgot that she was an evangelist. The quiet, unassuming, yet determined evangelism of Sara Couch's "prophetic voice" does not sound in sermons or in public or personal writing. Rather, it resounds from a life lived for God, a life dedicated to the people of Japan and to her work as a witness to the God of love.[1]

Sara Couch was, like many other female missionaries of her day, a farmer's daughter.[2] The Couch family farm, along the valley of the Schoharie creek in upstate New York, was worked by three adult men—Sara's father, half-brother, and uncle; three adult women—her mother Lydia, her father's unmarried sister Mariah (who, in fact, owned much of the property), and an elderly great-aunt; and two children—Sara Maria and Lee, her older brother. A series of deaths decimated Sara's family in the 1880s. Of the extended family of the 1870s, the only ones left by the end of 1890 were her uncle and half-brother, both bachelors.

During these years of loss Sara joined the Reformed Church of Schoharie, at a time when the Schoharie church was reporting "a blessed revival in religion" (Minutes of Classis of Schoharie, 1884). Perhaps this new fervor in the Schoharie church was related to the evangelistic tours through New York of the famous revivalist preacher Dwight Lyman Moody. If the young

Sara did not hear him preach, she surely heard of him, for his urgent message—of the imminent coming of Christ and of the Christian's duty to prepare by bearing witness to the gospel and doing deeds of public charity—was galvanizing young Christians everywhere.

Sara had trained to be a school teacher at the Albany Normal School, but left her position as an elementary teacher in Mechanicville, New York, in 1891 and set off for Chicago and the training school for missionaries and church workers newly opened by Mr. Moody himself. Sara was not unusual. The death of family members often proved a catalyst for women to enter the missionary field. The church and its mission field supplied such women with a renewed sense of purpose, with a substitute family, and with more scope for their vitality than offered by the domestic ideal or by the realities of farmyard or schoolhouse drudgery.[3]

At Moody Bible Institute Sara received a training that was innovative in its time. Moody preached the equality of women in the cause of Christ, as workers, teachers, and evangelists, if not as ordained ministers. Like the men, the women not only received training in Bible study and exposition but were sent out into the neighborhoods of Chicago in an organized program of ministry to the physical as well as spiritual needs of the poor of the city. The graduates emerged with practical skills for hands-on mission work and with an understanding of themselves as evangelists.

"In 1913, when the South Japan Mission decided to merge Sturges [Seminary] with a similar school run by the Presbyterians and located over a hundred miles away, the mild Miss [Sara] Couch rebelled. She refused to make the move. Her stubbornness surprised the men who ran the mission, who had known nothing but cheerful compliance from her in her twenty years of service. They expressed their consternation, but Sara remained firm. It was her belief that God had called her to Nagasaki."

—the Rev. Jennifer Reece, To Love and Suffer with Them: The Quiet Evangelism of Sara M. Couch

Sara trained at Moody Bible Institute for one year, at the same time beginning her application process to the Board of Foreign Missions of the Reformed Church. She sailed for Japan in September of 1892, expecting to be given the evangelistic work she had prepared for at Moody's school. On setting foot in Japan, Sara Couch learned of the death of a beloved young teacher at Sturges Seminary, the mission's school for girls in Nagasaki, and discovered that she was being reassigned "temporarily" as a teacher at Sturges. The work of evangelism would have to wait. With the combination of grace and energy she brought to all her work, Sara went back to teaching. Her appointment to Sturges lasted for two decades.

In 1913 when the South Japan Mission decided to merge Sturges with a similar school run by the Presbyterians and located over a hundred miles away, the mild Miss Couch rebelled. She refused to make the move. Her stubbornness surprised the men who ran the mission, who had known nothing but cheerful compliance from her in her twenty years of service. They expressed their consternation, but Sara remained firm. It was her belief that God had called her to Nagasaki. She insisted that she remain as a worker alongside her former pupil at Sturges, Tomegawa Jun, who was already a force in the small Christian Japanese community of Nagasaki.[4] The mission, faced with such unexpected obstinacy, gave way. Sara stayed to develop her work with women's groups and Sunday schools in the poorer

city neighborhoods. She and Tomegawa Jun also published a newsletter, Ochibo (Gleanings), which went to Sturges graduates as far afield as Korea and even Alaska (Files of the South Japan Mission).

In addition to their daily evangelistic work, the two women were staunch members of the Oura church, begun by the mission but later independent. At one time when the church was without a pastor, Sara reported proudly that Tomegawa Jun, who had been elected elder in 1929, preached in its pulpit. Sara went on to say that even she had been known to address the church at an evening meeting. But her forum was not public speaking. Her way of evangelism was to live with the people she wished to bring to Christ and to share their lot.

Sara adopted Japanese dress and customs and "was a master in the use of colloquial Japanese" (Sara M. Couch's obituary, *MGS* 1946, 11). With Tomegawa Jun she had become once more part of a family living and working together in common cause: only now the family was not bound by kinship and farm chores but by common faith in and work for Jesus Christ.

In 1937 Sara Maria Couch officially retired from missionary work. But she did not return to the United States, even when Japan's military buildup and increasing anti-foreign agitation forced almost all European and American missionaries to leave the country. Sara, with the other Reformed Church missionaries, was urged by the board to leave, but she would not think of it. Japan had become her only home.

In the fall of 1942 at age 75, Sara was taken into custody by the Japanese army in Nagasaki; in December of that year she was moved to an internment camp in Tokyo. Tomegawa Jun was allowed to visit her only when she was hospitalized for a few weeks in Tokyo. Once recovered, Sara had to return alone to the internment camp. There she lived out the duration of the war, inspiring the other internees with her simple trust in God's providence. One of them reported in a letter how Miss Couch had encouraged her by showing her the words written on the fly-leaf of her Bible: "We can afford to lose anything and everything except faith in the God of truth and love."

In the early days of August 1945, the interned missionaries heard the news that the United States had dropped the first atom bombs, first on Hiroshima, and then on Sara's beloved city of Nagasaki. The war was over, but at horrendous cost.

The prisoners were released on September 1, 1945, and a frail but determined Sara rushed back to Nagasaki to search for Tomegawa Jun. She found their home "a mixed up mess" full of broken glass; but, shielded from the epicenter by a low hill, it miraculously stood intact, and Tomegawa was alive, unhurt. Life in Nagasaki after the bomb was a numbing affair, as the survivors struggled to count the lost and help the remaining. Sara was almost glad of her experiences in internment camp, for they "have done much to fit me for living under the present conditions." But she could not live in such conditions for long, and the following January, a few days after her 79th birthday, Sara Couch died from pneumonia.

Sara Couch was not a "mover and a shaker," but a simple woman of great courage and devotion who quietly defined the work of a missionary for Christ, writing these words from bombed-out Nagasaki: "Beyond praying, I believe just now the most I can do for the people of this city is to love them and suffer with them." In the stubbornness of her "love and suffering" with the women of Japan, Sara Couch transcended the terror of her time and bore a truly prophetic witness to the God of truth and love to whom she had given her life.

Dorothy Catherine Trompen Poppen

(1892-1972)

Born before the turn of the century in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Dorothy Trompen and her sister, Sara-Helene, could have lived comfortably anywhere in the United States if all they had been interested in was materialism. Their entrepreneurial father was a dedicated Christian who zealously established churches throughout the Grand Rapids area. Early in life, the Trompen girls caught their father's passion for evangelism and committed their lives to Christian service (Trudi Amerkhanian, story submitted to Beth Marcus, 1989).[5]

As young brides, Dorothy and Sara-Helene, along with their missionary husbands were assigned to China. Their experiences were reminiscent of St. Paul's letter to the Corinthinians: "afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, [and] hunger" (2 Cor. 6:4-5). Add to that bubonic plague, cholera, malaria, and smallpox. All were part of their life trials. Each left her first-born child buried in China. They learned the language, the mores, and culture of China, a depressed country in great need of physical and spiritual help. They obeyed God's will to spread the gospel—love, not fear—with their "Word book," the Bible. Their imperative was the good news through Christ (Anna Ruth Poppen Wiersema, daughter, submitted story to Alvin J. Poppen, April 1995*).

Dorothy graduated from Hope College in 1914, the same year as her future husband, Henry A. Poppen. While he earned a theological degree at Western Theological Seminary, Dorothy taught English and Latin at Cedar Grove Memorial Academy in Wisconsin. After two years, she earned a master's degree in English from the University of Colorado.

After their marriage in 1917, Henry and Dorothy Poppen sailed for China. Together in the inland city of Leng Na, they built schools and hospitals. Dorothy taught in the schools while Henry traveled more than three hundred miles each year on foot over the mountain ranges.

The pioneer missionary work in inland areas was interrupted in 1929 by Mao Tse Tung, who with his army devastated the residences, hospitals, and schools, causing Dorothy and her two children to flee on foot. Traveling in Chinese dress and only at night, Dorothy and her children made their way to the coast of China and the city of Amoy, ninety miles from Lengna. Later, Henry also made his way to Amoy.

In Amoy Dorothy worked with the girls and women in the Slave Refuge, a project of the YWCA. The Slave Refuge was a home for girls sold into slavery (prostitution, etc.) who had escaped their masters. The escapees could find solace, creature comforts, and, of course, the good news of Christ at the Slave Refuge. Many of these girls were rehabilitated in the home of Dorothy and Henry.

The outbreak of hostilities between Japan and China brought a new and difficult challenge. Thousands of Chinese fled to the safety of Kulangsu, an international settlement opposite the island of Amoy. Dorothy was instrumental in helping the mothers and children adjust while spreading the comforting love of Christ and the saving word of the gospel.

During most of World War II while Henry was under house arrest and later in a concentration camp, Dorothy returned to the United States with her youngest child. Two other children, already in the U.S., joined her, and they lived in Holland, Michigan, with Dorothy dividing her time between caring for her children and speaking in Reformed churches throughout the East and Mid-

west, telling of God's work in the hearts of the Chinese people.

In 1944 the family was reunited and moved to Boulder, Colorado, where Henry taught the Amoy vernacular in the Navy School of Languages. Dorothy was again involved with both the work of the churches and the YWCA, a continuation of the interest she had acquired while working with slave refugees in Amoy.

When the war ended, Henry returned to China. In 1946 Dorothy joined him in Changchow (inland from Amoy), where the Board of Foreign Missions had assigned them. Dorothy taught in Talmage College and assisted in the religious activities of the school.

After the Communist takeover, anti-American feelings increased, and the Changchow missionaries made plans to leave China. Exit permits were issued to all but Henry Poppen. He had been singled out for public trial. Not allowed to attend, Dorothy listened in one of the hospital rooms overlooking the school athletic grounds where the trial was held in front of over ten thousand Chinese. She heard his condemnation and sentence of execution. After the trial, Dorothy and the remaining missionaries were ordered by the Communist hierarchy to leave the country by 5:30 the following morning. They boarded a bus and traveled overland. Days later they arrived in Portuguese Macao and then went on to Hong Kong. Meanwile, Henry was imprisoned in solitary confinement for several days, then thrown into the hold of a ship destined for Hong Kong. During this period, Dorothy presumed Henry had been executed. Imagine her joy when they eventually found each other.

Throughout the ordeal the couple depended on God by praying Psalm 121, which ends:

> *The Lord will keep you from all evil;*
> *he will keep your life.*
> *The Lord will keep your going out and your*
> *coming in from this time on and forevermore.*

Following Henry Poppen's one-year term as president of General Synod (1952-53) Dorothy and Henry Poppen were assigned to work with Amoy-speaking Chinese in Singapore. The Poppens ministered at Prinsep Street Church, the oldest church in the city. Dorothy also taught English at the University of Singapore and served as president of the Seventh Girls Life Brigade, an organization through which hundreds of girls were inspired to give their lives in service to Jesus Christ.

In 1962 they settled in southern California. Henry had been called to serve as associate pastor of Garden Grove Community Church, but both called on the sick and shut-ins. They also established the Keenagers, a group of active elderly who through monthly meetings reaffirmed their commitment to the good news through Christ.

Dorothy died in 1972 from injuries received in an auto accident while delivering Easter bouquets to shut-ins. Soon after Dorothy's death, Henry died of cancer.

Of her China experiences Dorothy Trompen Poppen has said:

> *Within three months we were to see five different armies of occupation. Even a Christian general held Leng Na for some time. Had I known the future, I never would have dared to embark on a career so venturesome, so full of hazards, of dangers seen and unseen. I am convinced that our heavenly Father graciously hides this from our vision and conceals all. This is a wise providence. What we do know is the promise, "And, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the ages" (Matt. 28:20).*

In 1893 the Women's Board of Domestic Missions sensed that it was being called to expand its ministry from that of building parsonages, giving money for church buildings, and sending missionary boxes, to one of active participation in spreading the gospel to races and ethnic groups other than whites of Dutch and German ancestry. They began by reaching out to Native Americans. Fifteen years after the Rev. Walter and Mabel Roe organized a church in Colony, Oklahoma, Anna Berkenpas, a missionary nurse, began a sixty-year career of service with American Indian people.

Anna Berkenpas

(1884-1974)

"Miss Anna," as she was commonly known, ministered to Native American people for sixty years. During those years, Anna Berkenpas was nurse, counselor, midwife, social worker, administrator, devotional leader, benefactor, gardener, housekeeper, and friend. "A remarkable and resourceful woman," Anna Berkenpas "was all things to all people in order that some might be won for Christ (see 1 Cor. 9.22b)" (Auriel Aalberts, retired RCA missionary, letter to author, Feb. 28, 1994 *).

Miss Anna grew up in Lafayette, Indiana, where her family belonged to First Reformed Church. She was educated at Lafayette Community College, Chicago Training School at Garrett Biblical Seminary, and Western Hospital in Chicago, Illinois.

Gently reared in a Dutch home, her father thought it unladylike for her to go out into the world to work. But she resisted his efforts to keep her in the home when the pull of service was strong within her heart. She studied and worked hard to become a trained nurse. No one but God knows how many thousands of times she put her skill to its highest use in relieving suffering among her chosen people (Walker, 1967, 1).

Following a year in Colony, Oklahoma, the Women's Board of Domestic Missions assigned Miss Anna to the mission in Winnebago, Nebraska. She arrived in Winnebago the same day World War I was declared—July 28, 1914, something Miss Anna mentioned often.

Until 1945 Anna Berkenpas shared her nursing skills and God's love with the Winnebago people. She delivered hundreds of babies during her thirty-three years there. She also learned to chop wood to heat the homes of the families she visited while attending the sick or a newborn. She felt a distinct responsibility for each child she delivered, and she helped many young people further their education. She furnished the funds or secured them from friends or relatives so that young Winnebagos could attend college, business college, or nursing school.

In the early years Miss Anna traveled by horseback. Later she learned to harness a horse to a buggy. She was a nurse who was on call twenty-four hours a day and was always ready to go when someone called. People recall how she would walk miles at night through deep snow that not even a doctor would attempt. A frequent cry on the reservation was, "Tell Miss Anna; she'll get through" (Walker, 1967, 1).

After a government hospital was built and her nursing abilities were in less demand, Miss Anna took charge of the Children's Home and functioned as a community social worker.

She was the person everyone turned to for assistance in every phase of their life. One little girl, whose parents were addicted to alcohol, fell out of the wagon she and her parents were riding in. A wagon wheel rolled over her, and she was taken to the hospital with severe injuries. Later her mother, who had become a Christian, became ill. Before her death the mother asked Miss Anna to take care of her daughter. The girl grew up at the Children's Home as Miss Anna's daughter (Aalberts, letter, Feb. 1994).

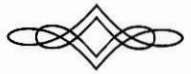
In 1944 Miss Anna went to Cook Christian Training School in Phoenix, Arizona. Dr. G.A. Watermulder, who knew her capabilities because they had worked together for decades in Nebraska, asked her to come and help him reorganize the institution. During her time at Cook she taught hygiene and health and the speaking and writing of English. She also served as the campus nurse, dean of women, and secretary to the Board of Trustees.

Miss Anna was the hub around which the school turned. Her life and energies were totally committed to those she loved at the school and to the glory of God! Many students arrived with no means of support. She would assess their background and needs and then arrange ways they could earn part of their tuition and other expenses. She was frugal in her money management and expected the students to learn the same.

She lived in the girls' dormitory as a housemother, advisor, and friend. She kept strict discipline but was loving and caring for each girl. To the married students, and especially to their wives, she was a friend and instructor in the management of their homes. She advised them about how they could keep their food expenses down—even to the point of inspecting their garbage cans to see how thickly they pared their potatoes!

She tried to "retire" a few times, but always seemed to be back on the job to help. She was well into her eighties when she left Cook School, moved back to Lafayette, Indiana, and used her time volunteering in a nearby hospital (Luella Van't Kerkhoff, retired RCA missionary, reflections on Miss Anna, April 1994).

Anna G. Berkenpas served four years as a volunteer in the St. Elizabeth Hospital office before her health failed. She died a year later in the Americana Nursing Center.



Although Reformed Church pastors preached about evangelism, most churchgoers thought that meant supporting missionaries overseas. They tended to ignore the newcomers to the U.S. and Canada and their need to hear God's Word. That attitude changed early in the 1900s when the Women's Board of Domestic Missions began mission work among the Hungarians, the Italians, and the Japanese on the East Coast.

Tomi Niwa Shimizu

(1886-1954)

Tomi Niwa Shimizu was born in Tokyo, Japan, and attended Ferris Seminary, a Reformed Church school for girls in Yokohama. Ferris continues to be one of the most prestigious women's colleges in Japan.[6] About 1912 Tomi Niwa came to Chicago, accompanied by a Canadian missionary, to study music. Her plan was to return to Japan where she had been teaching at Ferris and Toyo Eiwa High School (Emiko Akiyama and Toyo

Nakamura, daughters, submitted story to author, Dec 1994*).

She was introduced to Sojiro Shimizu, a student at McCormick Theological Seminary, by a pastor of a Japanese congregation in Chicago, Illinois. After graduating from seminary in 1913, Sojiro Shimizu had planned to go to Scotland to continue his studies, then return to Japan as a missionary. His plans changed when the Rev. E. A. Ohori, organizer of the Japanese Christian Institute, recommended his friend Sojiro to the Women's Board of Domestic Missions of the Reformed Church in America as a temporary replacement at the institute for the summer of 1914. The Rev. Shimizu stayed on when the summer was over. Two years later Tomi joined Sojiro in New York, and they were married. The couple had three daughters. Emiko Akiyama, their eldest daughter, says:

> *My mother was a woman of the Meiji era.[7] She was so innovative, had great foresight, was adaptive to the new customs and thinking of a new country, and had great leadership qualities which helped her in assisting my father in his work as a pastor ministering to the Japanese people coming from Japan.*
>
> *She was pretty amazing for a woman who literally came to this country in a kimono and wearing Japanese shoes (zori). She told us that the first pair of American shoes she bought pinched her feet, but at that time she thought everyone in America was wearing pinched shoes!*

Every Saturday Tomi worked with the children who came to the Japanese church school. She made sure they learned songs, such as "Jesus Loves Me," and other English hymns which had been translated into Japanese. Tomi also arranged English classes for the Japanese women, many of whom knew little English, and cooking and sewing classes to help the women learn as much about American food and styles as they could. In 1932 the Women's Board of Domestic Missions reported that Tomi Shimizu, "possessing a charming personality, with much sweetness and graciousness of manner, is bringing help, comfort, and cheer to many of her country women transplanted to a land of strange and difficult ways" (Golden Years, 1932, 73).

In those days people from Japan who planned to be in New York for a short time knew that if they came to one of the Japanese churches, they could count on a place to stay and other assistance. The Japanese Christian Institute, which was made up of two brownstone buildings which had been combined, contained offices (first floor), a sanctuary (second floor), and housing for visitors (upper floors). During World War II Japanese-American servicemen coming through New York City sometimes contacted the institute for help and a place to stay until they left for overseas. One young soldier they had helped wrote from Italy to thank the Shimizus for their hospitality to him and to say "I now help the chaplain with a new eagerness and some day I hope to be of great service to the world" (Tomi Shimizu, *Church Herald* reprint, WBDM, Nov. 1945).

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, many Japanese were picked up by the FBI and taken to Ellis Island, where the U.S. government kept all the "enemy aliens." The Rev. and Mrs. Shimizu were not detained by the FBI because the Women's Board of Domestic Missions immediately made it clear to authorities that they were church workers. The Rev. Shimizu traveled by ferry boat to Ellis Island almost every other day to visit some of his church members, to take letters or clothing to the men, and to bring them hope.

The Shimizus helped Japanese-American people who had relocated from camps on the West Coast find apartments or jobs. Employers in New York City were will-

ing to take a chance on Japanese, especially if they had good resumes or experience. Although it seemed as if there was less discrimination in New York City than in the Midwest or West, the relocated families depended on the church. Many of them had gone to church in California, so they sought out a church as soon as they came to New York. The women especially were eager to participate in the women's society, where among other activities, they made garments for hospitals in Arabia.

Tomi Shimizu was popular as a speaker at mission festivals and women's classical union meetings. She usually wore a Japanese kimono and began by talking about Japan's customs and how Japan differed from America. Then she spoke of the work being done at the institute and the people whose needs were being filled because the Reformed Church in America cared. In November 1935 the Executive Committee of the Women's Board of Domestic Missions voted "that if Mrs. Shimizu consented to speak at eight spring conferences, she should be given $5 and expenses for each conference" (Minutes of Exec. Comm., WBDM, Nov. 5, 1935, 1). On Ladies' Day at the 1938 General Synod, Tomi Shimizu was one of seven women missionaries who gave testimonies in response to a speech—"Is the Message of Jesus Christ Paramount to the Needs of the World Today?"—by Irene (Mrs. John A.) Dykstra (Minutes of Exec. Comm., May 24, 1938, 2).[8]

Tomi and Sojiro continued to evangelize and teach first- and second-generation Japanese-Americans in New York City until 1948, when Sojiro retired. They returned to Japan, where Sojiro preached the gospel until his death in 1952. Tomi died two years later, on May 20, 1954.

During the 1940s and 50s it was quite common for city congregations to hire single women as pastor's assistants. Sometimes the women had earned degrees in Christian education or had received training at a Bible college. Most worked with children and young people, called on church members, and directed a variety of church programs, lightening the (male) pastor's workload.[9]

Ann Foerster

(1895-1976)

At one time Jersey City, New Jersey, had eighteen Reformed churches. By the time Ann Foerster completed work on a master's degree in social work, and began working as a volunteer at Central Avenue Reformed Church in 1938, there were only eight.[10] She was determined to do what she could to keep the Reformed faith alive in Jersey City.

Central Avenue Reformed Church hired Ann Foerster to serve as assistant to the pastor, the Rev. Leonard Sibley. Her concern for children moved her to start a once-a-week after-school program at the church, which included Bible stories, music, crafts, games, and refreshments. She also administered the church's three-week summer daily vacation Bible school and "took groups of young people on field trips to places such as the Statue of Liberty and the Bronx Zoo, crowding them, giggling and squealing, into subway cars before the doors closed" (Armida Hartman, long-term member of Central Ave. Church, letter to author, May 1994*).

Ann is credited with starting the first senior citizen's group in Jersey City. She taught Sunday school, led

the school's opening devotions, and called on elderly people and parents of Sunday school students.

The Jersey City YWCA, which was her home for many years after her mother died, also benefited from her talents. Enlisting church and school choirs, she directed the annual Christmas pageant at the Y, which played to packed houses every year. She also directed plays and minstrel shows to benefit Camp Brett, a Christian Endeavor camp for disadvantaged youngsters from Hudson County located in Lebanon, New Jersey.

During the late forties Ann learned that the Classis of Brooklyn intended to close the historic New Lots Reformed Church. At that time New Lots was a community in transition; the church was slowly dying because its members were moving away and many Jewish people were moving into the neighborhood. The construction of a large housing project for veterans brought Protestants into New Lots, but most of the newcomers had never heard of the Reformed Church in America. Determined that the church remain open, Ann took it upon herself to carry on Sunday school work in the Brooklyn congregation and to canvas the neighborhood for potential members. A former co-worker recalls her saying on more than one occasion, "I don't care if you are black, white, green, or purple. And neither does God" (Thelma Summers, letter to author, March 1994).

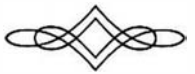
To get to Brooklyn from Jersey City was no small feat in itself. Several times a week she traveled via the Hudson Tubes (subway under the Hudson River linking Jersey City with midtown Manhattan) and New York City's subway trains. Eventually her efforts came to the attention of the Rev. Richard Vanden Berg, secretary of the Board of Domestic Missions (1949-58). The board funded Ann as an urban missionary and New Brunswick Theological Seminary assigned student ministers to the church. Thelma Summers, wife of NBTS student Fred Summers, recalls: "Ann sort of came with the church. She held Released Time classes on Wednesday afternoons, as well as a Sunday school class for a few children in the immediate area. The children dearly loved her and flocked around her."

By 1951 the Board of Domestic Missions noted: "The interracial work at the old historic Reformed Church of New Lots, Brooklyn, has grown under the leadership of Miss Ann Foerster, until the church is now ready for a full-time pastor" (Annual Report, BDM, 1951, 30).

In 1955 Fred and Thelma Summers with their ten-year-old son, Fred, Jr., moved into the old manse. Thelma says:

> *Fred stayed at the seminary during the week, coming to Brooklyn on weekends to preach and visit. Ann would find Christian families in the neighborhood for Fred to visit. She was a devoted Christian woman who truly loved the Lord and would talk about her love openly. On June 3, 1956, Ann Foerster saw her dream come true. Fred was ordained and installed as minister of New Lots Reformed Church, where he stayed until 1961.*

Her health and eyesight failed in the last years of her life, and in 1976 Ann Foerster died in Jersey City, New Jersey.



In the past, and even today, mainline North American churches offered a vast array of programs which strengthened women's spiritual lives and augmented their social lives. These programs, however, are geared to those who seek them. The Reformed Church in America does not have a tradition of taking the gospel into the streets. Now and then, however, an

RCA woman has acted on her call to evangelize women who were unlikely to seek out a church on their own.

Grace Vander Ploeg Willett
(1902-1978)

An article written in December 1968 called Grace Vander Ploeg Willett of Chicago, Illinois, an "angel of Women's Court" (Roberta Viet, Today, 1968, 2-4 & 12*). Gracie was a small woman—four foot, ten—who graduated from Moody Bible Institute in 1937. In 1964 when Moody presented her with the "Alumnus of the Year" award for her "work with women in the jails," Grace Willett was the only graduate of the institute with that kind of ministry.

Grace Vander Ploeg was raised an evangelical Christian. Her home was in Chicago, where her family belonged to First Reformed Church of Roseland. After graduating from Moody Institute, she went to work on a poor farm in Paterson, New Jersey, where one night the superintendent's daughter asked Gracie to help a drunken nurse. That experience contributed to her sense that God was calling her to help people addicted to alcohol. Sometimes she would go to the Bowery in New York City, an area known for rundown saloons and evangelical missions. In fact, she was in a Bowery mission when the Lord asked her, "What about the women?"

> *In 1940, she returned to Chicago. During her early days in Chicago, she invited a drunk woman, who was hobbling about on crutches outside a mission, inside to hear the message. The woman, who had once taught Sunday school in Ohio, asked Gracie to pray with her that night though she made no commitment to Christ.*
>
> *"That woman is the worst harlot on Madison Avenue," the minister told Gracie after the service that evening. That woman returned to the mission though, committed her life to Jesus Christ, ceased her drinking and prostitution, found a job, and stopped living off welfare.*

In 1947 Grace Vander Ploeg married William Willett, who encouraged Grace to continue her ministry to Chicago women in trouble. William, who died four years after they were married, understood Grace's burden to share the gospel in a tangible way with women who worked in burlesque houses and picked up men for the purpose of prostitution.

> *Gracie used to stand outside Chicago's burlesque houses and invite the women to meetings at the Pacific Garden Mission before the mission even had facilities for a women's work.*
>
> *Finally, a Bible teacher at Dwight (Ill.) Reformatory for Girls learned of Gracie's burden for women in trouble and suggested she work among the girls and women in the Cook County Women's Court. Through one of this teacher's relatives, who worked in the social services department of the court, Gracie got into Women's Court.*

As chaplain in Women's Court, Grace Willett began every weekday before seven a.m. by interviewing women arrested during the night. She made special note of those who were still trying to shake off an alcoholic binge or whose behavior appeared erratic, then she advised the judge regarding medical or psychiatric help she felt each woman needed. Grace said, "I do everything I can to keep a woman's arrest record as low as possible. Women still shaky from their drunk the night before are better off locked up for a few more hours than being turned out to the street, only to be arrested again almost immediately."

Gracie's ministry was more than advice to the judge and counsel for the offender. Women who needed something decent to wear for court appearances were offered donated clothing. Released women who had nowhere to go were referred to women's shelters at the Pacific Garden Mission or Gospel League Home. Those with no transportation were put in a taxi and sent home.

Often she interviewed the same women week after week, but that never made her give up ministering to them. She believed:

> *Anyone doing this kind of work has to like people, yet be willing to see too few results compared with the demands on time and energy. I want the women I work with to find the happiness in Christ that I have found. This job is just being a servant to women—a servant willing to impart not only the gospel but also her own life. This means receiving telephone calls from lonely, troubled women at all hours. It requires a flexibility which allows me to be at the beck and call of those in need.*

Gracie kept in touch with some of the women she met in prison. Most were still struggling with alcohol addiction, but Gracie maintained: "We must take them in over and over and over again in love for Christ's sake. Christ was willing to forgive many times and so must we."

Gracie's ministry was voluntary, although she did receive some support from First Reformed Church in Roseland.[11] She did it, she said, because "God's power works for the salvation of everyone who believes it," including the women in the streets.

In order to reach people with the gospel, especially those who had never before heard of the Reformed Church in America, historic congregations studied neighborhood demographics. They discovered that the church needed to expand its traditional programs. They began by asking, How can we reach particular groups of people in our community?

Mary Fulton Brinig

(early 1900s-1988)

The theme of Mary Brinig's life was that Christ could take an ordinary person and use that person in extraordinary ways to change circumstances and to convert lives. Wherever she went she would captivate people with this idea, whether a person was a waitress in a coffee shop or the top executive of some corporation. She was always challenging people, especially young people, to this wonderfully exciting idea. She had endless stories to tell of people who had had this experience with Christ that had so revolutionized their lives (Florence Pert, senior associate minister, Marble Collegiate Church, taped interview with author, March 1994*).

Mary Brinig, who was born and brought up in New England, knew nothing about the Reformed Church in America before she moved to New York City in 1936. Mary and her husband, Harold, an executive in the paper industry, were recent transfers from Pittsburgh, when she met Ruth Stafford Peale at a tea. As soon as Mrs. Peale discovered that Mary had been active in a large church in Pittsburgh, she convinced her to join Marble Church's staff as director of church activities.

One of the first things Mary did, with the help of her husband, was to establish a canteen for servicemen, staffed with a team of young women. During World War II many soldiers, sailors, and marines appreciated the attention they received at Marble Church every Sunday afternoon. When the war was over, some of these young men who had come to the canteen on a regular basis asked Mary and Harold to start a group for them, saying, "We don't want to stop coming to church, and we don't want to stop being with you." Mary and Harold agreed to start a young adult group as long as everyone understood that its basis would be "deeply spiritual."

At the first meeting of Marble's young adult group, the Brinigs shared their stories of how Christ had made a difference in their lives. The group took off from there. Every person in the group was challenged to find his or her place in the world, no matter if it was in the church or a secular field. By the early fifties the group had grown to somewhere between three and four hundred young adults.

Florence Pert remembers: "Mary Brinig—dynamic, charming, articulate, quick-witted—usually wore bright red lipstick. She was a vibrant individual, who always looked as if she had stepped out of Bonwit Tellers [a Fifth Avenue clothing store catering to the wealthy], but she sewed all her own clothes, copying them from pictures in *Vogue* magazine. She was no fuddy-duddy fundamentalist; she was very much centered on the fundamentals, but with enormous style."

Mary loved people and knew how to talk with them, making them feel at ease. Whether she was consulted about a broken romance or the death of a loved one, Mary helped people to see that God wanted only the best for them. An acquaintance remembered Mary's words of comfort after the death of the woman's husband: "You know, dear friend, life gives us many difficult experiences. It is what we do with them that makes the difference" (Harriet Prins, letter to Beth Marcus, Nov. 1989).

A member of the Women's Board of Domestic Missions and Hope College's Board of Trustees, Mary Brinig was known for her dynamic speeches. She gave the 1950 commencement address at Southern Normal School in Brewton, Alabama, and spoke at the First National Women's Assembly (precursor to RCW's Triennial Assemblies) at Buck Hill Falls, Pennsylvania, April 23-25, 1957.

Mary left her job at Marble Church when Harold retired, but both continued to share their leadership skills with the wider church: assisting Robert Schuller and his staff in setting up the small group ministry for the Garden Grove (California) Community Church, and with John and Vera Mace doing Marriage and Family Life Clinics. Mary Brinig died in August 1988 while she was a resident in the McKerley Nursing Home in Laconia, New Hampshire.

In 1924 the Women's Board of Domestic Missions, with the cooperation of the Board of Domestic Missions, decided to enlarge its vision to include Mexico. Missionaries were sent to Chiapas to assist the Presbyterian Church in Mexico, to be advisers and helpers rather than directors. At first the missionaries worked mostly with those who spoke Spanish; later the work expanded to include Tzotzil, Ch'ol, Tzeltal, Tojolabal, and Amatenango Indians. In 1980 Eugene Heideman wrote: "Apparently, that relationship is a fruitful one, for few churches have grown so rapidly as has the church among the Indians in Chiapas" (Heideman, 1980, 20).

Mabel Ruth Van Dyke Kempers

(1902-)

In 1924 Mabel Van Dyke graduated cum laude from Hope College, receiving an award for the best all-around girl of the class. This woman of many talents chose to marry John Kempers ("Kemp"), a 1925 graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary, and to serve with him for almost forty-four years in order to bring the gospel of Christ to the people of Chiapas, Mexico.

At their commissioning service in Flatbush Reformed Church in Brooklyn, New York, in November 1925, Mabel sang "I'll Go Where You Want Me To Go" to Mary Van Brunt's violin accompaniment. "People who heard her were deeply moved by the utter beauty of her dedication, the complete surrender of her will to God's direction. She has never wavered from that resolve to go and to do whatever God wills for her" (Lillian Van Dyke, sister to Mabel Kempers, letter to Dorothy Meyerink, undated).

Kemp and Mabel arrived in the Vera Cruz harbor on December 12, 1925, and settled in Tapachula after several months of language study. For eighteen years they were the only RCA missionaries in the isolated southernmost Mexican state of Chiapas. Making a home for her family, which eventually included four children, was a challenge Mabel took in stride. Their home had rough cement floors. Drinking water had to be boiled, and the cooking was done with kerosene, wood, or charcoal. Tarantulas, centipedes, fleas, flies, and other obnoxious insects made mosquito netting compulsory (Minutes of Exec. Comm., WBDM, Nov. 1933, 3). There were no corner grocery stores, yet Mabel managed her home quite efficiently. She made the most of what she had.

> *Able to cope with inconvenience, she had a unique skill in creating delicious dishes from "little or nothing," being economical and creative in cooking. This was vividly impressed on our family when the leftover breakfast scrambled eggs appeared in the soup at supper-time. . . . Mabel was always careful not to waste anything nor to cook more than was actually needed for the number of persons to be fed (Meyerink, reminiscenses about Mabel Kempers, Mar. 1994).*

During the years when Mabel taught her three older children at home, servants were hired to help with the cooking and cleaning. This freed Mabel to be a teacher and to work with the women in the churches she and Kemp served.

> *Finding the Tapachula church without a Sunday school, she and her husband asked permission to have classes for children in the afternoon. Soon they changed the time of the classes to the morning because of heavy rains in the afternoon. An adult class and classes for young people were added, and before long the Sunday school became the morning service in Tapachula, a pattern which was copied statewide (J. R. Kempers, letter to author, Dec. 1994).*

In December of 1926 Mabel helped the young women of the Tapachula church organize a society, which they named "Union, Peace, and Happiness."

> *For them. . . this was a very new idea but enthusiastically accepted. Following in the steps of their elders, their activities take much the same tone as the Woman's Society. Weekly meetings, committee work, visiting and aiding the poor and needy, and distributing gospels have kept them very active. Recently they presented the church with their first gift, a much-needed hymnboard. Every second*

Wednesday of the month they conduct a public service in the church (Annual Report, WBDM, 1927, 39).

Over the years Mabel helped women in many churches organize societies. She organized the Union of Women's Societies and served as their secretary for many years. The church governing body in the state officially named her Promoter of Women's Work.

During their years in Mexico, Kemp did lots of traveling, but "Mabel. . .never complained or expected him to change what he felt his work entailed. Patient and long suffering, she was always. . .supportive of Kemp in his work—a real partner" (Meyerink, letter to author, Mar. 1994). She spent her first anniversary alone in Tapachula, as her husband was on a long tour which he had thought would be over in two weeks, but took two entire months.

When she did travel with Kemp, she focused on the beauty of the mountainous country and the simple faith of the Chiapanecan believers. In 1956 she wrote of a two-week trip where Kemp preached in Spanish at twenty-two services.

We were high in the Sierra Madre mountains, where along some invisible line Chiapas joins Guatemala—visiting churches and isolated groups of the far-flung circuit pastored by don Margarito. To my husband, veteran traveler, the grandeur of cliffs, vistas, and valleys was familiar, and the homes of Christian brethren on wide-swept summits or nestled close to streams were known and opened wide to him. To me each day brought the thrill of new sights, and people and places long-heard-of became reality (Mabel Kempers, Charm and Challenge, *1956, 16).*

A talented musician, Mabel took responsibility for church music, organizing choirs, playing the piano, and teaching people to sing hymns and spiritual songs. During the early years, there were few who could play musical instruments, so Mabel's Bilhorn portable organ did much traveling on the backs of men or mules or in Jeeps and airplanes. John Kempers remembers, "She organized the first church choir in Chiapas in the Tuxtla church. Girls came to our house to practice during the week" (J. R. Kempers, 1994).

Each year before Christmas, Mabel invited two people from each church in the Tapachula area to a short-term music institute. "She led [the participants] in singing from morning till night, leaving her husband with the responsibility to see that there was food in the kitchen for cooks to prepare for hungry young people. It was pleasing to hear people singing the songs correctly years afterwards. Mabel's students had taught the songs in their congregations" (J. R. Kempers, 1994).

When the Kempers family moved to Mexico City, where Kemp taught the Old and New Testaments in the Presbyterian Seminary, Mabel taught piano in the Girl's Bible Institute and in the School of Music. Mabel's knowledge of both English and Spanish grammar and syntax made for exceptional writing. She painstakingly edited everything Kemp wrote for publication, and she was the first editor of the illustrated pamphlet, *Charm and Challenge of Chiapas*, a title and phrase she coined. She also wrote the women's page in the Presbyterian Church's official monthly paper, *Despertador*, and a monthly bulletin for the women's societies.

Mabel loved Chiapas and the Mexican people. Her daughter Kathleen recalls that furloughs were often cut short because Mabel was always eager to return to home in Chiapas. And the people with whom she worked loved her in return. "In Mexico the friendly greeting is an abrazo (embrace or hug). Kissing is rare, but it

was touching to see older toothless mountain women as well as young girls in city churches kissing her goodbye. The Girls Bible School in Berriozabal—Escuela Biblica Mabel y Ruth—bears her name and that of Ruth Van Engen" (J. R. Kempers, 1994).

In June 1969 John and Mabel Kempers left their work at the Presbyterian Seminary in Mexico City to take up residence in Leisure World, Seal Beach, California. Kemp and Mabel went to Chiapas to help build a new church in an old land. "When they left, the Kempers had laid the foundation, had seen the walls rising on every side, and were assured that the Church in Chiapas, begun in faith, would continue to grow to maturity" ("How the Gospel Came to Chiapas," 9).

Missionary conferences, such as the ones held annually at Northfield, Massachusetts, were often catalysts for life decisions. At these conferences young people were exposed to RCA missionaries and mission work, some for the first time.

Morrell (Morrie) F. Webber Swart

(1921-)

In 1937 when she was sixteen years old, Morrie Webber attended her second Northfield Missionary Conference, where one of the speakers was Tena Holkeboer of the Amoy China Mission.[12] Morrie decided to dedicate her life to missionary service. "I told the Lord that I'd go anywhere for him" (Morrell Swart, written responses to author, Feb, 1994*).

Morrie Webber Swart's church home was the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church of Flushing, Long Island, New York. She met J. Robert Swart at Hope College. While Bob attended Western Theological Seminary, Morrie attended Biblical Seminary in New York City. After their marriage in 1944, Bob was installed as the pastor of Grace Reformed Church in Fond du Lac, Wisconsin. They had a baby girl named Valerie in 1945 and were just settling in to life in Fond du Lac, but the pull toward mission work continued. They applied to the Board of Foreign Missions, asking to be sent "where the need was greatest," never thinking it might be in Africa.

In 1946 the Rev. Barnerd Luben, secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions, asked Bob and Morrie Swart to go to Africa, where possibilities for mission service were opening up. They would be Reformed Church pioneers if they accepted the challenge. Morrie says, "It never crossed my mind that we would be sent to Africa because when I told God 'anywhere,' the RCA didn't have any missionaries in Africa. It was a struggle for some months, but finally, at the urging of the Holy Spirit, I was able to affirm my initial commitment: 'Anywhere, Lord!'"

Morrie's family was reluctant to see her go so far from home. "Only my mother was fully in sympathy with our going overseas, not that any of them tried to stand in the way or loved us any less. But I could sense underlying disapproval, as well as a pride that they could hardly hide!"[13]

After completing a one-year course for missionaries planning to do rural development work, the Swart family—which by now included two little girls (Gayle was born in August 1947)—and Wilma Kats[14] arrived in Akobo, where they were to live. Their journey had taken three months.

Home was eight thousand miles away. The

Atlantic, the Mediterranean, and the Nile were behind us, and we were riding at night through the savannah country of the southern Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. Day dawned as we approached Akobo Post.

There! A grove of eucalpytus trees, a windcharger, a mud-walled, grass-roofed house with three peaks—and Don McClure, surrounded by Anuak tribesmen, waiting to welcome us. We had reached our destination. This place was now our home (Swart, 1988, 18).[15]

Over the next two years the mission team was enlarged to include evangelists, translators, additional nurses, educators, and agriculturalists, a recognition by the Board of World Missions "that to begin the work in a new area, one needed to deal with all aspects of life of the people in order to successfully evangelize in a primitive area" (Heideman, 1980, 43). The approach was successful because in August 1950 Morrie Swart wrote: "The Anuak church at Akobo has become an organized body now with a council of seven men, appointed by the Christians" (Swarts, missionary letter, Aug. 1950).

In 1953 the Swart family, which had increased to seven with the births of Merry, Chloe, and J. Robert, Jr. (Jack), was appointed to establish a mission station at Pibor Post, about ninety miles south of Akobo, among the Murle people. Their sixth child, Dick, was born in 1954. Morrie taught her own children through second grade. When each one reached the age of eight or nine, Morrie and Bob sent them off to Alexandria, Egypt, where they were educated at the American School.

In 1964 the Islamic government in the north expelled Protestant missionaries from Sudan. Once more Morrie and Bob established a home in a new post—on the Omo River in Ethiopia, and established a relationship with a new people—the Daasanech (Geleb). Morrie's primary responsibilities included teaching English and sewing in the primary school. She also edited the American Mission's newsletter, *Ethio-Echo,* and continued to write articles for the *Church Herald.* In a 1988 article Morrie spoke of highlights of their time in Africa, which included the first baptisms at the Omo River Post in 1971: "After six years, a sizable group of Daasanech were ready for baptism. The service was held at the river's edge. It was a spine-tingling event: the church was coming into being there along the Omo. A sharp watch was kept for crocodiles" (Swart, 1988, 18).

Outside of family commitments, Morrie's most rewarding work was in the field of writing: in the Sudan, the preparing of reading primers for adult Murles; in Ethiopia, editing *Ethio-Echo*; and writing programs for the women of the RCA and articles for the *Church Herald* and *Our Father's Business.*

Once again in 1977, the Swarts were forced to vacate a mission post—this time due to internal political struggle in Ethiopia. They relocated across the border in Ileret, Kenya. Morrie says: "It was wonderful to me to know that my being willing to go facilitated Bob's going—our going together—that the Spirit spoke to us both in our many moves. In fact, when we were down on the Omo River in Ethiopia, after I had once tried to make Bob promise that if we ever had to leave Ethiopia we'd just go on home to the States, the Spirit in me suggested that perhaps we could move across the border and work with the Kenya segment of the Daasanech tribe. The Spirit had a way of working in me, keeping me on course. When it was time to move, we were both ready" (Swart, Feb. 1994).

Morrie and Bob moved twice more—to Alale, Kenya, (1980-82) among the Pokot people, and to Waldena, Kenya, (1982-88) among the Orma people—before leaving their beloved Africa. Since 1988 Bob and Morrell Swart have lived in Canon City, Colorado.

Women missionaries engaged in evangelistic work and provided leadership in the church abroad. They were praised for preaching and teaching men and women overseas. However, these women were not allowed to teach and preach at home.

The church was, theologically speaking, sending a mixed message to its women missionaries whose ecclesiastical authority shifted depending on the male audience in question. Nevertheless, in their role as missionaries, and in spite of certain theological ambiguities attending the role, these women have always returned home to tell their stories, thereby providing important models for young girls in the RCA (*MGS* 1991, 441).

Ruth Stegenga Luidens
(1921-1977)

Ruth Stegenga Luidens was conjoined with the Reformed Church in America from before her birth; it was her pedigree and her life's blood. Her father, the Rev. Miner Stegenga, was an RCA pastor, and her mother Dureth Bouma Stegenga, was the daughter of another pastor. Ruth grew up in parsonages in Grand Rapids, Michigan; Walden, New York; and North Bergen, New Jersey (Don Luidens, elder son, written response to author, Mar. 1994*).

She and Edwin Luidens were married in September 1943, the same year they enrolled at Princeton Theological Seminary in preparation for service as RCA missionaries in the Arabian Mission. Edwin completed a M.Th. in Islamic study; Ruth—the only female in the program—studied Arabic at Princeton University. Although she compiled a strong record, taking courses parallel to her husband's, she received no degree because Princeton Seminary did not grant degrees to women.

Posted to Iraq, their nerve-wracking journey in the middle of World War II took almost two months. They arrived in Baghdad on Christmas Eve 1944, where they were warmly welcomed by resident missionaries. Each had carried one small suitcase containing their entire wardrobe and a few small Christmas presents, the wrappings of which were ripped and rumpled because they had been opened repeatedly by customs and military officials who feared contraband or weapons.

Ruth and Ed engaged in extensive language study with the Rev. Dr. John VanEss, during which Ruth discovered that she was extremely adept in conversational, idiomatic Arabic, an asset in her dealings with Arab women from all stations in life. She ultimately developed sufficient facility in Arabic to translate a number of children's songs, including "Jesus Loves Me" and "This Little Light of Mine," both of which her children learned first in Arabic from her.

They were assigned to Bahrain, where Edwin served as pastor of the local church and Ruth administered the orphanage. "With her background as a pastor's daughter, and her rather incisive and precise approach to things, [Ruth] was extremely well-suited to running an organization." In addition to managing the orphanage, Ruth had a new baby to care for. Don was born in 1947, his sister Carol in 1949, and Robert Jay in 1953.

Shortly after Don's birth, an old woman named Medina, who had attached herself to the mission, announced that she wanted to become a Christian. Medina had been captured somewhere in Eastern Africa by slave traders when she was a young girl of six or seven. Throughout her life as a slave, she carried with her a drum—a stump of a palm tree, with animal hide on top

and bottom laced together by stout rope—which was her only link to her childhood. She used this drum to ward off evil. Don says: "Following the cues of veteran missionaries, my mother made the drum the sticking point. If Medina were to become a disciple of Christ, then she no longer needed to ward off evil on the nights of the full moon. She no longer had to sit awake all night beating on the drum and singing for deliverance. Deliverance was at hand. Shortly after my birth, Medina came to Mom with her drum in hand. She wanted to be baptized with me, she announced, and her mark of commitment was to turn over this ex-slave's talisman."[16]

After a fifteen-month furlough in the U.S., the Luidens family was posted to Amarah, Iraq. It was Ruth's task to engage women in educational evangelism. This often entailed small discussion groups—frequently under the pretext of "sewing circles" during which young Arab women would do cross-stitch needlework while they listened to Bible stories and talked about their lives. Don says: "My sense is that those sewing sessions may have been some of her greatest sacrifices for the Lord's work. Other than when she was engaged in one of these sewing sessions or replacing a missing button, I have no recollection of Mom ever putting together an article of clothing or other stitched item."

Together with Edwin, Ruth ran a Friday school for local boys, where she instructed them through the use of Bible stories. She also spent time with Iraqi women who lived in harems. Intra-family squabbles between favored wives and their offspring and less-favored ones and theirs came spilling out to her during these visits.

The Luidens family left the mission field in 1964 and settled in Teaneck, New Jersey. Edwin joined the staff of the Board of World Missions, and Ruth found a job in a college alumni office, commuting to New York City.

Displeased with secular work, Ruth happily accepted a part-time job at Second Reformed Church of Hackensack, New Jersey, working with the pastor, the Rev. Edwin Mulder. She was particularly pleased with the "young mothers with children" group she started, which brought together a score of young women for Bible study and mutual sharing. Don remembers: "In many respects, Mom recreated the highly personal community of her sewing circle days—without the distraction of needlepoint. She found that many of these women were experiencing the same kinds of interpersonal problems and personal self-doubts that had been present among the women in the harems of the Arab world. Throughout it all, Mom was looked to as one who had some authority from her own experiences and from her extensive knowledge of child development."

Ed Mulder and his staff treated Ruth as a pastoral equal. Don says, "I frequently goaded her, during those days, to take what steps might be necessary to become ordained as a pastor in the RCA. Always conscious of what she deemed appropriate for a woman to do in the church, she declined."

In 1975 Ruth developed the cancer which eventually took her life. During her last illness she reflected on the irony that she had been commissioned by the RCA to be a minister of the Word to the "heathen." Don writes: "This commissioning was valid for the years she spent outside this country, but when she returned to the States, her commissioning dissolved. She was no longer fit to be a minister. She foresaw a day when women would be ordained as ministers of the RCA, but she knew that it would not include herself."

Ruth Stegenga Luidens passed away quietly on the day after Christmas 1977, with her family at her bedside.

Evangelism has always been the church's primary task. The church growth movement which emerged in the sixties and seventies reminded the RCA that there were thousands of people in the United States and Canada who had either been turned off by the institutional church or who had never really "heard" the gospel. Evangelism is more than simply saving souls. It involves identification with and compassion for the people God cares for. Women who have struggled to serve as ministers of the Word and sacrament in the RCA tend to identify with and have compassion on God's oppressed, battered, and suffering people.

Madeline Ricker Fuentez

(1948-)

The road to ordination for Madeline Fuentez was long, frustrating, and littered with obstacles. She enrolled in Trinity Evangelical Divinity School in 1986 when she was 38 years old. For five years she commuted seventy-five miles from her home in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, to the seminary in Deerfield, Illinois. Her energy was often depleted as she labored at being a full-time wife, mother, homemaker, and theological student. She dealt with opposition to women in ministry from both her home church and her parents, and she struggled to overcome her own confusion over what women could/should or couldn't/shouldn't do in the church. "The fact that I made it has been an encouragement when I've encountered other draining situations" (Madeline Fuentez, written response to author, March 1994*).

Madeline Ricker's family moved a lot—to wherever her mechanical engineer father happened to be working—during her childhood years. When she was twelve and living in a Florida motel, another girl lent her some kids' magazines produced by the Billy Graham Association. She remembers: "One day as I was idly paddling about in the motel's pool pondering what I had read, I decided to give my life to Jesus Christ and asked him to be my Lord and Savior. Soon after this gentle conversion I experienced God calling me to the ministry. It confused me. I knew that girls did not become ministers, so I decided to be a missionary instead."

As preparation for mission service in South America, Mexico, or the southwestern United States, Madeline studied Spanish in high school, but she told no one of her call to ministry. In fact, she had forgotten about her sense of calling until after she began attending Trinity. Still believing that women didn't belong in ministry, she went to seminary with the intention of becoming a Bible teacher. Since the Ph.D. in education program was closed to her, she enrolled in the M.Div. program as a temporary measure. During that time she began to entertain the idea that women could be in ministry, and one day in church while her pastor was praying and she was wrestling with God, Madeline heard a voice clearly say, "I am preparing you for the ministry." Her first response was fear. Then she said, "Lord, you know that my husband opposes women in ministry, my parents oppose women in ministry, this church opposes women in ministry, and I'm not even sure if I think women should be ministers. If I pursue this, it could tear me apart, and I'm afraid. But if this is what you want, here I am."

Surprisingly, when Madeline reported this experience to her husband, Roberto, he became supportive of her calling and has been very supportive of her ministry. Since March 1991 Roberto, a Mexican-American (Chicano), has owned his own business, Maejor Tooling and

Production, a business he began after being laid-off from his machinist job. Madeline says: "Even in those few tough days and weeks following his layoff, my dropping out of seminary was never an option for him. He is always behind the scenes getting things going. It was never MY struggle: the financial problems, the long drive, the hours of study, the hurts and frustrations, the confusion and searching, the joys and triumphs. It was always OUR struggle. It's been the same as he's begun his business: the ministry is mine, the business is his, but we have a strong sense that we're in this together."

Madeline was uncertain about the denomination with which to affiliate. She didn't think her home church would take her under care although she tried to make her consistory understand her calling. Because she was involved with a two-year residency program in church planting among Hispanics under the auspices of the Evangelical Free Church in America (EFCA), the Fuentez family began to worship at an EFCA church, a requirement of the program. The EFCA told Madeline they would allow her to plant a church, but once planted they would assign a male pastor to it. "I was so convinced that church planting in Hispanic Milwaukee was where God wanted me to be that, no matter whether I received support or not, I would do it anyway."

A Reformed Church pastor who learned of her decision took Madeline's proposal to the Church Planning & Development Committee of the Wisconsin Classis. "They expressed interest. There was only one problem, they said. They would not consider me unless I agreed to be ordained. That was the final confirmation."

Although Madeline Fuentez began her church planting efforts on a part-time basis on July 1, 1991, and received her Fitness for Ministry Certificate from TEA (Theological Education Agency) with commendations in June 1992, she was not ordained until January 31, 1993. By that date she was working full time at La Iglesia de la Trinidad in a building the classis had purchased and was remodeling.

Madeline was offered a provisional two-year contract, which she accepted, and on March 7, 1993, she was installed as the pastor of La Iglesia de la Trinidad in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Worship began on Easter Sunday of that year, and in the first year attendance at worship and other church programs increased from twenty-five to sixty-five. "I do not anticipate ever receiving a call here even though I consider Trinidad my life's work, and I know that each time my contract comes up for renewal it may not be renewed." She says:

> *It's hard to plant a church, especially a cross-cultural, inner city church. It's draining and heart-breaking. You always seem to be going backwards faster than forwards, and the problems you face can seem insurmountable. Such a church planter is often alone, must wear all the hats, from janitor to fundraiser to secretary to pastor, teacher, and evangelist, and is often misunderstood, both by the sending and the receiving culture.*
>
> *In my case, I am working with a triple cross culture: I must relate to the Hispanic community, I must be able to communicate effectively to this predominantly Dutch denomination, and I must deal with the culture of men. . .the "Old Boys Club" mentality.*
>
> *I'm more of a teacher than an evangelist. But I always get "high" whenever through me someone is led to Christ. I struggled with evangelism for years. I do not have a natural gift or ability in that area, and I have to work very hard at it, but there is something fantastically thrilling at being an instrumental part of a new birth.*
>
> *Seeing that my life is actually impacting and*

making a difference in the lives of others is the goal of a lifelong dream. I'm not only where God wants me to be, I'm exactly where I want to be.

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1. Sara Couch's story was written by Jennifer M. Reece, who is currently working on a book of Sara's life and ministry, titled To Love and Suffer With Them: The Quiet Evangelism of Sara M. Couch

2. Female missionary recruits in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were largely from small-town or rural settings, according to a study made by Jane Hunter. "The population of Massachusetts was 69 percent urban in 1890, according to that year's census, but only 40 percent of the missionary force were born in towns of over eight thousand." The Gospel of Gentility *(New Haven & London: Yale, 1984) pp. 28-29.*

3. See Jane Hunter, The Gospel of Gentility, *pp. 40-42, and this statistic: "Of those in the American Board whose family circumstances at the time of departure are known, 17 percent were without both parents and 51 percent without one." p. 40.*

4. Tomegawa Jun, Sara Couch's partner in mission in Nagasaki for forty years, preached and taught on missionary tours through Korea and Formosa (Taiwan) as well as in Japan. Research on this extremely interesting and important woman is currently being undertaken by a U.S. historian of Japanese culture.

5. Sara-Helene Trompen Beltman's story may be found in Chapter 1—Taking the Lead.

6. Ferris Seminary, a girls boarding school, opened on June 1, 1875. It grew out of the work of Mary Kidder, who in 1869 was the first single woman RCA missionary to go to Japan. "At the close of her first year of teaching she had a class of six girls. . . . In the second year of her teaching she had a class of twenty-two girls, and she began to realize that here was the nucleus of a Girls' School. . . . In 1872 the first pupil was baptized, a great joy and encouragement to Miss Kidder." Chamberlain, Fifty Years in Foreign Fields, *p. 30.*

7. Japanese women were docile, took care of the home, were submissive to their husbands and fathers-in-law, and submerged rather than expressed their feelings. However, during the Meiji era (reign of the Emperor Meiji, 1868-1912), the country changed. Japan began to relate to other countries, and women became educated, went abroad to school, and were more self-expressive. Many famous women leaders were prominent in education, churches, medicine, and science, and many considered following careers in addition to marriage.

8. Irene Dykstra's story may be found in Chapter 8—Nurturing in Church and Home.

9. Author's note: I grew up in New York City, where I was actively involved in the life of Adams Parkhurst Memorial Presbyterian Church. Julia Fulton, the director of Christian education and choir director during my elementary and high school years, introduced me to church music and opera, paid me out of her own funds to assist her in after-school clubs, encouraged me to attend college, and influenced me to use my abilities in God's service.

10. Today there are only four: Central Avenue, Old Bergen, Second, and United.

11. First Roseland relocated in South Holland, Illinois, in the early 1970s and changed its name to Thorn Creek Reformed Church.

