

We Risked Hope

by Jonathan Bay

It was with apprehension that many travelled to Grand Rapids this year for Annual Conference. With the looming trauma from the past conference there for the LGBT community and the difficult business items that questioned core parts of our faith, there was a lot to feel heavy about even before the annual meeting began. However, there is a growing vitality from the Progressive groups, lead by the Supportive Communities Network. We were able to honor the fears and anxieties from the past and remember the history respectfully by naming it.

As always, Caucus had a booth and luncheon. This year's luncheon was a huge success — we sold out! In light of the statement released by the Leadership Team, Caucus is very happy that we were able to highlight the ministerial leadership



that **Elizabeth Ullery Swenson** is practicing with Wildwood Gathering in the PNWD (Pacific Northwest District). She, along with three other strong women — **Jeanne Davies** (Parables Community), **Monica Rice** (Living Stream COB) and **LaDonna Nkosi Sanders** (The

Gathering Chicago) — were part of a panel of women leading and participating in new ministries within the church. Caucus selected the panel and was happy to single out these leaders because they are excellent examples of the strong women leaders shaping new ministries.

Our Mother of Caucus this year is **Janine Katonah**. Her speech, "Reflections", is on page 6.



The luncheon is our yearly fundraising event that helps us fund our annual conference activities, a yearly in-person meeting, and sending Steering Committee members to other important gatherings. We appreciate the support we get at the luncheon, in all the various ways that support comes!

I want to lift up all the women who spoke at the microphones this year. After attending conference for many years, and several years ago consciously deciding to look at how many women speak at the mic, it was heartening to see so many speaking insightful, spirit-moving words. There are, of course, many other ways that women showed leadership this year, and those are just as important and necessary. I view speaking at the mics as a small

window into how women are empowered within the denomination.

The noteworthy outcomes of the business items were that On Earth Peace was narrowly kept as an agency of the COB by 9%. The Leadership Team attempted to give guidance on how to deal with agency breaches from annual conference statements, however, they have not decided to write new polity. There were many recommendations made by the Review and Evaluations Committee based on a decision from the previous conference. To find the full list go to the website <http://www.brethren.org/ac/2017/documents/summary-of-actions.pdf> for specifics.

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2 Timothy
1:1-7
September
6, 2017

by Susan Boyer

In June of 1930 my grandparents, Desmond and Irene, set off on a freighter to cross the Atlantic Ocean, headed for Garkida, Nigeria. At the time they left my grandmother was twenty-four years old and three months pregnant with my mother. Once in England they changed boats and spent three weeks sailing down to Africa on a German vessel, stopping often along the way to load and off-load freight. When they got to Nigeria they got off the boat in Port Harcourt. The plan was to travel up the Niger River to the Benue River, but the rainy season was late that year. The water simply wasn't high enough. They camped beside the river for several weeks hoping for the rain to arrive. But eventually they gave up, leaving most of their belongings behind to be delivered later.

They traveled over 500 miles by train headed for the tin mines. Once off the train they took a series of lorries that got them as far as Damaturu. From there they decided they must travel the last 100 or so miles by horse.

Those were hungry days. They had to shoot their own game in order to eat.

When they got close to Garkida they sent word ahead that they would need help crossing the swollen Hawal River. By the time they made it to the river they had been traveling inland for weeks. My

Courage Begets Courage

grandmother, Irene, was worried she might deliver her baby before she ever arrived in Garkida. When they got to the Hawal River missionaries were waiting for them. They had brought a bathtub to float my very pregnant grandmother across the river. My mother was born on Christmas Day in 1930 in Garkida, Nigeria, just weeks after they had arrived from their arduous journey.

Of all the stories about my grandmother, Irene, that is the one that swells my soul with a desire to be like her. Pregnant, she takes out on a journey of thousands of miles in which she will travel by boat, train, lorry, horseback, foot and bathtub in order to share her faith with others.

My mother, Pattie, courageous like my grandmother, grew up in Nigeria. She grew up speaking Hausa, and when my grandparents tried to teach her English she said, "Why would I want to learn a language so few people speak?"

After she met and married my father in the United States, the two of them traveled to Nigeria as missionaries, a life my mother knew and loved. Thirty years after my mother's birth, I was born in Garkida, in the same small remote village of Nigeria.

