



Join us for the Womaen's Caucus Online Event "Speaking Truth to Power" Friday, July 3, 2020 — 12:00 noon EDT

Virtual Speakers

by Anna Lisa Gross

When we invited **Gimbiya Kettering**, **Madalyn Metzger**, and **Debbie Eisenbise** to be our Annual Conference presenters on "Speaking Truth to Power," we knew:

- Madalyn, Gimbiya, and Debbie are wise, fierce, faithful, patient and passionate church leaders, writers and speakers;
- The Church of the Brethren is witnessing the birth of something new (within and beyond the denomination), and we wonder what our role will be in this birth; and
- We need visionaries who are grounded both within the church and beyond the church, who speak truth to power, and who call their church and world to Jesus' radical love.

We didn't know we would move this panel online. We didn't know that the ongoing ills of prejudice, violence and economic exploitation would be joined by

COVID-19 and increased police brutality. We don't know as we send this newsletter to press what horrors and hope will emerge by July 3.

We know that we have Gimbiya and Madalyn speaking to us through these pages, and speaking live on July 3, to prophesy and to pastor us. Join us at <https://livestream.com/livingstreamcob/speakingtruth> on Friday, July 3, at noon Eastern time. Please try the tech in advance – we don't want you to miss a word. LiveStream will not require you to download anything to view our sessions, although it may invite you to sign in. You do not need to sign in or to create a LiveStream account to watch the panel, but you do need to log in with either Facebook or create a (free) Livestream account if you want to pose questions or reflections to share with others.

Holy Spirit, come with power and put words in our mouths, that we may speak truth to power. Amen

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The Protest of Martha

by Gimbiya Kettering

When men preach, they often interpret Martha as the woman who misses the big picture – the traditional woman in the kitchen. But Scripture does not actually witness Martha in the kitchen. We are told of Martha outside of the kitchen – she comes to tell Jesus it isn't fair that she is working alone, to remind him that there are logistics to manage. She is admitting that she needs help – and this is speaking truth to power.

I believe that the first five breads and three fish, the seeds for the miracle of feeding the five thousand, were packed by a woman. The oil to anoint Jesus was brought by a woman. It was the women who washed his body and lay it in the tomb. But when Martha comes out of the kitchen, Jesus tells her that she is missing the important stuff. Scriptures, written by men, do not tell us what happened next: Did Mary hear her sister's plea and get up? Did Jesus promise to perform a miracle, so Martha could be a part of the conversation? Did he offer to help her in the kitchen? Or did Martha hand Jesus the spatula and storm out, leaving everyone to be "hangry"? Did they cooperatively develop a Chore Chart?

People still ask about my resignation. At the time I heard the voice of God telling me that my daughters were the big picture and I was missing them. Sometimes, I was actually gone – working weekends. Other times, I missed the joy because I was distracted and worried about work even when I was home. Since the stay at home orders related to Covid-19, I am reinterpreting my choices and life with greater solidarity with women around the world. Many of us are taking care of families without the help of our extended "village", running the complicated logistics of food procurement and preparation, and now disinfecting light switch plates. The struggle to balance work, ministry, self-care, and the 24/7 needs of family and household can make it feel impossible to speak truth to power. It can feel like a weakness to ask for help.

Necessarily and productively, we have differing visions for how to move forward because the spiritual tools for caring for the most vulnerable are different from the tools we need to change the systems that make us all vulnerable. Yet, as I have been watching the protests for racial justice unfold in the midst of a pandemic, I am noticing how many women are showing up. It reminds



Gimbiya Kettering

me that we must ask for what we need even in the midst of our vulnerability and that there are others who are more vulnerable than I am. It reminds me, I still have a responsibility to continue doing the work of Jesus, peacefully, simply and together. There isn't going to be a perfect time, when we are strong enough to work for justice and peace. There is only now.

Gimbiya Kettering tells stories about the interwoven impacts of faith and racial identities inspired by her experiences and family. Her most recent writing, a serialized novel about the impacts of Covid-19 on young children, can be read here <https://www.wattpad.com/story/220436765-a-to-z-of-staying-home>.



