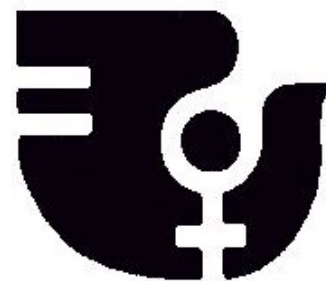


# Femailings



Womaen's Caucus, Church of the Brethren

@wcaucus follow

One Woman, All Women April 2018

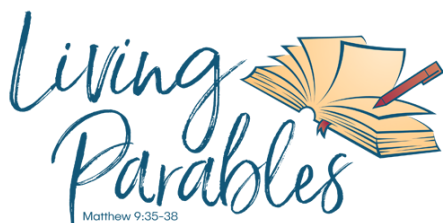
60th Anniversary of Women's Ordination

## 60th Anniversary of Women's Ordination

2018 marks the 60th anniversary of the Annual Conference decision to ordain women. In celebration of this anniversary, Womaen's Caucus would like to feature vignettes from ordained Church of the Brethren women. We would love to have as many of these writings as possible! If you write something for the next *Femailing*, please send in 250-500 words by email before May 15th or by mail before April 30th.

Here are four questions to spark your inspiration: What is the story of your call? What is your favorite celebration moment? What do you hope your legacy is? What advice do you have for incoming clergy women?

## Annual Conference Theme



"Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field' "

(Matthew 9:35-38)

**Always  
leave people  
better than  
you found them.**

**Hug the hurt.  
Kiss the broken.  
Befriend the lost.  
Love the lonely.**

## Shhh . . . SILENT



As usual, we will be having our silent auction at our luncheon this year. This event is where Caucus raises most of our money for the working budget throughout the year. Last year this money went to help support Femailings, our mid-year retreat, sending Steering Committee members to conferences and our Annual Conference activities. If you would like to send something for the auction ahead of your arrival, please send to **Jen Scarr** at 105 Whispering Dr., Trotwood, OH 45426. Items that sell well are: pottery, art, handcrafted items, and books. Thank you for your continued support!

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## Of Models & Mentors on the Journey

By Nancy Heishman

2018 marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Annual Conference granting “free and unrestricted rights to ordination” to women in the Church of the Brethren. But of course, women have been preaching for long before 1958. Since the days when Jesus called women to join him as followers, God’s Spirit has sent women out to preach and proclaim the gospel. And yet in my days as a youth, I can remember very few models of women preachers. Except for a hazy memory of hearing Anna Mow speak on one occasion, I had no one prompting me to consider the outrageous idea that God might call me to be a preacher. However, I am thankful for the stories of persistence and support in our Brethren history.

Dana Cassell’s October 2008 Messenger article recalls much of the struggle for the right to ordination. After over 100 years of debate surrounding the question of women’s ordination, sister Cora Fisher’s appeal to the conference delegates in 1952 helped win provisional ordination. Edward Ziegler repeated the call in 1958, finally sparking the approval of the body for full rights. All along the way, there were voices that attested to the call of the Holy Spirit in the lives of women and men alike.

As for me, I was blessed with a supportive pastor at the time of my call. Jim Tyler, pastor of my home congregation in Annville,

PA, was enthusiastic about my sense of *calling* and urged its affirmation by a congregation that had transitioned out of the non-salaried plural ministry barely two decades earlier. Later on, Bethany Seminary professor Eugene Roop encouraged my *equipping* by suggesting I try a summer pastorate in Mexico, IN. And all along the way I had wonderfully *encouraging* parents who believed there was nothing I couldn’t do if God was calling me to it. I long for these ingredients of calling, equipping, and encouraging that fed me on my journey to sustain all sisters who hear God’s call today.

Today in the life of the Church of the Brethren there is a tremendous need for calling, equipping, and encouraging women to the set-apart ministry. The realities of sexism, harassment, and prejudice of all kinds loom large for many women even as they hear a clear call from God’s Spirit. As sisters among the Brethren, let us by all means heartily celebrate, for 60 years of official credentialing are a joy. But let us also especially be listening and looking for the Spirit’s movement in the hearts and lives of sisters around us because God’s work among us is not finished. As the prophet Isaiah proclaimed, “For ages past no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who works for those who wait for You. (Is.64:4)” May our waiting be marked by prayerful persistence and holy action as we partner with God’s mighty Spirit.



## A Call to Minister and Mother

By Audrey Hollenberg-Duffey

Ministry is something the is filled with moments of joy and also moments of pain. It is something that has at times overcome me with love and at other times drained me of all my energy. But in my ministry, I have found an answer to a calling on my heart that I never expected would come from ministry.

