

Fall 2019

Reflections

Y A L E D I V I N I T Y S C H O O L

a magazine of theological and ethical inquiry

Resistance and Blessing: Women, Ministry, and YDS



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Credits

Reflections

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COVER ART

On Being American/Jazz:
Ryan Cohan's The River #5
(papers, oil, flashe, pencil, MSA gel)
by Ellen Priest '77 M.Div.

For a multi-year project, Ellen Priest chose pianist/composer Ryan Cohan's hour-long jazz suite *The River* for its beauty, intellect, emotional range, and panoramic scale. On her website (ellenpriest.com) she writes, "In it I hear voices of Latin and Afro-Cuban jazz, African drumming with its layered rhythms, Aaron Copland's uplifting compositions, call-and-response forms from Africa and the African-American South, and the gritty Chicago blues and jazz tradition Cohan grew up in. *The River* offers me rich musical spaces and emotional content to work with ...

"For me, *The River* project is a 'coming home' — an embrace embodied in my work. Coming of age in the Vietnam era, I have long struggled with the contradictions in America, especially my country's persistent difficulty embracing the diversity that defines it and makes it thrive. Yet both the Abstract Expressionism that has provided a critical artistic source and the jazz (our great American art form) that has been my beloved subject for 25 years could only have happened *here*."

An abstract painter for more than 40 years, Priest has used jazz as her subject matter since 1990. Her most recent exhibition, "On Being American/Jazz: Ryan Cohan's *The River*" was featured at Saint Peter's Church in New York City earlier this year. At ellenpriest.com, click news, then video for a short presentation on her studio process.

"The sheer joy and energy of visual experience and of the creative process itself are at the core of my work as an artist," she writes.

INSIDE PHOTOGRAPHY

Images from the Yale Divinity School archive

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From the Dean's Desk



Gregory E. Sterling
The Reverend Henry L. Slack
Dean of Yale Divinity School
& Lillian Claus Professor
of New Testament

This is a special year at Yale. We are celebrating the 50th year of co-education at Yale College and the 150th year of women in the graduate and professional schools at Yale University. One way to celebrate is to remember and retell the story of women at Yale Divinity School, and also own our institutional failures to treat women as full equals.

YDS was not the first school at Yale to admit women; that distinction belongs to the School of Fine Arts that opened in 1869. Women began taking classes – primarily religious education classes – at YDS in 1907, 112 years ago but nearly four decades after women came to the School of Fine Arts. This is a relatively unknown chapter in our history, as Ann-Catherine Wilkening '19 M.A.R. writes, but it should become a part of the narrative. I attempted to do this at opening Convocation and will continue to incorporate it.

We began admitting women to degree programs at YDS in 1932, but in restricted numbers. For those of us who walk the halls and view the class portraits of these decades, it is embarrassing to see the limited number of female students. Realizing there was a correlation between the era's disapproval of women in ministry and their restricted presence at YDS makes the quota comprehensible but not laudable. The women who graduated were pioneers. I have had the privilege of knowing several of them personally. Elizabeth Frazier '40 B.D., who recently died at 104, was strong, independent minded, and passionate about her faith. Ordained in 1972, she served churches in Connecticut and Florida. Rena Karefa-Smart '45 B.D. was no less strong than Elizabeth but gentler in spirit. She was the first African-American woman to graduate from YDS, the first to earn a Th.D. from Harvard Divinity School, and the first woman tenured professor at Howard University. Both were remarkable women who elected to work for change within systems and were successful. The articles by current Student Council President Jessica Church '21 M.Div. and recent graduate Emma

McDonald '19 M.A.R. represent the same determination to be agents of change within institutions.

The seismic cultural shifts of the 1960s set up a number of changes. In 1971, Margaret Farley became the first woman on a tenure track in the faculty, and Joan Forsberg became the registrar and Advocate for Women. Letty Russell joined Margaret on the faculty three years later. The three had an immediate impact: The number of women students quickly grew. All three women are honored in this issue; all have their portraits in the Common Room as a reminder to all of their significance for our history.

It has taken longer to reach the same success in the ranks of the upper administration and faculty, but progress is real. This year, for the first time, women comprise more than 50 percent of the tenure track faculty. Several women have had significant roles as administrators: Margot Fassler served as the Director of the ISM (1995-2005); Rebecca Chopp as Dean of YDS (2001-2002); Emilie Townes as the Academic Dean (2008-2013) and, additionally, was the first African-American woman to be tenured; Jennifer Herdt is completing her second term as Academic Dean (2013-2019); and Sarah Drummond is launching Andover Newton Seminary at YDS as the first woman to head that school in its 212-year history. At Berkeley Divinity School, Associate Dean Cathy George will serve as Acting Dean in Spring 2020 while Andrew McGowan is on leave. She is the first woman to serve as the head of BDS in its 166 years. All six women contribute to this issue.

We will mark this year in other ways as well. Every endowed lecture this year will be given by a woman. Every alumni/ae award will be given to a woman. They were not chosen on the basis of gender, but on the basis of excellence; the selections came from pre-existing lists of candidates and were coordinated to coincide this year.

I think that I was able to express our deep appreciation to Elizabeth Frazier and Rena Karefa-Smart before their deaths. This *Reflections* expresses gratitude to all who have contributed to the place of women at YDS and challenges us to remember the principle that in Christ Jesus gender is irrelevant (Gal 3:28).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gregory E. Sterling".

Gregory E. Sterling, Dean



Erika Jones '06 M.Div. speaking in Marquand Chapel, 2004

Photo by Jim Anderson

© Yale Divinity School

The Bible and Women? We Need to Talk



By Michal Beth Dinkler

At a recent meeting of the largest academic organization in my field, the Society of Biblical Literature (SBL), another scholar told me God would bless me if I teach “from behind a lectern” but not if I teach “from behind a pulpit.”

“After all,” he declared, “Paul had some things to say about that.” He promptly walked away.

Had he stayed, I might have shared that I’m not only a New Testament scholar; I’m also an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA). And perhaps – if we could have given one another the benefit of the doubt – we might have had a real conversation about the Bible and women. Because the man was right about this: Paul did indeed have “some things to say about” women’s roles. How we understand and apply those “things” today, however, is a more complicated matter.

Embers of Hope

There are rumbles of revolutions and reckonings: #MeToo headlines, feminist and womanist protests against misogyny, unprecedented backlash against sports industries for the unequal pay for female athletes, new awakenings about the pervasive dangers of toxic masculinity, and the insidious intersectional nature of racism, sexism, and classism. The Christian landscape in this country is clearly

The importance of discussing what the biblical texts say about women becomes more urgent every day.

shifting in response: #ChurchToo has resulted in the resignations of prominent religious leaders in nearly every denomination. Closer to home: I’m raising two young children – a boy and a girl – who visibly bristle when they hear God called “him,” because, they insist, “God is not a boy!”

For me, these embers of hope threaten to die too quickly in the overwhelm of hateful tweets spewed

by our president, the unfettered chauvinistic fury of white supremacists, the persistently patriarchal daily operations of our most hallowed institutions. The importance of discussing what the biblical texts say about women – and how we should understand what they say – becomes more urgent with every passing day.

The truth is this: Justification is there, in the New Testament, for whatever view one wants to espouse on women.

A Swirl of Attitudes

If you want to justify women’s leadership in the church, you can turn to the Gospels, where Jesus travels with and accepts support from women (e.g., Luke 8:1-3). Or look to Romans 16, where Paul hails Phoebe, a deacon and benefactor, and Junia, “prominent among the apostles.” If you believe in equality, you can appeal to 1 Corinthians 7:2-4, where Paul advocates mutuality in marriage, or Galatians 3:28, widely viewed as erasing differences altogether (“There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus”).

If you wish to argue for male headship in the home, you might turn to 1 Cor. 11:3 (“Christ is the head of every man, and the husband is the head of his wife”); to Titus 2:5, which says women should be “submissive to their husbands, so that the word of God may not be discredited”; or to any of the so-called “household codes” (e.g., Ephesians 5:21-6:9; Colossians 3:18-4:1; 1 Peter 2:18-3:7). If you want to argue for female submission, you can draw on 1 Cor. 14:34-35 (“Women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be

subordinate, as the law also says ... it is shameful for a woman to speak in church ..."); or 1 Timothy 2:11-12 ("Let a woman learn in silence with full submission. I permit no woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent").

If you want to make a claim about women based on the texts in the New Testament, you can find your verses. The texts simply do not speak with one voice regarding women. How, then, should we adjudicate between these disparate messages, especially as Christians who hold these texts to be the Word of

We risk getting stuck in echo chambers, surrounded by our own interpretive communities, where it's too easy to lapse into stereotypes and imprecision.

God for the people of God? How can we hope to communicate with Christians who hold different views about women/gender if we do not understand their approach to interpretation?

I want to outline three major hermeneutical options employed in the church today, and I'll keep 1 Timothy 2:11 as my focus to show how various interpretive strategies can lead to entirely different conclusions even with respect to one passage. It's crucial to keep a few things in mind: First, these interpretive strategies are not always distinct in practice; people are often inconsistent, moving between hermeneutical approaches without even being aware that they're doing so. Second, remember that there are folks who consider the New Testament to be the timeless and eternal Word of God in all three of these interpretive "camps" – they just understand "timeless and eternal" in different ways. Thus, the operative question should be: What *about* this particular passage is timeless and eternal? Or: *In what way* is this timeless and eternal?

Interpretive Approach 1: Extract and Apply

From this perspective, if God's Word is universally applicable in every time and place, then we can and should extract New Testament passages from their historical settings and apply them in a straightforward way today. This is how the current-day Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, for example, can declare that 1 Tim. 2 means that every woman in every time and place ought to submit to men. This mandate for human hierarchy is, in their view, *unqualified* by historical or literary context.

Most who take the "extract and apply" approach to biblical interpretation consider New Testament injunctions about household and church to be

analogous – that is, whatever a New Testament writer says about the home applies to the church and vice versa. Some, though, do distinguish between women's roles in public (i.e., churches) and women's roles in private (i.e., in the home). The man I met at SBL would have agreed with complementarian George Knight, who writes that 1 Tim. 2 does not say that women "may not teach *anyone*, but that *within the church* she must not teach and have authority over a man." A common exception is when women are allowed to teach children in the church (as long as a male pastor oversees them). In this sense, setting is significant, but only insofar as it circumscribes women's roles in particular settings, not as a way of softening a text's claims about female submission.

Approach 2: Contextualize

The second major approach is to situate specific New Testament passages historically and literarily in order to determine their meaning. These practitioners might point out that women typically weren't educated in the ancient world. Thus, the reference to Eve being deceived in 1 Tim. 2.14 doesn't mean all women everywhere are easily deceivable; it means that the women in that community were being deceived by teachers of false doctrine (mentioned in 1 Tim. 1.3) because they were uneducated.

Such readers sometimes point out that 1 Timothy claims to be written to Timothy in Ephesus, which was the seat of the cult of Artemis, the goddess of fertility. In that historical context, these interpreters suggest, the reference to the created order of Adam

If you want to make a claim about women based on the New Testament, you can find your verses. The texts do not speak with one voice regarding women.

and Eve would have been a balancing corrective to those who were claiming that women, like Artemis, should be in a position of superiority over men.

Some who take this approach hold that these hierarchical structures do not apply in the 21st century, but the underlying principle of submission continues to be relevant in various forms. One version of the principle is that if Christians experience opposition from non-Christians, especially those in positions of authority over them, they ought to endure for the sake of those people's salvation. Another variation of the principle of submission shows how God's economy of love works, and it's about

self-sacrifice: Whoever is most likely to abuse power should choose to be humble first. Those who take this view would say that Paul defined what that principle looked like for Christians in the first century CE; in today's world, we can live into the intention of the message without holding to the literal exhortation.

Approach 3: Reject These Texts

Approaches #1 and #2 above generally seek to value or redeem New Testament texts about women for our world today. Advocates of #3 instead consider texts like 1 Timothy 2 (sometimes dubbed "texts of terror") to be harmful to women and thus reject them outright. Reading with a "hermeneutic of suspicion" or reading "against the grain," these interpreters consider oppressive tendencies in a text to be traces of humanity's fallen nature.

To be clear, this is not necessarily a denial of divine inspiration of Scripture. Those who reject specific texts are often committed Christians who believe the New Testament is the Word of God. The difference is that they believe that when God inspired (literally, breathed into) the words of Scripture, God did not dictate the words and thereby

When Christians make claims about women based on the New Testament, we ought to be doing so with full awareness of the interpretive strategies we employ.

erase human influence in the writing of the texts. This is why these interpreters say they don't believe texts advocating female submission should be applied today in the same way they might have been in antiquity.

Many who take approach #3 rely on historical contextualization of a different sort than we saw in #2. Some see a chronological development from the egalitarian views in the undisputed Pauline letters to an endorsement of cultural accommodation and patriarchy in the later letters like 1 Timothy. For these folks, there is a Pauline equality tradition preserved in Galatians 3:28 that the earliest Jesus-followers were trying to enact, but that drew criticism from outsiders. 1 Tim. 2 is evidence, they say, that over time, the church turned to patriarchy as a means of placating hostile outsiders who were suspicious of Christians. For those who take interpretive option #3, such dividing lines around gender are more harmful than healing today and ought to be rejected. This interpretive option considers New Testament texts as only one side of arguments that

were ongoing in the early church (with no privileged status simply because they were later included in the Christian canon).

I've laid out three major interpretive approaches to New Testament texts about women, with some bias (of course). Obviously, each could be expanded in many directions, and I've had to skip over far too many details due to space. My main point, however, is this: When Christians make claims about women based on the New Testament, we ought to be doing so with full awareness of the interpretive strategies we employ and the criteria by which we're drawing our conclusions.

I am not neutral on the topic of God's truth about women. I'm an ordained minister. My sister is an ordained minister. My pastor is a woman. Many of my female students have become pastors and priests. We've all been told at one point or another, in ways both subtle and direct, that we're working against God's will instead of for it. If I'm honest, it can be tempting to ignore those who read the Bible differently than we do. But then we get stuck in echo chambers, surrounded by our own interpretive communities, where it's too easy to lapse into stereotypes and imprecision. When we're frustrated or baffled by other Christians' positions on women, we ought to engage on the level of interpretation, understanding their approaches to the text and being clear about our own.

Questions about the New Testament and women raise even larger questions about authority, inspiration, relationship, human nature, and gender broadly construed (not just the male/female binary). We can't discuss these matters unless we know where and why we disagree about biblical interpretation. Christians who care about God's love and justice cannot ignore these conversations. There's simply too much at stake.

Michal Beth Dinkler is associate professor of New Testament at YDS. Her books include Silent Statements: Narrative Representations of Speech and Silence in the Gospel of Luke (De Gruyter, 2013) and Literary Theory and the New Testament, to be released in November by Yale University Press.

A TIMELINE OF YDS WOMEN'S HISTORY



RENA WELLER
KAREFA-SMART



CAROLINE CHEN



ANA INES BRAULIO



IRIS CULLY



M. SHAWN COPELAND



ADELA YARBROW COLLINS



EMILIE TOWNES

- 1907** – Lottie Genevieve Bishop and Ethel Zivley Rather are the first women to register for YDS classes, according to the 1922 centennial catalogue. Both are Yale students from other departments. The number of Yale women attending YDS classes while pursuing other degrees increases into the 1920s.
- 1932** – The Yale Corporation approves recommendation of the Educational Policy Committee to admit women to the Bachelor of Divinity degree program. Four women enroll in the Fall.
- 1934** – Esther Brown graduates after two years in the B.D. program, having transferred to YDS from Colgate-Rochester Theological Seminary.
- 1935** – Bernice Buehler and Thelma Diener are the first to complete the full B.D. program.
- 1945** – Rena Weller Karefa-Smart graduates as first black woman to earn B.D. at YDS.
- 1950** – Caroline Chen, of Nanking, China, is the first Asian woman to graduate.
- 1953** – Ana Ines Braulio, of Puerto Rico, is the first Latina graduate.
- 1953** – The Batchelder Report details achievements and stresses that women experience at YDS. It says women at YDS have scored above average academically in the 20 years since enrollment officially began.
- 1957** – Porter Hall is built to house YDS women, ending 25 years of a lack of campus residency.
- 1965** – Iris Cully is hired as associate professor of religious education.
- 1971** – Joan Forsberg '53 B.D. is hired as YDS registrar and advocate for women students. She helps start the YDS Women's Center.
- 1971** – Margaret Farley '70 M.Phil., '73 Ph.D. is the first woman hired for a tenure-track faculty position. She becomes full professor of social ethics in 1984.
- 1973** – A Women's Inter-seminary Conference is hosted by YDS, drawing women from seminaries across much of the US.
- 1974** – Women's enrollment at YDS nears 40 percent of the student body; a 10-percent quota practice had been dropped by the 1960s.
- 1974** – Letty Russell is hired in theology. She becomes full professor in 1985.
- 1975** – Lee McGee Street '69 M.A.R. is one of the first women to be ordained in the Episcopal Church.
- 1981** – Phyllis Tribble is first woman to give the Beecher Lectures as the only featured speaker. Her theme: "Texts of Terror: Unpreached Stories of Faith."
- 1982** – A Jubilee Celebration marks 50 years of women at YDS.
- 1989** – M. Shawn Copeland is hired as the first African-American woman on the fulltime faculty.
- 1991** – Eleanor Scott Meyers '77 M.A.R. is named president of Pacific School of Religion.
- 1992** – Kathy Turner '69 M.Div. becomes president of the Association for Clinical Pastoral Education (ACPE).
- 1995** – Margot Fassler becomes director of the Yale Institute of Sacred Music.
- 1996** – Margaret Farley and other YDS women are leaders in the Foundation for the Preservation of the Sterling Divinity Quadrangle, endeavoring to save the Prospect Street location of the YDS campus.
- 2000** – Adela Yarbrow Collins is first woman tenured in New Testament on YDS faculty. Since then, other women named to the tenured faculty include Teresa Berger, Jennifer Herdt, Serene Jones, Joyce Mercer, Mary Clark Moschella, Laura Nasrallah, Sally Promey, Carolyn Sharp, Chloë Starr, Kathryn Tanner, Leonora Tubbs Tisdale, Emilie Townes, and Tisa Wenger.
- 2001** – Rebecca Chopp is named dean of YDS.
- 2001** – The Women's Initiative: Gender, Faith, and Responses to HIV/AIDS in Africa is established by YDS women faculty and YDS students from Africa, partnering with the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians.
- 2005** – Sharon Watkins '84 M.Div. becomes General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
- 2007** – An M.A.R. in Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies in Religion is inaugurated, succeeding a degree concentration in feminist studies first offered in the early 1990s.
- 2008** – Emilie Townes is the first African-American woman to be on the tenured YDS faculty and the first to be academic dean.
- 2008** – Serene Jones '85 M.Div., '91 Ph.D. is named president of Union Theological Seminary in New York.
- 2019** – The ratio of tenured faculty women at YDS reaches 50 percent.

In 1932, YDS moved into an iconic new building — Sterling Memorial Quadrangle, up the hill from the main campus. It also adopted a historic policy: Women were allowed to enroll in a degree program.

The decision came with conditions: No more than 10 women could enter per year, and no existing scholarship funds would be available to them. Four women — Esther Brown, Bernice Buehler, Thelma Diener, and Gloria Diener, Thelma's older sister — enrolled that Fall, breaking decades of institutional resistance.



Esther Brown '34

Previously, women were permitted to take YDS classes but not pursue a divinity degree. (See Ann-Catherine Wilkening's article on p. 66.) Now finally they could officially matriculate at YDS and earn the three-year Bachelor of Divinity (B.D.).

Of the pioneering four, Esther Brown was the first to graduate — in 1934, having entered YDS as a second-year student in 1932. Two of that original quartet, Thelma Diener and Bernice Buehler, became the School's first women to take the full B.D. program and graduate in 1935. The fourth, Gloria Diener, didn't finish.

In reminiscences, early YDS women described a largely welcoming if wary student body, but they were reminded at every turn that they were newcomers in a universe of male prerogative. The women were informed they were taking a man's place by being there, so they should work hard and avoid marriage, which could remove them from the job market and defeat the purpose of their YDS education. They must not allow their femininity to be "disruptive." A presumption lingered that women were there to pursue a husband, not a degree.

They had to endure occasional tomfoolery. Thelma Diener recalls her first semester with bemusement:



Thelma Diener '35

On my first day of classes, I was on my way to Marquand Chapel when I met a fellow student on the sidewalk. He looked me over from head to heel and asked, "What's the matter with you?"

I said, "I'm not sure. Why do you ask?"

*He answered, "No girl would come here to school unless she couldn't find a man and that can't be your problem."*¹

For the first 25 years, there was no campus housing for women. Inconvenient off-campus arrangements had to be made. Many stayed at the board-

ing house at 301 Prospect St. Jane Ann Stoneburner Moore '56 B.D. bluntly enumerated other limitations of those years: "Only one female restroom on campus. No women welcome in the chapel choir. No women in the chapel pulpit until one brave sister in my last year did splendidly. No women on the faculty. No female advisor or mentor we could emulate."

One '56 alumna said she felt lucky to be there at a time of theological ferment, despite the era's sexism. "We didn't have the categories at that point to say, 'this is a sexist remark, this is a condescending remark,' and so forth. In fact, I had the opposite response. I said, 'Well I'm one of the privileged few. I better do something about it.' And so I worked very hard and did well academically."²

The quota on women persisted until the 1960s. One reason for the limit was the difficult job market for women in ministry. Even after some postwar breakthroughs (e.g., United Methodists began ordaining women in 1956), women's vocations were usually limited to education, chaplaincy, administration, or mission field, never senior minister.