12. Tena Holkeboer's story appears in Chapter 7—Teaching in Word and Deed.

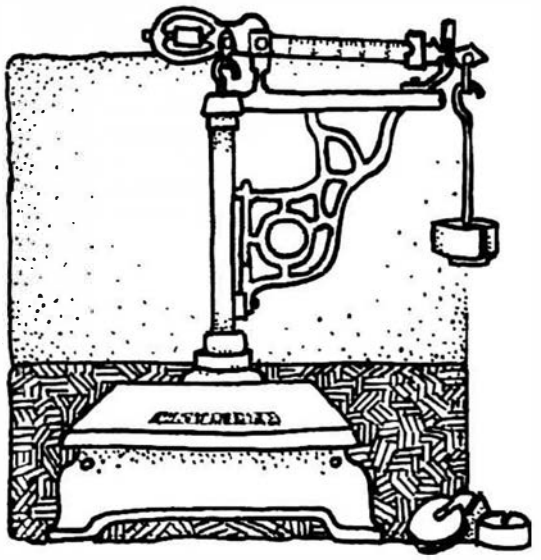
13. Morrie's mother, Wilda Webber, was a member of the Department of Women's Work of the Mission Boards, Reformed Church in America. In 1952 she wrote "Mail From Africa," a Program of the Month for use in RCA women's societies, in which Mrs. Webber shared words from letters written by Morrell Swart to her mother.

14. Wilma Kats' story may be found in Chapter 7—Teaching in Word and Deed.

15. The Rev. and Mrs. Donald McClure, Presbyterian missionaries who had been working with the Shulla tribe in southern Sudan, had paved the way for the RCA missionary team. During a time of famine the McClures came, bringing wheat to the starving people. By the time the Swarts and Wilma Kats arrived, the Anuaks were ready to hear the gospel.

16. "For years my mother began her mission-emphasis speeches by walking on stage wearing a black robe, or abba, and beating this drum. I have the drum in my possession today, and it is one of my most treasured family relics" (Don Luidens, March 7, 1994).

Chapter Three



Seeking Justice

The Daughters of Zelophehad—Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah

(Numbers 27:2-4; Joshua 17:3-4)

Zelophehad was a member of the tribe of Manasseh who died during the Israelite's journey in the wilderness. Before entrance into the Promised Land, Jehovah ordered Moses and Eleazar the priest to take a census of every male one month old and up. Then the Lord instructed Moses to apportion the Promised Land for inheritance on the basis of that census. So, that's what Moses did.

But the daughters of Zelophehad, whose father belonged to the tribe of Manasseh, protested. Normally women did not inherit property, but Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah thought this was unjust. They confronted Moses, Eleazar, and the other leaders saying, "Our father died in the wilderness. . .and he had no sons.

Why should the name of our father be taken away from his clan because he had no son? Give to us a possession among our father's brothers" (Num. 27:3-4). So Moses brought their case before the Lord and the inheritance law was changed to allow property to pass to daughters when there were no male heirs.

When the Israelites finally got to the Promised Land, the daughters of Zelophehad had to remind Joshua, the new leader, of the inheritance law which included females. When allotments were made only to the male descendants of Manasseh, the daughters of Zelophehad asserted their rights and went straight to those in charge, saying, "The Lord commanded Moses to give us an inheritance along with our male kin" (Josh. 17:4). So Mahlah, Noah, Hoglah, Milcah, and Tirzah received their inheritance along with the other descendents of Manasseh.

Men and women who are concerned with pleasing God are willing to do whatever it takes to fulfill the Lord's requirement "to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with their God" (Micah 6.8).

Frances Eunice Davis Beardslee

(1888-1975)

Frances Davis' New England background, combined with her mother's Methodism and her own Congregationalist and Unitarian religious tradition did not adequately prepare her for life in Holland, Michigan. In fact, one might say that she suffered from culture shock for some time after arriving there as a bride in the early 1900s. Her husband, John Walter Beardslee, Jr., a professor in the classical languages department at Hope College, brought his new wife to live in his father's large home. In the years they lived in Holland, Frances not only cared for her husband and three children, but also kept house for her father-in-law, John Walter Beardslee, who was a professor at Western Theological Seminary (John Walter Beardslee III, letter to author, April 1994*). Will, one of Frances and John's four sons, says: "It wasn't easy. When they went out in the car, dad and grandpa sat in the front seat, mother in the rear. Once grandpa redecorated a room without telling her beforehand that he was going to do it" (William Beardslee, letter to brother John, April 1994).

Frances always put her family, including her five lively, precocious children—John III, William, Frank, David, and Ellen—first. During much of her married life, Frances took care of children, old people, and sick people—her father-in-law; her mother, who came to live with the Beardslee family after the death of her husband; her husband, who was very frail for more than a decade; and her son Frank. Not that she complained. She enjoyed her life as the wife of a New Testament professor, first at Western Theological Seminary, and later at New Brunswick Theological Seminary. "It is important to remember that, like other theological professors' wives of that period, she had household help on a scale impossible for the present faculty. She was also sustained by a deep faith that rarely expressed itself in terms of conventional piety" (William Beardslee, letter to brother John, April 1994).

Frances, who earned a bachelor's degree from Wellesley College (Mass.) and a master's degree from the University of Chicago, met John Walter Beardslee, Jr., when both were graduate students in Chicago, where she was working on a doctorate in Greek literature. She never completed the doctorate, but she maintained her love of Greek and her facility with the language throughout her

life. A former student of John Walter, Jr., remembered that when a point of Greek grammar came up in class, Dr. Beardslee said, "I will have to check that out with Frances." Professors in the classical language department at Rutgers University also respected her facility in the language. At one time they hired her for one semester as a substitute for the male Greek teacher.

She maintained a lively intellectual life, reading contemporary literature, taking classes in Italian, reading Greek with her husband and sons, acting occasionally in dramatic performances, teaching and tutoring, writing missionary programs for the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions, preparing and leading devotional services for board meetings of the American Committee of Madras Women's College which she served as a member, and sharing her love of nature with close friends such as Dr. Frank Speck, the head of the anthropology department at the University of Pennsylvania. (The Specks and the Beardslees had summer homes in Gloucester, Mass.)

Will remembers: "One day when they were coming back together from a visit to the Peabody Museum in Salem [Mass.], Dr. Speck noticed a rare fern growing just inside a cast-iron fence in front of a Salem mansion. Astonishing mother, he reached through the fence with a pen knife and took a portion of the fern home to plant at 'The Wigwam' [his summer home]. Not too many of mother's peers shared such a friendship" (William Beardslee, letter to brother John, April 1994).

In 1917 the Beardslee family moved to the campus of New Brunswick Theological Seminary, where John W., Jr., taught New Testament and later served as president. Shortly after the move, Frances was elected to the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions, "doubtless due in large part to the fact that her husband's family was known in the denomination, and she was living near New York City," where the boards met. John Beardslee III says: "Once on the board, she worked hard for it. It had a small staff, volunteers (members) did much that employees do now, e.g., for years correspondence for the Cradle Roll, including membership applications and checks, came to our home; she wrote replies and expressions of thanks, etc. Later, as candidate secretary, she interviewed candidates after screening applications, helped with technicalities, arranged medical examinations, etc."

Frances Beardslee was known as a caring friend of both faculty and students, a gracious hostess, and a determined advocate for social justice. The Rev. Dr. Marion de Velder remembers Frances Beardslee as a frequent caller in their seminary apartment on George Street in New Brunswick, New Jersey.

> *In our middle year at the seminary, my wife Edith was ill for a number of weeks with food poisoning from a below standard hamburger eaten in a Bayonne diner. Frances Beardslee came to visit frequently, to help, encourage, counsel, compliment, and inspire. We knew her as the "loving arm" of the seminary family (Klunder and Gasero, 1989, 4).*

As early as her high school years Frances Davis Beardslee showed concern for the rights of others. In 1912 she participated in a demonstration at the Massachusetts State House in Boston advocating women's suffrage. Years later as a board member of the YWCA, before any New Brunswick clergy would mention the subject, Frances cooperated with a social worker in distributing contraceptive information to working class women in the garment industry. In February 1939, when the African-American contralto Marian Anderson was reported to have been denied the use of Washington, D.C.'s Constitution Hall, owned by the Daughters of the American Republic (DAR), Frances Beardslee, a DAR member, followed the example of Eleanor Roosevelt and resigned

from the organization. During the sixties she participated in several demonstrations against the Vietnam War, once marching from Douglass College to Old Queens on the Rutgers (New Brunswick, NJ) campus when suffering arthritis in both knees.

In 1969 "Fearless Frances," as some called her, joined a group of RCA women at the General Synod meeting in New Brunswick, New Jersey, in a march advocating equality for women in the RCA.

> *At the beginning of one General Synod business session, a line of Reformed Church women marched in, with banners flying, to confront the synod for the rights and needs of women as equal partners in the Reformed Church. . . .Midway in the line of march strode eighty-one-year-old Frances Beardslee, banner held high. She marched along with determination and resolution, impressive and awesome. Her presence was undoubtedly appreciated by her daughter-in-law, Edith Brown Beardslee, a leader of the group (Klunder and Gasero, 1989, 5).*[1]

In 1972 following the General Synod action that "elders and deacons shall be chosen from the members of the church in full communion who are at least twenty-one years of age," Frances Beardslee was invited to consistory meetings at Second Reformed Church in New Brunswick, but because of infirmity she was never ordained an elder. By the time she died at the age of eighty-seven, the Reformed Church in America had still not opened the office of minister of the Word to women.

In a different time, Frances Davis Beardslee would have combined marriage with a career as college professor. Instead, she made a career of working for "righteousness and justice," which "is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice" (Prov. 21:3).

Much has been written concerning the politics and civic actions of Dutch and Huguenot Reformed Church clergy and other church leaders—all male—during the American Revolution. Willard Dayton Brown wrote: "The Dutch Church, its ministers and members, were almost without exception aligned with the patriot cause" (Brown, 1928, 74). Little is known, however, of what Reformed Church women may have done during the war for independence. We do know that General and Mrs. Washington were neighbors and friends of Domine Jacob Rutsen Hardenbergh and his wife Dina in Raritan, New Jersey, during the winter of 1779.[2] It is possible that Dina enlisted some of her church friends in giving money or other forms of aid to support Washington's army, but the actual fighting and subsequent establishment of a new government were done by men (as far as we know!).

Women became politically active during and following the Civil War in the United States. They spoke out in favor of abolishing slavery, they advocated for woman's suffrage and woman's rights, and they were developing an understanding of the connectedness of people around the globe.

The Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) grew out of the Women's Temperance Crusade of 1873, when women church members went into saloons, sang hymns, prayed, and asked bar owners to stop selling liquor. The organization grew rapidly and attracted women of the Reformed Church who believed in abstinence from alcoholic beverages.

Agnes Dykstra Te Paske

(1878-1954)

Agnes (baptized Akke) Dykstra was born on a farmstead called the Stjelp near the town of Pinjum, Friesland, in the Netherlands. When she was four years old her parents brought Agnes and her six brothers and sisters to the United States, where they settled on a farm near Sioux Center, Iowa. An extended family of aunts, uncles, and cousins accompanied Agnes, their departure from Europe being motivated by Holland's unsettled economic conditions in the aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War, rather than personal penury or the more often-cited quest for religious freedom (Adelphos H. Te Paske, son, submitted story to author, July 1994*).

Agnes' nephew, D. Ivan Dykstra, described his aunt as

> *the crowning jewel of the clan, when measured in terms not only of what she was, but of what she did. She shared her sisters' graciousness, their lady-likeness, their soft-spoken charm. But she surely put her own unique stamp on it. For one thing, she was richly cultured, in the educated sense of cultured, much of it self-acquired, all of it ready to bounce out in the form of some timely quotation from one of the classics of our literary heritage (Dykstra, 1982, 22f).*

Her formal education extended from the rural one-room school near her farm home to Northwestern Academy in Orange City, Iowa, from which she graduated in 1894. A year after she began teaching in a country school at the age of sixteen, the school was destroyed by a cyclone. Knowing that a cyclone threatened, however, she had dismissed her classes before it hit, so no children were lost or injured.

From her childhood Agnes was an active member of First Reformed Church of Sioux Center. Young people from First and Central Reformed churches joined forces in Christian Endeavor activities. When First Reformed organized its own society in 1904, Agnes Te Paske became its first secretary. She also taught Sunday school. An early record shows that by 1897 the Sunday school boasted twenty-two classes with 371 scholars. Among those students were sixteen in a class taught by Agnes Dykstra. Until 1895 all classes were conducted in the Dutch language, but thereafter English quickly gained in prevalence. Agnes Te Paske taught Sunday school for more than fifty years, and in 1936 she attended the World Sunday School Convention in Oslo, Norway.

On July 2, 1903, Agnes Dykstra married Anthony Te Paske, who had established a law practice in Sioux Center in the late 1890s. Under Anthony's tutelage, his new wife undertook the study of law. She was admitted to the Iowa Bar in 1909, being the first woman to do so. When Anthony served in the Iowa State Legislature (1943-1945), Agnes served as his very able assistant. In collaboration with her attorney husband, she used her knowledge of the law to assist newly arrived immigrants in the community, and when people could not afford it, there was no charge.

> *For decades her major project was to assist newly arrived immigrants in the process of becoming naturalized citizens. The process of preparation went far beyond the mere minimum of helping to pass the basic naturalization test. It became a thorough effort at enculturation into the America she had come to love with all her heart. And as each new class of immigrants completed the preparation course, she made sure there was an appropriate rite of passage into the full stream of American life (Dykstra, 1982, 23).*

A front-runner in women's activity in her church, Agnes became a charter member of the Junior Women's Missionary Society in 1920. They called themselves "junior" so as not to unduly antagonize the Vrouwen Vereeniging (Women's Society), who until that time had had a monopoly on women's activities in the church. "She never wore her Christianity on her sleeve; it would be foreign to her to think, 'Now I am a Christian, so I must do this.' Her churchliness was quite internal, not on her sleeve but in her heart" (D. Ivan Dykstra, letter to author, Oct. 1994).

Agnes Te Paske was a social activist who, in many ways, was ahead of her time. Her deep and abiding faith in Christ informed and permeated all of her life's activities. She was vigorous in her support of the vote for women and zealous in the temperance crusade. At the age of seventy she flew to the world convention of the Women's Christian Temperance Union in Zurich, Switzerland.

> *She was a major force in the work of the Women's Christian Temperance Union. In her church she was much less anxious about maintaining some ecclesiastical purity than in seeking the well-being of persons. No community improvement project had occurred in which she was not involved. Anything that was "pure, lovely, and of good reputation" attracted her enthusiastic support. . . .She was truly one of the great ladies I have known (Dykstra, 1982, 23f).*

When the community decided it needed a hospital, she was untiring in collaring people to enlist financial support. "She seemed to operate so forcefully on not so much a specific self-conscious commitment, as on her own powerful instinct (this strikes me as being an obviously good thing to do, so I will do it). And she had the knack of arousing similar instincts in others" (D. Ivan Dykstra, letter to author, Oct. 1994).

Agnes Te Paske died in an automobile accident in June 1954, returning home from a meeting of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America.

Women in the United States were not allowed to vote until 1920. Until 1946, when the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions merged with the General Synod's board (men), women in the Reformed Church were also denied the right to participate fully in denominational structures. Perhaps that is why they reached out to groups of people they sensed were oppressed and needy.

In 1893, concerned about repaying the nation's debt to Native Americans and in bringing the gospel to them, the Women's Executive Committee sent its first missionaries to the Indians in Oklahoma.

Mildred Imach Cleghorn

(1910-)

Mildred Cleghorn didn't have a very promising start in life.[3] The daughter of Chiricahua Apaches, she was born in 1910 in Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Mildred's father had been a small child when his father fought for Geronimo and was part of the band of Chiricahua warriors who surrendered to the U.S. Army in 1886. The army shipped the warriors and their families to Florida, imprisoning the men in one fort and the women and children in another. After a year of disease and many deaths, the families were reunited and the government moved them out of Florida to Alabama. Mildred's mother was born as a prisoner of war in Alabama; her parents had married

while the tribe was in captivity. In 1894 the Apaches were moved again, to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, where they remained as prisoners of war until 1913.

Mildred grew up hearing about the Apaches' golden years, when Geronimo was their beloved medicine man and prophet. He became a war chief only after the soldiers killed his mother, wife, and children and forced the Apaches from their land. When Geronimo understood that the army intended to kill his entire tribe, the Apaches surrendered. Only 394 Chiricahua Apaches were left by then. Though they pleaded again and again to return home to Arizona, they remained prisoners of war for twenty-seven years in Florida, Alabama, and finally, Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

In 1897 the Reformed Church had sent the Rev. Walter and Mabel Roe to Fort Sill. These missionaries worked with the Chiricahuas throughout their captivity. Many became Christians, including Mildred Cleghorn's family. Those Apaches who remained in 1913 were given two choices. They could go to a reservation in New Mexico or try to make it on their own in Oklahoma. Mildred Cleghorn's family was part of the group that decided to stay in Oklahoma, living side by side with non-Indians. Each family was given $3,000 per adult and $2,000 per child to buy land.

When they were released, Mildred's family settled into their new home in Apache, Oklahoma. Her parents helped start Apache Reformed Church because they wanted to worship using the songs they had previously learned from the Reformed missionaries. Mildred was the first woman to be elected an elder in Apache Reformed Church. She has served on the American Indian Council of the Reformed Church in America and as a delegate on the General Program Council.

As a child Mildred was expected to do everything her "white neighbors did, but a little bit better." She graduated from college and then went on to graduate school. Mildred never stopped learning; she signed up for a computer course at age seventy-four.

While working for the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the university extension service, Mildred Cleghorn met Native Americans of many tribes. She also met non-Indians who thought all Native Americans were alike. "Indians are as different from each other as Germans are from Italians. They have different languages, different customs, different dress."

Mildred and many other people in the small tribe of Apaches at Fort Sill felt their differences strongly. Because they had chosen to get along with and to live among non-Indians, Native Americans who lived on reservations thought the Fort Sill Apaches had forgotten who they were. But Mildred did not forget that she was a Chiricahua Apache. In fact, with God's help, she began working to make sure that the Apaches would not be forgotten.

The Chiricahuas chose Mildred as chairperson of her tribe. Because her tribe was so small, and the town of Apache had so few good jobs, Mildred worked with others to start a daycare center, to raise money, and to attract new jobs to the area. She found ways to teach the young people to be proud of their roots. Mildred began making dolls to show the different dress of each Native American tribe she worked with during her time in civil service. Her doll exhibit has traveled to many museums, including the Smithsonian Museum in Washington, D.C.

The Chiricahua language had never been a written language, so it began to disappear as the prisoners of war died. Mildred's cousin, a linguist, is converting their native tongue into written symbols. She helped start a cassette tape library of interviews with the old people. They told their family stories and memories so the young people would remember their heritage.

Mildred also wanted to make sure people learned the truth about Geronimo. She says: "Geronimo should be remembered as a man who tried to save his people and his homeland. He fought against injustice. Geronimo himself once said, 'I think I am a good man, but. . .all over the world they say I am a bad man.' If you stop to think about it, nobody wants to be chased off their land or see their family slaughtered."

In October 1986, during the one-hundredth anniversary celebration for the Statue of Liberty, Mildred Cleghorn was one of eighty people given the Ellis Island Medal of Honor. The winners were chosen because they "exemplified the ideal of living a life dedicated to the American way while preserving the values or tenets of a particular heritage group."

When she received the medal, Mildred said, "I didn't do all this myself. This Medal of Honor represents the work of many persons for what they have done to keep our tribe from disappearing from the face of the earth."

When the members of Apache Reformed Church heard what Mildred had said, someone said, "That's just like Mildred. She always gives credit to others." Another mentioned, "She's the kind of person who never acts superior to others."

Mildred plans to "surrender" her job as chairperson of her tribe at the end of her present term, in October 1995, "if the Good Lord lets me live that long. Then I want to play dolls!!" (Mildred Cleghorn, postcard to author, November 1994).

Prior to the middle of the twentieth century the Reformed Church in America had for the most part ignored African-Americans. They had generously supported Southern Normal School in Brewton, Alabama, but simply to educate young men and women to be leaders in "their own community." Civil rights activity and the movement of black people into northern cities during the late 1950s and 60s developed a new black consciousness. "They wanted no more charity; they were demanding black power" (Erskine, 1978, 85).

The Black Council was established in the Reformed Church in America in 1969 "to reconcile the church to all of God's people by leading the church in a ministry to the wholistic needs of Black people both within the church's family and beyond" ("The Black Council of the Reformed Church in America, The First Ten Years," 1980, 9). The Rev. B. Moses James, who was elected as the council's first chairman, "insisted, when the Black Council constitution was being drafted, that its preamble affirm racial reconciliation as a primary goal of the organization" (*MGS* 1975, 69). From its inception the council—renamed African-American Council in 1990—understood that "reconciliation without justice is a mere word, and to claim Christ, while sneering at justice, is blasphemy" ("The Black Council of the Reformed Church in America, The First Ten Years," 1980, 19).

Dorothy Elizabeth Cox James

(1921-1989)

"Walk softly, but carry a big stick. If you can reach

up, you can get up. If life gives you lemons, make lemonade. Cliches? Maybe yes, maybe no, but Dorothy James lived her life in the physical doing, choosing not to dream of the greatness one is capable of, but making it the front lines of reality where the battle is fierce, but the rewards satisfying" (Lois James Fisher, daughter, August 1994*).

Dorothy James was born October 11, 1921, in Batesville, Mississippi. She was a graduate of Western Michigan University who taught reading at Grand Valley Community College and in Kalamazoo (Michigan) public and Christian schools from 1970 to 1975.

She was the wife of the Rev. B. Moses James, pastor of North Community Reformed Church in Kalamazoo, Michigan. They began residence and ministry within the RCA beginning in 1961, after relocating from Washington, D.C., where they had been in the ministry in the Baptist and Presbyterian denominations. Following her husband's death, Dorothy James relocated in Flint, Michigan, and served Bethany Community Reformed Church as the director of Christian outreach from 1976 to 1979.

Dorothy James returned to Kalamazoo in 1979 where she made quite a reputation as an elected county official, serving her constituents with high marks. Before her death, she had become quite a leader in the African-American Council (AAC) of the Reformed Church in America in her own right, following her husband, B. Moses, who had been the council's first chairperson. At the time of her death, she was midwest regional convener of AAC.

After North Community Reformed Church closed, Dorothy James joined Second Reformed Church of Kalamazoo. She served as a member of the Board of Theological Education, as a member of the Commission on Christian Unity, and on the RCA delegation to the North American and Caribbean Region of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches (M. William Howard, Jr., executive director of African-American Council of the RCA from 1972 to 1992, letter to Beth Marcus, April 1991).

She was a delegate to the World Alliance of Reformed Churches in 1982 when two all-white Dutch Reformed Churches in South Africa were suspended from that international organization.

One could call her an activist, a crusader, a seeker of truth, a teacher, a spiritual being, a political organizer, a reformer—all true, but she was so much more. She was a gentle, soft-spoken leader who appealed to the soul of her community, and she was a person who was never afraid to challenge the power structure when it failed the hopeless, the helpless, the powerless. She believed God gave us life, but life gives us experience and opportunity; and if that experience is not used to enlighten, change, and commit oneself to humankind from one tiny soapbox, the opportunity to be Godlike is lost. As a committee chairperson at a Kalamazoo tribute to Martin Luther King, Jr., when trying to raise consciences about the need for interracial cooperation, Dorothy James said, "talking about love and practicing openness to people of different ethnic origins should take place in the area's strongest forts—our churches. Each person's contribution will say, 'I have had something to do with making this philosophy of improving race relations come alive.'"

In the political arena, Dorothy James was a team player until the team struck out. When that happened, she simply gathered her strength and met head-on the forces she felt were off-track, standing by her convictions and ideals, all the while helping to put into perspective major concerns which would ultimately impact the human rights and dignity of the total community. Her

friend and coworker, Catheryn Sirk, wrote of her:

> *Dorothy James worked tirelessly with/for women in the criminal justice/jail system in Kalamazoo County. She was director of the Offender Aid and Restoration Agency, recruiting Christian mentors throughout the community. Dorothy was an elected county commissioner. [She served two terms.] In this board of thirteen she quietly, persistently, and successfully advocated for the poor and the special needs of women.*
>
> *In 1991 the County Commission created the Kalamazoo Treasure Award in honor of Dorothy James. Each year a select committee honors her by choosing a Christian community leader whose efforts have impacted and upgraded the quality of life for women and minorities (Catheryn Sirk, letter to author, August 1994).*

She relinquished her seat on the Kalamazoo County Board of Commissioners at the end of 1984. At the last meeting she attended, fellow commissioner Richard Burke described a heated battle over some past county issue that had inflamed the board and left commissioners divided and bitter.

> *"But then," he said, "a gentle lady in our midst spoke to us and told us to think about doing what was right for all citizens. Gentle Dorothy, we will miss you." Curtis Haan, chairman of the Human Resources Committee called her the "conscience of that committee" who made them stop and look at what they were doing (Paul Keep, Kalamazoo Gazette, Dec. 19, 1984).*

If she found herself in disfavor or on the unpopular side of an issue, she had to be convinced her logic was skewed, but was never so dogmatic that she could not compromise and be willing to listen objectively to another's view. Her bottom line, however, was that no one lost if justice was the winner.

Dorothy James' focus was her children—not only her biological children, but the world's children. Becoming an educator late in life, she believed that learning should be a living, breathing activity, a partnership between child, parent, and teacher—not a regurgitation of class work only, but knowledge gathered in all the dimensions of life. She felt everything should be a classroom—neighborhoods, Sunday schools, museums, friendship, race relations, politics, life, and death.

> *"One could call her an activist, a crusader, a seeker of truth, a teacher, a spiritual being, a political organizer, a reformer—all true, but she was so much more. She was a gentle, soft-spoken leader who appealed to the soul of her community, and a person who was never afraid to challenge the power structure when it failed the hopeless, the helpless, the powerless."*
>
> *—Lois James Fisher, daughter of Dorothy James*

She gave of herself to countless community and service groups, working as a volunteer for many local organizations, including the Douglass Community Association and Hospice of Greater Kalamazoo. In 1985 the City of Kalamazoo honored her with a community service award, noting:

> *While preserving the gentleness of character which has characterized her over the years, Mrs. James has become a symbol of concern and commitment to the special needs of the disadvantaged. During her four years as a Kalamazoo County Commissioner, Mrs. James carved a special niche as a person who could translate a discussion about facts, figures, and programs into what they mean to*

*real people. She is a person who knows what's right and what's wrong. And she speaks it clearly in her gentle voice (*Kalamazoo Gazette, *Wednesday, May 1, 1985).*

The March on Washington in 1963 was the beginning of a dream for Dorothy James. The 1983 symbolic recurrence, which she was able to attend, became the realization of that dream for her, her daughter (Lois James Fisher), and her granddaughter (Nicole Fisher). The three generations of James women participated in this event together. Always a strong advocate for social change, her involvement with the NAACP helped to hone her ability to persuade her constituency to concentrate on and support the concept that we can empower ourselves to determine our own destiny.

Following her death, one of Dorothy's fervent dreams became a reality on August 26, 1989. That was the completion and unveiling of the Martin Luther King, Jr., statue in the Kalamazoo park named for him. In bas-relief on King's clerical robe are highlights from his life and significant events of the civil rights struggle. Dorothy James' likeness is featured on the statue in a scene depicting her registering a voter, as a tribute to her being "a consistent champion for causes of social justice" for all humankind.

Nida Thomas, one of her coworkers on the committee to plan the twentieth anniversary of the African-American Council, which Dorothy James served as chairperson, said of Dorothy:

She was a prayerful person who always thanked God for the successes of her various tasks and for her family. The Christmas before her death, I visited her at her home in Kalamazoo. She talked about the Bible and her beliefs. She hoped that she had lived according to God's will, abided by Christ's teachings, and used well the talents God had given her (Nida Thomas, letter to author, March 1994).

Dorothy James died, following a brief bout with cancer, on February 17, 1989. Dr. M. William Howard, executive director (1972-92) of the African-American Council of the RCA, offered the eulogy at her memorial service. In it he said:

I will remember her for her faith. The very impetus for her courage and her willingness to serve, her very concern for people, was rooted in her belief in Christ as her Lord and Savior and her guide to life. She identified with the powerless because Christ identified with the powerless. She chose the sometimes uncertain road because she knew she was in the Savior's care.[4]

Pastors have been preaching on the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12) for hundreds of years, yet these sayings of Jesus remain mostly words to those who sit in the pews. "Blessed are the peacemakers" is one of those difficult sayings. True makers of peace are few and far between because peacemaking and reconciliation demand hard work, single-mindedness, and a deep relationship with God.

Elsie Parsons Lamb

(1924-)

Elsie Parsons Lamb grew up in Hudson, New York, where she belonged to First Reformed Church. Her Sunday school teachers modeled the Bible stories; her mother inspired and led her to church weekly—"I had eighteen years perfect attendance!"; and ministers J. Har-

vey Murphy and Harvey Hoffman influenced her choice of Hope College (Elsie Lamb, written responses to author, March 1994*).

Elsie, who admits that she is "called and gifted as a public and church school teacher," taught third grade in Traverse City, Michigan, before she and Laurence "Bill" William Lamb, Jr., were married in 1948. Bill and Elsie hold similar Christian goals and are committed to God's leadership in their lives, which most likely is "the reason for our long and faithful marriage." Two of the couple's sons are married. Their eldest son died of suicide at age thirty-five, a loss which only "faith in God and faithful friends" enabled them to endure.

"I first became aware of the importance of peacemaking," Elsie says, "when I listened to a series of sermons on the Beatitudes. When the minister read 'Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God,' something within me said, 'Yes!'

"I was very involved in the peace movement during the Vietnam War, assisting young people who chose not to fight. Throughout the civil rights movement you could find me marching and speaking for equal rights. When Mayor Nelson Bosman formed the first Human Rights Commission in the city of Holland, Michigan, he asked me to be on it."

Hope Church in Holland, Michigan, provides spiritual food, joyful worship, and a springboard for Elsie to put her faith into action. She was one of the first women to serve as an elder in Hope Church and she is a trained Bethel Bible teacher. "My Bible is underlined and used. I take every adult education offering at Hope Church." When young people ask her to share what church membership means, Elsie is quick to serve as a sponsor and mentor and to share her pride in Hope Church.

In the 1980s Elsie put her "whole heart and soul into peacemaking." She and a friend, Joanne Brooks, traveled to Washington, D.C., to meet with a group called World Peacemakers, which originated in the Church of the Savior, where Gordon Cosby is the senior pastor. When they returned to Holland, Elsie and Joanne began a World Peacemaker group, which uses a meditation action format at its meetings, at Hope Church. In 1982, when there were worldwide anti-nuclear demonstrations, the Holland World Peacemaker group identified with the outpouring of concern in the Netherlands. Group members arranged workshops, planned vigils, offered speakers, and eventually were led by the Spirit to protest. Elsie says, "I joined fifty other protesters at Williams International, the largest manufacturer of cruise missile engines at Walled Lake, Michigan. Six of us linked arms and blockaded and prayed at the plant entrance at 6 a.m. on the first day of Advent. I was arrested and jailed for eight days and nights.

"I found myself in a large cell with eight other women who had been arrested on various charges. Needless to say, I felt alone! That night on the top bunk I said the Twenty-third Psalm, which deeply comforted and encouraged me. My eight days included directing clean up—cigarette butts, vomit, etc.—and helping the other inmates write letters to their lawyers. In general, I was where I was supposed to be, unafraid and enjoying these new friends."

Perhaps because of the shock of the news or not knowing what to say, no church friends called Bill during those eight lonely days and nights. "Thankfully, God provided grace. Time and forgiveness healed our hurts." Two years later Elsie's case was tried in a Pontiac, Michigan, courtroom. After spending eight long days in court, Elsie and the other protesters were found guilty of trespassing and placed on probation. Every month for one year, she trekked 150 miles to Pontiac, paid a

$200 fine, and returned to Holland.

Since that time, Elsie has taken a number of peacemaking trips: with the World Council of Churches to the Soviet Union in 1983, with RCA missionary Wendell Karsen and Holland area churches to China in 1987, and with Sonja Stewart and students of Western Theological Seminary to El Salvador and Nicaragua in 1990. Her latest trip, with her peacemaker colleague Joanne Brooks, was in February 1995. The pair traveled to Okinawa and Hiroshima, Japan, with the Japan North America Commission of the National Council of Churches to study issues of war and peace, fifty years ago and today.

Following her first peacemaking trip, Elsie had an opportunity to "pass the peace" to someone else. "Upon my return from the trip to the Soviet Union I shared my slide presentation, Faces of Russia, with more than one hundred congregations in Michigan and Wisconsin. I saved all the offerings I received and used them to send another young woman to the Soviet Union."

Prior to the twentieth century people with mental impairments were hidden by their families. Parents of mentally impaired children struggled to raise them alone, often having to cope with shame or blame for bearing a "less than perfect" son or daughter. Until recently, the church also tended to ignore the spiritual development of mentally impaired young people. In the late seventies and early eighties a visionary missionary used her prophetic voice to improve quality of life for and offer spiritual nurture to a group of people in Hong Kong who were unable to plead their own cause.

Joyce Hughes Karsen

(1936-1989)

Joyce Karsen knew nothing about training programs for young people with mental impairments or about support programs for their parents. Yet inspired by a Chinese man who had a burning desire to help such young people and who died of cancer at the age of thirty-seven, Joyce Karsen began to look for ways to begin such a ministry in Hong Kong, where she served as a Reformed Church missionary (Wendell Karsen, husband, letter to Beth Marcus, January 1990*).

At the time, parents of these young people had no assistance to help them in their struggles to raise their impaired children and to cope with the considerable social stigma that hung over households "cursed" with such offspring. Joyce and her colleagues had no experience with mentally impaired young people. Neither did they have any funds, facilities, staff, or equipment.

However, they researched programs elsewhere, gathered materials, found a few Chinese social workers who had received specialized training abroad in rehabilitation programs for the impaired, and convinced the small congregation of the Kowloon Union Church to provide seed money and primitive facilities and equipment that enabled them to begin a small daycare program named the Wai Ji Center.

They continued to learn as they went, even journeying to Australia and New Zealand to observe renowned rehabilitation programs there. The program they had developed became so effective that their pleas for government funding and involvement were finally answered. Today well-staffed multiple programs in modern facilities with excellent equipment are the result of those humble beginnings.

Joyce and her colleagues encountered problems along the way, including cutting through masses of government red tape. However, in Joyce's eyes, the dramatic progress that the youths made and the enthusiastic support of their parents were more than enough to compensate for the trials encountered in giving birth to this ministry.

Joyce was concerned that these young people and their families come to know the God who cared for them at whatever level they could manage. She adapted the Friendship Series published by CRC Publications for use in the Wai Ji program. To this day, the Wai Ji Centres, although now largely government funded, still retain close ties to the church and recently celebrated their fifteenth (1994) anniversary with a special service of worship and praise.

Joyce Hughes Karsen was born and brought up in South Carolina. She graduated from Bryan College in Dayton, Tennessee, and the Wheaton (Illinois) Graduate School of Theology. From the day of her graduation until her death from ovarian cancer twenty-nine years later, she faithfully served Jesus Christ. She was an active partner with her husband, Wendell, in two Michigan RCA congregations—Bethany in Grand Rapids, and Lakeland in Vicksburg. Together they served as RCA missionaries in Taiwan from 1969-73 and in Hong Kong from 1974-84. The couple had four children—Stephen, Philip, Rachel, and Andrew.

Throughout her life Joyce utilized her skills as a writer, speaker, and teacher to communicate the Christian gospel, to inform people about the needs and contributions of the peoples of Asia, and to encourage others in their spiritual pilgrimage.

She was a gifted speaker who was called upon to lead women's regional retreats and to speak for Women's Classical Union meetings and other groups. Joyce had the ability to help groups to focus and to share openly. She was not afraid to try new things and to think new thoughts, and she encouraged others to do so.

For two and a half years Joyce fought valiantly against the disease which eventually took her life. At the same time she continued to carry on the tasks of ministry as she was able.

During the last year of her life, she taught a course on Making Space for God, based on the CRC publication Space for God by Donald Postema. In her struggle to work out a theology of suffering that was true to her own experience, she dared to challenge traditions and presuppositions that she felt did not ring true to that experience. Through this course and throughout her long ordeal, she was, I believe, able "to open people's hearts, to enhance their understanding, and to bring about their turning to God."

In 1975, in response to a suggestion from RCW, the General Synod appointed a Task Force on Women to study issues relating to the leadership role of women in the denomination and to formulate some recommendations. One of the significant accomplishments of the task force was the development of a Talent Bank. At the 1979 General Synod, special thanks was given to "Edith de Velder for designing, developing, and systematizing this important resource" (*MGS* 1979, 54). This talent file, which was kept in the RCA's Office on

Human Resources, contained the names of more than "a thousand women, some of them elders, with special skills available for service on boards, commissions, agencies, and delegations" (*MGS* 1979, 54).

The 1979 General Synod approved the creation of a Commission on Women for the Reformed Church in America. The commission, which continued and expanded the work which had been done by the Task Force on Women, was viewed as an advocacy group for the full and complete participation of women in church and society.

Shirley Van Konynenburg Borgman

(1933-)

> *I've always felt that women have the right to do what they want to do. When I was school teaching, I can remember when I found out that the salary committee gave men an extra $100. They said it was because they were the head of the house. I said, "Listen, the third grade teacher right next door to me is a single woman raising two children. If you're giving extra money to heads of the house, she should have another $100. You should pay her more, too" (Shirley Borgman, taped interview, June 1994*).*

Shirley Borgman is an advocate for women's rights. Born and raised in California, in a family of three girls and a boy, Shirley grew up believing that she could do the same things boys did. Her father, who was a founding member of Calvary Reformed Church in Ripon, California, never discouraged her from being a leader, although he kept her from working in the orchard where the men were, "because in those days he was afraid of that." Shirley and her sisters were part of the Girls' Missionary Society at Calvary, initiated and led by their mother, who wrote plays and directed these teenaged girls. "I'm sure that's where my service mentality began."

Shirley learned more about volunteering and service at Central College. "It seemed very natural to me to participate in Y programs, raise money for Cornie DeBruin in India, and teach vacation Bible schools in little mining towns as part of a Caravan team."[5]

Shirley married Glenn Borgman. After three years of teaching fourth grade in the Pella (Iowa) public schools, she devoted herself to helping her farmer husband, raising two boys and a girl, being a foster parent to a retarded child, hosting a foreign exchange student, and volunteering in the community and at First Reformed Church of Pella.

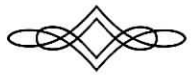
Although the General Synod of 1972 had voted that women could serve as elders and deacons, Shirley's voice to put women on First Reformed Church's ballot went unheeded. Frustrated by the opposition to women in leadership in her local congregation, Shirley decided to use her leadership gifts in the community. She ran and was elected as the first woman to serve on the Pella School Board. What surprised Shirley was that members of First Church strongly supported her. She interpreted their support as affirmation of her leadership gifts. During the nine years Shirley served on the school board, she limited her involvement with First Church to attendance at worship. However, she served the wider church as a member of the Task Force on Women and later on the Commission on Women.

> *I felt good working on the commission and seeing a woman like Joyce Borgman deVelder.[6] Whenever I would see them [RCA women seminarians and seminary graduates] in action, I would feel a part of encouraging them. Maybe it wasn't a big*

part, but I certainly had some influence in patting them on the back and saying, "You can do this now. Just get in there and keep going." Sometimes when someone asks "How many people have you led to the Lord?" I can't name anyone, but I can say that I've helped women act on their leadership gifts and move on for God in some way.

Shirley's goal has been to help and encourage women who feel called to the ministry, women "like Judy Marvel, who was a student of mine in fourth grade. Thirty years ago she thought she had to be a missionary because she couldn't be a minister. Today she is a pastor."[7]

When the Borgman's last child was a senior in high school, Shirley began to look for something new and exciting to do. Along with three other women, she started Hospice of Pella, where she served as administrator. Now she works as a bereavement coordinator, training and assigning volunteers to work with people who are trying to cope with the death of a loved one. Shirley also uses her leadership skills at First Reformed Church of Pella, giving about ten hours a week as coordinator of the congregation's caring program.



The parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) makes the point that people who have assets—often interpreted as skills, talents, material goods—must invest or use them so they can multiply and do some good. Increasingly, women choose to use their leadership skills as public servants in spite of the fact that, because of their gender, they face challenges males are not asked to face.

Carol Sikkema Kamper

(1940-)

Carol Sikkema Kamper grew up in Fulton, Illinois, a community settled by Dutch immigrants. Her father was the local funeral director, which meant the family lived above the funeral parlor. Her father also provided the local ambulance service. "This experience of helping people at times of great need and the constant realization of death has stayed with me all my life" (Carol Kamper, written responses to Beth Marcus, February 1994*).

After graduating from Hope College and Rutgers University in 1964, Carol Sikkema married Reuben Kamper. They moved to Rochester, Minnesota, from Owego, New York, in 1967. When Carol couldn't find a job, she began participating in an AAUW (American Association of University Women) discussion group on civic issues. That group started her on the road to public service in Olmsted County, Minnesota.

Carol says, "I don't feel that I ever experienced a direct call to my vocation, but I have always felt an inner need to help people and to leave the world a bit better place to live. I do believe that my career opportunities have been part of a plan directed by God. Did I ever expect to be an elected official? No! Was it meant to be? I believe it was God's plan, but it certainly materialized in a strange way."

The discussion group in which Carol was participating dared her to apply for an opening on the Rochester City Council, which she did. The "Good Old Boys" on the council said they would not appoint a woman since one had never been elected in Rochester's 114 years. Carol remembers: "Now I really felt challenged. With the support of the newspaper, local church groups, friends, and family, I ran a campaign in which I was out-

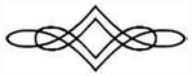
spent ten to one, but much to everyone's surprise, I won! In 1976 I was elected an Olmsted County Commissioner, a position I have found challenging and rewarding for eighteen years."[8]

Carol has served as an elder at Church of the Savior in Rochester, Minnesota, a congregation where women are encouraged to use their gifts in service. She was on the founding board for the Meadow Park Daycare Center, a mission outreach instituted by Church of the Savior when the Rev. Erwin Voogd was pastor. "Erv Voogd felt that our church facilities should be used during the week. The idea of sharing was difficult for some to accept, but the center has served our community with Christian care for over twenty-five years."

Christian faith has sustained Carol during difficult periods in her tenure as county commissioner. She says, "My most fulfilling and most difficult experience involved the location of a federal medical prison on county-owned land. This was the most controversial event in Rochester's history. There was even division in our church. I found this difficult to understand because of my belief that we are called to serve all, including those in prison."

By voting to convert the unused hospital buildings near the Mayo Clinic to a federal medical prison, Carol faced verbal and written abuse, including a death threat, but she persevered. She says, "Today this entire area of our community is developed with an infusion of fifty million dollars. The prison has provided good employment and quality care. We bought the building for one dollar, later selling the facility for eighteen million dollars. I feel a special sense of accomplishment because I now teach in one of the facilities we were able to build because of that sale."

Since 1985 Carol Kamper has been an instructor in the political science department of Rochester Community College. Teaching gives her an opportunity to share experiences in government and, without minimizing the risks, to encourage young women to become public servants. When her daughter Kimberly decided to major in political science, Carol tried to discourage her, but Kim's response was: "Mom, you should be proud of me for wanting to make a difference in people's lives like you have done."



One of the most difficult issues the church has had to deal with is the problem of sexual abuse. Often church leaders either do not want or don't know how to confront church members accused of abuse. Victims of sexual abuse are afraid to take the difficult and painful steps which are necessary to both stop the abuse and to enable healing.

Colleen Conover Janssen

(1950-)

I have often said that speaking out about sexual abuse was my mission. Possibly by speaking out and sharing the information I have, the church is helped to respond to victims in a more positive way. It is my mission to educate about the problem of abuse and how that impacts church, community, and society in general.

For years perpetrators have been protected by the church. Many have used the church to gain respect and acceptance in the community by teaching Sunday school, serving as elder or deacon, or working with the youth of the church. The church stood behind the perpetrator and ostracized the victim for having told the "secret." If the victims in the church

were to be truly helped, these things had to change.

I wanted change, but for that change to occur, it needed a voice. I felt so strongly about this issue that I was ready to sacrifice my own privacy and my own exposure for that change to occur. I chose to be that voice. And in doing that, the pain and struggles of victims are better understood. Responses are improving. The church is beginning to listen (Colleen Janssen, written responses to author, June 1994).*

Since 1985 Colleen Janssen has been a prophetic voice, speaking out about sexual abuse in churches, schools, and community groups. The decision to speak out about the abuse she suffered as a child and preteen was made only after she had dealt with it in individual counseling and as part of a support group of women who had been abused as children. "For the first time I began to realize that I was not alone and I was not to blame for what happened to me."

Colleen was born and raised in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Not long after she was baptized in First Reformed Church, her parents separated and eventually divorced. Colleen and her mother went to live with her grandparents, and her mother worked as a nurse to support them all. Growing up in the fifties as a child of divorced parents made Colleen feel somewhat of an outsider. The one place she felt welcomed and included was the church. She says, "Grandma took me to Sunday school and church and taught me that God was a loving and kind father. She taught me that God was not there to make things right every time we messed up or the world gave us a knock, but rather God was there to offer guidance, strength, and support. As I grew, the church became the center of my social life and existence."

When Colleen was eight and half years old, her mother remarried, and Colleen moved to the home of her stepfather (who has since died). She says, "Within a few months he began bathing me, coming into my room at night, touching me. This continued and the intensity progressed until the age of fourteen. When he attempted anal intercourse, I said no. After that my stepfather never touched me again, but he did still continue to violate my privacy and my sense of safety and security. He would peek through the keyhole while I changed and come and stand at the end of my bed and stare at me in the middle of the night. He would be nice one minute and mean the next. The abuse damaged my soul, my very being, the very core of who I am, and I have had to learn to cope, to adjust, to modify, in order to be able to function."

Colleen went off to Central College, where she met her husband, the Rev. Allan Janssen, her greatest supporter. The Janssen family, which includes a son and two daughters, has lived in the Hudson Valley of New York State since Al was ordained in 1973 and accepted a call to Port Ewen Reformed Church. Since 1978 they have lived in the parsonage of First Reformed Church of Bethlehem in Selkirk, New York, where Colleen is a daycare teacher.

For nineteen years Colleen repressed all conscious thought of the abuse she had suffered at the hands of her stepfather. In 1983 three events caused her to confront her past and "begin a long difficult journey to healing and to helping others." The first was seeing her stepfather verbally abusing her own children. "Something inside me snapped. I jumped up from the table, slammed my hand down, and screamed that he had done that to me, but I would not sit back and watch him do it to my kids. I had had enough!"

The second causative event occurred when a sixteen-year-old Albany (NY) girl shot and killed the father

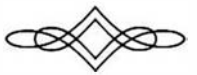
who had been abusing her for years. The determining event for Colleen came when she attended a program on sexual abuse held at her church. "That's when I knew I needed help."

Although Colleen Janssen is now a veteran at telling her story, she was frightened and nervous when she first spoke in public at New Brunswick Theological Seminary in May 1985. "The greatest difficulty," Colleen says, "was in overcoming my fear and anxiety and overwhelming sense of vulnerability. I was afraid what my stepfather would do if he found me out. I was afraid of what others would think of me for allowing the abuse to continue, and I was nervous about the impact my speaking out would have on my husband and children."

When Colleen told her story, an elder of the church Colleen's stepfather attended was in the audience. The elder talked with the church's pastor and they confronted Colleen's stepfather. He acknowledged the abuse but did not express remorse to Colleen. Except for one sister, the family opposed Colleen's publicly telling her story.

As a result of her talk on sexual abuse from the victim's perspective, Colleen realized that clergy and other church people needed more information on the subject of sexual abuse and that church groups needed to discuss the issue openly. In a letter to RCA clergy and by word of mouth she made it known that she would be willing to speak to any receptive church group. Although the initial response was not overwhelming, she continues to receive requests to speak.

Over the years Colleen has given programs for clergy, women's guilds (RCW), youth groups, and family nights. She has led day-long seminars and workshops and has given keynote speeches. Colleen says, "Every single time I have spoken, there is at least one person, but usually more, who comes up to me and says, 'That happened to me.' These women tell me that I put into words that which they are feeling or thinking, and it helps them to better understand what has happened to them and how it has impacted them. I am convinced that education and telling the secret are the key to preventing sexual abuse and stopping it if it is already going on. I have committed my life to doing just that."



Theologian Abraham Heschel wrote that prophets speak for those who are too weak to plead their own cause (Heschel, 1962). Amos reminded God's people to "let justice roll down like waters" (Amos 5:24a). Isaiah admonished worshipers "to share your bread with the hungry, and bring the homeless poor into your house; [and] when you see the naked, to cover them" (Isa. 58:7). Poor, hungry, homeless, and disenfranchised people need an advocate, someone who will plead for them. At the same time, the prophet may need to tell those who have received God's blessings to "open your hand, willingly lending enough to meet the need, whatever it may be" (Deut. 15:8).

Talk of homosexuality continues to divide the church. Some even go so far as to say that AIDS is God's way of punishing gay men. As the AIDS epidemic continues to worsen in all regions of the world, people of faith are getting involved in ministering to those affected by HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus), the virus which causes AIDS. The next story tells of one woman's ministry to help church people understand that homosexuals and people with AIDS—called by some the leprosy of the nineties—need compassion, not condemnation.

Mignon Mouw Zylstra

(1939-)

Mignon Zylstra grew up in a little village in southwestern Minnesota, where everyone belonged to either the Reformed or Christian Reformed Church. In 1957 she married Robert Zylstra, a hospital administrator on Whidbey Island, Washington. Mignon says: "When we were married we were committed to each other, to church, to community, and to family. We were blessed with three children—a son, Scott, and two daughters, Heidi and Wendy. Our children were conceived in love and grew up in a happy, loving home. At ages three, four, and six, I taught them a Bible memory verse for each letter of the alphabet with the thought that they would have these promises hidden deep in their heart throughout life, giving them strength and courage. Our family participated in all the activities of the Reformed Church in Oak Harbor. All three children were honor students who attended Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa" (Mignon Zylstra, written responses to author, March 1994*).

> *Listen to God's voice. When one is called to a ministry, I believe you will know it. You don't have to go looking, asking "What is it? Where is it?" For me it was a burning within. The important thing is to not listen to the many other voices of people who may be assisting you, trying to encourage you in a direction that isn't God's direction.*
>
> —*Mignon Zylstra*

They seemed to be the perfect family; no one suspected that Scott was engaged in a struggle with his sexuality. When Scott returned to Washington after a year of study at Capernwray Bible College in England, he told his parents he was gay. They were in shock and suggested counseling, believing that homosexuality is something a person can work through. It wasn't until 1988, when Scott was gravely ill with AIDS, that Mignon and Bob were able to accept their son's homosexuality. At the same time, August 1988, Mignon felt a call to ministry: "God first spoke to me about ministering to people living with AIDS when my Scott was lying very ill in an AIDS ward in Century City Hospital in Century City, California. It was then that I felt the whispering, 'Mignon, in every one of these rooms lies someone I love very much. Go tell them about my love and my forgiveness and my grace.' I felt sent. So while my son's life hung in the balance and many procedures were being performed on him, I would visit each room on that ward telling them of God's love."

About ten months later, Mignon heard God speak to her once again, "not audibly, but within." It happened on a night when Mignon felt caught. Scott was experiencing seizures due to the HIV involvement in the brain. Scott's father was at a meeting; his mother was realizing the intensity of being the sole caregiver much of the time. Mignon's heart was filled with such pain, but she knew she needed to care for her son. She felt as if she had no choice but to be there as Scott suffered from constant vomiting and diarrhea, memory loss, seizures, pneumonia, herpes, cancer, and other AIDS-related illnesses, as well as depression, remorse, and grief. Mignon found herself on her hands and knees cleaning the bathroom, a job which took two hours after Scott had a bout with projectile vomiting. "I believe it was again that night that God spoke to me in a very real way, reminding me that there would always be others feeling locked in the way I did."

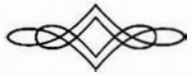
Scott died on September 19, 1989, in the peace of Christ. He had found a church where he could worship

and belong, where the congregation hugged him freely and took communion from a common cup. In his last Christmas letter to family and friends (Dec. 8, 1988), Scott wrote: "Without Christ's sacrifice and assurance of everlasting life, I would not want to continue the constant battle with this disabling and usually fatal disease."

Two months after Scott's death, Mignon and Bob began meeting with a couple who lived twenty miles from their home. One was HIV infected; the other had AIDS. The support group formed by the Zylstras and this couple slowly drew others who were infected with HIV or living with someone who was HIV positive.

With money received as memorials to a person who had died from AIDS, Mignon and Robert Zylstra set up their non-profit organization called Support for the Journey. In addition to her ministry to people living with AIDS, Mignon continues to speak about her journey to groups of young people, parents, and church groups.[9] She says: "When I speak to young people, I talk to them about the qualities of a successful, thriving relationship, qualities to work on in friendships, dating, and into their marriages. I challenge them to work on developing qualities of trust, honesty, patience, respect, loyalty, caring, commitment, understanding, and compassion."

Mignon finds her greatest challenge is to try to convince the church to bring the message of Jesus Christ to people infected with HIV/AIDS, to welcome them into the church, and to put into practice Matthew 25:34-36. "I think it is difficult for the church and the denomination to accept the challenge and opportunity to minister to those who are HIV infected regardless of how they became infected. To this day some people and leaders of the church believe that we should not show compassion to the homosexual with AIDS, and so this is a constant challenge to me. I believe so firmly in what God has called me to, that my commitment is unwavering."[10]



Until recently, people with disabilities tended to be ignored or patronized. Increasingly, the church is being called to pay attention to the special needs of people with disabilities and to use the gifts they have to offer. Louise Shumaker, who is blind, uses her gifts and encourages others. She told Hope College's graduating class of 1994: "When life throws a barrier in front of you, resist the temptation to see it as a problem. See it as a challenge, one that you can turn into an opportunity" (Hope College Commencement, May 8, 1994).

Esther Louise Wightman Shumaker

(1947-)

Our family moved to Holland, Michigan, from Douglas, Michigan, when I was a year old, joining Bethel Reformed Church in our new neighborhood. As a child struggling with a disability,[11] my home and family were a refuge and comfort to me. My parents did not over-protect me. I was mainstreamed in a public school long before it was accepted by others, and I was expected to stand up for myself. My younger sister, Mary, has always been my very best friend. She was always there to run home from school to get my tennis shoes when I forgot them, and do all those little things that sisters do for each other. My older sister, Diane, is also visually impaired. I have often looked up to her as a mother in some ways, since our mother died when I was twenty-two years old and had a new baby (Louise Shumaker, written and taped responses to author, November 1994).*

In 1967 Louise married her high school sweetheart, Vernon, an energy engineer. They have a son, Bart, and a daughter, Kimberly. As a family they enjoy camping, biking, roller-blading, and music—listening and performing. Louise also enjoys running on the indoor track at Hope College and 5K or 10K road races as well as throwing pots in her home ceramics studio.

When Louise was thirty-two years old she decided, with the encouragement of her husband, to pursue a degree in psychology and sociology at Hope College.

Once I made that decision, I knew that God had a new plan for my life. Being a college student took a great deal of commitment and stamina on both my husband's and my part. We prayed a good deal for strength to be responsible parents and be successful at the education thing also. My husband spent a lot of time not only doing more than his share of parenting, but he spent countless nights reading articles and books into a tape recorder for me. We made it, and when I graduated in 1986, I felt that a good portion of my diploma belonged to him.

This was also the time that I felt a strong call from God to begin working in the area of disability issues. When I discovered how much people with disabilities are discounted, shunned, patronized, and neglected, and how their God-given personhood, potential, and abilities were going unnoticed, I was motivated and driven to make some changes for us all.

Not only did I want to make life better for individuals with disabilities, but I wanted the general population to become aware that we are valuable people, who, when given the accommodations which are rightfully ours, can be valuable contributors to society.

In addition to a degree from Hope College, Louise earned a master's in organizational and interpersonal communication from Western Michigan University (Kalamazoo, Michigan) in December 1994. In 1986 she was hired as the director of disabled student services at Hope College. Since there was no program, Alfredo Gonzalez, who was assistant dean of multi-cultural life, and Louise put together a program and presented it to the administration. She was given a half-time position to implement the program. There were thirty-two students with disabilities on campus at that time. By 1995 there were eighty-five.

Louise has served on the Michigan Commission on Disability Concerns and as president of MAHHE (Michigan Association of Handicapper Higher Education). Locally, she is a member of the Holland Area Committee on Disability Concerns, an ecumenical effort to encourage area churches to address disability issues within their congregations, and she serves as president of the board for the Lakeshore Center for Independent Living. She says, "Centers for Independent Living (CILs) exist to support the determination of people with disabilities to live dignified, independent lives, and to heighten community awareness of physical and social barriers which restrict independence. A six-person task force worked two years to create the Holland area CIL, and we feel really blessed. The owner of the building where we rent office space gave us a wonderful deal because he was so impressed with our organization. Herman Miller—an office furniture manufacturer—decided to make our office space their showroom and working lab for accessible furniture."

Louise, accompanied by her leader dog Doogie, a six-year-old golden retriever, speaks to organizations, such as Rotary and Lion's Clubs and church groups. She shares her philosophy of a holistic approach to life, link-

ing the need for a healthy body, a sound mind, and a strong spirit, with her students and all others with whom she comes in contact. She also speaks to 4-H clubs and schoolchildren, especially during West Ottawa Public Schools' Disability Awareness Month. She likes "to talk to kids before they have all those stereotypes formed." She also likes the opportunities to make an "impact on little girls. I really think little girls need to be thinking about themselves as valuable, so I think it's good for me to be in their classrooms and talk about what it's like to be a woman with a disability."

Louise says that in some ways her disability has been a very positive thing. "When I lost most of my vision, the adjustment was challenging, but since that time I believe my life has been a testimony of how God assists us in turning a bad thing into something positive. Supportive people and my students have been the most important gifts God has given me in making the transition to living a complete, productive, and happy life."

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1. Edith Brown Beardslee organized and served as president of WERCA, Women for Equality in the RCA.

2. See Dina Van Bergh Frelinghuysen Hardenbergh's story in Chapter 8—Nurturing in the Church and Home, for more on the friendship between the Washingtons and the Hardenberghs.

3. Adapted from "A Place On the Face of the Earth," by Una Ratmeyer, LiFE Curriculum, Grades 5 and 6, © CRC Pubs, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Used by permission.

4. M. William Howard, Memorial Service for Dorothy Cox James, Second Reformed Church, Kalamazoo, Michigan, February 20, 1989.

5. Caravaning was a joint project of the Presbyterian and Reformed Churches during the fifties and early sixties, which utilized college students as summer assistants in churches throughout the United States. Shirley Borgman says, "One of my first experien ces that stretched me at Central College was going Caravaning with Barb Jeffries [now Mrs. James Neevel] from Hope College. She and I were on the same team with two girls from the Presbyterian Church."

6. Joyce Borgman deVelder's story may be found in Chapter 6—Interpreting the Word.

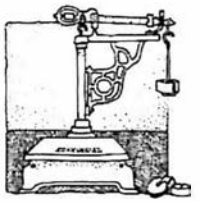
7. Judy Marvel was ordained as a minister of Word and sacrament in 1994 and is currently serving the Reformed Church in Tucson, Arizona.

8. Carol's goal is to be elected the first woman mayor of Rochester.

9. Persons living with AIDS and their loved ones are encouraged to contact Mignon and Robert Zylstra or Support for the Journey, a ministry offering physical, emotional, and spiritual support, at P. O. Box 1794, Oak Harbor, WA 98277; (360) 675-1835.