Two years ago my husband and I, who is also my co-pastor, discovered that we were unable to have children without medical help. I was diagnosed with Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) after a year of trying to get pregnant. As we began various treatments we tried to remain strong and keep what we were going through a secret from our congregation. Eventually my doctors discovered that I also had unexplained infertility on top of PCOS, and we realized that what we were going through wasn’t going to have a quick fix. It was at this point we decided to share the burden with our congregation.

As soon as we shared with them what we have been and will continue to go through, the burden seemed to immediately lift. I wasn’t having to keep secrets anymore and I noticed that I began to see how my calling to be a mother was possibly finding an answer in my ministry.

One day I sat beside the bed of an older woman who had fallen down the stairs in her home, seriously injuring herself. As she shared her fear and pain freely with me, I was able to pro-

*Continued on page 2*

vide her comfort. A few days later, I prayed over her and stood at the foot of her bed as she breathed her last breath and her spirit moved from this life into the hands of God. It was that moment that I realized that maybe I was already a mother.

This past winter, our congregation had our annual women's retreat. During one of the sessions, we were encouraged to share what women in scripture we feel most drawn to. I shared about my connection to the prophet Anna in the Gospel of Luke who is one of the few women in scripture who is valued for her ministry without it being connected to her motherhood. After my words a woman who was in my small group said, "whether or not you become a biological mother, you are mother to all of us."

At that moment she gave me a role that I had been longing for, one that I was beginning to see in my role as minister as I accompanied my congregation in their discipleship and growth. I was already a mother when I taught, when I comforted, even when I corrected and called people to their full potential.

I don't know what the end of my fertility story will bring, but God has been showing me that my ministry is already beginning to answer this call placed on my heart. My call to minister and mother are not only compatible, they are inseparable for me.



## Clergy Reflection

### On Vocation

By Jeanne Davies

I began to write out the story of my calling and realized it might be more helpful to reflect on what I have learned about the calling process over the years. Here are some of the things I have learned:

#### God will surprise you

Stay open, pray a lot, and listen to God's leading. You don't have to know the destination. You just need to take the next best step. You will probably end up serving in a way or in a place that you never expected. It might even be something you said you'd never do. (Be careful with those proclamations!)

#### God will equip you

You are capable of more than you believe. If you are called, God will give you what you need. You have shared responsibility in this. Keep seeking out opportunities to learn, to be trained, and to grow. Learn to know yourself well, both strengths and weaknesses. Study the world around you and discern how you might participate in what God is doing.

#### God gave you unique gifts that are needed

There are many ways to live out one's calling. I never thought I would be a pastor because the good examples of pastoring I saw did not look like something that was a fit for

me. As time went on I realized that my unique gifts and my style of pastoring was needed. We all embody leadership differently. Check your assumptions about what a leader looks like.

#### The church needs your passion and imagination

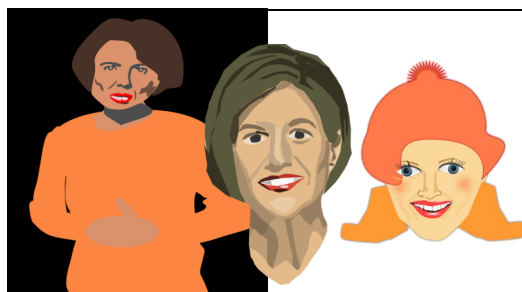
We are living in a time of great change. We need to hold fast to our core beliefs and practices while re-envisioning the shape of the Church in this generation. We need the visions of young people and the dreams of older ones. Be bold. Take risks. Step up and step out. Don't be afraid.

#### Listen to others/don't listen to others

God has given us companions on the journey. Find a spiritual director, a trusted friend, or a small group to pray and reflect with you on your vocation. But do not be swayed by every opinion that you hear. Careful discernment is needed. Learn to trust yourself and the vision that you have received.

#### Take the long view

Your vocation will unfold, develop, and change shape over years and decades. God uses our whole lives. Every experience is grist for the mill. You are a small part of a larger story, the story of Jesus at work in the world. Do what you can with what you have, and be at peace.



One Woman  
All Women

## On Being Silenced

By Dana Cassell

My favorite example of being silenced in church is the Brother who, in the midst of a heated conversation about some matter of church polity, told me my point might have been valid...if someone else had said it. "Why?" I asked him, genuinely curious. "Because your voice has no reality on this matter!" he shot back.