Bernice Buehler '35

"A woman's 1940 church career expectations were different from a man's," alumna Elizabeth Frazier '40 B.D. recounted. "Professional models for all women were limited. All professors were male. Language was patriarchal. The YMCA could provide 20 work-study opportunities for men. The YWCA had none. Pulpits went to men; religious education opportunities went to women. I worked in the library; my husband pastored a church."³

The first two women to graduate after completing the full B.D. program went on to distinguished careers. Born in Ohio in 1905, Bernice Buehler was ordained in the Evangelical and Reformed Church, became a religious educator, pastored churches in the 1950s, and later joined the faculty at Eden Theological Seminary. Thelma Diener, born in Oklahoma in 1908, became a widely known writer and editor of fiction, non-fiction, and children's books (aka Terry Allen), and founded the David Diener Scholarship at YDS. Both women lived to be 100.

- 1 *Yale Divinity School Women's History Project*, compiled by Joyce V. Trickett '93 M.Div., 1993.
- 2 Ruth Ferguson Hooke '56 B.D. in *Eight Decades of Women: Milestones and Recollections*, compiled by Martha Smalley.
- 3 Elizabeth Frazier '40 B.D., in *The Age of the Giants*, compiled by Graham R. Hodges '40 B.D.

— Ray Waddle and Martha Smalley



Campus protest, 1969

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Women in the Church: The Search for Equality Continues



By Maria LaSala

As I write this, people across the country are rallying in protest against the latest attacks on women's reproductive rights, the so-called "fetal heartbeat" laws that now plague the states of Georgia, Alabama, Ohio, Missouri, and Louisiana, with likely more to follow. Only God knows how far this cruel war against women will continue.

Many of us women of deep Christian faith have had just about enough of being dismissed and abused by men in power. Many such men will justify their power by claiming the Bible tells them so. Just take a look at the Genesis account of the creation and hierarchy of humankind, they will say. First came Adam, taking pride of place in the order of things. Only then came Eve. Then the serpent. Add the notorious fruit of the tree, which so many still think

Given the world's chaos these days, led primarily by privileged men, I would venture to say women's leadership styles might offer something new and something better.

was an apple used by Eve to tempt Adam and, well, the rest is history. "His-story" indeed. Women — with their power to procreate — have been a threat to men since the beginning. Some men haven't even figured out exactly how a woman's reproductive system works! Such men continue to legislate against women.

The church unfortunately stands in a long line of institutions that have kept patriarchal rules in place, keeping women down, and rewarding men, even when they don't deserve reward.

Groans of Protest

As a Presbyterian pastor, I can remember one meeting of my presbytery about 25 years ago. A congrega-

tion was seeking an interim pastor who would serve for a time as the head of staff. The congregation already had an associate pastor who was a woman. The church's governing body, the session, was ready to invite a woman to serve in the interim position. According to Presbyterian policy, the ruling elders and ministers of Word and Sacrament of the presbytery must approve the call of a new pastor to a congregation.

The woman candidate was interviewed on the floor of the presbytery by these elders, with questions posed to her about her vision for the congregation, her theology of grace, her relationship with Jesus Christ. When it came time to vote, the woman was escorted out of the room. Debate followed. One hand went up: "I am a bit concerned that this congregation will suffer because they will not have the chance to hear a man preach from the pulpit. The congregation will only be served by women. This might not be a good thing for a congregation."

A loud moan came forth from those of us who identified as women, along with our allies in the room. This was 1993, 37 years after the first woman, the Rev. Margaret Towner, had been ordained in our denomination. Until that historic moment, the only voices coming from the pulpit were men's. And long after that pivotal moment for Presbyterian women, male clergy continued to dominate in congregations. And yet now solicitous concern was raised that a congregation would hear only the voices of women and not men?

To be fair, most mainline denominations have seen the light and deem it appropriate to invite women into senior positions. But others still rebuff any idea of women's ordained leadership. On whose word does this opposition stand? Biblical scholarship and theological ethics offer us insight into why it's no longer defensible on biblical and theological grounds to restrict women's leadership in the church.

A History Ignored

In all four Gospels, Jesus after his resurrection appears first to women. The women are the first to go and tell the others of this amazing and wonderful turn of events. Jesus' trust in the women – his

Many of us women of deep Christian faith have had just about enough of being dismissed and abused by men in power. Many men will justify their power by claiming the Bible tells them so.

invitation to them to be bearers of this good news to others – was soon conveniently ignored. Women were silenced and men took over.

How is it possible that the scriptures say one thing and the church leadership for thousands of years has said another? How is it possible that we are still arguing over whether women have the authority to teach the Bible and preach the Holy Word? Yet here we are, asking the same questions that were expertly challenged more than 30 years ago when I was a divinity school student. Clearly some unfinished business remains.

I've been a parish pastor, a teacher, a chaplain, and a women's rights activist all my adult life. I have heard the stories of scripture's women – the feisty, the bold, the courageous, the intelligent, the compassionate women, named and unnamed in the biblical text. From the beginning of creation, women have been given voice by their creator to question and to affirm the ways of God and the ways of humanity. Sometimes they have gotten into trouble – Eve for wanting more out of her life, Sarah for oppressing another woman, Miriam for questioning her brother Moses's sole authority to lead the people into freedom. These women have been role models for other women, inspiring us to question and reform and reflect on life and love and loss.

A Biblical Roll Call

We shouldn't stop with just those women ... Imagine what would it mean to the church to lift up the

midwives Shiphrah and Puah, or Rahab and Deborah and Ruth? Or the daughters of Zelophehad, who challenged inheritance laws and won. Or the women of the Gospel including Anna the widow who on first looking upon the baby Jesus and his mother Mary knew her life would never be the same. What of all the other Marys – Mary the sister of Martha, Mary Magdalene, Mary the wife of Cleopas, and what of Joanna and Susannah, Phoebe and Dorcas?

Each of these women and the many others unnamed demonstrate how God values their very beings, and especially their minds. So how is it that many people of faith still question whether a woman could lead a congregation? How is it that many people of faith still question whether a woman could lead a congregation? How is it that we wonder whether a woman could win a presidential election? Surely God's story holds some weight as we argue about women's rights and leadership. Surely it's inadequate for people to say about a woman candidate, whether in ministry or the White House, "Well I don't know, I'm not against women, there's just something about her ... I just don't like her."

Redefining the Conversation

Women of my generation looked to the historic voices of Yale Divinity professors Letty Russell and Margaret Farley, as well as to scholars elsewhere – Phyllis Trible, Rita Nakashima Brock, Kwok Pui-Lan, Chung Hyun Kyung, Beverly Harrison, Delores Williams, and Katie Geneva Cannon, to name just a few – as women who made a way out of no way, inviting their students to challenge the patriarchal status quo of biblical and theological scholarship of the day.

At YDS, Letty Russell's picture hangs in the Common Room, next to that of Margaret Farley, so that current students recognize the importance of these women who changed the way we think about church and leadership. *Church in the Round: Feminist Interpretation of the Church* (Westminster John

From the beginning, women have been given voice by their creator to question and to affirm the ways of God and the ways of humanity. Sometimes they have gotten into trouble.

Knox, 1993), one of Russell's groundbreaking books, encourages seminarians to imagine and embrace themes of justice and hospitality in the church in our day. Margaret Farley's *Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics* (Continuum, 2006) has

redefined the theological conversation about human sexuality for more than a decade.

To Know and Be Known

The theological project of expanding ways of knowing and being known in church and world continues. At YDS, powerful voices of biblical scholars like Michal Beth Dinkler, Jacqueline Vayntrub, and Yii-Jan Lin, the writings in theology and ethics by Jennifer Herdt, Teresa Berger, Chloë Starr, Kathryn Tanner, Linn Tonstad, Melanie Ross, Erika Helgen, and Eboni Marshall Turman, the historical writing of Tisa Wenger, the sermons of Donyelle McCray and Carolyn Sharp, and the radical pedagogy of Almeda Wright, Janet Ruffing, Mary Moschella, and Joyce Mercer are all transforming the way the church is seen and heard and known in the 21st century.

My hope is divinity students today will risk taking the words and ideas of our current womanist and feminist theological thinkers and work for changes so that hierarchies come tumbling down, the haughty are removed from power, and those who have been kept down have a chance to rise up.

All God's Children

Barriers persist. Debate continues about language we use to speak of God. All these decades later, feminine images of God are resisted in liturgies meant to speak to the mystery that is God, who is neither male nor female and whose attributes – whether gentle or harsh, distant or approachable – are not gender specific. And all of us must come to terms with the truths that queer folks present to us, reminding us, demanding that we honor and

Letty Russell used the image of the round table to talk about theological reflection and leadership. For Russell, all theological reflection is “table talk,” whether it is around a kitchen table or a communion table. Russell knew that when people come together to read scripture, speak from their truth, and reflect on their lives, hearts could be changed. This type of leadership model, one of partnership rather than hierarchy, one that is shared with many whose voices have long been silenced, is a far cry from most of the leadership models at work today.

But what if we took a risk and invited this kind of model into the church? What if we encouraged our church leaders to invite more voices to the table and to lead from the margins? This is the kind of leadership that Letty Russell and her feminist/womanist proteges now counsel.

What if we forge a female vision of power and of leadership? Would we, as Ferrante asks, have “done any better than men?” She seems to think so. Our task in these years ahead is to get more women into leadership positions with all the variety of their gifts. Given the world’s chaos these days, led primarily by privileged men, there is much reason to believe that women’s leadership styles might offer something new and, dare I say, something better.

I look forward to that day. Equality for all just can’t wait any longer.

Maria LaSala, a Presbyterian (USA) minister and former pastor, is the Director of the Reformed Studies Program at YDS, where she has taught Presbyterian Polity and Preaching for more than 20 years. She is also the Spiritual Care Coordinator at Whitney Center in Hamden, CT.

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respect the pronouns which identify us all as God’s beloved children. All this is necessary as we work to redeem humanity and be a part of the transformative ways of God.

Writer Elena Ferrante in a recent opinion piece talks about how power has been “conditioned by male attitudes toward the world. To women, then, it seems that power can be used only in the ways that men have traditionally used it.” (*The New York Times*, May 17, 2019)

ESTHER, PLAYING HOUSE
By Whitney Rio-Ross '15 M.A.R.

She learns what to want
before she finishes the alphabet –
B, boy. She needs to L love one of those.
Mother is M. Like M, she'll be a wife.
She doesn't know that letter,
but it must mean being wrapped
in white like the B bed sheet
she can't wear on Halloween.
No, a girl (that's G) means being wrapped
in glitter. Glitter turns G into a P princess.
Boys dress however they like,
but one told her they all carry swords
(S, same as snake). He kicked
playground pebbles at her shins
and yelled, "So we can get you!"
(How can U be P princess?)
At night, she places her favorite doll –
B again, beautiful – inside cardboard
walls, forehead balanced against
sliding glass doors. (No one
can always stand on tip-toe T.)
She's ready for nightmares – N, like nothing.
She sings her letters, spells a world of wishes
(she should learn that letter).
She'll keep up her P practice,
become P perfect.



Kaji Douša is senior minister of Park Avenue Christian Church in New York and president of the YDS Alumni Board. She is also a frontline witness to the violent agonies of US immigration policy. As co-chair of

New Sanctuary Coalition, she has traveled to the Mexican border to pray with asylum-seekers, provide humanitarian aid, and help them learn their rights. Earlier this year she was detained for several hours by federal agents and placed on a watch list. In March she wrote a column for Buzzfeed called “I Prayed with Migrants. Now the Government is Tracking Me.” In July, she filed suit against the US Department of Homeland Security, saying the US violated her constitutional rights by surveilling her religious border activities and wrongly detaining her. She spoke with Reflections in the summer.

On the war against evil in our time ...

God doesn’t give you more than you can handle – *but the world does*. I believe that. It’s crucial that the church give people permission to admit feeling overwhelmed by the terrible things happening around them, and help them know that God’s gift is love, not suffering. We try to help people shape a response to that. This is part of what liberation means.

It is very important to say this: We are in a state of warfare with evil, a war that is permeating every corner of life. I don’t know where evil comes from, but I do know it is present, and I have to help people face it every day. To be honest, at YDS I had no idea what so many people struggle with in their lives – until I started working up close with people and what they face every day.

Responding to the diabolical, there’s always a choice ...

Many of us feel privileged and protected, but evil doesn’t care. Evil will start on the more vulnerable people first, make the rest of us complicit, then, eventually, come for everybody.

The question is how do we respond: Are we willing to grasp and resist it or remain woefully ignorant of its existence? My job is to help people prepare themselves to answer, “Yes, I’ll follow God and resist evil,” but also, “Yes, I’m willing to give up some things in order to resist, and be willing to fail if necessary but keep on trying.” That’s a beautiful choice we always have to make: Will we do something or won’t we?

Things happening at the border – the conditions of the camps for migrants – are truly diabolical. If we do nothing about them – if we really believe this is the best we can do – then we’ll have to account for that on the Day of Judgment. The church’s message right now has to be: It’s time to repent and turn back and stop this. There’s always a choice. Every person – including each agent working at the border – has the choice to be merciful and follow God and make liberation possible. For those agents who are choosing mercy, I give thanks. For those who haven’t yet figured out how to do that, then all the churches should be talking to them, praying for them ... and more.

On decolonizing worship and conveying the work of the Spirit ...

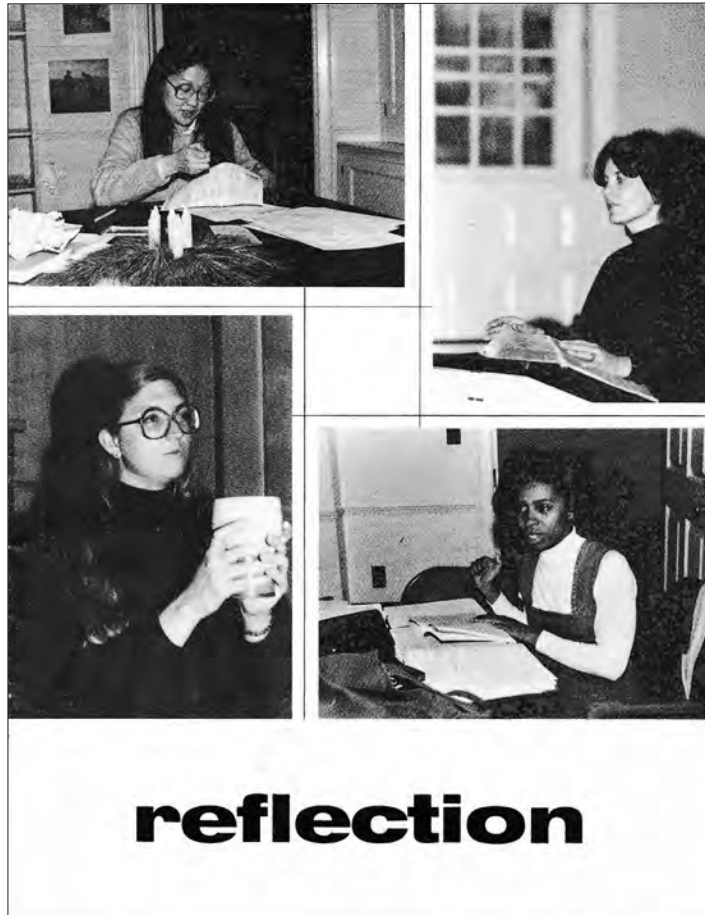
Structurally our church makes sure the empowerment we offer is not for the people who show up with the most power. I’m interested in liberation, not so much “equality.” I can’t be your equal if I’m not free. If a person doesn’t have access to their own liberation, that person becomes a priority for us.

We’ve put up a lot of viewing screens in the worship area. These are access points for people who can’t speak the language, or can’t hear it. If something is being said in English, it is translated into Spanish – sometimes also Cantonese and Portuguese. We want to give people interpretative lenses in the moment and decolonize worship.

We offer an online ministry so people who can’t be with us on Sunday will have access to how we are trying to convey the work of the Holy Spirit. We know that people have Sunday work requirements, or work four jobs in order to pay the high rent in New York. We’re saying: We’re not going to penalize you for your way of life if you can’t be here Sunday morning.

On reclaiming scripture and following Christ ...

I believe in God, the Bible, Jesus. I don’t know or recognize the Jesus a lot of people talk about – their Jesus is white-washed, stripped of what he said, did, and cared about. Meanwhile, I know I don’t always follow Jesus, and when that happens, I have to ask: Then who is it am I following? If we are really following Jesus, we need to keep in mind every step of the way that we may be getting it wrong, and stay in touch with our accountability structures who can let us know we’re wrong ... and keep digging down into what’s really in the Bible, what God is truly asking of Christ-followers through this apocalypse.



Cover of *Reflection* journal issue on women, January 1982 (*Reflection* changed to *Reflections* in 1985)

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Changing the Rules of the Game



By Sarah Drummond '93 B.A.

All her life Kitty had moved hand to hand forward, lightly holding on the line strung between signposts of a woman's life. ... A woman was meant to tend a child, a garden, or a conversation. ... What Kitty learned at Miss Porter's School – handed down from Sarah Porter through the spinsters teaching there, themselves the sisters of Yale men who handed down the great words, Truth. Verity. Honor – was that your brothers and your husbands and your sons will lead, and you will tend. – Sarah Blake, *The Guest Book*

In 2011 I became the academic dean of Andover Newton Theological School in Newton, MA, after serving six years there as a faculty member. Daunted by our school's precarious enrollment and financial situation, and aware of the challenges of a new administrative role, I decided to look to leadership books for guidance. I scanned the shelves in the management section of a bookstore in Harvard Square, seeking a title like, How to Be a Seminary Dean at the End of Christendom. No luck.

I did stumble across another book, the first few pages of which had me laughing so hard I had to sit down in the aisle to catch my breath. *Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office: 101 Unconscious Mistakes Women Make That Sabotage Their Careers* by Lois P. Frankel (Warner Books, 2004) is a self-help book for women managers who want to avoid the habits that

found myself on the bookstore floor, I had asked that the conference table be removed from my office in favor of a coffee table surrounded by comfortable chairs. After drying the tears of my laughter at life's abundant ironies, I bought the book.

Winners and Losers

As many self-help books do, *Nice Girls Don't Get the Corner Office* includes a self-assessment. I scored relatively well on most categories, dodging some of the worst sorts of self-sabotage for which women are known. I fared badly, however, at what the book defined as "playing the game." Evidently, I am the type that does not like to admit that leadership is often like a game, with winners and losers. I understand leadership to be a process in which a leader guides a community – sometimes past obstacles – toward faithful service and witness. I take on conflict when doing so is necessary for my organization's mission, not for sport.

This past summer, upon the retirement of Martin B. Copenhaver, I became the first woman at Andover Newton to serve as senior executive of this

Mistake one: Do not feed people, as you are not their mother. Yet I had brought snacks to the first faculty meeting I chaired.

bump them up against the proverbial glass ceiling. It includes a series of tips that I started to skim, only to realize that I had made two of the first ten mistakes in my first week on the job.

Mistake one: Do not feed people, as you are not their mother and do not want them treating you like her. I had brought snacks to the first faculty meeting I chaired. Mistake 2: Do not set up your office like a living room. The same day that I

historic theological school, which was founded in 1807, and is the oldest US graduate school of any kind. Andover Newton left Massachusetts to become embedded at YDS in 2017 and adopted the name Andover Newton Seminary at Yale Divinity School. My appointment as founding dean of Andover Newton Seminary coincides with the 150th anniversary of women at Yale's graduate schools and the 50th anniversary of women in Yale College. Yet because of my overwhelming desire to block out

Women labeled ambitious are considered schemers, whereas ambitious men conform to social expectations that they play to win, and they are admired for it.

anything game-like about leadership, I am loath to declare victory on any of these fronts. I learned in a conversation with my mother about writing this very article that my resistance to discussing the topic of becoming a first-woman leader for a historic institution can be traced back to my early childhood.

"The Woman Card"

My mother reminded me of ways in which my family – my father, in particular – stood up for women but never liked it when they played "the woman card." I was trained from an early age to act as if my gender simply does not matter in settings where gender is not directly relevant. Taught to pretend it did not matter, I never learned a language for talking about my womanhood in general, or sexism in particular. When the topic is my faith, my values, my tastes, my preferences? I could talk about those endlessly. But talking about being a woman in leadership suggests playing the woman card. Playing a card is something we do in a game. And I evidently do not like to admit there is a game, let alone play it.

The history of women at Andover Newton suggests a slow, nonlinear arc of progress toward leadership, two steps back for every three steps forward. Women were welcomed at both predecessor institutions¹ earlier than other male-oriented seminary settings for one reason: Both educated missionaries. Women who were going overseas as missionaries with their husbands were permitted to sit in on classes in preparation for their missionary service as early as 1894. Women were admitted to degree programs focused on religious education beginning in 1925. Soon after, however, men started shying away from educational programs intended for missionaries because of a feared "feminization" of the field. Because women were allowed, the logic went, the field must not be all that elite or exciting.

In the 1950s, as doors to ordination opened for women in mainline traditions, women's numbers started dwindling in the master's degree programs intended specifically for them (in this case, religious education) and the seminary's pre-ordination program of study newly open to them. This pattern of women's flight was not unique to Andover Newton but rather pervaded mainline seminaries of that era: Without a niche degree, women had to compete in a men's game, which they often and inevitably lost.

Double Standards

In the 1970s, the United Church of Christ partnered with Andover Newton to study what was at that time being called "the women problem," where women would experience a call to ministry and start seminary, but soon thereafter leave the church altogether. What that study uncovered was this: The elusive, mystical certainty of the call that drew women to seminary was frequently crushed by the realities they discovered upon matriculation. Scholarly engagement with the history of misogyny in the church, coupled with the contemporary sexism of their classmates and professors, disillusioned women to the point of dropping out. Only in 1971, which happens to be the year I was born, did Andover Newton hire its first tenure-track woman on the faculty – biblical scholar Phyllis Trible. Nearly 50 years later, here comes the first woman at the helm.²

A recent Pew study reveals the latest irony around the issue of American women's capacity for leadership. Whereas both men and women express their conviction that women are just as capable as men in the areas of business and politics, "women still make up a small share of top leadership jobs

Placing a woman in the chief leadership role of any institution will not be enough to rewire an entire cultural system that expects women to tend while men lead.

in both of these realms."³ Maybe this disconnect has something to do with playing "the game." To move from competence to success requires some strategic maneuvering that many find distasteful in women. Women labeled ambitious are considered schemers, whereas ambitious men conform to societal expectations that they play to win, and they are admired for it.