My mother was a courageous adventurer born of a courageous adventurer. But when I think of my mother the image that sticks out for me comes from later in her life. My mother became an ordained minister at the age of 58 while she was serving as a District Executive Minister.

While serving in that role she was asked to represent the Church

of the Brethren at the Dunkard Brethren Annual Meeting in California. She gladly accepted but, because of her gender, the Dunkard Brethren leadership would not welcome her nor acknowledge her presence. They couldn't reconcile the idea of a woman in that role and so they didn't speak to her . . . the very person who came to bring them greetings. She stayed present and visible. When she returned from the meetings she offered to represent the denomination again if needed. My mother was a bold, courageous woman born of a bold, courageous woman.

I was handed a legacy . . . a gift, passed down from generation to generation . . . a courageous faith, born out of conviction in service to truth, love, sacrifice and humility. This gift wasn't a family heirloom I could put on a shelf and admire. In order to be accepted, I had to own it. It had to become mine. It had to be nurtured so that it would come alive in me. If you are here tonight because you love Christ and the church, someone along the way loved you and Jesus enough to introduce you. Others along the way nurtured that faith in you. Blowing on a spark until it became a flame.

So many people in this denomination fanned that flame for me. I remember being at Annual Conference when I was 11 years old and instead of insight sessions hundreds of Brethren stayed after worship, late into the night, to watch a documentary film on racism in the United States. I sat with my fellow members of the Church of the

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Brethren while we watched together the horrific images of African American civil rights activists being sprayed with fire hoses. They were young adults, and they were people of courage. Someone had fanned the flame of courage in them.

I had seen those images on my television set at home but by watching those images with my Annual Conference family I knew I was part of a community that was going to join non-violent, courageous young adults in working against oppression.

I attended National Youth Conference in Estes Park, Colorado when I was in high school. One afternoon we were given the option to attend a protest at the Rocky Flats Nuclear Power Plant. It was from my denomination that taught me to display my convictions through the act of protest.

It was while attending a Church of the Brethren college that I felt the call to ministry . . . at a time when I didn't have very many role models of women in ministry. Through education and experience and service and prayer this denomination developed in me the tools I needed for ministry.

I know that we live in a time in which faith is attributed to the individual, but that is completely false. None of us would be here tonight without the bold, courageous, sacrificial gifts of those who have gone before us: those who made the bold decision to be baptized by trine immersion in the Eder River; those who took the practice of feet washing and made it smooth with prayer; those who took the stance of peacemaker to the point of becoming medical guinea pigs rather than serve and

kill others through military service; those who have stood in the way of tanks; those who have stood up for the inclusion of others; those who have been allies to the farmworkers; those who joined Martin Luther King in the march from Selma to Montgomery; and those who refused to let gender be a deciding factor for answering the Spirit's nudging. We are here because of the generations of courageous people who went before us, putting their lives and reputations on the line for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I remind you of that because we are in a time when we need Paul, or anyone for that matter, to write us an encouraging letter like the one Paul wrote Timothy.

Paul knew that something was bothering Timothy. Paul recalls Timothy's tears and then he writes, "You have a sincere faith and it was passed down to you from those who went before you. Don't squander that hard given gift . . . claim it. God didn't give you a gift of cowardice but of love, power and self discipline."

The context of that letter was that Paul and Timothy were losing to the flashy preachers of their day who were selling a different gospel. Timothy had two choices: alter the gospel to look more appealing or stay courageous and bold.

Paul, writing from prison, encourages Timothy not to dilute the faith but to join him in suffering for the gospel. He begs Timothy to remember that he was blessed with a spirit of courage.

And that is why I am here tonight — to remind you and me that we have been blessed with a courageous legacy. We live in a time of dangerous polarization, in

our world and our nation and within our beloved denomination. There is a temptation to respond by preaching a gospel people want to hear. We find ourselves at a time when the legacy we have been given is in danger of extinction, and so we have a choice: make sure we don't offend anyone so no one else leaves; or hold fast to the courageous faith that has been handed down from generation to generation that we might be able to hand it down to the generations who come after us.

Luckily, I found that letter of encouragement I needed in the words of Maya Angelou, prolific writer and civil rights activist. She writes, "Courage is the most important of all the virtues, because without courage, you can't practice any other virtue consistently."¹

We have become more worried about the survival of the church than the message of the gospel.