10. Mignon Zylstra is writing a book, When AIDS Comes Home, telling the story of her spiritual journey and her ministry with HIV-related individuals. The projected publication date with Thomas Nelson publishers is late 1995.

11. Louise was legally blind at birth, and at the age of thirty-four lost most of her existing vision and became functionally blind.



Chapter Four

Healing God's People

Puah and Shiphrah

(Exodus 1)

When Joseph was an important leader in Egypt, the Hebrew people "multiplied and grew exceedingly strong, so that the land was filled with them" (Exod. 1:7). But when a new Egyptian king "who did not know Joseph" began to rule, he noticed that the Hebrews had power.

Pharaoh became annoyed when the Hebrews refused to revere him as a god. The new ruler also discovered that the Hebrew population was greater than the Egyptian one. That's when he took action to make the lives of the Israelites more difficult. "But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread, so that the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites" (Exod. 1:12).

Since his strategy of imposing demanding and seemingly impossible tasks on the Hebrews didn't seem to keep them from bearing children, Pharaoh, who thought he had the power to give and take life, ordered two Hebrew midwives, Puah and Shiphrah, to his court. He told them, "When you help the Hebrew women deliver their babies, you are to kill the boy babies; you may let the girls live."

Because the midwives "feared God," they knew it was wrong to do what the king asked of them. They agreed they would not obey the king's cruel order to kill newborn Hebrew boys. Although the women knew they would themselves be killed if Pharaoh found out they were letting the boy babies live, the midwives would not do as he asked. Thus, Puah and Shiphrah become the first Hebrews in the story of the Exodus to rebel against Pharaoh.

Of course the king, who had his spies, discovered that no baby boys were being killed, so he summoned the midwives to appear before him. When Pharaoh confronted them asking, "Why have you allowed the boys to live?" Shiphrah and Puah protected themselves and their clients by telling the king that Hebrew women were so strong they delivered their children "before the midwife comes to them" (Exod. 1:19).

The king must have believed them because he did not punish Puah and Shiphrah. These two women acted courageously to protect the life of the Hebrew newborns. Because they revered and honored God, "the people multiplied and became very strong" (Exod. 1:20b), and God gave Puah and Shiphrah families of their own.

Medicine is an area in which women missionaries have played a vital role. Many women in India and China once died because social custom prohibited their treatment by males.

In the 1880s missionaries in China were pleading for a female medical missionary. The Woman's Board finally located a young Chinese medical student, the adopted daughter of English Presbyterian missionaries in Amoy. Dr. Y. May King was willing to go to China at the completion of her studies. Unfortunately, less than a year after arriving in Amoy in the fall of 1887, King's health failed and she was forced to leave.

Not until 1899 did the women of Amoy receive a well-trained and qualified female physician. Dr. Angie M. Myers, a graduate of Vassar College, was sent by the Woman's Board to work at the newly constructed Hope Hospital.

> *In the years between 1900 and 1904 thousands of patients were treated by her and many major and minor operations were performed, many of them so marvelous in the eyes of the Chinese that they went away overjoyed. . . . One woman with seven sons had a tumor successfully removed, and she and all her sons became Christians. The eldest son, by no means a rich man, presented the hospital with $50 in token of his gratitude (Chamberlain, 1925, 284).*

Dr. Myers left China in 1904, and the Woman's Board had little success in developing medical work there. In 1925 when Mary Chamberlain wrote *Fifty Years in Foreign Fields*, Wilhelmina Hospital was again without a resident woman physician.

The board had more success in India. In the early 1890s the women of the Albany (New York) Synod paid for the medical education of an Indian Christian, Mary

Rajanayagam. Mary, who was headmistress at the Madura Girls' School, graduated from Madras Medical College in 1894 and went to work under the direction of Dr. Lewis R. Scudder at the mission hospital in Ranipet.[1] In 1896 when Mary Rajanayagam Gnanamoni transferred to the hospital in Madanapalle, the Woman's Board appointed Dr. Louisa Hart to do the women's medical work in Ranipet.

The first Reformed Church missionaries to India—John Scudder and his sons, Henry, Ezekiel, Jared, and John S.—were trained in both medicine and theology, but they took the position that evangelism through preaching and teaching took precedence over healing. In spite of that philosophy, the Scudders provided medical services, finding they needed to minister to the body as well as the soul.

> *One hundred years later in Vellore, the great Christian Medical Hospital and College, established by Dr. Ida Scudder, was the greatest medical institution in India. . . .At Ranipet, three miles from Arcot, stood a two-hundred-bed hospital also begun by the Scudders. Located nine miles away and closely related to the Christian Medical College was the leading leprosy hospital in India. In addition, there was a hospital in Madanapalle and several smaller dispensaries nearby. . . .All were directed by the church or the Arcot Mission or both (Heideman, 1980, 40).*

Ida Sophia Scudder

(1870-1960)

Ida Scudder, the daughter of an RCA medical missionary and granddaughter of the first American medical missionary to India, was born in India. In 1890 after her graduation from Northfield Seminary, Ida returned to India as a short-term missionary because her mother, Sophia Weld Scudder, was ill.

> *A dramatic experience turned the young woman to her medical vocation. In the course of one night a Brahmin, a Muslim, and another high caste Hindu came to the Scudder residence, and each begged the young woman to aid their young wives, then in difficult childbirth. She offered to assist her father. The skills of Ida's father [Dr. John Scudder] as physician were useless, since Hindu culture forbade a strange man even to look upon a woman, let alone attend to her. That night all three wives died. Ida then and there dedicated her life to the health and welfare of the women of India. She returned to the United States to study medicine (David, 1986, 39).*

Upon completion of her medical studies at the Women's Medical School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and Cornell Medical School in New York City, Dr. Ida Scudder returned to India. She carried with her a gift of $10,000 for the erection of Mary Taber Schell Memorial Hospital for Women and Children at Vellore. When he visited Vellore in 1903, Dr. Charles Cuthbert Hall of Union Theological Seminary in New York called Dr. Ida Scudder "the best thing about this admirable hospital" (Chamberlain, 1925, 95).

Ida's vision included a medical school in which Indian women could be trained to minister to the thousands of their own gender who could be reached by no one else. Her dream became a reality in 1918 when Union Missionary Medical School for Women opened in Vellore. The facility was constructed with the support of four American women's boards—Baptist, Congregational, Lutheran, and the Woman's Board of the Reformed Church in America. Dr. Ida Scudder served as the school's first president.[2]

Dr. Ida died in India in 1960 after giving a total of sixty-five years of service as a missionary of the Reformed Church in America.

Seven years after the inauguration of Union Medical School, the missionary team of the Rev. Ralph and Dr. Anna Ruth Korteling arrived in India, where they served for thirty-three years.

Anna Ruth Winter Korteling Richardson

(1897-1990)

Shortly before Anna Ruth Winter was born on February 21, 1897, the family moved to South Bend, Indiana, when her father, the Rev. Jerry P. Winter, accepted a call as pastor of the Reformed Church in that city. The Winters also lived in Orange City, Iowa; Clinton, Oklahoma; and Fairview, Illinois.

Her mother, Sebia Van Zwaluwenburg Winter, believed that girls as well as boys should have a chance for an education, so Anna Ruth, two of her three sisters, and her two brothers went to Hope College. Anna Ruth graduated from Hope in 1919. Because she had been encouraged to go on for graduate study, she applied to and was accepted at Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, and was given a full scholarship. She decided to pursue a medical career in spite of a note from her uncle, Dr. Van Zwaluwenberg, head of the radiology department of the University of Michigan, warning her that a woman might have to choose between a profession and a family.

Anna Ruth and Ralph Garret Korteling were engaged during the time she was in medical school and he was at Western Theological Seminary. Following their engagement, Ralph transferred to New Brunswick Theological Seminary, from which he graduated. After she had completed an internship at the West Pennsylvania Hospital in Pittsburgh, and Ralph had served two years as pastor of the Montville (New Jersey) Reformed Church, the couple married. At the time Anna Ruth was seriously ill and spent a year in a tuberculosis sanatorium in Denver while Ralph pastored a small mountain Presbyterian congregation nearby.

Initially the Kortelings had been appointed by the RCA Board of Foreign Missions to serve the Arabian Mission. However, during a meeting in Chicago in October 1925, they were persuaded to go to India instead. In spite of advice that living in a foreign country would be too difficult for Anna Ruth's health, the Kortelings set sail for India, where they served for thirty-three years.

> *The attitude of the missionary community was that only male physicians or single women MDs were able to practice medicine appropriately. . . .Her proven ability plus her constant agitation for more appropriate assignment of duties was finally recognized by the mission synod in India, and she was no longer given the usual duties of a missionary wife.*
>
> —*Dr. May Korteling Votaw, daughter of Dr. Anna Ruth Korteling Richardson*

After a year of language study and learning about Indian culture, the Kortelings moved to a Punganur mission bungalow, where the family quarters were upstairs. The assignment was made on the basis of Ralph's work as an evangelist, with little thought to Anna Ruth's skills as a doctor. Since there were no medical services in Punganur, Dr. Korteling started her own dispensary and clinic, seeing patients in two

rooms on one side of the ground floor of the bungalow; the Rev. Korteling used similar rooms on the other side for an office/study. Their daughter, Dr. Marian Levai, remembers:

> *The front verandah was always crowded with patients waiting to see her. In those days we only had kerosene lanterns. I remember my dad driving the car up to the house so that the headlights would shine into the examining room so that she could perform emergency surgery at night. Eventually my dad was able to get a battery-operated generator to provide electricity for the little hospital she started (Marian Levai, M.D., daughter, letter to Beth Marcus, Oct. 1989).*

During her first year in India (and even later), Dr. Korteling's medical work was viewed by the missionary community as an addition to her primary responsibilities.

> *Mother was expected, as all missionary wives, to be involved in work with Bible women and girls' education. Her job as a physician was considered extra and not of major consequence. The attitude of the missionary community was that only male physicians or single women M.D.s were able to practice medicine appropriately. The prejudice voiced by her uncle years before was also present on the mission field (May Louise Votaw, M.D., daughter, letter to author, December 1994).*

During the Korteling's first term in India, Anna Ruth's oldest sister, Sara Zwemer, helped with the work of the Indian Bible women, freeing Dr. Korteling to do what she had been trained to do, practice medicine. Many of her patients were Moslem or Hindu.

> *Dr. Anna Ruth was held in high regard by the local population in Punganur and later in Madanapalle for the excellent compassionate care she gave Indian patients. When on leave with other missionaries in the hill station, Kodaikanal, she was also sought by the missionary community, especially women. Her proven ability plus her constant agitation for more appropriate assignment of duties was finally recognized by the mission synod in India, and she was no longer given the usual duties of a missionary wife (May Votaw).*

As the clinic grew and funds became available from the mission board, Ralph Korteling supervised the building of a small rural hospital with inpatient beds for surgery and difficult maternity cases. Some patients were referred to the better-equipped Mary Lott Lyles Hospital in Madanapalle. Before the Kortelings moved to Madanapalle in 1932, Anna Ruth traveled there one or two days a week for surgery cases.

Whenever people requested her to do so, Dr. Korteling extended her medical services to men as well as to women. A woman doctor attending men was highly unusual in South India, but because her skills were highly regarded, Anna Ruth was sometimes called upon to see male patients.

> *Mother felt her greatest calling was to the women in India, and she loved obstetrics and gynecology, but she was also a general surgeon and treated many men. She always started an operation with a word of prayer. As a child I made rounds with her, accompanied her to "well baby clinics," and, when older, was allowed in the operating room (May Votaw).*

Her medical skill became well known; her eagerness to serve any who were suffering, her ready and encouraging smile, and her kind disposition captured

the hearts of her Indian patients and everyone else. She was compassionate and sensitive to the needs of rich and poor alike.

> *She was able to treat the child prostitutes of the temple with the same care as the Rani (queen) in the Punganur palace. She could deliver babies on the floor of a mud hut or in a modern operating room of a hospital. When she took on a maternity case, she would remain with that woman even if it meant changing her travel schedule (Marian Levai).*

During World War II travel was severely restricted; the Korteling family, in the U.S. on furlough, could not get to India. Because her medical skills were sorely needed in India, the mission board asked Anna Ruth to return to India via troop ship, but she did not want to leave her husband and four children—Marian Alice, Ruth Kamala, May Louise, and Ralph, Jr. While her husband studied at Union Seminary, she used the extended furlough time to do post graduate study at hospitals in New York and Jersey City. "She was always eager to keep up with the latest developments in medicine" (Marian Levai).

> *She fought hard for all that she accomplished with quiet determination, skill, up-to-date medical knowledge, and strength in the Lord. However, all her medical life my mother battled prejudice. She was a feminist long before the current women's movement was started. I recall evening walks after supper in Kodaikanal when she might say in an off-hand way, "Mrs. S (missionary wife) went to Dr. W (male), who gave her the same diagnosis as I did last week. Now she believes it. It gets a little frustrating at times that the men are always immediately accepted as right." Then we went on to discuss the problems that I might face if I entered the medical profession (May Votaw).*

The family returned to Punganur on V.E. Day, May 8, 1945. During their final term of service in India, the thirty-bed Punganur Medical Center was established. The Kortelings left India and active missionary service in 1958, but they did not retire; they went to Nicaragua for a year with the Moravian Church Mission Board. One doctor had been serving two hospitals which were one hundred miles apart. Anna Ruth served as physician at the fifty-bed hospital in Puerto Cabezas on the Atlantic Coast. Ralph was used by the mission to photograph various mission stations in Nicaragua and in Honduras and to assist with mission interpretation. The Kortelings needed no training because the work was very similar to what they had been doing in India for so many years. When the two doctors got together, they often compared notes. A favorite topic was the size of tumors they had removed. Dr. David Thaeler, the doctor at the Moravian Mission Hospital at Bilwaskarma, Nicaragua, thought the twenty-five pound ovarian cyst he had removed was a record, but Dr. Korteling reported one of thirty pounds.

Upon returning to the United States, Ralph and Anna Ruth settled in Penney Farms, Florida, a complete care community for retired pastors, missionaries, and all who have served the Lord in various professions. Shortly after their return, the resident physician of the community died, and Dr. Korteling was asked to take his place. In spite of being sixty-seven years old, she did not hesitate to take up this responsibility; she took an examination for a Florida medical license, which she passed. This enabled her both to be resident physician at Penney Farms and to assist at Clay Memorial Hospital in Green Cove Springs, eight miles east of the retirement community. At age seventy-three she was elected chief of staff at Clay Memorial. She continued doing surgery until her late seventies, but regretted having to give up delivering babies in her eighties.

Despite their advanced age, when the Moravian Mission Board asked the Kortelings to help out for three months, Anna Ruth and Ralph traveled to the east coast of Honduras to minister to Miskito Indians. Living conditions were primitive, hospital equipment inadequate, but the Kortelings filled a great need and won a place in the hearts of yet another group of God's children.

When her husband of sixty-four years died in 1988, Anna Ruth Korteling still had a few private patients. On January 8, 1990, Anna Ruth married Harold Richardson, a Penney Farms resident whose first wife had been one of Dr. Anna Ruth's patients. Mutual attraction and common interests (bridge and music) brought the two together. They were married only nine months when Dr. Anna Ruth Winter Korteling Richardson died (October 4, 1990).

Bernadine Siebers De Valois

(1908-)

Bernadine Siebers first began to think about being a missionary at a young age. Each year the family attended Mission Fest for all RCA congregations held in a beautiful picnic grove in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where Reformed Church missionaries spoke about their work. Bernadine remembers these yearly gatherings and how they inspired her to tell her mother, "I would like to be a missionary." Her mother nurtured that desire by often saying, "I have always prayed that God would take one of my children to be a missionary. Maybe it will be you" (Bernardine Siebers De Valois, autobiographical sketch to author, July 1994).

In her first year of high school, Bernadine Siebers began to feel a definite call. Her continuing prayer was, "Lord, if you want me to be a missionary, keep the way open for me to prepare. If not, close the door and show me what else you would like me to do."

Bernadine's older brother, Chris, a tool and die maker, and her sister, Henrietta, a salesperson in a dry goods store, both affirmed her call by insisting that she continue her schooling even though the family had little money. Bernadine's father, a factory furniture maker, had contracted pulmonary tuberculosis while she was in high school, and the two older children had to work while their father was in a sanitorium. She says, "I took science subjects in high school because I thought I would become a nurse. Chris suggested that I study to be a doctor instead, thinking I might need more education if I were in an isolated mission field."

Even after her father returned home, the family struggled financially. Bernadine worked and was granted a tuition and book scholarship for her first year at Grand Rapids Junior College. Then a Sunday school teacher at Fifth Reformed Church, along with some of his students, encouraged Bernadine to enroll in the pre-med program at Hope College. Some church leaders, who knew the family's financial situation and knew of Bernadine's desire to go to the mission field, established a fund to pay for her education. They formed a church basketball team and arranged games with other churches with all the proceeds going into the fund. The church even told Bernadine that the money for her education was an unconditional gift, "because we know that even if you do not become a missionary, you will always be involved in church work."

With the gate receipts from the basketball games and a loan from the RCA's Board of Foreign Missions, Bernadine completed Hope College and went on to study at Rush Medical College in Chicago, Illinois. Fifth Church realized that basketball games would not generate the amount of funds Bernadine needed to pay for

medical school, so they established a men's association, one of the purposes of which was to work out ways of raising funds for her education. "Their assurance to me that they would never let me down was another affirmation of God's call and doors being left open."

Bernadine and seven other women, including a Hope classmate, Eva Tysse, studied medicine with ninety-two men. She wonders, "Was it because of the presence of six fine Hope men that we did not experience any sexual harassment?" She graduated in 1934, completed an internship in the New England Hospital for Women and Children in Roxbury, Massachusetts, and did her residency in pediatrics at the Gallinger Municipal Hospital in Washington, D.C. Later she realized how beneficial this emphasis on children's medicine—tonsillectomies and adenoidectomies, simple ear infections, nasal conditions—was for her future work in the ear, nose, and throat (ENT) department in India.

Throughout her medical school years Bernadine had maintained a loving relationship with a young man she had met at Hope College. Their mutual commitment to missionary service kept them close in spite of the miles which separated them. However, during his senior year at New Brunswick Theological Seminary he began to feel that God was calling him to serve the church at home. Bernadine was devastated and prayed he would reconsider. She knew she would never be happy staying in the U.S. She says, "My call to overseas service and the affirmations I had received all along the way were so strong, I could not even think of a change in my direction." During her internship year (1935) Bernadine received a short note from the seminarian announcing his engagement and upcoming marriage. She says, "My faith in God's leading and the prayers and loving support of family and friends who knew of my great disappointment carried me through this very trying time as I faced the thought of going overseas alone."

By the summer of 1936 Bernadine and her friend Eva Tysse were preparing to join the staff of the Christian Medical College and Hospital in Vellore, South India, when Bernadine received a telegram from the board, saying funds were available to send only one doctor. They wanted her to raise $1,000 to cover her salary and an additional $500 for passage to India. "I could not believe that God was closing the door at this late date. My German neighbor invited me to share my story with her Sunday school class. One of the ladies prayed that the $10.25 offering, which was received for me that morning, might be blessed like the five loaves and two fish in the New Testament miracle. It took faith to believe that this could become $1,500!"

The money to send Bernadine Siebers to India came from three sources the following week. Nick Hager, an elder in Garfield Park Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and a successful businessman, had finally accepted his clergy brother's challenge to tithe. Mr. Hager offered Bernadine $500, the amount he had in the bank which was "the Lord's money." The Sunday school superintendent of the Garfield Park church, "which up to this time had not supported a missionary, pledged that in faith the Sunday school would raise the other $500" to cover Bernadine's salary. At her commissioning and farewell service at Fifth Reformed Church, the congregation "promised a special faith offering of $500." Bernadine says, "The $10.25 had become the $1,500 necessary for my departure. I continued to marvel at how wonderfully God had led me from childhood to the age of twenty-eight, my age when I sailed in the fall of 1936, for a service I had committed to God so many years before."

After five-and-one-half years as assistant surgeon at the Christian Medical College and Hospital (CMCH)

in Vellore, Bernadine took a furlough in Canada where she earned her fellowship in the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons. Returning to Vellore in 1945, she set up the Department of Otorhinolaryngology (ENT) for the higher degree program and taught medical and nursing students.

On January 1, 1946, Bernadine Siebers married John J. (Jack) De Valois, an RCA agricultural missionary in India whose first wife, Henriette, who had been a dear friend to Bernadine, died in 1944. Dr. Ida Scudder, Bernadine's beloved colleague at CMCH, graciously consented to "give the bride away," when she discovered that Bernadine planned to continue her work at the college and hospital, dividing her time between her home with Jack in Katpadi and CMCH in Vellore. The marriage also gave Bernadine the opportunity of being a second mother to the four DeValois children—Jack, Russ, Margaret, and Francine.

In 1956 Hope College conferred on Dr. Bernadine Siebers De Valois an honorary degree in science. She served in India until 1959, but the couple continued to volunteer their skills with World Neighbors—a self-help organization—by traveling and working in Central and South America and in Africa. In 1964 she began working at Pine Rest Christian Hospital in Grand Rapids, Michigan, giving that up in 1973. She and Jack built a retirement home in Holland, Michigan, and joined Hope Church, which elected her as one of the congregation's first women elders in 1972. Since her second retirement, Dr. De Valois has remained interested in world affairs and continues to inspire others. A few years after Jack's death in 1988, Bernadine moved to Colorado Springs, Colorado, where she lives in a retirement facility near family.

Today, as in the time of Ida Scudder, Anna Ruth Korteling, and Bernadine Siebers De Valois, the Christian Medical College and Hospital in Vellore, India, practices holistic medicine. The staff works together in an attempt "to bring the perspectives of Christian faith into the treatment plan of each patient. . . .Clearly, wholeness at Vellore revolves around relationship to God" (Granberg-Michaelson, 1980, 7).

Medical missionaries in the Arabian Gulf also practiced holistic medicine, not only because they believed in it, but also because the Muslim governments of Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman were strongly opposed to evangelistic missionaries. Christian doctors and nurses were welcomed because the medical services they could provide were sorely needed.

Mary Bruins Allison

(1903-1994)

In 1933 when Dr. Mary Bruins Allison had completed medical school and was ready to go to the mission field, the United States was in the midst of the Great Depression. She recalled: "The church's income was so small that they had to call some of the missionaries home. They said they couldn't send me out. But the women of the Synod of Michigan, who had heard about me, thought it was important for me to go at that time. They agreed to raise the money needed for my salary—about $60 a month. I accepted because I wanted to be a missionary, to obey Christ's command to go into all the world and make disciples" (Mary Bruins Allison, taped

interview with LeRoy Koopman, February 1994*).

Mary Bruins, whose father, the Rev. Henry Martin Bruins, served Reformed and Presbyterian congregations in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Iowa, announced at the age of eight that she "was going to be a missionary." Mary was raised by a stepmother because her own mother had died shortly after Mary's birth. Her father, however, remained a dominant figure in her life. "I always remember the Bible stories he told because he was such a good storyteller."

Mary spent her high school and college years in Pella, Iowa, during the time her father was pastor of Second Reformed Church. "I still wanted to be a missionary, so I took a pre-medical course at Central College." After college she taught high school math and science for three years to raise money for medical school. Those years were difficult ones for Mary. She couldn't manage the unruly high school boys in her classes, which depressed her, and men didn't seem to be interested in dating her. "I thought I wasn't fit to be a wife or didn't know how to attract the right kind of men."

She chose to attend the Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania not only because it was where Dr. Ida Scudder and Dr. Eleanor Calverly (the first RCA physician in the Arabian Gulf) had gone, but also because it was a single sex school where young men would not distract from her studies.

After completing an internship in Wisconsin and a residency in Chicago, Mary Bruins set sail for Kuwait in 1934. Not long after her arrival, and long before she was fluent in Arabic, she was summoned to treat her first patient, the wife of a sheikh.

I decided she needed a simple operation to relieve a pelvic abscess, but the sheikh would not let her come to the hospital. "My royal wife never leaves the harem," he said. So, we had to do it in the home. I had never seen a case just like this before in my experience, but I had gotten out the books I had brought with me, and had read up on how to do this particular kind of operation. It was like reading a recipe on how to make a cake. My knees were shaking. The nurse [Mary Van Pelt, who had been in the Gulf for more than fifteen years] wasn't sure I knew anything, and Dr. [Stanley] Mylrea didn't know much about me, but they were all hoping I knew what I was doing. I picked up the knife, and through the goodness of God the diagnosis and treatment were right, and the pus poured out.

The royal lady got well and rewarded Mary with a beautiful pearl ring and cloth that came from Baghdad.

Although Mary Bruins had decided that she would never marry, one of the young men working with the oil company was very persistent. Mary explained that she could not have children, wanted to continue her career in medicine, and did not plan to stop being a missionary. None of that deterred Norman Allison, a minister's son from Scotland. They got married, but the marriage ended in divorce, something Mary agreed to reluctantly. "Even though Jesus said that what God has joined together let no one put asunder, in our case it was right."

In Kuwait Mary began to work with Dr. Lewis Scudder and his wife, Dorothy, a nurse who was "a very good organizer and a politician too. She took charge of getting nurses from India to help out in the hospital, which worked out very well." The women's hospitals had huge clinics, usually seeing more than one hundred a day. Mary said, "This was not because the women were so sick; they just wanted to get out of the house. In Arabic society and in a desert town like Kuwait, the women had to stay at home. They were never allowed out on the streets by themselves and had to remain covered by a

veil and abba, a garment which fell from the top of their heads down to the ground. I am sure that women were fed up with staying at home. If they said they were sick, their husbands were willing to send them to the clinic where they could get to see other women." Sick or well, Mary saw them all.

> *Listening to complaints in three or four languages, making quick examinations and diagnoses, writing out an order for treatment or drugs, assessing the income of a patient, recording the charges, teaching mothers how to make formula—somehow we get through by twelve or one o'clock. Then we must plan the afternoon operations—what instruments, what time, what nurse to scrub, what nurse to circulate, what anesthesia....Former patients drop in any time of the day or night. We are getting a little worn, but we are glad to be used (Allison,* Church Herald, *February 18, 1955).*

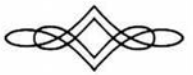
But there were problems which troubled her. Sometimes she made serious errors in surgery, and patients died. At those times she "had to trust that Christ could forgive such sins." She also had to deal with patients who wanted Mary to perform abortions. Women in Arabic society who got pregnant as a result of illicit affairs risked death at the hands of relatives. Mary said, "These women were desperate, but I felt I couldn't do abortions. I offered to help them deliver the baby and keep the child, if they were able to conceal their pregnancy with their abbas until it was time for the baby to be born. Some were able to get by with it, but I think some of these women were killed."

When the board asked Mary to leave Kuwait, she didn't want to go. "It was my home. But the church said I was to go to Bahrain, so I went to Bahrain, and after I got acquainted there, I liked that too."

Another board decision which was hard for Mary to take was the closing of the mission hospital in Kuwait. Even though oil-rich Kuwait had established free government hospitals, Mary believed that hospitals were an integral part of the mission work in the Arabian Gulf and the evangelistic work would suffer without the hospitals.

Mary officially retired at age sixty-five and left Bahrain, but she returned to the Arabian Gulf a year later to work at Ar-Rahmah Hospital in Muscat, Oman. She found a hospital overflowing with patients, and she felt needed once more. By the time Mary left Oman four years later, the government had built modern hospitals and secured doctors from India, Pakistan, and Egypt.

In 1975 she settled down in her house in Redlands, California, surrounded by her Persian carpets, chairs, tables, and thousands of memories. Just before her death in September 1994, Mary Bruins Allison published her memoirs in a book titled *Dr. Mary in Arabia*.



Ministries of healing take different forms. Answering God's call to such a ministry demands creative listening skills and may require flexibility regarding the choices one makes in life.

Joann Veenschoten Hill

(1923-)

Joann, the second child of RCA missionaries Stella and Nelson Veenschoten,[3] was born at Hope and Wilhelmina Mission Hospital in Kulangsu, China. (Kulangsu and Amoy are two islands very close to each other and

just offshore from the mainland.) Most of her growing years were spent in Changchow, thirty miles from Kulangsu. Until she went to Shanghai American School in the eighth grade, Joann's mother was her teacher, not only in the three Rs, but also in piano and voice (Joann Hill, story submitted to author, September 1994*).

Sitting on her father's lap, she watched him draw stick figures which brought the Bible stories vividly alive. She often rode on the back of her father's bike through the streets of Changchow as he visited Chinese friends and colleagues. When she was older, Joann followed on her own bike as he made these visits. Joann's call to mission resulted from an incident when she was thirteen.

> *Several RCA missionaries from other stations had come to Changchow for a committee meeting. As was customary, there was a potluck supper for all the station families, including committee members. I was sitting with two or three other children while the grownups sat together. Suddenly, during dessert of pumpkin pie, Dr. Clarence Holleman asked me, "Joann, what are you going to be when you grow up?" It was as though a bright light bulb had suddenly been turned on. Perhaps all the pets and animals I had treated were unconsciously brought together with all the miserable sickly folk I had seen in the streets of Changchow. In any case, I replied, "I'm going to be a medical missionary." The grown folks smiled, but that became the focus of my studies from then on. The guiding hand of God's Spirit is so clear!*

Joann attended Wayne State University in Detroit, Michigan, where she met Jack Hill, a medical school classmate of her brother, Girard. Intent on her goal of medical school and a medical missionary career, she did not think much about marriage until Jack suggested that he could go with her to the mission field. They were married March 30, 1944, and Joann gave up her place in the September class at Wayne State University's College of Medicine.

Four years later, the Hill family, which included sons, Jack, Jr., and Donald, steamed into Amoy harbor in South China, where they were met by Dr. Clarence Holleman! Although Jack was the official medical missionary of the family, Joann couldn't put her medical aspirations on a shelf. While Jack studied Chinese and saw patients at the Elizabeth Blauvelt Mission Hospital in Tong-An (about twenty miles northwest of Kulangsu and Amoy), Joann set up a small laboratory in the hospital and got it running. A year or so later she began playing for worship services and directing the choir in the nearby small village church.

Medicine and music became the dual focus of her ministry, fit alongside growing family responsibilities. Son Keith was born in Tong-An two years before the Hills left on Christmas Day in 1950, under the suspicious eyes of Communist soldiers who had taken over the area a year earlier.

Forced to leave China, the Hills returned to the U.S.—Dallas, Texas, where their only daughter L'Anni was born.[4] They were reassigned to Cebu City in the Philippines, where Jack assumed the directorship of the one-hundred-bed ChongHua Hospital, newly opened by members of the Chinese community.

Again Joann combined medicine, music, and family as she ministered on Cebu. She designed, set up, and opened a hospital laboratory; son Robert was born in 1953; and she directed the music ministry at Cebu Gospel (Chinese) Church. A Sunday school for English-speaking children in the Hill home was the beginning of the English service and Sunday school at the Cebu Gospel Church.

After ten years in the Philippines, the Hills returned to the U.S. in 1962. While Jack took a psychiatric

residency in Hartford, Connecticut, Joann took further training at Hartt School of Music. When Jack accepted a job as staff psychiatrist at Pine Rest Christian Hospital in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Joann decided to pursue two masters degrees, one in agency counseling and the other in social work. "I saw this as a way to continue my call to medical ministry, a ministry of healing."

When Jack and Joann returned to the mission field, Joann was able to use what she had learned and to continue her music ministry. This time their assignment was in Bahrain's American Mission Hospital. Joann served as social work consultant and Jack as chief medical officer. At the hospital Joann initiated the first and only English-speaking "Telephone Helpline" as an additional way for the hospital to serve those who had come to work in the Gulf Coast countries. She also trained Bahraini nurses in listening skills.

Teaching three classes of Bethel Bible each week for several years to adults from many nations "was a very special privilege." A special challenge was playing for the Arabic services. "The music scores for the hymns were printed from right to left!"

In 1986 the Hills retired from mission service and returned to Grand Rapids. Jack returned to his position at Pine Rest, and Joann continued her healing ministry at Central Reformed Church, where she was a Stephen Ministry leader/trainer for five years, and at Hospice of Greater Grand Rapids, where she served as a social worker until her retirement in 1988.

Joann and Jack Hill continue to live and work out their healing ministry at Penney Retirement Community in Penney Farms, Florida. "I never cease to be amazed and delighted at how I have been provided the means to live out God's call to me, how each experience becomes an opportunity for further service in God's kingdom."

Katharine (Kitty) Bosch Crandall

(1924-)

Like Joann Veenschoten Hill, Katharine (Kitty) Bosch Crandall was born in Kulangsu, China, to RCA missionary parents. However, when Kitty was four years old, Dr. Taeke Bosch resigned from service abroad due to the severe illness of Kitty's sister, Alice. In 1931 Taeke, his wife, Margaret, and their five children moved into "the stone house across from the Christian Sanatorium in the semi-rural town of Wyckoff, New Jersey," where Kitty's father served as medical director (Katharine Crandall, story to author, March 1994*).[5]

Kitty says: "Our family filled a pew at worship services at First Reformed Church of Ridgewood, always sitting in front of the Crandall family. My mother, who took turns with my father being Sunday school superintendent, impressed on me the necessity of memorizing portions of Scripture such as 1 Corinthians 13, the Beatitudes, and the Great Commission."

After graduating among the top ten students in her class at Ramsey High School at the age of sixteen, Kitty spent two years at a secular college, where it didn't take her long to realize that "kicking up my heels a bit" and "soaking up a world which basically left God out of the picture, put me on very thin ice" in terms of grades. Her life got back on track at Bellevue Hospital School of Nursing in New York City, where "the Lord graciously gave me a warm, vital Christian roommate, who was heading for India as a missionary" as soon as travel conditions during World War II improved.

Armed with a nursing degree, six months of training on an Indian reservation in Montana under the Cadet Nurse Corps, and a bachelor's degree, Kitty felt

God's call to serve in the Kentucky hills. Then Lee Crandall, who had majored in agriculture and animal husbandry at Rutgers University in New Jersey and served two years in the U.S. Army Air Corps, "captured my heart and turned my missionary dreams to the Sudan." Following additional training at Biblical Seminary in New York City and New Brunswick Theological Seminary, in 1949, a year after their marriage, Lee and Kitty joined an RCA-United Presbyterian missionary team serving a primitive Nilotic tribe which had never heard the gospel before.

The Crandall family, including three children, spent ten years in southern Sudan before all Christian missionaries were expelled from the country. Kitty frequently assisted in the clinic and helped train one of the dressers (male nurses). At times, when she was the only medical person on the Akobo station, she "delivered babies, set fractures, and dressed some enormous wounds inflicted by water buffalo and lions."

A house fire in 1951 took everything the family owned, but it helped Kitty and Lee to focus on their faith in God. She remembers: "A spark from an oil lamp ignited the dry grass roof of the Crandall home, and in seconds the entire roof was ablaze. I grabbed Alan, our first born who was just a few months old, and ran out. All escaped without injury, but we had only the clothes on our backs. We had been stripped of all our possessions; we didn't even have shoes on our feet."

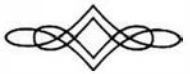
At the time, the Crandalls were tempted to stop their tithe, which was being sent to their home church. She says, "We didn't succumb to that temptation, and clothing, food, and dollars flowed in. God's faithfulness and the compassion of God's people overwhelmed us. The verse that sustained us through the fire, and through the years, has been 'My God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus' (Phil. 4:19)."

The Crandalls left Sudan in 1959, feeling that God was calling them to stay in the United States. The Rev. Lee Crandall served as pastor of three New Jersey Reformed churches—Griggstown in Princeton (twice), Lakeview Heights in Clifton, and Brookdale in Bloomfield. At first Kitty worked part time at a nursing home. Later she worked full time as a staff nurse in Hackensack General Hospital and as a nursing instructor for three years in East Orange General Hospital School of Nursing and three years at Princeton Hospital School of Practical Nursing.

In 1973 Kitty began a fifteen-year relationship with the Reformed Church Home in Irvington, New Jersey. For six years she served as director of nursing services. Kitty says, "My husband even changed churches to lessen my commuting time. As the ministry to the aging expanded, the administrator of the home and my mentor, the Rev. Roy Wagoner, asked me to accept the new position of assistant administrator. I accepted the opportunity, took some management courses, and passed the state examination to become a licensed nursing home administrator. Within five years the home added a facility, Mr. Wagoner was named executive director over both facilities, and I was appointed administrator of the Irvington Home."

Kitty was known as someone who encouraged others, accepted the limitations of those she taught and with whom she worked, and who valued the gifts individuals brought to their jobs. She says, "My goal as nursing instructor, director of nurses, and nursing home administrator, was to instill in those working with me a deep love of people, to serve their needs not only professionally, but with compassion and cheerfulness. I always saw the health fields as channels toward wholeness: physical, emotional, and spiritual."

Lee and Kitty Crandall retired in 1988 to Whiting, New Jersey, where they serve as hospice volunteers and as members of Community Reformed Church. In addition, Kitty has chaired Warwick Conference Center's Women's Auxiliary, taught a Neighborhood Bible Class, and initiated the first CROP Walk in Whiting.



Dr. John Scudder was the first medical missionary of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions. He and his wife Harriet, who were the first overseas missionaries of the Reformed Church, arrived in Ceylon in the fall of 1819. In 1836 they moved to Madras, India; and in 1853, with his sons, he founded the Arcot Mission of the Reformed Church. Many, many descendants have carried on the family's missionary tradition, in-cluding Dr. Ida Scudder, founder of Vellore Hospital and Medical College.

Scudders continue to serve as missionaries, both in the Reformed Church—the Rev. Lewis R. Scudder III and Nancy Graham Scudder work with the Middle East Council of Churches—and in the wider Christian community. Dr. Marilyn Scudder, Lew's older sister, is a world mission associate with the Reformed Church in America serving with Christian Blind Mission International in Tanzania, Africa.

I am very aware that I do not work on my own. We all work together to fulfill Christ's powerful command of love when he said to his followers (Matthew 25 paraphrased): "I was sick, in prison, hungry, naked, (and blind—my addition), and you came to me. Enter into my kingdom. Truly, I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me."

—Dr. Marilyn Scudder

Marilyn Scudder

(1939-)

Marilyn Scudder's parents, Lewis R. Scudder II, M.D. and Dorothy Bridger Scudder, R.N., were missionaries in the Arabian Mission of the Reformed Church in America. When Marilyn was born, they were living in Amarah, Iraq, but moved to Kuwait shortly after her birth. "That is where I have my first memories" (Marilyn Scudder, letter to author, March 1994*).

In 1946 the Scudder family, which by this time included Lew and Pam, was again posted to Amarah, Iraq. They stayed in Iraq until 1949, when they were "transferred back to Kuwait, where they completed their careers. My father died there in 1975; my mother died while still on active duty, but on enforced leave in the U.S. in 1992."

Marilyn, along with other children from the Arabian Mission and the Arcot Mission, attended boarding school in Kodaikanal, Tamil Nadu, South India. After graduating from Kodai in 1956, Marilyn returned to the United States as a student at Hope College, where she majored in history. She didn't seriously consider a vocation in medicine until her junior year, the same year her father suffered a serious head injury. An additional year of pre-med classes following her graduation from Hope in 1960 prepared her for the University of Michigan's Medical School in Ann Arbor. During her senior year of medical school she received a fellowship which allowed her to take a six-month elective experience at Ar-Rahmah Hospital in Muscat, Oman.

After completing an internship at Bronson Hospital in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and a residency in ophthalmology at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, Marilyn was sponsored by the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind (now known as Sight Savers) to spend a year working in Mvumi near Dodoma, the capital of Tanzania. Mvumi Hospital is a 200-bed Anglican mission hospital. Mvumi had thirty-six beds set aside for eye cases and conducted outreach through "eye safaris."

In 1971 Marilyn returned to Minneapolis, where she maintained a part-time private practice. The following year she did further study in diseases of the retina at the University of Minnesota, and in 1973 she returned to Africa as an ophthalmologist. She accepted a position at Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Center (KCMC) in Moshi, Tanzania, supported by Christian Blind Mission International (CBMI), an international Christian mission. She says, "From 1979, I was in charge of the fifty-bed eye unit. Most of the time we had two other ophthalmologists. We operated a training program, training Tanzanian (and other African) assistant medical officers ophthalmology (AMOO), ophthalmic nurses, ophthalmic opticians, and AMOO cataract surgeons."

In 1993 after twenty years in Moshi, Marilyn decided "it was time for a change. The hospital was well established with staff who were well qualified to continue the work." When CBMI asked her to accept a new challenge at the hospital where she first worked in Africa in 1970, Marilyn said yes. She began her new duties at Mvumi Hospital in April 1994. In addition to medical work, there is a strong emphasis on training at Mvumi.

For those familiar with the Dr. Paul White stories about the Jungle Doctor, Mvumi was the place he was writing about fifty years ago. Mvumi is a large village in semi-arid bush country surrounded by hills with large boulders and rock formations. Mvumi Hospital is built on a small hill so it can be easily seen from many miles around. The story goes that when the missionaries wanted to build a hospital around sixty years ago, Chief Mazengo of the Gogo Tribe insisted that the hospital be built within visual distance of his village. He would not allow them to build the hospital in Dodoma. The missionaries selected the farthest possible point which was still visible from the chief's house and built the hospital there.

Since that time the hospital has grown and is now run by Tanzanian doctors under the auspices of the Diocese of Central Tanganyika with the Right Rev. Bishop Mhogolo. There are close ties with the Anglican Missionary Society in England and the Church Missionary Society of the Australian Anglican Church.

Marilyn works closely with Dr. B. Isseme, the head of the eye department, "a very competent doctor who did his eye training at KCMC in the early 80s and worked at KCMC for four years" with her. Marilyn's job is to support and help Dr. Isseme to upgrade the eye care and surgical capabilities of the eye department, to teach three ten-week eye courses and one three-week eye course for medical assistants and nurses, and to engage in the outreach eye clinics and surgery to rural hospitals by car or small air craft (Missionary Aviation Fellowship). She says, "In this way the two of us can continue to improve the eye care services for the whole area which is reached by Mvumi. I am very aware that I do not work on my own. We all work together to fulfill Christ's powerful command of love when he said to his followers (Matthew 25 paraphrased): 'I was sick, in prison, hungry, naked, (and blind—my addition), and you came to me. Enter into my kingdom. Truly, I tell you, just as you did it

to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.'"

In many ways physical illness is easier to treat than mental illness. Some emotionally ill people need only doses of nondemanding love, undivided attention, or assurances of God's forgiveness. Others find that by talking with a therapist they are able to get through a particularly trying period in life. A small percentage of men and women need the help available from a psychiatrist.

Margaret Elizabeth DeWitt Van Wylen

(1924-)

Margaret Elizabeth DeWitt Van Wylen was born and brought up in Grand Haven, Michigan, where her family belonged to First Presbyterian Church. Because her mother died when Margaret was only eleven years old, she was raised by her grandmother, "a woman who was faithful in prayer," and her stepmother. Margaret also lost her father to death when she was twenty years old and a sophomore at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina (Margaret Van Wylen, written responses to author, March 1994*).

At a Presbyterian youth conference at Alma College (Alma, Michigan), Margaret became aware of a call to the mission field. She pursued that call by attending Biblical Theological Seminary in New York City for a year after graduating from Duke. Then, even though her family did not encourage a career in medicine, Margaret applied and was accepted to the University of Michigan Medical School.

She met Gordon Van Wylen at the University of Michigan during the summer of 1946. The Lord changed their direction from professional missionary service to a work with international students at the university when Margaret contracted tuberculosis in her senior year of medical school. After she and Gordon were married, Margaret returned to medical school, graduating in 1952.

A commitment to family directed Margaret's energies toward maintaining a comfortable home for Gordon and their five children—Elizabeth, Stephen, Ruth, David, and Emily. Students, especially internationals, were always warmly welcomed in the Van Wylen home. Margaret served as a gracious hostess during the years her husband was dean of the University of Michigan's Engineering School (1965-72) and president of Hope College (1972-87). In 1980 she received Michigan's Mother of the Year award.

When Emily, the youngest, was in elementary school, Margaret decided to take a residency in psychiatry at Michigan State University, doing most of her training at Pine Rest Christian Hospital in Grand Rapids, Michigan. After graduating in 1982 she headed the psychiatric department of Holland (MI) Community Hospital for one year and practiced psychiatry at Ottawa County Community Mental Health Center until her retirement in May 1994.

Margaret Van Wylen is a competent, caring woman who does not boast about her accomplishments. Rather, when asked to tell about her achievements, she quotes the apostle Paul: "We are what God has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life" (Eph. 2:10).

Healing ministries involve more than doctors and nurses. Because the causes of disease are socioeconomic and spiritual as well as bio-medical, all of us, but especially those within faith communities, need to promote health and wholeness. Dr. Eric Ram, director of international health at World Vision, has said, "Whenever we offer acceptance, love, forgiveness, or a quiet word of hope, we offer health. When we share each other's burdens and joys, we become channels of healing" (Granberg-Michaelson, 1991, 6).

Karin Granberg-Michaelson

(1948-)

My calling to advocate the healing ministry of the church emerged while I was a student at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., and simultaneously part of two great faith communities—Church of the Saviour and Sojourners Fellowship. Through these church communities I was brought into contact with both psychological and spiritual approaches to personal integration and healing and charismatic experiences with prayer for healing.

My interest in healing is very simple. I had a deep hunger to be healed. I saw that those around me were also hurting and hungering for wholeness. I couldn't understand why God's church was not mediating healing, grace, and forgiveness more effectively, so that people could be set free to serve. . .to put aside the hurts of the past, reintegrate them, receive forgiveness, but finally to move ahead in service as God's beloved, forgiven, and healed people (Karin Granberg-Michaelson, written responses to author, September 1994).*

Karin Granberg-Michaelson grew up in Reformed churches in Michigan, California, and Iowa. Thus, the Reformed Church in America and RCA institutions played an important role in her early Christian formation. Her father served at two RCA colleges, and both parents were active leaders in the Granberg family's various church homes. Karin found significant early role models in these surroundings. A long list of women and men mentors encouraged Karin to search for God's particular calling on her life. Sunday school and youth group leaders, classroom teachers, along with her parents' friends and colleagues, enriched Karin's views on the options open to women to serve church and society.

After graduating from Hope College, Karin taught English and served for two years as an RCA short-term missionary to Sendai, Japan. This was a pivotal experience which led her to pursue theological studies in psychology of religion and pastoral counseling at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. During seminary, Karin focused on the healing ministry of the church. After graduation, she established a church-sponsored holistic health care center in inner city Washington, D.C. Columbia Road Health Services was based on a team approach to health care including a doctor, nurse, pastoral counselor, and social worker. The attempt to treat the patient as a whole person and the experience in this type of health care environment reinforced her conviction about the church's role in the healing process.

Karin married Wesley Michaelson in 1974. She has found their partnership to be a gift which has enabled her to become more true to herself and her vocation. "Parenting our two children has taught each of

us a lot about the value of giving each other practical support so that we can try to meet the children's needs and still encourage each other to keep discovering and using our gifts in service."

When the Granberg-Michaelsons moved to Missoula, Montana, to become part of Community Covenant Church in 1979, Karin worked as a pastoral counselor and eventually developed a health and healing ministry including a counseling center in her church. She became acquainted with the Vellore (India) Christian Medical College and Hospital through her work with church-related health care and later served as a resource person in the area of faith and health. Together, she and Wes established the New Creation Institute which was focused on the environment and pastoral counseling.

During the years in Montana, Karin wrote *In the Land of the Living: Health Care in the Church*, which tried to synthesize everything she had learned about the healing ministry of the church. She also became increasingly aware of her own need for healing. By this time she was serving on the pastoral team of Covenant Community Church.

> *Henri Nouwen's "wounded healer" resonated strongly with my own experiences in pastoral leadership. Objections to women pastors from a few very vocal members of our church and restricted leadership roles for women in all aspects of the larger church's life were daunting. They did not fit with my passionate belief that the priesthood of all believers included women—indeed that the full expression of women's gifts is needed in God's New Jerusalem Community.*
>
> *During that period of discouragement, I felt God's healing hand through the encouragement I received at an RCA Women in Ministry gathering and through students who participated in a course I taught at North Park Theological Seminary (Chicago, Illinois) on the healing ministry of the church. This is how I think it works: we minister and we are ministered unto.*

The Scripture passage which ministered unto Karin at this time, at it has done many times over the past twenty years was Isaiah 6:1-8, especially verses 5-8.

> *Isaiah said: "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: "Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out." Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And [Isaiah] said, "Here am I; send me!" Each time I work with this text, I find new inspiration for the conviction that God heals us and God empowers us to go and serve.*

In 1988 Wes accepted a position with the World Council of Churches (WCC) and the family moved to Switzerland. During the five and a half years the Granberg-Michaelsons lived in Geneva, Karin served as a consultant to the WCC's Christian Medical Commission (CMC) and their women's division. Later she served as communications director for the world YWCA. Karin wrote her second book, *Healing Community*, in Geneva.

In 1994 the Granberg-Michaelson family returned to the United States when Wes received a call to serve the RCA as general secretary, a decision in which the entire family was actively involved. Karin continues to use her prophetic voice, writing, speaking, and acting on behalf of the voiceless.

I am convinced that we are living in a deeply broken world filled with profoundly wounded people who cannot allow themselves to feel their pain for fear it would destroy them, and [I believe] that the church is still, as Robert Frost said, "the place where, when you go there, they have to take you in." I am confident that God wants the church to be that place of healing...the great banquet to which all are invited and welcomed whatever state they are in. I believe that the Scriptures give so much space to the healing ministry of Jesus because we are such a wounded people. This is our task today—not to ensure "right behavior," but to promote the healing love of God which will challenge people into living morally congruent lives motivated by God's perfect love, and inspired to serve in thanksgiving for what has been given.

In opportunities to speak to international groups and letters of response Karin knows that the call to challenge others to become engaged in the healing ministry of the church is God's particular gift to her. "Whatever else I do, this is the thread that holds it all together."

There are men and women within the church to whom God has given the spiritual gift of healing. Pastoral counselors help both congregations and individuals deal with any unhealthy condition that hinders the progress and wholeness of the church's ministry. This may be an illness of an individual, but it could also be a congregation grieving the loss of a well-loved pastor. Hospital and hospice chaplains work with medical personnel, seeking to minister to a person's spirit at a time when he or she may be feeling great pain in body, mind, and spirit.

Lynn Carol Mierop Van Ek

(1947-)

"I feel uniquely blessed to be able to integrate my medical background and my theological one in hospice work. Strong issues for me are biomedical ethics and healing ministries—not faith healing, but healing of the spirit of individual human beings as well as healing for the planet Earth and the cosmos itself as we allow ourselves to live together in peace and harmony" (Lynn Van Ek, written responses to author, March 1994*).

Lynn Mierop Van Ek's story begins at Summer Street Christian Reformed Church (CRC) in Passaic, New Jersey, where, "as a young girl, I had been lovingly nurtured in the development of my faith" (Lynn Van Ek, 1987). After graduation from Eastern Christian High School, she attended Fairleigh Dickinson University in Rutherford, New Jersey, where she earned a degree in nursing.

From 1969-1987 Lynn combined homemaking and childrearing with pediatric nursing. Lynn and her husband Ed met at high school. Ed, who is a graduate of Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, was a reading specialist, but now works as a customs broker. They have three sons—Jared, Jeremy, and Jonathan.

About 1984 Lynn began to realize that God was leading her to make some major decisions about the future. She says, "I had been involved in teaching the Bethel Bible Series at Midland Park CRC for a number of years and had grown in many ways from the intensive study of God's word. I responded to that leading this time by deciding to be open to whatever idea was laid before me. . . . I listened. And prayed. And waited. It was another whole year before the answer came."

When God's answer to Lynn was, "Go to seminary," she came up with a long list of reasons why that

was impractical and impossible. But God changed her "faithless 'no' to a positive adventure of faith." In 1985 Lynn began attending New Brunswick Theological Seminary part time while completing a bachelor's degree in religion from Thomas Edison State College in Trenton, New Jersey. She continued private duty nursing jobs on weekends at the Christian Health Care Center in Wyckoff whenever she could fit them into a very busy schedule. She also left the CRC, "which couldn't (or wouldn't) accept who I turned out to be, and joined the RCA in order to come under care of a classis and begin the procedure toward ordination."

When God's answer to Lynn was, "Go to seminary," she came up with a long list of reasons why that was impractical and impossible. But God changed her "faithless 'no' to a positive adventure of faith."

—the Rev. Lynn Van Ek's story

In 1990 Lynn Van Ek was ordained and installed as assistant pastor at Second Reformed Church in Wyckoff, New Jersey, where she concentrated on Christian education and outreach, including visiting the sick. She was the first woman ordained by the Classis of Paramus. At that time Lynn told a reporter: "I see ministry as a healing task. In nursing we focus on physical healing. Jesus teaches us how to live together in peace and justice—that is healing, too. We need healing in all phases of our lives" (Supik, 1990, B-5).

In February 1992, two months after leaving Second Church, Lynn began her relationship with Passaic Valley Hospice, first as a chaplain and since 1993 as pastoral care/bereavement services coordinator. "As part of a home care health agency," Lynn says, "I travel all over Passaic County, New Jersey, to provide pastoral care to our terminally ill patients. Many times there is not a pastor or church connection. Many times there is great need. I feel privileged to be given the opportunity to go to people who never come to the churches, but who are searching for spirituality during a time of crisis and transformation. Often they are open in ways healthy people are usually not. Perspectives on life and its meaning are intensifying as death approaches. It is a sacred space, holy ground."

In 1992 while serving as a chaplain for Passaic Valley Hospice, Lynn also worked with Lebanon (New Jersey) Reformed Church as stated supply, providing pastoral care and counseling for this congregation which was in great need of healing. In 1993 Lynn was called to serve the Community Church of Glen Rock (New Jersey) as pastoral associate for congregational care. She served with the Rev. Dr. Arie Brouwer, who had been assigned as interim pastor. In the fall of that year Arie Brouwer was diagnosed with terminal cancer. She says: "For me, a very meaningful time of service as a pastor for the dying was my relationship with Arie Brouwer. As we stood together in the space of transition from life to death to life, we became spiritual friends. When I came to the church at Glen Rock as Arie's interim associate, I thought God had sent a hospice chaplain to this congregation to deal with the grief of a long-term pastor leaving. It turns out God had other things in mind. Yes, I had been sent there for the congregation—and for Arie. It has been one of the more sacred experiences of my life."

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1. This gifted physician died in 1904, the victim of a plague epidemic. Mary Chamberlain wrote of her: "Had Christian missions done nothing more than produce one Mary Rajanayagam, it was enough to justify them" (Chamberlain, 1925, 92).

2. Books, such as Dorothy Clarke Wilson's Dr. Ida: The Story of Dr. Ida Scudder of Vellore (New York, Toronto, and London: McGraw Hill Book Company, Inc., 1959) and Mary Pauline Jeffery's Dr. Ida: India (Revell, 1939) and Dr. Ida S. Scudder of Vellore, India (Jubilee Edition published in India, 1950), tell much more about this remarkable woman.

3. Stella Veenschoten's story may be found in Chapter 10—Praising God through the Arts.

4. L'Anni Hill-Alto's story may be found in Chapter 6—Interpreting the Word.

5. Kitty Bosch Crandall is the younger sister of retired RCA medical missionary to Oman, Dr. Donald Bosch.

Chapter Five

Practicing Hospitality

Rahab

(Joshua 2:1-21; 6:17, 23, 25)

The prostitute Rahab, who lived in Jericho, was used to men coming to her home. Therefore, when two Israelites knocked on her door, she invited them in, and they spent the night there. Rahab seemed to have known who the Israelites were and may have feared what might happen to her if she weren't hospitable. Later she told them, "We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea before you when you came out of Egypt and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites...whom you utterly destroyed" (Josh. 2:10).

The men, who were in the city to assess the strength of Canaan, "especially Jericho," must have explained to Rahab their real mission to spy out the land, because not only did she take them in, but when the king's soldiers came looking for them, she hid the spies under stalks of flax on the roof of her house. Then Rahab told the soldiers that the men had gone out "when it was time to close the gate at dark" and that she had no idea where they had gone. She also convinced the soldiers to leave her house in order to "overtake them."

As soon as the king's agents left to pursue Joshua's spies, Rahab went to the men hiding on her roof and proclaimed her belief in the greatness of their Lord, who "is indeed God in heaven above and on earth below" (Josh. 2:11b). Because Rahab's house was built in the city wall, she was able to help the men escape by letting them down by a rope through a window. Joshua and his army were grateful both for her military information and for her hospitality to and protection of the two spies. Because of this, the Israelite army carefully spared the lives of all of Rahab's family when they overthrew the city of Jericho.

Hospitality is a human virtue. You might say that hospitality was Rahab's business, but what she did for Joshua's spies had nothing to do with business. Rahab's hospitality to these men was the sort of thing people of faith have done through the ages. By hiding the spies in her home and helping them to escape the soldiers, Rahab demonstrated kindness and compassion while putting herself at risk.

To share one's home with other people means sharing one's life. To offer someone the hospitality of your home is to open to that person the sacred places in your life. Lydia did this when she urged Paul and Luke to "come and stay at my home" (see Acts 14:14-16). By providing a place for Elisha, the Shunamite woman was offering the prophet entrance into her family's space (2 Kings 4).

In spite of the fact that Christians are instructed to "contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers" (Rom. 12:13), this is a ministry which not everyone can carry out with ease. Those who practice hospitality may put themselves at risk. For example, during the U.S. Civil War, men and women who provided space in their homes and barns for runaway slaves jeopardized their lives as well as those of the people they protected. Christian hospitality shows a sincere concern for others and their needs. People of faith who extend themselves to persons beyond their intimate circle demonstrate the unlimited and inclusive love of Christ. To welcome strangers is to welcome Christ (see Matt. 25:35, 38, 40).

Marie Ver Howe Zegerius

(1912-)

Marie Ver Howe was born in Holland, Michigan, in 1912, the eldest child of Peter and Maude (Marcus) Ver Howe. Peter and Maude, whose families were among the early settlers of the Holland area, grew up within walking distance of each other. The family attended Maple Avenue Christian Reformed Church, where the teachers made the Scripture lessons come alive for Marie. Her teachers in the Christian school she attended through seventh grade and those in Holland High School encouraged her spiritual growth. She had planned to attend Hope College and become a teacher of English and literature, but the Great Depression changed things for her family. "Instead of attending Hope," she says, "I worked as a secretary for the Holland Furnace Company and

attended evening classes at both the public and Christian high schools in Holland. I also met my future husband, Harri Zegerius, a student at Western Theological Seminary" (Marie Zegerius with daughter Joan Oorbeck, story "Walking Along a Tulip Lane of Memories," submitted to author, May 1994*).

Because Harri worked with the youth at Third Reformed Church, Marie attended that church, where she was encouraged to teach Sunday school. She also prepared herself to be a pastor's wife by taking some courses at the seminary. Their first parish was Forest Home Reformed Church in Muskegon, Michigan. They began with twenty-three families and only a basement structure. Marie says, "We opened our home and our hearts to people who were struggling to build a congregation. Adult Sunday school classes as well as Wednesday night prayer meetings were held in the basement of our home. Our living room was open to consistory meetings once a month. As pastor's wife, I taught Sunday school and chaired the Ladies Aid meetings. This was just the beginning of a pathway to opening our home and hearts to diverse people who were seeking a Christian faith."