So what are we to do? What will lead us into a new reality, where women are present in leadership at rates that reflect their share of the population, in numbers that align with an overwhelmingly strong

public trust in their abilities? Indeed, it is surprising that Andover Newton has never had a woman serve as its chief executive, considering its longstanding embrace of women in ordained ministry. But the problem underlying the disconnect is not that there is a man whose presence is creating an obstacle at the top. Pushing men out and replacing them with women is not the answer. And placing a woman in the chief leadership role of any institution will not be enough to rewire an entire cultural system that expects women to tend while men lead.

Coming back to that self-help book: As founding dean of Andover Newton Seminary at YDS, I had the option of moving into President Copenhaver's office upon his retirement, a corner office in the Quad at YDS. I decided to keep the one I have, which overlooks Prospect Street and the Great Hall, and from which I can see and greet the students and guests who come to visit Andover Newton. I did ask, however, that the office be remodeled to give me more space. Carving out a new space works better for me than adapting to the current or historic one. Maybe we need to do the same thing with "the rules" of "the game."

Sarah Drummond '93 B.A. is founding dean of Andover Newton Seminary at YDS, associate dean at YDS for congregational ministry, and adjunct professor of ministerial leadership. Ordained as a UCC minister, she holds an M.Div. from Harvard Divinity School and a Ph.D. in urban education from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. She is the author of three books, Holy Clarity: The Practice of Planning and Evaluation (Alban, 2009), Leading Change in Campus Religious Life: A Case Study on the Programs for the Theological Exploration of Vocation (Scholars' Press, 2011), and Dynamic Discernment: Reason, Emotion, and Power in Change Leadership, newly released by Pilgrim Press.

Notes

- 1 Andover Theological Seminary was a Congregational school that broke off from Harvard in 1807. Newton Theological Institution was a Baptist seminary founded in 1825.
- 2 See Margaret Bendroth, *A School of the Church: Andover Newton Across Two Centuries* (Eerdmans, 2008).
- 3 See www.pewsocialtrends.org/fact-sheet/the-data-on-women-leaders.

EVOLUTIONARY, OUR DESIRE FOR LUSTER

By Bethany (Carlson) Swann '16 M.Div.

They say humans are attracted to glitter:
evolutionary, our desire for luster –

an act of self-preservation, this compulsion
for freshwater surfaces. To be human

is to come up for air. And so we surface
parting the lashless phrases of sun.

What the eye takes in, encloses as ours.
When a train the color of an origin story

echoes back to me in a dream, I don't question
whether it is the sound of caught sun

embroidered across the small green hills.
In the beginning, heat storms ossified

the bones of wintering quail. Back then,
wifi passwords were only four letters long,

no special characters. We memorized
a word for when the light razored through

formless loam, we grew restless in the arc
of its narrative. The act of being was a kind of piety.

We did not yet know the dazzling
templates to which we would conform.



Theologian Letty Russell, center, lighting candle during a shalom meal hosted for YDS students, early 1980s
© Special Collections, Yale Divinity School Library

A Meal, A Theology, A Vision of Hospitality



By Kate Ott '00 M.A.R.

Once a semester, I lead a chapel service at Drew Theological School, where I teach. Thursday, Feb. 28, was my Spring semester slot. Weeks prior, worship team members and I followed the usual pattern of filling the shared Google document with ideas. Then, two days before the service, the world intervened: Delegates at the United Methodist General Conference voted to pass the Traditional Plan which continues a ban on ordination of LGBTQ clergy and officiating or hosting same-sex marriages.

Drew Theological School is a United Methodist Church seminary. We are committed to full inclusion of LGBTQ members in the life and leadership of the denomination. Bishop Karen Oliveto, the only openly gay episcopal leader in the UMC and a Drew alumna, said days later in an NPR interview, “This decision has caused a shockwave of trauma across the church and around the world. There are hurting people in our pulpits and in our pews. And we have a lot of pastoral care to offer. We have to care for our young people who are shocked that a church that raised them, that helped them understand God’s

In defiance of all varieties of exclusion, the shalom meal embodies a practice reminiscent of early house churches. The egalitarian practice of a shared table was central to Letty Russell’s own theology.

love for them – they see in this vote a tremendous rejection.”¹ Indeed, our seminary community was in need of a response to this trauma: Once again, people in the name of Jesus had allowed difference to be a problem rather than a sign of God’s beloved creation.

The chapel plan for that Thursday radically changed. Faculty who were leaders in General

Conference protest movements shared their anger, solidarity, and future visions. The songs shifted to anthems written by Mark Miller, a beloved member of the denomination and our faculty who is also a lecturer at YDS and ISM.

The chapel plan changed – except for one part. I stayed with the original idea to lead a shalom meal in place of communion. Since I am not ordained and technically cannot lead communion in chapel, I had chosen a shalom meal out of necessity and memory.

Practicing God’s Welcome

At YDS, my mentor and advisor Letty Russell taught me and many others the practice of shalom meals. Each of her semester-long theology courses would end with a shalom meal at her home on the West River in Guilford, CT. I even participated in a shalom meal in Cuba on a travel seminar with her. In Matanzas, our class joined students from the Evangelical Theological School. She also conducted the meal with female students from the International Women’s Doctorate of Ministry cohort that she and her partner, Shannon Clarkson, taught in Cuba through San Francisco Theological Seminary. Over her lifetime, Letty participated in innumerable shalom meals all over the world. Rather than hosting a wake after Letty’s death in 2007, Shannon and friends hosted the “mother of all shalom meals” to honor her.

In defiance of all varieties of exclusion from religious participation and leadership, the shalom meal embodies a practice of hospitality reminiscent of early house churches. The egalitarian practice of a shared table was central to Letty's own theology. Her classrooms were always organized in the round, reflecting an ecclesiology that she termed "church in the round," which was the title of her 1993 book. Her commitment to excavating biblical clues for the work of justice led her to hospitality as central to her theology and her life practice.

A World in Crisis

Letty understood hospitality as "the practice of God's welcome, embodied in our actions as we reach across differences to participate with God in bringing justice and healing to our world in crisis."² In the Bible, she wrote, marks of hospitality include unexpected divine presence, advocacy for the marginalized, and mutual welcome. Letty was fond of reminding those in Christian contexts that the New Testament word for hospitality, *philoxenia*, translates most literally as *love of stranger*.³

Welcoming our friends or people like us is easy. Reaching across lines of difference to welcoming strangers requires risk and courage. Jesus' life in the Gospels sets an example for the Christian practice of hospitality that calls into question dividing lines around religion, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and even family.

Sing, Toast, Pray

Letty, like all professors (and humans), was not perfect. As students will testify, including myself, Letty's vision of community required lots of labor for which you were often volun-told. She frequently said, "You have to give people a job if you want them to show up." Whether it was a conference, church program, or class activity, Letty organized and delegated. At times, her vision did not leave enough room for all perspectives. Yet when a student gathered the courage to name this, Letty usually treated it as a learning opportunity for herself and those involved.

Shalom meals included a flexible order of worship with songs, prayer, readings, and sharing of bread and wine. There was always a potluck. Bread and wine were the beginning of a shared meal, not the totality of the meal. When the end of a semester came, and I sat on the carpet in her living room to sing, toast, and pray, I finally understood the need for hospitality as ritual to rejuvenate justice seekers. As the introduction to her book *Just Hospitality* states, "Letty's practice of hospitality through Shalom Meals is one example of her open welcome to

and sharing with students she saw as partners in the work of justice."⁴

In my final year at YDS, I served as the Women's Center co-coordinator. Those were in the turbulent, uncertain days of Save the Quad, when the Women's Center went from an apartment space, to an emptied-out broom closet, to a corner of Letty's office. At our end-of-year chapel, I presided with my colleagues at a shalom meal in Marquand Chapel. That is the closest I came to communion leadership as a Roman Catholic female theological student.

An Open Table

The Traditional Plan vote in the UMC reinforced barriers to God's table for LGBTQ clergy and church members. In the face of that unjust exclusion, I began the shalom meal at worship on Feb. 28 at Drew. I invited those for whom the UMC decision denied a place in the full life and ministry of the denomination to join me in leading the shalom meal and open wide the table that Drew will sustain. Together, we led a shalom meal in defiance of heterosexual exclusion.

I am an ethics professor with specialties in sexual and professional ethics. I could write many pages that provide a Christian ethics argument for full inclusion of LGBTQ-identified Christians. Ritual practices are not my comfort zone. But over the years and many shalom meals later, I have come to realize that we need rituals to nourish us on the long road toward justice.

For me, the shalom meal as a practice of hospitality was and still is an act of resistance at the very center of theological exclusion – the communion table. When I look at what has happened across the United States – the division, violence, trauma – since the 2016 election, I believe we need to recover practices of hospitality that embody God's welcome in a world of riotous difference.

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Notes

- 1 National Public Radio interview, March 1, 2019. See npr.org.
- 2 Letty M. Russell, *Just Hospitality: God's Welcome in a World of Difference* (Westminster John Knox, 2009), p. 2.
- 3 Russell, p. 20.
- 4 Russell, p. xv.



When I learned that this academic year commemorates the 50th anniversary of women at Yale College and the 150th anniversary of female students at Yale University, I paused. I wanted to cheer, but something held me back. *Was it strictly white women?* I wondered. *We can't celebrate that.*

As a bit of research revealed, black women were in fact part of Yale College's first co-ed entering class in 1969. And actually Yale Divinity School admitted women a bit earlier, with the first trailblazers arriving in 1932, and the first black woman graduating in 1945. Even so, I am compelled to ask, what kind of celebration is warranted when the institution in question, Yale itself, was rather late to the game? How do we celebrate something that is, on one hand, good and, on another, worthy of critique?

This anniversary prompts reflection on how we relate to institutions that disappoint and frustrate us, yet draw us in again and again because the world would likely be a worse place without them.

Those who know me know I have a track record of devoted relationships with imperfect institutions. My alma mater, the University of Virginia, was originally built by slaves. The Democratic Party, to which I've given a handful of professional years and anticipate giving more, does not always live up to its ideals of equity and justice. And my church, the Episcopal Church, though inclusive in important ways, remains about 90 percent white.

I count YDS in this group. I have come to love YDS deeply in the short year I've been here. The professors stretch the bounds of my intellect. The students call me deeper into community. And worship at Marquand Chapel has reignited my faith, making me laugh and cry, sing and shout.

But this community also falls short sometimes. When my peers tell me they do not feel heard or respected, I wince and remember that I walk these halls with more privilege than most.

Thinking about imperfect institutions reminds me of Albert O. Hirschman's landmark text, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty* (Harvard, 1970). In it, he presents two main ways of responding when a business, political party, church, or other institution fails to meet your standards. You can leave the system entirely, hoping your exit, along with that of others, goads the organization to change. Or you can stay and use your voice to shape the thing you hold dear. Agitate from the inside and advocate for higher standards or better policies. As a member of that institution, you have a mildly better chance that those in power will listen.

Though I acknowledge the reasons people give for leaving institutions sometimes, I usually choose to stay and use my voice. I do this because I think it is more effective – and also because, as a Christian, I have a holy and powerful model for loving things that are imperfect.

Seeing that the world was broken, God did not give up or opt out. Instead, God performed the most radical act of love by entering creation in human form, not as a powerful king or wealthy landowner, but as the son of a poor unwed mother in a scandalous birth. Raised by Mary to love God and the world, Jesus grew up to be a healer whose interactions with sinners defied social norms and challenged conventions.

The act of loving something imperfect is not cause for complacency. Rather, it thrusts us into deeper engagement. This love is not sentimental or nostalgic. No. It is righteous. It labors, serves,

As a Christian, I have a holy and powerful model for loving things that are imperfect. Seeing that the world was broken, God did not give up or opt out.

and embodies a hallowed hope for change. "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God," but all can be redeemed (Rom 3:23).

Believing this, I am prompted to participate, speak up, and do what I can to remake and redeem the imperfect institutions that I love. And I must be prepared to be remade and redeemed in the process. When we love, we change and are changed by it. I am a witness to this transformation, having already been remade and redeemed by the students, faculty, and staff at YDS. I am not the same person I was when I arrived, nor do I expect to graduate from this place the same person I am today. And as I change, I hope this institution does too.

There will be times in our lives when exit is the right choice. When we've been too hurt to persist, when our sanity is at stake, or when we've used our voice and nobody has listened, it may be time to leave. But here and now, I am heeding God's call to love and engage at YDS because of, not despite, its imperfections. And in the end, I hope we'll both be better for it.

Jessica Church '21 M.Div. is student body president of Yale Divinity School. She has a background in progressive politics and plans to return to this work after graduation.



These remarks by Jeanne Hein about her Divinity School days in the 1940s and 50s, edited here, were made during a YDS reunion panel in 1993. She attended YDS from 1940-42, then married businessman Stanley Harbison, a pacifist in World War II. Together they pursued a wide-ranging ministry in Puerto Rico through the 1940s, including rural reconstruction projects there. After they returned to New Haven in 1948, Harbison entered YDS, graduated in 1952, but died of polio weeks later. Jeanne then completed her YDS degree and also raised their two children. She married YDS professor Norvin Hein in 1959, with whom she had three children. A tireless public advocate for people with disabilities, she received the YDS Award for Distinction in Lay Ministry in 1992. She died in 2013 in Bethany, CT, age 94.

In 1940 it came as a shock to find the not-too-subtle attitude among men on campus – that women came there to get a man. All the women I ever knew resented that attitude, and I never knew a woman who filled that description, except possibly my roommate who brazenly declared her intention to pursue her

We, men and women alike, were all creatures of our time, caught in an age which still considered the role of women as adjunct to men. We were all caught in the struggle over power, politics, place, and privilege in a still male-dominated society.

fiancé to YDS for the purpose of protecting him from the likes of me and other YDS women predators! So you see the notion did not originate at YDS – it was in the air we breathed. It was wherever women were beginning to invade male domains.

In the classroom I felt an equal. A woman hell-bent on a theological education in order to serve out a career in the church was not seen as a threat to men. She was quite safe, for she dispelled their fears by her serious academic and vocational endeavors. To a YDS male friend she was asexual – a buddy.

Much later – after graduation in 1954 – I took a YDS job as Dean Liston Pope's secretary. Ever a sensitive social liberal, he always seemed somewhat uneasy because I as a YDS graduate was doing secretarial work. So he expanded my job as far as he could beyond the usual secretarial work – but, as he would tell me, there was no way within the limits

of the system that existed in the University that he could elevate me to a job commensurate with my education and experience.

One day, he burst into the office and triumphantly announced he had gotten me the title of "advisor to women students." I was astonished because we had never even discussed it. Dean Pope had simply convinced the provost that women were now very much a part of his concern as dean and he needed help. To me he also admitted it was the only way he could elevate my pay scale, a matter that genuinely concerned him.

I soon learned that advising women students had to be a peripheral responsibility. For how could a dean of the Divinity School allow his secretary (at the time his only personal aide) to absent herself from his office even for such a worthwhile reason as helping women students? Consequently I did very little as an advisor beyond setting up a few informal discussion groups with women and dashing over to 301 Prospect St. (the boarding house off campus for women) when I got notice of an impending crisis. Both he and I simply made do with the situation.

As it turned out, it remained for Joan Forsberg in the early 1970s to define a place for a professional woman on the staff and faculty and really open YDS to women, as well as create a new job as dean of students – for men and women.

I know now that the reluctance to receive women into true equality at YDS was not really because we were scheming predators whose very sexuality would undermine the church, nor do I think that men really looked on us that way – however much they boasted. That was the cover-up of a larger and deeper matter – the great change that threatened the power and role of men. We, men and women alike, were all creatures of our time, caught in an age which still considered the role of women as adjunct to men, whether in the home or in the workplace. We accepted this and cooperated with it, and its impact on us was profound. It never occurred to us to rebel.

We were all caught in the struggle over power, politics, place, and privilege in a still male-dominated society of which YDS was and I think still is a vital part. Our school bent farther than most. But YDS is but one of many institutions of our society. Here as elsewhere it has taken many years of struggle and growing awareness by women about who they are and what their work is, to bring about long-lasting change throughout our land.



YDS Dean Liston Pope with students at the newly built Porter Hall for female residents, 1957
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Reforming the Church, Not Leaving It



By Emma McDonald '19 M.A.R.

I arrived at Yale Divinity School in the fall of 2017, eager to join an ecumenical community committed to both academics and ministry. I chose YDS in part because I hoped that its student body, drawn from many strands of the Christian faith, would help expand and enrich how I thought about Christian ethics and theology. Happily, that hope was fulfilled. At the same time, however, I was surprised to find skepticism among many of my peers when they discovered that I am both Catholic and a woman.

Overt questions and subtle comments suggested that the Church's stance on women's ordination, on same-sex relationships, on contraception, and abortion meant I should be leaving it behind. The revelations of the Church's role in covering up and perpetuating the sex abuse crisis that emerged in the Philadelphia Grand Jury Report in 2018 only renewed these kinds of questions in my second year at YDS.

Both Pain and Empowerment

These inquiries made sense to me: If all you know of the Church is its scandals and shortcomings, who could stay? I, along with most Catholics I know, feel an acute sense of pain and sorrow in seeing the

Though the Church's male hierarchy might have possessed disproportionate institutional power, my experience of the Church was shaped by women.

Church hierarchy's neglect of vulnerable children and its frequent failures to adequately honor the experiences and perspectives of women. While the Church's failures on an institutional level can be nothing but discouraging, my own experience in the Church never fails to remind me that the Church is much more than the worst elements of its hierarchy.

In fact, my own experience in the Church has been one of empowerment and support. From my childhood through graduate school, I have witnessed strong female pastoral leadership in the Church and have found support within the Church to make my voice heard as a Catholic woman.

Seeing Women Lead

As a child, my parish had a female pastoral life director. Though the intricacies of her role were not clear to me at a young age, I became accustomed to seeing a woman lead our parish. Opportunities for women to contribute and lead were readily available: I was encouraged to be an altar server, a lector, a confirmation peer minister. I served on the Archdiocesan Youth Advisory Council, which itself was led by a woman from the archdiocese. I attended a Catholic summer service camp, which was run by women. Though the Church's male hierarchy might have possessed disproportionate institutional power, my experience of the Church was shaped by women. I never doubted that the Church was a place where I belonged.

As an undergraduate, I studied Christian ethics, writing a senior thesis on infertility treatments and Catholic moral theology. While this culminating project opened my eyes to the many ways in which sexism has infected Church theology and practice, I discovered that I was not alone in my frustrations

with the Church's missteps. The work of Catholic theologians (introduced to me by professors from the Presbyterian and Methodist traditions, by the way) – from Margaret Farley and Teresa Okure to Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Rosemary Radford Ruether – ushered me into a community of Catholic women committed to changing the Church for the better.

Desert Mothers and Dorothy Day

Studying these contemporary theologians in conjunction with a course on the history of women's religious life and thought revealed to me that, from the

As a Catholic at YDS, I am part of a community offering many examples of prophetic leadership by women who have lasting impact even in the face of church misogyny.

early church's women deacons and desert mothers, to Dorothy Day and Saint Josephine Bakhita, women throughout the history of the Church have held fast to their faith. Like the hemorrhaging woman in Matthew, Mark, and Luke and the women who discover the empty tomb in all four Gospels, these women persevere despite social stigma to follow Christ and build up His Body.

YDS furnished even more instances of female leadership in the Church, both ancient and contemporary. In her course on women mystics, YDS professor Janet Ruffing, RSM (Sisters of Mercy), shared the spiritual insights of Teresa of Ávila, Hadewijch of Brabant, and Gertrude of Helfta, all inspiring examples of female leadership in church history. Professor Ruffing's own accomplishments in Christian spirituality and spiritual direction carry forward the legacy of these storied women into the present day. The scholarship of another YDS professor and practicing Catholic, Teresa Berger, highlights the role of women in liturgy, giving voice to global expressions of women's rites that reflect both struggle and hope.

A World of Voices

Examples of Catholic women leading at YDS are not limited to the faculty: Jeanne Peloso shares her gifts of compassion and commitment as YDS Dean of Students, and Catholic YDS alumnae continue efforts to better the Church in a variety of fields. Jamie Manson '02 M.Div. adds her insights as a columnist and book editor at the *National Catholic Register*, writing on LGBTQ inclusion in the Church, women

deacons, and sexual ethics. Carlene Demiany '12 M.Div., '14 S.T.M., assistant chaplain at Yale's Saint Thomas More Catholic Chapel, offers pastoral insight and support and leads students on Alternative Spring Break trips to Taizé, France. Within the academy, Christiana Zenner '05 M.A.R. at Fordham University has utilized the resources of the Church to develop an ethic for fresh water; Nichole Flores '09 M.Div. at the University of Virginia conducts scholarship on Catholic ethics, Latinx theology, and the aesthetics of solidarity, while reflecting on how to do Catholic theology at a public university.

And let's not forget the leadership of current students and very recent graduates: Emily Judd '19 M.A.R. created and produced "The Quadcast," a YDS podcast series that features conversations with Yale faculty on issues of faith, politics, and culture. Phoenix Gonzalez '20 M.A.R. directed and produced a modern rendition of the medieval Noah play this past year in Marquand Chapel and at the Yale School of Forestry & Environmental Studies, constructing an ark made of garbage in order to ask questions through performance about the destruction of Creation. Sarah Watson '19 M.A.R./M.B.A. used her financial prowess and theological skills to undertake an independent study investigating how Catholic women religious have spearheaded lending practices that uphold principles of Catholic social teaching.

Pushing the Church

As a Catholic at YDS, I've been part of a community that offers so many examples of radical witness and prophetic leadership from women who make a lasting impact even in the face of sexism and misogyny in the Church. As I continue my studies as a doctoral student at Boston College, where I will remain focused on connecting the perspectives of Catholic women experiencing infertility with theological ethical reflection, I will carry with me the inspiration from these many women of YDS, whose faith, vision, and leadership push the Church to a more just future.