Never mind that the polity in question was one I'd spent ten years studying, crafting, interpreting, teaching and implementing. Never mind that I was the only person in the denomination who had actually put fingertips to keyboard to write the piece of polity he was upset with. Never mind that I was an actual expert on the topic of discussion: my voice had no reality.

That conversation happened in an online discussion, and when a host of friends and family (including my furious mother!) began to question this brother's treatment of me, he promptly deleted the entire thread. The only evidence that this man, a leader in our denomination, declared my voice non-existent resides in my own memory. That's more than enough for it to do its hateful work of sowing doubt, keeping me and other women from engaging fully in church leadership, silencing us again and again.

But why is this my *favorite* example? I think it's because this is such a sparkingly clear case study in how the church silences women's voices without even

thinking about it. It's my favorite example because this brother of mine didn't even bother to cloak his misogyny in metaphor or rationalism – he just came out and said it: your voice has no reality. You do not exist. Your opinion isn't just wrong or misguided or questionable: you are not here.

Over the last few years, I've spent a lot of time and energy in service to the church that formed my faith, nurtured me in discipleship, and called me into leadership. I've served on congregational, district and denominational committees, I've been a pastor and a preacher and a retreat leader and a facilitator. I've traveled across the country and met sisters and brothers from almost every realm of the Brethren world. And every kind of context – large and small, conservative and progressive, events for youth and events for adults, I have been silenced.

Silencing begins with lack of inclusion. If women aren't invited or encouraged or expected to speak, then we cannot hear them. Women's voices don't get much airtime in our congregations, districts and denomination. Take note, next time you're in a Brethren space, of how many women raise their hands or approach a microphone, and how many of those women share their own words.

This exclusion is insidious in and of itself – if women aren't speaking, the church is missing half its voice, and we women are being denied access to autonomy, decision-making and full inclusion in the life of the Body of Christ.

But silencing is worse than passive exclusion. Sometimes,

silencing includes active harm. And usually, it is much subtler and harder to recognize than my favorite Brother's tactic. For instance: when a woman *does* speak, are we paying attention to her words or to her appearance?

In my last congregation, I wore pants almost every time I was in the pulpit, because every time – every single time – I wore a skirt, someone in the post-worship handshake line made an inappropriate comment about my legs. In my new congregation, I wear dresses more often and thought I had avoided the silencing-by-attire-compliment dynamic. Alas: I wore a pair of slacks on a cold day and after I preached, a dear woman drew me aside to whisper that she just thought I looked so nice in pants and really, I should wear them more often. Damned if I do, damned if I don't.

Every one of these comments came after I had stood and preached a sermon or led a worship service – after I had proclaimed the gospel or prayed on behalf of an entire congregation, after I had performed a professional, spiritual task using my own, female voice and my own, female words. I had not been participating in a fashion show or making a case for modesty in dress. I had been doing my job of preaching the gospel, but my parishioners had apparently paid more attention to whether or not my legs were covered. Not only is that disappointing for those congregants who missed the sermon, it's also destructive to the preacher, who is forced to make small talk about her wardrobe instead of the hours of scripture study and exegesis

*Continued on page 5*



she's done in order to preach the Word.

These belittling comments are not isolated incidents, but they are also not the worst implication of silencing women in the church. Sometimes, silencing women means being complicit in their harm. Twice, now, I've had significant concerns about a male church leader. In each instance, I took my concern to the body to whom he was accountable. In each instance, I was dismissed. Once, a board chair wrote off my concern as "emotional," and declared that if this male leader was not doing his job then they, his supervisors, would just have to adjust the job description so that it aligned with his wishes. In another instance, I brought serious concerns about ethical violations to a male leader's supervisors. Instead of believing me and addressing the issue, the body called to hold him accountable requested, first, that I be the one to broker a "compromise" that would enable them to continue employing him and, second, that I be the one to request of the woman who had been wronged that she "not speak about this any further."

I have not been abused or assaulted in the church. There are court cases and newspaper stories a plenty attesting that these abuses are realities for ecclesial bodies, including our own, but those stories are not my stories. I have been, however, persistently and consistently silenced. I'm still here, still speaking and writing and proclaiming both the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the truth of our own silencing systems, but there are many, many women who are not.