One Woman
All Women



Building up the Body of Christ

by Madalyn Metzger

The Church of the Brethren has always felt like home to me. I was born and raised in the denomination, another generation in a long family history of Brethren. And like many others – whether raised in the Brethren tradition or found it later in their lives – “church” was more than a place to worship. For me growing up, church was a place of familiarity and comfort, a faith family that supported each other.

But, as early as my teenaged years, I began to realize that church is not always familiar and comfortable for everybody – even within my beloved Church of the Brethren denomination.

For centuries, the church and its members have struggled with and been complicit in the oppression and subjugation of fellow sisters and brothers, at both an individual and systemic level. Behaviors, beliefs, and biases (unconscious and conscious) around power and privilege separate us from one another and from God.

And lest we think these are things of the past, all it takes is a look at today’s headlines to see that social oppression is still rampant today. As Christians, these injustices

run counter to our understanding of the will of God. And as Anabaptists, these injustices run counter to who we are as people called to live together in community, in service to each other and to God.

For a denomination that lifts up its emphasis on service, mission and peacemaking, we sometimes forget the somewhat shaky history our faith family has when it comes to welcoming people of color and ordaining women and diverse individuals. For sure, each generation has made progress in addressing oppression – but that doesn’t mean the work is done. The names, faces and labels might be different, but we still struggle with not only welcoming everyone to the table Christ has set for us, but sending the invitation in the first place. Over the generations, we’ve learned and have taken steps to address the systemic “isms” within the Church of the Brethren, but yet the pain and the injustice still exist for many.

We are called by God to care for all of creation, including our neighbors – yet we continue to rely on systems and norms designed to hold back certain groups of people. That’s why I engage where and



Madalyn Metzger

when I can. I want to help our denomination and others explore new ways of building community with one another. Do I get weary? Sometimes, yes. Do I get jaded? Sometimes, yes. But I still believe that God’s justice and peace will be made real through us, answering God’s call to build up the Body of Christ – a faith family, supporting one another.

Madalyn Metzger is a member of Goshen (Indiana) City Church of the Brethren, and Vice President of Marketing for Everence® Financial, a ministry of Mennonite Church USA and other churches.

our lives begin to end
WHEN WE BECOME
SILENT
about things that
MATTER

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

New Steering Committee Member: Kathryn LaPointe

Kathryn lives in San Diego with her husband, three children, two dogs, assorted cats, and one very favorite coffee cup. She is on staff at San Diego Church of the Brethren leading their asylum initiative.

As an introduction, she has written of her journey towards working with the Church of the Brethren and Womaen's Caucus:

I was raised to be nice. My Catholic parents, distressed by social disruption in the 70s, doubled down on tradition: we attended Latin Mass, paying a quarter at the door to rent doilies. I was raised to sit quietly, covering my head with Pauline lace to signify that I was a good girl.

Occidental College, a small liberal arts school near La Verne, taught me to think more broadly about the role of women. My feminist philosophy has been shaped lifelong by one phrase from one book I read there, more than

thirty years ago now: "men act and women appear." Art critic John Berger wrote widely on social control of women through imagery, but that singular concept gave me courage to act, to speak, to resist diminishment.

My mother died of cancer when I was nineteen, and I refused to quit school to raise my younger siblings. Insisting on my education cost me years of estrangement. Lonely and needing good news, I joined an InterVarsity bible study. I heard for the first time the healing, restorative words Jesus spoke to women, and I marveled that the revelation of the risen Christ was first made to women.

From Catholic to Protestant: I married a pastor and spent decades working in and for various churches. Evangelicalism, however, reduces Christianity to right belief. When I could no longer accept that diverse expressions of human sexuality

were sins that precluded belonging, the Jenga pile of my beliefs tumbled. Pull one block, and you pull them all. I found myself in exile again.

Despite a season of absence from the pews, church was still a familiar language. In 2018, that fluency helped me train congregations to support asylum seekers. San Diego Church of the Brethren was one of the first to open its doors. The concerning name fueled some internet research, and I discovered anabaptism. My own road to Schwarzenau.

And in Womaen's Caucus, I found a community pursuing positive peace instead of anemic niceness. Childcare at the women's clergy conference is expensive, but paying for it demonstrates the value of inclusion. Insisting that women's voices be heard and acted on is the work of Jesus.