Emma McDonald '19 M.A.R. is a doctoral candidate in theological ethics at Boston College. She also has a B.A. from Middlebury College. Before attending YDS, she spent a year as an AmeriCorps VISTA member at the Middlebury College Center for Community Engagement, where she coordinated the Privilege & Poverty Academic Cluster.



A YDS student in her new dorm room at Porter Hall, 1957
© Special Collections, Yale Divinity School Library



Leonora Tubbs Tisdale retired last year from YDS, where she was Clement-Muehl Professor of Homiletics since arriving in 2006.

*Her long career as teacher, scholar, preacher, and minister includes service as consulting theologian at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York and faculty positions at Princeton Theological Seminary and Union Presbyterian Seminary in Richmond, VA. She is also a former president of the Academy of Homiletics. Ordained in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the daughter of a minister, she has written or edited 11 books, including *Prophetic Preaching: A Pastoral Approach* (Westminster John Knox, 2010) and *The Sun Still Rises: Meditations on Faith at Midlife* (WJK, 2017). Nora Tisdale will deliver this year's YDS Beecher Lectures Oct. 16-18 on "Women Preachers in the US and the Transformation of Homiletics." She spoke recently to Reflections about how preaching has changed in the last generation.*

Regarding the shift from the three-point sermon to lectionary preaching and an incarnational style ...

When I was growing up in the 50s and 60s, I heard the preaching of my dad and his generation. And the prevailing model was the three-point sermon: Make three points with insights gleaned from the biblical text, end with a poem or hymn, and use alliteration in the points if you can (as a mnemonic device).

Then came a shift. Fred Craddock (the late preaching scholar) helped move us from deductive to inductive preaching, which regarded the sermon as a way of taking the congregation on a quest of discovery. Preachers started giving a narrative shape to sermons – not just more storytelling but shaping the sermon like a good story is shaped.

One result is, today we see far more self-disclosure in preaching. Previously, ministers thought they should never talk about themselves in the pulpit because that would only get in the way of God speaking. Today's approach is much more incarnational: God speaks to us through our experience. The top-down mode has yielded to a more dialogical approach, an invitation to the congregation to explore the sermon's themes together. Authority is based on the authenticity and vulnerability of the speaker. Instead of announcing, "*This is the Word of the Lord!*", the preacher is willing to say, "This is how I see it – how do you see it?"

Also, the use of the lectionary in many main-line denominations changed preaching. When I was growing up, there was ordinarily only one biblical text read during a service, and it was chosen by the

minister. Ministers tended to preach their favorites and avoid challenging texts. *The Revised Common Lectionary* (first published in 1983) pushed us to preach on texts we wouldn't necessarily choose on our own. The creation of *The African American Lectionary* in 2008 has helped continue that trend.

On the appearance of women in pulpits and in church history ...

I didn't even hear a woman preach until I was in seminary. The appearance of women in pulpits was a dramatic change. It challenged the implied notion that God speaks only through men. It expanded our imagery for God, since God imagery and preacher imagery are often closely intertwined. Congregations were suddenly hearing different life experiences from the pulpit – women's experiences, sermons that now included themes of birthing and motherhood, or discussions of rape or domestic violence, topics that were absolutely verboten before.

When I was in seminary, there was no research or teaching about the history of women preachers. But in recent decades women scholars have been unearthing all kinds of information about women who preached in the US during the 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries: Quaker women and others who preached in the colonies before the US became a nation; evangelical preachers like Jarena Lee (born in 1783, the first authorized female preacher in the AME Church), and Phoebe Palmer (born 1807, a founder of the Holiness movement within Methodism) who felt the call to preach long before ordination was a possibility in their churches. Learning about their lives and work is invaluable today.

Is preaching an outmoded form of communication by now?

I've lived through several iterations of that question, the idea that preaching is going to die. For a while, the argument insisted "the action is in the streets, not the sanctuary," and therefore people won't sit for a sermon anymore. The version today says we are a media generation that thinks in soundbites and short bursts of attention and there's no place for sermons the way they used to be.

But there's something about one person speaking giving testimony to a group of other people about the Word of Life; there's simply no substitute for that.

Sometimes I look out from the pulpit and marvel at what I see: people sitting in church, busy people who could be anywhere else but have chosen to sit there and be open to whatever is spoken next. The Spirit still moves in miraculous ways in the preaching act. Preaching is still changing people's lives.

There Is No Secular World



By Cathy George

Between classes, walking the shiny linoleum hallway of my Midwestern public high school, my long middle-parted hair framing my 16-year-old face, I was shocked to see the interim pastor of our church walking toward me with a smile on his face. Delivering a book to his son for a class, he paused under the wall clock outside the school library door. “Hello Cathy – hey, what should I preach on this Sunday?” he asked. Without hesitation I replied, “Sex.”

Lifting his eyebrows and cocking his head, he took in my spontaneous sermon suggestion and replied, “Now there is a challenge!” I forgot the encounter by the time Sunday came around. But he didn’t.

Hurrying late into the sanctuary that morning, I saw the pastor enter the pulpit and announce: “My sermon topic today came from a member of the church I ran into this week.” Worry flooded my body. I pleaded with God, “Please do not let him say it was me who asked him to preach on sex.” As my

People often leave the church for solid theological reasons. Faith leaders have an opportunity to value those who never darken the doors or who have fled those doors.

panic rose I tried to reassure myself by recalling that a 16-year-old was not a “member of the church,” a title reserved for adults. My attention was riveted.

“He Took Me Seriously”

“This morning I am going to address an aspect of Christian life important for all of us, our sexuality,” he declared. My jaw dropped as I sat in the pew. He had taken me seriously. He heard me. He didn’t out me. I don’t recall one word of his sermon. But I will never forget how affirmed I felt that Sunday.

Church doors open, and we spread our arms wide to welcome people to step inside. Yet fewer

and fewer people are meeting us at that threshold. They are navigating the spiritual joys and sorrows of their lives outside the walls of the church, and we do well to pay attention to the many reasons this is happening. One of them is the disconnect between people’s daily life in the world and their experience of church.

An Unhelpful Divide

What is often labeled as the sacred-secular divide between church and world is an unhelpful polarization. As a teenager who was serious about her faith, I needed help navigating attitudes toward the sexuality I was encountering in high school. An effort to connect with the real lives of people, like my pastor did, can make a big difference to the integration of one’s spiritual life. When people sense that their life challenges and dreams are being taken seriously inside the church, connections begin to be made. Listening and responding to the joys and troubles people face gives faith communities a chance to thrive.

Jesus went out. Jesus sent others out. Raised in a faith, formed by the temple traditions, Jesus’ work summoned him out from Jerusalem into the secular world. His leadership was formed by the people he encountered. He took himself to the marketplace, the seashore, rowed off in boats, stopped at the town pool. Jesus sends out 70 disciples into people’s homes in Luke. Twelve go out in pairs in Mark. Out he goes to the lilies of the field and the

fig tree in Matthew, in order to teach. In John, Jesus is in a kitchen and garden employing things of the earth – vines and branches, light under bushels, yeast, mustard seeds, bread, salt, sheep, and shepherd – using elements from the daily world to talk about ultimate meaning and growing a spiritual life.

Waking Up to the World

While I was a parish leader I experienced congregations willing to reach out and seek integration with their neighborhoods and towns. Paying attention to the weekly world we lived in allowed us to respond with food, programs, and invitations that spoke to people's daily experiences.

At first we were not so happy with the small numbers at church during worship on Sunday, but when we opened our doors for parents to sign their children up for the summer day camp we hosted, the line winded so far down the sidewalk that we had to turn people away.

And when we opened a food pantry on Tuesdays, volunteers had to be enlisted to manage the line of 300 people or more who came each week for food.

And when Gene Robinson, then Bishop of New Hampshire, came to speak on being gay and Christian, every fold-up chair in the fellowship hall was filled while others pressed together and stood against the back wall.

When church leaders show up at neighborhood meetings about zoning issues or city parks, sitting with police and politicians and homeowners and all others who worry about safety on playgrounds and green spaces, it speaks volumes. People notice when churches host funerals for a grieving neighborhood or sponsor a summer camp for children whether or not they are church members. There is

Out he goes to the lilies of the field and the fig tree in Matthew. In John, he is in a kitchen and garden employing things of the earth, using elements from the daily world to talk about ultimate meaning and spiritual growth.

no secular world. Food for the hungry and school safety and child development are God's concern as much as liturgy, sacraments, and pastoral care.

My years of parish leadership working side by side with laypeople taught me the lessons I now teach as a divinity school dean and director of formation. One of them is that leaders can step into the larger community and involve themselves in

the lives and concerns of others, just as Jesus did. Offering one's time and energy to learn from the surrounding community – standing ready to affirm their questions without presuming to supply all the answers – makes a difference.

A New Threshold

People often leave the church for solid theological reasons. Today's faith leaders have an opportunity to value those who never darken the doors, or who because of experiences at church have fled those doors. When people arrive at the threshold of our church entrances they come with lessons we need to learn. And people bring questions that the teachings of Jesus can address.

Thriving congregations don't divide God's world into us-and-them. A worshiper or visitor might describe, for instance, their meditation practice as a spiritual resource they turn to because it produces more kindness, patience, and compassion in them. And if they tell us, "I don't get that at church," listen. Share with them the ancient practices of Christian contemplative tradition, which few people perhaps even know exist.

Jesus went to the outsider and spoke to the needs he encountered. There is no secular world. There is God's world, a world in need of faith leaders who can notice, value, and speak to the questions, troubles, and joys in the daily lives of those we seek to live with, pray with, and care for.

*The Rev. Cathy H. George is Associate Dean and Director of Formation at the Berkeley Divinity School at Yale. A graduate of Macalester College and Harvard Divinity School, she completed her doctorate in ministry in transformational leadership at Boston University School of Theology in 2017. She has served as a priest in urban, rural, and suburban parishes, and as a chaplain in prison and hospital settings. She is the author of *You Are Already Praying: Stories of God at Work* (Morehouse, 2013).*

It was April 1970, and the women had had enough. They were tired of leaving the YDS library stacks and study carrels every time they needed to find a women's restroom. The nearest one was an inconvenient distance away. More and more women were attending YDS now, yet the physical facility lagged behind by about 40 years in one detail. There were far more men's restrooms than women's.

So the women made history and the news too. Ten of them liberated a restroom there in the library – a lavatory for men only. Their achievement, and the equality it symbolized, wasn't lost on the School in an age of manifestos, consciousness-raising, and resistance to old-boy networks.

"At 10:15 on a Thursday morning a contingent of about ten graduate student women walked past the bleary-eyed men students gathered for ritual pipe-

smoking and gossip in the library lounge, tacked the letters 'WO' on the door of the men's room, claimed possession by placing a bouquet of plastic flowers in the urinal, and sat down," wrote Carol P. Christ '74 Ph.D., who was there.¹

The occupation continued through the day. They placed a declaration of aims on the door – the need for a women's restroom in the vicinity. They wearied of this male lavatorial "Babylonian Captivity." One male student barged in and washed his hands "in sullen defiance," reported *Yale Daily News*.² That prompted the women to buy a lock for the door, allowing only other women into the restroom. They resumed their vigil.

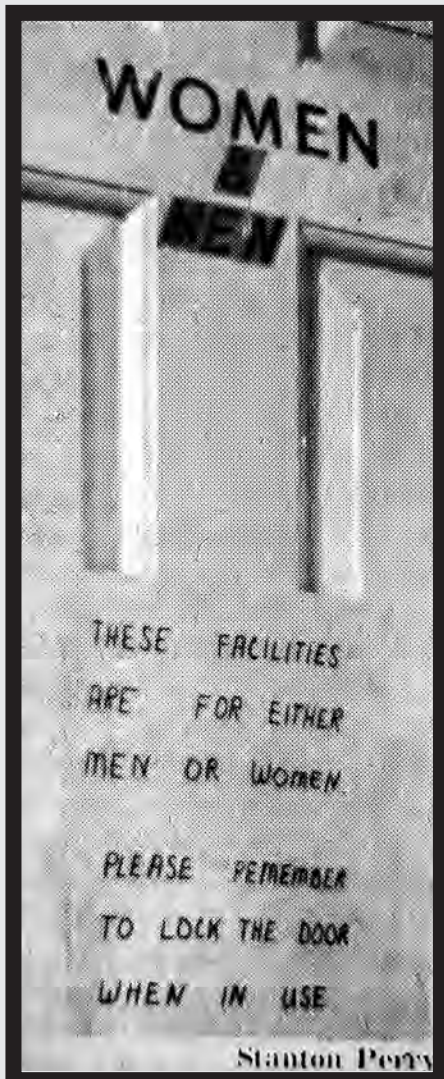
By afternoon, YDS Dean Colin Williams arrived, reportedly bearing a handkerchief as a kind of white flag, hoping to broker peace, or at least a satisfactory compromise. He proposed that the restroom be available for "common use." The women accepted. A new sign went up: "These facilities are for either men or women – please remember to lock the door when in use."

The incident would become a flashpoint, an early turning point in the gender debates on campus, and a fond memory in YDS lore. Several participants looked back on the episode in spirited reminiscences. Women's progress in attaining leadership positions at YDS was still slow for decades after. But the lessons of that day weren't forgotten.

"Like the body's other equally powerful imperatives – its needs for food and sleep, the finality of death – elimination serves as a foundation around which societies elaborate the distinctions and rules that help constitute power relations in a particular time and place," wrote Judith Plaskow '75 Ph.D., one of the demonstrators.³

The protesters that day billed YDS for the lock – \$1.53. "They received prompt recompense," wrote Carol Christ, "from the dean's 'indiscretionary' fund." The small but storied restroom – one urinal and one stall – remained unisex until the library was renovated in 2001.

– Ray Waddle



Photograph by Stanton Perry / *Yale Daily News* / April 14, 1970 / © *Yale Daily News*

- 1 Carol P. Christ, "Liberation of the Yale Divinity School Library Men's Room," in *Pulling Our Own Strings: Feminist Humor & Satire*, edited by Gloria Kaufman and Mary Kay Blakely (Indiana, 1980), p. 96.
- 2 "Girls Occupy John," *Yale Daily News*, April 14, 1970, p. 1.
- 3 Judith Plaskow, foreword to *Ladies and Gents: Public Toilets and Gender*, edited by Olga Gershenson and Barbara Penner (Temple University Press, 2009), p. viii.

FRAGMENTS

By Kathi Wolfe '78 M.Div.

Sifting through pre-historic
newspaper clippings,
faded T-shirts,
unfinished dreams, begun
in Provincetown between
drag queens and sand dunes,
I chase the fragments
of our life.

Scooping up ticket stubs,
garden seeds, books, CDs,
memories, washed out
in the ocean, streaming
over the beach,
our life becomes invisible ink –
just beyond reach.



Joan Bates Forsberg, YDS advocate for women, 1971
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Thank You, Joan: How We Found Our Voices



By Talitha Arnold '80 M.Div.

In the high desert of northern New Mexico, piñon trees are icons of endurance. The sturdy, compact trees can live for centuries in a land of little rain, desert heat, bone-chilling cold, storms, and wind. Piñons grow in the unlikeliest places, clinging to the side of a canyon wall or atop a mesa, unprotected from the elements.

How do piñons survive and even thrive? Their roots go deep and wrap around the biggest rocks they can find to hold them against the harsh desert landscape.

The Rev. Joan Bates Forsberg '53 B.D. knows what it takes to live and serve in unlikely places of ministry. Born in New Jersey, now living in retirement in California, she came to YDS in 1950 as one of ten women admitted under the school's quota for

Joan said: "Those were the years when the Holy Spirit blew open the doors of seminaries and denominations across the country. Women who had heard God's call came pouring in."

female students. By policy, none received financial aid. They couldn't live on campus. The second day of school, Joan and her classmates were welcomed by the dean, who also reminded them they were taking the place of a qualified man, so they should be there to study, not seek a husband.

Rooted in the Rock of Ages

As a place of role models for women in ministry, YDS in the 1950s was barren as a desert mesa – no women professors or worship leaders until 1971, when Joan herself joined the staff and ethics professor Margaret Farley became a faculty member.

Yet Joan says the women students were not alone. "We may not have had role models, but we had the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit helped us live into the new reality of being women called to seminary

and into ministry."¹ Joan and her classmates dug deep and wrapped their roots around the rock of their love for God and God's love for them.

Those roots also embraced the other ageless rock of our faith – the love of neighbor. Joan started YDS with plans to become a campus minister. But after graduation, she and her husband Bob Forsberg '52 B.D. moved from Prospect Street into the housing projects of New Haven to help start an interracial group ministry focused on social and racial justice. Over the next 20 years, they raised three children, advocated for better schools and health for their neighbors, and experienced first-hand the transformation of the civil rights movement into Black Power.

They shared a covenant of economic equality (their income was the same as their neighbors') and daily prayer. There were times, Joan acknowledges, when it was overwhelming to be both a mother raising children and a minister dealing with rent control and rat control. Often, "the only thing that got me through the day was knowing that five other people had prayed for me that morning." As she discovered, love required a faith rooted in God's love and held in the prayers of others.

Later, at YDS, she would teach generations of students, both women and men, that same wisdom.

Job Posting: Women's Advocate

In 1971, the 28 women students of YDS told Dean Colin Williams, "We don't even know what a woman minister looks like. YDS needs women on the faculty." Out of the blue, the dean called Joan at her New Haven ministry and asked her to fill a new YDS position: Advocate for Women.

Over the next two decades, Joan helped guide the school through an enrollment surge of women. “Those were the years,” she recalled, “when the Holy Spirit blew open the doors of seminaries and denominations across the country. Women who had heard God’s call – and had been waiting for the

For many of us, Joan was the first woman we’d ever heard preach or seen celebrate the Eucharist.

church to hear it, too – came pouring in.” Some male faculty accused Joan of “recruiting” female students. “I’m not recruiting,” she answered. “The Holy Spirit is sending them! I just welcome them.”

By the mid-70s, along with professors Margaret Farley and Letty Russell, Joan formed a holy trinity of advocacy for women seminarians, offering moral support and mentoring as women blazed trails in the male-dominated worlds of YDS and the church.

Unexpected Destinations

For many of us, Joan was the first woman we’d ever heard preach or seen celebrate the Eucharist. As a white minister who lived two decades in an African-American neighborhood, she brought a perspective to her teaching and Common Room conversations that linked the Christian faith with both racial justice and feminism. As a wife and mother, she knew the challenges older women face in returning to school while raising their families.

Yet Joan’s influence wasn’t limited to women or to students. She provided all of us – no matter our gender, generation, race, or setting – the essentials of ministry.

She taught us to honor God’s call to ministry in places we didn’t expect. Eugene Petersen translates the opening of John’s Gospel as “the Word became flesh and moved into the neighborhood.” Joan did that when she followed God’s call to move into New Haven’s inner city in the early 1950s. It wasn’t the life or ministry Joan had anticipated, but it was the place that called her.

Dean Williams’s phone call 20 years later called Joan into yet another unexpected place – a university divinity school with growing numbers of strong-willed, sometimes radical and generally younger women. By her own admission, Joan hadn’t paid much attention to the women’s movement when she was busy raising children and doing urban ministry. Now she was in the middle of it.

Her experience of such faithful surprises and dislocations held many lessons. Those of us in min-

istry in the early 21st century also know about being dislocated, whether by cultural change or the diminishment of the church. God has certainly led us to some unfamiliar places. But wherever we found ourselves, Joan taught us to honor the Christ that was already at work there. As a young, seminary-educated white woman, Joan could have moved into an impoverished African-American neighborhood with her own agenda for her new neighbors. She didn’t. Instead she got to know them. She took time to understand the issues that were important to the women and families on the block.

A good example was the issue of family planning and birth control. Until the *Griswold v. Connecticut* US Supreme Court decision in 1965 (in which Joan played a major role), the use of contraception was illegal even for married women in Connecticut. Consequently as a young married woman, Joan drove once a month to Port Arthur, NY, to get her contraceptive contraband. When her neighbors saw that she wasn’t pregnant every year, they asked how she did it. “Do you make Bob sleep on the roof?” one woman joked.

After Joan told them about her monthly trips to New York, neighborhood women organized their own pilgrimages to Port Arthur. Joan had no idea her ministry would include driving the parish van full of women on a mission for birth control. “But if you listen to your neighbors,” she said, “if you

By her own admission, Joan hadn’t paid much attention to the women’s movement. Now she was in the middle of it.

honor their wisdom and trust that Christ has been at work long before you ever showed up, then you never know where the Spirit will lead you or how your ministry will unfold.”

“That’s for You to Define”

She took the same approach with the YDS job. When she asked Dean Williams, “What does an advocate for women do?” he replied, “I don’t know! That’s for you and the women to define.” Joan listened to the ideas, concerns, and excitement of the new women students. She supported us as we strategized with women faculty to institute change, whether opening a women’s restroom or getting inclusive language hymnals for chapel. Joan also built bridges with those who resisted such change. She listened to the women students who didn’t see a need for a Women’s Advocate or a Women’s Center. She listened deeply to the concerns and sometimes confusion of the men, whether students or faculty.

Joan knew that going the extra mile with someone who differs from us can help us find common ground and discover how God's Spirit is at work in ways we may not see. Whether my classmates and I served established congregations in the sub-

I finally realized what Joan believed about my generation of women preachers: We had the voice of authority, even when the voices in our heads told us otherwise.

urbs or created communities on the cutting edge of feminism, womanism, or LGBTQ rights, we needed to seek that same Christ. Faced with today's deep national divisions, we still do.

The Christ Within

Joan also taught us to honor the Christ within us. She and her YDS classmates knew only too well the questions that have dogged women in ministry for generations: Are we legitimate? Do we have a right to claim our own authority? The 1950s template for church leadership was decidedly male. "I never felt legitimate as a preacher," Joan said, "not when the only model was that of the black-robed handsome man with a voice that sounded like God and the authority to back it up."