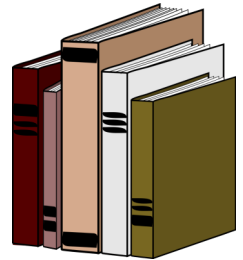
I am here because powerful women called me into ministry in the church and modeled for me the strength and commitment it takes to continue speaking even when your voice is dismissed and discounted again and again. But there are so many of us who were silenced one too many times, whose silencing led to deep wounds that could not be cared for by the church that caused them. There are so many of us who haven't heard women's voices, haven't seen that strength modeled, haven't had loud women in their corner urging them to speak up, to speak out, to keep speaking, to say it again for the folks in the back.

We are missing our sisters' voices because our institutions and our practices – our congregations and our districts, our denomination and our communities – are built on premises that systematically shut them up and shut them out. This is not an outdated conversation, as much as we would like it to be. Every one of these incidents I've described happened in the Church of the Brethren in the last five years.

If we want to stop silencing our sisters, we might start practicing a few new tactics: we might, for instance, decide to comment on the substance of her statement instead of the style of her clothing. We might decide to make sure there are at least as many women speaking in any given room as there are men – and if there are not, we might be intentional about inviting another woman to share, whether we are in charge or not. We might choose to believe women – to simply believe that they are telling the truth, and, more

radically, to believe that their truth might have the power to set us, all of us, free.

## Book Review



### Marie Fortune's book, *Is Nothing Sacred?*

By Shirley Kirkwood

This book, published in 1989, should be must reading for every church member and is SO timely in today's culture. Before I review the book, I'd like to share with you my meeting Marie at a pre-annual conference workshop in the 1990s that addressed the issue of sexual violence. From that brief acquaintance, I was led to apply for a grant from the VA Foundation for the Humanities and Public Policy that led to a conference on Sexual Violence: Framing the Ethical Questions in November 1992 and invited Marie to be the plenary speaker. Her three sessions were on Sexual Violence vs. Sexual Activity, Framing the Ethical Questions and Where Do We Go From Here? I recommend that readers go online to the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence and learn of resources available, including curriculum for children's Sunday School classes.

The subtitle of the book, *The Story of a Pastor, the Women He Sexually Abused, and the Congregation He Nearly Destroyed*, prepares the reader for an account one would never

*Continued on page 6*

imagine happening. And yet, today in Rockingham County, VA, the same scenario occurred and was reported in the newspaper. There is a local chapter of SNAP (for survivors of sexual abuse) that meets monthly in Harrisonburg, VA. The introduction to the book provides an historical account of allegations of a sexual liaison of Henry Ward Beecher, considered to be “the greatest preacher since St. Paul” in the 1870s, who had a sexual liaison with a member of his church. The response of his followers and the questions asked about the power of institutions and the ethics of those in control are ones we continue to address today.

Peter Donovan came to First Church of Newburg with impeccable credentials which included skills as an administrator, counselor, and preacher. He was 36 years old, handsome, had been married and was divorced but this was not an issue for this congregation. His preaching was exciting and attracted new members to the church. He created new programs, delegated responsibilities, and created commitments to himself rather than to the church. He was essentially a loner as he did not participate in District activities or related to other pastors in the District. Members

of the congregation did not have access to him as his home phone number was not available. It was in June 1984 that Marie Fortune received a call from the associate district minister requesting her help with “a very messy case of pastoral abuse” and he was aware of her work with the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence.

Marie scheduled a visit to be with six of the women in that congregation who had reported their abusive experiences with this pastor. They had cried and grieved together, they were angry and knew they must do something to stop and prevent this abuse. Marie listened to their stories and recounts the variety of relationships he formed with these women to pursue his intentions of sexual intimacy with them. He exploited the vulnerability of these parishioners in ways that trusting parishioners would never imagine. As word of Marie’s involvement spread, other women came forward with their own accounts of violation. As church and District leaders were advised of the problems, they met with Donovan whose responses ranged from denial to acknowledging consensual relationships with these women. Other church members connected the dots between the women’s accounts and their own observations of his leadership as it impacted the committees and

projects they were involved in. Marie’s experiences there will resonate with some of the current accounts one reads about in today’s media. Without giving away the resolution of the situation, it is essential that one understand and remember the message of the last chapter, *Doing Justice and Mercy*. It highlights issues which dominate the lives of those abused and give us a framework in which to understand the various aspects encountered in sexual abuse. Those issues are:

1. The Consequences of Injustice
2. An Ethical Framework
3. *Doing Justice and Mercy*
4. Truth-telling
5. Acknowledging the Violation
6. Compassion
7. Protecting the Vulnerable
8. Accountability
9. Restitution
10. Vindication
11. Approximate Justice
12. Shooting the Messenger
13. Misnaming the Problem
14. Blaming the Victim
15. The Power of the Patriarchy

The book ends with a quote from Willard Gaylin, “Time does not heal all wounds, and the amount of time needed to heal the majority of serious wounds is well beyond that which the unwounded could ever anticipate.”