That is why the Apostle Paul admonished Timothy to act with courage, for courage is the foundation of all that is true. But courage takes practice. Angelou writes, "You develop courage by doing courageous things, small things, but things that cost you some exertion"²

We weren't born courageous. We are born with the potential to be people of courage. In an interview Angelou was asked what was the most important lesson she learned from her mother. She said, ". . . she encouraged me to develop courage and she taught me by being courageous herself."

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Courage begets courage. We learn courage from those who exemplify courage.

And our spiritual ancestors were people of courage. They followed the One who threw the money changers out of the temple and spoke for truth at the cost of his life. They followed him by counting the cost of faith. They followed him by choosing death or imprisonment over killing others. They followed him by clothing the naked, visiting the prisoner, feeding the hungry, welcoming the marginalized. They followed him in the hard work of non-conformity. They followed him by not letting the empire be in charge of their decisions. They followed him by not allowing polity to win over love. They followed him by discerning together new light in new times. They followed him by keeping their Bibles and their hearts and their minds open wide. They followed him to some of the most difficult places. They were people of courage, they handed us this legacy, and I don't think we have developed our courage muscles very well.

In Jesus' final words to his disciples he says, "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these" I admit I have been confounded by those words my whole life. I have looked at the miracle stories and said, "I don't see anyone doing greater things than these." I was focusing on the wrong things but luckily his disciples focused on the right things. I think the great things Jesus was referring to were acts of bravery on behalf of others. Jesus' followers became people of

uncommon courage. The stories of the bravery of the generations that have followed Jesus are amazing. They developed courage, and they passed down that legacy to us.

Every day . . . every day . . . we are bombarded with new news of how needed courage is in our world today. It would be so easy to live out the remainder of our days going on hikes, eating good food, reading our Facebook feed, driving our grandchildren to dance class, and knocking a few more things off our bucket lists.

But there truly are things that are more important for our children and grandchildren. When I interviewed at the La Verne Church of the Brethren I asked them what they needed from a pastor. Without hesitation someone spoke up and said, "We need our pastor to be brave." That is what our children and grandchildren and their children and grandchildren need from us. They need us to be brave. They need us to pass on the gift of what it means to be Brethren in the world at this moment in time. We cannot let our heritage down by falling prey to cowardice. For God has given us a spirit of power and love and self-discipline and courage and the next generation is counting on us to fan that flame in them.

Amen

¹ "A Conversation with Dr. Maya Angelou," Beautifully Said Magazine, July 2012. <http://beautifullysaidmagazine.com/201207feature-of-the-month-3/>.

² "Maya Angelou on Courage and Creativity," Harvard Business Review, May 2013. <https://hbr.org/2013/05/maya-angelou-on-courage-and-cr/>.

You may order a DVD of the NOAC service in which this sermon was preached at brethren.org/noac

October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Domestic violence is any abusive behavior or pattern of abusive behaviors in any relationship that is used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over another intimate partner. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual, emotional, financial, spiritual or psychological actions or threats of action with the intent of controlling or manipulating another intimate partner, spouse or family member.

Domestic violence is one preventable issue that affects one in four women statistically. Domestic violence occurs across socio-economic strata, and includes any race, ethnicity, education level, religion, gender or age. It can happen at any time, any place and without warning. While domestic violence is often assumed to be physical violence, domestic violence includes sexual violence or threats of sexual violence without consent, and reproductive coercion. It can include words, looks or gestures meant to control or frighten. Domestic violence includes emotional, psychological, spiritual and financial abuse with injuries and long term effects that can be passed from generation to generation. It can include humiliation, insults, isolation, ignoring, shaming, demeaning and manipulation through power and control. It can include abuse of pets and animals.

A great resource is the Domestic Violence Hotline: [1-800-799-7233](tel:1-800-799-7233).

Let us unite to proclaim zero tolerance for domestic violence. Let us unite to empower our churches and communities to advocate, educate and work to end abuse.

In Remembrance of Beth Glick-Reiman

Beth was a writer who had five books published in her lifetime, and the book she had finished in the weeks before she died, *To Die Is Gain*, will be published posthumously. In her last years she led several writing groups, notably the "Write For Your Life" group that met at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Berkeley, and a similar group in Ellsworth. Her most recent book, *The Unfinished Feminist*, was published by Arc Light books in 2015.