Joan didn't have the same doubts about celebrating the Eucharist. "Standing at the communion table wasn't about me or my wisdom and insights," she said. "It was about breaking the bread, sharing the cup, praying for the Spirit, and inviting everyone to the feast. *That* I could do." And so generations of YDS students and faculty had their first experience of a woman's hands holding the bread and lifting the cup, and a woman's voice calling them to the table of the Lord. Generations of women students saw they had a right to hear Christ's call and stand in that same place.

As a student, I didn't always understand Joan's fear of preaching. I was used to public speaking from years of 4-H demonstration contests and speech competitions. I'd also had women professors in college, and my mother had been a research scientist and teacher, so I had role models and felt reasonably confident in leading worship.

But one Friday afternoon in my last year at YDS, I was working on a Women's Re-Union project in an empty office, when a senior male professor came in expecting to find someone to type a letter for him. To this day, I don't know what set him off other than

the fact I wasn't a secretary but a coordinator for the Women's Center. A foot taller and a lot heavier than I, the professor stood in the doorway so I couldn't leave until he'd vented his anger at women, feminism, and a host of social justice issues. His rage sowed seeds of self-doubt. Maybe he was right. Maybe I and other women students were ruining the school by our presence and leadership. The next time I helped lead worship in Marquand Chapel, my right arm trembled throughout the service. I began to understand why Joan and others had difficulty finding the voice of their own authority.

Such doubts were reinforced over the years as I and other YDS women grads hit the proverbial glass ceiling and heard the refrain that "churches weren't ready for a female senior minister."

She Belongs Up There

Yet 10 years after graduation, at a national gathering of my denomination, I watched the young woman moderator lead the meeting. A recent YDS graduate, she was the first ordained woman in that denominational role. I thought to myself, "She knows she belongs there. On stage, up front, she has no doubts that she doesn't have a right to lead. No one has told her otherwise." I finally realized what Joan had felt about my generation of women preachers: We had the voice of authority, even when the voices in our heads told us otherwise.

Women's right to preach and lead remains an issue, given that many denominations and also non-denominational megachurches continue to base ordination on one's chromosomes. A 2017 Barna study showed that only one in 11 Protestant congregations is led by a woman, and overall those

Whether we served established congregations or created communities on the cutting edge of feminism, womanism, or LGBTQ rights, we needed to seek the same Christ.

congregations tend to be smaller than those led by men. With such barriers persisting, Joan's affirmation to "honor the Christ within oneself" is as important now as it was for her generation.

Finally, even as we found our own voices of authority and leadership, Joan also taught us to honor the silence. Not the mandated silence imposed by church authorities or doctrine, but the silence that comes from within. It's the silence that comes to each of us, male or female, old or young, at some time in our ministries.

In 1980, when Letty Russell organized a group of women students to plan the first Women's Re-Union to commemorate 50 years of women at YDS, we all agreed that Joan should be the closing-service preacher, even though we all knew she hated to preach. The organizers also agreed that I should be the one to talk her into it. "She'll listen to you," Letty said. "Don't let us down."

As it turned out, I was the one who needed to listen. Over dinner one cold January night, I presented Joan with all the reasons we needed her to preach. She was a role model. She spanned generations of YDS women. She had first-hand experience of balancing ministry and family life. She had witnessed the connection between racism and sexism. We all supported her and wanted her to do it. Personally, I needed not to fail in this most important task.

Silent Truths

Joan listened. She suggested other women as possibilities. She asked why we needed a preacher at all. She recommended Quaker silence. After I'd answered her questions, she was silent for some time. She turned her wine glass around and around on the table. Finally she spoke and I listened.

"I don't have any more words to offer, Talitha," she said. "The last 10 years have been filled with so many challenges and so much change, I don't have anything to say."

"I feel silenced," she continued, "not by church doctrine as so many women have been and continue to be, but silenced by my own life. I have no words

What do you say when the person who has been your role model for decades tells you she has no more words? You honor the silence.

to offer, no courage or insight. Only silence – and you can't preach that."

Joan and I sat in that silence for a long time. What do you say when the person who has been your role model tells you she has no more words? You honor the silence.

Finally I said, "Joan, I think that is what all of us need to hear. We need to know the truth about the silence. We need to hear you name what can happen in ministry. We need to hear that truth from you."

And that's what she preached. In her sermon for the closing service, Joan recalled the story of Zechariah who was silenced by Archangel Gabriel at the annunciation of John the Baptist. Like Zechariah, Joan observed, we too can be silenced by the events

in our lives, struck mute when changes come too quickly and our images of God or ourselves no longer hold true. Ironically, she continued, it is often at those times when we have nothing to say to others or ourselves, that another will appear at our door to ask for a word – to counsel, preach, or advise.

When faced with such silence, Joan asked that we not speak empty words or deride ourselves for our lack of eloquence. She urged that we listen to the silence and hear the Word from others – through Scripture or music, prayer or meditation, the sharing of bread and cup around the table. She asked us to trust that God's spirit was still with us, as it had been for Zechariah, and that it would still bring new life.

As a woman in ministry for almost 40 years, I have known such silences. You probably have, too. They've come after national tragedies like 9/11, Sandy Hook, Emmanuel A.M.E., and El Paso. They've come, too, after the death of a parent, the ending of a relationship, the loss of a friend. Sometimes the silence has come more slowly, when the church that a student prepared for no longer exists or the language of the faith is no longer spoken by the culture.

In such times, may we remember Joan's wisdom to honor the silence and wait for the Spirit. May we, like she, also nurture a faith that puts down roots deep enough to wrap around the ageless rocks of love for God and love for neighbor.

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Note

- 1 Quotations from Joan Forsberg in this article are based on remarks she made to the author during a series of conversations that stretch back across nearly 40 years of friendship, and as recently as this summer.



Detail from Class of '45 group photo
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Out of my weariness with this relentless climate of hatred masquerading as patriotism, I find myself turning to the power of lament and hope to help keep my faith vibrant and to encourage others to not become hostages to despair.

This is a tall order, as each day carries news, social media feeds, conversations, classroom discussions, sermons, and more that remind us that things are bad ... very bad. However, to combat the obscene hijacking of the common good, we must embrace the challenge of lament and hope as a rallying cry for those of us who are focused on being partners with God for bringing in a more robust new heaven and new earth.

I am often struck, as a sometimes archetypical grumpy and never quite satisfied ethicist, by the drive we have as meaning-makers and moral agents. We often stall in our attempts when we treat this climate only as a matrix of problems instead of opportunities to exercise the gift of God's grace in our lives. We humans are a rather creative lot and we never quite know what we will do next.

With our all-too-human unpredictability, lament can serve as an anchor to help us find our bearings on how to live as people of faith. We learn

We learn from biblical laments that it is imperative to name what is wrong with as much precision and honesty as possible.

from biblical laments that it is imperative to name what is wrong with as much precision and honesty as possible, even if it hurts or causes us to wince. From the Psalms to Joel to the cross, laments tell the truth of the suffering that is smothering our worthiness, our dreams, our ability to work toward a better tomorrow. Laments mark the beginning of the healing process when we open ourselves up to look at the situations we find ourselves in and our own complicity in them as well as the ways in which we are victimized by them. And, importantly, we see and feel with clarity how this affects others who may have no direct relation to us but who are all a part of this magnificent journey of life.

So, we name the horrors – bankrupt immigration policies, race baiting, white supremacy, biased drug policies, mass incarceration, troubled educational systems and policies, forms of violence, human trafficking, and more. This sad laundry list

weighs on each of us in varying ways. However, by naming these things we can address them rather than simply survive them, and realize that we are in this life together: It is foolhardy to think we are somehow immune or unaffected by the venom being spewed as our national discourse. Naming these horrors in an unrestrained lament helps mold us into a people who respond with an emphatic “No!” to the ways our nation and our communities of faith are turned into graven images of hatred and despair.

And this is where hope comes in for me. Naming the hot mess above is both admitting the realities – and possibilities – and confessing that we cannot right things without leaning strong and hard into our faith for the sustenance to stand up, dig in, and do the work our souls must have. Hope is not the by-product of a divine guarantee and it certainly is not a dubious promise of fire insurance or a misdirected glory train. We face the tough times of our day with fresh energy and urgency that remind us that we stand on the frontlines of hope.

This hope is neither sentimental nor vapid. It does not give up on God or us. Hope refuses to believe that evil and suffering and sorrow and hatred are God's final words to us in a world that is a spinning top of war and violence. This hope believes and guides us to another way in which we are all made whole – the power of the common good shaping our lives and that of countless others on the highway to salvation.

Yes, this hope may become weary, may become disgusted, may become impatient, and may disappoint us. But hope is forged out of the biblical call to dig deep into our innards to tell the truth of what we see, feel, hear, and experience. And it reminds us that we must always show up in the face of relentless evil, particularly in such times when it appears so normal and natural in our midst.

*Emilie M. Townes is dean of Vanderbilt Divinity School, where she is also the E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Professor of Womanist Ethics and Society. Ordained in the American Baptist Churches USA, she is the author of *Womanist Ethics and the Cultural Production of Evil* (Palgrave, 2007) and other books. A past president of the American Academy of Religion and the Society for the Study of Black Religion, she was on the faculty of YDS from 2005-2013.*

Home from the Journey, Between Past and Future



By Margaret A. Farley '70 M.Phil., '73 Ph.D.

This essay is newly adapted from a keynote given at the Yale Divinity School Women's Reunion in 2010.

For those of you who are alumnae, so much has happened since you lived and worked and formed community here. Your personal and ministerial lives have changed you and the world around you. You were all called equally in the Spirit of God when you came here to prepare for diverse ministries – in the churches, in your families, in other professions.

But you went forth to sometimes vastly unequal situations, where your credentials were accepted or dismissed, exalted or trivialized – depending sometimes only on your gender or your race or your theological perspectives, or on whether or not you were ordained, or whether your call beyond YDS was

Some of you have found a home in ministries or families, others have lived homeless in a sense, even if you are ordained. The journeys themselves may be where you make your home.

recognized as sufficiently traditional, or whether you were able to find communities of faith and committed love. Your professional and ministerial and personal lives have stretched out, with beginnings and endings still to be enacted; but the “between” of these beginnings and endings will, in a sense, matter most of all. And the “between” will be different for each of you.

Progress Delayed

Your “between” partakes of both past and present, even as it is the bridge to a not-yet future. My own experience with women at YDS began in 1971, a long time ago, yet a relatively short past. Immediately prior to this, in 1970, a YDS alumnaal Committee

on the Ministry of Women issued a report describing the history and current situation of women as women at YDS. It contained statements such as: “Little has been done to diminish the jaundiced attitudes toward women seminarians and their vocational aspirations which remain among their male peers. Less has been done to foster an atmosphere of support among women and in the community. ... Nothing has been done ... to prepare women to cope with the discrimination they continue to encounter in the churches and their ministries – difficulties in placement, lower salary scales for the same work, lower status. ... At a time in which our society is being confronted by a second wave of protest against the continued economic, social, and vocational discrimination against women, ... the seminaries have tended not to be in the vanguard of the church, but have trailed miserably behind the concerned leadership in [some] denominations and the National Council of Churches.”

A Surge After '70

The report proposed, among other things, that a position be established for a vocational-religious counselor for students; that women be appointed to the full-time faculty; that active steps be taken to address gender discrimination in the school; that more women be recruited to the B.D. (later M.Div.) program and encouraged to seek ordination; and that courses be offered at YDS dealing with the im-

age, role, and relation of women and men in the church, family, and society. This report obviously gave a grim picture of the experience of women at YDS, although these women also had richly positive experiences, times when their hearts were burning as they studied the ways of faith and the possibilities for action. The 1970 report became part of the radical change that began to take place in 1971 – the beginning of a surge that continues today. Its concerns were energized by the social and cultural situation of the 60s. The women who flocked to YDS and other seminaries after that were filled with a power for change.

Revisiting the Classics

The present is markedly different – in the world, the churches, theological education, and YDS. There are not the same problems (or at least not in the same degree) that were identified in the 1970 report. For example, as Letty Russell and I taught our course in Feminist Theology and Ethics through many years, it became apparent to us that questions had changed over time, and many feminist theological and ethical classics had been lost – the work of women like Mary Daly, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Rosemary Ruether, Beverly Harrison, and others. New students by and large did not know these writings, and hence their understanding of women's critique, retrieval, and reconstruction of major doctrines was truncated. The last time Letty and I taught our course, in 2007, we decided to

You went forth to sometimes vastly unequal situations, where your credentials were accepted or dismissed, exalted or trivialized – depending sometimes only on your gender or race or theology.

include classics as well as major new writings by women. This was an eye-opener for many of the students, both women and men, and a source of new energy for probing the depth of what they believed.

No one lives in a historical vacuum. In each of your generations, the past has moved to the present, remaining within each life even as it is transformed. And every one of you who has passed through this divinity school has changed it, however imperceptibly: Here you became a part of someone else's life, and you changed the institution as well.

There are some dramatic examples of this, such as the massive effort to "Save the Quad" in the 1990s – the countless meetings, the communications with alumni/ae, the partial victory of remain-

ing on the hill and the fuller victory of saving all of the buildings. Women and men, students and faculty, were part of this effort, although it must be said that women were its backbone and its force of communal grace. What followed was also dramatic – the remarkable renovation of the school, its move-

Every great love is tried by fire, but not destroyed. In the cross of Jesus Christ the divine/human relationship is forever restored, and it holds.

ment into the 21st century in terms of classroom design and forms of worship, both preservation and transformation – achieved not without struggle, but now incarnating the commitments and hopes of a divinity school whose tradition is a living tradition. And women have been a sterling part of what makes the tradition live.

Other dramatic examples include the simply explosive increase in the number of women students – stabilizing at about half the student body – and the not so simple but nonetheless remarkable growth in numbers of women faculty, administrators, and staff. There are also the profound conversations held within the walls of YDS, changing forever the lives of individuals and even the school; the diversity achieved slowly and still developing within the student body and the faculty; the openings to ecumenical and interfaith dialogue. Some things some of you will regret, but there can be no doubt that this school is vibrant – in its struggles, its achievements, its ongoing life.

Mending Creation

The fabric of the "between," shaping the present and future, has notable threads running through it in the school's continuing commitment to prepare persons for the churches as well as society. Think of the path forged by administrators like Joan Forsberg, whose wisdom and comfort saved the vocations of countless students, and whose quiet presence and courageous action made so much progress possible; and faculty like Letty Russell, whose challenges to injustice showed so many students new ways to mend creation, and whose creative pedagogy and theology startled and nurtured new insights and convictions in the hearts and minds of so many.

Today, we are all challenged by a social and cultural situation marked by escalating technological progress yet also disaster, wars, and rumors of wars. The stark contrast of poverty and wealth haunts our country and the whole world. Mean-spiritedness

and self-righteousness mark the political landscape. Still, remarkable humanitarian efforts are mounting, movements to care for Earth are growing, and countless individuals and organizations stand in solidarity with the marginalized.

Yet optimism is not our general mood. We recognize that today's signs of the times still call us to struggles against so much hatred and fighting, still against racism and sexism; and they call us to struggle for economic and political liberation, respect for genuine pluralism, and renewed efforts to bring about justice, in our generation, for our neighbors near and far.

What can be said now about the heart of your own vocation – in whatever form it has taken? The patterns and places of your lives have been diverse. Some have found a home in ministries or families, others have lived homeless in a sense, even if you

Perhaps we have heard the call to put our roots down not simply in a place, but in the hearts of those we love; and we have thereby learned to welcome one another into our own hearts.

are ordained. First called to one path, then to another, many of you have learned the meaning of “we have here no lasting home,” as the Letter to the Hebrews declares. No matter what, you have been on journeys since your first call to come to YDS – the journeys themselves may be where you make your home.

Love Stronger Than Death

Whether you have found your place, or you are still searching for it, you may have come to know the kind of love that asks you in a myriad of ways to lay down your life for others, thus coming paradoxically to find yourself. If so, you have probably also learned that every great love is tried by fire, but not destroyed. With other women who questioned a view of Christianity that glorified suffering, you may have learned that the point of the cross is not finally suffering and death, but that a relationship can hold. (I speak in Christian terms here, and of Christian symbols, but I trust that some analogies may be found in symbols of other traditions in which some of you may stand.) In the cross of Jesus Christ the divine/human relationship is forever restored, and it holds.

And our relationships with one another can hold. Never letting go of our sense of dignity, truth, justice, and call, we can glimpse the possibilities of a

love stronger than death, a love that can withstand complexity, limitation, distance, even failure. To sustain such loves, the “between” of our lives gets woven with insight into experiences of the already/not-yet, experiences not of disillusionment or mere resignation but of an upsurge of hope. This is at the heart of our movement into the future, and at the heart of our call.

The Heart of God

But to return to our title, what can it really mean? Surely we who have traveled forth, and now come together again, are only fleetingly here at home. We may still be without a home of a certain kind; or we may have many homes, yet “here no lasting home.” Our ministries, in whatever form they take, perhaps always include the ministry of easing the burden of persons driven from home, living endlessly in a strange land, or never being welcomed to a table. Perhaps we have heard the call to put our roots down not simply in a place, but in the hearts of those we love; and we have thereby learned to welcome one another into our own hearts.

As we reflect on our individual as well as our shared pasts, we shall no doubt recognize things lost and things gained. But we shall also remember and perhaps re-live those encounters, those events, of which we can still say: “Were not our hearts burning within us?” And we may see anew our call to make our home in one another’s hearts and ultimately in the Heart of God. If so, we can go forth, never leaving; and return, never having been away.

The first woman hired to the full-time YDS faculty, Margaret Farley '70 M.Phil., '73 Ph.D., Gilbert L. Stark Professor Emerita of Christian Ethics, has been a mentor and advisor to generations of students at YDS, where she taught from 1971-2007. Her books include Changing the Questions: Explorations in Christian Ethics, edited by Jamie Manson '02 M.Div. (Orbis, 2015) and Just Love: A Framework for Christian Sexual Ethics (Continuum, 2006). She is a member of the Sisters of Mercy and a past president of the Catholic Theological Society of America.

Rena Weller Karefa-Smart '45 B.D. was the first African-American woman to graduate from YDS, a milestone for the School. She died earlier this year, age 97.

Growing up in Connecticut, her sense of calling was strong. Her parents – her father an AME Zion minister, her mother an educator and church activist – instilled an awareness of the global church and the excitement of intellectual endeavor. Rena was attending ecumenical gatherings for her denomination even as a teenager.

She went to college at age 15, graduating from Central Connecticut State University in 1940. She then earned a master's degree from Drew Theological Seminary, studying with Mildred Moody Eakin. She did independent study at Howard University, interacting with Howard Thurman and honing interest in systematic theology before turning to Yale.¹

At YDS, professors H. Richard Niebuhr and Liston Pope helped deepen her ecumenical passion and ethical themes. Because of transfer credits from Drew and Howard, she was able to complete her YDS work in a year. With Pope's encouragement, she then entered the Yale Ph.D. program in sociology of religion. However, post-war social forces were gathering – independence movements in Africa, a civil rights movement in the US, a surging ecumenism in denominational circles – that pulled her into far-ranging Christian activism. Before Martin Luther King Jr. and James Cone and Katie Cannon, she would be a theological witness on the world stage when mentors for women of color were rare.

"Let me tell you, she was strong – very strong from within, very grounded in her sense of call," says Angelique Walker-Smith '83 M.Div.

Still in her 20s, Karefa-Smart was a formative, high-profile presence at the inaugural World Council of Churches Assembly in Amsterdam in 1948 and was a presenter at the second WCC gathering in Evanston, IL, in 1954. She helped galvanize the WCC's attention on racism in the 1960s: She co-designed the WCC's Programme to Combat Racism, which focused on divestment and non-violence and helped bring down South African apartheid. For years she was also at the center of the World Student Christian Federation, with its themes of peace, women's rights, and social justice.

Her destiny turned decisively in 1948 when she married John Karefa-Smart, a Sierra Leone physician, public health specialist, professor, Methodist elder, and political leader. He was instrumental in Sierra Leone's independence from Britain in 1961. In Sierra Leone they led an eventful life of health reform initiatives, advocacy, teaching, travel, sometimes political persecution – and had three children. His work for his country took them to Nigeria, Liberia, Congo-Brazzaville, Switzerland, as well as the US, where Rena did race relations work with the National Council of Churches.

In the early 1970s, the family was stationed at Harvard, and there Rena Karefa-Smart pursued further study. In 1976, she was the first black woman to

receive a Th.D. from Harvard Divinity School – graduating the same day that her younger daughter received a Harvard undergraduate diploma. Three years later, she became the first female tenured professor at Howard Divinity School, teaching Christian ethics. Loved ones marveled at how she moved through the world during those decades with boldness and confidence despite having grown up in a segregated society during the Depression. They credit her belief in the Kingdom of God, commitment to a Christian faith of liberation, and optimism in the human spirit.

"She worked closely with her husband, but she was a leader in her own right, a woman fighting against all kinds of odds, going to school in a white-dominated context of men," says Walker-Smith, who is completing a book called *Ahead of Her Time*, which profiles a group of pioneering pan-African women of faith in the global ecumenical movement, including Karefa-Smart.

"She was married to a remarkable diplomat, raising a family, and inspired by her faith – it was a peculiar, rarified space to be in the 1940s and 50s, and it helped shape her character."

Ecumenism defined her vocational path. She would become an AME Zion minister and a presiding elder, later an Episcopal priest – a dual ordination – and played a role in the Lutheran-Episcopalian concordant on shared full communion.

She in turn became a role model – of womanhood and committed belief. Angelique Walker-Smith, a new student at YDS in 1980, was keen to learn about the women of African descent who had blazed a path there. She soon sought out Karefa-Smart, who was living in the DC area.

"She was glad to talk to me – and was candid about her efforts to balance family and vocational life. ... Her contributions span at least two generations."

In 1992, Rena Weller Karefa-Smart returned to YDS to speak at the Parks-King Lecture Series. Her topic: "Racism Revisited: The Anatomy of a Heresy." In 2015, she was guest of honor of the Yale Black Seminarians Graduate Banquet.

