

Make the  Most of Your
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Magazine

How to Use *Horizons Magazine*

by Joyce MacKichan Walker

This issue is full of articles that cry out for involvement in mission at the local, national and international levels. To move to action, you need a focus on something you care about, and a sense that the goals you imagine can be accomplished. Also, it usually helps to be able to see concrete results!

As you encounter the many opportunities described, think about which article the most women in your church might respond to, or alternatively, which articles would most resound with a few women you know the best. Or imagine some way to gather information on which articles stirred women's desire to act. The key question is how to gain a critical mass of interest and how to use that interest to inspire a response. The suggestions that follow encourage responses to the particular articles and causes, both so that individual magazine readers might be inspired to respond, and so that a women's circle or congregational PW might select one and be empowered to work together.

A brief session plan is offered for using "What About the Children?" by Pat Gleich for an adult class or a circle or PW gathering meeting.

"Raising Children, Growing Ourselves" by Dee Dee Risher

- What issues do you experience around this topic, either for yourself or others in your church and community? Are there other factors that played into your decision, or the decision of someone you know (male or female!), about how to balance raising a family with other obligations?
- If you have a Mom's Group at your church, make copies of this article and invite them to discuss this article. Ask how the church might be advocates for them, or better respond to their situation—at least in church programming. Be careful not to assume that those moms who can meet on a weekday are all "stay-at-home moms." Is your church reaching out to those who are balancing two-parent-care, two part-time jobs, two odd-hour work schedules? This article isn't about single moms, but as you elevate this issue, expect some single-mom response in the background—they do 100 percent of the parenting, 100 percent of the time. It's a bit harder to be sympathetic about these challenges from that perspective. Also, to make a difference, it's not enough for parents in these kinds of situations to be the only one's who read such an article and discuss it. Many others are implicated as players—grandparents who often help with childcare, work colleagues who help make flexibility an option for the moms and dads, bosses, personnel management who make job-sharing possible, and so forth. Cast the conversation net widely.
- As many of us do, Dee Dee ascribes "conservatives" and "liberals" particular positions; her examples have to do with a woman's place as parent and society's role in supporting that place. However, those loaded labels carry a whole lot of baggage and don't always fit these neat positions. How would you refine terms for these two positions on the place of woman? Are there political overtones? Social? Moral? Cultural? How might we define the dichotomy in ways that might lead to less confrontational positioning and more openness-producing consideration of the complexities of the situation?


- The author says, “The choices we make for our children . . . reveal the true spirit of our society” Do you agree with this assessment? In what ways might it be true, and in what ways might it not be a complete picture?
- Dee Dee says both she and her husband “ . . . agree that having a job at the office . . . is hands-down, the cushy position.” Clearly not all would agree. Does comparing and calling one more “cushy” than another matter? What is at stake in such comparisons?
- Dee Dee describes some of her dreams for parents and for cultural change. What are some of your dreams? Which of those dreams are particularly shaped by your Christian faith? Which are worthy of the church’s advocacy?
- What are some ways we can intentionally help our children listen for and respond to God’s call on their lives?


 **“There’s Something About Mary”** by Kathleen Long Bostrom


- It’s not often we think of Mary in this very human, very motherly way. What new insights does it give you into Jesus as you think about his early years, and in fact his whole early life, since his ministry didn’t begin until he was about thirty years old? If you put yourself in Mary’s place, how does raising this particular child feel? What temptations do you resist and what joys do you experience? How do these compare to your own experience of being a mother?
- What things have your children said or done that hurt in unimaginable ways? What have they said or done that brought you great joy? Reflect on the best and the worst of being a parent for you. What do those things mean to or for you now?
- If you are intrigued by Mary and by the idea of imagining her life as a mother, you might enjoy *Showing Mary: How Women Can Share Prayers, Wisdom, and the Blessings of God* by Renita J. Weems (Warner Books, West Bloomfield, MI, 2002). Weems takes us through Mary’s song in Luke 1:26–56, exploring the self-discovery that happens in times of change in women’s lives, as we birth new dimensions of ourselves throughout our lives. If you are more interested in a thematic approach to an examination of Mary, try Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Cynthia L. Rigby’s *Blessed One: Protestant Perspectives on Mary*, a book of 11 essays by mostly women scholars (9 of the 11 chapters). See especially chapter 8—“Pondering All These Things”: Mary and Motherhood, by Bonnie J. Miller-McLemore (Westminster John Knox Press, 2002).