Beth Glick-Reiman was born as Elizabeth Cline Glick, on October 2, 1922. She was born to Effie Iwilla Evers Glick and the Rev. John Titus Glick, in Timberville, Virginia, in the Shenandoah Valley, and named after her grandmother. Her Daddy was a minister of the Church of the Brethren and a farmer, and her Mama raised 12 children (Beth was the fifth). Later the family moved to a farm near Centerville, Virginia, where they were able to grow enough food to mostly feed all of those hungry mouths.

She is survived by four of her siblings, Margaret Hunkins (of Ashland, OR), Joseph Glick (of Harrisonburg, VA), Ruth Welliver (of Lewisburg, PA), and Stanley Glick (of Centerville, VA).

Beth attended Bridgewater College in Virginia, receiving a Bachelor of Science in Music Education in 1944, and after college she became a public school music teacher and organist in Somerset County, Pennsylvania. There she met the man who would become her husband, Glenn Walker Rieman, a math teacher who would go on to become a psychologist for the Veteran's Administration. After they were married (6/7/47), they moved to Pittsburgh, PA to go to graduate school, where Glenn received his Doctorate in Psychology, and Beth got a Masters degree in Religious Education (1950). Over the course of their married life they lived in Hollidaysburg and Altoona, PA, Dayton, OH, and Bridgewater, VA, (where they moved to take care of Beth's aged father, after Glenn retired). Glenn died on 10/31/80 of a heart attack.

Beth was a woman who gave a lot to family. She spent a number of years trying to get pregnant, and when it finally took, she gave another 27 of her good years

taking care of her five children. She set some of her own vocational hopes aside, as her culture asked her to, and she did it because it was what she wanted to do. Family meant that much to her. She is survived by three children, Dr. Jill Christine Rieman Klingler (of Cinti., OH), Dr. Marta Elizabeth Clayton Rieman, (Ellsworth, ME), and Eric Glick Rieman, MFA (Berkeley, CA). Two of her children died before her, Peggy Ruth Rieman (age 19), and Linnea Rieman (stillborn at term). Beth is also survived by nine grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

She taught piano lessons in her home as her children grew up, and the house was always full of music. When most of her children were grown, and after the death of her eldest (Peggy), she returned to her career aspirations and her eagerness to change the world for greater good, and began studying at United Theological Seminary, in Dayton, Ohio, receiving a Doctor of Ministry degree at the age of 51 (6/5/74). She started a new career as an advocate for Feminism in the Church of the Brethren shortly thereafter (the church she had grown up in, and the one that drove her crazy, but that she couldn't abandon, as that would be "throwing out the baby with the bath water").

She became an ordained minister of the Church of the Brethren (an historic peace church) in 1975. Beth's growing advocacy and knowledge of feminism became one of the burning lights of her life during this period. When her position of "Person Awareness Coordinator" was undone by the church, because the church balked at her attempts to help it re-vision itself in a Feminist direction, she moved on, and started working as a consultant, group facilitator, and writer.

During this period she became a member of the Association For Creative Change, and met people worldwide who wanted to help society evolve. Eventually, she started her own consulting company, Human Empowerment In Religion and Society (HEIRS) and worked in a company started by her good friends, Rev. Kenneth Mitchell and Rev. Carl Crider (Another Way). This work led her to move to San Diego. Her consultant days were

filled with helping groups with their process - church groups, the East LA school district, and many other situations where a mediator was needed to teach communication. She also worked with youth at the Church of Canada's Naramata Center, in Naramata, British Columbia.

In 2001 she moved to Richmond, CA, to be closer to her son Eric's young family, and because she needed more help (as an elder) than she had before. Her little house on Van Fleet Avenue was a refuge to grandchildren and their friends, and a sanctuary where she wrote, sang, taught, and made sour lemonade from the lemons that she grew in her backyard garden. She had help from several live-in family members as she strove to maintain her independent lifestyle, notably Tacey Rieman Clayton (grandchild), Tina Rieman (great niece), Grace Rieman Clayton (grandchild), Cord Sargent (grandchild-in-law), and Emily Kinzie Roberts (friend and almost grandchild).