> *I knew opening my home and heart to other people would be an important part of my life as a minister's wife. This was not so much a call to a way of life, as it was a realization this was a task that needed to be done. God did the enabling. To God be the glory!*
>
> —*Marie Zegerius*

Marie and Harri had two children, Joan and Ronald, during the seven years they served Forest Home Reformed Church. A third child, Bruce, was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where Harri served as pastor of Oakdale Park Reformed Church. In addition to teaching church school and chairing a women's group, Marie also provided room and board for two Calvin College students.

In 1950 they moved to Hamilton, Ontario, to begin the challenging work of helping immigrants from the Netherlands settle in a new land. Because these immigrants hungered for spiritual nourishment, churches were being established in various locations. Harri, who spoke Dutch, helped the newcomers find housing and jobs. Marie did not speak Dutch, so it was difficult for her to communicate with those immigrants who spoke very little English.

Marie and Harri had not even unpacked their belongings when a Dutch dominie (clergyman) arrived at their door. Then two young immigrants, who needed food and work, arrived on motorcycles. This was only a token of what was to follow.

In spite of the language barrier, Marie learned very quickly to make accommodations for newcomers. Immigrants slept in bunk beds in their large, unused third floor and in a spare bedroom. An open-up couch in the study could also be put to use in an emergency. Marie had no idea how each day would develop and how many Dutch folk would show up at their home, but as the Reformed Church representative in Canada, she was ready. Marie remembers serving two hundred meals in the first month. "Immigrants who had yet to find a place to settle and work were assigned to certain farmers in our area as laborers. Families were housed in our home—some for one week, some for two weeks. I remember one family with four children who stayed for six weeks."

Marie supervised meal preparations for all these people, showed them how to do laundry, and spent time with them trying to make them feel comfortable and wel-

come in their new land. She did all this while caring for a ten-year-old daughter, a seven-year-old son, and an infant son.

In addition to the work required to keep the Zegerius home going, Marie sometimes accompanied Harri, who had been appointed director of Canadian immigration for the Reformed Church in America in Canada in 1951, to places where some of the immigrants were setting up new homes. Marie helped the women by teaching them English words for household supplies and everyday necessities. Because Harri's job took him from Nova Scotia to Alberta, Marie was the one who carried on the work of hospitality at their home. She set aside a large section of the third floor of their home for the clothing kept for new immigrants. She says, "When the used clothing arrived, much of it from churches in Grand Rapids, my daughter and several women helped me sort and hang the clothing on clotheslines. That way families could choose the clothing they needed. Not all the clothes were usable, so some had to be discarded, and we often found moths flying throughout the entire house."

At the end of three years several families who were among the first to emigrate to Canada offered to help Marie and Harri. Also in 1954 a few immigration houses were established to help with the task of receiving new families who continued to come in goodly numbers.

By the end of 1955, immigration from the Netherlands had slowed considerably. After five years of giving themselves to the full, Harri and Marie were bone weary.

Their energy depleted, Harri accepted a call to First Reformed Church, a long-established congregation in Portage, Michigan. In addition to all the church activities, Marie continued her ministry of hospitality. Marie says, "Because we lived near a railroad track, I often found hobos knocking at the door seeking a handout. Giving them cash seemed to be a mistake, as they went around the corner to the saloon. So I invited them in for a sandwich and a cup of coffee. Then a prayer was offered in their behalf."

After twelve years in Michigan, Harri accepted a call to Emmanuel Reformed Church in Chicago, Illinois. At that time the neighborhood around the church was undergoing racial change. Again the Zegerius home was open, this time to children. "Some of the black boys and girls from the neighborhood came to our home just to have their many questions answered. They were curious about our home and our manner of living."

In 1970 five years before Harri's retirement, the couple returned to First Reformed Church in St. Catharines, Ontario, a congregation which Harri had helped start in 1951. As was their custom, the parsonage was a hospitable place. "After Sunday evening services the R.C.Y.F. was always invited to meet in our home."

Marie and Harri served in two more churches after his retirement: Woodmar Reformed in Hammond, Indiana, a small congregation which was in its final years (disbanding in 1978); and Bethany Reformed in Kalamazoo, where Harri was calling pastor for two years. In both cities their home was a welcoming place. "After the first experience at Forest Home in Muskegon," Marie says, "I knew opening my home and heart to other people would be an important part of my life as a minister's wife. This was not so much a call to a way of life, as it was a realization this was a task that needed to be done. God did the enabling. To God be the glory!"

In his first letter to the exiles the apostle Peter exhorted the believers to "be hospitable to one another without complaining. Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received" (1 Peter 4:9-10). Ladies of the manor in colonial America were experts in making their guests feel comfortable.

Margaretta Hardenbroek Philipse

(the 1600s)

and

Catrina (Catharina) Van Cortlandt Philipse

(1653-1730)

When Vredryk (also spelled Fredryk) Flypse came to New Amsterdam in 1647 he was a carpenter with little money. By 1662, the year he married a rich widow named Margaretta Hardenbroek de Vries, he was doing quite well financially.

> *He soon became the wealthiest man in the city. He was remarkable for foresight. When, through Stuyvesant's surrender in 1664, the English came into possession of New Netherland, he was shrewd enough to anticipate the property boom that would be sure to follow in the city, and northward along the Hudson (Cole, 1898, 117).*[1]

Margaretta was his equal when it came to managing and increasing her fortune. In 1670 she purchased three hundred acres on the south side of the Saw Mill River, in what today is Yonkers, New York. Two years later Frederick Philipse (the anglicized version of his name) bought more land in and around Yonkers.

In 1680 the King of England gave Frederick Philipse a license to buy parcels of land fronting on the Hudson River, from Spuyten Duyvil (in the Bronx) north to the Croton River. These "lands. . .with others previously purchased, were finally confirmed to him in 1693 as the Manor of Philipsburgh" (Cole, 1898, 114).

Frederick, as lord of the manor, leased his lands to settlers who agreed to cultivate and develop them. These settlers "were true Christians" who "lived as such among the Indians by whom they were surrounded, and . . .were in the habit. . .of meeting at a fixed spot every Lord's day for divine worship" (Cole, 1898, 114).

In 1683 Frederick and Margaretta built their manor house and moved to Tarrytown, New York.

> *They found a strongly pious people, whose religious instincts they themselves as born Hollanders fully shared, and they did everything they could to favor the conditions already existing and looking to the organization of a church at some date not far away. Margaretta, from the day of her settlement in Tarrytown and ascertainment of her surroundings, must have seen the need for a house of worship, and perhaps the idea of building this house started with her. . . .The building. . .was begun at least as early as 1684. . . .[Until it was completed,] it may be that the new Philipse house was freely offered for religious meetings (Cole, 1898, 122-23).*

The woman who the people of the Tarrytown congregation called "Margaretta of blessed memory" died in either 1690 or 91. In November 1692, sixty-five-year-old Frederick remarried. Within two months of the marriage, Frederick was confirmed as Lord Philipse and

his second wife, Catrina (also spelled Catharina) Van Cortlandt, became lady of the manor.

> *Catharina was twenty-six years the junior of her husband, but was a lady of great moral and religious worth, as well as of great dignity of bearing, and well fitted to sustain her prominent and responsible position as the presiding genius of the Manor House, and the leader of the little community and its religious movement. Both she and Frederick were devoted to their ancestral Reformed Church. . . .And now, from her accession to Margaretta's place, began here that seeking for a Reformed Church minister (Cole, 1898, 126).*

It took Catharina until 1697 before she was able to find a Reformed minister who would come to them three or four times a year, preach in the Dutch language, and administer the sacraments. When she began her search, "there were but seven Reformed Church ministers in America, and four of these were not Hollanders, but Frenchmen" (Cole, 1898, 127). Catharina finally located Guiliaem (William) Bertholf, a former voorleser (lay reader) who had been ordained in September 1693. Bertholf was pastor of two New Jersey churches—Hackensack and Acquackanonck—and organizer of several others. For fifteen years he was the only Dutch minister in New Jersey. On Sundays he preached in the churches where he was pastor. During the week he traveled to other congregations—preaching, baptizing, administering the Lord's Supper, catechizing, and holding funerals.

When it was Tarrytown's turn to host Dominie Bertholf, one of the Tappan elders rowed him across the Hudson River by boat. "No doubt he was most carefully received and treated at every one of his visits by the commanding Frederick and the elegant Lady Catharina" (Cole, 1898, 131). Frederick died in 1702, but Lady Catharina continued to offer her hospitality to the Rev. Guiliaem Bertholf until 1724, when due to age he had to discontinue traveling to and from Hackensack.

Although it was Frederick who built the Old Dutch Church at Sleepy Hollow in Tarrytown, New York, Catharina shared in presenting to the church a heavy oak pulpit and an oak communion table, inlaid with ebony, made in Holland. The couple also donated two silver beakers and a silver baptismal bowl. One beaker bears the name Catharina Van Cortlant and the other, along with the bowl, bears the name Fredryck Flypse.

During World War II some European Christians risked their own lives and those of their families to conceal Jews and members of the underground from the Nazis by hiding them in secret places within their homes or other places on their property.

Johtje Kuyper Vos

(1909-)

Johtje Kuyper Vos is the granddaughter of Abraham Kuyper, the leader of a secessionist movement from the Hervormde Kerk in 1886 and co-founder of a new denomination, the Gereformeerde Kerk, which is similar to the Christian Reformed Church in the U.S. and Canada.[2] He also headed a political party for forty years, and was a long-time member of the national legislature and prime minister of the Netherlands for four years. Johtje, her mother, and her sisters lived with her grandfather during the First World War, when their military father was mobilized to the frontier of the country.

> *It was not such a great life living with a prime*

minister, although he was a very nice man. But in school—we, of course, went to Christian schools—everyone knew about Abraham. So when I got a failing mark, which happened quite often, they didn't see it as just a failing mark, but "the granddaughter of Abraham Kuyper has a failing mark." So I came to hate that position (Johtje Vos, taped interview with Carol Cortelyou Cruikshank, April 1994).*

At the age of nineteen or twenty Johtje Kuyper left her home in the Netherlands "to live in Paris as a journalist." She had always wanted to write, and she was good at it. Her conservative, very religious family (especially on her father's side) was understandably upset. "At that time, before the Second World War, Paris was still the city of sin, and a young lady didn't go there to live by herself. But I did."

In moving to Paris, where she lived for four and a half years, Johtje Kuyper left both her family and her religion. She met her first husband, Hein, an artist, in Paris. Hein was an atheist who had left Germany when Hitler was beginning his rise to power.

The couple left Paris to live in Holland when their first daughter, Hetty, was born. Shortly after their second child, Barbara, was born, the "marriage went wrong." Finally, Hein left Johtje for another woman. Still she did not wish to divorce him because she believed strongly that the promises she had made when she and Hein married were "for better or worse. If it turns out to be the last of these, it still is not a reason to break your promise." She only agreed to divorce him after her dominie (clergyman) pointed out to Johtje, "You force those people to live in sin." Although Johtje "went to church once in awhile. . .and had the children baptized," it was mostly out of habit. "Now I give everything to God."

Johtje married her second husband, Aart, several years after her divorce. "Then the Germans came and the Dutch capitulated to them." But there were many, including Aart and Johtje Vos, who did not capitulate. After the German army practically flattened Rotterdam and the queen left Holland, Dutch officers who had survived the fighting began to build a network of people to sabotage the Germans. Before long the Vos home in Laren was opened to Jews and members of the underground who were being hunted by the Nazis.

> *My husband and I didn't sit down one day and say, "We are going to do something for the Jewish people." It didn't work like that at all. . . .I didn't feel that God called me into the work, but I certainly felt that we could do it only with God's help. . . .I was scared to death on many occasions. When the Germans came into our house, pushed us aside, yanked open our drawers, looked everywhere, and we had this house full of Jewish people hidden, and didn't know if they would find them, and I had to answer to the Gestapo, and they interrogated me, of course, I was afraid.*
>
> —Johtje Vos

My husband and I didn't sit down one day and say, "We are going to do something for the Jewish people." It didn't work like that at all. We became members of the illegal party [the Underground] as soon as we found out there was a party who tried to sabotage what the Germans were doing. Friends who were famous musicians came to us one day at the beginning of the war and said, "We are Jewish and we have to leave our homes. We have a suitcase with some very important things to us. Would you mind keeping them for us?" (We hadn't known they were Jewish because we didn't know those things in Holland.) We said, "Of course!" That's not a difficult thing to do for a friend. A week

later they came and said, "We have to move now to Amsterdam and it's going to be very difficult for our little boy. Would you mind keeping him for awhile?" And, of course, we said, "Bring him here."

Not long after that, they took in a couple who needed a place to hide. No one believed the war would last five years. Everyone thought it would be over in a few months, so when they opened their home to children of Jewish friends and even strangers, Aart and Johtje thought it would be a temporary kind of arrangement. It was only later that the inherent dangers of hiding "enemies of the Germans" began to penetrate. Johtje and Aart briefly discussed whether or not they should continue, deciding that as long as people needed help, "Of course, we'll go on."

I didn't feel that God called me into the work, but I certainly felt that we could do it only with God's help. . . . I was scared to death on many occasions. When the Germans came into our house, pushed us aside, yanked open our drawers, looked everywhere, and we had this house full of Jewish people hidden, and didn't know if they would find them, and I had to answer to the Gestapo, and they interrogated me, of course, I was afraid.

We sheltered [a total of] thirty-six people. . . . The most we had at one time was nineteen. We had more adults than children. All the young ones had mattresses in the attic. We had our own three children—the two girls from my first marriage and the boy from Aart's first marriage. (After the war we had two sons together.)

Our house had always been full of friends, but soon our children noticed that things were hidden. Then we had to teach them to lie, and that was a very difficult thing. For instance, we had this little Jewish girl. We said, "You are to tell [people who ask] that this girl is a cousin and you don't know where her father and mother are because they live somewhere else and she is here on vacation." Then our children would say, "But her father. . ." and we would say, "We know, but this is what you say." And they caught on. They seemed to be able to feel the difference between truth and untruth.

The Vos home was on a hill next to a nature reservation. In back of their house there was a studio which was also used to hide people. Outside the studio was a coal bin connected by a secret panel to the inside of the building. Underneath the coal bin, Aart and some helpers had dug an underground tunnel which came out in the nature reservation at the end of their lane. This tunnel saved lives, something Johtje wrote about in *From the Entrance of the Tunnel* (1994), a book about her experiences in Holland during the war.[3]

When the war ended, Holland was economically devastated. The Vos family emigrated, as did many people. Johtje says, "We didn't really want to leave Holland, but there were no jobs. The country was so poor. Aart [who had a degree in agriculture] was in his forties and we had six children. We came to America at the request of our relatives and friends [who were already here]. We emigrated to give our children a future."

Sponsored by one of Aart's friends and an uncle of Johtje's, they arrived in Woodstock, New York, in 1951. At first Aart worked for other people. Then he and Johtje started a home for children of families related to the United Nations.

There were a lot of people at the U.N. who, because they traveled a lot, were looking for homes for their children. They preferred their children to be with European families, and because I speak foreign

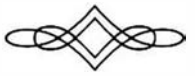
languages [Dutch, French, English, and German], we took in these children. We had nineteen children in the house, and I had no help. Most of the children went to public school, except for the little ones. That was an enormous lot of work, so after two years we changed it into a summer camp, although we still kept a few of the children year round.

After seventeen years had passed and Johtje had suffered two heart attacks, Aart convinced her to give up the camp. About the same time, "in a very remarkable way we got a pension from our work in the war." They also were invited to the Israeli Consulate in New York City, where they received a medal from Yad Vashem, the holocaust organization in Israel. Although for twenty years they had not talked about their experiences during the Holocaust, a rabbi, who was at the ceremony and knew of the books Johtje had written, encouraged her to talk about the things they had seen and done. He told Johtje, "You have a God-given talent for writing. You have a duty to write about it and to talk about it because you are a living witness. You can help many people in not only understanding what happened, but also in teaching people how they can help each other."

Johtje not only wrote about that horrifying period when the Jewish people became scapegoats for the economic woes of Germany, but she—and Aart before his death—began to speak about it in synagogues, churches, civic organizations, and schools. She always tries to make time to speak to children's groups. Johtje says, "I like to speak to children because they have so much to learn. It's so important for children to know not only how it started, but also how to understand the difference between discrimination and hatred and love. I try to help them to see how beautiful it is that God created people in all different races, colors, types, and builds, like the trees and flowers. Of course, they are interested in adventurous stories, but I tell a lot more than that."

Aart and Johtje Vos became members of Woodstock Reformed Church shortly after becoming established there. Johtje, who has served the congregation as a deacon, was active in Woodstock's migrant ministry for many years. Still in the hospitality business until 1993, Johtje ran a weekend bed and breakfast in her beautiful huge house, located in the woods partway up Mead Mountain Road.

When she reads Psalm 139, "which is my favorite and I read very often," Johtje is reminded of God's faithfulness and leading. She says, "Even in the years I tried to forget about my faith in God, it was still there and I am thankful. . . .Even though I strayed from the way, I had to come back. 'Where can I go from your spirit?. . .If I take the wings of the morning and settle at the farthest limits of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me and your right hand shall hold me fast'" (Psalm 139:7a, 9-10).



Through the years many Reformed Church women have opened their hearts, their homes, and their Christian faith to foster children or exchange students. God can and does use this ministry of hospitality to bring others to the Lord. Welcoming strangers into one's home can also prepare the hospitable person for new and exciting ministries.

Marilyn Kuyper Rensink

(1935-)

Marilyn Kuyper grew up on a farm in rural Iowa

where, she says, "life was sheltered and simple. My dad was a consistory member for all the years I was at home, and both my parents were very involved in teaching in the church. Their commitment to the Lord made a real impact on my life, and I made a commitment to accept Christ as my Savior at an early age" (Marilyn Rensink, story submitted to author, March 1994*).

Marilyn married Wilmer Rensink at age eighteen. Together they raised six children and settled into a good life on a farm. But God had other plans for Wilmer and Marilyn. Unexpectedly, Marilyn, supported by her husband, felt the call to attend college and work toward a degree in education. "For a farm wife who couldn't stand up in Circle and give a simple report, the thought of going to college with students who were sixteen years younger and much more versed in academia as well as social graces, was terrifying."

But she did it. Sometime during those college years the Rensinks began taking teenaged foster children into their home. Marilyn preferred babies, but the need was for teenagers.

> *Foster children come with a set of problems which are unique, and many of these children are not at all familiar with a traditional home. Our family continued to attend church [First Reformed in Sioux Center, Iowa] regularly, to have family devotions, and to study Sunday school and catechism lessons, and those who lived in our home were expected to do likewise. We tried to demonstrate to them what a loving, caring, Christian home was like. We incorporated them into this loving circle even though at times it took all the grace we could muster. Foster children need to feel loved, they need to feel someone cares enough about them to even want to discipline them. Foster children need to experience the love of Christ, and often that love is only seen as it is worked out in the lives of those of us who take the time to care. We did not always see a change in the young person's life while they were at our home, but I am grateful that the Lord allowed us the opportunity to sow the seed and pray that it will be brought to fruition in time.*

The Rensink family also welcomed exchange students, which allowed the Rensink children to learn about different cultures while sharing their own. "Both foster children and exchange students were a benefit to our own children as they learned to verbalize and share their beliefs and gained an appreciation for their own family values and their country."

In opening their home to others, Marilyn believes that God was preparing them for the day when her daughter, Donna, would respond to the call to missionary service. Donna and her husband, Brian Renes, serve the Reformed Church in America as missionaries in Chiapas, Mexico. Marilyn struggled with the thought of her daughter and three granddaughters leaving the comfort and familiarity of Iowa for a life among the Mayan Indians of Chiapas. The Rensink family had always talked missions, supported missions, enjoyed listening to missionaries, and encouraged others to go into full-time mission work. But now the Lord was calling their daughter. Marilyn wondered how often they would see each other, especially the grandchildren, and whether they would be safe in a foreign land. Sometimes these concerns seemed to take precedence over Christ's command to "go. . .and make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28:19).

Gradually Marilyn came to understand that her ministry of hospitality, first to teenaged foster children from northwest Iowa and then to exchange students, had been God's way of opening her to the truth proclaimed in John 3:16, that God does indeed love the world that Christ came to save. Marilyn admits, "Donna and Brian would have gone without our support because the call

of the Lord was certain to them. We praise God that we were enabled to hear the cry of the unsaved around the world and to know the certainty that they would be eternally lost if someone was not willing to go and tell them about Christ."

Marilyn's husband, Wilmer, has been an Iowa State Senator since 1983. In addition to serving as his aide, Marilyn is a frequent speaker at Reformed Church mission festivals and classical union meetings throughout the regional synods of the Heartland and the Far West, where she shares how God has directed her to various activities throughout her life, "activities I would not have planned for myself."

Marilyn Rensink does not know where God will call her in the future, but she is confident that whatever happens she is willing and ready to go where her Lord directs and that Christ will enable no matter how inadequate for the task she may feel.

Opening one's home to one or two foster children requires abundant patience, heartfelt understanding, and a great deal of love. Directing a children's shelter requires these qualities and more.

Bernice Tegeler

(1923-)

Does growing up in a family of sixteen children prepare you to direct a home for sixty children? Bernice Tegeler, who worked with Native Americans as an RCA missionary for fifty years, says that being "the thirteenth child of a large lovely Christian family totally influenced the person I am today" (Bernice Tegeler, story to author, March 1994*).

Bernice grew up on a farm in Whiteside County, Illinois, where besides having "loads of fun with neighboring families," school and church—Newton Zion Reformed in Erie, Illinois—provided the only activities other than farm chores. She recalls, "As the end of the school year drew near we would look forward to the annual Sunday school picnic and the county fair. We would make great plans, but Mother would always remind us, 'The Lord willing we will attend the picnic and the fair.' When I was a child, I often wondered why we couldn't just have fun and go. Somehow I knew she and God really did know best, and we would wait for the Lord's decision."

Through the youth group of her church, Bernice became involved in the RCA mission work in Annville, Kentucky. She even hoped to continue working there as an RCA missionary, but God had other plans for her. Bernice's parents both died when she was a teenager—her father died following a crippling stroke, and her mother passed on a year later.

The Rev. Reuben Ten Haken, who was the pastor of Newton Zion Church at that time, and his wife, Berniece, were considering a call to the Mescalero (New Mexico) Mission of the Reformed Church.

> *The Board of Domestic Missions informed us we could have household help for our family in Mescalero. We knew Bernice needed a home, but we hesitated to ask her to leave her family and work 1,600 miles away when she was so young. With much prayer and the encouragement of one of Bernice's older brothers, we approached her and told her to pray about it. She only had an eighth grade education, but she was very willing and conscientious in anything she did (Berniece Ten Haken, letter to author, May 1994).*

Bernice Tegeler prayed and discussed the move with an older sister. In a quiet time Bernice received her answer. "The Lord simply said, 'Go.'" Her sister agreed. "I know this is just what the Lord wants for you." And so Bernice Tegeler began her fifty years of RCA mission service among Native Americans.

> *When we arrived at Mescalero, Bernice immediately found her place in our family. We thank God for the excellent care she gave our family, the household work we did together, and the delicious meals she prepared. Soon she took on responsibilities teaching Sunday school and working with the Ladies Aid. I can't emphasize enough how Bernice grew in the Lord (Ten Haken, letter, May 1994).*

In 1951 Bernice Tegeler accepted a new challenge. She moved to Winnebago, Nebraska, to work with the Rev. Gradus Aalberts and his wife, Auriel. Bernice became housemother to the sixty children who had been placed in the Children's Home by county and state welfare agencies. Eventually she took over as the home's administrator.

> *Caring for children under any circumstances requires great patience, understanding and love. Caring for large numbers of children who have been deprived of family life and their natural parents requires these qualities in an immeasurable degree. Few are so qualified for this task as Bernice Tegeler whose Christian character and ideals lead her to selfless service and devotion to the deprived and neglected children who are cared for at the Children's Shelter (Acquaintance sheet, Board of Domestic Missions, R.C.A., June 1959).*

Great demands were placed on staff members who served in the home because the children were so needy. When the Nebraska Association of Child Care Agencies provided in-training services, Bernice gladly made the two-hundred-mile round-trip drive to Omaha fourteen weeks out of the year for four consecutive years. "Those courses on child development at Creighton University proved to be a great asset."

In the 1970s Indian ministries went through a difficult transition during which institutions were phased out. The home for deprived and neglected children was closed and the property transferred to the Winnebago tribe. However, at the request of the Winnebago tribal government, Bernice remained in service as a counselor, finding homes and placing children with Indian foster families. At the same time she took continuing education courses in modern Indian psychology and Native American studies at St. Mary's College in Omaha.

Bernice Tegeler became the administrator of Winnebago Reformed Church's Daycare Center in 1982. Although she officially retired in 1990, this caring woman with a heart full of love for children continues to volunteer her administrative expertise at the daycare center, where she always has a smile and a hug for any child who may need one.

In the 1980s many nonprofit organizations, including churches, became involved in ministries offering shelter, food, legal assistance, and counseling to homeless individuals. Volunteers, many of them women, staffed soup kitchens, food pantries, and overnight shelters.

Terry Troia
(1958-)

Terry Troia is a second-generation Staten Islander

(New York) whose grandparents came to the U.S. from Sicily. She was raised as a devout Roman Catholic and attended Mass daily. Deeply moved by the Scripture stories she heard in church and school, Terry became aware of her calling in the second grade. "I wrote a little essay about how I wanted to be a priest." By the seventh grade she realized she couldn't say she wanted to be a priest because people would laugh at her. Instead, by age twelve she decided she wanted to be "an Old Testament scholar and theologian. People still laughed at me" (Terry Troia, written responses to author, February 1995*).

Before entering high school, Terry took her first graduate course in theology at the New York Theological Seminary extension program on Staten Island, began serving as the first woman lector in St. Adalbert's Roman Catholic Church, taught church school and vacation Bible school classes, and served as her parish's youth director. "I was deeply in love with my local church, and the people there strongly encouraged my gifts for speaking and teaching in the church."

On her thirteenth birthday Terry's priest took her to the Catholic Worker Shelter on the lower east side of Manhattan to hear anti-Vietnam War activist Daniel Berrigan speak. His talk inspired Terry to social activism. "More than anything else, social injustice provoked me to social action at an early age. I got emotionally and physically upset whenever I read about or saw anyone treated unjustly."

Terry studied theology with Dutch Jesuit theologian Fr. Felix Malmberg at Loyola College and then went on to study at St. Mary's Seminary and University in Baltimore, Maryland. She says, "I never entered seminary with the thought of being ordained—Catholic or Protestant—but I thought it would be terrific for me to be with other folks interested in parish ministry and in theology as a tool to change the world."

It didn't work out that way, however. The seminarians had limited experience of the church and were distrustful of women. Terry and the other woman in her class were not allowed to eat in the dining room with the seminarians, to use the study hall or student lounge, to walk above the first floor of the building, to actively participate in worship, or to do a preaching practicum. But she stuck it out, completing two years of study and earning a master of arts in systematic theology.

> *This was my first articulated experience of oppression as a woman. I didn't survive it well. My entire world of meaning, the religious language by which I knew God crumbled in the wake of this experience of oppression. For my own emotional survival, I left a church that had already left me. I began the search for a way to again be in relationship with my God.*

Terry matriculated in a graduate study of ethics program at Union Theological Seminary in New York City and forged bonds with women seminarians. But it was the year she spent studying and working among the poor and suffering Christians in Central America that enabled her to "understand the meaning of the resurrection, the hope of victory. . . that the children to come after may know a better world, and that ours is a gracious and powerful God whose love for us would indeed triumph over evil."

With that conviction, Terry returned to her home community on Staten Island to work with the poor. She signed up as a volunteer with Brighton Heights Reformed Church's soup kitchen and shelter, a ministry which the congregation's pastor, the Rev. Roland Ratmeyer, had named Project Hospitality (PH).

Curious about the Reformed Church in America, Terry began attending worship services at Brighton

Heights and was encouraged by the pastor to make profession of faith. In addition to her volunteer work with PH, Terry became a youth leader at Brighton Heights. Aware of her gifts for ministry, Terry's pastor encouraged her to pursue ordination in the RCA, which she did, completing all the necessary requirements through the RCA's Theological Education Agency by the fall of 1988.

In 1985 Terry was hired as program director of PH's Hospitality Center for Counseling and Referral. By that time, many Protestant, Roman Catholic, and Jewish congregations were involved. Seven congregations took turns housing overnight guests; others prepared meals and sent volunteers to work in PH soup kitchens and the men's shelter. Four years later, the Rev. Terry Troia, newly ordained as minister of Word and sacrament in the RCA, was installed as executive director of Project Hospitality, Inc. This interfaith effort serving the needs of the hungry and homeless on Staten Island, New York, is Terry's congregation. She sees Project Hospitality as a new way of being church—the church of the poor.

> *Our pews are not in the sanctuary; they are the bus stop and ferry terminal benches. Our congregants sell drugs and their bodies for sex on the street corners; our congregants sleep in doorways and freeze to death in alleyways. Our congregants die with needles and babies in their arms, from addiction and disease and lack of care. I do my preaching in hospital emergency rooms, in the chambers of city council and city hall, at community board meetings, and in the face of hostile crowds.*

In 1989 Terry initiated a "Faith-In-Action" program, which brings groups of people from all over the United States to Staten Island. They live in the shelter, eat in the soup kitchen, work, pray, and reflect on their experiences. When they return to their home communities, many of these groups start ministries serving the needs of the hungry and homeless where they live.

Since the fall of 1994, Terry has had two jobs. During the week she is executive director of Project Hospitality, but on Sundays she serves New Utrecht Reformed Church in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn, New York, as pulpit supply minister.

No longer housed in Brighton Heights Reformed Church, Project Hospitality still operates congregational-based shelters and coordinates a number of soup kitchens. The ministry has grown to include Hospitality House, a transitional shelter for women and children; Neighborhood Homes, transitional apartments for people in recovery; Positive Living, special services and a housing program for people living with HIV; a health clinic; a drop-in center with social workers; and a mental health team for street outreach. Terry, assisted by a board of directors, a caring staff, and hundreds of volunteers, oversees all these ministries.

> *My hardest challenge now comes not from the dilemma of being a woman leader in a man's church, but of being a witness to the gospel in a city and country whose mean-spiritedness and self-centeredness not only marginalizes the poor, the fragile, and the sick, but seemingly seeks to eliminate the poor from their right to exist at all.*

Terry's ministry often leaves her drained. "Being prophetic is lonely. I would not, however, trade my life experiences for the world." To renew her spirit, Terry relies on reading the Psalms, "which voice my prayer"; listens to the music of the Benedictine monks of Weston Priory, Vermont, with whom she once lived; and, in the last years, has "struggled to remain faithful to a weekly sabbath observance."

1. A former site manager of Philipse Manor believes the stories of Margaretta and Catharina Philipse have been romanticized a bit by 19th century writers.

2. Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920) was editor for almost fifty years of two of the Gereformeerde Kerk's newspapers, a daily political paper and a weekly religious one. He helped found and taught at the Calvinistic Free University in Amsterdam and promoted and defended the Christian labor movement. Kuyper filled many roles in his personal, political, and ecclesiastical life. His base was religious, but his vision was for a transformed society.

3. Johtje Vos is the author of three novels published in Holland. In her last novel, A Cedar in Lebanon, *the main character is a woman who joins the underground after her husband escapes to England, where he remains for the duration of the war. She has also written a children's book on hatred and discrimination.*

Chapter Six

Interpreting the Word

Huldah

(2 Kings 22:14-20 and 2 Chronicles 34:22-28)

Huldah was renowned as a prophet during King Josiah's reign in Judah. Her husband, Shallum, who was in charge of the priests' robes in the Temple at Jerusalem, appears to have been less important in the kingdom than his wife. When the scroll containing the nucleus of the present book of Deuteronomy was found by the high priest Hilkiah during the repairs of the Temple, he sent it to King Josiah. The reading of the scroll so distressed the king that he tore his clothes and instructed his servant to inquire of the Lord for the king, for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that had been found. Oddly enough, the men immediately sought out the prophet Huldah to consult with her about the book.

Huldah read the scroll and interpreted it to issue a warning to the king and the people of Israel. Her message to the king prompted Josiah to make a covenant before God to keep all God's commandments and to initiate an era of reform in Judah.

Anna

(Luke 2:36-38)

At eighty-four, Anna was a woman "of a great age." She was also a prophet and a widow. Anna spent her days and nights in the temple in Jerusalem, worshiping, fasting, and praying. She was waiting for the special occasion she knew was going to happen in her lifetime. She was longing to see the promised Messiah.

The day arrived when Mary and Joseph brought their baby boy to the temple "to present him to the Lord." Anna's eyes lit up with joy when she saw Jesus, and she began to praise God and give thanks that she had been allowed to live long enough to see this wonderful day. Then she announced publicly that this little boy was the one they were all looking for, the one who would redeem Jerusalem.

Luke described Anna, a woman who had spent most of her life in the temple, as a prophet. As far as we know she had not been officially ordained to preach the Word of God. Yet, that is what she did. It was her calling.

When Huldah followed her calling as God's prophet, her interpretation of the holy Scriptures moved King Josiah to remove "the abominations from all the territory that belonged to the people of Israel" (2 Chron. 34:33) and to reinstitute the worship of the one true God.

Abraham Heschel says that prophets experience a fellowship with the feelings of God, sense that their mission is to enhance people's understanding so they turn to God, and speak for those who are too weak to plead their own cause (Heschel, 1962).

Women in the Reformed Church in America have also been called to prophesy, to preach, and to interpret God's Word. Overtures from RCA classes had been presented to General Synod since 1918 to change the wording of the *Book of Church Order* to allow the ordination of women as elders and deacons. There were many years of study of both the Old and New Testament Scriptures, the nature and function of church offices, and the sociological aspects of ordaining women. As a result of these studies and the work of the Holy Spirit, in 1972 the RCA opened the offices of elder and deacon to women.

The following year (1973), General Synod voted to grant Joyce Stedge a professorial certificate allowing her to preach in the RCA, and the Classis of Rockland-Westchester licensed her as a minister of the Word. The Classis of Mid-Hudson ordained her and installed her as the minister of Rochester Reformed Church in Accord, New York.[1] Those actions set off years of debate and painful struggle, centered on an interpretation of the word "persons" in the *Book of Church Order*, causing Joyce Stedge-Fowler to remark, "To sit through three General Synods while people discussed whether women were persons does something to you."[2]

By 1978 more than fifty Reformed Church women had received theological instruction in seminaries and were engaged in Christian ministry, classes continued to take women under care, seminaries continued to admit women for study, the General Synod continued to grant dispensations to qualified women, but ordination of women as ministers of the Word was still prohibited in the RCA (*MGS* 1978, 28).

Many felt the discussions and debate had gone

on long enough, and in spite of the failure to reach agreement on changing the *Book of Church Order* by two-thirds of RCA classes, five classes voted to ordain particular women during the summer and fall of 1978. Only the ordinations of Constance Longhurst, October 15, by the Classis of Raritan; and that of Klaire Miller, November 12, by the Classis of New Brunswick (New Jersey), went unchallenged. Two ordinations—Valerie DeMarinus, June 25, by the Classis of Brooklyn; and Louise Ann (L'Anni) Hill-Alto, July 13, by the Classis of Bergen—were challenged. Although the Classis of Albany had voted on June 20, 1978, to ordain Joyce Borgman deVelder, the Particular Synod of Albany directed the classis not to ordain her. Complaints concerning the ordinations of these three women were filed and brought before the 1979 General Synod, which voted to dismiss the complaints and to approve their ordinations as ministers of the Word.[3]

Pioneering for women in ministry has sometimes/often affected choices and decisions I've made, realizing that my "mistakes" could sometimes be perceived as excuses not to ordain women coming after me. Earlier in my ministry I felt at times as though my life and ministry were in a fishbowl, under the critical scrutiny of the church. I've relaxed more since I've been at it for fifteen years.

—the Rev. L'Anni Hill-Alto

The stories which follow are representative of RCA women clergy. Most have struggled to be accepted as ministers of the Word and sacrament. All of the women whose stories appear below agree that God's call to them to serve in the ordained ministry was so insistent, that to deny it would have been to deny "the vocation which is related to my deepest self and will help that self to unfold" (O'Connor, 1987, foreward by Gordon Cosby).

"The fulfillment of a calling is a work of art, like the layers of color on a blank canvas that seem to make little sense until one begins to see the odd colors of highlight added by God, that suddenly throw the whole masterpiece into perspective" (Hill-Alto, 1991, 3).

Louise Ann (L'Anni) Hill-Alto

(1952-)

The daughter and granddaughter of RCA missionaries, L'Anni Hill-Alto spent her childhood in the Philippines.[4] By age twelve she knew that God was training her for some kind of ministry, but she had never thought of being a pastor. That "was unheard of!" (L'Anni Hill-Alto, taped responses to author, April 1994*).

Following L'Anni's graduation from Grand Valley State College (Allendale, Michigan), she taught English and Bible in Taiwan through an RCA-sponsored program. She says, "It became clear to me that I really needed to strengthen my biblical literacy, and my understanding of who Christ was, if I was going to do some kind of ministry."

When she returned to the U.S., L'Anni told her grandfather [the Rev. Nelson Veenschoten] and her parents [Dr. Jack and Joann Hill], "I really feel that God is calling me to go to seminary or Bible school." Strongly affirming that calling, they said, "We have seen that in you," even though there were no women pastors in churches at that time. "It is very clear to us that this is a calling that affirms your gifts."

L'Anni's grandfather, a conservative Reformed Church man/preacher, gave her his entire theological library with his blessings. "To receive that kind of affirmation from this old Dutch churchman was in itself a real blessing, a blessing that carried me through a lot of difficult years which followed."

When she enrolled at New Brunswick Theological Seminary in January 1974, L'Anni says, "it was because I knew that's what God had called me to do. They had no living quarters for women, so Klaire Miller, the only other female attending New Brunswick Seminary at that time, and I were housed on the top floor of a house used by male students. We shared the kitchen, living room, and bathroom with the guys whose rooms were on the second floor." A friendship with one of those men, Bill Alto, eventually developed into the romance which led to their marriage in 1975.

When it came time for L'Anni to be taken under the care of North Grand Rapids Classis, she had tremendous support. "The angels were out in force in the form of ministers like Bud Ridder, Arie Brouwer, George Brown, and people within the denomination and my home church who were very much willing and able to speak out on behalf not only of me, but of women in the Reformed Church. They felt this was an important addition to the agendas of the Reformed Church at that time, that the kairos time had come, and they were most helpful. North Grand Rapids Classis took me under care, knowing that it would be in preparation for a license to permit me to preach later on, because they couldn't see a reason not to at that point."

In 1975-76 the Hill-Altos spent a year as intern ministers assisting RCA missionaries Harold and Neva Vogelaar in Cairo, Egypt. When they returned in 1976, North Grand Rapids Classis was faced with licensing L'Anni to preach. "That also was very much an act of the Holy Spirit. Later I was told that if it had been any other year, for some reason they would not have been able to pass it as easily as they did the year I asked to be licensed to preach. But they had no grounds academically to keep me from licensure, so they did license me to preach."

Preaching the circuit in the New York/New Jersey area, L'Anni found that her gifts were being affirmed all over the place. There were many people who were surprised and some who said, "I didn't realize I could also hear the Word of God from the mouth of a woman."

L'Anni continued to go to school following her graduation from New Brunswick Seminary "in order to buy some time, since it appeared that the Synod was still not yet ready to vote the ordination-of-women issue through at that point, and we felt it was important to be as patient as we could." She spent a year pursuing a master's of social work at the Rutgers School of Social Work, while working part-time as an assistant in ministry at the Glen Rock Community Church in Glen Rock, New Jersey. "The youth work, preaching, pastoral care, and visitation I did affirmed that God was calling me to ministry. I realized that there really wasn't anything else that I had considered in my past that could equal the satisfaction of this kind of a calling. This was the only one that really made sense."

"After a hard but patient wait," L'Anni says, "God finally opened the door for ordination for me on a very hot, 104 degree summer day in July of 1978.[5] The laying on of hands by my fellow pastors in Bergen Classis felt more gracious and more powerful than I had expected. Again there were tremendous amounts of support."

She also received some opposition. "Three or four people in the denomination wrote begging me not to go through with this, saying that it would split the church, it was unscriptural, and it would engender conflict in the denomination. I also got a tape from a person who indicated that I would go to hell if I went through with this. The prayers and support of brothers and sisters in Christ is what really held me up."

In 1980 Bill and L'Anni accepted a call as co-pastors of Amity Reformed Church in Vischer's Ferry, New

York. They were the first clergy couple in the RCA to serve a church together. "It was not an easy time, but we hung in there. It was a growing time, where I was affirmed in my ministry as a pastor and began to really gain confidence in claiming some pastoral authority, something that hadn't come easily to me."

Five years later, the Hill-Altos received a call to Second Union Church of San Juan, Puerto Rico, as RCA mission associates, where they spent six years. L'Anni says, "This interdenominational church allowed me to preach in different ways, to issue altar calls, and to experiment with forms of worship which were not the usual Reformed Church style. Still I had no female mentors or models and realized that I was pretty much breaking new ground on my own."

When the time came to leave Second Union Church in San Juan, L'Anni wasn't sure about taking on a large pastorate on her own. Bill, who felt called to change the nature of his ministry from parish ministry to teaching special education, went back to school. L'Anni received and accepted a call to serve as the senior pastor of Pompton Reformed Church in Pompton Lakes, New Jersey, a large church with more than five hundred active members. She says:

> *This has been a real growing experience. The male associate pastor, who had been running the church for two years during the pastoral search, did not receive me with great warmth. At first I found that people were resistant to my style of leadership. They seemed to be threatened, and I realized that I needed to look at several different dynamics that were functioning here. Male/female issues were involved, authority issues were involved. I wondered if they would accept my authority better if I were older, more gray-haired, wiser, more experienced. In any case, it was clear to me that God had moved many barriers to call me to this position, and so I continue to do the best that I can.*
>
> *The issue of spirituality is absolutely essential for me in this ministry. The only way I really understood this calling was to spend time by myself in communion with God. I continue intentionally to do that by reserving the hour of 9:00 to 10:00 a.m. as a prayer time, a time to close the door and put the "Do Not Disturb" button on my phone. That, as well as quarterly retreat days—days of prayer for myself; my teenaged children, Jonathan and Joanna; my marriage; my congregation—are all so essential to schedule in. The more I grow as a pastor in my spirit, the more my people grow.*

One of the most rewarding parts of L'Anni's ministry is "seeing little girls and boys being free to be who they are through what I represent for them in the church." Often she sees little children going up into the pulpit and mimicking her, taking the microphone and pretending they are the pastor and saying in a very authoritative voice, "The Lord bless you and keep you," or "This is the Word of the Lord."

> *I continue to simply strive on, realizing that I am also pioneering for many sisters coming behind me. Pioneering for women in ministry has sometimes/often affected choices and decisions I've made, realizing that my "mistakes" could sometimes be perceived as excuses not to ordain women coming after me. Earlier in my ministry I felt at times as though my life and ministry were in a fishbowl, under the critical scrutiny of the church. I've relaxed more since I've been at it for fifteen years. Now, with other women pastors nearby, we will be able to do that together, arm in arm, and see where that takes us.*
>
> *It has been a wonderful, exciting, surprising journey which I wouldn't have traded for anything in the*

world. I still can't see myself in any other career or profession. This is my calling, this is what God made me to do, and I am tremendously joyful in this role.

Joyce Borgman deVelder
(1950-)

People call me and some of the other women in ministry "pioneers." But I don't take full credit for that. There were others before us; and when I consider the improbability of my ever having become a pastor and see where I am today, I can only conclude that God is doing unimaginable things and we all need to be open to God's leading! (Joyce Borgman deVelder, written responses to author, July 1994).*

Joyce Borgman deVelder, who was baptized and confirmed in First Reformed Church of Fremont, Michigan, was the oldest of five siblings, all of whom were expected to help in the family's orchard at harvest and pruning time. After ten years at Fremont's Christian School, Joyce went to a public high school. At the same time, instead of going to church with her family, she volunteered to teach Sunday school at a rural mission outpost—Graham Chapel—started in an old one-room school house by her relatives who began this ministry with the blessing of the church. "I consider those years to be among the most important in my life. They were soil, from which a call to ministry would later grow."

> *I believe that whenever I say the words "Love God with all your heart and love your neighbor as you love yourself," the prophetic voice has spoken, the advocacy has begun.*
>
> *—the Rev. Joyce deVelder*

Joyce graduated from Hope College with a degree in religion, but wondered what to do next. One of her professors, Dr. Sang Lee, suggested that she go to seminary. "At first I thought he was joking," she says. "I had never considered that to be an option for a woman in the church. But he was serious. All I could think of was the absurdity of my becoming a preacher. It was something that had never before entered my mind....It would be some time before my calling was clear. It was a lonely, uncertain time, since my parents could not fully support my decision and my home church reluctantly agreed to recommend me to the care of the Muskegon Classis."

Joyce entered the M.Div. program at Western Theological Seminary in 1972. She was the only woman in the program until Nancy Van Wyk Phillips entered a year and a half later. "At a time when there was little support for women becoming pastors and some people saying that perhaps I had misunderstood my calling from God, I was conscious of a faith struggle to hold on to what I had and to not become a victim of self-doubt. For some time during my first two years of seminary, my parents did not approve of what I was doing. They needed time to study the Scriptures and do their own soul-searching. I was challenged to stand firm in my calling in the Classis of Muskegon and to communicate as best I could in a peaceful and loving spirit with my words and presence."

After two years of study at Western, Joyce Borgman married David deVelder, son of the Rev. Walter and Harriet deVelder, RCA missionaries to Southeast Asia. They moved to Warwick, New York, where David worked as resident manager of the RCA Warwick Conference Center and Joyce took courses at New Brunswick Theological Seminary. In the summer of 1975 they moved back to Michigan, and Joyce completed her studies at Western. Because women were not yet being ordained, it wasn't possible for Joyce to receive a call to

a congregation. Thus, she accepted a position as associate in ministry, a contracted full-time ministry, at Delmar (New York) Reformed Church.

Women graduates of Reformed seminaries waited for changes in the *Book* of *Church Order* (*BCO*) which would make their ordinations permissible. When efforts to change the *BCO* failed for the third year in a row, Joyce requested ordination from the Classis of Albany, a request which was ultimately denied. Following the 1979 General Synod, which opened the door to the ordination of women, Joyce Borgman deVelder was ordained by the Classis of Albany in Delmar Reformed Church. "It was good to celebrate at the end of a long and exhausting year."

Joyce, who has been the pastor of Old Saratoga Reformed Church in Schuylerville, New York, since 1982, was supported in her journey toward ordination by her husband David. When their two sons, Nathaniel and Mikael, were young, David stayed at home to help care for them. David works as a teacher's assistant for children who need personal aides, an interest which grew out of personal experience with Mikael, who is developmentally disabled and has always needed a teacher aide in the classroom with him.

> *For several years David and I have had to advocate for our son's inclusion in his local school district. . . . Over the past four years, as I've served as a parent member of our school district's Committee on Pre-School Education, I have had occasion to be in an advocacy role for other parents of children with disabilities.*
>
> *At one of our Synod of Albany Social Witness Unit meetings I led devotions and talked about the ministry of advocacy—the advocacy of God's Spirit on our behalf, our ethical responsibility to advocate for the disabled, the poor, or whoever speaks with weak voice. In my pastoral work, I see a close connection between advocacy and intercession. To pray with or for another is an act of spiritual advocacy. In preaching, the prophetic voice makes itself heard whenever we call the attention of our congregations to the plight of the poor, the discriminate attitudes toward persons with disabilities or social diseases.*
>
> *I believe that whenever I say the words "Love God with all your heart and love your neighbor as you love yourself," the prophetic voice has spoken, the advocacy has begun.*

Lisa Hansen Tice

(1959-)

As a child Lisa Hansen wanted to be a missionary when she grew up. She says, "I wanted to be just like the missionaries I heard about each Sunday at church. Well, not really. I didn't want to live in a jungle with snakes, and giant bugs, and stuff. My pastor, Clarence Van Heukelom, taught me that everyone has a gift to share in the church. When I was a young girl, I wanted to be a pastor just like Pastor Van, but everyone told me that only men could be pastors. I guess I must have looked disappointed because they kept telling me that I could be a pastor's wife, which didn't interest me at all" (Lisa Hansen Tice, written responses to author, March 1994*).

Music kept Lisa Hansen involved in Platt Ranch Community Church in Canoga Park, California. An accomplished singer and pianist, she sang in the youth choir and occasionally played piano preludes and offertories. Although she drifted away from the church during her college years, Christ called her back to the community of faith through music. After a few years of noninvolvement, she joined Bel Air Presbyterian Church. "The more I became involved in the church—singing in the choir, participating in the Young Singles Fellowship,

and teaching Sunday school—the more I wanted to be involved. My career in business didn't hold my desire or attention."

When her church installed a woman as an associate pastor, Lisa tentatively explored ministry as a career. She decided to apply to Princeton Theological Seminary, knowing that her undergraduate grades weren't very high, the seminary accepted only one-tenth of those who applied, and the male associate pastor at Bel Air Presbyterian gave her no support in the process because he didn't believe in the ordination of women.

Lisa says, "I actually bargained with God concerning my acceptance. I applied to Princeton late, and I knew deep down that I did not have the qualifications or backing for admission. So, when Princeton accepted me, I reluctantly accepted my calling [to ministry]. I continued to set up road blocks in seminary, but God got me through each barrier that I set up."

In addition to a theological education, Princeton did two things for Lisa: she met her husband, Jonathan Tice; and she was introduced to the Air Force Chaplaincy, "where I believe I am fulfilling my calling." During the summers of 1986 and 1987, Lisa served as a chaplain candidate at Patrick Air Force Base in Cocoa Beach, Florida, and the USAF Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado. From August 1991 to June 1992 she served as a reserve chaplain at Wurtsmith Air Force Base in Michigan. The Rev. Jonathan Tice is an RCA minister who finds work as an interim minister wherever the Air Force sends Lisa.

Lisa Hansen Tice was ordained by the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) at Westminster Presbyterian Church in Grand Rapids, Michigan, in October 1989. A month later she was installed at Central Reformed Church in Grand Rapids, where she served as the associate minister of Christian education until July 1992. Since that time she has been a full-time chaplain in the United States Air Force, one of two RCA female chaplains in the armed services. Currently she is assigned to the 37th Training Wing at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas, where she works at the technical training chapel. Lisa, who goes wherever the Air Force sends her, was one of three Air Force chaplains and two Army chaplains who went with U.S. troops on a humanitarian mission to Rwanda, Africa. Wherever she goes, her message to the women and men in the Air Force is that God loves them.

> *Basically I preach only the love of God. . . . I have found that our own hard hearts and our self-imposed separation from God are punishment enough. Besides, men and women need to hear that God has not forsaken them. Everywhere I go I try to speak on behalf of those who have no voice: children, physically and emotionally abused people, the mentally and physically challenged, people who live in the streets, people who live in financial distress, etc. If, in all the ruckus, at least one person hears and knows that God loves them, that God cares for them, and that I and others are praying for them, then I am content.*

Phyllis Steenhoek Palsma

(1952-)

A Dutch ancestry that includes great-great-grandparents who were in the original Scholte party that settled Pella, Iowa; active participation in the life of First Reformed Church in Pella; and security in a family that highly valued the Reformed Church in America contributed to the person Phyllis Steenhoek Palsma is today. She remembers playing church on the side steps of her grandfather's farm house on spring and summer Sunday afternoons with cousins who were her age (Phyllis Palsma, written responses to author, March 1994).

The steps were the pews. Cheerios were communion bread. A weather-beaten wash table was the pulpit. I remember sharing the role of preacher with an older cousin (also female). We quoted all the big words and profound phrases we could remember from the Sunday morning sermon by Herman Ridder (in the late 1950s) and then (in the early 60s) by Glen Peterman.

The Rev. Henry Vermeer, "a passionate preacher," was Phyllis' pastor through her high school and college years.

I can still envision him standing in the pulpit saying "I know that God is calling a young person from this church into the ministry." In his pastoral prayers, he prayed that God's call to ministry would be heard and answered by a young person from First, Pella. Imagine his surprise when in 1973 this young woman, a college senior, came to his office to talk about that call! He was supportive and said, in effect, "If God is truly calling you, then it's the right thing to pursue." He prayed with me. He offered words of encouragement as well as the acknowledgement that it probably would not be easy to be a woman in seminary.

Phyllis Steenhoek, who was pursuing a degree in music education at Central College and was participating in college and church worship and choir activities, was also being challenged "by whether my career choice as a music teacher was really how God wanted me to use my gifts." Through "soul-searching discussions" with her faculty advisor, Davis Folkerts, and the college chaplain, Eugene Heideman, she "began to think about a career which combined Christian education and music ministry. The more I wrestled and thought, the more I felt called to seminary to pursue a Masters of Divinity degree. But, women didn't do that! I came to see that while it was true that 'women' did not do that, Phyllis Steenhoek might!"

In 1973, "the year Joyce Stedge made headlines as the first woman to receive a dispensation from the Professorial Certificate," Phyllis was a student delegate to General Synod held at Central College, where she shared with some people her sense of call to ministry and her desire to attend seminary as an M.Div. candidate. "Their responses were incredibly supportive! That synod gave me a sense of the opposition I might run into, but it also gave me a profound affirmation of the place of women in professional ministry."

Phyllis' first hurdle was to ask the elders of First Reformed Church to sponsor her as a seminary student so she could come under the care of the Classis of Pella.

This was a new thing to First Church and to Pella Classis. No woman had ever applied for classis care. It meant having to struggle with their position on the role of women in ministry. It meant intense study of the Book of Church Order. I was affirmed by my home church and taken under care by classis. In 1974 I really did not intend to become a preaching pastor. I wanted to be a fully equipped Christian educator. But I did tell the classis that I needed to be free to respond to however God was calling me to serve. . . . That meant I might change my mind about ordination.

Western Theological Seminary (WTS) accepted Phyllis as a student, but it wasn't until she did an internship in two New Jersey congregations that her call to ordained ministry was confirmed. The people in Bogart Memorial in Bogota and First Reformed of Hasbrouck Heights encouraged Phyllis to do things she had never dreamed that she, as a woman, would be welcomed and encouraged to do. "I was welcomed into hospital rooms and homes. It was expected that I pray, preach, and teach

as any pastor did." There were few probing questions about why she went to seminary—only encouragement to use and develop the gifts that those people were helping her discover. "What a refreshing change from the scrutiny of so many in Michigan and Iowa!"

The summer after graduation from WTS in 1978, Phyllis Steenhoek and Nolan Palsma were married. She was also licensed for ordination by the Classis of Pella. While Nolan completed his seminary training (1981), Phyllis worked as director of music and education at Grace Reformed Church in Holland; as a hospital chaplain in the Iowa Methodist Medical Center in Des Moines; and preached, taught, and did secretarial work in Holland.

> *This was a new thing to First Church and to Pella Classis. No woman had ever applied for classis care. It meant having to struggle with their position on the role of women in ministry. It meant intense study of the Book of Church Order. I was affirmed by my home church and taken under care by classis.*
>
> —*the Rev. Phyllis Palsma*

When Nolan and Phyllis began to talk about marriage, they also began to explore the possibility of co-pastoring. "During his senior year of seminary we became serious about that. We knew we wanted a family, but were concerned about how two full-time careers in ministry would effect family life. Sharing one position in a church has given us the opportunity to share parenting as well as ministry."

The Palsmas have a son, Ryan, and two daughters, Sarah and Anna. They co-pastored Pequannock Reformed Church in Wayne, New Jersey, for nine years. Since 1990 they have shared the pastorate of Pitcher Hill Community (Reformed) Church in North Syracuse, New York.

When Phyllis entered Western Seminary she was one of only four women enrolled in the M.Div. program. The others were Joyce Borgman deVelder, Nancy Van Wyk Phillips, and Mary Van Andel. Some area churches weren't ready for women in their pulpits. Phyllis' first preaching assignment was taken away from her when the local church realized that the name they had been given was not a typographical error: It really was a Phyllis Steenhoek and not a Phillip who was assigned as their preacher. The church secretary figured it out when Phyllis called in the bulletin information. A few days later, she was summoned to the office of the seminary professor responsible for preaching assignments. He told her that particular congregation "was not prepared for a woman and that another (male) student would be going in my place."

The Palsmas initially wanted to serve a church in the Midwest, but found that churches there were not quite ready to accept the concept of a clergy couple. In finalizing their call to Pequannock Reformed Church, there were some in the classis who were not comfortable with women as clergy or elders and did not welcome women in those roles. But after some debate, Passaic Classis voted in favor of the call, and Nolan and Phyllis Palsma became the second clergy couple in the RCA to share ministry in the same church.

Two Scripture passages which have kept Phyllis going "through many trying times—both personally and professionally" are Romans 5:1-5 and Romans 8:28-39, especially "We know that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope" and "If God is for us, who is against us?"

Bernita Williams Babb

(1938-)

Bernita Williams Babb was born in Savannah, Georgia, but raised in New York City. She has been a dietician, a beautician, and a home economics teacher. Now she is a preacher and denominational executive. She is also the first African-American woman to be ordained and installed to the office of minister of the Word and sacrament in the Reformed Church in America. A relative newcomer to the RCA, Bernita's roots are in the National Baptist Convention, Inc., where she was a Sunday school teacher, Christian education director, and assistant to the pastor. It was always in the back of her mind to go to Bible school, not to be ordained, but to learn more about the Bible. "After the last of my two daughters went off to college," she says, "I had my opportunity to go to seminary" (Bernita Babb, taped interview, June 1994).

Bernita participated in the joint program between New York Theological Seminary and New Brunswick [Theological Seminary]. When she graduated from New Brunswick in 1985, she still wasn't considering going into the ordained ministry. Bernita says, "That was not my thing at all. But after I graduated my pastor wouldn't allow me to do anything as far as pulpit duties were concerned. He sort of 'sat me down.' So I began to think, 'Why not go into the parish ministry?' but I knew my church probably would not ordain me."

Then she remembered that the Rev. John Hiemstra, New York Synod executive, had come to the seminary to talk with the graduating seniors. He had given out his card and said "If you need to call me for anything, you have my card." Bernita says, "I am not one to move from pillar to post, so I wrestled with the idea of calling someone from another denomination for quite a while before I called him."

John Hiemstra put Bernita under the care of Steve Miller at Elmsford Reformed Church, in the Rockland-Westchester Classis, where she worked for about a year and a half. Although she enjoyed the work, Bernita wanted a church of her own, but she wasn't ordained.