In 2017, she received the YDS Lux et Veritas alumni award for a life's work of compassion and courage. "It is impossible to measure the distance you've traveled – and helped YDS travel," the award citation declared. "The inspiration you've stirred for generations of African-American women at YDS and beyond is incalculable."

At the award banquet, after sustained applause, the Rev. Dr. Karefa-Smart, age 96, quietly spoke some words of thanks inside the divinity school where she studied more than 70 years before.

"When I think of the people I have known along my long life in theological education, I couldn't honestly say that I deserve a place in it," she said. "However, when I'm told I do have a place, it gives me a second life ... to know that I've not been forgotten."

– Ray Waddle

¹ Various details here are based on a biographical essay generously supplied by Rosalee May Karefa-Smart, Rena Weller Karefa-Smart's elder daughter.



Rena Karefa-Smart at World Council of Churches Assembly in Evanston, IL, 1954
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On the importance of children's choirs, before it's too late ...

One thing I do is train musicians to build children's choirs. But for many churches I visit these days, it's too late. There are not enough children there anymore to start a choir. You've got to invest in the future by training the youth in the music of the tradition if you're going to have a future. Whether it's Roman Catholic or evangelical or mainline Protestant, you won't have success if you don't have a strong music program. You've got to have good musicians, and you've got to pay them!

On hymnody as a spiritual guide ...

Music, we know, is an art of memory. It has its own special place in the mind. The hymns you hear as a child or as a teen will always be held dear to you. I've seen this even among dementia patients in nursing homes – people whose strong memories of hymns are triggered when someone starts singing them. I hope churches will remember that truth about human nature. Every congregation needs to make conscious decisions about hymnody, keeping in mind that music not only relates to the present in theologically astute ways but ties back to particular places and denominations decades and centuries before. This musical dimension is vital to church leadership – to guide and nurture the spirits of people.

Three ways of nurturing the spirit ...

We might think of music as nurturing the spirit in three different ways. The first is to regard a great piece of music as belonging to a beautiful theoretical system that has its own set of rules and regula-

tions to follow. When you get a basic grasp of this, it's like a glorious symphony of numbers, a beautiful reflection of the human mind. Flawed as we are, music gives us some sense of the divine that is within us because of this extraordinary capacity to create such sounds.

The second way is to consider music as a glue that holds a community or congregation together. In a worship setting you can see people thumbing through the missal or hymnal, seeking the right hymn, endeavoring to join the group in song, because we all feel the power of that kind of beauty that can happen when we sing together.

There's a third way as well. It happens when the first two forms of beauty combine – an appreciation of the great technicalities of the music, and an experience of this in a congregational setting. This is rare. And it seems that increasingly the two ways of musically nurturing the spirit are separating. Musicians should be there to nurture people, meet them where they are, help them find their voices, and root them in their own traditions in ways that are artistically and theologically satisfying and strong. It's hard work, and doesn't bear fruit overnight; rather it requires a good mixture of talent, training, and patience.

On the flux and turbulence of religious history ...

The arts and strong preaching have to provide a way out of some of the ideas that are apparently shaping Christianity in some quarters today. People in the churches as well as in the culture have become imbued with a set of values seemingly learned from the media that deny complicated argument and the principles of Christian theology. There has long been a tendency in American religiosity to appeal to the heart first, and if it works, go for it. Our worship history has always been in flux, with tension between contradictory impulses of the intellectual and the anti-intellectual. It's no different today. But YDS and its partners, including ISM, stand for something else – something very important, based as YDS is historically and in the present on the bedrock of a learned clergy, women and men who lead with the intellect as well as with appeals to the emotions. We need this work more than ever.

On seeking the divine in the human today ...

We've never had a television in our house, so I don't watch the news. The headlines in *The New York Times* weigh on my spirit too. I return to music increasingly, because that's how I find the divine within the human, which is something I believe in.

A CHAPLET FOR LANA
By Martha Serpas '94 M.Div.

I doubt you are quiet even now
And why should you be

Now that your voice is unclasped
From the coarse line of our limitations

Your words freed from their pins
Like white-sleeved spectres

Caught in a breeze or untangled
From the strophes of your skirt

As you walked unhurried
Toward a world bent west

Arriving always
To the chime of fresh things

And what more you can say now
That every port is yours

Yours our unreachable provinces

This poem, from the poetry volume The Diener by Martha Serpas, honors the memory of Lana Schwebel, who was assistant professor of religion and literature at Yale Divinity School and the Yale Institute of Sacred Music from 2002-06. She died in 2007 after a car accident in Siberia. On the acknowledgement page of The Diener, the poet says "A Chaplet for Lana" is for Lana's parents, Lilly and Philip Schwebel.

In Search of the North Star



By LaShawn Warren '15 M.A.R.

"In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity." – Albert Einstein

Over the past decade we have witnessed public discourse descend to all-time lows. Conversations focus less on public welfare and more on who is consolidating power. The public square is bombarded with toxic messages – disinformation, ad hominem, name-calling – that reinforce the views of the powerful at the expense of the less powerful.

We are standing at a crossroads that will determine what kind of country we want to be. Shall we intensify our divisions, or become one nation under God with liberty and justice for *all*?

Despite these chaotic times, or perhaps because of them, the faith community has opportunity, indeed responsibility, to serve as the North Star to guide the nation to a place of hope and justice, a place that honors and dignifies each of us. If this is to be the case, people of faith must confront and redress their share of the responsibility for the chaos that engulfs us.

A Widow Who Defied Odds

One passage in Luke 18 provides remarkable lessons for this moment from a woman who defied the odds. A widow asks a judge to grant her justice

Enormities are compounded when faith leaders endorse those who peddle perverse policies, then proceed to baptize biases in the name of God.

against her adversaries. After being told no repeatedly, she returns again and again with the same request. The judge finally relents and gives her the justice she seeks. The passage provides three lessons for the church in navigating turbulent times: 1) Advocate for what is right. We must be committed to the cause of justice and pursue it relentlessly.

This means responding in the moment to confront and disrupt the status quo for the betterment of humankind; 2) Be persistent. We cannot let a "no" end the conversation; we must continue to fight for what is right; 3) Activism is for everyone. In antiquity widows had limited resources, but that did not deter this nameless woman from demanding justice. We are all called. This is not contingent upon our circumstances.

Blessing Enormities in God's Name

The weight of perverse policies that reward greed, encourage gun hoarding, ignore misogyny, promote environmental degradation, applaud racism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, and the mistreatment of the most vulnerable members of our society feels unbearable. Each is the result of human choices. The enormity is compounded when faith leaders endorse those peddling these policies, then slap a "Christian" label on themselves, and proceed to baptize inequalities or biases in the name of God. Their stance perverts the Christian witness and contradicts the very values that are foundational to Christianity – truth, love, justice, compassion, wisdom, courage, and service. This public clash between faith and politics comes at a precarious time in the life of the church. By various measures, attendance is declining, in part because of politics. The Southern Baptists have lost more than a million members over the last decade. Millennials are leaving religion in droves, according to persistent evidence.¹

A deeply flawed public assumption identifies faith or religiosity with a particular political party – and says people of faith, or “values voters,” only care about two issues: abortion and marriage. On the contrary, religious leaders who vocalize support for destructive policies do not represent the broader faith community. The relationship between faith and political engagement is far more nuanced than taking a stand on just one or two contentious issues. People of faith have a duty to examine all aspects of public life, particularly those affecting the marginalized.

The credibility of the church is badly damaged when the story of Mary and Joseph is used to justify pedophilic behavior, or when the US Attorney General quotes Romans 13 to defend border mandates to snatch babies from their mothers in order to stop asylum seekers, or when Thessalonians is cited to deny critical social services to the poor. It is urgent today that we increase the number of voices who will challenge misappropriated theological precepts that justify harmful public policy.

Neutrality = Complicity

Will we stand up for righteousness and denounce these policies as wrong? Or will our silence, inaction, and neutrality convey complicity in such policies? Our silence surely will stunt the spiritual growth of some and drive others away from faith. “If you are neutral in situations of injustice,” said Desmond Tutu, “you have chosen the side of the oppressor.” And that is not the side of Jesus.

We must swallow our pride and engage with those with whom we disagree. By talking only with those who share our political and religious views, we are not challenged to explain the reasoning behind our beliefs. Nor need we wrestle with new data points that may challenge – even change – how we think. Real intellectual growth comes when we consider differing viewpoints that may expand our thinking and reveal unexpected connection with other people. We may, for example, disagree with someone about the right to choose, but join hands with them in restoring voting rights to formerly incarcerated citizens.

From the Exodus and American slavery to the Holocaust and apartheid, faith in action has served as the North Star for generations of believers – an enduring force that centered morality in the fight for justice and has helped sustain oppressed people through the worst of times. As American history shows, the black church was at the vanguard throughout the civil rights movement. Yet in recent movements, from #MeToo and #BlackLivesMatter

to #NoMuslimBan and #TakeAKnee, the secular world has led the righteous conversation, with the church haltingly following. What does this suggest about the moral standing of the church? Why aren’t we leading conscience-reckoning conversations?

Courageous Women

It is easy to become discouraged and overwhelmed by the sheer volume of issues we face. Nevertheless, I am inspired by biblical and modern-day examples of courageous women who used their situation to challenge unjust systems to improve lives. The named and nameless women in the Bible, along with women like Fannie Lou Hamer, Coretta Scott King, Pauli Murray, Ruth Bader Ginsburg, Sonia Sotomayor, and the African-American women in Alabama whose moral barometer spurred them to

Real intellectual growth comes when we consider contrary viewpoints that may expand our thinking.

change the outcome of a Southern election – all demonstrate ways of navigating social turbulence and unrest. In so many cases, they relied on their faith despite the odds.

As the motto of Frederick Douglass’ newspaper *The North Star* declares, “Right is of no Sex – Truth is of no Color – God is the Father of us all, and we are Brethren.” As a community of faith, we must serve as the moral North Star. It is the key to our liberation as a people and as a nation.

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Note

- 1 See Frank Newport, “Church Leaders and Declining Religious Service Attendance,” [news.gallup.com.](https://news.gallup.com), Sept. 7, 2018; Bob Allen, “Southern Baptists Have Lost a Million Members in 10 Years,” [baptistnews.com.](https://baptistnews.com), June 9, 2017; Betsy Cooper, Daniel Cox, Rachel Lienesch, Robert P. Jones, “Exodus: Why Americans are Leaving Religion – and Why They’re Unlikely to Come Back,” [prri.org.](https://prri.org), Sept. 22, 2016.



Walking the YDS labyrinth, which was installed in 2019
Photo by Lisa Keresz
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Amid the myriad movements calling for the rights of particular peoples or groups – Black Lives Matter, LGBTQ, #MeToo, immigrants, children, persons with disabilities – I have been wondering: Is an all-

embracing humanism salvageable? Can we redeem the humanist conviction that we are bound together by a common humanity despite our varied conditions and traumas? And should we bother trying to salvage it?

On the one hand, we hear repeated calls to affirm the full humanity, the equal human dignity, of those who have been marginalized and excluded. On the other hand, movements proclaiming universal human dignity – past and present – are subjected to scathing critique because they are hopelessly blinded by bias. Thus the new nation proclaimed with humanist confidence, “All men are created equal” – but slaves counted as only three-fifths of one. “All men are created equal” – but women could not vote. Small surprise, then, when humanism is denounced as a form of false universalism that time and again imposes the identity and values of a particular dominant group on everyone, either obscuring differences or construing them as a failure to measure up to the ideals of the privileged. “The human” is implicitly defined as white, male, straight, Christian, and able-bodied – while movements for inclusion and equality fail fundamentally to challenge this cultural privileging, but rather function further to entrench the dominant identity. To make matters worse, this false universalism is a theological problem; if God created humankind in the divine image, so, writes Jay Cameron Carter, “as a false god, the dominant re-make the world in their image.”¹

This is a perceptive and vitally important critique, uncovering layer upon layer of exclusion and homogenizing, and all falsifying forms of inclusion. And yet – we do not seem able to abandon the ideal of a universally shared humanity. Nor, I think, should we. I mean here not secular humanism, with its identity formed around the rejection of God (“Which god?”, it is always pertinent to ask). Nor should we defend speciesism, championing *homo sapiens* with disregard for our extremely diverse creaturely siblings. I mean, rather, a deeply biblical way of thinking about humankind as called by God into accountability for self and other, and indeed, for creation itself. This strand of biblical reflection fed into a medieval Christian humanism for which creation made in the image of God was precisely a way of naming human beings as those creatures summoned to responsive moral agency,

to knowing and loving God and all things in relation to God. In so doing, human beings participate in the *reditus*, the return of creation to its source in God – a giving back in worship and praise what has been gifted into being by God’s abundant love.

In my most recent book, *Forming Humanity: Redeeming the German Bildung Tradition* (Chicago, 2019), I have sought to show how late 18th- and early 19th-century German reflection on the collective task of ethical formation or *Bildung* – by thinkers such as Wilhelm von Humboldt and Johann Gottfried Herder, Goethe, Schiller, and Hegel – has its roots in this Christian humanist tradition as passed along through the German mystical and pietist traditions, and how it provides resources for a *dialogical* humanism that is worth furthering today. In dialogical humanism, identity based on shared humanity leaves room both for more particularist and for more encompassing forms of identity, insofar as each is capable of mutual recognition and affirmation.

Lamentably, the *Bildung* tradition of holistic human education and maturation was bound up not just with aspirations to extend opportunities for personal development and broad participatory politics, but also with white racism and the project of European colonial empire.

Why bother to redeem such a tainted tradition? In part, because we have no pristine resources for moving forward; even our doctrines of creation and incarnation are, as Carter and others have shown, complicit and themselves in need of redeeming re-interpretation. In part, too, because we move forward precisely by way of self-critical scrutiny of the inadequacies of the ideals and identities we have heretofore championed. To be convinced that in some way they fall short, that every ideal of the truly human legitimates some oppression or reinscribes some injustice, is not to be freed either of the need or the responsibility to set out the best ideals we can *and* to subject these to ongoing, relentless critique. As political philosopher Thomas McCarthy argues, the notion of human development “... is inherently ambivalent in character, both indispensable and dangerous. Thus, ... there is no alternative to its ongoing deconstruction and reconstruction.”²

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- 1 Jay Cameron Carter, “Between W.E.B. Du Bois and Karl Barth: The Problem of Modern Political Theology,” in *Race and Political Theology*, edited by Vincent Lloyd (Stanford, 2012), p. 95.
- 2 Thomas McCarthy, *Race, Empire, and the Idea of Human Development* (Cambridge, 2009), p. 18.

Oceanic Crosscurrents and Feminist Ethics



By Keun-Joo Christine Pae '03 M.Div.

The Pacific Ocean, the broadest and deepest on earth, lies between Asia where I grew up and America where I have lived for 20 years. The construction of the term Asian America is unthinkable without it. Geopolitically speaking, my feminist theo-ethics has revolved around the ocean that silently remembers and embodies the history of Asian immigration to the US, as well as America's wars in Asia, the tourism at the cost of exoticized Asian women, the global trade of cheap female labor at sweatshops along the Pacific Coast, migrant laborers, and endangered oceanic ecologies.

I often feel that the Pacific Ocean is like Mother God, who continually creates life, holds tears and dreams of all Her creation, and embraces the silenced victims of history.

My understanding of Asian Pacific American feminist theology is grounded in the Pacific Asian North American Asian Women in Theology and Ministry (PANAAWTM). This 35-year-old grassroots

Post-1965 immigrants from Asia are divided into educated professionals who correspond to a “model minority” stereotype, and those who constitute a low-paid US workforce. The latter group, mostly women, is relatively hidden from the public.

organization has promoted sisterhood among Asian Pacific American women in the church and theological education and produced a critical body of feminist theological knowledge generated by Asian Pacific American women's analysis of white-hetero-patriarchal-capitalist nation-building and the struggles for liberation from it. PANAAWTM theologies are historically specific and “embodied” as

God embodies the hopes and sorrows of people in Asia Pacific diasporas.

A Distorted Legacy

In American public discourse, “Asia Pacific” appears as a culturally, racially, and religiously unified region of open borders. But the term fails to grasp the immense diversity among peoples, cultures, religions, and languages associated with the region. The Pacific is often imbued with the “yellow peril” – an unknown fear, danger, and threat to the US. The yellow peril surfaces whenever the US has tensions with Asian countries.¹ At the same time, “American Orientalism” perceives Asian Americans as perpetual foreigners whose loyalty is suspect and who can never be fully assimilated, because “Orientalism” has been constructed as barbaric, exotic, alien, and racially different from and inferior to the West.²

In actual fact, Asian Pacific Americans (APA hereafter) include long-term permanent residents “as far back as six generations.”³ Hawaiians, for instance, never migrated to the US but became American after the US annexation of their islands. “Asian Americans” first meant those of East and Southeast Asian ancestry predominantly, but “Pacific” was eventually added because the term increasingly included South Asians and Pacific Islanders.⁴ During the 1960s, a

racially conscious pan-Asian identity arose among APAs who shared similar experiences of racial discrimination in the US and political goals for justice and equality. Today, APA should be understood both as a racialized identity and as a political identity.

“Picture Brides”

APA women’s history is intertwined with that of men, who started coming to this country around 1763.⁵ In the 19th century, a large number of Asian men crossed the Pacific Ocean to the US as forced laborers (mostly in Hawaii and California) or as merchants and gold prospectors. Asian women were generally banned from entering the US during this period, but in the early 20th century Chinese and Japanese women were lured to prostitution here. From 1907 to 1924, 45,000 Japanese and 1,000 Korean “picture brides” arrived in Hawaii and California and married native men who were working in plantations and farms.⁶

From 1790 to 1952, Asians could not be naturalized in the US, although many of them spent their entire lives here. Also, until 1968, when the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965 was fully enacted, Asian-American women were few in proportion to men. As the Asian-American population grew in the US, ethnic Asian churches functioned as the community center not only to preserve their respective cultures, languages, and Christian practices but also to promote their political interests. Especially in the early 20th century, Korean- and Chinese-American churchwomen were internationalists who worked

“American Orientalism” perceives Asian Americans as perpetual foreigners whose loyalty is suspect and who can never be fully assimilated.

for the independence of their home countries that were subjugated by European and Japanese powers.

America’s wars in the Asia Pacific brought many Asian war brides (mostly Japanese, Korean, Thai, and Vietnamese women) who were married to non-Asian servicemen. Because of their association with non-Asian men, their leadership in ethnic Asian churches has often been neglected. However, these women were the backbone of Asian-American life – they built their communities and churches when only a small number of Asians could legally immigrate to the US.

Publicly Hidden

Since the 1965 immigration act, the APA population has rapidly grown across the US. Post-1965 immi-

grants from Asia are divided into highly educated professionals who have corresponded to a “model minority” stereotype, and those who constitute a critically low-paid US workforce. The former is usually represented by APA churches, as if APAs shared the moral, religious, and cultural values of the Protestantism of middle-class white Americans. The latter ill-paid group, predominantly made up of both US-born Asian and Asian immigrant women, is relatively hidden from the public.

According to American Studies scholar Lisa Lowe of Yale, the specific recruitment of Asian women as a labor force has intensified since the 1965 immigration act.⁷ Feminized and racialized labor

“Interstitial” integrity and wisdom give strength to APA Christian women who often become firsts in the church and theological education.

in today’s neoliberal market economy shows that the Asia Pacific is not so separate from the US. For example, the sweatshops of the garment industry in San Francisco and Los Angeles hire immigrant women from those Asian and Latin American countries where US transnational corporations conduct garment assembly work.⁸ With attention given to Lowe’s work, Kwok Pui-Lan accentuates the importance of the transnational lens in elaborating an APA feminist theology. She encourages APA feminist theologians and churches to reflect critically on the transnational intersectionality of race, gender, labor, migration, and religion.⁹

Courage and Remembrance

Metaphorically speaking, the vast Pacific Ocean is a hybridized space where diverse cultures and images of God find their own identities yet without claiming rigid boundaries. Instead they live harmoniously with one another, allowing currents and waves to cross one another without fear of losing their identities. Rita Nakashima Brock’s concept of “interstitial integrity” enriches my own understanding of Asian Pacific American feminist theology that actively remembers the history of APA women marred with violence by European imperialism, war, patriarchy, racism, sexism, and callous capitalism, and honors their courage and activism for justice and peace.

According to Brock, “interstitial integrity more accurately describes how human beings construct a self in any culture” – this characterizes the story of race (Native Americans, whites, blacks, APAs, Latino/as, and so forth) and immigration on North

American soil.¹⁰ All of our identities have been (differently) constructed by colonization, then transplanted and hybridized in North America. Brock traces interstitial integrity in APA women's work for justice since the late 19th century. Instead of splitting ourselves into Asians or Americans, we have worked on both frontiers at once for justice for ourselves, our compatriots, and people in other countries.¹¹ Interstitial integrity helps us stay attuned to life's fullness and participate in "its ever-changing rhythms and patterns rather than to be starved by unrealized hopes or a thin nostalgic past."¹²

Wisdom Betwixt and Between

Interstitial integrity infuses also the wisdom leadership cultivated by APA churchwomen. Scholars Su Yon Pak and Jung Ha Kim argue that APA women point to remembering, witnessing, and cultivating wisdom in-between and among various human relationships – in friendships, in intergenerational connections, and among community members and leaders.¹³ What makes a person wise comes from the "betwixt and between engaged relationships."¹⁴ In interstitial integrity, we breed wisdom, holding together what is seen and unseen, and refusing to let go of either world.¹⁵

This wisdom gives freedom and strength to APA Christian women who often become firsts in the church and theological education – the first APA woman pastor, the first APA woman tenured faculty, the first APA woman academic dean, and so forth. When no one has left recipes for us, we create new dishes, bringing our foremothers' ingredients to the present and borrowing our friends' cooking skills and spices. Together, we are held in interstitial integrity. Wisdom born out of and nurtured in interstitial integrity empowers us to navigate life's uncertainties without fear and to build community upon genuine friendships. This is the core of APA churchwomen's history and its theology.