Beth was a believer in Ecumenicism and was a representative of the Church of the Brethren to the World Council of Churches. She was a lifelong pacifist, and an advocate for peaceful methods to make changes to corrupt systems. She marched with the Peace People movement in Northern Ireland in the 1970s. She was an activist for political change throughout her life, writing letters, protesting, and making calls to her political representatives to promote peace and justice.

Beth believed in spirit and mystery. Her Brethren heritage instilled in her a will to create positive change in society. She had a strong affinity for the religious feeling that the natural world evoked in her, and the warm feeling of community, and she called this, and a sense of Love/ Presence, God. She believed in her power to change the world in a positive way, and she worked hard toward this goal and mentored others to foster the drive toward it in them. She loved children, roses, music, walking on the beach, and hiking in the mountains. And she loved butterflies. We miss you, Beth, and we'll always love you.

Memorial services were held at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Ellsworth, ME, on Saturday, July 8, 2017.

COB Leadership Team's Letter

The Leadership Team's letter indicates a tightening of the accountability of districts. Please go to: <http://www.brethren.org/ac/leadership-team-statement-to.html> for the complete statement. We are saddened by the recent letter from denominational leadership and want to support all those who have a calling and are trying to explore it.



Editor Position

Job Description: We are looking for someone to solicit articles, curate images and proof Femailings for the next year and a half. No layout work needed. You will work closely with the Steering Committee during the month the issue is released. This will require a phone or video call. We expect to create at least three issues a year, with a possible fourth issue. You will coordinate the gathering of all the materials for our layout person. You need to be proficient in editing skills, prompt response by email and have a passion for Womaen's Caucus. This position will be paid an honorarium per issue.

Please contact us for more information:
womaenscaucuscob@gmail.com

2017 Womaen's Caucus Luncheon

"Reflections"

Janine Katonah's keynote speech

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It is difficult for me to recall a time in my life in the Church of the Brethren when Womaen's Caucus did not play a significant role — even before Caucus was officially convened.

In 1969 I left my Methodist roots behind in Altoona, Pennsylvania, and moved to Bethany Theological Seminary, the newly married spouse of a Bethany student. York Center Church of the Brethren became my church home. It's still home for me after 48 years.

The Church of the Brethren was beginning to wake up to the need for more inclusion for women in the life of the church. The *Messenger* staff wanted to highlight the growing need for more women's voices to be heard and devoted the May 1, 1971 issue to women. The issue included the titles: "Games Women Play", "The Female Media Image", "The Bible Sets Women Free", "Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Women's Liberation", and "Sugar & Spice — Everything Nice?". I was one of six women who spent over 2 hours together while being recorded "discussing our feelings about ourselves, our roles as women," and "our expectations". The resulting 7-page *Messenger* article became "Sugar & Spice — Everything Nice?"

Here are some reflections from that *Messenger* article.

Far less is expected of women than of men — beginning in the earliest stages of boys' and girls' lives. Some of the educators in the group had already observed other educators offering far more creative learning experiences to boys than to the girls in the classroom. Boys' work, however crude or rudimentary, garnered more praise for its creativity. The girls were relegated to less creative areas of work and play. One teacher of high school students described how many of the girls were already planning their lives in roles where they would be subjugated by men and felt this was normal. Even the community helper role models for the children were masculine: postman, fireman, policeman, and sanitation man.

One of our group of 6 reported on research related to sexist references in Sunday school curriculum conducted by the United Methodist Church. The resulting research showed girls as sniveling and helpless in contrast to the strong and aggressive boys. A psychologist in the group lamented the burden of older women who arrive at their older years feeling devalued and useless. When these women move to change their lives through more education or meaningful employment, they do fantastic work because they are so committed and hardworking. This is how a movement really becomes empowering. It is within the momentum of a movement that hesitant women lacking energy of their own can be drawn in and empowered. They stand at the threshold and can finally cross over it.