 **“A Miracle in Progress”** by Anna H. Bedford

- The inspiration in this article begs us all to find out if this program (or ones like it) are available in our area. If so, how can your PW support it? If not, how can your PW make alleviating childhood hunger a priority? That’s the big step approach! The sidebar has 11 wonderful small step suggestions. Take this article to a circle meeting or a general meeting of your PW. Invite your group to pick one way to address the needs of hungry children. Make it happen by posting all the ideas and having everyone vote on three ideas to which they could personally commit. Take the one or two with the most votes and get started! Every hungry child fed counts!

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“When We Recognize Our Sisters” by Susan Baller-Shepard
 - The sidebar for this article contains all the suggestions needed to promote the Millennium Development Goals and to engage PW in response. This is much bigger than a PW circle or one church’s PW goal. Think big. Think power in numbers. Think, “You are the light of the world.”
 - How about pulling the “Widening the Circle Fund” envelope out of your copy of Horizons and passing it at a circle or PW gathering? Invite those present to give a dollar for every year since PW was founded (\$20.00), or a dollar for every year of this fund (\$10.00). Have an advocacy party and when you forward the collected funds to the PC(USA), include your group’s ideas of issues you want PW to address in upcoming issues of Horizons.

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“Together in Congo” by Cheri Harper
 - Sharing mission stories has always been a highly effective way to get people involved in mission causes. When has this approach drawn you into giving or action? What stories of mission participation does your PW have to tell? Where might you tell them to spread the word and the inspiration to respond?
 - The Together in Service program “. . . encourages everyone who engages in mission work to be as responsive as possible to the actual needs of the people, not the needs that we think they have. Therefore, whether groups do mission work across the street or across the state, it’s important to visit and build a relationship with the people you’re serving.” Consider having your PW coordinating team review all of your PW mission projects. Which ones have had direct visits? Which additional ones might you be able to visit? How can that be arranged? Who in your PW might take responsibility for taking one project that can’t be visited, researching it more thoroughly, and reporting her findings to the group?
 - The author refers to her time with the new Congolese mother as a “snapshot.” Make the sharing of such “snapshots” the focus of a PW gathering in your church or your presbytery. Invite participants to consider how these snapshots might shape their consideration of God’s call to do justice.
 - Lots of PWs are wondering how to attract younger women into involvement with PW, both for their own nurture and for the purpose of engaging the latest generation of women in study, fellowship and mission. What do you make of the author’s suggestion that this attempt “is so much more successful if these women are given an opportunity to do something with their faith”? Has this been true of your PW experience? Might it be? If so, how might you begin to act on this proposition? What kinds of mission experiences might be most engaging for young women?

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“Project Homecoming: Recover, Rebuild, Rejoice!” by Lisa Lani Easterling
 - It’s too easy to be removed by time and space from the images of a disaster site and move on to new projects, new needs and new crises. New Orleans remains a blight on our environment, on our national disaster strategy and on our Christian response to neighbors in need. How might you and/or your PW keep a mission focus on New Orleans? This is truly an effort with long-term consequences for children and families, for education and health care. If your church has been involved, say thank you. If not, is now your time?

 **“What About the Children?”** by Pat Gleich

- Statistics can overwhelm and the important conclusions in this article may be lost in a sea of percentages and research facts. Read this article with an eye to noticing statistics you can put a story to—think of groups that live in your community, risk factors you can identify in your neighborhood, and other stories that involve names and places you know. It has the potential to lead to important identification of particular needs that hit home, and of issues on which local advocacy might make a difference. Here are some ideas for using it to instigate important change:
 1. Gather a group of folks concerned about the challenges of growing up in today’s world. It might be an already formed mom’s or parent’s group, a regular adult education class receptive to these issues, or a handful of people you invite into a conversation because you know they are concerned.
 2. Provide copies of the article, ask them to read it before they come to the class or discussion and highlight one statistic and one high risk group that surprises them.
 3. List the major article headings on newsprint, then invite participants to identify their surprising statistic and high-risk group. Put a check mark under the major article heading in which it fits as each of these is named.
 4. Ask, “Which issues have risen to the top for our group?” Help the group select one only to focus on in this time.
 5. Ask, “What about this top issue most distresses us?”; “What about it makes us feel helpless?”; “What is our personal experience with or connection to this issue?”; “What are some interventions that might make a difference?”; “Which of those interventions are within the possibility of this group? This church? This community?”
 6. Finally, read aloud the final section of the article, “Going Forward.” Invite the group to focus on what actions this group wants to take at this time.