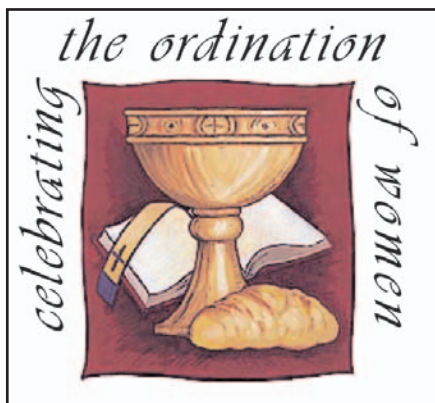


# Keep Your Lamps Trimmed and Burning

BY CYNTHIA M. CAMPBELL

From the time I was 12 or 13 years old, I knew what I wanted to be when I grew up, but I never told anyone. Actually, I knew *who* I wanted to be. I wanted to be Rev. Dr. H. Ganse Little, pastor of the Pasadena Presbyterian Church, the church in which I was raised. He was an immensely gifted preacher—widely read, given to an expository style of preaching, courageous in addressing issues such as fair housing, sexual ethics and the cold war. He was an ecumenical leader both in Southern California and nationally. His election as moderator of the General Assembly of the UPCUSA in 1966 was part of a strategy to win approval of the Confession of 1967.

I became a student of his sermons. On Saturday, the biblical text and title of Sunday's sermon was printed in the newspaper. Each week, I underlined and dated the text in my Bible. As the years went by, I became reasonably proficient at predicting what Dr. Little would do with the text and which direction the sermon would



take. Years later, when I was invited to preach at Pasadena Presbyterian Church, members of the congregation said, "Your preaching reminds us so much of Dr. Little." Scarcely surprising, since he was my first teacher, although he had no idea I was his student.

It was years before I admitted my ambition to anyone, including myself. In fact, it was not until my last year of seminary that I began

to say with assurance that I wanted to be a pastor. As I reflect on more than 30 years of ordained ministry, it goes without saying that there were no women role models for most of the positions I have held. But there have always been partners, colleagues and friends—men and women who encouraged me along the way.

It is clear to me that I would not be in ministry were it not for the outstanding examples of ministry that I experienced growing up. In addition to Dr. Little's preaching, I was blessed to know ministers and directors of Christian education, church musicians,



## 2005–2006 Ordination Celebrations

Sponsored by the Women's Ministries Area, National Ministries Division, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

◆ 100th anniversary of women ordained as deacons (1906)

◆ 75th anniversary of women ordained as elders (1930)

◆ 50th anniversary of women ordained as ministers of Word and Sacrament (1956)

"Were not our hearts burning within us while he was talking to us on the road, while he was opening the scriptures to us?" (Luke 24:32)

### Hymn Writing Contest

Sponsored by the National Association of Presbyterian Clergywomen

### Rules and Guidelines

- ✓ Submissions should consist of original words and music (or original words to a tune in the public domain) that reflect the theme.
- ✓ Submissions must be theologically sound, in keeping with the Reformed tradition and use inclusive language.
- ✓ Submissions shall be original and not be used anytime prior to the Triennial, March 31–April 3, 2005.
- ✓ All submissions become the property of the National Association of Presbyterian Clergywomen and will be available to be used during celebrations in 2005–2006.
- ✓ Submissions are due no later than February 15, 2005. Send to Janet Macgregor-Williams, P.O. Box 6, West Milford, NJ 07480, or janet.m.williams@att.net.

Members of the selection committee will sing all of the songs submitted, with the names of the writers and composers blocked out, so that the songs will be judged on their merits alone.

professors of Bible and philosophy, presbytery and synod staff, and really dedicated church school teachers. All of these women and men evidenced the qualities I have come most to admire—enthusiasm for the church, intellectual curiosity, courage when facing difficult issues and deep commitment to the Christian faith. Just as “it takes a village to raise a child,” many, many people have been and continue to be part of my call to ministry.

## Breaking Ground

Like many women who entered the ministry in the 1970s, I have had countless experiences of being “the first” or “the only” woman to serve in various capacities. My first call was as assistant pastor of the Northminster United Presbyterian Church in Dallas, where in the fall of 1974 (according to the *Dallas Morning News*) I was the only woman in any denomination serving in congregational ministry. Because I remained in Dallas to do doctoral work at Southern Methodist University, I did a great deal of supply preaching in what is now Grace Presbytery.