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Womæn's Caucus became the movement many Brethren women longed for — a way to meet and caucus and to strategize together about a path to move ahead. From the earliest Womæn's Caucus brochure came this statement of purpose: "We, the Womæn's Caucus, are impelled by Jesus' example to affirm personhood by working to eliminate sexual discrimination and empowering the oppressed so all may participate more fully in life." In the beginning is the threshold, the boundary, the point of departure. (Deanna Brown, Anita Smith Buckwater)

By the late 1970s, I was actively involved with Womæn's Caucus and, by 1984, was editing the *Femailings* publication and serving on the Steering Committee. In the fall of 1991, at our Steering Committee meeting in Midland, Virginia, several members of the Steering Committee of the Brethren Mennonite Council for Lesbian and Gay Concerns (the name in 1991) joined us to talk about how we could combine our efforts as risk-takers.

Another threshold was crossed! The two Steering Committees decided to ask other risk-takers to join us to meet at a restaurant at Annual Conference in Richmond in 1992 where we strategized on how we could collectively address the issues facing both groups as well as discuss the business items pertinent to our collective agendas. These informal gatherings were repeated at the 1993 Annual Conference in Indianapolis and again in Wichita in 1994. By 1995, Dancing at the Wall was born, followed by Dancing at the Table in 1996.

Sisters and Brothers, Womæn's Caucus is still taking risks and empowering us to be the church of Christ's example. We must continue to cross the thresholds of the challenges we face as we are the church.

In closing, let me offer this Litany of the Threshold written and pieced together by Deanna Brown and Anita Smith Buckwalter:

In the beginning is the threshold, the boundary, the point of departure.

Beginnings come in the midst of life.

Sometimes the summons comes through an incident loud as a trumpet.

Sometimes the beckoning is a still small whisper But no matter the form of the summons, the message is the same: some change is imminent.

The call to sit on a threshold and wait

Or the call to cross a threshold with all its immediacy, risk, and excitement breaks into our lives.

We are being lured toward a spirituality that reflects who we are at this time, one that we create out of our own experience and desires in accompaniment with the Spirit and with one another.

We are being lured to open the doors of our hearts and gates of our spirits.

We are being invited to rest on a threshold.

Impacts on Women's Lives



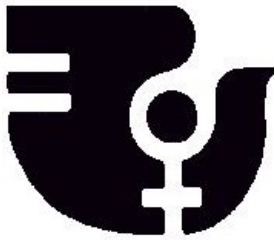
Many executive orders and decisions being enacted by our current president, vice-president, and our country's congressional and senatorial leadership impact women's lives through access to healthcare, insurance coverage for birth control, access to Planned Parenthood, care for victims of sexual assault, interpretation of religious freedom, and FEMA's response to major hurricanes in Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico, to name a few.

Please continue to contact your representatives and senators to advocate for accessibility to healthcare, mental health and social services. To contact the main switchboard at the U.S. Capitol, please call [202-224-3121](tel:202-224-3121) and follow the menu prompts.

Nominations for AC 2018 Open Positions

The following positions are open: Moderator-Elect; Program and Arrangements; Mission & Ministry Board (Area 2 and Area 3); Bethany Theological Seminary Trustees ~ 1 representing clergy and 1 representing laity; Benefit Trust Board; On Earth Peace; and the Pastoral Compensation and Benefits Advisory Committee. The nomination form and additional information about the open positions are available on the COB website, brethren.org (Annual Conference 2018, Election procedures).

Our voice, leadership, wisdom and compassion are being called for through these opportunities to serve the denomination and the agencies of the church. Please consider serving or nominating candidates to serve "for such a time as this."



Womaen's Caucus Needs Your Financial Support to Continue

With your continued support Womaen's Caucus can do so much to help further our mission of decreasing prejudice within the Church, empowering women and advocating for people on the margins. This year we have put a lot of energy into being an advocate for SCN members and creating a safe space at Annual Conference. We are thinking about tangible ways in which we can live out our mission and build our community and also interact with the community that Caucus has built over the past 40 years. We appreciate your support!

Options: complete the form below, visit our website at www.womaenscaucus.org and use the donate button, and/or select Womaen's Caucus to receive 0.5% of your purchases at smile.amazon.com.

Make checks payable to: Womaen's Caucus  Cut & mail to: Womaen's Caucus, 818 SW 3rd Ave., #E1299, Portland, OR 97204

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Contribution

☐ \$100

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Membership

☐ I am already a member

☐ Membership — \$25/yr

☐ Student member — \$15/yr

Femailings

☐ Already receiving

☐ Send by mail

☐ Send by email