> *You can't be ordained in the Reformed Church unless you have a ministry. I was in an all-white classis and not well-known in the Reformed Church. But Wilbur Washington, the first African-American to be elected president of the General Synod, knew me. He had been one of my teachers in seminary, so when he became General Synod president in 1988, he asked if I would provide the continuity of ministry at First Reformed Church of Jamaica [New York] as he moved hither, thither, and yon in the larger church. Of course, I accepted and was ordained to that ministry, which lasted for fifteen months.*

> *I liked the Reformed Church government. I had never seen, even heard, of a government that was so democratic: the consistory, the classis, the regional synod, the General Synod. I was used to a pastor who was quite autocratic, and if someone didn't agree with him, they either left the church or buckled under.*

> *In the Reformed Church there are no big I's and little you's. This appealed to me, but I felt as if the church, even the African-American part of the Reformed Church, was rejecting me. They had no vision of me. I had two strikes against me. I was black and a woman.*

With no calls in sight, Bernita accepted a job as the director of academic affairs at Jordan College in Detroit, Michigan. She stayed there for a year. Then she realized: "The Lord didn't call me to academia; God

called me to the church. It was something that wouldn't let me go. As I look back now, I know that God used that year to clean me up, to purge me of all that bitterness I had from being rejected. Then God said to me, 'I'm going to send you back now. I don't promise you flowery beds of ease, but I promise to be with you.' Somehow God had mellowed me, and I knew I had to come back."

Bernita returned to New York City in 1991, although she had no job. She lived on her savings and money from investments for a year. She had been a home economics teacher in the New York City high school system but didn't really want to go back into that, so she waited, trusting in God.

When she heard that Mott Haven Reformed Church in the Bronx needed a pastor, she sent them her resume. At the same time she had a conversation with Bob Bast, at that time the RCA minister for evangelism and church development, at the African-American Caucus. He encouraged her to apply for the position of associate for city congregational ministries.

Bernita was accepted for both positions. "The Lord knows I love to travel and that my heart's desire was to be a pastor, and God gave me both of those things at the same time."

She says, "It's been hard at the church because they are not used to having a female over them and a black female at that, but I think things are coming around, and God has given me the grace. In my denominational position I have had no problems whatsoever. Everyone has been very cordial. I think people in city ministries like the idea of somebody from the denomination, regardless of who it is, coming to their church. I love the job. I know that God is with me; I know that God has called me to the ministry. The Lord has brought me through."

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1. Although Joyce Stedge was a wife and mother of six children who could have sought dispensation on the basis of age or from study of original languages, she chose to fulfil all requirements in preparation for the ministry, earning an M. Div. degree from Union Theological Seminary in New York City. Following Joyce Stedge's ordination by the Classis of Rockland-Westchester on October 7, 1973, she was dismissed to the Classis of Mid-Hudson, which installed her as minister of the Word in Rochester Reformed Church of Accord, New York. She eventually left the RCA, because "there were few jobs for women," and became a hospital chaplain with the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. Remarried, Joyce Stedge-Fowler is currently retired and living in Piscataway, New Jersey.

2. Joyce Stedge-Fowler, March 24, 1994, "The RCA and the Ordination of Women: Personal Memories," one of a series of talks in the 1994 standing seminar in Reformed Church History.

3. Joyce Borgman deVelder's and Louise Ann (L'Anni) Hill-Alto's stories appear later in this chapter. General Synod's Judicial Business Committee, which had received the complaints, recommended the ordinations be sustained. After much discussion and debate, General Synod agreed by a vote of 150 to 115. (See MGS *1979, R-1, R-2, R-3, 69.)*

4. L'Anni's grandparents, Henry and Stella Veenschoten, served as missionaries in China. Stella's story may be found in Chapter 10—Praising God through the Arts. Following her marriage to Dr. Jack Hill, L'Anni's mother, Joann Veenschoten Hill, a medical technologist, encouraged her husband to go to China with her as medical missionaries. Joann's story may be found in Chapter 4—Healing God's People.

5. L'Anni's ordination at Cherry Hill Reformed Church in River Edge, New Jersey, on July 23, 1978, was challenged at the 1979 General Synod. That Synod approved the action of Bergen Classis and the ordination of women, thus paving the way for other women to be ordained as ministers of the Word and sacrament.

Chapter Seven

Teaching by Word and Deed

Priscilla

(Acts 18:2-4, 18-19, 24-28)

Priscilla (or Prisca) was a friend and colleague of the apostle Paul. She and her husband, Aquila, carried on a successful business as tentmakers in Rome until 49 A.D. when Emperor Claudius commanded all Jews to leave Rome. At first Priscilla and Aquila settled in Corinth, where they were living when Paul made his first visit to the city.

Paul, who hadn't had much success convincing the intellectuals of Athens to accept the gospel message, was glad to find this Christian couple who took him into their home and their business. Soon Priscilla and Aquila were working with Paul in their common trade as well as in the task of spreading the gospel.

When Paul left Corinth, Aquila and Priscilla went with him to Ephesus, where they established themselves as tentmakers and continued the work of evangelism. In fact, when Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, he sent greetings from "Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house (1 Cor. 16:19).

In Ephesus the couple come into contact with Apollos, "an eloquent man, well-versed in the Scriptures" (Acts 18:24). Priscilla, a mature Christian, noticed that although Apollos "spoke with burning enthusiasm and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus" (Acts 18:25), something wasn't quite right. Apollos seemed to have missed the meaning of the gospel. "He knew only the baptism of John" (Acts 18:25), a baptism into moral improvement, so Priscilla and Aquila "took him aside and explained the way of God to him more accurately" (Acts 18:26). Priscilla helped Apollos understand that baptism into Christ means admitting that by ourselves we can do nothing, but that we become new people by God's grace when we repent of our sins.

Priscilla used her God-given gift of teaching to initiate Apollos into the meaning of being "baptized into Christ" (Gal. 3:26) and receiving the gift of the Spirit.

Education, particularly Christian education, has a high priority in the Reformed Church in America. In the denomination's early years each consistory was charged with maintaining a school, but gradually parochial schools gave way to public schools for two reasons: children of Reformed congregations needed to be assimilated into American society, and parochial schools were simply too expensive to continue. Sunday schools began to take the place of religious day schools.

First Reformed Church of New Brunswick, New Jersey, opened a Sunday school in 1799 under the leadership of Sarah Van Doren. Six years later Joanna Bethune opened one in New York. Gradually the Sunday school spread to other Reformed churches (Brouwer, 1977, 89).

Missionaries, believing that education was important, had three main purposes in establishing schools: to provide Christian education, to influence children and youth with gospel teaching, and to prepare an educated leadership for the church (*Open Gates*, 1952, 10). In China an additional reason was given for providing education for women: learning could make their miserable lives more bearable and meaningful.

In 1870 Reformed missionaries in China established their first school for girls. Helen Van Doren was placed in charge of the school, located in a house near the Second Amoy Church, which was the only school for girls in the entire region. The school was continued by Mary Talmage after poor health forced Helen Van Doren to return to America in 1876. Mary Talmage, who directed the Amoy Girls' School for nearly forty years, was highly successful in spite of the fact that "even the Christian parents could see no good reason why their daughters should be educated" (Chamberlain, 1925, 44).

As early as 1855 we find Mrs. Ezekiel [Sarah] Scudder, the wife of the missionary stationed at Chittoor [India], taking into her own home, as boarders, three orphan girls who, with three older girls came to the house every day for study and became the nucleus of the Chittoor Female Seminary which in 1859, had increased to nineteen pupils and had become a permanent institution of the mission. . . .Their aim was not so much to develop excellent scholarship as to fit the girls to become the wives of the native Christian helpers and teachers and the mothers of a more enlightened Christian generation

to come. . . .In the years between 1868-1875 sixty-four pupils of this school joined the church (Chamberlain, 1925, 26).

At first these schools were restricted to children of believers, with few other children given permission to attend. By 1870 mainly due to the interest of the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions, schools for girls had been established in India, China, and Japan. "From the very beginning of Reformed Church missionary activity in Japan, missionaries built their efforts on schools for the young people of Japan. In 1870 while most of the restrictions against Christianity remained in force, Miss [Mary E.] Kidder opened Ferris Seminary, the first school for girls in Yokohama" (Heideman, 1980,9).[1] In 1880 the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions assumed the support of the three girls' schools in China, India, and Japan. Four years later that number had doubled.

Soon after its formation in 1897, the Women's Board of Domestic Missions, like its counterpart in foreign missions, saw the importance of education as a means of spreading the gospel. Whether they were commissioned as missionaries or not, Christian teachers brought their faith into the schoolroom.

Jenivee Reilly Kennedy
(1913-)

God gave Jenivee Reilly Kennedy the gift of teaching, a vocation she practiced for forty-three years. Her success as a teacher was due in part to her belief that each child was a valuable human being and a child of God. "When I taught school, I was always interested in the child. If I could help one child think well of himself or herself, I was happy" (Jenivee Kennedy, taped interview with LeRoy Koopman, Feb. 1994*).

As a teacher, Jen Kennedy loved her students. She was strict and expected them to work hard, but she was also fair, something she had learned from her parents. In the year 1917, when Jen was only four years old and the youngest in a family of five children, her parents purchased a farm near Rosalie in northeastern Nebraska.

Jen's father rented farm land from the Omaha Indians who lived in the area. Unlike some white men who cheated the Indians, Jen's dad practiced fairness and respect for the people with whom they lived. The Indians soon learned that Jen's father could be trusted. Instead of rent money, they requested to be paid in the gift of some livestock from the farm. Jen still remembers when entire Indian families would come to their place to pick out the pigs they desired to butcher for food. At first she was afraid of the Indians. Later she learned to respect and love them (Van Gessel, undated).

As Jen Reilly grew up, she felt a calling to teach. A year after graduating with an associate's degree from Wayne State College in Wayne, Nebraska, she accepted a job teaching in Macy, Nebraska. Because Jen's father had been fair to the Indian families, she soon had the respect of all the children. They accepted her immediately as their teacher. She had fifty third graders in her class every year. "Most of the Indian children never wanted to come to school. If they did, they might disappear at noon. The truant officer would take the names of the missing children and go find them."

George Kennedy came to teach fifth grade at the Macy school during Jen's third year of teaching. At the end of the school year they married in the Reformed Church of Macy with the Rev. George Laug officiating. Recognizing their love for children and the Lord, George Laug recommended Jen and George Kennedy as "farm missionaries" for the Reformed Church at Winnebago,

Nebraska. George worked as a farm manager, milking the cows which provided milk and cream for the boarding school at Winnebago; Jenivee taught the young girls personal hygiene.

While they were in Winnebago, the Kennedys adopted Jonne, a one-year-old girl, who was of Ponca Indian descent. After three years working at the RCA boarding school, they went back to teaching, first in Nebraska, then in California. They moved when George was offered a job as principal at the Imperial Valley school in Calipatria. Jen got a job teaching in the Niland elementary school and then in junior high.

> *One day the school board came to me and said, "We would like for you to teach seventh grade." "What?" I said. "Why do you want me to take seventh grade?" Well, this class had run out the teacher when they were in sixth grade. One boy especially was a holy terror. The school board felt that I could control them. They told me I could do anything I wanted with this class, and they got me a new bat. The first day of school when the boy who had hit the [previous] teacher walked in, I showed him the bat and told him, "If you ever touch me, I will use this on you." He was as big as I was, but he never caused me any trouble.*

In fact, the class and Jen Kennedy all got along just fine. At the end of the year the students asked if she would teach them in eighth grade, so she moved on up with them. She taught everything from sports to academics. "When we studied the westward movement, we made bread and churned butter. When we studied missions, we made a mission house. For many years I was also the track coach, and I got the parents to help, too."

The Kennedys moved to Norco, California, in 1967, where Jen taught fourth grade in Highland Elementary School. George, who had earned a master's degree in special education, got a special education job. Jen took college courses at night until she earned enough credits to get a degree from San Diego State.

The Kennedys became members of the Reformed Church in Norco, California, where they shared their musical ability and teaching skills with others in the church. Jen taught a sixth grade Sunday school class for many years. In addition, she and her younger daughter, Ruth, directed the weekly Children's Story Hour for community kids for eleven years. They used curriculum (purchased by them), crafts, and refreshments as a way of sharing the gospel and love of Christ with those students. "Some of those parents even came to church."

Finally retiring from full-time teaching at the age of seventy-five, Jen Kennedy continues to substitute teach occasionally for her daughter Ruth and to volunteer at Norco Reformed Church, where she gives time in the office, "usually stuffing bulletins or getting out the newsletter," and reading stories to the children in the church's day care. Sometimes she uses dolls from her extensive collection in talks to women's or children's groups. A few years ago on World Communion Sunday the Kennedys placed dolls from around the world on a long communion table to help the congregation visualize that "God so loved the world that he gave his only Son."

> *Since her retirement and through the years, many students have paid her tribute for her witness to Christ and the encouragement she has bestowed on them. A former student of Mrs. Kennedy's wrote: "It's no exaggeration to say that you played a major role in my younger years. In fact, I can't even remember the names of any of the other grammar school teachers I had. You have helped mold me into the person I am today, and for that I am very grateful."*

Another student wrote: "I wanted to let you know that I'm graduating from college. I also wanted to thank you for being the best sixth grade teacher in the world. I believe what I learned from you gave me the confidence to keep going, and for that I also thank you. The Lord made you a blessing in my life, and I know he is still making you a blessing in many lives" (Van Gessel).

Jen Kennedy did not preach to her students. Neither did she hide her Christian faith. "One day when my sixth grade class was being unruly, I simply sat with my head bowed. Then I heard one boy whisper to another, 'Let's be quiet. She's praying.' You can't do that in public school, but they knew."

In 1899 the Women's Executive Committee of the Board of Domestic Missions sent the first missionaries to the Appalachian mountains of Kentucky. Both women—Nora Gaut and Cora Smith—were teachers. Nora, a graduate of the Bible Institute of Chicago, was also a nurse. Due to ill health Nora Gaut was forced to leave the Kentucky work, but Cora Smith "began a permanent work at McKee, the county seat" (*Appalachia: A Field—A Force*, 1968, 5). In 1902 the Women's Executive Committee of the Board of Domestic Missions began a day school in McKee, with Catherine Kastein and Ruth Kerkhof as teachers. "In 1905 the McKee Academy, a school building with light, cheery rooms, comfortable seats, and neat desks, was completed and opened to a group of eager children who never before had had an opportunity for regular schooling" (*Appalachia: A Field—A Force*, 1968, 5).

Henrietta Zwemer Worthington

(1881-1944)

In 1907 the Women's Executive Committee commissioned Henrietta Zwemer to teach and serve as principal at McKee Academy, an elementary school in McKee (Jackson County), Kentucky. Within a year, Henrietta had expanded the school by starting the first high school class.

Henrietta Zwemer came to the attention of the Rev. William A. Worthington, a graduate of New Brunswick Theological Seminary, when he came to Kentucky in May 1909 as a newly ordained minister commissioned by the RCA Board of Foreign Missions. He had come to Kentucky to "while away a few months before his boat sailed." Instead of going to India, Worthington decided to stay in Jackson County.

Seeing that the people of Jackson and surrounding mountain counties, although possessing extraordinary latent possibilities, were behind in educational opportunities, Mr. Worthington abandoned the idea of going to India, visioning a greater service in helping to provide "complete living for the mountain people"[2] (Henrietta Worthington, reminiscences, 1931, on file with Jackson County Ministries, Kentucky).*

On December 30, 1909, seven months after Worthington's arrival in Kentucky, Henrietta and William "were married in McKee in the little teacher's cottage." Their "wedding trip consisted of a twelve mile drive through a snow storm over a very rough, hilly road to Annville."

For the first two years of their marriage, the Worthingtons lived in "a story-and-a-half log cabin, consid-

ered at that time to be one of the best in the little settlement."

> *When the bride and groom arrived at the little log house, the temperature was down to twenty degrees and many of their supplies were frozen. The newlyweds had only a fireplace for heat and used a ladder staircase to reach the loft which served as their bedroom. Here the brave couple set up housekeeping, stabling their faithful "Bess" in the lean-to barn in the rear of the house.*

The Worthingtons' house and Lincoln Hall, the school building which had been built in the fall of 1909, were situated on a seventy-five acre farm which had been purchased through the generosity of Mary Bussing.

> *Those first days and years were filled with hard work and difficulties, disappointments and pleasures, and life was not always rosy, but the love for pioneering was so great for both of us that we forgot the hardships and lack of all the comforts and began the work of building Annville Institute. . . . The first difficulties were in getting supplies. It took a team a half a day to haul 1,500 pounds of freight from East Bernstadt. A team could not make more than three trips a week and then only when the water was low in the river. It took one and one-half days to get Worthington's piano from East Bernstadt.*

School was started immediately. The primary need for the fundamental three R's was found to be so great that the idea of an industrial school was at first abandoned. The elementary eight grades were taught, and about forty students were enrolled that first spring.

Henrietta and William lived in the log house until 1910, when a new parsonage was built. By the summer of 1911 the seventy-five acre farm also boasted a church building, a dormitory for girls, a mill, a workshop with tools, farm implements, and animals. The school's enrollment had increased to 152.

Over the years the school added buildings and programs, trying to keep pace with the needs of the community. Annville Institute offered elementary and high school classes and industrial courses. Most years they had a greater number of applicants than they could accept.

Henrietta (who came to be known as Mother Worthington in Jackson County) organized a Home Improvement Society which "found a ready response among the women, and better home conditions. . . resulted" (Annual Report BDM, 1934, 33). She also worked with William in the church and a number of outlying Sunday schools. "There are boys and girls from the mountains who will always associate God and every good thing with the vision of Mrs. Worthington playing and singing the old hymns of the church" (WBDM, "A Tribute to Mrs. Worthington," 1944).

When she died on February 9, 1944, the Women's Board of Domestic Missions wrote:

> *For years her gifted talents had been given to the schooling of boys and girls among the lovely mountains of Kentucky. . . . The life of Henrietta Zwemer Worthington was one of thoroughly and completely devoted service to people and therefore to Christ. In the highest sense of the word this life was successful, for in losing herself she found abundant life. This life was creative, for she helped to bring out of boys and girls something fine which otherwise might have been lost to the world. She loved the people among whom she worked, and they knew it; and in return they loved her.*

Missionary teachers, similar to Priscilla, were often the ones who were in the best position to influence young people concerning the truths of the gospel, one of the goals of education on the mission field. They also had a vital part in educating the mission church's leadership. A 1960 *Church Herald* article noted that the church in China became indigenous because of educational work. For example, the piece pointed out that graduates of Iok-Tek Middle School for Girls became Bible women, elders, or active leaders in the church, and brought their non-Christian husbands to Christ (*Church Herald*, February 5, 1960, 20).

Tena Holkeboer

(1895-1965)

As a student at Hope College Prep School, Tena Holkeboer joined the mission study bands and was challenged to consider going into foreign missions. Instead she taught sixth grade for three years at Holland Christian School to supplement her family's income. Then Dr. William Chamberlain, secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions (1910-35), urged her to return to Hope College to work toward an A.B. degree, so that she would be qualified to teach in India. He also offered to pay her expenses.

> *Many of Tena [Holkeboer]'s students became leaders in the church and community because "they learned that education in itself is not the goal, it is a tool; Christ is the goal, and only as one is surrendered to him can life have its fullest meaning."*
>
> *—Ruth Broekema, friend of Tena Holkeboer*

At the time of her graduation in 1920, the board decided that Tena's keen mind and skills in education were desperately needed in China, so she was commissioned to go to the Amoy Mission. She was sent to Iok-Tek Girl's Middle School, a Christian high school in Kulangsu.

During her first furlough in 1927, she received a master's degree from Columbia University. On her return to Kulangsu, Tena Holkeboer became principal of the school, a difficult and demanding job. "I dreaded taking over the work of principal, for it means so much in these crucial times in China" (Holkeboer, letter from Kulangsu, Amoy, February 6, 1929).

Chinese school boards "urgently requested" Tena to serve as principal of four schools—two primary and two high schools—in Amoy, which served 2,000 boys and girls. The Chinese recognized not only her skill as a teacher and administrator but also her incredible facility in public speaking. The Chinese with whom she worked often commented on her beautiful Chinese. In a charge to new missionaries, delivered at the 1956 General Synod dedication service for RCA missionaries, Tena emphasized the importance of hard work and perseverance in language study. She warned the new missionaries "unless you can talk to the people fluently in their own tongue, there will be an invisible wall between you" (*Church Herald*, August 24, 1956, 5).

Increasing anti-foreign, anti-Christian nationalism in China during the late twenties and thirties brought changes to the Amoy Christian schools, but Tena Holkeboer and the other missionaries continued to educate young Chinese. Then in 1937 the Japanese attacked China. In spite of the war, Iok-Tek Middle School for Girls retained a high enrollment. In the fall

of 1941 Luman Shafer, the secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions, visited the mission and reported that the school "had an enrollment of 420 students—the largest in its long history—and that a person would have to go a long way to find a finer school" (DeJong, 1992, 261).

Following her furlough in the early forties, Tena tried desperately to return to China, but finding her way blocked, she settled down to teach Bible and English in the Beattie School in Chittoor, India, as part of the Arcot Mission. She finally returned to Amoy by way of plane and steamer before the close of 1945. She wrote:

> *It has been a long hard road back to Amoy, but I can today thank God for every step of the way in which he has led me. Having known trouble, fear, and uncertainty, I can better understand and sympathize with those who have known fear, uncertainty, and disappointment for four long hard years. Had my path been easy and prosperous, I should not have been fit to take my place here. He knew what I needed and led me back to his place for me—and all the way through, his presence and comfort never failed (Letter to supporting congregations, January 21, 1946).*

In 1951 all foreign missionaries were forced to leave China. Because she wanted to continue working with Chinese people who spoke the Amoy language, Tena was assigned to the newly established (1953) Chia Moa Christian High School in Manila, Philippines. As dean of students in the English department, she taught English and Bible, worked with students and faculty, presented chapel talks, and even did some radio evangelism. She found it to be "very satisfying work as one sees lives changing and responding to the message of Christ" (Letter to supporting congregations, Dec. 1, 1958). Many of Tena's students became leaders in the church and community because "they learned that education in itself is not the goal, it is a tool; Christ is the goal and only as one is surrendered to him can life have its fullest meaning" (Broekema).

Tena Holkeboer continued in education and evangelism until her retirement in 1961. When she died of a heart attack on November 4, 1965, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, her friend and missionary colleague, Ruth Broekema, said of her:

> *Tena had a compelling passion for the lost, whether they were her students or others, whether illiterate or well educated, whether rich or poor. Hers was the gift to know how to speak to all. . . . In her relationship with people she was always ready to give the other person the benefit of the doubt. She never sought glory, although honors were generously bestowed upon her.[3] Untiringly she gave herself to the work at hand. Each day was one of opportunity, to be walked with her Lord (Broekema).*

Marjory (Midge) Underwood Kapenga Marker

(1922-)

Until she attended a student volunteer conference at Wooster College when she was a senior at Cornell University, Midge Underwood thought missionaries "were people who ran around with Bibles and preached on street corners." At that conference she discovered that "missionaries did a lot more than just make converts. They helped people in lots of ways" (Midge Kapenga Marker, taped interview, June 1994*).

A month after the conference Midge, who had majored in zoology at Cornell, wrote to the mission board of the Presbyterian Church inquiring about job possibilities. "Yes," they responded, "we can use you as a short-termer in either Kodaikanal (South India),

Beirut (Lebanon), or Tehran (Iran)."

I thought about it for a long time and talked to a lot of people including the university pastor. I still couldn't make up my mind. Then one day during my morning devotional period I read the verse, "No one who puts a hand to the plow and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62), and I felt that that meant me. I had begun to be interested in religious work, and if I didn't go on with that, I'd be looking back. That's when I made up my mind.

The Presbyterian Board sent Midge to teach science for three years in the Iran Mission. She had never planned to stay—either in the Middle East or on the mission field. Her career plans were to use her short-term assignment to get some broader experience before going into work with college students in either "the Westminster Foundation, the Y, or something like that."

Her plans changed when she met and fell in love with Jay Kapenga, who was an RCA missionary doing language study at the Arabian Mission in Basrah (Iraq). "He came to the Middle East with the option of leaving, but Jay was very enthusiastic about staying."

When they married in 1947, Jay was working in Kuwait, but in January 1948 the couple was assigned to Muscat (Oman). There they worked with the Rev. Dirk and Minnie Dykstra in the Christian church and the Peter Zwemer Memorial School. Muscat was a town of about 3,000, where the people lived closely together. Women still got water from wells and walked miles to gather sticks for firewood.

I would have chosen to be in a city and to work in a college or at least a high school with some people who had some education. As it turned out, it was such a challenge. In those days there were no materials. There weren't very good textbooks. You sort of had to work from nothing. I really learned, I think, by going to Muscat, where there just wasn't a big upperclass of educated people, how wonderful simple people are. They care about each other.

Because the Omani government had closed the school in response to a complaint, classes were being held in homes. The students were all children of Christians or mission employees (hospital workers). Not long after the Kapengas came to Muscat, the Sultan gave permission to reopen the school. When the Dykstras retired and left the field in 1952, Jay became pastor of the Christian church and worked with Midge to supervise the school.

Although Jay was the school's official principal and taught math and Bible, Midge organized the schedule, told the teachers what to do, and supervised their work. She also wrote most of the school's curriculum, prepared worksheets on a mimeograph machine, and did a lot of teacher training. Each year the school attracted more students, mostly girls because the government had a boys' school. Midge recalls, "There was constant on-the-job training of the Arab teachers. We had a hard time finding people to teach the difficult Arabic subjects. I trained some of our older students, who had stayed on, to teach the kindergarten children. When Rachel Jackson came and we got another mission teacher, Jay worked less in the school."

By the late sixties the school's enrollment had grown to 130, and many more applied than they could accept. Each year after 1971, however, Peter Zwemer Memorial School lost pupils and teachers. The government had opened a girls' school, and the Ministry of Education enforced more and more restrictions.

It was bad enough when they said we couldn't have school prayers or teach Bible. The old Sultan

allowed us to teach the Bible. He thought it was good for the children's character, and he didn't feel threatened by it. But in the 1970s the people who were in the Ministry of Education either had not had a lot of contact with Christians or were anti-missionary, so they put restrictions on us. Finally they told the mission we had to have a principal who was both Arab and Muslim and we had to teach Islam. And that was the end [1987].

Midge Kapenga was in charge of the Peter Zwemer Memorial School for most of twenty years (1952-72) and was saddened by its close, believing that a Christian school produces lasting benefits.

We had kids in school from the time they were about six until they were about sixteen. In those years they studied Bible, they went to chapel, they sang hymns, they learned Bible verses by heart. We never made them learn any Bible verses that were against Islam or anything they believed. And this had some effect on them. It didn't make them Christians, but it certainly made them tolerant.

The people who went to that school for ten years have a different idea of God than other Muslims in the same country who didn't go to our school. They know what we believe, that God came in Christ. They know that we believe God suffers. Those are ideas that are not in the Koran, but somehow they have incorporated that into their beliefs. They may never join the church, but their lives are different because of our school.

Long after the school closed, women who had been students there when they were girls still had warm feelings for "their school." At the time of the Muscat Mission Centennial (March 1994) a group of former students approached Midge and her daughter Margaret, asking to see their old school building. Then they said, "We'd like to go in the church." Surprisingly, although almost all of them were Muslims, they wanted their photo taken in the church with the cross hanging up on the wall behind them. When they came out they wanted to sing a hymn, something they remembered. "Something there is special, and they all feel that."

From 1975 to 1983, Midge and Jay worked under the Ministry of National Heritage with Omani village people, helping them market their handicrafts, particularly handwoven goods. They retired in 1983 and moved to Penney Farms, Florida. The couple's three children, who grew up in the Middle East and India, live and work abroad. Peter Kapenga and his wife, Kathy, are ELCA (Lutheran) missionaries teaching in the Friends' School in Ramallah, West Bank; they live with their children, Eric and Jesse, in Jerusalem. Margaret Kapenga Shurdom lives with her husband, Ihsan, and son, Faisal, in Amman, Jordan. Barbara Kapenga is an RCA missionary teacher at Nile Theological College and Gereif Bible School in Khartoum, Sudan.

Jay's death in 1993 left a vast hole in Midge's life. The Rev. Charles Marker, whose wife of sixty years had died a month before Jay, was "sort of in the same stage of grief." Charley and Midge began talking to each other about their marriages, their partners, and the happiness they had shared. The two became good friends, and in May 1994 they were married.

Wilma Kats

(1920-1980)

Wilma Kats was the first person to be accepted by the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions in 1946 for a new work in Africa in cooperation with the Presbyterians, who were already ministering to Nilotic people in southern Sudan. Before going to Sudan, Wilma complet-

ed a year of study for rural missionaries at Cornell University and additional courses at Wycliffe School of Linguistics and Kennedy School of Missions. In Sudan Wilma joined a team of missionaries which included evangelists, agriculturalists, nurses, a translator, and teachers. Other RCA members of the team were the Rev. Robert and Morrie Swart,[4] Lillian Huisken, the Rev. Lee and Kitty Crandall,[5] and the Rev. Harvey and Lavina Hoekstra.

Wilma Kats was born in Firth, Nebraska, where she grew up on a farm. The hard times of the Great Depression became a part of her life experience during her high school years. Because she lived several miles from school, a long trip walking through snow and muddy roads, she stayed part of the time with the DeVries family who lived closer to school. As a result of the influence of Gertie DeVries, whose children Benjamin, Samuel, Johanna, and Elizabeth (Mrs. Fred DeJong) served as RCA missionaries in Annville, Kentucky, and in India, Wilma was inspired to become a missionary (Jane Vander Broek, biographical sketch submitted to author, April 1994*).

Soon after arriving in Akobo (Sudan), Wilma started a school for girls. She taught the most basic curriculum, as well as hygiene, cooking, and sewing. Women in rural areas in the United States collected and sent to Wilma clothprint bags, which had previously held chicken feed, for girls' sewing classes.

> *These classes were sometimes periods of frustration for the girls because Nyakwach—"child of the leopard," as she was known to the Anuaks—would say, "Take it out. Do it over." She had a high standard of what was acceptable. It was frustrating for Wilma because the girls frequently lost their needles, and she struggled to think of creative ways to make them take responsibility for these tiny, but ever-so-useful (and scarce) instruments. Wilma also tried to teach a few to use her treadle sewing machine. One who succeeded in mastering this skill was a young evangelist, Ojulo Okelo. He later became a successful tailor and earned a good living while continuing to speak for his Saviour and to serve as one of the first elders of the congregation at Akobo.*
>
> *Wilma had a contagious enthusiasm for all of life. She enjoyed bird-watching. She had great fun playing volleyball on Saturday afternoons with other mission personnel and the national school teachers. She knew her Bible well and understood that she belonged to God. She knew that God had directed her paths and would keep her to the end. A graduate of Central College with a minor in music, Wilma enjoyed singing. She helped translate some hymns and gospel songs into Anuak.*
>
> *Early in her missionary life she held meetings with the village women to teach them Bible stories and eternal truths about the God who loved them. The girls and women felt free to come to her home. One of these women, Apyo, was the wife of a former witchdoctor. At a time when their youngest son was very ill and the parents despaired of his life, Apyo had prayed, believed, and prayed yet again. She beseeched God for the life of her son. The Lord heard and answered, restoring her son to health. Apyo did not fail to thank and praise her Maker and Redeemer for this miracle (Lorraine Sikkema, article to author, March 1994).*

In the mid-sixties Sudan began to experience political unrest between Muslims and Christians. As a result, all Christian missionaries were driven out of Sudan. Wilma Kats and Lillian Huisken were the last RCA missionaries to be expelled in March 1964, when they were given just twenty-four hours to pack up and leave. Later they were transferred to Ethiopia, where they worked with the same tribal group they had worked with in Sudan.

The long weary hours Wilma put in as the headmistress of the Girls Boarding School took their toll. There were no medical personnel based at Akobo at a time when Wilma became ill with hepatitis. Her disease was not properly diagnosed, and as a result of not taking proper precautions, Wilma later developed cirrhosis of the liver.

Forced to leave the mission field, Wilma returned to the United States, where she made her home in Holland, Michigan. When she was well enough, she worked part time for Portable Recording Ministries. Gradually, her health deteriorated and she passed away on July 1, 1980.

Wilma was well-loved by many people in Africa, as well as in the United States. She was always cheerful, and her furlough visits were eagerly anticipated by adults as well as children. Her pictures of Africa and the African people fascinated everyone and helped us to better understand the calling she had to serve God on the mission field (Vander Broek, April 1994).

Whether a Christian teacher has been commissioned as a missionary or not, she not only teaches, but she also models the Christian life for her students. Priscilla must have been a role model for adolescent girls as well as older women. No doubt they knew she was a Christian, a woman who knew what she believed. Christian teachers such as Priscilla influence scores of individuals both by what they say and how they live.

Frances Van Rosendale Kohl

(1914-)

Dedicated to a life of teaching and service in God's kingdom, Frances Van Rosendale was born in Chicago, the daughter of Dutch parents, Peter and Nellie. The Van Rosendales' church home was First Reformed Church in Roseland (Chicago), and the children attended Roseland Christian School (Geraldine Heerema, story to author, May 1994*).

Each of the Van Rosendale children learned to play a musical instrument, with Frances playing the violin. Her music studies continued through the school years, culminating in a degree from Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois.

Certified to teach, Frances began her teaching career with a third grade class at the Roseland Christian School. She always prepared her lessons thoroughly, making every effort to reach each child. She taught Sunday school in the same way. Frances also sang in the church choir and was frequently asked to play her violin.

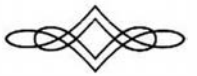
After ten years of teaching on the elementary school level, Frances moved on to Chicago Christian High School, where she taught mathematics. By taking summer school and evening courses, she earned a master's degree at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois. At the same time Frances gave up her children's church school classes at First Church to teach a women's Bible class. This class provided strong leadership in all areas of church work. During World War II they started the church *News Review*, a newsletter designed to keep in touch with church members in the armed services. Later they set up the church library, which has continued to be a valuable asset to the church.[6]

In 1953 Frances married William Kohl, who grew up in the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church. William shared Frances' enthusiasm for church work and taught in First Church's Sunday school while attending Moody Bible Institute, from which he graduated. Both taught Bible classes to neighborhood children in an area of Chicago which was changing racially from white to black.

After their daughter, Kathryn, was born, Frances gave up teaching school. Consequently, she had more time to devote to church work. From that point on she gave much of her time and energy to the work of Reformed Church Women. From the presidency of the local guild to the presidency of the Chicago Women's Classical Union, she served with zeal and enthusiasm, seeking to promote the work of missions everywhere. With her violin to provide inspiration and entertainment, Frances joined in service at city missions, Seaman's Mission, and Oak Forest Hospital.

When William retired from his work at International Harvester in 1979, the family moved to Orange City, Iowa, where their daughter had settled after attending Northwestern College and getting married. Frances and William joined Trinity Reformed Church and became part of the community. Frances was delighted by Trinity's strong RCW program and the organization's excellent leadership. She also enjoyed the town's musical culture, which included orchestras, bands, and choirs.

Immediately Frances was in demand as a violin teacher. Soon she was teaching thirty to forty students a week. Northwestern and Dordt Colleges also used her teaching skills in their string departments. Blessed with good health, at the age of eighty Frances is still teaching violin and playing in the local orchestra. A plaque, given to her by the Sioux County Orchestra, hangs on the wall of her music room. It was awarded to Frances Van Rosendale Kohl for "teaching excellence, enthusiastic support of the orchestra, and outstanding musical leadership."



Priscilla moved several times in the course of her married life. After each move she and Aquila worked at their tentmaking business and reached out to others to share the gospel. No matter where she was located, Priscilla was alert to an opportunity to teach. Sometimes when life seems secure and we feel confident we are obeying God's call in a particular vocation, God asks us to move in a new direction.

Gladys E. Rivera

(1946-)

> *As a child I always knew I wanted to become a teacher. My mom knew the value of an education, even though she only went through the third grade. She raised four children—three are teachers and one is a legal secretary. She never let us forget that school was first. This, and my own desire to become a teacher, kept me focused on what I wanted to do in life (Gladys Rivera, written responses to author, July 1994*).*

Gladys Martinez Rivera was born in Caguas, Puerto Rico, where she lived until she was ten years old. In 1955 her parents, Maximo and Esther, left Gladys, her brothers, and her sister with her maternal grandmother in Caguas while they came to "the mainland USA, looking for a better way of life." Six months later, after they had found work and furnished an apartment, their children joined them in the South Bronx, New York.

In Puerto Rico the family had attended a Baptist church, so they looked for and found a Baptist church in their new neighborhood.

> *I still remember songs, such as "Cristo Me Ama, Bien Lo Se (Jesus Loves Me, This I Know)," I learned as a child at the Baptist church in Caguas. At Third Spanish Baptist Church at 141st Street and Alexander Avenue, I learned Scripture and Christian attitudes from the teachings of Mrs. Lowe. (Only now do I realize that she must have been a missionary who chose the South Bronx as her mission field.) She didn't speak Spanish, yet she devoted her life to the children of that Hispanic congregation. By the age of seventeen I was already one of Mrs. Lowe's Sunday school teachers.*

That congregation became Gladys' "second home. Attending church was not a mere routine, but a challenging, meaningful part of my daily activities." Through her participation in Third Spanish Baptist Church, Gladys "learned how to lead services and to prepare programs for youth and adults."

After graduating from Benjamin Franklin High School in Manhattan, Gladys returned to her island home to attend the University of Puerto Rico. Armed with a degree in education, Gladys began working for the New York City Public School system, and in 1972 she earned a master's degree from City College in New York. Later that year at a youth retreat, she and Carlos Rivera, also a teacher in the city school system, realized that they were part of God's plan for each other. "I knew Carlos about six years because he played basketball for our church's youth basketball team. At that time, Carlos was the only Pentecostal in an all-Baptist Church league. The other players nicknamed him Carlos Fuego (fire) because he spoke in tongues when no one else did."

When Carlos returned from military service in Vietnam, Gladys helped him get a job as a teacher, but she "had absolutely no romantic feelings toward him." It was not "until the Lord put that love in my heart for him, a love which hasn't stopped growing after twenty-one years," that she knew Carlos was the partner for her.

They were married on April 14, 1973. The following year they bought a house in Coppaigue, Long Island, and joined a Full Gospel Church in Massapequa. Within five years they were blessed with three daughters—Esther, Damaris, and Denee. They both continued teaching in the New York City school system. At the same time, Carlos was in great demand as a speaker and evangelist in Hispanic churches throughout the metropolitan area.

The family had a comfortable life that got turned upside down in 1978. A delegation from a congregation in Manhattan came to the Rivera home to ask Carlos to serve as their pastor. Iglesia del Redentor (Church of the Redeemer) was one of the congregations under the umbrella of the Hispanic Council of the Reformed Church in America. At the time, Gladys had never even heard of this denomination. She says, "That's when I knew that the Lord had a sense of humor. Here was a Pentecostal, married to a Baptist, being asked to be a minister in a Reformed Church. I guess the Lord wanted to give us a taste of how heaven is going to be!"

Carlos accepted the invitation to serve the Manhattan congregation and began taking classes at New Brunswick Theological Seminary (Manhattan facility). Inwardly, Gladys struggled with the changes Carlos' call to ministry meant for her and her family, but most of the time she kept her doubts and fears to herself. She agreed with her husband's plan to rent out their Long Island home and to move in with Carlos' parents in Manhattan in order to be closer to the church Carlos would serve.

> *I kept asking the Lord, "Why this? Why me?" How*

could I be a pastor's wife? I had not prayed for that. I had not even secretly wished or thought of that as a possibility in my life. Was there any room for that in my busy schedule? I was a mother of three small girls, with a full-time job teaching thirty to thirty-two children. My weekends were taken up writing lesson plans and looking for materials to be a more effective teacher, not to mention all the housework and trying to be a full-time wife. What was the Lord thinking of?

Gladys kept telling herself and Carlos, "God called you, not me!" Although there were times she "wanted to give up the ship and was even secretly happy when it seemed as if it would sink," Gladys used her teaching abilities to start a Sunday school for the children, drove one of the church busses to pick up people for church, and adjusted to new facilities each time the congregation relocated—seven times in sixteen years.

It wasn't until I went to a pastors' wives retreat at Warwick Conference Center (1981) that the Lord made me realize my own calling. I can still remember the speaker asking us to open our Bibles to Isaiah 49:1: "The Lord called me before I was born, while I was in my mother's womb he named me." The Lord opened my understanding to the full meaning of that verse: if my husband had been chosen from the womb of his mother to be a pastor, and the Lord put love in my heart for my husband, and I had been chosen to be his wife, then I must have been chosen from the womb of my mother to be a pastor's wife! When that light went on in my mind and in my heart, I cried for about two to three hours, asking the Lord to forgive me and thanking God for the privilege of being Christ's useful servant. The vocation to be a pastor's wife, Wow!

Iglesia del Redentor now has its own building in Brooklyn, New York,[7] and the Riveras no longer transport parishioners by bus. The congregation, which began with sixteen members in 1978, has grown to over one hundred. Gladys has learned to combine her two vocations, using both to God's glory.

In 1987 the Riveras sold their home in Copaigue and bought a home in Hempstead, Long Island. A couple of years later, when the Rivera's youngest daughter was in junior high, Carlos' brother asked them to raise his son Billy. Gladys and Carlos agreed, seeing this as an answer to prayer. Each time Gladys had been pregnant, they had prayed for a boy. "In 1991 I learned that the Lord had not forgotten our prayer, and God gave us Billy. We got legal custody of Billy when his mother died. He is in the fourth grade and says he wants to be a pastor like his uncle Carlos."

In 1993 Gladys decided to move from the city school system, where she had taught for twenty-four years, to the New York State system, even though it meant a sizable pay cut. She wanted to work at a school in Hempstead to be closer to home. "And guess what? Even with my pay cut, the Lord manages to meet our needs. It could be because nothing is done in the Rivera household without confirmation from the Lord." In 1994 she applied for and was accepted as a curriculum specialist in the Hempstead schools.

Gladys continues to serve as a teacher in her congregation and to work with both the local women's group and the Hispanic Council's RCWM group. She also serves the wider Reformed Church as a consultant for the new RCA/CRC LiFE curriculum and is writing a study guide for the Christian Action Commission's paper, "Strangers Among Us."

Until the 1950s there were few women teachers in higher education. Female professors who teach or have taught at Reformed Church colleges and seminaries serve both as role models and as encouragers for young women of today.

Bette Brunsting

(1935-)

Bette Brunsting was born and raised in Sioux County, Iowa, where her family belonged to First Reformed Church of Hull, Iowa. The youngest of four girls, Bette Brunsting and her sisters all went to Reformed Church colleges. Three graduated from Central and one from Hope.[8]

> *My parents were committed to having educated daughters. My father took a lot of grief for that from friends, who said, "Why do you spend money educating daughters? They're just going to get married." His response was interesting. "Well, I never got through eighth grade, and the only thing I can give them really is an education, and no one will ever take that away from them (Bette Brunsting, taped interview, June 1994*).*

Bette chose to be a teacher partly because, when she graduated from college in the fifties, the options for women were limited. "You either went into teaching, the mission field, or you got married. Teaching was a way you could influence other generations. I saw teaching as my mission, a way to do something beyond myself that would hopefully make a difference for people."

At first Bette taught in public schools, where she believed she had a positive influence on her students. In 1964 she was hired as an instructor/teacher of communication at Central College. For three years she also served as dean of women. When she came to teach at her alma mater, she believed it would be "for a little while before I did something else." Instead she has stayed at the college for thirty years because she believes she is "a significant witness."

Bette Brunsting is an encourager. She wants her students to believe in themselves and to be all that they can be. "When I see former students use their potential, I feel like maybe I have added just one little particle to their success."

Teaching can also be discouraging and, at times, painful. She says, "I have a lot of empathy with students who try very hard, but who do barely passing work. The thing I really grieve is when I see students who claim to have strong Christian commitments approach their academic work with no dedication."

Being a single woman on campus and in a church where the norm is for women to be married can also be painful.

> *When I first came to the campus scene and there were few women, I think it took awhile for some of the males on the faculty to realize that a woman faculty member could be an equal colleague. In church, of all places, I felt most sensitive to the fact that being a woman is unfortunate. It seems to me that if the Bible is really serious about the fact that in Christ we are neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, but are all one, we still don't know what that means. Besides that, if you are single, you either find people wondering why you're single or they feel sorry for you, and I don't appreciate that either.*

Bette Brunsting was the first woman in the Pella

area to be elected to serve on consistory. She believes that she brought to the consistory her gift of speaking out from the perspective of faith rather than doing what is most economically sound. For example, when she was a deacon, she encouraged the church to support a Laotian family not because it made good money sense but because it was the action of a responsible faith community. For the three years she served as a deacon, Bette was the only woman on the board, which made her feel "sort of lonely." Later when she was elected to serve as an elder, the experience was repeated. "At the first consistory meeting," she says, "it was apparent that I sat with people, brothers, who would have preferred that I wasn't there and a minister who kept saying, 'Well, now, you guys.' Then he would apologize to me. But I think that's something we had to go through."

Bette has encouraged other women in the Pella area to serve as either deacons or elders in their local congregations and to use their gifts to serve the wider church. She herself has served the Reformed Church as a member of the General Synod's Commission on History and the Communications Philosophy Committee. Bette Brunsting grew up in a home where the phrase "full-time Christian service" was used. She has carried out that service as a teacher at Central College, as a committed member of an RCA commission and special committee, and as an ordained elder in Second Reformed Church of Pella.

Lynn Winkels Japinga

(1960-)

I swore that I would never teach, since both my parents were teachers. I was always interested in science, so I figured I would be a doctor. That's what bright kids did, and there weren't that many options for women. It never entered my mind that I could be a minister. Well, we couldn't! That was out of the question. There weren't even any women deacons or elders in my church.

Hope College was great for pre-med, but after three semesters, I decided it just wasn't fun. When I was a freshman I took Introduction to the Bible from Dennis Voskuil, a course I really enjoyed. On the basis of that one class, I decided when I was a sophomore in college that I wanted to go to graduate school and teach Religion in America, and that's what I did (Lynn Japinga, taped interview, March 1994).*

Lynn Winkels grew up in Grand Haven, Michigan, where her family worshiped at and was deeply committed to Second Reformed Church. Her parents didn't really understand why she was "giving up a perfectly good career in medicine and science for religion," but they supported her choice of vocation.

Following college graduation, Lynn married Jeff Japinga, whom she had met at Hope College. The couple moved to Princeton, New Jersey, where Lynn attended seminary and Jeff commuted to his job at *Guideposts* in New York City. Lynn had "never thought about parish work," nor did she "have any interest in being a preacher." Although she was determined to follow her dream of becoming a college professor, a student assignment at Willow Grove (Pennsylvania) Reformed Church under Leonard Kalkwarf during her second and third years at Princeton Seminary caused her to at least look at parish ministry as an option. "Len was a great mentor to me, and I deeply appreciated that church. They took us in and really took good care of us. They received what I had to offer, and that was very important in shaping who I am as a minister."

Lynn continued her education at Union Theological Seminary and was ordained as a minister of the

Word. For a year she served as an interim minister at Woodcliff Community Reformed Church in North Bergen, New Jersey. She served another year as stated supply at First Reformed Church in Union City, New Jersey. At the same time, Jeff earned his M. Div. at New Brunswick Theological Seminary.

When Jeff accepted the job as managing editor of the *Church Herald*, the Japingas moved to Michigan. For a five-year stretch Lynn completed her comprehensive exams, taught part-time at Western Theological Seminary, had a baby, and worked on her dissertation. When her Ph.D. had been completed, Hope College was hiring. Lynn applied and was hired as a professor of religion. Lynn has discovered that she enjoys teaching feminist issues and theology as much as courses in American religion. "I have to figure out how to teach Christian feminism," she says. "That has been very important for my own development. It's helped me to be critical of the church in some ways and to discover a lot of good stuff in the church. It helps me stay in when I'm tempted to get out."

Because Lynn and Jeff decided that it would be better if they were in separate classes, Jeff joined North Grand Rapids Classis, and Lynn became a member of South Grand Rapids Classis. She was the first and only woman minister in that classis. She thought, "They need me. They're not going to like me, but they need me."

I think of myself as a thorn in the side of that classis, but I also see myself as someone who encourages that classis to look at things in a different way, not only on women's issues, but other issues as well. I care deeply about the church. It makes me angry sometimes, lots of times. Sometimes it makes me furious. If you try [to change things] all the time, you get very tired. I try to figure out where maybe I can make a difference. And every once in awhile there are little signs of hope that keep me more than tangentially involved.

Lynn served as one of two RCA representatives in the latest round of Lutheran/Reformed Dialogue. Each denomination had a woman and a man in its delegation and, Lynn says, "since I was one of the most theologically educated women the Reformed Church had, they appointed me. There were a lot of movers and shakers on that committee—deans and presidents and professors of theology—and me. At times I felt like I wasn't really pulling my weight, but at least I could offer my voice to that committee, and I am learning as I go."

When men and women in the church see talented, articulate, theologically trained women, such as Lynn Japinga, serving in leadership roles, they are more likely to accept them on an equal footing with men. "Experience works wonders," Lynn says. It is also important to "tell stories of women in the Scriptures and our own stories. Lynn does that in the feminism classes she teaches. Some of her students don't know that women have had a voice. They say, "I never heard about the midwives (Exod. 2). I never heard about Jesus' encounters with these women. I never heard about Jephtha's daughter (Judg. 11)."

Tell the stories; hand them role models; encourage them to think, to ask questions, and to challenge the church in making them part of the church. There's so much power even in our own stories and even for young people to just see women in ministry. When I was teaching feminism last year, I was six to nine months pregnant. Several students said something about how important it was for them to have a pregnant woman teaching feminist theology because it shattered all their stereotypes about how feminists hate men and how they are lesbians and how they hate kids. I encourage women who can do so to break or challenge the stereotypes.

Christian educators work in tandem with pastors to assist children, young people, and adults to meet God, to question and talk about faith, and to grow spiritually. For hundreds of years Sunday school teachers have availed themselves of courses at Bible schools and seminaries in order to become better Christian educators. Western Theological Seminary has been offering a master of religious education degree since 1983 (New Brunswick Theological Seminary has never offered a degree in Christian education), and a number of RCA congregations include a minister of education on their staff.

Kathy Jo Blaske

(1953-)

> *In relation to persevering and pioneering in ministerial paths previously untraveled by women, I am one prophetic voice. I feel as if I have been called to advocate for small congregations who don't speak bureaucratese. I also speak for Christian educators whose ministries are sometimes falsely viewed as less significant than others, for children and youth whose talents and capabilities are not integrated into church life, and for the artistic whose contributions are not always well appreciated in popular society. (Kathy Jo Blaske, autobiography to author, August 1994*).*

The oldest of three children born to George J. and Marian DeVette Blaske, Kathy Jo Blaske's "vocational aim was to become an elementary teacher, whose purpose was to understand and encourage the best in students." Kathy Jo had intended to enroll in the local community college rather than a private college as it was more within the financial means of her family. The Rev. George Boerigter, pastor at Central Reformed Church in Muskegon, Michigan, directed her to Hope College in Holland, Michigan. She entered Hope in 1971 set on becoming an elementary teacher. During her senior year, she reflected upon words her pastor had spoken to her as she headed for college.

> *I remember George planting a seed in my thinking: "Kath, why don't you come back and take my job away from me?" Quickly I replied, "George, women can't become ministers." He responded, "I'm not so sure. I think the RCA will be ordaining women in about five years."*
>
> *During my senior year at Hope, I decided to enter seminary for a trial year. Although women were not yet being ordained as clergy within the RCA, I thought I might serve in Christian education. I told George. He told the consistory. And they voted to pay my seminary tuition for as long as I wanted to go. With profound gratitude I enrolled in Western Theological Seminary. Later I found that such confirmation and generosity from home churches were rare among women classmates.*
>
> *The debate about ordaining women continued throughout my seminary years, 1975-78. It seemed an entirely abstract question to me until I attended a forum hosted by Western. The words of those opposed to women's ordination kept reverberating within me. For a brief, vulnerable moment I found myself in tears. The debate which had been theoretical became personal. Why would anyone so vehemently oppose me on the basis of my sex? My motives for entering seminary were out of a desire to serve God.*

Kathy Jo continued to follow the call to ministry and completed her seminary studies. She sought a form

of ministry within the RCA where her theological education and her interests in the fields of education and the humanities could be exercised. In 1978 Third Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan, called her to serve as the congregation's minister of Christian education. She was ordained on Reformation Sunday 1979.

During the ten years she served as minister of Christian education, Kathy Jo's view of ministry deepened and expanded. She focused on drawing forth the God-given talents and potentials of children, youth, and adults, in service of God. She led God's church, ministering to, among, and with teachers, assistants, drama participants, musical production teams, worship leaders, artists, writers, craftspersons, musicians, decision makers, and dreamers.

In 1988 Kathy Jo Blaske accepted a position as program coordinator with the Synod of Albany. Soon after her move to Schenectady, New York, the synod reorganized, and Kathy Jo became minister for leadership development. One of her first accomplishments was to implement "Ephesus Two," a lay leadership training program. "Ephesus Two" was based upon the vision of Paul in Ephesians chapter four: to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ. Kathy Jo provided consultation services to churches in the development of church school teachers, parenting courses, Children and Worship training, worship, and in general leadership development.

In the years following 1988 Kathy Jo discerned God's call toward serving as pastor of a congregation. In 1994 she resigned her position with the Regional Synod of Albany and began serving as interim pastor of Niskayuna (NY) Reformed Church while continuing work begun in the late eighties on a doctor of ministry degree.

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1. This school continues to play an important role in Japanese educational circles, particularly for Japanese Christians.

2. For some years this was the motto of Annville Institute.

3. Hope College conferred on her an LL.D. in 1949.

4. Morrie Swart's story may be found in Chapter 2—Bearing Witness.

5. Kitty Crandall's story may be found in Chapter 4—Healing God's People.

6. In the early 1970s First Church of Roseland relocated to South Holland, Illinois, and was renamed Thorn Creek Reformed Church.

7. First Hispanic Reformed Church in Brooklyn had a building with no congregation, and Iglesia del Redentor had a congregation with no building. Gladys Rivera says, "It was a match made in heaven!"

8. Two of Bette Brunsting's sisters—Lucy Noordhoff and Joyce Vander Well—have served as Reformed Church missionaries in Asia. Bette's other sister lives in the southern U.S., where she is an active participant in a Presbyterian Church.

Chapter Eight

Nurturing in the Church and Home

Lois and Eunice

(Acts 16:1; 2 Timothy 1:5)

Eunice was a Jewish believer married to a Greek (Acts 16:1). Lois, Eunice's mother, also was a devout Jewish woman who lived with her daughter and her grandson Timothy in Lystra in Asia Minor. Both these women taught the Old Testament Scriptures, interpreted in a Christian way, to Timothy. What Timothy received from these women, however, was something more precious than a knowledge of Jewish history, a familiarity with the Psalms, or an excitement about the adventures of his Israeli ancestors. Timothy grew up in a house where he saw the faith of his mother and grandmother in action.

Therefore, when the apostle Paul arrived in Lystra and began to preach, Timothy was ready to hear the gospel message. Faith is a gift from God, but faith can be communicated in a loving environment. Lois and Eunice communicated their faith to Timothy as they taught him what they knew of the Scriptures, a fact which Paul acknowledged and pointed out to his "loyal child in the faith" in a letter: "I am reminded of your sincere faith, a faith that lived first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice and now, I am sure, lives in you" (2 Tim. 1:5).

Prior to 1900 the Board of Foreign Missions listed males as missionaries; missionary wives were considered assistants. When Jacob Chamberlain wrote to the Executive Committee of the Board of Foreign Missions on behalf of the woman he was planning to marry, he asked that she be appointed "as an assistant missionary with myself to the Arcot Mission" (J. Chamberlain, March 1859). Practically speaking, what that meant was that the men were usually off on evangelistic tours, while the women did most of the everyday work in the mission stations.[1]

The Arcot missionaries (males) even had a document drawn up (dated 1853) which included the duties of missionary wives:

> *The companions whom God has graciously given us are expected, so far as health, family duties, and other circumstances may allow, to labor among heathen women by visiting them in their houses and using other appropriate means to bring them to a knowledge of truth.*[2]

Charlotte Birge Chamberlain
(1837-1915)

When twenty-two-year-old Charlotte Birge Chamberlain, a graduate of Mt. Holyoke Academy (South Hadley, Massachusetts), went to India as a bride in 1859, she was well aware of what the rules of the Arcot Mission were. She fully expected to support her husband, the Rev. Dr. Jacob Chamberlain, a graduate of both New Brunswick Theological Seminary and the College of Physicians and Surgeons, by making their home as comfortable as possible. One has to wonder, however, if Charlotte realized how much time her doctor/evangelist husband would spend away from their home, especially in the early years of their ministry.

Jacob and Charlotte Chamberlain met when both were members of First Congregational Church of Hudson, Ohio. Charlotte's father had been a "Home Missionary" with the Presbyterian Church. When ill health forced his retirement from active ministry, the family moved to Hudson. Jacob's father, who was a farmer, had moved his family to Hudson so his children could be educated at Western Reserve College and the Young Ladies Seminary, which were located there.

The couple knew about the Arcot Mission because Jacob's sister Sarah, who had married the Rev. Joseph Scudder, was already in India. At Joseph's urging, Jacob transferred his membership to Collegiate Reformed Dutch Church of New York City and went to New Brunswick Theological Seminary in preparation for becoming part of the Arcot Mission (J. Chamberlain, letter, May 1858).[3]

Jacob described Charlotte as "well adapted to withstand the India climate. She enjoys habitually good

health, has a lively disposition, and a native energy which has enabled her to obtain a thorough education almost by her own unaided exertions" (J. Chamberlain, letter, March 1859). She also must have been a "saver," because she kept many of the letters Jacob wrote to her when he was away from home on evangelistic tours.[4]

Although most of Charlotte's letters to Jacob have disappeared, one can read between the lines of Jacob's replies to her that her letters were frequent and that she kept him abreast of happenings at home. In a letter from Vellore, dated June 11, 1863, Jacob consoled his wife over the loss of a carriage and urged her to have it fixed.[5]

> *It is too bad that that careless housekeeper should cause our carriage to be so smashed up, but we will thank the Lord that it is no worse. . . . You know we are about the only ones in the mission who have not lost more or less on horses or carriages, and now our turn has come and we must not complain. . . . Have it mended up as you think best. I shall be satisfied whatever is done (J. Chamberlain, June 11, 1863).*

A month later Jacob wrote about a house he had rented for them in Madanapalle,[6] "Our Station," and bemoaned the fact that they were in debt.

> *We must work hard to bring our expenses down and get clear of debt. I think I can bring my personal expenses down to Rs 40 a month for these three months. And if you can bring yours and the children's down to Rs 100 we can save Rs 50 per month, which will come within Rs 50 of clearing our whole debt, tax and all before we come to Madanapally. Let us make an effort to come to our new station free from debt (J. Chamberlain, July 2, 1863).*

While Jacob was away, not only did Charlotte have to contend with household servants and expenses, she also tended the couple's four sons—Chester (born 1860), Willie (1862), Lewis (1864), and Arthur (1867).[7] In July 1863 Charlotte wrote: "I do not know if my carriage is going to get mended in Coonoor. I think I will not have it painted & varnished till I go to Vellore as it may get injured going down. What do you think I should do?" In the same letter Charlotte noted her desire to find an ayah (an Indian nursemaid) with some education to help with her boys (C. Chamberlain, July 4, 1863).