After the first two dozen experiences, I quit counting the number of churches where I was the first woman ever to preach. When I was called to serve as pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Salina, Kansas (among the first congregations with more than 1,000 members to call a woman as pastor/head of staff), *USA Today* carried the announcement as their “factoid” for the state of Kansas the day after my election. Being named the first woman to serve as president of one of our degree-granting Presbyterian seminaries generated less publicity, perhaps because women are expected to serve in educational ministries.

What can be said about the leadership of women in the Presbyterian Church 75 years after women were first ordained as elders, nearly 100 years after women were ordained as deacons and almost 50 years after women were ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacrament? The percentage of women preparing for ministry has increased steadily, but the number of ordained women who leave the ministry (especially women serving parishes) is also high. The number of women holding executive positions and teaching in our seminaries has increased significantly. While the number of women serving as pastors of churches with more than 1,000 members has increased, resistance to the leadership of women as senior pastors or heads of staff continues.

Not long ago, I received a call from a member of a pastor nominating committee, asking me to suggest potential candidates for a staff vacancy at the largest Presbyterian church in a city that’s home to a major univer-



## *Inheriting the Promise . . . Living the Call*

*March 31–April 3, 2005*

Cosponsored by the National Association of Presbyterian Clergywomen and Women’s Ministries Area

### Location

Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey

Transportation to Princeton is available from the airports in Philadelphia and Newark, New Jersey. The registration fee is \$50 and scholarships are available.

### Featured Leadership

- ◆ Marjorie Thompson, director of The Pathways Center for Spiritual Leadership and a minister of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
- ◆ Gloria Tate, pastor of the Presbyterian Church of Teaneck, New Jersey, and chairperson for the board of trustees, Johnson C. Smith Theological Seminary, Atlanta
- ◆ Eileen Linder, associate general secretary for the National Council of Churches
- ◆ Nora Tubbs Tisdale, parish associate at Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, New York
- ◆ Unzu Lee, PW leadership development associate, Women’s Ministries Area, National Ministries Division, PC(USA)

There are several opportunities for preconference activities March 30 and 31, including a Broadway show, a stole-making workshop and a pottery- and tile-making workshop.

To learn more contact Janet Macgregor-Williams, P.O. Box 6, West Milford, NJ 07480; 973/728-3081; janet.m.williams@att.net.



## *A Flame in Our Hearts, A Fire in Our Bones*

*November 5–7, 2005*

### **Location**

Fourth Presbyterian Church, Chicago, Illinois

### **Event Highlights**

The Midwest celebration involves a multipart plan for commemorating the ordination of women as deacons, elders and ministers of Word and Sacrament. First, networks will be developed with women in presbyteries neighboring Chicago Presbytery, encouraging additional celebrations in congregations, presbyteries and synods. These celebrations will be based on the themes “Kindling the Fire: Re-memorizing our Community of Leaders,” “Living the Light: Celebrating Our Calling Today” and “Igniting New Torches: Lighting Up the Future.”

Next, four projects will be developed: a biography project of the Presbyterian Historical Society; a youth project called “Igniting New Torches Relay” in which torches, symbolizing renewed dedication to ignite commitment to women’s welfare and inclusion, created in congregations are brought to gatherings throughout the Midwest; the undergarment offering, collecting undergarments for abused women and their children; and a video project, recording women, especially racial-ethnic women, engaged in peace and justice ministries.

These myriad projects and celebrations will culminate in the Midwest gathering, which features a grand celebration honoring women chosen by their presbyteries for recognition, plus dramas, book signings, music and picture-taking for the biography project. Dale Lindsay Morgan, author of the 2004–2005 *Horizons* Bible study, *What She Said: Quotable Women in Scripture*, is the plenary speaker for this event.

To learn more contact Betty McGinnis, Chicago Presbytery, 100 S. Morgan, Chicago, IL 60607-2619; 312/243-8300, ext. 314; [betty@chicagopresbytery.org](mailto:betty@chicagopresbytery.org).

sity. When all three suggestions I made were women, the committee member said, “I guess we are ready to consider the idea of calling a woman as pastor.”