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Notes

- 1 Kwok Pui-Lan, "Fishing the Asia Pacific: Transnationalism and Feminist Theology" in *Off the Menu: Asian and Asian North America Women's Religion and Theology*, edited by Rita Nakashima

- Brock, Jung Ha Kim, Kwok Pui-Lan, and Seung Ai Yang (Westminster John Knox, 2007), p. 4.
- 2 Ibid.
- 3 Rita Nakashima Brock and Nami Kim, "Asian Pacific Protestant Women" in *Encyclopedia of Women and Religion in North America*, edited by Rosemary Skinner Keller and Rosemary Ruether (Indiana University, 2006), p. 498.
- 4 Ibid.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 Ibid., p. 499.
- 7 Lisa Lowe, *Immigration Acts: On Asian American Cultural Politics* (Duke University, 1996), p. 162.
- 8 Ibid., p. 165.
- 9 Kwok, "Fishing the Asia Pacific," pp. 18-19.
- 10 Rita Nakashima Brock, "Cooking without Recipes: Interstitial Integrity" in *Off the Menu: Asian and Asian North American Women's Religion and Theology*, edited by Rita Nakashima Brock, et al. (Westminster John Knox, 2007), p. 136.
- 11 Ibid., p. 139.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Jung Ha Kim and Su Yon Pak, introduction to *Leading Wisdom: Asian and Asian North American Women Leaders* (Westminster John Knox, 2017), p. 7.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Ibid., p. 8.



New students meeting at the beginning of Fall semester, 2014
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“What’s wrong, mama?”

My four-year-old daughter and I were riding in the back seat while my husband drove us home after a run to the hardware store. I was scrolling mindlessly on my iPhone when I felt myself gasp. Rachel Held Evans had died at age 37. The news was like a pummeling fist – I couldn’t seem to catch my breath. I felt gutted by the shock of such an unthinkable loss.

Evans grew up in an evangelical Christian church in the South. Her questions about God were not always welcome there. But despite her critics, she earnestly wrestled with the teachings of her childhood. In one of her better known works, *The Year of Biblical Womanhood* (Thomas Nelson, 2012), Evans challenged contemporary conservative understandings of “biblical womanhood” by adhering for a year to both the profound and absurd instructions given to women in the sacred texts.

Through her writing and speaking, Evans opened up space for wonder and granted her followers permission to question core tenets of evangelical Christianity without shame or guilt. She modeled for us a faithfulness that was ever seeking, ever evolving, and ever embracing.

Since her death in May of this year, I and many others have struggled with the question, *Who will be our Rachel now?* During these times marred by daily political chaos, I find myself longing for her insight and wisdom. What would she say to us about the children being torn from the arms of their parents and suffering, even dying, in concentration camps at the hands of the US government? What insight would she share about the draconian attacks on reproductive freedom while Black women continue to die in childbirth at alarming rates in the states dominated by legislators who dare call themselves “pro-life”? What hope would she manage to dredge up out of this desolate place and offer to those of us who are hungry for a good word?

Earlier this year I was invited to a breakfast gathering for clergywomen, activists, and other change-makers that was sponsored by an evangelical organization. With some reluctance, I agreed to attend. Now that I identify as a “recovering evangelical,” I enter these sorts of spaces with a certain level of anxiety. For over a decade, my ministry has focused on advocating for reproductive health and rights, including expanding access to abortion. I rarely shy away from discussing my work, but I am not particularly inclined to engage in a debate before my morning coffee. Shortly after finding my seat,

the speaker for the day stepped up to the podium. “Many of us are looking for a model,” she began. “But what if God is telling us, ‘You are the model?’”

In the wake of Evans’s death I have been re-reading a number of her books. I was struck by this line in *The Year of Biblical Womanhood*: “There are times when the most instructive question to bring to the [Bible] is not ‘What does it say?,’ but ‘What am I looking for?’” What I had been searching for in the months since her passing, and really for years, was a model of how to live into the calling of doing justice and caring for my neighbor. In fact I’d just spent three years writing a book about the long-forgotten and oft-dismissed women of the Bible. I was confident I’d find examples of fierce heroines who resisted oppression and rallied for justice – models I

What if this moment requires something we have never seen – and we are the ones to do it?

could emulate in my own work. But the deeper I got into these narratives, the more I realized that even the texts I cherished most required my critique as well as my compassion. I probably shouldn’t have been surprised by what I found – women who were flawed and guilty of abusing power – but I was disappointed nonetheless.

In the absence of a model, I considered the breakfast speaker’s challenge: What if this moment requires something we have never seen – and we are the ones to do it?

After the morning’s closing remarks, as plates and cups were being cleared, those of us gathered around the table lingered. The inevitable question made its way around to me: “Katey, what kind of work do you do?” I took a deep breath before responding: “I’m an ordained Baptist minister, and I advocate for reproductive dignity and freedom.”

Sometimes what we are most longing for is already within us. May we be brave enough to proclaim it boldly.

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YELLOW TULIPS

By Kathi Wolfe

When I'm sweaty like cotton candy
in the seventh inning stretch
of the final game of the World Series,
out-of-tune like a piano
too drunk to debut in Carnegie Hall,
empty as a soothsayer with no truth,
frightened as glass afraid to shatter,
when the dead yellow tulips remind
me that we will all turn to dust,
I think of you playing with my hair
three weeks before you died.
*The soft white clouds, you said,
will always be there.*
Not much comfort. But enough.



I was recently asked by a new colleague to reflect on my 30-plus years at YDS: What has changed? What hasn't changed? What should change? What should never change?

I came to YDS in the Fall of 1980, a year out from college, only just 22, with no idea what to expect. I found a welcoming community, supportive faculty, committed staff, and nearly 400 students, our pasts and our paths as varied as we were.

My years as a YDS student remain among the most formative and *transformative* of my life. I made lifelong friends, struggled to understand the depths of scripture, gained a new understanding of myself as a child of God, was confronted by difference in many forms, grew in my faith and call to service ... and was surrounded by the most difficult conversations of my young life.

They happened in the classroom and after chapel. They took place over meals in the refectory and late nights in the dorms. During Sunday pizza and beer at Naples or Archie's. Are there theological and biblical "truths"? How do we use language responsibly? What, exactly, does it mean to be faithful? How do we speak about the people of God? Who ARE the people of God? Who gets included at Christ's table? At the church's? At YDS's?

Nearly 40 years later, as I look at today's YDS, I see much that is different. The dorms are gone, and with them the three community meals per day. The physical surroundings have been renovated. And renovated again. We are much more diverse – in student body, faculty, and curriculum – in part because of these very kinds of conversations.

Much of importance has *not* changed. As a member of the Admissions committee, I hear each year that one of the things that draws prospective students to YDS after just one visit is that sense of a supportive and committed community of faculty, staff, and nearly 400 students. And it's a place where difficult conversations continue to happen. And that's good.

For me, a defining characteristic of YDS – at least in these last 39 years – has been its ability to hold both commonality and difference. Authentically. And in a healthy tension. This, I believe, is what creates and sustains this community. Yes, much at YDS has changed. But whether because of the voices of passionate faculty, students, and staff, or the geography and physicality of the Quad, or a common sense of core values – and most certainly by the grace of God – what endures is this ability to hold difference.

And to cultivate conversation, provoke struggle, and impel change.

Not fast enough, some might argue. The conversations now are not all that different from those we had back then: questions about truth, faithfulness, language, inclusion. And about gender, sexuality, race, theology. Exchanges are still provoked by what happens in the classroom, in chapel, gathering spaces, and, undoubtedly, still over pizza and beer.

Was YDS a perfect community 40 years ago? No, I don't think so. Is it now? Still no. Was it – is it – a dynamic, gut-wrenching, heart-breaking, ground-shaking, beautiful, and life-changing place? Yes, I think so. A community does not need to be devoid of tension to be welcoming; it does not need to be idyllic to be transformative. The tension that *comes* from the encounter with difference can be a sign of health and a marker of the ability to change and grow. As a YDS friend recently preached: A community's strength comes from *not* being perfected.

In his classic *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer cautions against idealized notions of what Christian life together should look like: "God's grace speedily shatters such dreams. Just as surely as God desires to lead us to a knowledge of genuine Christian fellowship, so surely must we be overwhelmed by a great disillusionment with others, with Christians in general, and, if we are fortunate, with ourselves."¹

If we are fortunate, YDS will continue to be a catalyst and incubator for difficult conversations. Some students and alumni might disagree. I, myself, am not a lover of conflict. Nationally, we have seen in recent years how conflict and disillusionment can rend families, church bodies, even our very democracy. But from what I've seen, the years of difficult conversations at YDS have made it stronger, more dynamic, and more relevant. We will always have work to do. But by the grace of God we can continue to love each other through it all.

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1 Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (Harper & Row, paperback edition 1976), pp. 26-27.

Fluidity and Empathy: The Future as Vocation



By Rebecca Chopp

Confession: I have a personal aversion to the traditional concept of vocation. In 1974, I had just been ordained a deacon in the United Methodist Church and had just married another minister. Like my male classmates, I asked for a full-time appointment. I had already served three churches part-time. After months of waiting, I got a call from the bishop summoning me to his office – not a good sign.

Tall, stern, and clearly disapproving of my presence, the bishop explained that I could not have a vocation as a minister. So long as I was a single woman, he would allow it, but, once married, in his clear view, it was God's intended vocation for me to be a wife and mother. He extolled Susannah Wesley (mother of John Wesley) who had followed her domestic vocation – and denied me a job.

However, I finished seminary at the top of my class and, with much soul-strangling struggle, I was ordained as elder. But the damage had been done: In my experience, “vocation” felt like a confining condition defined and handed down by others.

But as I have recently discovered, the term vocation is in the midst of tremendous revitalization. The idea of vocation is always contextual. The traditional view (vocation as one's station in life) and the modern view (vocation as career) represent

The traditional view (vocation as one's station in life) and the modern view (vocation as career) are being reinterpreted and transformed once again.

different ways of ordering self, community, and world in different historical times. Today it is being reinterpreted again. I am intrigued by the work of David Cunningham and others who argue for making vocation more plural, moving from univocity to multiplicity. I adore the notion of vocation as

capacious, dynamic, fluid, and elastic. A key point remains: Vocation as a resonating experience that links self, community, and world runs like a deep river through all its historical meanings.

The shifting nature of vocation relates to the history and aims of higher education as well. In the nearly 400 years since the founding of Harvard, American higher education has changed dramatically – time and again – to better serve the public good by educating individuals in community. Higher education in this country developed as an institution of democracy. Its purpose – its vocation – has always been intertwined with the vocation of individuals in community.

But contemporary conditions are transforming our notions of vocation for institutions and individuals alike. We could name three such conditions:

1. We live in radical times.

In my mind, today is very like the 1860-1890 industrialization age when every single aspect of our society was being questioned. Several mega-forces are transforming ourselves, our communities, our politics:

- Technology and digitalization are changing how we “know,” how we relate to one another, how we shop, how we access health care, how we form our social bonds. We know the negative side of this. Children can be recruited into the sex trade; young women are recruited as wives of terrorists; illicit drug trafficking gains momentum. I believe, however, despite its risks, technology is a powerful

bridge. Technology will continue to change how we customize education for the needs of our students, research, and connection with the world.

- Cultural disruption, socio-economic divides, and dissolution of community life increasingly characterize our country. There is too great a split between the rich and the poor, too much poverty, too much racism, hatred of others, too much us vs. them.

Crucial to this disruption is the struggle and disappearance of communities. In our democracy, communities have been the basic unit of government where people have been educated, where they work,

The need for heart – an Emotional Quotient that includes humility, courage, empathy, wisdom – will intensify in our work life.

recreate, and participate as citizens. Michael Sandel has noted how 19th century experience was defined by intimate communities in which your aunt was your first-grade teacher, your neighbor your barber, and everyone had long-term connections with one another.¹ In the 20th century, communities became highly correlated to types of professions and work. Doctors lived near each other in a set of suburbs, as did blue-collar workers, as did faculty members.

Now, as Sandel maintains, we need a new type of community – based in values and justice, bringing together people who can connect with one another in a values-based way of living. Today's crucial question is how we live together in purpose-driven ways, how we serve and rebuild the public good. Community is a must for the individual and for democracy. It is also a must for vocation.

- In future years, our work lives won't be eliminated by artificial intelligence, but they will be massively changed by it.² Approximately 60 percent of occupations worldwide could be automated by 2030. Among millennials, 47 percent are freelance workers. By 2027, more than half of American workers will be freelancing.

Thus it's much harder to tie vocation to a single purpose or career. The recent book *Humility is the New Smart: Rethinking Human Excellence in the Smart Machine Age* by Edward Hess and Katherine Ludwig (Berrett-Koehler, 2017) describes the new smart-age skills we'll need in order to face the unfolding technological tsunami: critical thinking, innovative thinking, and high emotional engagement with others for relationship building and collaboration.

- The future of being human/the future of human being is at stake. I work with students every day. I am so hopeful for this generation, its creativity and entrepreneurial spirit. Yet whenever I ask students, "What's on your mind?" here's what they say: When I graduate, will I get my first job? Will I be able to find jobs throughout my life? Will I ever have the resources to get married? Is the US collapsing? Will climate change mean apocalyptic destruction? Our students are hopeful and determined but also anxious and worried.

It's not surprising that so many young people struggle with mental well-being, given the mega-forces we face – which today's students will have to fix, endure, or reset. And I am deeply concerned. In 2017, 61 percent of students said they had "felt overwhelming anxiety."³ The tragic epidemic of mental illness and the lack of good models for redefining mental and behavioral health confront us all.

These mega-forces have disrupted every single industry. Our institutions have to either reframe their vocation, or die.

II. We must reframe higher education to help young people navigate their individual and communal journeys to serve the public good.

It is clear to me the bureaucratized structures of higher education, created around 1890, will no longer support the individual, community, and society – or the link thereof. We need to shake up the model and imagine new ways to deliver learning experiences to students. Let me identify three ways to reinterpret the purposes of higher education:

Purpose 1: Develop the skills, habits, and disposition of the 3D student, the three-dimensional person, the whole person. I like "3D" because it already means depth and breadth in multiple ways, intellectually, emotionally, interpersonally, politically, spiritually.

Today most students must learn something quite different from the old endeavor of mastering a single field: They must navigate the acceleration

What does it mean to be human? Our anthropology is undergoing historic changes.

of change, prepare for multiple careers that require mastery of highly different content and collaboration among changing groups of people.

"In the past, jobs were about muscles; now they are about brains. But in the future, they'll be about heart," says Minouche Shafik, director of the London School of Economics.⁴ The need for heart – an

Emotional Quotient that includes humility, courage, empathy, wisdom, among other virtues – will intensify as we strive to address geo-political challenges and renew our culture.

Purpose 2: Become the laboratory for teaching skills and habits needed for intentional community. Communities are the antidote to the tremendous loneliness we feel in this digitally connected and culturally fractured society.

In spite of the mega-forces, hope flickers and even shines across our schools and society. As David Brooks recently suggested, we are becoming a

What I call the beatitude moment is to stand on a mountain or the plains and see the world reborn.

nation of weavers, of people making connections in new, substantive ways. I hear students talk about their quest for communities of patience and persistence in order to solve neighborhood or national problems.

Purpose 3: Support lifelong learning platforms and connections. Increasingly, just as vocation can no longer be a one-time determination, higher education must be ongoing, across a life span, ensuring that graduates continually create and recreate themselves and their service to the public good.

“Life is not about finding yourself,” Emerson wrote, “it is about creating yourself.”

III. We need an expanded vocabulary for vocation.

In his epilogue to the book *Vocation Across the Academy* (Oxford, 2017), David Cunningham introduces the notion of “vocabularies of vocation.” David persuasively argues that vocation in its many dimensions today requires more than one simple vocabulary. I find his notion quite productive and provocative. Indeed, I am now so engaged with this multi-vocabulary sense of vocation that I’d like to conclude with another one to consider, one I will call “seeing and resonating.”

Vocation, I want to suggest, can be a way of *seeing* the world deeply, freshly – a way of seeing that constantly creates *resonances* of self, community, and the public good in the midst of continual change. Vocation that conjures up stations and careers, fixed ways of being, bureaucracies – that type of ordering of experience is disappearing. But resonance is another kind of order. Resonating means a sympathetic vibration with other people or values, as in, “that strikes a chord with me.”

Vocation can include the first impulse to wonder, to be curious, to have an attitude of wide-awakefulness, as Maxine Greene says in *Landscapes of*

Learning (Teachers College, 1978). Resonance, in a fully wide-awake mode, means respect for otherness, a capacity for empathy, across a lifetime. Wonder and empathy become the starting points for vocation.

Another dimension of this is seeing as inquiry, the effort to understand. We spend a great deal of time in education doing this type of seeing with academic subjects, but I want us to inquire into self and world as well – the adventure of lifelong learning, a willingness to learn new habits of seeing “just in time.” This dimension of seeing takes diligence and work, as the artist, the athlete, the scientist, the humanist knows. It invites the quest for self-knowledge, the investigation of our experiences, feelings, and blinders.

The third dimension is seeing as imagination and resonance as vision. Imagination is the ability to see multiple options, different futures, paths to the public good. Vision is the ability to create the story, paint the landscape anew. What I call the beatitude moment is to stand on a mountain or the plains and see the world reborn, see what it could be. This kind of resonating vision is Martin Luther King, Jr. on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial envisioning the dream of the beloved community for his children, for others, for his country.

In a day of turmoil around the world and in our souls, when students must create, connect, innovate, and pivot again and again, vocation can be the lens to see afresh the self, community, and world, and imagine all the ways they must connect anew.

Rebecca Chopp was dean of Yale Divinity School from 2001-2002. She left YDS to become president of Colgate University (2002-2009), then president of Swarthmore College (2009-2014). Since 2014, she has been chancellor of the University of Denver. She recently announced her retirement as chancellor, citing health reasons. Her books include The Power to Speak: Feminism, Language, God (Crossroad, 1991; new edition, Wipf & Stock, 2002).

Notes

- 1 See Michael J. Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (Cambridge, 1998).
- 2 See the “Future of Work” Deloitte series at www2.deloitte.com and “The Future of Work in America: People and Places, Today and Tomorrow,” McKinsey Global Institute report, July 2019, mckinsey.com.
- 3 American College Health Association’s National College Health Assessment, Fall 2017 Reference Group Executive Summary, acha.org.
- 4 Interview with Minouche Shafik by Alain Elkann, April 1, 2018, at alainelkanninterviews.com.



As a chaplain at Tampa General Hospital, I am first responsible to the trauma team, responding to the Emergency Department when I am paged. Deaths, life support withdrawals, family meetings, advanced directives, orders for support or prayer follow in priority. Occasionally I get to visit my assigned unit and check in on patients and families.

On the day I reimagine in the poem (see opposite page), I made a cold call in the burn unit, just popping in to see how a new patient was doing. He was recovering from surgery. His thumb had been severed off in a boating accident and had been reattached. At first I did mistake the leech for a wad of gauze, and the joy the boater took in introducing me to "Fat Albert" corrected my misconception. Fat Albert was latched to the middle of the boater's thumb and was sucking fresh blood from the healthy hand into the pale and sutured flesh. For the boater, Fat Albert embodied a miracle. The leech was making something new out of what was nearly discarded and restoring something new to its old usefulness.

Similarly, about poetry, the modernist Ezra Pound writes, "Make it new!" He hoped to push rigid rules about iambs and staid subject matter toward experimentation worthy of a new age. I have always thought his directive useful if accompanied by "make it old" as well. There is no new thing under the sun, and the rediscovery of some old forgotten things can be rejuvenated and made new. And even

With every new pastoral visit, I am unknown to the patient or family. They are unknown to me. We meet in trust and vulnerability, much like the poet and the blank page.

when we speak of spiritual renewal – something we long for as fresh and invigorating – we can be reaching back for spiritual restoration, the grace-filled roots of our beings, and pulling them forward into the light of today.

A pastoral visit can happen the same way. Chaplains try to encourage a present-tense emotional awareness, which, paradoxically, involves a return to some part of the original self, a bit of liquid amber – enduring, beautiful, iridescent.

Like a poem, the pastoral visit combines image, thought, feeling, and music. The boater has begun writing a poem from the images of the leech and of his reconnected thumb, and from the joy of his emotions. The ideas coalesce in my mind and in the

poem through my associations with his story and his responses. Every pastoral visit has this potential. I am unknown to the patient or family. They are unknown to me. We meet in trust and vulnerability, much like the poet and the blank page. Joined by language, the visit itself becomes a poem as those ingredients – image, thought, feeling – manifest in the music of our encounter. The visit (like a poem) does not signify some other meaning nor is it an end in itself. It is a mysterious experience, a new experience, meant to resonate with our deepest selves and provide healing.

As the boater returned Fat Albert to his shallow jar, I was reminded of a pyx and the multiple connections communion provides. The boater is Fat Albert's host – the leech being fed by the boater's blood – and the boater also receives sustenance from Fat Albert in the form of oxygenated blood to his thumb. There's a Trinitarian echo here – since I too am experiencing this wholeness, the three of us communing in a form of *perichoresis*, or God dancing as multiple Persons and as a single Being.

Perhaps my visit with the boater encouraged my greater interest in narrative health, a subset of the medical humanities, focused on the strengthening of clinical practice through interpreting stories of illness and healing. Literary exposure increases empathy, deepens the understanding and creation of metaphor, and improves diagnostic skills. Medical staff need to be well versed in metaphor to explain conditions and treatments to patients in way they can understand. Better interpreters of patient stories provide the best diagnostic care.

My practice of narrative health also includes helping health care professionals to write – both narratively and lyrically – to strengthen these skills and to promote their own healing of accumulated trauma and burn-out.

That day in the burn unit I walked into a poem. The greatest contribution was made by Fat Albert whose disinterested thirst – when acknowledged and appreciated – restored the boater's thumb and gave me lyrics through which to reexperience the mystery of physical and spiritual healing through this vulnerable encounter.

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HIRUDO MEDICINALIS

By Martha Serpas

It is hard to be misunderstood.
And how many of us get vindication
after a century or so?