Jacob's sons were often on his heart and mind. More than once Jacob missed a birthday celebration. On July 3, 1862, he wrote from Chittoor on Chester's second birthday: "Kiss Chester for Papa." He worried when they were ill, he promised to try to locate a proper ayah for them, and he delighted in hearing good news about his sons. In response to one of Charlotte's letters, he wrote: "I should like to see the darling Chester in his new suit. I could not keep back the tears when you told what he said when he broke his playthings 'Papa will mend tomorrow.' The dear boy! Papa does not forget him an hour in the day" (J. Chamberlain, June 29, 1863).

One of Charlotte's letters to her "dear husband" tells of David Scudder's death by drowning in a stream. Charlotte cautions Jacob "from running any risk" and then says:

> *Truly God would not have taken David Scudder before his appointed time and he will not cause my heart to be made desolate before your work is done. My hourly prayer is that you will be kept from danger and be the means of awakening many of these darkened minds and lead them to search for the truth as it is in J[esus] (C. Chamblerlain, Dec. 2, 1862).*

Jacob received Charlotte's letter at noon on December 3. That evening he sat and wrote her an eight-

page letter. (He also wrote two letters on December 5, and one each on December 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, and 16.) Wanting to allay her fears for him when he was "out on tours," Jacob responded:

> *Don't fret for me in the least, my darling, that God who has power to preserve me when by your side loses none of his power or his good will if I go out to labor in his name. I too will try not to feel anxious about you and dear Chester and Willie but commit you all to him who doeth all things well. . . .Many kisses for Chester and Willie and for my dear wife, too, who becomes more dear to me every day that I live (J. Chamberlain, Dec. 3, 1862).*

In addition to writing letters, Charlotte and Jacob sent each other packages by way of trusted cooly messengers. In one of his letters Jacob instructed Charlotte to "write to Bangalore what you would like to have me purchase or bring home and I will try and attend to it." In the same letter in which Jacob told Charlotte not to worry about him, he sent her "a soiled shirt collar cravat and pair of socks which there is no use in my carrying around with me." He also asked her to send back to him in a padlocked box—noting that he had the key—a list of items, including: annual reports of the Arcot Mission, Charlotte's large daguerreotype which Bogardus took, *The Harvest Field*, a grammar book, newspapers, news of Tappals, an extra pair of night drawers, his black hat (which he might need in Bangalore), and calfskin boots (J. Chamberlain, Dec. 3, 1862).

Every now and then Charlotte must have chided him about neglecting his health. On December 15, 1862, he wrote:

> *You will give me a credit mark won't you when I tell you that I refused a number of pressing invitations to preach yesterday just out of respect to you and your injunctions. . . .My cold is a little troublesome, and I did not know but that preaching might make it worse, and as you had given me such a special charge to take care of myself, I determined to remain quiet and stick to my resolution, and for the same reason I have declined to take the charge of the Union prayer meeting this evening. . . .Am I not a good boy! (J. Chamberlain, Dec. 15, 1862).*

Jacob was distressed when he didn't hear from Charlotte.

> *What can it mean that I do not hear from you? The last I received from you was last Sunday morning and was dated Friday. No letters have come for me here at all. . . .I might be anxious only you know I promised not to be. The mail arrangements here are very poor I find—all depending on the will of the Poonganoor Rajah, and probably letters have miscarried so I will fain leave you in the hands of Our Father (J. Chamberlain, July 2, 1863).*

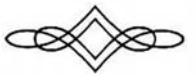
Then he wrote a P.S. in pencil at the top of the first page, noting "I had just gone to bed when the postmaster came carrying a letter for me. It was your Sat. letter forwarded by Silas." Although Jacob sometimes wrote of his anxiety when he didn't hear from Charlotte, he often expressed how much her letters meant to him.

> *I was gladdened again yesterday by another letter from you. You are a good wife to write every day even when you do not think your husband will be in a situation to receive the letters till several have accumulated. You don't know how much good the letters do me. How I laughed yesterday over your description of your ride to Mr. Stones' coffee plantation. Good for you. It pleases me very much, Dear, to see that you are so fearless in mounting that pony. Go on. It will do you good, and you will be always glad that you have had the courage to conquer (J. Chamberlain, letter to Charlotte, July 7, 1863).*

By the late 1860s the Chamberlains were able to establish a home in Madanapalle, where Jacob instituted a hospital and dispensary and Charlotte began working with the women and girls. In 1881 Jacob wrote to the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions begging them to send money to build a girls' school. He noted that Charlotte was devoting much of her time and energy to educating the daughters of the Indian Christian teachers and other young Telugu girls. The Woman's Board appropriated the necessary funds for erecting a building and set aside an additional amount for the support of the school. "This was the first girls' school actually built and equipped by the Woman's Board" (Chamberlain, 1925, 27).[8]

Charlotte Chamberlain has been called a "devoted pioneer to the Telugu women, carrying on this school ...meeting with the women, visiting in their homes, [and] looking after the sick" (Chamberlain, 1925, 55). She was also a devoted mother, who together with her husband Jacob, communicated the Christian faith in a loving environment to the girls in her school and to her own children.[9]

When Jacob died in 1908, Charlotte stayed in India for a year before returning to the United States. During her last illness (March 1915), she looked forward to death, saying to her children and their families who were tending her, "O, do not try to keep me. I have so many things that I want to talk over with your father" (Chamberlain, 1925, 55).[10]



The first permanent Dutch settlement in the Albany, New York, area began around 1631, when the first Rensselaerswyck colonists arrived. Dutch people of the Reformed faith began moving into the Hudson Valley. Patroons (landowners) established estates, built manor houses, leased small farms to tenants, and traded with their Indian neighbors. Manor children received both secular and spiritual instruction from tutors and educated relatives.

> *Female education was conducted on a very limited scale; girls learned needlework (in which they were indeed both skillful and ingenious) from their mothers and aunts; they were taught too at that period to read, in Dutch, the Bible and a few Calvinist tracts of the devotional kind. . . .Few girls read English...and few were taught writing (Grant, 1847, 27).*

> *The girls, from the example of their mothers, rather than any compulsion, very early became notable and industrious, being constantly employed in knitting stockings, and making clothes for the family and slaves. . . .Parents. . .tenderly cherished [their children] and early taught [them] that they owed all their enjoyments to the Divine Source of beneficence, to whom they were finally accountable for their actions (Grant, 1847, 41).*

In colonial America children were trained to be selective in their choice of playmates, because parents knew that someday one of those playmates would be their child's marriage partner.

> *On a typical afternoon, mothers gathered their small children, along with some of the sewing*

always awaiting a mother's attention, and visited with other mothers belonging to their unique social stratum. While the children played with their social "equals," the mothers could share the town's gossip as they attended to their sewing....Since these same family groups would have attended the same church, it is apparent that the mothers' playtime sewing groups were the progenitors of the "sewing circles" which would dominate the initial organization of women's groups within the church a century later (Alexander, 1990).

Catalina Schuyler
(1701-late 1770s)

Both parents of Catalina Schuyler died when she was quite young. She knew little about her father, Peter, who had been first mayor of the city of Albany and an elder in the Dutch Church, but she did remember her mother, whom Catalina described as being "mild, pious, and amiable." (This story is based on a book written by Anne McVickar Grant, 1808, and reprinted in 1846.*)[11]

Catalina's mother and several other Christian women befriended the Indian women who accompanied their husbands on their trek to Albany to sell furs. The Indian families set up their temporary camps near the Schuyler home in Albany. Because they wanted to share their religion with those Indian women, they explained essential Christian doctrines to them as "the natural results which arose out of their ordinary conversation" (Grant, 1846, 67). The Indian women examined the truth of what the Dutch matrons told them of the Christian faith, and when any were ready to hear more, the Christian women "sent them to the clergyman of the place, who instructed, confirmed, and baptized them" (Grant, 1846, 67).[12]

When Catalina's father died, she became the ward of her uncle, Colonel Philip Schuyler. The Schuylers owned considerable holdings near the town, now called Fishkill, New York, but the family residence was situated north of Albany on the banks of the Hudson River on "a fertile and beautiful plain" called the Flats. Some of the family's wealth had been brought from Holland; the rest was derived from leasing the rich agricultural land to tenant farmers and from buying furs from local Indians. The colonel cultivated Catalina's "taste for reading...by procuring for her the best authors in history, divinity, and the belles lettres." He often took his favorite niece with him when he went to New York City at least once a year on fur-trading business. There she met and mixed with young people of superior and cultivated intellect. The family worshiped whenever possible in the Dutch Church in Albany.

At the age of eighteen Catalina married "her cousin Philip, eldest son of her uncle, who was ten years older than herself and was in all respects to be accounted a suitable, and in the worldly sense, an advantageous match for her." Colonel Philip Schuyler was a member of the colonial assembly, and he commanded a regiment of provincials and Indians of the Five Nations in the French and Indian War. At the start of the colonel's first expedition, the chief commander and his aides came to meet with him and the Indian chiefs.

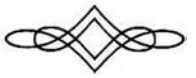
The common and the barn, at the Flats, were fully occupied, and the hospitable mansion, as was usual on all public occasions, overflowed....On the common was an Indian encampment; and the barn and orchard were full of the provincials....Mrs. Schuyler, by the calm fortitude she displayed in this trying exigency...accommodated her numerous and various guests...without visible bustle and anxiety, [and added] grace and ease to hospitality (Grant, 1846, 93).

Soon after Philip's departure to wage war against the French Canadians, Catalina delivered a stillborn child. The couple had no more children of their own, but adopted or took under their care and protection many children, including a succession of nieces and nephews. "Her house was never without one, but much oftener two children, whom this exemplary pair educated with parental solicitude and kindness." Catalina was an accomplished housewife who well knew how to manage her time.

> *[Catalina] always contrived to create leisure hours for reading; for that kind of conversation which is properly styled gossiping, she had the utmost contempt. . . .She began the morning with reading the Scriptures. . . .After breakfast she gave orders for the family details of the day. . .[then] she retired to read in her closet, where she generally remained till about eleven (Grant, 1846, 137).*

After the noon meal, she walked in the gardens with her husband or some of her guests, where "questions in religion and morality, too weighty for table-talk, were leisurely and coolly discussed." Later in the day, Catalina sat on the porch, "giving audience to new settlers, followers of the army left in hapless dependence, and others who wanted assistance or advice."

During the Revolutionary War, which began several years before Catalina's death, politics divided the Schuyler family: Catalina's side of the family remained loyal to Britain; Philip's relatives fought on the patriot side.[13] Catalina never saw the outcome of that war, because in 1778 (or 1779) she "died full of years, and honored by all who could or could not appreciate her worth" (Grant, 1846, 274).



Wives of missionaries are homemakers and hostesses, teachers and counselors, encouragers and musicians, and so much more. Although Reformed Church missionary couples receive two units of support while single missionaries receive only one, salary checks are issued in the husband's name.[14] In spite of this, most are very clear that both husband and wife have been called to serve in Christ's mission and that they are in ministry together.

Henrietta Josephine Beyers Van Es

(1904-1987)

When she was two and a half years old, Henrietta Beyers' father, who had been an Iowa farmer, died. Her mother opened a milliner business, selling her hats in Maurice, Iowa, and raising her daughter (Rowland Van Es, son, written story to author, July 1994*).

Henrietta graduated from Northwestern Classical Academy and Hope College, where she was a running forward on the women's basketball team and a member of a women's trumpet trio. After college she studied for a year at New York Biblical Seminary, using money left to her by her father. Henrietta, who was passionate about missions, truly wanted to be a missionary in a foreign land. Instead she went to work at the children's shelter in Winnebago, Nebraska, until she was called back home to care for her ailing mother.

Not long after Peter Van Es and Henrietta Beyers met at Northwestern Academy, they knew they were

meant for each other. They were married in 1929, while Peter was a student at Western Theological Seminary (WTS). Although women were not allowed to enroll in a degree program at WTS, Henrietta selected a full load of classes for 1929-30. Peter was awarded a Th.M. degree; Henrietta was awarded a certificate of study, one of the first two women—the other was Henrietta's cousin Henrietta Gosselink—to earn this award.

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—the Rev. Rowland Van Es, son of Henrietta Van Es

Peter and Henrietta Van Es wanted to go to China or Arabia, but the Great Depression closed that door. So they volunteered to work under the Women's Board of Domestic Missions, who commissioned them in 1930 to the Indian ministry. From 1930 to 1932 they served among the Cheyenne and Arapahoe Indians in Colony, Oklahoma, where their daughter Marthann was born. From 1932 to 1945 they served in Mescalero, New Mexico, among the Apaches. Another daughter, Mary Lou, and a son, Rowland Dean, were born during those years. In September 1945, the Rev. and Mrs. Peter Van Es, Jr., and their children bade farewell to the Indians at the Mescalero Reservation and went to their new home and work among the Omaha Indians at Macy, Nebraska.

In each of these communities the Indian members were the focus, but Caucasians living there were not neglected in pastoral concerns and church opportunities. Together Henrietta and Peter called on an immense number of people—members, potential members, and the needy in the community. Henrietta was so actively energetic in the church and community that the WBDM provided house help and child care so that she could be more involved in the ministry.

In 1952 Wendell Chino, with whom the Van Eses had ministered in Mescalero, was ready to graduate from Western Theological Seminary, and "it was deemed right that he should start his ministry in Macy." After twenty-one years of faithful and consecrated missionary service among American Indians, Peter and Henrietta Van Es, Jr., accepted a call to Grace Reformed Church in Sonoma, California. In 1958 they moved on to serve First Reformed Church of Yakima, Washington, where they stayed until 1963. Challenged by the inner city work their son, Rowland, did through a pastoral internship in East Harlem, New York, Peter and Henrietta accepted a call to Christ Reformed Church in Newark, New Jersey. They worked diligently for seven years, integrating the African-American newcomers in the community into this old congregation.

To meet people and talk to her neighbors, Henrietta would sweep her sidewalk every day. She was a witness even when their home was burglarized and her wedding silver was taken. In spite of being saddened and upset at the violation done to their home, Henrietta responded by saying, "I'm so grateful that my treasures are in heaven, where thieves do not break in and steal" (Matt. 6:20).

Wherever their home, Henrietta "was a consummate hostess." Her son recalls:

She was great at making the most out of a lit-

tle—elegantly serving crackers and cheese with tea or coffee in celebrations. Drop-in's at church were invariably invited to the house and always went away feeling feted. Family Sunday dinners were often stretched to feed several extra mouths. She sewed clothes for the family and remade old garments. One time she remade one of Dad's suits for herself. She made very creative valentines for her children to exchange with their friends in communities which expected most classmates to receive them from us.

Overnight guests were common. Sometimes years later a package containing a cup or spoon for her modest collections would come with a note of appreciation for both the hospitality and for the inspiration received while in our home.

Henrietta Van Es inspired young people to serve Christ through the stories she told, often sparked by drama, flannel graph figures, or chalk drawings. Harold De Roo remembers:

Once when I was a young pastor in Redlands, California, I went to a mission conference. Dr. Paul Harrison, the featured speaker, attracted me to the conference, but it was Henrietta Van Es who captivated me. What a marvelous communicator she was! She could really tell a story!

Henrietta also inspired people who watched her teach Bible classes, saw her direct children's and adult choirs, viewed the Christmas and Easter pageants she wrote and produced, listened to her prayers, and, on occasion, heard her preach. Henrietta was ready to give witness to her faith and her Lord at any and every time—in the grocery store or a parking lot, at the county fair grounds or a cotton candy machine, or wherever she noted someone open to hearing God's message of salvation.

Her total enthusiasm for the Lord's work was catching. More than one young person committed his or her life to ministry as a direct response to Henrietta's participation in a church conference such as those held at Lake Okaboji (Iowa), Green Lake (Wisconsin), or Northfield (Massachusetts). Her son, Rowland, became an RCA missionary, serving in Taiwan and the Philippines. Her grandson, Rowland Van Es, Jr., serves as an RCA world mission program associate working as program manager of the CRWRC (Christian Reformed World Relief Committee) Malawi-Mozambique Project and the RCA Friends of Africa program. Henrietta's granddaughter, AmyJo Van Es Hawley, is an RCA minister of the Word and sacrament, serving First Church of Albany, New York, as associate pastor. Rowland Van Es says:

I'm sure that many of my own life choices, including ministry, Bible teaching, and cross-cultural involvement, are directly attributable to my mother's influence through her expressed concerns, interests, stories, and reading material she made available to me, to say nothing of her exuberance for being totally used by God and committed to God's purpose.

Wherever they went, Henrietta and Peter Van Es worked together and in tandem. They retired in 1970 and bought a home in San Jose, California. When the Church of the Chimes in San Jose was between pastors, the consistory asked this team to do the interim ministry while they searched for a new leader.

Of course, Dad was the one they called, but it had been clear throughout their ministry that this was a pastoral team. In 1982 the Reformed Church in Zellwood, Florida, asked them to participate in a celebration of team ministry. Harold De Roo, pastor of that congregation (he had known them when he was a minister in Redlands, California, and my folks

were in Sonoma), held my parents up as a model of wholesome togetherness in marriage and true partnership in work.

On June 3, 1987, this partnership was broken by the death of Henrietta Beyers Van Es in San Jose, California.

For generations women have ministered full-time with their spouses—visiting the sick, coordinating the religious education programs, directing the choir, leading the women's groups, and playing piano or organ for church functions, among other things. To this day, some still fill this role, although one recognizes that the church can no longer assume that the spouse of the minister will also commit herself or himself to full-time ministry in the church.[15]

The following stories are representative of the thousands of ministers' wives who have made tremendous contributions to the life and ministry of the Reformed Church in America.

Elsie Tahkofper Chaat

(1904-)

Born in Indian Territory on ancestral lands in 1904, Elsie Tahkofper was the middle child in her family of seven. It was U.S. Government practice to send Indian children to government boarding schools as part of the treaty agreements. So, at the age of six, Elsie and her brothers were transported by wagon to Fort Sill Indian School near Lawton, Oklahoma. The school, which was under the control of the War Department, was run in a militaristic manner (Paula Chaat Smith, daughter, story submitted to Beth Marcus, 1990*).

It was difficult for pupils like Elsie, whose only language until that time was Comanche. Children were prohibited from speaking their native languages and were punished if they were caught doing so. Once Elsie was placed in a coal cellar when she was caught speaking Comanche. "This and other experiences motivated me to learn English in a hurry!"

In spite of friends, it was a lonely time for a little Comanche girl. Familiar clothing was taken away and students were required to wear government-issued uniforms. Anyone with long hair had to have it cut short. Parents were allowed to visit once a month and at Christmas, but the students were not allowed to leave the school from September through May. The one bright spot in this regimented life was the Sunday school classes taught by missionaries from the Reformed Church Mission.

Elsie Tahkofper was chosen to receive additional education at the Haskell Institute in Lawrence, Kansas. Much to her delight, she learned that Robert Chaat, a popular boy at Fort Sill Indian School and her friend, was attending the Roe Institute in Wichita, Kansas. They saw each other on holidays and during the summer. Gradually friendship deepened to love, and Elsie, aged seventeen, and Robert, aged twenty, decided to marry.

They dropped out of school to farm land allotted to Robert's family. By this time, Robert, who had been dedicated to the Lord Jesus Christ while still a babe in arms, felt called by God to minister to the Comanches and their spiritual needs. He needed more training for missionary work, so Robert, Elsie, and their baby son journeyed to Philadelphia, where Robert enrolled at the National Bible Institute.

When Robert's health suffered as a result of the

unfamiliar cold of a Philadelphia winter, the Chaat family moved to Phoenix, Arizona, and the Cook Christian Training School. At the conclusion of his Bible school education in 1924, Robert and Elsie returned to Oklahoma, where Robert became assistant to the pastor. Their family, by this time, had increased by two; Samuel and Theodore joined big brother Robert, Jr.

> *During her many years of faithfulness, she has served her church and her family as mother, pastor's wife, pianist, organist, teacher, choir member, cook, cleaning woman, advisor, planner, coordinator, seamstress, and in countless other roles.*
>
> *—Paula Chaat Smith, daughter of Elsie Chaat*

The family lived in a small home west of the Reformed Church mission. In between caring for her boys, Elsie helped Robert as best she could. By the time Robert was put in charge of the mission in 1930, two girls—Dorothy and Pauline (also called Paula)—had been born to the Chaats.

Time and weather had taken their toll on the church building and the parsonage. The condition of the buildings was appalling, but resources were few. The Rev. G. A. Watermulder reported to the Women's Board of Domestic Missions that repairing the parsonage was "a real job." Walls had to be plastered, windows and screens were repaired by a carpenter, and both porches were repaired and painted.

> *Robert and Elsie and her two brothers spent a number of days in cleaning, painting, varnishing, putting alabastine on the walls, etc. . . . All the work, except of the carpenter, has been done by volunteers and has been of no extra expense to the board. We found a number of gallons of paint in one of the storerooms which we exchanged for varnish, etc., getting $4.90 credit. The linoleum in the dining room cost us $16.20. The floors were so badly splintered, it was the only thing to do. . . . The parsonage will be in fairly good condition, and Robert and his family will be very happy in it and keep it in good condition (Report to WBDM, 1930).*

The Chaat family lived in that parsonage for thirty-nine years. Throughout those years Elsie devoted her life to her church and family. Teachers from the churches in Lawton gave religious instruction to the Indian children in the government school. Elsie and Robert taught the fifty Reformed Church children.

> *We have been making a special effort to bring these young people in touch with the church. Some come to the mission services almost every Sunday, and we invite two or three for dinner and the other services here. It means extra work and expense, but we feel it is worthwhile. After school classes the children scatter to their homes, some of them non-Christian. So we are trying to do everything possible to build them up in the faith so they may be able to withstand the forces of evil which tend to engulf them when they get home (Annual Report WBDM, 1931, 20).*

In 1934 the General Synod granted a dispensation to the Classis of New York to ordain Robert, even though his preparation for the ministry had been somewhat irregular. He had been tutored by RCA missionaries to the American Indians and members of the faculty at New Brunswick Theological Seminary, primarily Professor Milton Hoffman.

Robert Chaat was ordained into the Reformed Church at Marble Collegiate Church in New York City in November of 1934. With five small children at home, Elsie was unable to attend the important ceremony, but her prayers were with him.

In the early days, it took a great deal of effort to teach the Comanche people the traditions and rituals of the church. Elsie spent much of her time working with the children and the women. She taught Sunday school and encouraged the women to participate in church activities. By 1935 the Women's Missionary Society, with twenty-five members, "faithfully carried on their work. They made ten or more quilts, helped finance the church, sponsored the Day of Prayer, and were able to send small gifts to the WBFM and WBDM" (Report to WBDM, 1935).

Elsie thinks of herself as a shy person who would not call herself a leader. However, through the years Elsie Chaat has been a source of strength and inspiration to the Women's Missionary Society, the Sunday school classes, and the Bible school classes she has taught, as well as being a role model to numerous would-be pianists and organists by her mostly self-taught ability to play those instruments. Elsie never sought leadership, but encouraged others to step forward.

In difficult times, her first reaction has always been, "Let's pray about it." Ever since the first missionaries brought the message of hope to the Comanches and she accepted Christ as her Savior, Elsie has remained true to her faith. During her many years of faithfulness, she has served her church and her family as mother, pastor's wife, pianist, organist, teacher, choir member, cook, cleaning woman, advisor, planner, coordinator, seamstress, and in countless other roles.

After Robert's retirement in 1969, the Chaats remained faithful to their church. Elsie was the first woman elected to the consistory of Comanche Reformed Church. When she is needed, she serves as a substitute pianist. A widow since Robert died on October 7, 1991, Elsie continues to keep the Reformed Church in her prayers and as an important concern in her life.

Irene Staplekamp Dykstra

(1889-1972)

The daughter of a Reformed Church minister who died when he was forty-nine years old, Irene Staplekamp Dykstra spent most of her growing and educational years in Holland, Michigan, with her widowed mother, a sister, and two brothers. She attended Hope College Preparatory School and graduated from the college in 1912. That same year the Women's Division of the Michigan Oratorical League was organized. Irene competed, using a paper she had written on the challenge of the Christian missionary movement in American society, and she won the state contest (J. Dean Dykstra, son, submitted story to author, February 1994*).

Irene Staplekamp married the Rev. John A. Dykstra, a graduate of Princeton and New Brunswick Theological Seminaries, and moved with him to their first pastorate—First Reformed Church in Catskill, New York. Their son, J. Dean, was born in New York City, during the year the Dykstras served Hamilton Grange Reformed Church. In 1919 the family moved to Grand Rapids, Michigan, when John accepted a call to Central Reformed Church. Their second son, William, was born in 1927.

Irene Dykstra was a talented woman who had a great deal of energy. During the thirty-five years spent in Grand Rapids, she volunteered in both church and civic organizations, serving as an officer in the YWCA, the Women's City Club, and the Scribblers Literary Society. Irene gave the bulk of her time and talent to Central Reformed Church, the strong support of her husband's ministerial career, and the concerns of Reformed Church mission.

Mrs. Dykstra was very interested in the business

and professional women of the congregation. It was under her guidance that a very strong "B & P," as they were called, was formed and continued functioning as a unified force in the congregation for many years. She recognized the diversities in the congregation and turned them into strengths (Barbara S. Davidson, letter to author, Nov. 28, 1994).

An eloquent speaker, Irene Dykstra "enjoyed the recollection that through her association with the Women's Board of Domestic Missions, she spoke before a stated or special session of every particular synod in the entire denomination on some aspect of the church's missionary work." During the 1930s Irene Dykstra was in great demand as a speaker at women's missionary conferences. In 1931 Miss Ruth B. Rule, general secretary of the Women's Board of Domestic Missions, reported:

Miss Lawrence, of the foreign board, paid enthusiastic tribute to our speakers in the western conferences—Mrs. Scholten, Miss Marie Zwemer, and Mrs. Dykstra. She particularly spoke of the masterly address given by Mrs. Dykstra at the conference in Zeeland where there was an audience of 800 women in one church and an overflow meeting of 400 in another (Ex. Comm, WBDM, Oct. 1931).

Missionaries visiting western Michigan almost invariably stayed at the Central Church parsonage on Lyon Street. The Scudders (Dr. Lewis R. II and Dorothy), the Cantines (the Rev. James and Elizabeth), the Rev. Jose Coffin, Dr. Paul Harrison, and others became familiar faces at the Dykstra supper table. One year Irene and John Dykstra spent a considerable time at the Winnebago Indian Reservation working with the staff to upgrade the mission program there.

Irene Dykstra served as general chair of the first delegated Assembly of Women of the Reformed Church in 1957. More than once Irene served as a denominational delegate to the Federal (later National) Council of Churches. She was a member of the Board of Church Women United of Michigan and served as state chair of the seventy-fifth anniversary of World Day of Prayer (1961).

In spite of her busy life, Irene always had time for her family. Sunday afternoons were always devoted to hymn time at her piano in the parlor. Her sons learned the trained art of reading aloud under her tutelage by reading a passage from the Bible each weekday night after supper. "Reading the Bible came before school work!"

Irene Dykstra was a writer of some accomplishment. She was the principal author (working with her husband) of *It Is Yet Building*, a history of Central Reformed Church (1968). Her specialty, however, was writing and producing dramas and pageants. She wrote two Christmas pageants and another celebrating the founding of Hope College.

Mrs. John A. Dykstra wrote and supervised the production of the pageant, Yet Building, which was held in the Civic Auditorium. This pageant was essential to a successful celebration of the centenary year of the Reformed Church being established in Grand Rapids. Central Reformed is the union of the First and Second Reformed Churches. Dr. John A. Dykstra was called to be the first pastor of Central Reformed Church. . . . Four hundred participants plus a great chorus of choirs from the twenty-six Reformed Church choirs. . .and the additional support of the Federal Symphony Orchestra gave the packed auditorium a high resolve to go forward into an even greater time of history—"This is a living church and is yet building" ("The Centenary Year," Grand Rapids Mirror Magazine, 1946).

Hope College presented her with the honorary

degree of Doctor of Letters in 1957, referring to "her dynamic energy in Christian ministry to community and nation."

When Central Reformed Church was rebuilt (1957) after a fire which destroyed the original building, the large chapel was dedicated in honor of both Irene and John Dykstra, "the beloved leaders of this congregation for more than a generation, for their faithful service to Christ and his church."

When she was eighty years old and living alone, Irene was so concerned about the divisive spirit in Reformed congregations in the midwest following the defeat of the Southern Presbyterian/RCA merger proposals, that she carefully wrote an article (1969) and submitted it to the *Church Herald*. She asked members of the RCA to maintain a positive attitude toward the continuing dialogue with other mainline denominations through the Consultation on Church Union (COCU). Although the editor of the denominational magazine chose not to publish the article, which he felt was too controversial, her concluding words are indicative of the way Irene Dykstra felt about life:

> Though you may be scholarly, beware
> the bigotry of doubt.
> Some people take a strange delight
> in blowing candles out!

"Irene Dykstra in family, church, and community, was not one to blow out candles" (J. Dean Dysktra).

Carol Wenneis Hageman

(1923-)

Carol Christine Wenneis was born and brought up in North Bergen, New Jersey, where her fourth generation German-American family belonged to Woodcliff Community Church. "The church was the center of our life, as it was for many people, particularly during the Depression years" (Carol Hageman, taped interview, March 1994*).

Carol met Howard Hageman when he came to Woodcliff from New Brunswick Theological Seminary to work with the Rev. David Van Strien. Following Howard's graduation and their marriage in 1945, the Hagemans moved to Newark, New Jersey, where they spent the next twenty-eight years. Howard served North Reformed Church as pastor; Carol served as a supportive spouse.

> *There was an awful lot of nurturing that had to go on so it was important that I do what I could to help his work. His work was always the central part of our marriage. I did whatever needed to be done for the life of the church. For example, whenever we had events in the evening, we had to organize a group of women to get a supper together. Even then people were working downtown and if they went home, we wouldn't get them to come back again, so Howard always wanted evening meetings connected with a meal.*

Through all the years of their ministry together, Carol was a gracious hostess. "We felt very keenly that our home should be part of church life. It was easier for us because we didn't have a family." She also served as a member of the Newark Board of Education, YWCA, Preschool Council, and on the executive committee of United Way.

Before long Carol was asked to serve as a member of the Women's Board of Domestic Missions, which always met in New York City. Board members from the western part of the church came into Grand Central Station by steam train, usually "sitting up in coach because there was no budget for travel."

Assigned to the Indian Committee, which was chaired by Lillian Pool, Carol discovered that being a member of the board "was a very intimate thing because not only did we know the missionaries, but we also got to know the members of Indian congregations by name."

Carol continued to serve on the merged Board of Domestic Missions, where she chaired the City Work Committee during the years when the church was "beginning to understand the tremendous needs of people who had moved into the vacuums we had created in the cities at the same time as churches were moving out."

In 1967, when the General Program Council of the Reformed Church in America was organized, Carol Hageman was chosen as its first vice-president, an office she maintains, "didn't mean much, because that was one of the offices they always saved for women."[16] During these years she also served as one of the RCA's delegates to the National Council of Churches.

When Howard Hageman left North Reformed Church to become the president of New Brunswick Theological Seminary in 1973, his wife continued the practice of opening their home to those they had covenanted to serve. "Those first few years, particulary when the student body was small, everybody knew that the back door of our home was the family entrance and that the coffee pot was on. When they needed to talk, they came and I listened."

Women seminarians especially were drawn to the warmth of the president's kitchen table.

> *It was such a frustrating and difficult time for women in seminary. The Reformed Church urged young women to go to seminary, then at the end of their prescribed work, the church denied them ordination. I was never on the forefront of the feminist movement, but I've always felt that the church was denying itself a strength it needed. I did a lot of listening and a lot of hand holding and gave whatever support I could, including picketing General Synod with Edith Beardslee. I was very anxious for these able and wonderful young women to be accepted into ordination.*

The Hagemans left the seminary in 1985, but Howard continued to write and speak, and Carol was his sounding board, his chauffeur, and his dearest friend. His death in 1992 left a vast hole in Carol's life, one she is filling with new challenges and old and new friendships. She says, "Early along I learned a truth that has become more a part of me as I age; that is, we are all born with different gifts from God which we must use. If we use them well, we enjoy some satisfaction, but the glory is God's."

Editorial
The Vital Teaching Office[17]

We need someone to teach folks
theology, you say—
Would you believe I know one?
She's in my thoughts each day.

She shows me how the Bible
can change my way of life.
Some day I hope you'll meet her—
she is my pastor's wife.

—Carol Cortelyou Cruikshank

Gretta Van Weelden Vander Beek

(1918-1984)

The third child born to James and Effie Van Weelden, Gretta Van Weelden Vander Beek "was loved, claimed, and included in the covenantal body of Christ from infancy, a sacred relationship she never spurned or ignored" (Charles Vander Beek, husband, story submitted to author, March 1994*).

During her formative years, Gretta attended Central Reformed Church in Oskaloosa, Iowa, where she met her future husband, A. Charles Vander Beek. The Great Depression limited her formal education to eight years at Rose Hill Elementary School, but that is where Gretta developed her gifts of drama, speech, and music.

After their marriage on September 14, 1939, Gretta and Charles worked a large farm for eleven years. They also delighted in their daughter, Patricia, and son, Ronald. The family enjoyed farming, and they were successful at it.

However, in 1951, pursuing a new sense of calling, the family sold the farm and moved to town. Charles enrolled in Central College and Gretta offered her time and talents to the church. She directed children's choirs, sang solos, participated in a sextette, taught catechism and Sunday school, and became involved in the Girl's League for Service. In 1954 they moved again—to Holland, Michigan, where they lived for three years while Charles completed his theological education at Western Seminary. Then in 1957 when Charles accepted a call to Rose Park Reformed Church in Holland, Gretta happily and thankfully accepted opportunities for service in her new church family.

While the local congregation was her first delight, Gretta shared her service and talents at the classical, synodical, and national levels of the RCA. She also found time to share in her husband's ecumenical and migrant ministry programs. She was one of four teachers who began and sustained a weekly catechism time for African-American children living in Holland.

In 1968 the Vander Beeks answered God's call to serve in a metropolitan parish in the inner city of Brooklyn, New York. There was so much to do in South Bushwick Reformed Church, but Gretta, drawing on the Lord's strength, tackled needs in Christian education, women's work, and church music. Every summer she directed a six-week, all-day daily vacation Bible school that included children in kindergarten through eighth grade. She recruited teachers, trained staff, coordinated schedules, worked on Christ-centered curriculum, planned and carried out weekly trips on the elevated train or subway to places such as the Bronx Zoo, and never lost a child.

Gretta also served South Bushwick as music director, encouraging children and adults to sing both traditional and contemporary songs. Vivian Rhem, who sang in South Bushwick's children's choir, remembers how much they learned from Gretta. "She always stressed pronunciation of d's and ess's." She taught piano to the children of the community, even those who had no piano at home. These children practiced at pianos scattered throughout the church and Christian education buildings.

During the fourteen years the Vander Beeks served in Brooklyn, Gretta had a profound influence on thousands of children. She selflessly tutored many children after school, taught piano lessons to children whose parents could never otherwise have afforded them, and spent hours with children and youth being the kind of role model that inspired many to reach for goals they might never otherwise have had. Several of the chil-

dren Gretta taught in Sunday school and music classes have gone on to college. One—Cheryl James—now sings with the group called "Salt 'n' Pepa" (Kenneth Cumberbatch, letter to author, Jan. 1994).

Gretta taught sewing classes for both girls and boys. She participated in block clubs, community activities, Church Women United, and beginning January 1, 1981, she served as an elder in the South Bushwick congregation.

> *One of Gretta's greatest loves was Reformed Church Women. She was active on both local and classical levels. I came to the Reformed Church from a Baptist background and I knew nothing about ladies guild. Gretta inspired me to become active in the guild and after a few years she asked me to become the president of Brooklyn's Classical Union. I was like Moses, "Lord, why me? I can't speak well and I have no knowledge of the classical union." Gretta said, "I will help you and teach you all you need to know," and she did (Vivian Rhem, testimonial, Jan. 1994).*

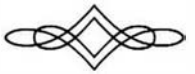
Easter Sunday, April 12, 1982, Gretta did all the things she loved to do—directed the choir, sang praises to God, produced a children's program. It was the last Sunday she would minister in those ways, but no one knew that at the time.

Two days later Gretta was taken to the hospital. Within a few more days she learned that she had pancreatic cancer which had spread to the liver. Medical procedures at New York Hospital improved her condition temporarily, allowing her to return home.

A host of concerned, loving people offered prayers in her behalf. "God did not miraculously intervene, but God lovingly sustained." Following a stroke which silenced her voice, Gretta's family accepted the inevitable. They decided to take her by air ambulance to a hospital in Grand Rapids, Michigan, where the family could be with her. With Charles at her side, Gretta joined those that await the resurrection on July 12, 1982.

> *Gretta Vander Beek was a woman unafraid to walk the ghetto streets, a woman whose girlish smile could warm the heart, a woman who planted bright flowers and ivy in her front yard despite an incinerator smoke stack directly across from her house, a woman who brought God's kingdom to earth in a desolate place where few would be willing to serve (Arlene Tenckinck, letter to Beth Marcus, Dec. 1989).*

To honor Gretta Vander Beek's life and ministry, the family established a scholarship fund at New Brunswick Theological Seminary to assist students preparing for Christian ministry in the RCA and planning to serve in the inner city.



Women have modeled the Bible stories and nurtured the faith of children through their work in church school and vacation Bible school, as well as in their homes. Children have seen their mothers and grandmothers take time to perform religious duties. As a child, William Walvoord observed his Grandma Lammers, who lived in their home in eastern Wisconsin.

> *Almost every day, besides sharing the regular family devotions at mealtime, she took time out to withdraw and to read her Dutch Bible. As she laid the sacred volume aside, she repeatedly expressed her love for it by saying: "Dit is het beste boek"—this is the best [or dearest] book (Walvoord, 1979, 10).*

Gertrude Siebers, the mother of RCA missionary doctor Bernadine Siebers De Valois, modeled for her seven children the importance of a regular devotional life. Bernadine's mother had three sessions of morning devotions—one with her husband who left early for his job at a furniture factory, a second with the older children, and a third with those in elementary school. Bernadine says, "One day I had forgotten something and had to return home. As I came in the door, the usual call of 'Ma, Ma' went unanswered. I found my mother on her knees in her bedroom. She got up apologetically saying, 'Yes, child, I suppose I should be doing the dishes, but after you all are gone I need some time alone with my Lord.' What an example of Christian discipleship!" (Bernadine Siebers De Valois, May 1994).[18]

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries children participated—or at least were present—in the worship service. Later, congregations encouraged parents with young children to sit near the back of the church where they could easily leave if a child had a tantrum. Or congregations provided cry rooms where parents and their babies listened to the worship over a loudspeaker in a soundproof room. Still later, church nurseries were made available for parents who wished to worship without squirming, noisy youngsters, and women equipped the nurseries and supplied the care.

Blanche Elva Segar Svendsen

(1917-1985)

Blanche Svendsen's parents possessed a pioneer spirit that led them to missionary work among the Navajo Indians in the early part of the century. Though her mother died when Blanche was five, her father continued to be a strong spiritual influence in her life. She had an interest in sharing her faith, especially with children. This led her to teach summer vacation Bible school in places where she lived in low income communities with the families of the children she taught. Later in her life it led her to serve in the Sunday school and nursery of Hope Community Church in Los Angeles, California (Sharon Rager and Janette Tovar, daughters, submitted story to author, Nov. 1994*).

Although her father remarried, Blanche never really experienced emotional bonding with her stepmother and had to look beyond her personal experience for positive role models. As a teenager she was strongly influenced by a junior high young people's sponsor, whom she endearingly called Aunt Helen. Blanche actually collaborated with her, some years later, in writing a Sunday school curriculum geared to the developmental level of young children. Aunt Helen recognized Blanche's gifts for teaching, her natural ability to understand how children learn, and her positive approach to disciplining the young child. She encouraged Blanche, a rather insecure and shy young woman, to affirm her gifts and to build on her instinctive abilities.

Relying on God's promises gave Blanche courage to pursue the Lord's will in her life. One of her favorite verses was: "God is able to provide you with every blessing in abundance, so that by always having enough of everything, you may share abundantly in every good work" (2 Cor. 9:8). Physical weakness due to polio and tuberculosis made it difficult for her to finish college, so she considered home and child-rearing her career and calling. At a time when the term housewife was most commonly used to describe nonworking

mothers, Blanche proudly referred to herself as a homemaker.

Blanche Segar and Donald Svendsen met through Christian Endeavor meetings in downtown Los Angeles. Don, along with his father, owned a small shoe store where he repaired and sold shoes. Often he led the singing at Sunday evening worship at Hope Church. Throughout the almost forty years Don and Blanche were married, the couple struggled with financial difficulties, magnified by exorbitant medical bills. Don was forced to add an evening job to the sixty hours a week he already worked; Blanche learned to accept her physical limitations, used the time to write children's stories, and became the primary child rearer of their three children. Today Sharon and Janette are homemakers and educators; Ron is a minister in the Presbyterian Church U.S.A.

Blanche treated her ministry to preschoolers at the Sunday school hour as a vocation, second only to her responsibilities in the home. A Bible verse she often quoted was "I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of the Lord, than dwell in the tents of the wicked" (Psalm 84:10). A portion of her time was dedicated every week to planning activities and scheduling and training helpers to ensure a productive hour on Sunday mornings. She was always on the lookout for innovative teaching methods or materials to make her time with the children meaningful to them. Sunday mornings were a joint effort by the family to set up for the children so that they would enter with a feeling of comfort and enthusiasm.

Her work in the Sunday school was often challenged by a prevailing attitude of status quo, which frustrated her desire for innovative strategies in teaching young children. Her dedication to her calling armed her with the courage and perseverence to remain undaunted by outside influences. The loyal support of a few assistants enabled her to successfully affect young children's lives and the lives of their parents.

Blanche was a prophet in her ability to open children's hearts. In an era when most church training consisted of developmentally inappropriate teaching methods at best and babysitting at worst, many children learned at a young age to turn a negative ear to anything connected with the church. Blanche, on the other hand, met each child at his or her own level, communicating her personal joy and love of the Lord. As an advocate for children, Blanche sought every opportunity to communicate with parents regarding the individual growth of each child and to maximize their time with her.

Blanche Svendsen died as a result of lymphoma on July 29, 1985. A Bible verse which typifies her ability to balance the seriousness of her calling with the attitude of humility in which she fulfilled it is:

You hem me in, behind and before,
and lay your hand upon me.
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
it is so high that I cannot attain it.
(Psalm 139:5,6)

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1. The men were the ones who related to the outside world and wrote the annual reports to the board, e.g., "Mrs. Chamberlain tells me. . ." By the 1870s, however, the women missionaries (or "assistant missionaries") had stopped providing information and had started writing their own reports. Annual Reports, 1870, p.3.

2. Rules of the Arcot Mission, *(Madras: Printed at the American Missionary Press, 1853), Section XI, p. 8. Annual reports show that the women of the Arcot Mission were faithful in spreading the gospel to Indian women. "Mrs. Silas Scudder in 1863 had invited the women from a neighboring village to come every day to her house for Bible study, promising a cloth to each one who could read a chapter in the Bible at the end of a year. Four women attended, two won the prize, and all became Christians." Mrs. W.I. Chamberlain,* Fifty Years in Foreign Fields, *(New York: Woman's Board of Foreign Missions, 1925), p. 56.*

3. Joseph and Sarah Scudder left India the year after Jacob and Charlotte Chamberlain arrived.

4. Missionary wives seldom accompanied men on their evangelistic tours and the preaching, done by men, reached mostly men. When single missionary women began arriving in India in the 1870s to serve as teachers and administrators, they reached out to adult women in their homes. This evangelistic effort was called the Zenana Mission (or Movement) after the zenana, or women's section of an Indian home, a segregated living space for the exclusive use of women and the men they could see without violating rules of modesty.

5. This letter and many more are preserved in the Archives of the Reformed Church in America, New Brunswick Theological Seminary, New Brunswick, New Jersey. The first letter from Jacob to Charlotte is dated 2 January 1861 and the last is dated November 9, 1873. Each letter which was sent by the Indian Postal Service cost one-half anna, but in the early days, many letters were hand carried.

6. Place names in India are spelled in a variety of ways, e.g., Madanapalle is sometimes spelled Madanapally.

7. Arthur Chamberlain, a sickly child, died on January 16, 1878.

8. In 1947 the work of the Arcot Mission, including the Girls' School was absorbed into the Church of South India (CSI). In 1980, when CSI celebrated the school's centenary, the institution, which began with only five students, had grown to more than a thousand.

9. Two of Jacob and Charlotte's sons, William Isaac and Lewis Birge, later worked as missionaries in the Arcot area. As with many missionary children, these boys personally appropriated the faith in Christ that was so much a part of their parents' lives.

10. Mary Chamberlain, Charlotte's daughter-in-law, was probably with the family at Charlotte's bedside when she died.

11. Mrs. Grant, an English citizen, stayed with the Schuylers during a brief visit to Albany. Written in 1808, forty-six years after her visit to America, Mrs. Grant's recollections may be exaggerated and romanticized. Nevertheless, it is one of the few available works on women's life in eighteenth century Albany written by a woman, and, therefore, useful in giving readers an idea of what life might have been like for a colonial woman such as Catalina Schuyler.

12. Robert S. Alexander, historian of First Church of Albany, notes that the church's pastor, Dominie Godfredius Dellius, did some missionary work among the Mohawk Indians. See Alexander's book, Albany's First Church *(New York: First Church in Albany, 1988), p. 77.*

13. John Luidens notes that "The clergy of the Dutch Reformed Church were almost solidly in support of the patriotic cause...and a very large majority of the church members supported in various ways the cause of independence." John P. Luidens, The Americanization of the Dutch Reformed Church *(Norman, OK: John P. Luidens, 1969), p. 200. However, Alice Kenney found sentiments about equally divided, often splitting families down the middle ("The Albany Dutch: Loyalists and Patriots," N.Y. History, October 1961).*

14. Some missionaries and their spouses are advocating that this policy be changed and that separate checks be issued.

15. Commission on Theology, "The Role and Authority of Women in Ministry," MGS 1991, p. 441.

16. Frances Davis Beardslee, who worked hard as Cradle Roll secretary and candidate secretary as a member of the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions, had a similar impression concerning women on the united boards. When she was put on the finance committee of the Board of Foreign Missions, she observed that she "felt herself to be a token female." (John W. Beardslee III, letter to Una Ratmeyer, April 27, 1994.) Frances Beardslee's story may be found in Chapter 3—Seeking Justice.

17. Carol Cortelyou Cruikshank, March 13, 1987, Rosendale, NY. Carol's story (and more of her poetry) may be found in Chapter 10—Praising God through the Arts.

18. Bernadine Siebers De Valois' own story may be found in Chapter 4—Healing God's People.

Chapter Nine

Giving Generously

Dorcas/Tabitha

(Acts 9:36-42)

When Dorcas became a Christian she used her wealth to give to the needy and to provide poor people with clothes which she herself sewed. She was the kind of woman everyone loved and admired. So when she died suddenly, members of her congregation in Joppa were so distressed that they sent for the apostle Peter, who was visiting in the nearby town of Lydda. The Christians in Joppa had heard that Peter had healed a man who had been paralyzed for eight years, so they thought Peter might be able to raise Dorcas from the dead.

As soon as Peter arrived, he found the widows of the congregation weeping. They showed him all the shirts and coats Dorcas had made while she was alive. Peter could see that Dorcas had been a gifted and generous woman. He prayed she would live again to glorify God.

Then Dorcas "opened her eyes, and seeing Peter, she sat up. He gave her his hand and helped her up. Then calling the saints and widows, he showed her to be alive. This became known throughout Joppa, and many believed in the Lord" (Acts 9:40-42).

Giving is one of those things members of Christ's body are expected to do, but we all know some individuals, like Dorcas, who are able to see a need and who have the resources or skill or time to do something to alleviate that need. In his Gospel, Luke wrote of women—"Mary, called Magdalene...and Joanna, the wife of Herod's steward Chuza, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them [Jesus and the disciples] out of their resources" (Luke 21:2b, 3).

God has given some people the gift of generosity, which they use both to address the needs of others and to share God's love in Christ. When the United States was a very young country, women (especially those who lived in cities on the East Coast) had few options other than child-rearing and housekeeping open to them. Wealthy women who employed domestic servants had a great deal of leisure time, which some used to help others. Women such as Sarah Doremus[1] raised funds among men and women of her own class to help the needy at home and abroad. Women such as Gertrude Lefferts Vanderbilt (Flatbush Reformed Church, Brooklyn, New York), first foreign corresponding secretary of the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions, "whose wisdom and consecrated pen have rendered most valuable service to the work from the beginning" (Chamberlain, 1925, 115), volunteered time, talent, and treasure to aid their "beloved church in its foreign missionary work for women and children" (Chamberlain, 1925, 115). When Gertrude Vanderbilt died on January 5, 1902, the Woman's Board lamented her passing: "She gave her labor and her influence, all the resources of an exceptional intellectual endowment, to the work of foreign missions carried on by the Woman's Board" (Chamberlain, 1925, 116).

Early church records indicate that wealthy women gave both money and goods, such as silver baptismal bowls, to their local congregations. Endowment funds began or increased because women left all or part of their estates to a congregation with which they had been associated all their lives. Sometimes they gave sizable amounts. Robert Alexander, historian of First Church of Albany, New York, reports: "The first explicitly unrestricted legacy appears to have been received by the church in 1853 following the death of Margaret Ten Eyck, whose will bequeathed $10,000 to North Church" (Alexander, 1988, 260).

There were also women, deeply committed to the mission work of the Reformed Church, who remembered the RCA in their wills. "In 1859, Miss Caroline E. Adriance, a member of the Reformed Church of Owasco Outlet, New York, went out to Japan with the Rev. and Mrs. S. R. Brown and the Rev. and Mrs. G. F. Verbeck. After spending several years in Yokohama, she joined the Amoy Mission where she died in 1864, leaving the greater part of her small estate to the Board of Foreign Missions which had given her her commission" (Chamberlain, 1925, 19).

At the annual meeting of the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions in 1879, the Rev. Mr. James H. Ballagh of Japan spoke of women's power which revived "the missionary spirit in the church," and in the previous year had given "a half million dollars to this work; and by personal labor in the field, had done a service that could not be overestimated" (Annual Report WBFM, April 1879, 5).

Charlotte Wyckoff

(1893-1966)

In 1908 Charlotte Wyckoff, the daughter of RCA missionaries Dr. John Henry and Emmeline Bonney Wyckoff, who was born and educated in Kodaikanal, South India, came to the United States to study at Northfield Seminary in Massachusetts. After graduating from Wellesley College, her mother's alma mater, she returned to South India as a missionary teacher.

Charlotte studied Tamil for three years and taught at and helped to build a school for girls at Chittoor. In 1930 she spent six months visiting village schools in the Arcot Mission. She encountered Christians in the southern area of the mission who asked her, "Have you forgotten us? Why don't you continue your father's and mother's work [with us]?" Charlotte felt this was a direct call to do village work. In spite of the fact that the Arcot Mission and Indian Christians wanted her to remain as a teacher at Sherman High School for Girls in Chittoor, Charlotte Wyckoff left her position in the school in 1940 and, on her own initiative, went to live in the village of Muttathur in the district of South Arcot, an impoverished rural area.

She lived in a tent, walked miles, rode crowded buses and slow bumpy bullock bandies, and sat up late at night writing letters, by the light of a kerosene lantern, to her many friends who were inspired to support her efforts. . . .By giving up the so-called luxury of a town job and going to live in the midst of them in the village, she showed them her deep interest in their daily lives and activities.

—Joyce Dunham, written about Charlotte Wyckoff, 1954

She set up housekeeping temporarily in a tent and then moved to a thatched-roof house where she lived on a piece of mission property that had once been the center of a Christian parish. When Charlotte moved there in 1941, there was nothing left (because of retrenchment by the mission) but a ruined church building. Although the Arcot Mission couldn't promise her any funds, Charlotte felt strongly that God wanted her in Muttathur. Friends in America encouraged her by sending $1,500. Indian Christians also contributed to the project.

> *A group of five hundred Christian women in a conference at Katpadi pledged themselves to help the new work which they took on as a home mission project. These women took up collections by putting aside the Lord's handful from each meagre ration of rice. Servicemen also contributed funds so that a sum of 1,000 rupees a year, made by real self-sacrifice, was used for actual running expenses (Joyce Dunham, "Jothy Nilayam Rural Center," article written in 1954, submitted to Beth Marcus with letter, Nov. 1989*).*

At first the only staff at Jothy Nilayam (Abode of Light) Rural Center were Charlotte and a nurse, Dhriviam. In a letter to West End Collegiate (New York City) friends, Charlotte indicated her desire to keep the center "simple so that the Indian people can feel it is theirs" (June 10, 1941). Together these two women "started a dispensary, which grew from a tent to a shed, and finally to a four-room infirmary. This medical center was the only place for miles around where villagers could receive first aid" (Dunham, 1989).

Soon others came to help Miss Wyckoff. Many were teachers who were primarily interested in the outcaste children who were not allowed to attend the public school in the caste-village. Abraham, one of the teach-

ers, taught reading to boys who came to Jothy Nilayam at night after working in the fields from daybreak. They would work at their lessons until about 10 at night, then flop on the ground to sleep. At dawn they awoke to return to the fields. Dhanam, who was one of Charlotte's "orphan daughters" from the Christian Home in Vellore, kept house and taught anyone who dropped in. A number of Miss Wyckoff's twenty-six "daughters" joined her at Jothy Nilayam. Mercy took on a little parish school. Yesumony, another "daughter," came to the center with her four children to work as a cook after her husband deserted her. Charlotte was glad for these helpers because, as she wrote to friends, "My job [after breakfast] is to wash the dishes, for I have not the intelligence for much other housework" (Letter to West End Collegiate friends, June 10, 1941).

Charlotte Wyckoff's gift was not doing housework. Instead, she generated funds to begin and maintain a school, nursery, dispensary, agricultural projects, and the revitalization of the church.

> *She lived in a tent, walked miles, rode crowded buses and slow bumpy bullock bandies, and sat up late at night writing letters, by the light of a kerosene lantern, to her many friends who were inspired to support her efforts. To us as young people who visited her, it was a lovely, quiet, camping situation, but to her it was long, hot days and nights without fans or refrigeration, plain dull meals with very little in the way of fresh foods and vegetables, and isolation from English-speaking people (Dunham, 1989).*

Charlotte Wyckoff believed that she needed to live in a rural area of India in order to be closer to people she had been called to serve.

> *[Missionaries] get too much involved in running big institutions and managing accounts and telling other people how to do things! . . .If American Christians in America find it hard to introduce religious matters into the conversation, we have the same difficulty, perhaps made greater by the complete difference of our background and thought content. I am so glad that I broke away and came out to live nearer to the people. But I have to watch myself to see that I don't just fall into another rut (Wyckoff, 1945).*

In the 1950s a full-time agricultural worker established a farm, a branch of the Katpadi Agricultural Institute. This improved the nutrition of the people by showing them how to produce more and better foodstuffs. The government also helped by providing a veterinary department. Jothy Nilayam helped the unemployed by teaching inexpensive crafts like mat-weaving and bag-making and, during periods of famine, provided relief packages. In 1960 Charlotte wrote:

> *When I tried to say that the food parcels came, not from me, but from the friends overseas, they shook their heads sagely. "How would those people far away know what address to write on the boxes and bales? Would they have heard of our obscure village if you had not found us first and sent word to them of our needs?" Nothing has touched their hearts more than the shipments of milk-powder, wheat, cheese, and beans which were distributed to us by the lorry-load for them in time of drought and resulting famine. Those of you who have contributed to UNICEF, C.A.R.E., and Church World Service, please take note! (Wyckoff, 1960, 3).*

As is so often the case with those who have been given the gift of generosity, their intense desire and motivation to give is never seen as a burden. Giving makes them feel good. In the November 1941 Jothy Nilayam Journal Charlotte Wyckoff wrote: "Where are the hardships of this village life? I was never so happy before" (Wyckoff, 1941).

Miss Wyckoff had seen the need of approaching the Indian people at their most concentrated spot—the village. By giving up the so-called luxury of a town job and going to live in the midst of them in the village, she showed them her deep interest in their daily lives and activities. By her own initiative, she built up the rural center to a lively settlement of eighteen buildings, with several consecrated workers, serving several hundred villagers, in all phases of life (Dunham, 1954).

When Charlotte first went to Muttathur, the caste-village women called her names. They pointed at her and laughed at her. She was the village bogeyman. Mothers teased their children by telling them Miss Wyckoff would take them with her and beat them if they weren't good, until soon "every baby is howling with fright of me" (Wyckoff, 1946). Nineteen years later, by the end of Charlotte's term in India, they had accepted her as "a neighbor and friend and citizen of Muttathur, and were no longer worried about caste-pollution when we came among them" (Wyckoff, 1960). In fact, Jothy Nilayam had become a place where caste and outcaste, Hindu, Jain, Moslem, Protestant, and Catholic learned to work and play and even pray together.

The last half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth have been called the Benevolence Empire by some historians. It was a time when "the industrial revolution and the rise of the business class gave certain women leisure beyond child-rearing and housekeeping. . . .The Benevolence Empire...was based on the voluntary work and fund raising of middle-class women" (Hardesty, 1924, 109).

Mary Putnam Pruyn

(1820-1885)

Mary Putnam was born in Albany on March 31, 1820, the daughter of Scotch Presbyterians Elisha and Esther Johnson Putnam. At the age of eighteen, following her marriage to Colonel Samuel Pruyn (twenty years older than Mary), she transferred her membership to Second Reformed Dutch Church, her husband's congregation (Robert Alexander, historian First Church in Albany, NY, story submitted to author, Dec. 1993*).

Mary, who was the colonel's second wife, and Samuel had eight children: four died in early childhood and one, Charles E., was a casualty of the Civil War. Those who survived to adulthood were Agnes Pruyn (Mrs. Robert) Strain, Mary Pruyn (Mrs. Worthington) La Grange, and Samuel S. Pruyn.

The Pruyns were active in Second Reformed Dutch Church on Beaver Street, where the colonel was a deacon and Mary was a loyal supporter of the Women's Bible Class and a "faithful teacher in the Sabbath-school" (Christian Intelligencer, obituary, Feb. 18, 1885, 5). When Mary's husband died in 1862, he left his relatively young widow financially secure. She responded to her bereavement by resolving to dedicate her remaining years to Christian service.

During the Civil War, she supervised the collection of food and other supplies to be sent to army hospitals. She taught in the industrial school sponsored by the Children's Friend Society, founded the House of Shelter, the Bible Reader's Association, the Mother's Mission, and Flower Mission. "So highly esteemed were her services in city mission work, that when she was inclined in 1870 to go to Japan as a missionary, her purpose was earnestly opposed by many of her friends" (*Christian Intelligencer*, Feb. 18, 1885, 5).