Occasionally, I am still asked, “Don’t you think there are too many women in seminary? Don’t we need more men going into the ministry?” Just once, I wish someone would ask me, “Don’t you think we have too many European Americans in seminary?” Because the answer to that, if the Presbyterian Church wants to become a church of the new multiracial America, is “Yes!” But the issues for women’s leadership are just as significant (if not more so) in Asian, Hispanic and (to a lesser extent) African American congregations.

### **Cultivating Leadership**

The question about the leadership of women in the future is one that can only be asked and answered in the context of the future of the Presbyterian Church as a whole. It is true that our denomination has declined both in real numbers and in percentage of the American population. But that fact taken by itself ignores the fact that there are thousands of active, vibrant and vital Presbyterian congregations in rural areas, suburbs and downtown neighborhoods all across America. It is time for us to stop worrying about numbers and concentrate on sustaining and developing new healthy congregations. And the critical factor for the health of congregations is outstanding pastoral leadership.

If we as Presbyterians want to continue a lively Christian presence, a way of living the Christian life marked by the engagement of our faith in God with the real needs of the world, we must call, prepare and support leaders who embody the kind of church life we want to sustain. I followed a call to ministry because of what I saw in the lives of those who raised me in the faith. The same thing is needed today as we think about the leadership needs of our church.

For the past several years, various denominational offices, Presbyterian seminaries and congregations have undertaken projects to identify and cultivate young adults for ministry. Much of this activity has been funded by the Lilly Endowment, which is concerned about improving the quality of pastoral leadership in American religious life in general. Significant gains have been made: more students are coming to seminary shortly after completing their undergraduate studies. Many have been “recruited” to ministry through the Presbyterian Young Adult Volunteer program. Other programs have been designed to help new (and especially younger) seminary graduates enter ministry and succeed in their first call.

It seems to me, however, that entering ministry today (for both men and women) is more difficult than I remember it being 30 years ago. As congregations experience the stress of recent economic downturns and membership loss, they become more demanding of ministers, expecting them to come in and provide ready solutions to their problems. As presbyteries become the venue in which denominational battles are fought, newly ordained ministers find themselves caught in the crossfire rather than welcomed into a fellowship of pastors.

When I entered the ministry, the congregations I served as an intern and as a first call both understood that I was still learning to be a minister and they understood that it was their job to help me learn and grow. Likewise, various pastors, educators and lay leaders in presbyteries took it upon themselves to welcome me and mentor me into the church beyond the congregation. In fact, I will never forget being with a group of synodical leaders at a conference at a time when I was very discouraged about remaining in ministry. It was their love and encouragement that helped me see beyond the challenges I then faced; it was their support that helped me continue to hear God's call.

### **Fulfilling One's Call**

If the church is to benefit from the leadership abilities that God has clearly given to women, it must be willing to support and encourage them in fulfilling their ministries. Most women entering ministry today expect to be able to be pastors and parents. This may require adjustments of workloads, office hours and other important accommodations. Nominating committees need to take into account gaps in employment as commitment to family. Presbyteries should find more creative ways to utilize the professional skills and energy of women (and men) who are seeking part-time rather than full-time ministry while raising young children or working to fulfill other commitments. Congregations need to consider assisting the ministers' spouses (both men and women) in finding adequate employment in the community.

Finally, the future of women in ministry cannot be discussed apart from the theological issue of language about God. Regardless of the fact that the Presbyterian understanding of ministry and ordination does not see the pastor (or elder) as "representing" God, nevertheless the general, cultural understanding of religious leadership does make that connection. As long as the way we talk about God is limited to male titles and masculine pronouns, women as religious leaders will always seem at least a little abnormal.



## *Spirit Flames*

*March 9–11, 2006*

### **Location**

First Presbyterian Church, Atlanta

Housing is available at the Sheraton Midtown Hotel, Atlanta.