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MY MISSION IN LIFE IS  
NOT MERELY TO SURVIVE, BUT TO THRIVE;  
AND TO DO SO WITH SOME PASSION,  
SOME COMPASSION, SOME HUMOR,  
AND SOME STYLE.

— MAYA ANGELOU

## #MeToo Movement

by Rev. Kathy Gingrich

Tarana Burke is credited with giving birth to the “Me Too” movement in 2007. In a recent article published in *The New York Times*, Ms. Burke reports that in 1997 she was sitting across from a 13 year old girl who had been sexually abused. As the young girl described her experience, Ms. Burke reports “I didn’t have a response or a way to help her in the moment, and I couldn’t even say ‘me too’.” Ms. Burke reported “It really bothered me, and it sat in my spirit for a long time”.

Ten years after that initial conversation with the young girl who had been sexually abused, Ms. Burke created Just Be Inc, a nonprofit organization that provides care and support to victims of sexual harassment and assault. She named her initiative “Me Too.” In 2017, actress Alyssa Milano added the hashtag and promoted #metoo to give voice to others who had experienced sexual harassment and assault. Women began to come forward using mainstream media, tweets, Facebook and other social media accounts to share their stories of sexual abuse, sexual assault or harassment using #MeToo and to call out their perpetrators by name.

Alyssa Milano tweeted “If you’ve been sexually harassed or assaulted write ‘me too’ as a reply to this tweet. The “#metoo” movement has raised much awareness to the magnitude of sexual assault and harassment in the US and around the world. Unfortunately Ms. Milano did not give credit to Ms. Burke’s creation of “me too.”

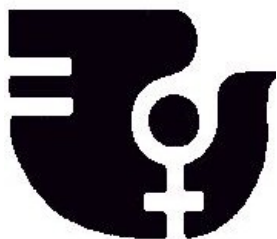
Black, Latino and other women of color responded with a campaign of their own — #OscarSoWhite — to affirm women of color and to uplift one another when disparity occurs in how women of color are treated when they report abuse. Ms. Milano, who had not been aware of Ms. Burke’s campaign, is now hoping to collaborate with Ms. Burke. Ms. Milano has publicly given credit to Ms. Burke for her work and together they are putting the focus on the victims and survivors. For more information on the history of this movement, see *The Woman Who Created #MeToo Long Before Hashtags* by Sandra E. Garcia, *The New York Times*, Oct. 20, 2017.

Using social media, many Church of the Brethren women have self identified as victims of sexual assault and harassment using the hashtag #MeToo. Shirley Kirkwood, a former caucus worker, recommends “Our Stories Untold,” ([www.ourstoriesuntold.com](http://www.ourstoriesuntold.com)) a website and blog dedicated to sharing stories about sexual assault and rape in both the Mennonite Church and all spiritual communities.” SNAP Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests ([www.snapnetwork.org](http://www.snapnetwork.org)) is a self-help group for persons abused by clergy and provides resources, advocacy and support to help victim-survivors heal, recover and prevent future abuse.

Dr. Marie Fortune of the Faith Trust Institute opines, “Religious teaching and communities will play a role: they will never be neutral.” Let us remain strongly committed to raising awareness and raising our voices as we educate, provide advocacy, and protect victim-survivors of sexual assault and harassment.

### Matthew 25:31—40

- 31 “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit upon his glorious throne,  
 32 and all the nations will be assembled before him. And he will separate them one from another, as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.  
 33 He will place the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.  
 34 Then the king will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.  
 35 For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me,  
 36 naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me.’  
 37 Then the righteous will answer him and say, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?  
 38 When did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you?  
 39 When did we see you ill or in prison, and visit you?’  
 40 And the king will say to them in reply, ‘Amen, I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.’



## 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](http://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](http://smile.amazon.com).

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

Name _____	<b>Contribution</b>	<b>Membership</b>
Address _____	<input type="checkbox"/> \$100	<input type="checkbox"/> I am already a member
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> \$75	<input type="checkbox"/> Membership — \$25/yr
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> \$50	<input type="checkbox"/> Student member — \$15/yr
Email _____	<input type="checkbox"/> \$25	<b>Femailings</b>
Phone _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> Already receiving
District/Home Church (if applicable) _____		<input type="checkbox"/> Send by mail
_____		<input type="checkbox"/> Send by email

## 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](mailto:womaenscaucuscob@gmail.com)