She did go to Japan in 1871, traveling under the auspices of the Women's Union Missionary Society of New York. She established the American Mission Home for Girls in Yokohama, which she directed for five years; it survives today as one of Yokohama's leading girls' schools.

> *Her relentless pursuit of visions for serving the needs of the Lord's people proved to be at the expense of her own health, and in 1876 she found it necessary to return home to regain her strength. Back in Albany, she again immersed herself in the work of the Beaver Street Church, understandably becoming an officer of the Ladies Mission Association (Alexander, 1993).*

Mary Pruyn was in great demand as a speaker, giving talks on foreign missions to many women's groups and appealing for aid to establish a home and school in Nagasaki, Japan.

> *At the anniversary of the society [of the Reformed Church in Yonkers, New York], Mrs. Mary Pruyn addressed a numerous and attentive audience; and after stating the difficulty which attended the work in Japan in 1871, when she arrived there, gave illustrations of the rapid progress of missionary effort; the thirst for knowledge and quickness in acquiring it, among both sexes, being remarkable (Annual Report WBFM, 1877, 22).*

In 1882 she responded to an earnest request from the Women's Union Missionary Society to go to China, to erect a hospital in association with the Women's Christian Medical College of Shanghai.

> *As construction of the hospital got underway, she turned her attention to the needs of the younger girls and reactivated the "Bridgeman Home," a home for girls similar to the one she had established in Yokohama. Again, her boundless energy exceeded her physical endurance, and before long her health was failing. She found it necessary to leave China in May of 1884, but not before a "Mary Pruyn Memorial Bed" in the new hospital had been dedicated in her honor. Her illness forced a stopover in Japan of several weeks and another delay in San Francisco in order to mobilize her strength for the arduous nature of travel in those days. Arriving in Albany towards the latter part of September, she failed to regain her health and passed away on February 10, 1885.*

In summarizing her life at the funeral service, the Rev. Dr. [Joachim] Elmendorf stated: "She was a vigorous woman—vigorous in body, mind, and spirit. She was a woman who first asked 'Lord, what would you have me do?' and then did it with all her might" (Alexander, 1993).

When the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions (WBFM) and Women's Board of Domestic Missions (WBDM) were organized in the late 1800s, wealthy women and pastor's wives were chosen as board members. Amelia Van Lent Van Cleef, wife of the Rev. Dr. Paul Van Cleef, was a leader on both boards. Her selection as a board member in 1875, when the foreign board organized, was due in part to the fact that she lived close to New York City, where the boards met, and that her husband was well known in the denomination. Paul Van Cleef was pastor of Second Reformed Church in Jersey City, New Jersey, (1849-96) and stated clerk of the General Synod of the RCA (1871-76). Amelia, however, was a woman who "was vitally interested in the cause of for-

eign missions and spared no effort, shrank at no sacrifice to accomplish the coming of the kingdom of God in Eastern lands. . . .Full of vitality and enthusiasm, her capacity for service knew few limitations" (Chamberlain, 1925, 190). She served the foreign board as vice-president for nineteen years, as president for six years, then as honorary president until her death on November 26, 1911. She also served as the first president of the Women's Executive Committee of the Board of Domestic Missions.

Wealthy women were chosen to serve as board members in part because they had sufficient leisure time and could afford to serve without remuneration. Most of these women were also deeply committed to helping others spread the gospel of Christ. Mary Bussing, daughter of Emily and John S. Bussing of New York, New York, became a member of the WBDM in 1906, but she had been participating in the board's work long before that. The "Our Church" column of the January 21, 1885, issue of the *Christian Intelligencer* noted:

> *Christmas in Dakota. Miss M. Bussing sent a large package of beautiful Christmas cards, which were distributed among the three Sabbath schools of Turner, Salem, and Centreville. Miss B. has been a great help in the mission cause, sending papers, books, cards, money, and cheering words. May the Lord reward her fourfold. (p. 5)*

Three years after joining the WBDM, Mary Bussing gave money to purchase a seventy-five acre farm in Annville, Kentucky. This farm and the tumble-down log house, which stood near the roadway and open well, became home for RCA missionaries William Worthington and his bride, Henrietta Zwemer, at the end of December 1909.[2] Mary's generosity to the RCA mission in Kentucky also "made possible the erection of the John S. Bussing Memorial Church [in McKee], built upon a site selected and purchased by the mountain people" (Golden Years, 1932, 62). Periodically she gave additional gifts to enlarge this memorial to her father.

After her death on November 15, 1935, the WBDM learned that Mary Bussing had bequeathed $30,000 to the board. "$10,000 is left to the General Fund, $15,000 to the Kentucky Mountains Fund, and $5,000 to the Indian Fund" (Minutes of Exec. Comm. WBDM, April 15, 1937, 2).

Generous people often avoid calling attention to themselves. They do, however, enjoy setting up memorials for their loved ones.

Elizabeth Rodman Voorhees

(1841-1924)

Elizabeth Rodman, born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1841, was the only child of John Rodman, a builder of sailing ships, and Elizabeth Woodruff Nevius Rodman. Because Elizabeth's mother died when her daughter was an infant, the child was raised by her aunt, who later became her stepmother. Because the family was wealthy, Elizabeth was educated by private teachers and attended by many servants.

In her adolescent years Elizabeth moved to New Jersey, after her father purchased an estate near Bedminster. The family transferred their membership to the Reformed Church in Bedminster, where Elizabeth "sang in the choir and took a woman's share in the work of the church" (Luidens, 1912, 3).

At the age of twenty-five she met and fell in love with another choir member, Ralph Voorhees, the son of a well-to-do farmer. Elizabeth's father did not want her to marry Ralph, who was going blind due to atrophy of the optic nerves. Not wishing to upset her father, she com-

plied. However, her love for Ralph was so great, that Elizabeth remained single until after John Rodman's death. The couple married in 1887 and moved to Clinton, New Jersey, where they joined First Presbyterian Church.

During Ralph's lifetime the couple enjoyed giving away large sums of money. "Through her generosity and that of her husband...the Ralph W. Voorhees fund for the chair of Hellenistic Greek and New Testament exegesis was founded in...New Brunswick Theological Seminary" (Luidens, 1912, 1). The couple also gave a "large contribution to Rutgers University in the magnificent library" and provided the Women's College of New Jersey with "a beautiful Colonial Chapel, a magnificent organ, and a residual fund for the promotion of religion and religious leadership in the Women's College" (Luidens, 1912, 1).

When the Reformed Church decided to send an evangelist to Amoy, "the Voorhees family assumed entire responsibility for all expenses" of the Rev. John G. Fagg during the years he served in China from 1887-1894 (Luidens, 1912, 16). After Ralph's death, Elizabeth continued to help the Amoy mission by providing $10,000 "to erect a girls' school building and a residence for two single women missionaries" (Chamberlain, 1925, 212). Another recipient of their generosity was Voorhees College in Vellore, India.

The couple lived together happily for twenty years before Ralph died (1907). Elizabeth lived another seventeen years, during which her husband's memory inspired her to even greater philanthropy.

> *She loved to set up memorials for him. One day Mrs. William I. Chamberlain of the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions of the Reformed Church came to her to tell the story of her visit to the mission stations around the world. Amongst other incidents, Mrs. Chamberlain told her old friend of Dr. Chamberlain's dangerous illness, with fever, while visiting Bombay. The steamship authorities would not let him go on board for fear of spreading contagion. This meant that the doctor was remanded to shore and was consigned to a hospital in a little village where the Presbyterian missionaries had a school for the blind. Dr. Chamberlain was very kindly treated in this hospital by the nurses. He, with Mrs. Chamberlain, became deeply interested in the work that was being done in this place for the blind.*
>
> *Mrs. Chamberlain's story made such a deep impression upon Mrs. Voorhees, and the memory of the blindness of her own husband was so keen, that she sent to Mrs. Chamberlain the day after her visit enough money to found what is gratefully acknowledged in Bombay as the "Ralph W. Voorhees School for the Blind." In the Southland, in the Middle West, in college centers, we find similar memorials to her husband's honor (Luidens, 1912, 5).*

Elizabeth Voorhees, who was wealthy in her own right, later inherited a large estate from her father's brother, Robert W. Rodman of New York, and huge returns from stock she had in Brooklyn Consolidated Gas. She seemed to delight in finding ways to share her wealth, all of which she did from her home. She rarely traveled, preferring to receive in her parlor representatives of educational and charitable institutions from all parts of the world.

She gave gladly and freely to churches of different denominations, including RCA congregations in New Jersey. She gave substantially to the Reformed Church in Highland Park. "When the Spotswood Church needed an organ, she gave them one that would do credit to any large church. When the Reformed Church at Middlebush burned down, her help was immediately and generously given" (Luidens, 1912, 5).

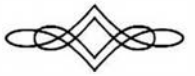
She also gave to denominational colleges,

including Hope College. "She gave $10,000 toward the endowment fund. Later she gave toward a women's dormitory, which today bears her name. She endowed the chair of Greek. Without these gifts the work of that institution would have been much restricted" (Luidens, 1912, 15).

Although Elizabeth Voorhees gave away hundreds of thousands of dollars, she did so only if the recipients met her criteria. The gift, first of all, had to serve to advance the cause of Christ. Secondly, there had to be a real need. Thirdly, Elizabeth had to know that the recipients were doing their share to fund the project. And finally, she wanted to know that the institution's financial policy was sound enough to guarantee that her investment would be used wisely.

Elizabeth preferred not to have people broadcast her gifts. When she gave funds for the Voorhees Library at Rutgers, she wanted no tablet to perpetuate her name. Instead, she told the university to tell anyone who asked where the funds had come from to say they had been given by a friend.

> *Only after long persuasion did she consent to have her name visibly placed above the portal of the chapel [at the Women's College of New Jersey]. It is a fitting monument to her long life of Christian philanthropy. As the generations of students come and go, the daily hours of worship, the music of the organ and the college choirs, the messages from the greatest minds and souls of the land, the religious organizations that will find therein a home—all these things, but most of all the lives of young women transformed and ennobled, will continue to bless the name of Elizabeth Rodman Voorhees whose simple faith, stern sense of duty, quiet humility, [and] self-denying blessed her generations (Luidens, 1912, 23).*



People who have been given the gift of generosity ask for no recognition or trophies as reward for their generosity. They prefer to give quietly, without a lot of fanfare. Like other generous individuals, Liz Alexander consented to having her story published because she felt it might motivate others to share the blessings given them by God.

Elizabeth (Liz) Schwartz Alexander

(1937-)

Liz Schwartz Alexander, who was born and educated in New York City, learned a lot about being generous from her parents. Liz's father was a Jewish immigrant from Romania who "worked his way through college and medical school and became a world renowned pioneer in cardiac research" (Liz Alexander, story submitted to author, June 1994*). Liz's mother, who had been baptized Roman Catholic, was a bacteriologist who did not work while Liz and her older brother were children. However, she did spend "a great deal of time volunteering for the Red Cross, Girl Scouts, and PTA...and on the telephone being a friend to those in need of a listening ear." Although neither of her parents practiced any formal religion, both "had very high moral and ethical standards and a great concern for the well being of people."

Liz's first experience with religion occurred when she was six. "My mother, brother, and I spent the summer with my great aunt in Norwalk, Ohio, and while there I attended vacation Bible school. My only recollec-

tion of the week is the theme: 'We are God's fellow workers,' but that has been a cornerstone of my life."

At the age of seven Liz began to attend Sunday school at Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church (New York City) when invited by a playmate. She was baptized and confirmed in the church when she was in tenth grade. "At confirmation we were each given our own Bible verse. Mine was Jeremiah 29:13: 'Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart.' Bible study and reading books of a spiritual nature has been an important part of my life ever since."

Every summer the church offered teens an all-expense paid week at the church's summer conference center. Liz went twice. One year the theme was the parable of "The Vine and the Branches" (John 15:1-17). "That week," Liz says, "I came to a deeper understanding that I had been chosen by God to be his helper. This brings with it the responsibility to bear much fruit—to share God's love with others so that they might experience the joys of living a Christian life. I didn't understand how I was to do this, but that has come later."

Liz Schwartz met David Lee Alexander when both were freshmen at Oberlin College in Ohio. They married on June 7, 1958, two days before graduation. She says, "Our spiritual life was not very active until we moved to Dutchess County, New York, where we still live, where Dave spent thirty-two years working as a rheologist. He started working there while I packed up our belongings and put them on the moving van. By the time I arrived, he had found a church home for us—First Reformed Church in Fishkill.... This was the beginning of our association with the RCA."

Since the birth of the Alexanders' three children—Robert, Michael, and Janet—Liz has not been employed, but she has not allowed dust to gather under her feet. When Jan was in kindergarten, Liz returned to school, earning an M.B.A. in accounting and finance at Marist College. "I looked at my master's as an insurance policy—I would have a marketable skill if the need arose. It hasn't yet, but I have been able to use the skills I learned there, as well as my spiritual gifts of administration, faith, and hospitality in a career of community service."

A Lay Witness weekend, a Marriage Encounter weekend, and Tres Dias (the Protestant expression of Cursillo) were formative in Liz and Dave Alexander's spiritual growth. Through Tres Dias Liz learned about "Friendship Evangelism," which can be summarized as: make a friend, be a friend, win a friend for Christ.

As our nest began to empty, we were left with several empty bedrooms. I read in Hebrews 13:2 "Remember to welcome strangers in your home. There were some who did it and welcomed angels without knowing it" (TEV), and Luke 14:13-14 which says "invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, and the blind. And you will be blessed, because they cannot repay you" (from 1992-95 RCWM Triennial theme). As I was puzzling over how to do this, I learned of an agency in our county which needs temporary housing for its clients. We have been hosting them for the last ten years. I cannot say that we are not repaid—we are just not repaid monetarily.

One Thanksgiving, just as we were winding down from a typical family Thanksgiving dinner, we received a call asking if we could house a person who had spent the whole day in a hospital emergency room and was no longer welcome to stay with his friend. I said sure, picked the person up, and brought him home. I was a little apologetic as I put a leftover turkey dinner in front of him, but his reaction was "This is wonderful! I didn't think I would have any Thanksgiving dinner." This is just one of a multitude of similar stories I could recount. By giving what for us is so little—a meal of leftovers and a

bed for the night—we received immeasurable joy in knowing we had been able to bring a ray of sunshine into this person's life. We don't preach to our guests, but when they express gratitude, we tell them that God has been good to us and we are glad to have had the chance to share with them. We also suggest that perhaps they will have the opportunity to do the same for someone else some day.

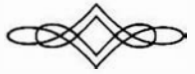
Liz shares her blessings in other ways as well. She and Dave have loaned their cars and "enabled others to buy houses or make needed repairs either by loaning them money or co-signing loans for them." Most of her monetary gifts are given anonymously. She is able to do this, in part, because of an inheritance she received, which she has "dedicated entirely to charitable purposes."

Liz has used her professional expertise in her congregation, as financial secretary and treasurer, and at the independent day school her sons attended, where she was a trustee and treasurer. She has done fund raising for both of these institutions and helped with long-range planning, financial analysis, grant writing, and publicity.

In the area of human services, Liz offers older women transportation to Bible study and help with shopping and other errands. She helps the elderly and low income persons as a volunteer tax and health insurance counselor, works with battered women and the frail elderly, volunteers at a homeless shelter, gives time to her congregation's food pantry, and does a variety of things with Reformed Church Women's Ministries.

Liz enjoys being able to help other people and organizations, but it wasn't until she studied Ruth Dickson's RCW Bible study *To Live with Joy* that she learned of the necessity of being able to accept gifts from other people. She likes to think of herself as a very capable, self-sufficient person. She says, "I had accepted gifts from others, but I usually tried to go out of my way to avoid doing so. I am indebted to Ruth for her written word in teaching me this lesson. Until I studied the chapter 'Joy in Giving—Joy in Receiving,' it did not occur to me that others have the need to give and that I have a responsibility to allow others to give to me. Now I can consciously grant people the opportunity to give me gifts."

These days Liz and Dave, who recently retired, are feeling their way into a new lifestyle. Whatever that may look like, it will certainly include giving and trusting God, who "is utterly dependable" (a recent RCWM theme). "God has given us much and expects much from us. With God's help we will be able to do whatever is asked of us, and we look forward to the future with great anticipation."



Generous people give because it gives them great joy, whether the giving involves money, time, energy, or special abilities. The Reformed Church in America has been blessed with women who are cheerful givers, seemingly tireless volunteers who make the church work.

Catherine (Kate) Miller Allard

(1904-1990)

Kate Miller Allard was born in Hudson, New York, but moved to Albany in 1921, when she became a student at Albany Normal School, a teacher's college. (Later this school became part of the State University of New York.) While at college, Kate became aware of the plight of low income people and their special needs, and she decided to become a social worker rather than a

teacher. Thus, she continued her education by earning a master's degree from Columbia University School of Social Work in New York City (Ed Mondore, story submitted to author, March 1994*).[3]

After graduation, Kate Miller returned to the Albany area, where she joined the staff of the Albany County Department of Social Services. Kate's work during this period known as the Great Depression was primarily with people who became displaced due to the closing of the many textile mills in Cohoes, New York, part of Albany County.

It was during her formative years in Albany that Kate joined Second Reformed Church, more commonly known as Madison Avenue Reformed Church. There she met Walter J. Allard, the man who became her husband and coworker in the life of the church. In 1937 Madison Avenue Church was destroyed by fire, and a year later its membership joined with that of First Reformed Church. These two congregations became newly incorporated as First Church in Albany.

Kate Allard gave generously of her time, energy, and skills in this merged congregation. She and her husband worked side by side in the church school, with her as a teacher and with him as church school superintendent. During these early years, Kate and Walter saw a growing need for a youth fellowship group. Together they convened a dozen young people on Sunday evenings. In addition to worshiping and studying together, the group enjoyed a large measure of fellowship. Soon they were meeting on Tuesday evenings as well as Sunday, and the group grew rapidly, numbering sixty to seventy-five members.

In 1950 Walter suffered a severe stroke and although he lived another twenty years, he was never able to work again. This meant that Kate had to return to full-time employment as a public school teacher. In spite of the fact that she taught full-time and attended to the needs of her beloved Walter, she remained unrelenting in her work in the church school and as the advisor to the Young People's Fellowship. She also labored tirelessly for the Women's Guild for Christian Service as well as for other groups in the church.

During these same years, Kate became superintendent of the church school and organized and directed a daily vacation Bible school. Shortly after the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., she inspired, organized, and directed the "Martin Luther King, Jr., Summer Lots Program," sponsored by First Church in Albany. RCA missionaries the Rev. Martin and Emilie Weitz met as volunteers in this outreach program for inner city children.

> *Kate located a number of vacant lots in the inner city sections of Albany and received permission from the city to use them in First Church's program. We spent one week at each lot telling stories, doing crafts, and leading recreational activities. In the evenings we would have programs, including movies, which involved the parents. We looked to Kate, a cheerful person with high energy, for leadership and inspiration. She picked us up when we were down (Martin Weitz, RCA missionary, telephone conversation with author, Feb. 1994).*

Kate used some of her energy to serve for a number of years as a member of the Board of Directors of the Clinton Square Neighborhood Association which was an inner city social service program. In later years she served as a member of the Board of Directors of the Downtown Day-Care Center, which was sponsored by First Church, and in her eighties she became the organizer and first director of First Church's food pantry.

At the age of seventy-five, Kate Allard became the first woman member of the Board of Trustees of First Church. She continued to serve the church and commu-

nity until shortly before her death in 1990 at the age of eighty-six. She and Walter never bore any children, but they always counted as their own the hundreds, indeed, thousands of children and young people who were blessed by their love, care, and nurture.

> *Ministers come and go at all churches, but Kate was always a constant at First Church. Indeed, she was First Church to her young people. Years later, after they had moved from Albany and returned for a visit, they always asked about or wanted to see Kate. In recognition of the affection held for Kate by countless numbers of people, when a new women's group was organized in 1960 to include more of the younger women in the congregation, it was named the Kate Allard group (Ed Mondore, March 1994).*

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1. Sarah Doremus' story may be found in Chapter 1—Taking the Lead.

2. Henrietta Worthington's story may be found in Chapter 7—Teaching by Word and Deed.

3. Ed Mondore, who knew Kate for a period of almost fifty years, wrote of her, "I know of no one who touched the lives of so many people more deeply than she did."

Chapter Ten

Praising God through the Arts

Miriam

(Exodus 2:1-10; 15:20-21)

Miriam, daughter of Hebrew slaves, had two younger brothers—Aaron and Moses. The youngest, Moses, was born at a time when the Pharaoh had decreed that all male children born to the Hebrews be thrown into the Nile River, but Moses was saved from death because God had chosen him to lead the Israelites out of Egypt to the Promised Land. God's plan to deliver the Hebrew people from slavery also included Aaron and Miriam.

Jochebed, Miriam's mother, put the child in a watertight basket and "placed it among the reeds on the bank of the river," while Miriam "stood at a distance, to see what would happen" to her infant brother. Miriam must have been fearless, because the moment she knew that Pharaoh's daughter planned to rescue her brother from the river, Miriam boldly approached the princess and asked, "Shall I go and get you a nurse from the Hebrew women to nurse the child for you?" And so Moses' early years were spent with his Hebrew family (Exodus 2).

Years later Moses, Miriam, and their brother Aaron were reunited as the children of Israel escaped slavery in Egypt (see Mic. 6:4). Although Moses is the one who led the Israelites to freedom, "the prophet Miriam" is the one who celebrated what God had done for them by leading the people in an act of worship. Courageous, enthusiastic, thankful Miriam "took a tambourine in her hand; and all the women went out after her with tambourines and with dancing. And Miriam sang to them: "Sing to the Lord, for he has triumphed gloriously; horse and rider he has thrown into the sea" (Exod. 15:20, 21).

Miriam's song of praise after the defeat of the Egyptians in the Red Sea is one of the earliest and most famous Hebrew literary pieces. Other women's songs have also been recorded in both the Hebrew and Greek portions of the Bible. The song of Deborah makes "melody to the Lord, the God of Israel" (Judg. 5:3) and "repeats the triumphs of the Lord" (Judg. 5:11). Mary's song of praise "magnifies the Lord" (Luke 1:46-55).

Through the ages, women have used their talents in the arts to glorify God. Many have served their spiritual communities as musicians—composers, singers, instrumentalists, liturgical dancers, and directors of music. Others have contributed their talents as writers of prose and poetry, as dramatic performers, or as artists in a variety of mediums.

In 1899 John S. Bussing commissioned Nah-bess-say, "the best bead worker in the Navaho tribe," from the Reformed Church mission at Colony, Oklahoma, to fabricate the RCA coat of arms on a twenty-four-inch by forty-four-inch piece of buckskin. When it was completed, Bussing presented the piece to the Executive Committee of the Women's Board of Domestic Missions.

> *Nah-bess-say worked one entire year in her little tepee using only sinew to thread the thousands of beads, and not one stitch showed on the reverse side of the skin. The large copy of the Coat of Arms was so perfectly reproduced that it seems as though an artist's brush had touched it* (Golden Years in Miniature, *1932, 42).*[1]

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries it was quite common for church women to come together in sewing groups to make garments which were then given to poor people in their own communities or packed in boxes and sent to the mission field. A word of appreciation to the "thousands of women who gather together at regular intervals during the year in sewing groups, and under whose busy, skillful fingers a constant stream of supplies flows out to the mission field," appeared in a history of the Women's Board of Domestic Missions written in 1932.

> *The articles they make so beautifully are varied—babies' layettes, complete from the dainty dress to the tiny knitted shoes; bright-colored jumper frocks for the littlest boys and girls; dresses for the older girls; tablecloths, napkins, sheets, pillow-cases, curtains, pillows, quilts—one could go on reciting the list indefinitely. But it would be impossible to tell the loving thought that goes into the producing of these articles—and the deep joy and gratitude in the hearts of those receiving these gifts* (Golden Years in Miniature, *1932, 103).*

The stories which follow are representative of RCA women who, with loving thought and a variety of talents, have praised and continue to praise God through the arts.

Stella Girard Veenschoten

(1892-1962)

Stella Elda Girard was born March 14, 1892, and raised in Pigeon, Michigan. Her mother, of English stock, was a staunch member of the Methodist Church. Her father, a French Canadian and Roman Catholic, worked for the Pere Marquette Railroad. At an early age Stella showed an intense interest in music. By the age of thirteen she was teaching piano to pay for her own instrument and her piano lessons. Using free rail passes, she traveled to study music with teachers in Bay City and Saginaw. After high school Stella moved with her parents to Holland, Michigan, where she was active in the Methodist Church, serving as soprano soloist in the church choir. She continued teaching piano. She also played piano for the silent movies at the local theater and sang at weddings and funerals (Joann Hill, daughter, story to Beth Marcus, Nov. 1989*).[2]

> *Largely as a result of her ministry, church music came of age in South Fukien, especially in the large towns and cities, principally through the students and choirs she had trained.*
>
> *—Joann Veenschoten Hill, daughter of Stella Veenschoten*

During his student days at Western Theological Seminary in Holland, Michigan, Nelson (H.M.) Veenschoten got to know Stella when he worked as a janitor at the Methodist Church and heard her sing in their choir. Following his graduation from seminary in May 1917, Stella Girard married the newly-ordained Rev. H. M. Veenschoten. After three months of speaking in RCA congregations as well as getting to know Nelson's relatives in Iowa, the couple left for China as career missionaries of the Reformed Church. Their three children, Girard, Joann, and Elin, were all born in the Hope and Wilhelmina Mission Hospital at Kulangsu, Amoy, Fukien, China.

Following two years of language study, the Veenschotens were assigned to Changchow, where Stella became involved in the music programs of various local churches and the girls' and boys' elementary mission schools. This latter involvement soon shifted to Talmage College, a high school for boys, and to Chin-Tek, a high school for girls, where she had major responsibility for the music program for many years.

Stella spent much time arranging music for mixed choral voices and for all male or female voices for the Glee clubs in those schools. Many of her students participated in church choirs as well as performing in musical programs which she produced. She gave private voice and keyboard lessons to promising students and faculty members.

One of her students, Tan Sun-Hua, was coached by Stella for the London Royal College of Music examinations and won a music scholarship to the University of Shanghai. Later, Sun-Hua served as director of music for the Christian Radio Broadcasting Company in Hong Kong.

Stella became a resource person for all church choirs in Changchow and for several in Amoy as well. She conducted combined choirs on a number of occasions. During the thirties, Stella served as consultant, working closely with Miss Tena Holkeboer[3] at the Iok-Tek Girls Middle School in Kulangsu, Amoy, developing a strong music curriculum. Stella commuted between Changchow and Kulangsu—a distance of thirty miles—to teach and coach students. The trip by bus and launch was rough and long, necessitating a stay of several days at Iok-Tek each week. In addition to private lessons, Stel-

la prepared the students for concerts and the performance of operettas at the school. Near the end of the thirties the Japanese had taken over Amoy. Stella lived in Kulangsu, an international settlement which was free. Nelson continued living in Changchow, commuting by mission motor launch between the two stations.

Largely as a result of her ministry in music, church music came of age in South Fukien, especially in the large towns and cities, principally through the students and choirs she had trained. Her students moved throughout southeast Asia, taking with them Stella's vision of ministry in music for the church. Several of her students were missionary children, all of whom came to love music. Some became church soloists or choir directors; others became professional musicians.[4]

In 1951 all Christian missionaries were forced to leave mainland China as a result of the Communist takeover. The Veenschotens moved to the Philippines, one of the countries where Amoy Christians had migrated. There Stella found many of her former students active in school and church music. Thus, she was able to continue her ministry of music in the Philippines in schools and churches, but primarily as music director for Amoy Chinese Temple Time broadcasts. Stella arranged hymns for male quartets and worked with Chinese young people, training and directing, singing and playing for the radio broadcasts.

After the Communists took over mainland China, the Amoy-speaking Chinese congregations in the Philippines were no longer able to get new hymnals. A group of Christians from the Chinese United Evangelical Church in Manila decided to print copies locally. Those of the group who were involved in that congregation's music program were also working with Mrs. Veenschoten on other music projects. They asked her to serve as music editor for the 1955 *Revised Edition of the Amoy Chinese Hymnal*. She revised the musical notation, searched out tune and author sources, and made other changes such as rewriting some hymns in lower keys for easier singing.

Stella Veenschoten had no reference library at her disposal. All she had was an extensive collection of hymnbooks. It was not unusual to find her working intently at her piano in the early morning hours, surrounded by books. The work of authenticating sources was arduous and time-consuming, but for this missionary it was a labor of love and a measure of the dedication she had given for forty years to spread the gospel among the Amoy Chinese people.

After the Veenschotens retired from missionary service in 1957, they returned to Manila for an additional year in order to hand over the Amoy Chinese Temple Time broadcast responsibilities to a group of young Chinese Christians who had earlier been working extensively with them. Immediately after their return to the United States in 1958, they lived for a time in Baldwin, Michigan, where their son Girard was in medical practice. A few years later they moved to Byron Center, Michigan, to be near their daughter Elin. These were family years, providing opportunities for time with their grandchildren.

Stella died on August 14, 1962, ten days after their daughter Joann and her husband, Dr. Jack Hill, and children returned to Michigan on furlough from Cebu, Philippines. Stella had a long life of service to Christ and his church and loving influence in the lives of her children and grandchildren.

Margaret E. Munson Sangster

(1838-1912)

Margaret E. Sangster was a poet, author of chil-

dren's books and poetry, and editor on staff of both Christian and secular magazines, including *Harper's Bazaar* (1889-1899). She was also well-known to thousands in the RCA as "Aunt Marjorie." When she died at the age of seventy-four at her home in Maplewood, New Jersey, the *Episcopal Recorder* wrote: "Religious journalism has lost one of its most sane and helpful writers" (*Christian Intelligencer*, June 19, 1912).

Margaret Elizabeth Munson was born in an old farmhouse in New Rochelle, New York. Her Presbyterian family worshiped at home twice a day, after breakfast and after supper. They also took the Sabbath very seriously. During her childhood, Margaret's "great standby for Sunday reading, strange as it may seem, was Matthew Henry's *Commentary on the Bible*" (Sangster, 1909, 35). On Sunday evenings after supper the children recited the Shorter Catechism, dividing it into three parts, one per Sunday, until the catechism "became inwrought with the fibres of character" (Sangster, 1909, 36). Margaret's mother "used the Psalms and Proverbs in the reading lessons of her little children" (Sangster, 1909, 25).

The family moved to Paterson, New Jersey, when Margaret was ready for school. She attended Passaic Seminary, a private girls' school near the Passaic River. "The River," one of the poems she included in her autobiography, *From My Youth Up*, was written as she "sat in the schoolroom and watched the waves" she loved. Her career as a writer began when she was a teenager. At the age of sixteen, when Margaret was a student at a French and English School near her family's home in Brooklyn, New York, she published a volume of religious poems and essays.

She taught her first Sunday school class before the age of sixteen. From age eighteen to twenty she also carried on a school for girls, six to sixteen, where the subjects included embroidery, English, and French. When she was twenty years old, Margaret married George Sangster, a native of Aberdeen, Scotland, and a widower with two daughters under the age of five. A year later a son completed their family.

During the first decade of her marriage, she had been an occasional contributor to the *Christian Intelligencer* and the *Sunday-School Times*. In 1871 when "the happy years of her married life reached their conclusion," Margaret's life as an author and editor began in earnest (Sangster, 1909, 246f). She became an editor of *Hearth and Home*, a household magazine. Later she also read manuscripts as literary adviser in the book publishing department of Harper and Brothers, and about 1881 she began to edit the family page of the *Christian Intelligencer*, the official newsletter of the Reformed Church in America. Her name first appeared as associate editor in the masthead of the *Christian Intelligencer* on Wednesday, February 21, 1883, along with editors the Rev. John M. Ferris, D.D., and the Rev. N. H. Van Arsdale. Her column, "Aunt Marjorie's Corner," first appeared in January 1883.

> *Our corner shall be a curtained and cozy nook, with the home atmosphere filling it; and we shall welcome everybody to it, week after week. Please write to us freely. It does not matter whether you put your thoughts in shape for publication, or not. Aunt Marjorie will attend to that part of the work* (Christian Intelligencer, *Dec. 27, 1882, 10).*

The column, which was usually a page or more, included poetry, favorite hymns, stories, letters from readers, and items about mission. The writer of a tribute to Margaret Sangster confessed to enjoying what Margaret wrote week after week for women and girls. "Her 'cozy corner' was cozy indeed. There was always room for three in it: the one she would help, herself, and the unseen but never unrealized presence of the great

Friend, from whom she learned her secret of helpfulness" (*Christian Intelligencer*, January 19, 1912).

Her poems also appeared on pages other than "Aunt Marjorie's Corner." "The Slighted Guest" was published in the March 18, 1885, issue (p. 10) and "Cedar and Holly" in the December 30, 1885, issue (p. 10). "The Bethlehem Star," appeared on the front cover of the December 21, 1887, issue of the Christian Intelligencer, "artistically arranged and illustrated...written expressly for our columns by Mrs. Margaret E. Sangster" (*Christian Intelligencer*, Dec. 14, 1887, 1).

From the time she was a student at Passaic Seminary, Margaret showed a keen interest in foreign missions. During her lifetime, she attended or belonged to a number of Reformed congregations, including Marble Collegiate in New York City, Church on the Heights in Brooklyn, and North Church in Newark, New Jersey. She was associated with the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions from the time of its incorporation in 1875; at one time she served the board as secretary for Japan and was generous with her time and money. She was the editor of a *Manual of Missions* which the board published in 1877. The aim of the book, which was sent free to any women's auxiliary unable to purchase it, was to increase the interest of Reformed Church women in the board's work in China, India, and Japan. It was said to have "met with a very favorable reception" and "formed a valuable contribution to the literature of missions" (Chamberlain, 1925, 34). Her writings also appeared in the *Mission Gleaner*, the magazine of the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions. Her poem, "Our Motto—Christ for All; All for Christ," appeared in the initial issue of the magazine, November 1883.

Margaret credits "a series of worthy and efficient maids who proved to be helpers in the largest meaning of the term" for making it possible for her to combine care for home and family with "professional activity outside its doors....Lacking their aid I could not have given to my work the attention and absorption that it demanded" (Sangster, 1909, 258f).

Her writings, many of which were for young people, were known in the United States and in England. She seemed to have a special interest in children and young people and often wrote them letters of encouragement. The day after Christmas in 1877, Margaret Sangster wrote from 210 Penn Street in Brooklyn, New York, to Arthur Chamberlain, the sickly ten-year-old son of Jacob and Charlotte Chamberlain, RCA missionaries to India.

> *When your Pa came here the other day and told me that you were not so well, I felt very sorry indeed. It is hard work to be sick, and patient, too, my dear, but I think you know how. And I think there is one who loves you very tenderly, the precious Lord Jesus, and he helps you bear pain and gives you love. Maybe more of his love than he does to those who are well and strong (Sangster, 1877).*

Margaret Sangster's autobiography, *From My Youth Up*, printed in 1909, told of the sorrows and disappointments which had come into her life, "out of which came peace and radiance and surety of faith" (*Christian Intelligencer*, June 19, 1912). Although blindness had come upon her gradually, no one was expecting her death. Some who mourned her passing wrote verses of appreciation to the woman who "will never give greeting from page again" (Margaret H. Matthews, *Christian Intelligencer*, June 19, 1912).

> *"The gentle word" she often spoke,*
> *Unto "The stranger in the pew,"*
> *Her heart was with "The little ones,"*
> *Who by her teachings nobler grew.*
> *(Agnes B. Wauters,* Christian Intelligencer, *June 19, 1912)*

Edith Erickson Luben

(1908-1986)

Edith Erickson was born of Southern Presbyterian missionary parentage in the town of Takamatsu on the Inland Sea on the southern island of Shikoku, Japan. Edith's mother, Lois, was her first teacher. She and her younger sister spent their high school years at the Canadian Academy, a boarding school in Kobe on Japan's big island, Honshu. After graduating from Flora Macdonald College in Red Springs, North Carolina, Edith returned to the Canadian Academy as head of the music department (Barnerd Luben, letter to author, February 1994*).

> *Her special gift was in portraying the women of the Bible. Wearing beautiful costumes, with deliberate gestures and carefully chosen lines, she would seem a Mary or a Ruth come back to life on the stage. Through drama she portrayed some of the great truths of the faith.*
>
> *—the Rev. Barnerd Luben, husband of Edith Luben*

In the summer of 1930 Edith Erickson met a young RCA missionary, Barnerd M. Luben, in the hill resort village of Karuizawa, where Edith gave a piano recital. When they married two years later, Edith left her teaching job. She continued to teach piano to private students, even after the birth of their son, Robert Eric.

> *She loved teaching. She loved her pupils and was more to them than teacher. As with all her responsibilities, she taught well, spending much time preparing her lessons and keeping up her own skills on the piano. To her, teaching was a wonderful way of life. Not to be able to teach was to her unthinkable....She has left a wonderful legacy in the lives of countless young people, opening up to them a world of beauty in the world's great music (Luben, 1986).*

Edith Erickson Luben taught for nearly sixty years in Kobe and Tokyo, Japan; Kalamazoo, Michigan; and Ridgewood, New Jersey; encouraging and guiding some outstanding performers on the piano over the years. She was an active member of the Professional Music Teachers Guild of New Jersey, serving in various offices, including a term as president. She was also a faculty member of the American College of Musicians. She loved teaching not only music but also the Bible. After the Lubens left Japan (1940) when Barnerd was appointed field secretary for the Board of Foreign Missions, they settled in Kalamazoo, where their daughter Elaine Luben Van Dyke was born. In 1952 Barnerd accepted the job of executive secretary for the board and the family moved to Ridgewood, New Jersey.

Edith used her teaching and artistic skills in Michigan and New Jersey congregations and at the denominational offices in New York City. It was she who taught the confirmation classes in the various churches where her husband was interim pastor. She spent hours preparing for Sunday school, Bible, and confirmation classes. She was never satisfied with what she had done the year before, for she would say she had learned so much in the meantime. She loved teaching, but her higher interest was in the pupils. "They loved her, and she loved them, and she helped many a child through rough times. When one of her classes appeared before the consistory before confirmation, the elders declared they had never had a class so enthusiastic and well informed."

Edith's artistry went beyond music. She also had a gift for designing displays. Missionary windows and dis-

plays she prepared for use in the village of Ridgewood, New Jersey, and at the Reformed Church headquarters at 156 Fifth Avenue in New York City elicited many favorable comments. Her husband was fond of saying, "My Ede can do anything!"

Church women who knew Edith remember her dramatic presentations. Barnerd Luben says, "Her special gift was in portraying the women of the Bible. Wearing beautiful costumes, with deliberate gestures and carefully chosen lines, she would seem a Mary or a Ruth come back to life on the stage. Through drama she portrayed some of the great truths of the faith."

Edith did one of her dramatic character portrayals at the RCW Triennial in Chicago, for which she served as head of the planning committee. Her niece Jan Luben Hoffman says, "I never saw her 'perform', but I've heard stories of her dramatic presentations, particularly her portrayal of Mary at the empty tomb." When Edith Erickson Luben died on November 17, 1986, Jan wrote to her Uncle Barney:

> *When Dad told me today that your darling Edith was gone, I truly felt a light had gone out—I always perceived her as being luminous—lit with a special blessing she shed on those around her. I remember her fondly and with a great deal of admiration for she radiated a goodness, kindness, and serenity that one almost never encounters. Aunt Edith was a gentle, loving person whose unfailing care and concern for others make goodness attractive. When I remind my children that with some people God's light passes through them, illumining the way for others, they know what I mean (Jan Luben Hoffman, letter to Barnerd Luben, 1986).*

Jane Douglass White

(1919-)

Jane Douglass, who was born and raised in Coffeyville, Kansas, says, "Everyone knew I was destined to become a musician." Before she could walk, Jane could hum any tune she heard. She grew up knowing about Jesus at home and in First Presbyterian Church. "My first memory of singing in church was when I was very young. I wore a tiny kimono and sang Jesus Loves Me in Japanese, and I still remember the first line" (Jane Douglass White, taped responses to author, Feb. 1994*).

Jane always used her musical talent in God's service. During her teens she sang in the church choir and was so fascinated by the church's pipe organ that she convinced the organist to give her lessons. Since the church elders, who felt she was too young, wouldn't let her practice on the church's organ, Jane practiced at a funeral home in exchange for playing their new Hammond organ at funerals.

> *After graduation from Oklahoma University with a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree in 1940, I thought I was going to become a teacher in the public schools. I taught in Bristow, Oklahoma, for two years before enlisting in the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps. As a captain in the Women's Army Corps, I commanded a group of second lieutenants—all male. (Although I never realized it at the time, I was one of the first women to be a commanding officer over men.) We traveled around to posts, camps, and stations teaching soldiers how to put on their own soldier shows when there was no USO available.*

In 1945 Jane ended up in New York City, where she became a professional musician, playing dinner music in a large New York hotel. She also met her husband Gail White, who was a salesman, and they were

married in 1947. The Whites settled in Wyckoff, New Jersey, where they raised a son, Whitney, and a daughter, Gretchen. She continued her music career, first as an associate producer for the network television show "Name That Tune," until game shows became out of favor with the public. Then she conducted the orchestra for Broadway shows, for summer theater in Maine, and their own summer theater in New Jersey. In the late sixties she began taking Broadway shows such as *Music Man, The King and I*, and *The Fantasticks* on the road. Whenever she could, Jane worshiped at Wyckoff Reformed Church "because the ritual was similar to what I had grown up with, the music was wonderful, and the people were friendly."

Jane admits that she "never felt a great calling to serve God" until she participated in a lay renewal weekend at the Wyckoff church.

> *Soon after that I felt called to leave show business to serve Christ with my music, although I didn't know how. This was a difficult decision because I was making good money, and we had two children ready for college. My husband and I discussed it together and did a lot of praying before I was able to step out in faith. At the same weekend, Janet [Baird] Weisiger felt the same calling and we joined forces and became a singing Christian duo, "Janet and Jane." I began to write music for us, and we began to sing and witness in many, many churches and organizations to which God called us.*

They sang together for seven or eight years before Jane Douglass White offered her musical abilities to Prison Fellowship, a ministry begun by Chuck Colson. At that time Jane "began to realize that people who are at odds with the law and who go to prison are someone's child, and I began to feel that I would like to take my music to the prisons."

For thirteen years (1978-91) she traveled to state and federal prisons, leading weekend Christian seminars, where she used music to build the self-esteem of incarcerated men and women and to lead them to Christ. Wyckoff Reformed Church helped Jane financially by paying her airfare. After her husband Gail retired and began to travel with her, the General Program Council of the Reformed Church in America agreed to pick up Jane's other expenses. She says, "I was very grateful to them for their willingness to support us in this ministry. I think it is wonderful to see how Jesus Christ is working in the prisons. When I went to New York, I was looking for fame and that kind of thing, but when God changed me, I realized that I am so blessed. There is no fame, no riches that could give me what I have in Jesus Christ."

In 1991 when the Whites moved to Tennessee, Jane gave up her prison ministry but continued to use her musical talents to praise God. For two years she directed music at Church of the Good Shepherd, a Reformed Church start in Franklin, Tennessee. In 1994 when the congregation changed its name and style of worship, Jane and Gail White transferred their membership to First Presbyterian Church. In 1993 and 1994 she had a principal role in Opryland's presentation of "Easter in Story and Song," which ran for three weeks before Easter in Nashville. She also serves as a music consultant for the Peale Center for Christian Living, something she has done for many years.

Carol Cortelyou Cruikshank

(1922-)

Carol Cortelyou Cruikshank knew that poetry was part of her ever since she was a child, and she remembers the thrill of seeing one of her poems—about daffodils standing as wardens in a garden—in *Child's*

Life, a children's magazine. From then on she wrote a lot, but never thought of poetry as a vocation until much later in her life (Carol Cruikshank, taped responses to author, March 1994*).

Carol was born and raised in Brooklyn, New York, where her paternal grandparents and her immediate family each rented a pew in the Protestant Dutch Reformed Church of Flatbush (as it was then called), where they were members. Her mother's ancestors, who had come to this country from Holland in 1652, had been instrumental in founding the church (originally a house church), a fact which was impressed on Carol many times.

Her high school years were divided between Packer in Brooklyn and Shipley, a Quaker school in Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania. The family, which included an older and younger brother, spent summers in a cottage at Mohonk Lake, a Quaker resort about ninety-eight miles north of New York City. In those days Mohonk attracted well-known church leaders such as Gerald Kennedy, Rufus Jones, Robert McCracken, Elton Trueblood, Ralph Sockman, and Joseph Sizoo.[5] Carol came to know these great preachers personally and continues to be influenced by their preaching and writing.

Carol had two loves in her life—poetry and medicine—both of which she wanted to pursue when she grew up. Discovering science wasn't her forte, though medicine was the profession of a number of her cousins, she concentrated on developing her gifts with language and concern for people.

In 1943 when she graduated from Vassar College with a degree in euthenics, she was offered a job as a cryptographer with the FBI, trying to and sometimes succeeding in breaking enemy codes throughout the final years of World War II. She worked in Washington, D.C., where for three years she worshiped at New York Avenue Presbyterian Church and was inspired by the great preaching of the Rev. Dr. Peter Marshall.

After the war, Carol returned to New York and to school—Columbia University, where she earned a master's degree in sociology. Although Carol found fulfillment in volunteer work with the New York Junior League in accordance with her mother's belief that "ladies don't work for money," eventually she succumbed to the pressure to get a paying job. She took a position with the American Red Cross as a recreational and social worker at a U.S. military hospital in Japan.

From 1949 until the death of her parents in 1965, Carol completed a two-year program in the East Asian Institute at Columbia University, held a series of secretarial and administrative jobs in doctors' offices and hospital record rooms, edited a textbook on eye tumors, and started and administered a medical secretarial service out of her home in order to be near her aging parents and to help earn money to pay for their round-the-clock nursing care. Throughout these years she continued to write poetry, some of which appeared in the Brooklyn Heights Press, along with photos she took, but "things were not good" in her life.

Depressed and suffering from anorexia after her parents' deaths, Carol moved to California at the age of fifty-two, hoping to find a new and better life. Things actually got worse before they got better. She stole food although she could afford it. She spent time in jail, in mental hospitals, and in and out of therapeutic care. She was hospitalized following a bicycle accident.

She was on the way to recovery in 1978 when she received word that her nieces, aged 21 and 23, had been killed by a drunken driver on the New York Thruway. Returning to New York for the funeral and to comfort her brother and his family, Carol cast a fleece, saying, "God, if I find a job, I'll stay on the East Coast."

Carol found a part-time position with the Brooklyn Heights Press, and through the volunteer office at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, she found work with the Rev. John Pyle, an Episcopalian chaplain at Lenox Hill Hospital. On the basis of his encouragement, in 1980 Carol Cortelyou Cruikshank enrolled at New Brunswick Theological Seminary to study for chaplaincy. She left NBTS after only one semester to pursue a year of Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE), and then, deciding that she and NBTS did not quite fit, Carol moved back to the West Coast and continued her theological education by studying at Fuller Theological Seminary, both on campus and in its extension programs. Halfway through she stopped taking a full load of courses because she heard God telling her, "If you want to write, now's the time. Make space and walk and listen, and I'll give you the poetry."

She began to read her poems in worship at the Methodist Church in Salinas, where they were accepted enthusiastically. Often she read poems such as "I Got Your Answer, Lord. It's NO." in the Joys and Concerns section of the liturgy.

I got your answer,
Lord—it's NO.
I trust you, but it
does hurt, though.

Three months I've wrestled
with that call—
And then it never
came at all!

How oft I fall in
that morass—
Fret o'er what never
comes to pass.

I got your answer,
Lord—it's NO.
Please help me thank you
that it's so.

Carol's poems have appeared in the *Christian Medical Society Journal, Quaker Life, Guideposts,* and the *Church Herald.* Ministers have used Carol's poetry in sermons, and churches in at least seven denominations have printed her poems in their newsletters.

In the fall of 1986 Carol returned to Ulster County (New York). At that time and on several subsequent occasions, Carol approached the Human Support Committee of Mid-Hudson Classis about the possibility of ordination. Eventually, in connection with the Theological Education Agency (TEA), they approved and supported her plan to pursue ordination to a specialized ministry to consist of "writing, visitation, chaplaincy, and preaching" (Petition to General Synod dated December 27, 1991). There were times she was tempted to give up, but Bryant Kirkland (her former pastor at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York City) and John Pyle (chaplain at Lenox Hill Hospital, New York City) encouraged her to hang on.

On September 29, 1992, Carol Cortelyou Cruikshank was ordained at Woodstock Reformed Church to a specialized ministry as described above. She lives in a furnished apartment in Rosendale, New York; uses pay telephones and the mail to communicate with others; does a lot of walking; and also uses buses and taxis to get around. Her "congregation" is made up of people locally and across the country whom she has met in the course of her studies and on her frequent bus trips and walks. She maintains contact with many of these people by mail and through poems published in their own church newsletters. She also has a ministry to taxi and bus drivers and to passengers with whom she strikes up conversation on local and long distance buses or airplanes. It is through these people, travels, and walks that the Lord sends her inspiration for her poems. Sometimes she writes sixty or more poems per month.

Until recently, she didn't see her poetry as something valid in her ministry. Others, however, believed that Carol's gift for poetry and her intentional use of the medium was, indeed, a ministry. Now she believes that her poems may reach people in ways sermons and pastoral prayers cannot.

Perhaps when the Rev. Dr. Bryant Kirkland, the Rev. John Pyle, the Rev. Nicholas Miles, and the Rev. Helen MacFadden all mentioned it at my ordination, I began to see that even though I'm a very minor poet, I am a poet. Perhaps [I am] the poet God meant for the people in my circle of contacts who never heard of Helen Steiner Rice or Emily Dickinson or Rudyard Kipling. But when people like Minnie in the laundry and Lottie in the library hear my kind of poetry, about them and their town and their creek and their friends and their religious questions, sometimes they like the poems and want copies because the poetry is about things and people important to them...and to me.

I sort of feel that's why God sent me to seminary in California and later to settle in this locale. I'm not sure that's being a prophet. I think it's more being an Andrew, but it's an all right role for me.

Andrew

I'm not a John the Baptist,
a Peter,
or a Paul.

I'll never lead ten thousands
to heed the
Master's call—

But please Lord, won't you make me
in some small
way to be

A little bit like Andrew
who led his
friends to thee?

Susan Graves Van Kuiken
(1937-)

As a child, Susan Graves, who grew up in Grand Rapids, Michigan, loved to draw. She says, "I can still feel the pleasure of having a newly sharpened pencil and clean sheets of paper in hand with hours to draw" (Susan Van Kuiken, story submitted to author, June 1994*).

As time went on, Susan did less drawing and more sewing. Her mother, who had never quite lived up to the expectations of the seamstress aunt who had raised her, was determined that her daughter learn to sew. Susie took sewing lessons and became quite good at making clothes for herself and, later, for her three little boys and their all girl cousins. She says, "Except for occasional deadline situations, sewing was one of those acts of real joy for me, whereupon sitting down at the machine I would feel the cares of the world drop off my shoulders. I always thanked God for that."

Susan's church home was Park Congregational in Grand Rapids, whose beautiful Tiffany stained glass windows provided a young child, not yet interested in sermons, with hours of contemplation. The music which emanated from the superb organ and the fine choirs also created for Susan a sense of the Divine which permeates her faith to this day. Early in her life, she joined the soprano section of the choir. And it was music that led her to Hope College. "I heard the Chapel Choir sing and knew that I had to be a part of that group."

In 1959 she married Jim Van Kuiken and began to teach first grade in a Grand Rapids public school. A degree in education had not really prepared her for teaching thirty-five buoyant, boisterous six-year-olds in a big old classroom, but she did enjoy the drawings her students produced. "Most six-year-olds are at the peak of their art careers, and the work they turn out is straight

from the heart—joyful, colorful, and expressive. My greatest joy then was in displaying that art in unique and creative ways around our room which became the showplace of the building."

After two years of teaching school, Susan became a full-time homemaker and mother and became involved in programs at Central Reformed Church, a good compromise between Jim's Christian Reformed background and Susan's Congregational one. She says, "Attendance at a Great Ideas Discussion Group led by Sarah Olert, wife of one of our pastors, Frederick Olert, stretched me in directions I had not before thought of. It took me out of the realm of babyhood into the area of current events, a subject area that has captivated me ever since. One of the outcomes was my part in forming and leading Worldwatch, an adult education class dedicated to understanding the role our faith plays in interpreting major social issues and world events."

Susan was also instrumental in beginning a study/prayer/conversation group in 1971 which still meets monthly. She credits this group with giving her support during some of the more trying times of her life, including her divorce. "It is these women who have made Christ's love real to me in their genuine acts of kindness, support, encouragement, and concern."

In the fall of 1979 Lee Engstrom, Central's minister of music, asked Susie to assist him with the children's choir by doing a banner-making project with one group while he rehearsed with the other.

In preparation for that I made my first original banner using a quote by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, "The new song is sung first in the heart. Otherwise it cannot be sung at all." The children's banners, reminiscent of those years of first grade teaching, were happy demonstrations of group work. The next year I did a series of four Advent banners, which was a very pleasurable experience. They were well received by the church and are still used.

I began to feel that this was the direction my vocational efforts should take, and thus my banner-making career was launched. Many years have passed. The banners which brought together the sewing and drawing skills that were part of my earlier life have been a major focus of the past fifteen years. My church family has been wonderfully encouraging to me, always expressing interest in and gratitude for new creations. They have spread the word among friends and relatives, resulting in work done for other churches around the U.S.

In preparation for the 150th Anniversary of the founding of Central Reformed Church, Susan Van Kuiken designed and fabricated four sets of paraments for the sanctuary, a job which took a year. The Rev. Dr. Robert Bedingfield, senior pastor of Central Reformed, arranged for the sets to be commissioned by members of the congregation, and from that time on Susan has been paid by the church for any creative design work she is asked to do.

That was a very important step for me because it gave credance to my choice of creative design as a vocation rather than a hobby. It was, in fact, my greatest challenge—to see my work as something for which I could earn money as well as gratitude. Living through an era which expected women to dedicate their lives to raising families, caring for the home, and volunteering their time and energy to church, school, and community, as well as having been blessed with a kind and helpful husband who provided well for his family, it has been very difficult for me to put a monetary value on my work.

Looking back on the years since I began this vocation, I can say with enthusiasm that I have been

blessed with work that is varied, challenging, demanding, and satisfying. There are times when I wonder whether I can accomplish a difficult project, but I have an assurance that I can do what I have to do, an assurance that comes from our loving Father who provides us all with gifts and abilities. I wonder why it is that it takes so long to realize that the things we do with comparative ease, confidence, and joy are some of the very gifts that God has given us and that as we freely acknowledge them and use them they can become our cherished life's work.

Helene Bosch Zwyghuizen

(1939-)

Ever since Helene Bosch was a little girl growing up on a farm north of Holland, Michigan, she can remember enjoying harp music and the soothing peace it brought. Harps were far too expensive to buy, and she never knew anyone firsthand who played a harp, so piano lessons and later organ lessons filled her desires to play an instrument (Helene Zwyghuizen, story submitted to author, February 1994*).

Helene graduated from Hope College, married John E. Zwyghuizen, and taught third grade while John completed his seminary training at Western Theological Seminary. In 1963 the Zwyghuizens were commissioned as RCA missionaries and settled in Tokyo, Japan. During their second year of language study, John was shopping on the Ginza and came upon a tiny music shop which featured Japanese-made Irish harps. He discovered that not only could he afford an Aoyama Irish harp, but that it was the perfect Christmas present for his wife. Of course, Helene was delighted with her gift and began studying with Mr. Mimura, who also taught harp to Crown Princess Michiko, the current empress of Japan.

When the Zwyghuizen family, which now included daughters, Ardith and Jayne, were assigned to the southern island of Kyushu, Helene continued her studies with Mrs. Arao, harpist for the Kyushu Symphonic Orchestra. Their daughter, Heidi, was born in Kyushu; their son, Edward, was born in Princeton, New Jersey, while they were on furlough.

By the time the Zwyghuizens returned to the United States for their first furlough, Helene knew she wanted a concert harp, but they were very expensive, and John and Helene weren't sure they could afford to buy one. After a month of prayer and discussion, they decided to make the investment. Helene's concert harp, made to order by the Lyon Healy Harp Company in Chicago, was packed in its steel reinforced wooden box along with the children's stuffed animals, which served as good filling, and sent to Japan along with other baggage.

In Japan Helene had many opportunities to play the harp and share the gospel in Japanese church services and house meetings, evangelistic services, at Christmas programs and mothers' meetings at the church-related kindergarten, during monthly gatherings of missionaries, and at Mrs. Arao's recitals. Once she played at the U.S. Consulate in Fukuoka for a gathering of wives of Japanese businessmen.

In 1974 the Zwyghuizens decided to stay in the United States for family medical reasons. They live in Clymer, New York, where John serves as pastor of Abbe Reformed Church and Helene works with the congregation's Children and Worship ministry. Since their return to the United States, Helene has played her harp at weddings, church services, elementary school assemblies, women's Lenten breakfasts and Christmas programs, senior citizen gatherings, retired teachers' groups, the RCW Triennial in Holland, classis meetings, and a host of other settings. As she plays the harp, Helene shares the

love of God and what God has done for each of us by the songs and/or hymns she chooses to play and by reading the Bible. One of those songs closes with the words, "To be used of God is my desire." Helene's prayer is that her harp playing is used to glorify God and to enlarge the kingdom.

Maxine Harris De Bruyn

(1937-)

Maxine Harris was raised in an eastern Michigan German community where most folks, including her family, belonged to the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church. She began taking dance lessons as a child, and by high school she knew she wanted to major in dance. At the time, there were only four colleges in the United States which offered a degree in dance; she chose to attend Michigan State University. It was the closest to her home, and she knew she would need the security of her family and community if she were to succeed in such a new and, to some, questionable field. She admits, "In the mid-fifties that was a crazy major. People couldn't imagine why I wanted to go to college for four years and spend all that time and money majoring in dance. I was going to prove that there was great opportunity for someone in dance, so I went on to do so. I have had a wonderful world of performing and choreographing and teaching" (Maxine DeBruyn, taped interview with Eloise Van Heest, September 1994*).

After completing a degree in dance and physical education, Maxine did further study in New York City, and began teaching dance in Bay City, Michigan, for two years before taking a job with the Harvard Newton Program, "a creative arts program in the Newton (Massachusetts) Public School System." She began teaching at Hope College in Holland, Michigan, in 1965 and has been chair of the college's dance department since 1981.

Maxine was introduced to and came to appreciate Reformed doctrine and Calvinist viewpoints after her marriage to Robert DeBruyn, Jr., who is carrying on the family-owned produce business in Zeeland, Michigan. The DeBruyns moved to western Michigan in 1961.

While she was still getting acquainted with the area and familiarizing herself with the Reformed Church in America, three women from Hope Church in Holland came to her with an idea. One of the women, Joanne Brooks, had seen the Lord's Prayer and several other Scripture passages presented in dance when she had been at a conference in Colorado. She and the other two women—Libby Hillegonds, the wife of Hope Church's pastor, and Elsie Lamb[6]—wanted to incorporate dance in the worship at RCW's Fall Conference at Camp Geneva. They said, "We know you are a dancer with a background in dance education and choreography. We would like you to help us do the Lord's Prayer with dance movements as part of the worship at the women's conference." Maxine, who had done "an immense amount of choreographing for musical theater and modern dance," accepted the challenge, even though she "had no background for choreographing for a religious theme."