### **Featured Leadership**

- ◆ Katie Cannon, professor of ethics at Union Theological Seminary and Presbyterian School of Christian Education, Richmond, Virginia, and the first African American woman ordained as minister of Word and Sacrament in the PC(USA)
- ◆ Rebecca Reyes, pastoral counselor in New Hope Presbytery and one of the first Hispanic women ordained as minister of Word and Sacrament in the PC(USA)
- ◆ Catherine Gonzalez, professor emeritus of church history at Columbia Seminary, Decatur, Georgia
- ◆ Margaret Towner, Presbytery of Tampa Bay, the first woman ordained as minister of Word and Sacrament in the PC(USA)
- ◆ Margaret Aymer, instructor in New Testament at the Interdenominational Theological Center, Atlanta
- ◆ Mardee Rightmeyer, evangelist for the southeast region, That All May Freely Serve

The celebration begins Thursday, March 9, with registration from 1 P.M. to 5 P.M., dinner at 6 P.M. and the opening keynote address at 7:30 P.M. Conference presenters will address a variety of issues, including justice and peace; global mission; disabilities and the church; working for the church outside of the church; women and the scriptures; polity and the church; race, gender, society and the church.

Different aspects of the conference's theme will be addressed each day: "Celebrating our witness" (Thursday evening); "Claiming our ministry" (Friday morning and afternoon); "Sharing the sacred table" (Friday evening); "Discerning our way into the future" (Saturday morning). Shared storytelling and art appreciation will occur throughout the event, in addition to workshops held both Friday and Saturday.

To learn more contact Ruth Hicks, associate executive presbyter, Greater Atlanta Presbytery, 1024 Ponce de Leon Ave. NE, Atlanta, GA 30306; 404/898-0711, [rhicks@presbyteryofgreateratl.org](mailto:rhicks@presbyteryofgreateratl.org).



## *Tending the Flame— Telling the Story*

*October 6–9, 2006*

### **Location**

San Francisco Airport Marriott Hotel,  
San Francisco, California

Hotel rooms are \$115/night, single or double occupancy. The registration fee will be determined by January 2006.

### **Event Highlights**

This conference revolves around the theme of storytelling. Professional storytellers from the San Francisco Bay area will come and share in this celebration. In addition, each woman who registers for this conference will be asked to submit a short story (500 words or less) about her journey to ordination as deacon, elder or minister—the ups and downs, ins and outs, laughter and tears. These stories will be assembled into a devotional booklet used during the conference and as a reminder of the great cloud of witnesses who have tended the flame before us, with us and for us.

Instead of signing up for particular workshops led by an “expert in the field,” conference participants will be the leaders and experts. Shared issues, joys or concerns that participants raise at the beginning of the event will inspire the subjects of workshops. The workshops will provide opportunities to brainstorm, celebrate or commiserate in small groups of like-minded souls, with the help of group facilitators.

The meeting space will include meditation rooms representing the rich spectrum of people and cultures found in the San Francisco Bay area. These rooms will be available for personal spiritual practices in the morning and evening, and for small group sharing.

To learn more contact Sarah Reyes, Bethel Community Presbyterian Church, 14235 Bancroft Ave., San Leandro, CA 94578; 510/357-4130; sarah@bethelcpc.org.



**Cynthia M. Campbell, President of  
McCormick Theological Seminary**

Theologically, we know that God is neither male nor female. As a theologian friend of mine puts it, the One who created gender is not bound by it. But we rely only on one type of language, metaphor and symbol, and thereby deny in practice what we know to be true. To take such a stance, to declare that God is beyond the confines of human gender and that God calls women and men to all offices of the church, puts us as Presbyterians out of step with the largest and fastest-growing Christian movements in the United States (the Southern Baptist Convention, the Roman Catholic Church and the megachurch movement, all of which either explicitly or implicitly deny women significant leadership positions). But we have never argued that the validity of a theological view could be determined solely by the number of people agreeing to it.

I am deeply grateful for all the opportunities I have had to serve God through the ministry of Word and Sacrament in the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and I want to continue to encourage and support the women and men whom God continues to call. The flame of women’s leadership has been passed carefully from generation to generation. It is now our turn to keep our lamps trimmed and burning, always ready to welcome God into our midst and God’s call into our lives. 🔥

Cynthia M. Campbell is the ninth president of McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago and the Cyrus McCormick professor of church and ministry. Ordained in 1974 by the Presbytery of San Gabriel, she has served more than 10 years in congregational ministry and 17 years in theological education.