Reflections from the Clergywomen's Retreat



Blessings,

I want to thank God for the opportunity that he gave me back in January to attend my first Womaen's Caucus retreat. During those days I had the opportunity to meet different women of God in different levels of their walks with God.

The opportunity to be a part of the worship planning team was incredible. Every night was different. Our main speaker, Mandi, was very knowledgeable in the subjects she spoke on and made them very easy to follow. I never had the experience of being in a place like that, and the whole

atmosphere made me feel relaxed and allowed me to reflect on my own walk in ministry.

Meal time conversations were the best. The laughter, the tears, the testimonies, and encouragement were very powerful to me. I'm glad that I was able to walk around and enjoy God's beauty there. I thank every woman who helped and supported me in any way to be a part of that event. I hope to be a part of the next one when the time comes.

Sincerely,
Cesia Morrison
Jeremiah 29:11

Dear sisters,

I wanted to thank God for the opportunity that I had in the Womaen's Caucus retreat. I was not only able to see many younger women in ministry, but to have my spiritual daughter with me and see what God did through her that week was such a wonderful blessing. Sharing my experiences in the field of church planting with many during fellowship time was wonderful. I enjoyed the small sessions, walks, everything was refreshing to me.

Thank you again,
Lidia Gonzalez

Women and Food

by Anna Lisa Gross

Even in the small city of Lafayette, Indiana, lines for the food pantries wrap multiple blocks. Food insecurity was a reality for ~1/8 people in the US before COVID-19 and increases with myriad anxieties and injustices.

Hunger kills people throughout the world (~821 million are chronically hungry), and the World Food Programme predicts 1 billion will be in danger of starvation as COVID-19's ramifications unfold.

Women and girls are most likely to starve – in many families they are the last to eat. Yet women grow the majority of the world's food, care for most of the world's livestock, and prepare most of the world's meals.

The UN's Food and Agriculture Organization states, "In sub-Saharan Africa and the Caribbean, [women] produce up to 80 percent of basic foodstuffs. In Asia, they provide from 50 to 90 percent of the labor for rice cultivation. And in Southeast Asia and the Pacific as well as Latin America, women's home gardens represent some of the most complex agricultural systems known."

Can COVID-19 be your opportunity to intervene? How can we transform our food systems to provide delicious, nutritious food while caring for creation? Vegetarian or vegan diets are a simple (not necessarily easy) place to start. Eating local, absolutely. COVID-19 might limit your creativity or cash flow – this is a good time to learn basic food production skills.



My family is developing the simplest-possible hydroponic system for growing herbs and greens in jars in our house. We're exploring ways to enjoy field corn, soybeans and wheat intended for livestock feeding – let's leave these animals out of the cruel, carbon-belching system and just eat these plants ourselves.



And we have a dream. How many empty Sunday school rooms does your church have? Are you running low on volunteers to keep the church's grass mowed? Wonder why you're spending so much to maintain a building used two hours a week? (Or now, none?)

What about inviting BVSers or other people to live in your church and turn the yard into orchards and gardens? What about hosting a bulk-buying club in your fellowship hall and storing and processing food together in the church kitchen? Who in your congregation would like to teach people to garden, can and ferment?

Women feed the world. Would your Women's Fellowship like to feed your community? Where do you want to start?

Anna Lisa Gross is an itinerant preacher, frugal cook and lazy gardener. She would love to hear your ideas: annalisa144@gmail.com or 765.414.1627.



Joshua 1:9: "Be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."

Wikipedia: Speaking truth to power is a non-violent political tactic, employed by dissidents against the received wisdom or propaganda of governments they regard as oppressive, authoritarian or an ideocracy. The phrase originated with a Pendle Hill pamphlet "Speak Truth to Power: a Quaker Search for an Alternative to Violence", published in 1955.

grammarist.com/phrase/speak-truth-to-power: To speak truth to power means to demand a moral response to a problem, rather than an expedient, easy or selfish response. The phrase speak truth to power carries a connotation of bravery, of risking either the status quo, one's reputation or livelihood, or the wrath of the person one is confronting.



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 focused energy into growing our steering committee and commitments. We continue to find tangible ways to live out our mission and build community.

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

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