I mistook the little bloodsucker
for a wad of gauze as it whirled
from the sailor's spliced thumb.

It became an iridescent helix,
a liquid amber's leaf
dangling through a day-long

spring and fall and spring.
Have you ever taken God's name
in vain? Forgotten all your Latin

but *opiate* and *parasite*, believe
it's God who eats at our table?
The sailor calls his savior Fat Albert.

"C'mon, there you go," he soothes.
"Fix me all over, fix my heart, fix everything
around me." What carries us forward,

when I enter the room,
is the blankness – the sheets,
the walls, the page.

Language itself is prophylactic.
It avails us, suspends the hours
for us, inscribes our intentions,

seams the ordinary, provides
for the whiting in which, in this case,
the sailor and I can make our poem.

His poem is about wholeness and joy.
Mine is about the illusion of linear
progress, about Albert spinning

his symbiotic segments as he waits
in his salty pyx, both host and communicant,
the three of us chanting the same poem.



When I was growing up, my family attended a Catholic and a Baptist church. Over the years, I've come to appreciate some of the really powerful aspects of this duality – the distinctive sound of Black people singing about the goodness of Jesus, the pageantry of the choir marching down the sanctuary aisles, the dignity of the people who took their roles as deacons, nurses, and prayer warriors very seriously, and of course, the dynamic preaching. I remember how the Catholic sacraments worked as holy benchmarks in my life. Between the two churches, I received my own revelation of Jesus Christ and became a believer by way of worship, a believer in the incarnational, palpable presence of God revealed in worship.

My training as a scholar of liturgy and homiletics has enabled me to connect my vocation to the experience of worship I have loved since I was a girl. I remain awestruck at the ways in which worship is at once shared and communal *and* deeply personal and private – an encounter with the mystery and beauty of the Holy through Christian rituals.

I tell this story because if I'm really honest, that experience becomes more and more elusive. For the first time in some years, I actually observed Lent this year. I was feeling extremely frazzled vocationally. I was tired all the time. Often too tired to sit and think about what I was going to say on Sunday morning to my congregation of college students. Since moving

If transformation, healing, and wellness were my goals, I realized I had to adopt intentionality and discipline about my thoughts and actions.

to Atlanta last year, I'd picked up about 15 pounds of weight that I could see and feel, but struggled to get off. I was losing the notion of ministry. I would often feel more like staying home on my couch than answering my call to go and tell this broken world about the justice of God.

I knew that I needed to pay closer attention to my interiority, turn inward, and nourish myself from the inside out. It was going to require an immediate lifestyle change. Trying to do ministry with no breath in my spirit was not sustainable. Who was I, attempting to speak with spiritual authority to edify the spirits of God's people, but lacking my own spiritual vitality?

In my work, I was able to pinpoint three challenges to making such a shift. First, the space,

time, and silence necessary for spiritual wellness and renewal are in competition with the many other things that tug on my heart and mind. Secondly, as a Black woman, I often experience the church as a strange land that must be navigated with extreme caution that is spiritually draining. Finally, I had a few stories of vocational trauma that were in dire need of reframing and reinterpreting, in order to promote my healing and wholeness.

I decided to remove myself from social media. As a millennial woman, I've often relied on these platforms to remain connected to friends and supporters of my ministry. But I was also using it to maintain a sense of relevance in the field, buying into the myth that "if it's not posted, it didn't happen." I would post almost every event flyer that had my face on it, because somehow this equated with success. Ironically, these platforms were also gateways to the all-too-common tendency to begin comparing myself to others, and becoming ungrateful for the goodness of God in my life and ministry. So, I logged out of all my apps and deleted them, one by one, from my phone.

I committed to creating more space in my life for what was important, beginning with my spiritual wellness and interior vitality. I found transformation in the practice of discipline. It became clear to me that transformation isn't always tied to any one practice, but in one's willingness to commit to doing *something* every day. Spiritual wellness is not only about abstinence and removal of vices, but requires consistency in those practices, and accountability to people who give us life. During this period, taking warm baths and listening to uplifting and informative podcasts were as important as praying. I found joy in meeting with my mastermind group, writing in my journal, and reading fiction. I committed to being present to my relationships, in body and in mind, taking more time for physical activity, and overhauling my food choices.

If transformation, healing, and wellness were my goals, I realized I had to adopt intentionality, discipline, and consciousness about my thoughts and actions. In this conscious daily decision-making and priority-setting, my spirit is feeling lively, attuned, and open again.

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YDS commencement, 2008
Photo by Frank Poole
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The Forgotten Women of YDS



By Ann-Catherine Wilkening '19 M.A.R.

Louise Triplett, born in 1904, came from a family of ministers. After completing many YDS courses, she graduated from Yale in 1928, and began a long career in service to Congregational churches. She later became director of religious education and young people's work in the Congregational Church conferences of Wisconsin and Ohio. In her final professional years, she followed a call to serve a church in Hawaii and became a noted supporter of the civil rights movement. She passed away in 1983.¹

So concluded a wide-ranging life of Christian service, grounded in many classroom hours at YDS – yet she never received a YDS degree, because women were not allowed to enroll in the Divinity School in her day. Her Yale degree was a Master of Arts, conferred by the Department of Education.

Unearthing History

When I initially became aware of Louise's story, after I happened to meet her niece when she visited YDS earlier this year, I thought she might have been a singular case. But as I would learn, the history

The recovery of the names and stories of the women who slipped through our institutional memory challenges our established narratives.

of women attending Yale Divinity School reaches back 20 years before Louise Triplett. As it turns out, Louise was one of many women who were determined to attend YDS as either non-degree-seeking students or Yale students enrolled in other schools before the co-educational reforms of 1932 took effect. I had stumbled upon a neglected chapter of YDS history – an overlooked part of the history of women at Yale as well.

Before YDS's policy change in 1932, Yale promoted the following policy regarding women students: "Properly qualified women are admitted as candidates for all degrees except those offered by the two Undergraduate Schools, the Divinity School, the School of Forestry, and the higher degrees in Engineering."² Yet this did not stop women from pursuing YDS course work. From 1907 on, women are listed in the YDS bulletins among the attending "Students from other departments." The first two women to appear in the *Eighth General Catalogue* of the Yale Divinity School are Lottie Genevieve Bishop and Ethel Zivley Rather.

Although women appear only sporadically in the records of the first two decades of the 20th century, women attended YDS continuously beginning in 1920. Their numbers are comparable to the number of women who later enrolled in YDS as degree-seeking students from the mid-1930s to the 1950s. In addition to recovering the names of these women, I have tracked down traces of their biographies, though many remain uncovered.

A Picture Emerges

Louise Triplett is listed as an Education Department student in the Divinity School's bulletins in 1927-28 and 1928-29 under the heading "Students from other Schools of the University."³ Those two bulletins list 15 and 16 other women, respectively – mostly

from Education, but also from the departments of Religion, History, English, and other degree programs. In both years, women made up just over 25 percent of students from other schools of the University attending YDS classes. Percentage-wise, the statistical high-water mark for women in this era was in 1920-21, when women constituted 63 percent of students from other parts of the university doing YDS course work. These numbers are quite astonishing given the fact that the Divinity School would, starting in 1932, limit the women admitted to its degree programs to 10 per year until the 1950s.

The vast majority of women who studied at YDS pre-1932 were Master of Arts degree candidates from the Education Department, often with a con-

As it turns out, Louise Triplett was one of many women who were determined to attend YDS before the School allowed women to enroll in a degree program.

centration in Religious Education. In addition, YDS established a Department of Religious Education in 1912.⁴ Thus students interested in religious education would have taken classes there.

Global Sense of Mission

Besides Louise Triplett, I found other hints that many women graduate students primarily attended YDS classes: Lavinia Scott, a Master in Education graduate, appears in YDS records between 1930 and 1933. Lavinia was later interviewed by the *Yale Alumni Magazine* about her time at Yale and her subsequent career. She made sure to mention that “she did at least half her work at the Divinity School.”⁵ Immediately after her graduation in 1932, Lavinia left America to move to South Africa as a missionary and teacher, a calling that she had felt since her childhood and had brought her to Yale in the first place. In South Africa, Lavinia worked as a teacher and, eventually, the principal of Inanda Seminary, a secondary school for Zulu girls. During the rise of apartheid, Lavinia fought to keep her school from becoming government-controlled and also served as a substitute teacher for the education of black ministers at a theological seminary before retiring in the States in 1974.⁶

Between 1920 and 1927 the YDS bulletin also lists students who were not enrolled at Yale but took classes at YDS as non-degree seeking students. The number of women in this group rose steadily through 1927. After that, the bulletin no longer lists non-degree students, and it is unclear if the school still allowed non-Yalies in the classroom. Nonethe-

less, some of these students stayed at YDS for more than one year, demonstrating another way women pursued a Yale Divinity education without the option of seeking a degree from the school.

One of these women was the Rev. Elsie Stowe, a pioneer in women’s ministry and ordination who appears in the records as a student “pursuing resident study not leading to a degree” for three consecutive years, 1920-23. She first came to New Haven in 1916, where she enrolled at the Blakeslee Deaconess Training School. She served as pastor and deaconess in various Connecticut and New York churches from 1917 onwards. In 1920, the same year she came to Yale, she was consecrated as a Methodist Episcopal Church deaconess and granted a local preacher’s license at the First Quarterly Conference of the Newtown Church in Sandy Hook, CT. With this license she had the opportunity to perform wedding, baptismal, and burial ceremonies. Elsie officiated the wedding of her own brother in September 1924. In 1927, Elsie was the first woman to be ordained in the denomination’s New York East Annual Conference.⁷

Another factor contributed to so many Yale women affiliating with YDS before the admissions reform: the school’s location. Until 1932, the Divinity School was located in the heart of Yale’s downtown campus at the present-day site of Grace Hopper College. This address made it easier for students from other departments to take classes at YDS and placed the school in closer proximity to broader campus life.

Ironies of Admission

In 1932, however, big changes came to YDS. The school moved to Sterling Divinity Quadrangle, approximately one mile up Prospect Hill. In the same year, YDS decided to admit women to the Bachelor of Divinity program (the equivalent of today’s M.Div.). Ironically, the relocation contributed to women’s struggles to attend the school in subsequent years – it was further from the downtown campus, and there was no women’s housing at YDS. In 1933, the percentage of YDS women students who were affiliates from other parts of Yale dropped to its lowest point since 1919.

Esther Temperly Barker, a degree-seeking student at YDS in 1936, remembers the difficulties of being a woman at YDS at the time. One February day, after a snowstorm, she was “one of the very few people who got up there that morning,” trudging through snow for several blocks to get to campus. The men who lived in the Sterling Quadrangle residences, however, had time to spare, enjoying the snow, donning swimsuits, and hamming for photos.⁸

Bernice Buehler '35 B.D., one of the first women to graduate from YDS, remembers that the school "did not make any arrangements for women to be in the dorms at that time." Though they appreciated being full-fledged students at YDS, "the women felt a little left out that we could not [live] on campus, she said."⁹ In the end, the move to Sterling Quadrangle, which secluded YDS from the rest of campus downtown and made it more self-contained with its own refectory and (male) dormitories, gave the school more a boy's club atmosphere than it had been in the 1920s when it was closer to other graduate programs and more easily accessible for Yale women.

Acknowledging Their Stories

The stories of the first women attending YDS have often been ignored outside of commemoration anecdotes. The women who attended YDS before 1932 are not part of the narrative that the school tells about its institution today. The YDS website and the school history displayed on a wall near the Admissions Office mention nothing about the earliest women at YDS. According to the school's website, the "first women of YDS" were Bernice Buehler and Thelma Diener Allen, both '35 B.D., "the first two women to complete the full course of study and graduate from YDS in its current location."¹⁰

Whether women received degrees is an important question because degrees are credentials that provide proof of one's education and help one to find a job within a professional field. Yet there were many women of YDS who came before Bernice and Thelma, though marginalized by the school's admission policy. Even without seeking YDS degrees, their presence would have influenced the school, including the classroom, as much as they were shaped by it. Some of them considered the Divinity School their primary site of educational belonging while at Yale. Later in their lives, many of these women influenced the world of religion in important ways. Their education at Yale took them along diverse career paths in the field of religion and ministry, as they became professors, preachers, missionaries, and religious teachers.

My research has only scratched the surface and has highlighted just a few early YDS women. Much work remains to be done, especially in regards to the history of early women of color. In light of the 150th anniversary of women at Yale being celebrated this year, it is imperative to think hard about and, indeed, revise who we remember as a school. The recovery of the names and stories of the women who slipped through our institutional memory can challenge our established narratives.

In recent years, YDS has, thankfully, made efforts to remember and celebrate its first black student, the Rev. James W.C. Pennington, an escapee from slavery who attended YDS classes in the 1830s and never received a degree from the school. Many of the women who attended YDS before 1932 were pioneers in a larger historical trajectory of women's emancipation in ministry, theology, and religious studies. Women such as Louise Triplett likely influenced and paved the way to the later decision to grant women full and equal access to a Divinity School education. It is my hope that YDS eventually finds a way to memorialize these women more permanently and acknowledge their stories as part of the school's history.

Ann-Catherine Wilkening '19 M.A.R. is pursuing a Ph.D. at Harvard in the Religions of the Americas subfield. She is interested in how non-English archival sources might be better incorporated into historical research in order to tell the stories of often disregarded and marginalized groups in American history.

Notes

- 1 See Louise Triplett, *Presenting Missions: Methods for Youth Groups* (New York: Friendship Press, 1948). I thank Catherine Kling, Louise's niece, for providing me with biographical information about her aunt and a copy of her obituary.
- 2 See e.g. "Bulletin" (1931/32), Yale University Divinity School Memorabilia Collection RG 53 Series IV Box IV-2, Yale Divinity Special Collections.
- 3 All bulletins I used as primary sources for my study can be found in "Bulletin 1856-1959," Yale University Divinity School Memorabilia Collection RG 53 Series IV Box IV-2, Yale Divinity Special Collections.
- 4 See "New Department of Religious Education at School of Religion," *Yale Daily News*, March 1, 1917, Vol. XXXX No. 119.
- 5 Catherine Stearns, "'The Power of Love': A Missionary Finds Her Niche in South Africa's Stormy History," *Yale Alumni Magazine*, November 1982, p. 26.
- 6 *Ibid.*, pp. 26-29.
- 7 See United Methodist Church, "Rev. Elsie F. Stowe Spring 2011," accessed May 3, 2019, www.nyac.com/revelsiefstowespring2001. Her papers are housed at the United Methodist Christman Archives in White Plains, NY.
- 8 "Yale Divinity School's Women's History Project" (n.d.), YDS Memorabilia Collection RG 53 Series VI Box II, Yale Divinity Special Collections, p. 2.
- 9 *Ibid.*, p. 3.
- 10 "First Women of YDS," Yale Divinity School, accessed April 14, 2019, divinity.yale.edu/gallery/first-women-yds.

CREDITS

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COVER ARTWORK

On Being American/Jazz:
Ryan Cohan's The River #5
(papers, oil, flashe, pencil, MSA gel)
By Ellen Priest '77 M.Div.
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POETRY

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"*Hirudo Medicinalis*" and "A Chaplet for Lana" from *The Diener*. Copyright © 2015 by Martha Serpas. Reprinted by permission of LSU Press. See Isupress.org.

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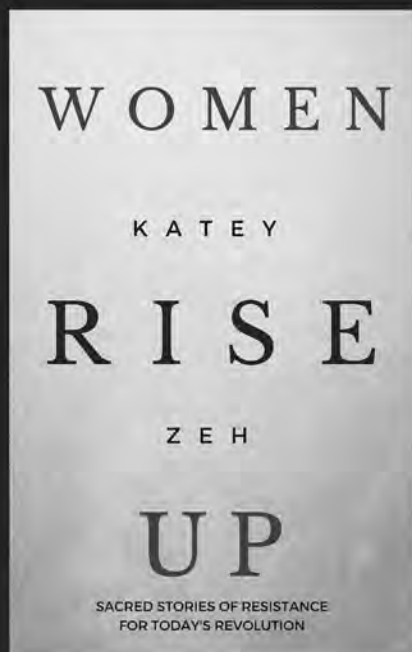


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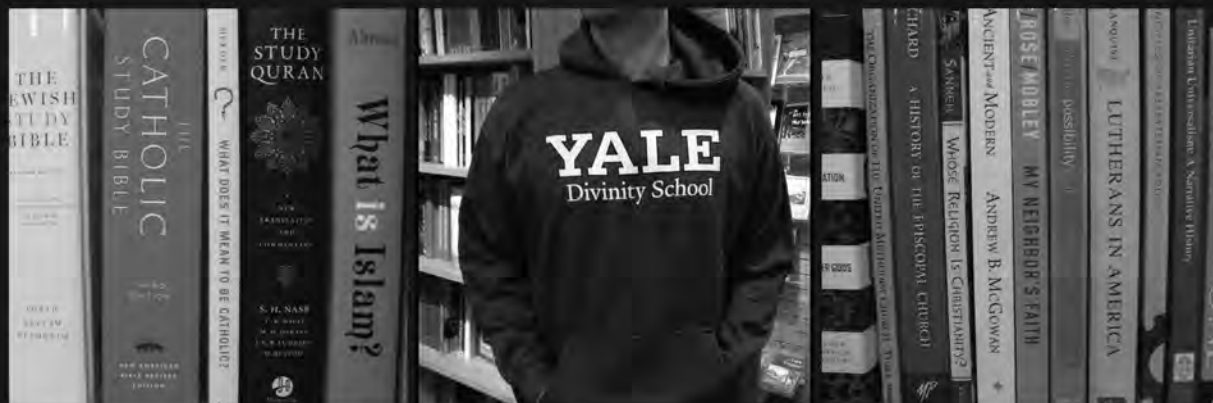
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From the Editor: “A Fuller Vision of the Whole People of God”

By Ray Waddle



What happens when a male-centered religious institution – a divinity school, say – admits women into the fold, admits them into leadership, admits the truth of their life experiences and insights?

One answer is, the institution becomes a laboratory, an ongoing seminar, in the sharing of power. Also: The image of God is transformed, sending the faith on new trajectories of renewal. There's no turning back.

When YDS started enrolling women in 1932, four women were admitted (total enrollment was nearly 200). By 1940, the number of women attending was 23 (total student body was more than 250).

The door was opening – slowly. Administrators were cautious: They pointed out that American churches weren't ready for female ministers. Still, the numbers crept up – 40 women students were on the YDS rolls in 1955, or about 10 percent, according to YDS directories of the period. Then in the early 1970s came a historic escalation. By 1977, the number of women had risen to 175. Society's rampages were pressing in – the world of the Bomb, the Pill, Vietnam, civil rights movement, women's rights, gay rights. The church was changing. So was YDS. By the 1980s, some 200 women students were on campus, 50 percent of the student body.

Witnesses from those times describe gradual revisions of campus culture and theology. Joan Bates Forsberg said the surge of women was bringing to YDS “a fuller, more accurate vision of the whole people of God, a heightened awareness of the partnership and equality of women and men in the service of God.”¹

By the mid-70s, more women were pursuing the M.Div. degree, a sign that churches were embracing women's ministry despite clamorous debate around women's ordination. More mid-career women were enrolling – former nurses, social workers, homemakers – who brought gritty life experience to the classroom. Courses forged new points of view – lectures on human sexuality, family dynamics, the politics of contraception and abortion. Letty Russell and Margaret Farley regularly taught a renowned course on feminist theology and ethics.

“At long last there seems to be developing an awareness that if men and women are to be prepared adequately to serve churches made up of women and men there should be some conscious encounter in the classroom with the theological, psychological, and social implications of our feminine and masculine humanity,” Forsberg wrote in 1972.²

The presence of women on campus changed conversations about the meaning of servanthood, leadership, and the irresistible will of God. Old hierarchies were tested. Second-wave feminism challenged inequality, sexist language, and retrograde social policy everywhere. Women brought new perspectives to matters of power – often a spirit of collaboration, an insistence on fairness – after being ignored or devalued for centuries. Their pain and wisdom ignited theology, hermeneutics, ethics, and Christian life.

By 2011, alumnae could envision a new church spirit based on the gains of past efforts and ordeals.

“As women in ministry we now have a generation of experience to draw on,” the Rev. Carol Pinkham Oak '85 M.Div. wrote in *Reflections* that year.³ “I had to fight for maternity leave. I had to resist the culture that said you will be available *every single moment*. We are generating a new culture. Women of this generation will make their own contributions in as-yet-undefined ways, but they will discover their way. And they will give the next generation even more to build on.”

By now second-wave feminism has evolved into a third and fourth wave, with more attention on equality for women of color, sexual orientation, and gender in an era of postmodern pluralism, connectivity, continued racism, sexism, violence.

“Many of us in gender and sexuality studies have been trying to say that there's a lot of complexity and messiness – a lot of contradiction – around sexual identity and ethics,” Linn Tonstad, associate professor of theology at YDS, stated in *Reflections* last year.⁴ “The way women get punished for being both too timid and too aggressive, for instance – it's lose/lose. Queer and feminist theologies help us recognize patterns of contradiction and interlocking oppressions.”

One theme resounds across these eventful decades of women at YDS, as this *Reflections* issue argues: Tradition is absorbing and metabolizing what women have to say about themselves and the world. They are narrators and heroes of the story of faith. No gender has a monopoly on truth. As it turns out, everyone bears the image of God.

1 Joan Bates Forsberg, “‘Ye That are Men Now Serve Him ...’ or Did We Really Sing that in Chapel This Morning,” *Reflection*, Yale Divinity School, November 1976, p. 2.

2 Joan Bates Forsberg, “Consciousness '72,” *Reflection*, Yale Divinity School, May 1972, pp. 2-3.

3 Carol Pinkham Oak, “A New Culture Rising,” *Reflections*, Yale Divinity School, Spring 2011, p. 41.

4 Linn Tonstad, “Theology Thriving at the Margins,” *Reflections*, Yale Divinity School, Fall 2018, p. 33.



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