The Lord's Prayer in dance was so well received that others in the Holland/Zeeland area wanted to learn about liturgical dance from Maxine. The Sacred Dance Group of Holland, which included Maxine, the three women who first approached her, Jean Prothroe (a teacher at Hope College), and Dotty Cecil, began at Hope Church. Over the more than two decades the group existed, it grew gradually to include women from other denominations—Methodist, Christian Reformed, Lutheran, and Presbyterian. In the beginning the group struggled with what sacred dance was and the place it

had within worship. Maxine says, "Sacred dance is more than just dancing and movement. It is a way of delivering a spiritual dimension of ourselves. The body, which does not lie, presents how the human thinks and feels, so we had to have a clear understanding of what we were doing with each piece. We searched the Scripture and discussed it thoroughly before deciding what movements to incorporate in any new piece. We had to be very careful not to appear phony."

Maxine and the others were encouraged by ministers such as Ray Beckering at Second Reformed Church in Zeeland and Bill Hillegonds at Hope Church in Holland, who were willing to let the group participate in worship at their churches. Harold Englund, acting president of Western Theological Seminary, was also supportive.

Some, however, were less enthusiastic about this new form of worship. Some Reformed Church clergy and lay people had strong feelings about dance being unacceptable in worship. In fact, dancing was still not allowed on the Hope College campus because some believed that dancing was sinful. Maxine says, "There were times during those two decades when I said, 'Let's bag it! Let's quit!' because we would run up against groups who were trying to enforce their own concepts [of what was or was not appropriate in worship]. It seemed as if we were always having to educate. Then I realized that I had to change my attitude and look at it not that we were fighting battles, but that we were educating the community. We discovered that people's fears about dancing in the church came from a lack of understanding that movement is a legitimate form of worship. The good solid choreography we developed proved what we were saying and allowed people to see and understand their beliefs about God through Christian movement as well as through the spoken Word."

At the same time Maxine was working to establish the Sacred Dance Group of Holland, she was also trying to get Hope College to expand its fine arts program to include dance as an art form. Hope already had classes in theater, visual arts, and music. After hearing Maxine's presentation that a liberal arts college "should not only expose students to critical thinking, but should also expose them to creative thinking," Hope decided to add dance to its fine arts curriculum.

During the first three or four years Maxine and others at the college did some serious work communicating to lay people and clergy that "dance was all right in its proper place, that it filled a need, and that movement was another way God's Word could be shared." Beginning with one class in the mid-sixties, today Hope College is one of three small liberal arts colleges in the United States offering a dance major with emphases on dance education, dance therapy, and performance choreography. The department has accreditation with the National Association of Schools of Dance.

Although the Sacred Dance Group of Holland disbanded in 1993, Maxine works with a small group of Hope students who "have become very strong and good movers for the Word of God."

Doris Boersma Dahl

(1944-1993)

Doris Boersma Dahl was born to Milton and Alice Boersma in Chicago, Illinois, where her family belonged to Mt. Greenwood Reformed Church. Very soon in her life she knew she had a gift for art. She was always drawing. Her teachers, who recognized her talent, recommended her for a scholarship to study at the Art Institute of Chicago (Calvin Rynbrandt, story submitted to author, May 1994).

She married Robert Dahl and continued her art studies at Western Kentucky University, where Bob worked as a chaplain for two years (1970-72). The Dahls have two children, Matthew and Rachel.

Doris, who had a deep and profound faith in God, enjoyed creating through drawing and painting the essence of God's creation. Often, as she worked at her easel, she would hum, "This Is My Father's World." Her rope art was also popular with art lovers. She liked to fashion paintings of various persons, but was known especially for her water colors of flowers. Much of her work hangs in offices, banks, yachts, and homes in surrounding areas where she lived.

The *Church Herald* commissioned Doris to illustrate the Holy Spirit and to paint portraits of victims of abuse to accompany a series of articles on that subject. Prior to her death on August 21, 1993, at age forty-nine, Doris completed a magnificent series of water colors for the December 1993 issue of the *Church Herald*. In that issue, Christina Van Eyl, associate editor of the *Church Herald*, wrote of Doris' art talent and their developing friendship.

> *After she had started her work, Doris brought some of it in for our approval. It was wonderful. Doris and I talked more about the art, but we also talked about other things: about Scripture, about being mothers, about the creative process. The more we talked, the more I began to appreciate Doris not only for her ability, but for her person, for her easy laughter, and her intelligent insight.*
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> *The last time I saw Doris, she dropped off the completed artwork. I found it even more beautiful than I had at first, almost certainly because I had a better appreciation of Doris.*
>
> *As I watched her walk to her car, I felt a twinge of something like envy. She was slim and blond and beautiful, full of quiet energy and passion that came through in her artwork, in her mannerisms, in her conversation; it would be easy to envy Doris. But I envied her only for a second, because as she drove away I realized that she was now my friend, and because I could count her as such, it was I who should be envied.*
>
> *Two weeks after she delivered her art, an aneurysm ruptured in Doris Dahl's brain and she died. I will miss her talent, and I will miss our conversations. I will miss the opportunity to know her better (Van Eyl,* Church Herald, *Dec. 1993, 2).*[7]

Karen Bohm Barker

(1952-)

> *My father never treated me like a girl, if you know what I mean. He never even hinted that there were some things I could not do because I was a girl. He taught me to play baseball well. He taught me to work in the fields alongside him and my brother. He taught me what he knew about fixing things. It wasn't that he forced these things on me or even that he made a point of them. On the contrary, I probably helped with household tasks more than I did with outdoor tasks. He simply never missed an opportunity to show me or teach me or model for me the things that I naturally wanted to know. He affirmed my intellect and my curiosity. He treated me with great respect (Karen Barker, responses submitted to author, August 1994*).*

Karen Bohm grew up on an Illinois farm in a home which included an older brother and younger twin sisters. The non-denominational, Calvinistic Bible Church her family attended was where she received the foundations of her faith. It was also where her performance skills were nurtured and where she discovered

that she loved performing. She began singing special music when she was about twelve years old.

Karen, who has an Illinois State Teaching Certificate, trained at Greenville College to teach English and theatre on the secondary level. She and her husband, Jeff Barker belong to Trinity Reformed Church in Orange City, Iowa, and share the position of assistant professor at Northwestern College. They also share housekeeping tasks and parenting of their three children—Joseph, Hannah, and Daniel. Karen teaches the acting classes, religious theatre class, and dramatic literature class; she directs the touring drama team, Drama Ministries Ensemble, and some of the mainstage dramas.

Ever since their marriage, Karen has been performing. In Seattle, Washington, they helped found a theatre company. When they moved back to Illinois they started a community theatre project in their town. When Jeff was working on his master's degree in DeKalb, Karen acted at the university, and they helped found a Shakespeare theatre company in a nearby town. In Pennsylvania they started a repertory company at the college where Jeff was director of drama.

In the beginning Karen viewed performing as an avocation, teaching as a vocation. Now she admits to two vocations. She loves teaching and performing and she is good at both. Karen says, "When there are people starving and killing each other all over the world, performing doesn't seem to be a very worthy occupation. And then the Christian community tends to want performers to validate their calling by only performing evangelistic material. But you know what? By performing, I can move the emotions of people, and in moving their emotions, I do have the possibility of changing their lives. When a person sees and experiences good literature performed well, she does not leave the theatre building the same person as she was when she went in. I believe that. Perhaps she is spiritually richer. Perhaps she is more self-aware. Perhaps she has gained knowledge. Perhaps her faith and/or beliefs have been challenged. It may be small, but she is changed."

Since 1988, when Karen earned a master's of fine arts in acting from Northern Illinois University in DeKalb, she and Jeff have been involved in a number of theatrical endeavors. In 1991, along with some theatre friends they experimented with starting a professional/community theatre in Orange City. Both have served as workshop leaders in a number of venues. Karen led acting workshops for the Iowa Community Theatre Association the summer of 1991 and for Lillenas Drama Conference in Kansas City in February 1993. In the fall of 1994 she led a drama ministry workshop at Siouxland Council for Christian Education and Enrichment.

Sometimes Christian performers and directors are expected to donate their services or work at reduced rates. Karen has been impressed with the treatment she and Jeff have received from the Reformed Church in America. The Barkers performed and helped lead evening events at the 1990 and 1994 General Synods and in 1993 they were leaders of the Summer Mission Conference. In 1992 Karen served as worship leader at the RCW Triennial. She says, "When we do work for the denomination, we are treated as professionals. We are paid decently. Our children are cared for. The support staff we are given are professionals (light operators, sound operators, stage managers, etc.)."

Karen Barker is a professional who models what it means to live as a person called by God in everything she does. She says, "My students are at an extremely impressionable time of their lives. I have the opportunity to impact their lives (and consequently, the world) forever as a result of the work that I do here. For better or worse, I am a role model in everything they see me do—

in my dealings with Jeff and my children, in my relationship with the administration here, in my discipline as an artist, in my longing for God, in the fairness of my dealings with students, in the way that I entertain, in what I put in my grocery cart, in the clothes that I wear, in the transportation I use. Everything. What I want them to see is a woman of discipline and courage, grace and love. When that is not what they see, I at least want them to see a woman who is working towards that goal."

Susannah Kist

(1961-)

When Susannah Kist graduated from Hope College (1984), she got a job teaching school in Hamilton, Michigan. She says, "I had thought that this was what I wanted to do. It had always been my goal. But after four years, and some personal struggles, I realized that this was not my final destination. I was happy, but I longed for more. Part of that longing involved the creative actress/performer in me who had no space or place for expression" (Susannah Kist, responses submitted to author, July 1994*).

Susannah's brother, Abraham and his bride, Sayuri, were about to begin a seminary internship in Chicago.[8] They encouraged Susannah to move to Chicago to be near them and to explore new opportunities. She says, "This had not been one of my options, but deep inside I knew it was the answer."

After turning in her letter of resignation, "doors began to open." An old highschool friend needed a roommate; the place where Susannah would be living was only a mile from Abraham and Sayuri's apartment; and the Rev. George Beukema, a former pastor of Chicago's Church of the Good News (RCA), informed her that the music center sponsored by this city congregation was in desperate need of a teacher.

The Lathrop Community Music Center needed a teacher, and Susannah needed a job, "but," Susannah says, "it didn't take me long to discern that George's vision of the music center and what was reality didn't actually match. I talked this over with him, and as it happened, things were put in motion for a full-time director of this music program, which turned out to be me."

Susannah Kist has been the director of Lathrop Community Music Center, which gives lessons to those who would otherwise be unable to afford them, since January 1990. At first, her family was concerned about her financial situation, but they remained supportive. They wondered why she would leave a stable teaching job for the uncertainty of this new position in Chicago. The center, which is completely independent from Church of the Good News, depends on contributions, fund raisers, and government funding. Susannah says, "Many times there is not enough money in the school's account to pay my salary. This is stressful, but I have learned to be totally dependent on God's provision. Sometimes I feel as if I am in a constant Guideposts article. I cannot even number the times I have needed X amount of dollars and, at the last moment, a check arrives for that amount. I have also learned that if you don't work, you cannot reap the harvest."

Susannah knows that what she does is worthwhile when she sees people changed as a result of the music school. Recently she hired an inexperienced teacher, whose love of learning and willingness to experiment with what was available paid off. "He rose to the challenge and was able to teach students piano, voice, recorder, and guitar. When his guitar student, Danny, played for his final performance at the end of the year, he only knew two chords, but this teacher was able to get the entire audience to sing along with his rendition of 'It

Ain't Gonna Rain.' (Danny is one of twenty students Glen was able to inspire.) Seeing the looks on the faces around the room was a fulfilling experience for me."

Susannah is not only director of this unique and vital outreach ministry of Church of the Good News, but she is also an actress, musical director, singer, costume designer, and writer of original musicals. "Sometimes," she says, "it's a tremendous challenge to live as a person called by God when I am working in the world of theatre. I used to keep pretty quiet about my faith. In the past few years I've become vocal. I share my story of how I got here, and I discuss what we learned in Bible study. Someone told me that not everyone gets neon footprints set down for them to follow. I said, 'Are you sure they aren't shining brightly off to your left and that perhaps you've strayed a bit?' That person was at Bible study with me the next week. Of course, it turned out to be a one-time deal, but only God knows if a seed was planted."

In 1992 Susannah, who serves as an elder, Bible study leader, and church school teacher in the Church of the Good News, began to work with a clowning group started by the church's pastor, the Rev. Liala Beukema. "How exciting it is to use all of my theatrical experience in bringing the gospel alive [through clowning]. My strongest role model is Liala Beukema. I admire her strength, wisdom, understanding, compassion, and fighting spirit. It is through her counsel that I have been able to find my voice. She can be fun and outrageous, but she knows the times to be still and to listen. She often hears what isn't being said, and she's not afraid to call you on it. She's willing to take risks and is fiercely protective of those who look to her for guidance."

"The greatest compliment I have received has been when people wonder if we're sisters because we are so much alike. In many ways, I feel the things I admire in her were asleep in me, and through her tenderness and pushing they are beginning to wake up."

Susannah Kist strives to encourage others. Many of the young people with whom she works say they want to be like her. She tells them to "have a passion for what they are doing and to do their best and the rest will fall into place."

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1. This framed work hangs in the RCA chapel at the Interchurch Center in New York City.

2. Joann Hill's story may be found in Chapter 4—Healing God's People.

3. Tena Holkeboer's story may be found in Chapter 7—Teaching by Word and Deed.

4. Stella Veenschoten's pupils included Anna Ruth Poppen Wiersma, a Hope College graduate organ major, who taught keyboard and served for a number of years as church organist, and Marjory Angus Stetson, who majored in voice. She was a great influence in the lives of two of her grandsons—Keith and Robert Hill: Keith builds harpsichords, fortepianos, and other stringed instruments in Manchester, Michigan; Robert is a concert harpsichordist and professor of early keyboard music performance at the Freiburg Conservatory in Germany.

5. Since her graduation from Fuller Theological Seminary in 1986, Carol Cortelyou Cruikshank has been working on a biography of Dr. Joseph Sizoo, a friend of her father's, who was an ordained minister in the Reformed Church in America and president of New Brunswick Theological Seminary (1947-52).

6. Elsie Lamb's story may be found in Chapter 3—Seeking Justice.

7. An art scholarship fund has been established in Doris Dahl's name at Hope College.

8. Sayuri and Abraham Kist-Okazaki were appointed RCA missionaries to Japan in 1994.

Chapter Eleven

Remaining Faithful

Hannah

(1 Samuel 1 and 2)

Hannah was one of Elkanah's two wives. Peninnah, Elkanah's other wife, had sons and daughters, but Hannah had no children, a fact which deeply distressed her. Hannah knew that Elkanah loved her. When he saw her crying, he said, "Hannah, why do you weep? Why do you not eat? Why is your heart sad? Am I not more to you than ten sons?" But Hannah was still depressed.

Each year the entire family went from their home in Ramah, which was in the hill country, to worship at Shiloh. Each year Hannah, who was very devout, prayed fervently that God would look on her misery and give her a child. She "prayed to the Lord and wept bitterly," pleading with God not to forget her. Even though her husband loved Hannah, his other wife continued to torment and humiliate her because of Hannah's childless condition.

After years of infertility, Hannah made a bargain with God. If God would give her a male child, then she would dedicate him to the professional service of religion. Having prayed and spoken to Eli, the priest of the shrine at Shiloh, Hannah went home to Ramah at peace.

Hannah's trust in God was rewarded when she finally bore a son, whom she named Samuel. Fulfilling her promise that her son would be raised in the service of the Lord, she brought the boy to the priest Eli, saying, "The Lord has granted me the petition that I made. Therefore...as long as he lives, he is given to the Lord."

Later Hannah became the mother of three more sons and two daughters.

Woman suffering from a hemorrhage

(Mark 5:24-34)

The woman who had been afflicted with chronic hemorrhages for twelve years was at her wits end. She had spent all her money going from doctor to doctor to no avail. Not only was she weakened from the constant flow of blood, she was also very discouraged. Then she heard of a new healer. People called him Jesus. Could this man help her? She had nothing to lose and everything to gain, so she sought him out.

She said to herself, "If he is as good as folks say he is, I won't even have to reveal myself to him." That would be too embarrassing. "All I have to do is touch his clothes. That will make me well." The woman came up behind Jesus in the crowd and touched his cloak. Immediately her hemorrhage stopped, and she felt completely healed of her disease.

Remaining faithful, praying unceasingly, carrying on in spite of difficulties, pain, and discouragement, is never easy. Yet the woman who had been suffering from hemorrhages for twelve years did not lose hope. When she was healed of her disease, Jesus told her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."

Hannah is another woman of faith who didn't give up. It is always faith which keeps men and women going; it is faith which saves.

Dina Van Bergh Frelinghuysen Hardenbergh

(1725-1807)

Dina Van Bergh was a woman who, through illness, danger, and sorrow, demonstrated a faith that was of profound influence.[1] The presence of God, which was so real to her, gave her a warmth of concern for people and a hopeful attitude that generated enthusiasm in others. Her trust in God was transparent. She had experienced the grace of God since she was young and her faith stood the test of adversity and sorrow over the years.

Dina was born and grew up in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. When she was nearly seventeen she experienced a spiritual awakening in which "my soul was set free...the Lord broke my bonds, and set me at liberty, and saved me from the deep darkness I was in."[2] Two years later she experienced healing by the grace of God and pledged herself to use all her talents in God's service.[3]

A group of female friends who supported Dina in her faith met every Tuesday as a prayer circle. Dina listened intently to the sermons she heard, studied the Scriptures herself, and daily engaged in private meditation and prayer.

On a visit to Utrecht in 1747, Dina met Johannes

Frelinghuysen, a theological student from America. Johannes was one of five sons of Theodorus Jacobus Frelinghuysen, pastor of the Reformed churches in the Raritan Valley of New Jersey. While Johannes was in the Netherlands news came that his father had died. Several of the congregations his father had been serving issued Johannes a call as pastor.

Johannes proposed to Dina that they be married and that she go with him to America. Although she was strongly attracted to him and felt deeply that God was calling her into Christian service, it was a most difficult decision for Dina to make. America was a strange and distant land. The trip across the ocean was long and dangerous. It would mean leaving her family and all that was familiar to her. Dina's parents and her younger sister didn't want her to go; they feared they would never see her again. After much prayer, Dina felt it was God's will to marry Johannes and go with him to America.

They were married February 17, 1750, and set sail for Raritan, arriving by mid-1750. Dina energetically and enthusiastically shared in the ministry with her husband. She entertained women of the congregation in her home and eagerly shared with them her experience of God's grace and power and her understanding of the Christian life. Two children were born to them—Frederick (April 13, 1753) and Eva (September 5, 1754).

Johannes gave himself unstintingly to his work of ministry. In his home he offered instruction to young men who desired to go into the ministry. Unfortunately his health failed him. On his way to a Coetus (association of churches) meeting on Long Island he became fatally ill. There he died of pneumonia, September 15, 1754.

Bereft of her husband in a land she had known only four years, Dina decided to return to Holland. She made plans to make the trip with Johannes' younger brother, Hendricus. When he decided not to go to the Netherlands, she made new plans to travel there with her older brother-in-law Theodorus.

Meanwhile, a young man of eighteen, Jacob Rutsen Hardenbergh, who had been one of Johannes' students, had his own ideas about what Dina should do. Gathering his courage, Jacob found Dina and her two little children at her favorite place of prayer in a meadow between their home and the Raritan River. Apologizing for the intrusion, Jacob told Dina of his affection for her and proposed that they be married. Dina's reaction was, "My child, what are you thinking about?" and she went ahead with her preparations to leave.

When a severe storm prevented her departure, Dina recognized that God's plans for her were different than her own, and she listened with new seriousness to Jacob Hardenbergh's proposal.

Two years after Johannes' death, Jacob and Dina were married at Raritan on March 18, 1756. He was twenty; she was thirty-one. In 1758 Jacob was licensed to preach by the Coetus of the Dutch Reformed Church in America and called to the parish which Johannes had served.

Dina was of inestimable help to Jacob. She was familiar with the parish and its people. She had gained the love and respect of the people Jacob had been called to serve as pastor. Her deep faith and sense of the presence of God was an inspiration to them. She was well-read and a good conversationalist. During the time between worship services on Sunday she would be engaged in conversation that reinforced the teachings of her husband from the pulpit. Because of her close walk with God in daily living and her strong faith in the midst of adversity, Dina was sought out as a counselor. Over the years many came to her for direction and advice.

Jacob and Dina had five daughters, including

twins—Maria and Laura (1757), Mary Nela (1760), Dina (1762), and Rachel (1765), and four sons—Johannes (1759), Jacob Rutsen (1763, died in infancy), Jacob Rutsen (1768; it was common practice to use the same name for another child if the first given the name died in infancy), and Lewis (1771).

Jacob became a leader beyond his local parish. He was among those who worked for the independence of the Dutch Reformed Churches in America from the Classis of Amsterdam, advocating this both in the colonies and in the Netherlands during his visit there. Jacob also gave leadership to the effort to form a college for the training of ministers. He was among those who secured a charter for Queens College in 1766 and again in 1770. On four different occasions, he was elected the president of the General Synod of the Dutch Reformed Church (1775, 1780, 1783, and 1786).

The war years were trying ones for the Hardenbergh family. Because of his advocacy of independence, the British threatened Jacob's life, offering a reward of a hundred pounds for his capture. He slept with a loaded musket by the bed. The British caused him considerable grief when they burned down his church at Raritan.

During the war a friendship developed between George and Martha Washington and the Hardenberghs. They became neighbors and friends when General George and Martha Washington spent two winters in the Wallace house in Raritan. Martha's friendship with Dina continued after Jacob accepted a call to become the pastor of the Marbletown, Rochester, and Warwarsing congregations in Ulster County, New York. General Washington had headquarters at Newburgh at the time.

In 1785 Jacob became the pastor of First Reformed Church in New Brunswick, New Jersey, and president of Queens College. Jacob and Dina gave their attention to building the small college and serving the church.

When they moved to New Brunswick, Dina was sixty-one years of age and Jacob fifty. Dina assisted in the pastoral ministry by visiting the sick, caring for the poor, and going to the homes of those who were experiencing crises. She continued her custom of joining in conversation between worship services on Sunday, frequently discussing a point of faith or a Scripture passage.

Jacob died on November 2, 1790. Dina lived for a time with her son Lewis in the Hardenbergh estate at Rosendale, New York, and with her son John (Johannes) in Raritan. Then she returned to New Brunswick to reside with her son Jacob Rutsen, Jr.

Dina participated in the worship of First Reformed Church and she continued to be a trusted spiritual counselor for many. She found a friend with whom she shared her spiritual journey in Mrs. Van Deursen of New Brunswick. They prayed together and gave each other encouragement.

In 1799 Dina assisted two women of First Reformed Church—Sarah Van Doren and Mrs. Condict—in forming a Sunday school at the church—one of the first to be organized in the United States.

Dina died at her son Jacob's home on March 26, 1807. When it appeared that she was dying, her friend, Mrs. Van Deursen, told Dina that her death seemed to be at hand, to which she responded, "O! How glad I am."

In 1925, more than a hundred years after Dina Hardenbergh died, the Woman's Board of Foreign Missions was beginning its sixth decade. In the board's jubilee year Mrs. W. I. Chamberlain urged the women of the church to join hands with God to usher in a new era in which "political disturbances. . .may pro-

foundly affect the progress of our mission work" (Chamberlain, 1925, 286).

Missionaries would be tested, mission in foreign fields would move in a new direction, but Christians would keep the faith.

Jeannette Veldman

(1901-1994)

Jeannette Veldman served as a missionary of the Reformed Church until well after her official retirement in 1967. Her travels took her from RCA fields in Kentucky to the shores of China, the challenges of India, and the heat of Arabia. Following her retirement, she joined the staff of Portable Recording Ministries. The story of her time in the Lord's service is one of joy, hardship, and hope, covering far-flung parts of the globe (Larry J. Wagenaar, director of the Joint Archives of Holland, story based on the missionary's papers, submitted to author, July 1994*).[1]

Jeannette Veldman, who was born in Grand Rapids, Michigan, was a member of Beverly Reformed Church. Her call to serve the Lord came at the age of eighteen. Later in life Jeannette remembered the Lord's first tugs to ministry:

> *When God said "Why don't you go to college and learn to be a missionary," immediately my mind thought foreign missionary, and that thought persisted through the years. But also, somehow, the preference to stay in America came up constantly, and I through the years prayed, "God I want to do your will, but could you please let me stay in this country?" (Veldman, Memoirs, 1985).*

After graduating from Hope College and the Presbyterian School of Nursing in Chicago, Jeannette opted to spend one year working as a community nurse for the Women's Board of Domestic Missions in Gray Hawk, Kentucky, thinking this could be the answer to her call. But after a year and the termination of the trial medical program there, Jeannette said to herself, "God is pointing you to China, so I quietly but steadily made plans for that." She accepted a position at Hope-Wilhelmina Hospital in Kulangsu, Amoy, China.

Once there, she faced the challenges of a new and complex language and the special needs of the hospital in ministering to the local population. With a shortage of medical supplies and basic food brought on by the Japanese occupation of eastern China, she kept her eyes on her service in ministry:

> *Everything here goes along much as usual. We have practically no fruit here. . . . The Chinese government will not let these things come down to us, and the J[apanese] government will not let rice go up to the up-country people. "War is Hell" was the title of an oration given by a member of one of the graduating classes when I was at Hope. There is more truth than fiction in that title too, and not all of the results of war are found on the battle field (Jeannette Veldman, letter to family, July 1940).*

Her work during the 1930s and early 40s was not limited to the challenges of Amoy. On a return from furlough in April 1937, she was assigned to assist at the Arcot Mission in India, where she assisted in nursing administration and teaching at the Scudder Memorial Hospital. In February 1938 she began the arduous trip to China.

Back in Amoy, Hope-Wilhelmina Hospital and the nursing education program flourished under Veldman's leadership, graduating fifteen students in 1939. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese turned the ground floor of the hospital into a detention camp for

some foreign sailors. "With the help of two or three Chinese nurses, Jeannette Veldman did what she could to make these 'non-paying guests,' as she called them, as comfortable as possible" (DeJong, 1992, 263).

All missionaries were interned by the Japanese, and communication with the outside world stopped. A brief note from the Red Cross let Jeannette's family in Grand Rapids, Michigan, know she was still alive. Jeannette was one of the last RCA missionaries to be released in 1943. Returning to the United States, she used this time to study public health at Columbia University in New York City and visited churches and mission fests describing the work the Reformed Church was doing in China.

Jeannette returned to the Amoy mission in 1946. However, she and other Christians suffered under the Chinese Communists, who severely hampered the hospital's work. Letters which she wrote home reveal the suspicion which was present everywhere during this period and the hardship among the people. The government ordered her out of the country in 1951.

The following year Jeannette was assigned to the Arabian Mission as director of nursing and in-service education, where she served until her retirement in 1967. It was a unique opportunity for Jeannette and the church to build on the many talents which she brought to her work.

One of Jeannette's colleagues in the Arabian Mission wrote of her:

> *She taught and influenced many young men to become competent, thorough, and compassionate nurses. She and Anne DeYoung, using materials which they had prepared themselves, set up the first nursing school in Oman. She was a person who encouraged and stimulated others. Jeannette was a remarkable person who could successfully relate to all age groups (Joyce De Bruin Dunham, RCA missionary to Oman, 1953-84, letter to Beth Marcus, undated).*

Jeannette Veldman died at the age of ninety-two in Holland, Michigan.[5]

Arlene Schuiteman

(1924-)

Arlene Schuiteman, daughter of John G. and Johanna Rozeboom Schuiteman, grew up with five sisters on a farm in Sioux County, Iowa. Shy and fearful as a child, she spoke Dutch until she started kindergarten in a rural school. In high school Arlene took the teacher training course which gave her basics in elementary eduction. That plus a twelve-week summer school session qualified her to teach in a rural school. "As a child I had a keen interest in caring for anyone who was ill in our home. I really wanted to be a nurse, but my parents urged me to become a teacher" (Arlene Schuiteman, written responses to author, March 1994*).

Shortly after she began teaching, Arlene heard Dr. Paul Harrison speak at a missionary conference in Orange City, Iowa. His plea for nurses for Arabia moved her deeply, but she "brushed the thought aside since his call was for nurses" and Arlene was a teacher.

Eight years later, sitting in the balcony of First Reformed Church of Sioux Center, listening to a sermon on Isaiah 6:8 by her pastor, the Rev. P.A. DeJong, she had an experience she could not ignore. "At some point toward the end of the sermon I had an unusual experience which I find difficult to explain. It felt like a bright light passed through me and that I was glowing from head to foot. Shy as I was, I feared that others might see it. I looked around me thinking others might be experiencing the same thing, but some of the young people were actually sleeping."

Arlene didn't understand what had happened, but she sought guidance from her pastor. He persuaded her to contact Ruth Ransom at the Board of Foreign Missions, which she did. Although Arlene doubted her ability to succeed as a missionary nurse, confirmed by the lack of encouragement she received from Miss Ransom, Arlene "put out a fleece,[6] saying, 'If I am successful in getting a registered nurse degree, then I will know that this is of the Lord.'"

> *Finding God's will is not as big an issue as we make it. The big issue is to be obedient. . . . We need not have everything mapped out for us in advance as long as we know and trust our Guide and Shepherd. . . . Give highest priority to a daily, private, quiet devotional time of Bible reading and prayer. Participate on a regular basis in worship with God's people. Listen for God's voice and be obedient.*
>
> —*Arlene Schuiteman*

Telling no one but her pastor about her call to the mission field, Arlene used all her savings to complete a three-year nursing program at Methodist Hospital School of Nursing in Sioux City, Iowa. A month after her graduation in 1954, Arlene was appointed to serve as a nurse in Nasir, the Sudan, home to the Nuer, a nomadic people.

Until the Sudanese government expelled her in 1963, Arlene, a doctor, and nine Nuer "dressers" (nurses) coped with the masses of sick people who came to the clinic during the dry seasons. "Often they came from both sides at once. One season we employed three men to try to control and police the crowd." In addition to difficult working conditions, missionaries lived with uncertainty, never knowing when Sudanese officials would expel them. "The workload grew heavier each time a coworker left and no new personnel were allowed to come to help. Government officials refused to grant reentry permits. When time for furlough came, one had to decide whether to go home and forfeit the opportunity to return or to stay on and forfeit rest time."

When Arlene's expulsion was ordered, she was given only seven days to leave Sudan, despite the problems involved with getting to the port of exit, Khartoum, which was a thousand miles from Nasir. Under constant surveillance by police until she boarded the plane in Khartoum, and given no reason for her expulsion during a brief interview with the permanent undersecretary, two Scripture verses came to her mind: "You shall be brought before kings and rulers for my sake" (Mark 13:9 KJV) and "The lot is cast into the lap, but the decision is the Lord's alone" (Prov. 16:33).

Arlene was reassigned to Mettu, Ethiopia, in 1966. As nursing instructor in a government-recognized training school, she was able to use her teaching skills in addition to nursing and midwifery skills. Some of the men she trained went to remote clinics to work with RCA missionaries such as the one at Omo River with the Swarts and at Godare with the Hoekstras.

In the last months of 1976 the Ministry of Health ordered Arlene to leave Mettu and teach midwifery in Addis Ababa. The country was in chaos due to the Marxist revolution, Christians were being persecuted, and members of her church family were being tortured or killed. After working for a year in the capital city at a time known as the Red Terror, her work permit was not renewed and she was forced to leave Africa for a second time.

In 1978 Arlene returned to Africa. This time she was assigned to Zambia, a country she assumed would be politically stable. "Two weeks after I arrived, guerilla

fighters from Southern Rhodesia entered Zambia, the army was mobilized, and the American Embassy warned us that highway travel was unsafe. Once again, I was assured that God had called me to serve in Zambia and I could trust him to care for me. After Southern Rhodesia gained its independence and became Zimbabwe, tensions subsided."

Although they were always short of staff and the workload was exhausting, Arlene spent eleven satisfying years working as a nursing instructor at St. Francis Hospital in Katete (1978-81) and then with the Brethren in Christ Mission in Macha (1981-89). Since her retirement in 1989, Arlene Schuiteman has completed three short-term volunteer assignments in Ethiopia. When a number of Nuer refugees from southern Sudan were placed in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, Arlene was invited to help teach the Nuer women. She was delighted to begin literacy and Bible classes for them.

One of Arlene's favorite Scripture verses is "As you go, your way shall be opened up step by step before you" (Prov. 4:12 Hebrew translation). She says, "I believe that finding God's will is not as big an issue as we make it. We want to be sure of security, and this may replace the adventure of following where God is leading now. We need not have everything mapped out for us in advance as long as we know and trust our Guide and Shepherd."

In November 1994 doctors discovered that Arlene had a rare life-threatening condition, arterial venal fistula, which was treated by brain surgery. A prayer network of friends and churches in the United States, Ethiopia, and Zambia sustained her throughout the ordeal.

I entered surgery knowing that the Lord would fight for me; all I needed to do was be still (Exod. 14:14). I also knew that whatever the outcome, God's purposes would be carried out. And praise his glorious name, God chose to keep my senses intact. I can see, hear, talk, and walk. God was in charge in the operating room" (Arlene Schuiteman, letter to friends, Dec. 1994).

Darlene De Beer Vander Aarde

(1931-)

Growing up on a farm in Northwest Iowa, where each member of the family did chores and the girls learned to sew, cook, can food, and wash clothes, prepared Darlene De Beer Vander Aarde for the twenty-six years she and her physician husband, Stan, spent as missionaries in India (Stan and Darlene Vander Aarde, archival materials and written accounts submitted to author, October 1989 and March 1994*).

"My parents didn't have much in the way of material goods, but they gave their eight children lots of love and showed us by example to share ourselves when we didn't have much else to give. They sacrificed in order for all of us to attend Northwestern Academy in Orange City. God provided the money for tuition and opened doors not only for me, but for my brothers and sisters as well (Darlene Vander Aarde, 1994).

Darlene met her husband at the academy, but they did not marry until 1956, after graduating from Hope College. While Stan pursued a medical degree, Darlene taught school in Evanston, Illinois. She says, "From the time I was a child I wanted to be a teacher. I taught second grade in Archer, Iowa, to earn money to complete my education at Hope College. I never dreamed of living outside of Iowa, let alone being a missionary, until I met Stan. He helped me discern God's will for my life and encouraged me to do things I never thought I could do."

In June 1961 the Vander Aarde family, which by this time included three sons—Paul, David, and Leon—began missionary service in Madanapalle, South India. While Stan carried out his healing ministry at Mary Lott Lyles Hospital, Darlene ministered to her family and began the important task of home schooling her children. She also was a Christian witness to the many visitors who came to their home.

A year after the family arrived in India, their two-year-old son drowned in a garden tank, one of many set out to preserve water in drought stricken-India. The death of a child is heart-wrenching for any mother, but it did not cause Darlene to leave India or to lose her faith. She was sustained by "support from Indian friends and missionary colleagues and the abundant grace of God." Money given in memory of Leon was used to build a laboratory at the hospital.

Darlene's faithfulness enabled her to do a great deal to improve the life of poor Indian girls and women. Some of her most joyful and fulfilling experiences came as a result of working in the Church of South India's (CSI) Girls High School.

> *I've been blessed to be the instrument God used to help many poor girls obtain scholarship aid and to encourage them in the pursuit of their goals. I was privileged to be asked to teach Bible and English courses at the nursing school in Madanapalle. It has been a joy and blessing to see the girls achieve successful careers, enabling them to support their families, no longer bound by poverty. I was thrilled to present a nursing diploma to Parvathi, a Hindu orphan who came to my school as a second class student. Not only did she complete her education and nurses' training, but she received achievement certificates for having the best grades and being the best student in the nursing school.*

In addition to serving as administrator of the Girls High School, the boarding home connected with the high school, Geegh Nursery School, and American Arcot Mission Elementary School, Darlene opened a daycare center for the poorest of the poor children in Madanapalle. The center, CSI Creche, which was sponsored by a West German organization, allowed mothers who were day laborers to leave their children in a well-supervised situation where they received food and loving care. The center also provided jobs for four previously unemployed women.

Darlene helped organize and manage Shanti Sadan (Abode of Peace), a home for destitute and homeless older women, sponsored and supported by the local Women's Fellowship. She advised the famine relief project which trained poor people to make toys to sell.

For many missionaries one of their most difficult ordeals is to send their children away from home for their education. Darlene and Stan trusted in God's mercy when each of their children—Paul, David, Debra, and Mary Beth—left them to attend Kodaikanal School three hundred miles from their home in Madanapalle. "When we needed it, God's grace upheld us."[7]

In December 1985 Darlene was stabbed in the shoulder as she sat in church. The mentally unbalanced man who assaulted her was sent to a psychiatric hospital; Darlene took up her duties as administrator, hostess, and teacher after a very short recuperation period.

Darlene and Stan returned to the United States in 1988. They lived in Willmar, Minnesota, where they continued faithfully to follow their Lord as they participated in the life and work of the Reformed Church in America. In 1995, when Stan retired, the Vander Aardes moved to Orange City, Iowa.

Dina Van Bergh and the three RCA missionaries whose stories are written above knew God intimately from the time they were very young. Khamman Inthisan came to Christ in her middle years. Yet, like Dina, Jeannette, Arlene, and Darlene, Khamman Inthisan is a leader who knows "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding" (Phil. 4:7).

Khamman Inthisan

(1947-)

"John Gardner, the founder of Common Cause, a citizen's organization that works for political and social reform, was once asked if there was one characteristic present in every great leader. Without pausing, he replied that a commanding physical presence and energy was never absent among those who lead well" (the Rev. David Phillips, former pastor of Lao Community Reformed Church, who submitted this story to author, June 1994*).

The first thing that strikes you about Khamman Inthisan is her size. Not only is she very tall for a Lao woman, she also has the commanding physical presence of which Gardner spoke. At forty-eight years old, Khamman, who works in a bank, is just moving into the role of leader in the Lao Community Reformed Church in Eagan, Minnesota. Had the war in Southeast Asia never happened, there is no telling what she would be doing now.

To understand Khamman, one must grasp both the amount of progress she has made and the number of hurdles she has had to face. She was born in a poor village in central Laos while the French were still dominant in much of Southeast Asia. Khamman's village had about sixty homes and a Buddhist temple, but no school, medical facility, or roads. Footpaths led to family-tended gardens.

The nearest school was in the next village, three miles away. Though girls typically received no education, Khamman talked her parents into letting her attend first grade. Despite the fact that she was the only girl in school and lacked parental encouragement, she loved learning. Eventually she moved to the capitol, Vientiane, where she completed college and met her husband, Bounleuang, a good and gentle man who studied to become a high school teacher.

Instead, Bounleuang became a soldier, rising to the rank of major in the Lao army. He was brought to the United States and trained, along with other Lao officers, to fight communism in the war in Southeast Asia.

Near the end of the war and after the collapse of the Royal Lao Army, Khamman was left alone with their daughter. Bounleuang was taken to a reeducation camp, where his communist captors were especially cruel. Though discriminated against because her husband had been declared an enemy of the people, Khamman was able to eke out a living as a teacher, nursing her daughter while she taught.

After being separated from her husband for three years, Khamman was permitted to live with him in the camp. There was so little food that wives were welcomed into the camps to plant and tend gardens. For a time, the only food the prisoners had to eat was rice. The Inthisans' second child was born in the camp, but when Khamman became pregnant with their third child, she was forced to leave her husband. That same year she buried her father. More than six years passed before Bounleuang was released and he was able to meet his youngest child. During that time, Khamman and Boun-

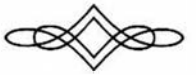
leuang had written to each other, but only about one letter per year had been delivered.

When the family was reunited in 1987, they realized that their lives in Laos were over. They applied for refugee status and entered a resettlement camp in Thailand. It was there that they became Christians, and it was there that the comfort of God's presence sustained them. In the camp they shared a small sleeping room with as many people as the floor could hold. At night people cried out, their sleep filled with the nightmares of war. In an act of simple faith, Khamman began to place her Bible under her children's pillow and sometimes under her own pillow. The nightmares ceased.

God's peace began for the Inthisan family in that Thai camp. It followed them as they emigrated to the United States in 1989, sponsored by a former soldier who had served with Bounleuang in the Laotian Army and had come to the U.S. some years before. God's peace continues, although it is a peace which is continuously challenged. Leaders of any refugee community are in great demand. Khamman and her husband spend an extraordinary amount of time helping other Lao refugees who are not doing well in their transition to life in the United States. Further, both Khamman and her husband had to accept much instability in the work place. The last hired is the first fired in times of economic recession. They know that peace of mind grounded in economic security often does not last.

Family life is another challenge to peace. The Inthisans have been spared many of the communication problems common in refugee families, because both parents and children have learned English well. But how do parents explain hostility, the danger of words such as "gook" and "chink," and how do they help their children deal with feelings of impotence or anger?

Although Khamman Inthisan has still not known a whole decade of peace in her life, she and Bounleuang understand better than most of us that "Christ is our peace...and has broken down...the hostility between us" (Eph. 2:14).



Internment did not only take place overseas. During World War II, the U.S. government classified more than a million newly arrived immigrants from Germany, Italy, and Japan as "enemy aliens." However, only the Japanese were treated unjustly. After the bombing of Pearl Harbor (Dec. 7, 1941), groups of U.S. citizens directed their rage at people of Japanese ancestry. In 1942 the government ordered 110,000 West Coast Japanese-Americans, two-thirds of them U.S. citizens, to report to inland relocation camps. Canada also relocated about 21,000 people of Japanese ancestry during the war.

Honey Toda Wada

(1921-)

In the years just prior to World War II people of Japanese ancestry lived in many towns and cities along the West Coast of the United States. At that time Issei—immigrants from Japan—were not allowed to become citizens, nor were they allowed to own land, according to the Immigration Act of 1924. Instead they leased fields and/or shops and markets. Most of the Nisei—people of Japanese ancestry born in the United States—were too young to own any property (Honey Wada, taped interview with author, May 1994*).

Honey[8] Toda Wada is a retired Japanese bilingual teacher in the Fort Lee, New Jersey, school system. She was born in Fresno and grew up in Glendale, California,

at a time when "there was still prejudice in California." Honey's father had converted to Christianity when he lived in Fresno, so when they moved to Glendale, the Toda family became involved in a local congregation which had Japanese and English language church services.

When she graduated from Glendale Junior College, Honey took the civil service test for the Los Angeles City Board of Education, because many Asian-Americans "felt that civil service was the way to avert discrimination."

> *Out of more than one thousand applicants, I finished fourth, so I thought, "Well, I'm near the top, so I should get a nice job in the city or in the main office of the Board of Education." Then I was told I would be hired, but I had a choice of only two high schools—one in North Hollywood, the other way out of the city in San Fernando. I felt this wasn't quite fair, but I took the job of clerk in North Hollywood High School. I started to work there the week following Pearl Harbor.*

At that time organizations such as the Native Sons of the Golden West and the American Legion were stirring up anti-Japanese feelings. In March 1942 the U.S. government decreed that all people of Japanese ancestry were to be removed from the West Coast and taken to detention camps. The Toda family had a month to dispose of their things, most of which they stored in their Glendale church or with friends. Honey, her parents, and her two teenage brothers assembled at the railroad station, taking only what they could carry in two hands. After they were tagged and given numbers, they boarded a bus, not knowing their destination. She says, "There was no resistance at all. People accepted the fact that our parent's fatherland was the enemy and so we were considered the enemy, too. I think if we had been older and more aware of our rights, there would have been more protest, but we obeyed the government orders to show that we were loyal Americans."

Honey spent one year in Manzanar, a camp located "in the desert, where the wind blew and the sand came up through the cracks in the wooden floors." After her release with the assistance of the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) she applied and was accepted at the University of Maryland. AFSC also helped her find housing and a job caring for children in the home of a family who worked for the State Department.

After graduation she came to New York City to work as a research assistant to Dr. C. Wright Mills, sociology professor at Columbia University. She also went to the Japanese American Methodist Church, "a gathering place for relocatees from the West Coast." She met her husband, a son of a Baptist minister, at the church. When the three New York City Japanese American congregations—one Methodist and two Reformed Churches—united in 1953, the Wadas became a part of this Japanese American United Church.

Honey Wada is an energetic older adult with a keen sense of humor. She credits her faith in God, her participation in church activities such as Bible study and teaching Sunday school, true and faithful church friends, and her goal to "get out of Manzanar" for sustaining her during those unsettling war years.[9]

Difficulties and testing can be destructive and discouraging for some. For people of faith, trials and crises enable spiritual maturity. Faith strengthens them for the journey, helping them to endure.

Vera Kreykes Te Paske
(1918-1992)

Reared in rural Iowa, raised in a religious and ethnically Dutch working-class family, and a life-long member of First Reformed Church of Sioux Center, Iowa, there were many fundamental aspects of Vera Te Paske's religious vocation which, as it were, were simply "in the air she breathed." I never recall hearing my mother articulate her calling or vocation in so many words except possibly in the arbitrary forum of a church meeting or in response to certain people's naive curiousity about how one survived emotionally and spiritually in a wheelchair. This serves to emphasize that what Vera became, and the religious commitment which she embodied sprang first and foremost from an unquestioning acceptance of who she was and a profound "rootedness" in life (Bradley A. Te Paske, "Thoughts About My Mother," February 1994. This story was submitted to author by Bradley and Derrick Te Paske, sons, and Maureen Te Paske Evans, daughter, February 1994).*

Vera, the youngest of three daughters born to Dick and Win Kreykes in Hospers, Iowa, was "reflective, intelligent, [and] extremely personable." She earned a teaching certificate from Northwestern College in Orange City, Iowa, and did additional work at Iowa Teachers College in Cedar Falls, Iowa. At the time of her marriage to lawyer Maurice A. Te Paske, she was teaching at an elementary country school in Newkirk, Iowa. Her son Derrick says:

Though I never saw her do it, I always thought of her as a teacher, helping us and other people with what they had to do/learn, but seldom telling how to do it. I always thought of her as a working, if not professional, woman. Even after the accident, there was a sense of her being out and active (or checking tax returns at home).

In her late thirties (1954), a car accident initiated thirty-eight years as a paraplegic, but Vera did not let her circumstances stop her from living a full life. At the time of the accident, the family received an outpouring of love and devotion, which prompted in Vera "a deep sense of gratitude, and a deeper realization that it is love which weaves us all into one body." A young Robert Schuller was among the visitors during her recovery in Chicago. He brought her a bracelet to which was attached "a single glass amulet with a mustard seed at its center. It was an appropriate token of the faith which was being sorely challenged."

Vera's resiliance enabled her to transcend her tragedy and to get on with life.

She often remarked that "If God let her live, God must have had a reason and purpose for her." Her counter to the old "I complained that I had no shoes, and then met a man who had no feet" was the rather heroic (if sometimes daunting to live with) "I could have been a quadriplegic." Her sometimes apparent sternness, I now suppose, was an understandable function of unexpressed pain (I recall that in her last hospital admission, they [medical personnel] were amazed she was not on any medication) and of great spiritual resolve, self-possession, and courage. To call it just "the power of positive thinking" is only to hint at the complexity and profundity of the challenge and her triumph.

Vera Te Paske was well read, possessed a charming sense of humor, was a great storyteller, and brought great imagination and creativity to interpersonal relationships. Bradley Te Paske recalls an anecdote told by his father which illustrates Vera's inner strength and sensitivity to others:

One summer afternoon, months into her rehabilitation therapy in neighboring Sioux City, Iowa, Vera pulled up in the car in front of the Te Paske law office to talk to her husband. She got a few tears in her eyes as she reported to Maurie that the doctor had said she'd never walk again. Comforting her he said, "We've pretty much known that all along, haven't we honey?" To which Vera responded, "Yes, it's just that it made me so sad to have the doctor start crying when he told me!"

After Maurice's death in 1976, Vera went on boldly as a widow for sixteen years. Her faith showed itself in Vera's concern for her children, the community, and the church. She believed that Christ had come to give life and to give it more abundantly. Vera taught her children (and others) that to live well, they needed to love God and neighbor, to contribute to making life better for other people. Bradley Te Paske writes of his mother:

Quick to acknowledge her own financial blessings, her generosity to others extended beyond money to include her time, energy, and enthusiasm. I suppose the prevailing image of her in Sioux Center is moving cheerfully and busily about in her electric vehicle, perhaps bearing ads for the community theater or other local event, but being in herself and her presence, an advertisement for life itself.

Clara Moore Woodson
(1927-)

When Clara Moore Woodson was a youngster growing up in Brooklyn, New York, she attended a primary Sunday school class in a Methodist Church where most of the parishioners were Caucasian. Clara says, "Though I cannot specifically recall what happened or what was said in this little group, I do have a sense of it being very negative and hurtful. However, the teacher with an engaging, loving smile and soft-spoken, nurturing, comforting voice left an indelible imprint on me. Each Sunday this woman, who served us hot cocoa and cookies, dispelled whatever unpleasantry temporarily surfaced" (Clara Woodson, written materials to author, November 1994).

It was in that church school class that Clara's dream of becoming a missionary was born. A few years later, when the family moved and began attending a black Baptist church, that dream was replaced. The minister's wife encouraged Clara to be a teacher and even convinced the church's Board of Trustees to let Clara, who was only thirteen, teach a Sunday school class on her own.

Her father and maternal grandmother—"the wisest person I have ever known"—also inspired and supported her spiritually and psychologically. They encouraged her to "aim high, strive to be the best, realize education is a lifelong process, and never, never feel that you know it all and cannot learn from 'even the least of these.'"

Encouraged by her pastor's faith in her, Clara attended and graduated from Brooklyn College in 1947, a time when African-Americans were overtly and covertly discouraged from pursuing degrees from that institution. Clara's family and the church were her "safe havens." She says, "The church insulated me and enabled me to overcome the secular world's attempts to crush my self-esteem and reduce me to nothingness. Throughout my formal educational journey, I was always in the minority and frequently the only minority student in class. I remember vividly and painfully the times I felt ignored, treated with disdain, looked down upon, and viewed as a non-entity."

Clara struggled in an academic setting. "In the comfort and security of the church I was a leader,

respected and admired. In the 'real' world I was at the bottom of the totem pole."[10] It wasn't until her senior year, when she took student teaching, that her spiritual gift of teaching carried her through. That, and "the faith and prayers" of people in her church.

> *I have lived long enough to experience healing of many negative, discouraging, and hurtful situations. Through it all I have been blessed.*
>
> *—The Rev. Clara Woodson*

After graduating from college she worked fourteen years as a teacher. During this period she married Edwin Woodson and gave birth to six children. She also joined New Brooklyn Reformed Church and became actively involved in the women's group. "I became a full person again. My desire to enter the mission field was rekindled. However, I now had a husband and family whom I did not want to subject to the sacrifices that would be required if they had to relocate to foreign soil. Teaching in the school was my job, but involvement in denominational activities was my work."

For many years Clara was content to work in the local congregation and denomination as a lay person. She served New Brooklyn as an elder, clerk of consistory, church school and vacation Bible school teacher, and leader in Reformed Church Women (RCW). In addition, she served RCW on classical, synodical, and denominational levels. For two interim periods totaling more than five years, Clara assumed a leadership role in church administration until a pastor was installed. She served the Reformed Church in America as a member of many committees, including the Christian Action Committee, the Urban Task Force, the General Synod Executive Committee, and the Search Committee for General Secretary.

Her life became busier and busier. She earned two master's degrees in special education, guidance, and counseling, and she moved into a variety of guidance and administrative positions for the Board of Education in New York City. At the time of this writing, Clara is employed as an assistant superintendent of guidance for Community School District 18 in Brooklyn, New York.

Clara has always brought a spiritual element to her job. Before each workshop or session with a parent or student she prays silently (although to her clients she appears to be only in deep thought), asking God to give her "ears to listen" (see Matt. 11:15). In 1989 Clara, who is a consummate learner, felt drawn to New Brunswick Theological Seminary (NBTS) to pursue in-depth biblical studies. "I did not want to be a minister of a local congregation. I have been and am a missionary at home whenever I reflect Christ in my daily life. The foreign field is that environment in which I find myself outside the realm of comfort and support from the community of believers. My mission is to be more effective at both the work place and the church place."

Clara Moore Woodson earned her third master's degree in May 1992 when NBTS conferred on her the degree of master of divinity. On that occasion the faculty voted to award her a commencement prize to inaugurate the Clara Woodson Scholarship Award. Gifts from her friends and professors at NBTS created an endowment fund which will continue to make future awards possible.

In September of that year Clara was ordained—the second African-American woman to be ordained in the Reformed Church in America—and installed as a minister of the Word and sacrament. She serves as assistant pastor in Flatbush Reformed Church in Brooklyn, New York. "But," Clara says, "my ministry is really in the New York City school system. On a regular basis I encounter disgruntled parents, disillusioned children,

frustrated and burned out teachers, believers and non-believers who are in emotional and spiritual need. God gives me an understanding heart, and I try to model God's comfort peace in my interaction with them."

Many people have encouraged Clara to retire or at least to slow down in her seventh decade of life and to "be kind enough to leave some mountains for others to climb" (the Rev. Brian K. Woodson, youngest son, letter to his mother, June 29, 1993). But Clara believes that God still has work for her to do, such as leading workshops on "mundane ministries" and encouraging Brooklyn Reformed Churches to heartily endorse the denomination's $9.8 by '98 campaign to build new churches, renovate older churches, and train new church leadership. Clara takes on these responsibilities because she loves the Reformed Church in America, "its Dutch roots and its present diversity. I want to give back to this church the joy that it has given me."

> *I have lived long enough to experience healing of many negative, discouraging, and hurtful situations. Through it all I have been blessed. I can resound loud and clear with the Apostle Paul who proclaimed "We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus Christ, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh" (2 Cor. 4:8-11).*

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1. This story has been excerpted from a biography of Dina Van Bergh by J. David Muyskens (Van Dyk, Gerard, trans., The Diary of Dina Van Bergh, with biography by J. David Muyskens), which is part of the series of occasional papers available from the office of the Reformed Church Historical Services, Russell L. Gasero, Archivist, 21 Seminary Place, New Brunswick, New Jersey 08901.

2. In 1746 and 1747, when Dina Van Bergh was twenty-one and twenty-two years old, she kept a journal of her spiritual reflections and prayers, her spiritual struggles and times of refreshment and direction, her experiences of worship in Reformed churches, the encouragement she received from her prayer group, and concerns for her family and her country. On February 1, 1747, Dina wrote in her diary, "It was five years since my soul was set free."

3. Dina wrote on September 18, 1746, "It was two years ago that by a miracle God had saved me." She remembered "how sincerely and with an oath my soul committed itself to the Lord."

4. The Veldman papers are the property of the Joint Archives of Holland, Hope College, Holland, Michigan.

5. In the years preceding her death in 1994, Jeannette Veldman was working on her memoirs. An extensive set of her correspondence has been preserved in the Western Theological Seminary Collection of the Joint Archives of Holland, Hope College, Holland, Michigan, awaiting an editor and final publication.

6. This phrase, used in some evangelical congregations, refers to the manner in which Gideon tested what he thought he had heard God tell him to do. See Judges 6:36-40 where Gideon said to God, "In order to see whether you will deliver Israel by my hand, as you have said, I am going to lay a fleece of wool on the threshing floor; if there is dew on the fleece alone, and it is dry on all the ground, then I shall know that you will deliver Israel by my hand, as you have said." When Gideon's test confirmed Go d's promise, Gideon followed God's instructions and the Midianites were defeated.

7. Don Luidens, in his mother's story (see Chapter 2—Bearing Witness, "Ruth Stegenga Luidens"), wrote about the requirement to send children in their seventh or eighth years to boarding school in Kodaikanal, South India: "For this massive rupture with her motherly responsibilities, my mom was particularly unprepared. In later years, when she and I reminisced about those days, she spoke about the decision to send me to boarding school in my seventh year as the great betrayal of her life. In her more awkward (for me) comments, she made it clear that she would have had me grow up a somewhat different young man if she had had her say during this period." Don Luidens, March 7, 1944.

8. Honey is her legal name, which is a translation of her middle name in Japanese, Mitsuye. Mitsu means honey in Japanese.

9. Although a number of members of the Japanese American United Church were detained during the war, no one talked about camp life until recently. An annual Day of Remembrance held at the Japanese American United Church, is a time when Japanese-Americans are encouraged to talk about the wartime evacuation orders, internment in the "relocation" centers, their camp experiences, and resettlements to

other areas in the United States.

10. Clara A. Woodson, "Pastoral Administration," a paper written for Theology 590, New Brunswick Theological Seminary, Summer 1988.

Afterword

The ninety-five stories in the preceding pages offer only a glimpse of the marvelous and varied ways God has called RCA women to ministries in church leadership, evangelism, justice and advocacy, health care, hospitality, interpreting the Word and administering the sacraments, teaching, nurturing in the church and home, stewardship, the arts, and being faithful. Some of these women knew they were called to serve God even when they were children. For others the realization came gradually or late in life. Some fought against the notion that God was calling them to a vocation in ministry. Others responded with great joy and unhesitatingly.

The RCA's Office of Ministry and Personnel Services reported to the June 1995 General Synod: "The acceptance of women in ministry positions has grown steadily through the years. At the present time there are 110 RCA ordained women. Of these 110 ordained women, 53 serve as pastors of congregations (33 are senior or solo pastors) and others serve as chaplains." Eleven of these 110 are profiled in this book. Dozens of others whose stories appear in *Hands, Hearts, and Voices: Women Who Followed God's Call* serve the RCA as ordained deacons or elders.

Ministry, however, as noted in the foreword, involves more than ordination. The apostle Paul notes that there are varieties of gifts, services, and activities, "but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. . . . All. . . are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses" (1 Cor. 12:4-11).

How do you know God is calling you to a vocation in ministry? In preparation for writing *Hands, Hearts, and Voices*, I asked women in the Reformed Church in America to respond to the question, "How do you discern God's will for your life?" Almost everyone mentioned reading the Bible and spending time in prayer—alone and in community. Respondents also encouraged other RCA women to "have faith in God and pursue whatever it is that your heart is telling you to do" (Bernita Babb), "listen to the still, small voice that either makes you restless or makes you sit" (Phyllis Palsma), "be open to God's guidance through the words and affirmations of trusted Christian friends" (Eloise Van Heest), "seek out and meet with a woman who has chosen ministry as a vocation" (Joyce deVelder), "work out what your gifts and abilities are" (Bette Brunsting), "know what you want for yourself. . . . Have courage to start walking toward that goal knowing that God will see you through to good and not so good times" (Gladys Rivera), and "listen to women's stories—those who have gone ahead, those with you now" (Karin Granberg-Michaelson).

I trust that *Hands, Hearts, and Voices: Women Who Followed God's Call* has provided not only interesting and enjoyable stories, but also has sparked in you an eagerness to do God's will.

Hands, Hearts, and Voices:

The Story Continues

(Here are a few pages for you to add your story or the story of a woman you admire.)

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