



SUNRISE

Presbyterian Women



Presbyterian Woman Shenandoah

Darlene Mason, Moderator

<http://shenpres.org/presbyterian-women/>

September 2018

Pat Armstrong, Editor

The Moderators View

I had the most fortunate opportunity to be a voting Rep to the Churchwide Gathering on Aug 2, to Aug. 5 2018 in Louisville, Kentucky. I traveled with Pam Snyder, who was the chair of the Global Mission Community.

The items that were before the voting reps. Concerned the election of National Board members, the 2018-2021, budget, bylaw changes, proposed recommendations and resolutions and any new business from voting reps.

The work shops were quite good. The Bible Study for 2018-2019 by Amy Poling Sutherlun, God's Promise: I Am with You, was well received, as was the 2019-2020

by Eugenia Gamle, Love Carved in Stone: A Fresh look at the Ten Commandments and 2020-2021, by Lynn Miller, To You They Cried: Reclaiming Lament. I had a hard time picking my work shops as they were all very interesting.

There was a group protesting our gathering as they do not believe women should be ministers of the Word, have short haircuts and have positions of authority. The police were present and kept them from in front of the Hotel. So other than derogatory signs we were not impacted by their presence.

Mary Lou Cox, also a voting rep, Mary Campbell and Ruth Williams, attended the Gathering.

The CT have decided to adopt the Woodrow Wilson Workforce and Rehab Center for a project of mission. Anyone that knits and can make hats, gloves or scarves are encouraged to give to the project.

In Christ's Service

Matthew 5:16 Let your light so shine before

men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven

Darlene Mason

SHENANDOAH LADIES AT CHURCHWIDE



BACKDROP FROM CHURCHWIDE



TRIENNIAL CHURCHWIDE GATHERING OF PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN

The 2018 triennial Churchwide Gathering of Presbyterian Women was held at the Galt House in Louisville, KY, August 2-5. Shenandoah women included Mary K. Campbell, from Garrardstown Church, Ruth Williams, from Sunnyside and Mossy Creek Church, Pam Snyder and Darlene Mason, from Staunton Second Church, and Mary Lou Cox, from Beulah Church.

The gathering was preceded by the business meeting, August 1-2, to which Darlene and Mary Lou were voting representatives from Shenandoah. We heard inspiring speakers from the denomination, including Stated Clerk J. Herbert Nelson II, and the new CEO of the Presbyterian Mission Agency, Diane Moffett.

Close to 2,000 women gathered for the opening worship on the evening of August 2nd! Perhaps the most inspiring of all was being with so many women, and a few men, singing and worshipping together. The fellowship and connections with women from around the country and the world were amazing! We sang new and old songs, led by very talented musicians. I was blessed to be in the choir for Sunday worship with about 100 other women.

The gathering speakers were outstanding, inspiring, and challenging. We heard the authors of the Horizons Bible Studies for 2018-2019, 2019-2020, and 2020-2021, all excellent! There were several mission speakers, as well as leaders for PW. This year is the 30th anniversary of Presbyterian Women (since the reunion of the women from the PCUS and UPCUSA), so there was lots of history and celebration, too.

There were 41 workshops from which to choose, mission tours, book groups, bookstore, and 26 exhibitors in the Global Marketplace, as well as a silent auction benefiting the PW Mission Pledge to help continue the missions of PW. I unexpectedly won a beautiful paper bowl made of carefully cut, folded, wrapped, molded, and sealed Thank

Offering flyers! I plan to bring it to show you at our September 4th meeting.

Attached is a photo of the stage backdrop in the plenary hall, handmade by two women on the gathering team, using 60 yards of paper. Cut paper! It was phenomenal; I estimate 12' high and 20' long! I never tired of looking at it. The photo couldn't capture the whole thing.

How I wished all of you had been there!! The next triennium will be in 2021.

Sent by Mary Lou Cox

HELLO FROM MT OLIVE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

We had Bible School and was well attended and enjoyed by all.

On the 4th Tues. of each month, we have a senior lunch. Sometimes we watch a movie or do a craft. We have good food.

The third Sunday of August, we will be having our church picnic at Lily Park beside the river.

Stacy started a Wed. night bible study. We are studying 1John We have been meeting about a month and have an attendance of about 14. Our first tenderloin meal for Fall will be Sept. 10.

God Bless All
Moderator Sarah Lange

Here is Some News from Second Pres.

Second Pres held their annual church picnic on Aug, 15, 2018 Entertainment was by Teresa Whitesell. She played the guitar and sang many of the old church songs.

We are getting ready to have the blessings of the dogs on Sept. 15, 218 in the fellowship hall with a service conducted by Pastor Evan Smith beginning at 4:00 pm. All are welcome.
Darlene Mason

NEWS FROM IVANHOE PRESBYTERIAN

Ivanhoe Church had their VBS at Lost River State Park again this year under the direction of Rev. Joel Thornton. The theme was "Moose on the Loose" which worked well with our setting and was held June 18 through 22. It could have easily been re-named "Bear on the Loose" for as many bears are often seen in that park. Ha! Our largest attendance was 24, which was very good for our area. The group of children included representatives from several other churches in our town.

The theme included Bible Stories focusing on Apostle Peter, crafts, games, and songs accompanied by a digital piano, brought to the shelter each day. Students and leaders were provided a small lunch each day and swimming at the park pool. God provided wonderful sunny weather for four out of five days. Friday brought major rain showers, but the brave leaders and students enjoyed their lessons, crafts, games, and lunch in the shelter for the day. The lesson that day was accompanied by a roaring river outside and a beautiful water fall within full view. It was all in all, a successful experience for everyone.

Shared by Connie Woods

LETTER IN WEEKLY NEWSLETTER FROM PASTOR JOHN LEGGETT

There's a lot of conversation these days about the loneliness that many people experience. Even if you are surrounded by people, it's possible to feel as if you're alone.

In fact, it's sometimes more likely that you will feel lonely in a crowd, than when you are actually alone.

And that can be true even within congregations. I've had many conversations over the years with people who long for a deeper connection with others in the congregation.

Let me suggest three ways that you can begin to build the ties that bind us to one another in mutual care:

First, pick up the phone or send a note or email to someone you know from our community of faith to let them know that you're glad they are in your life.

Second, when you are in worship or some other event in the church, smile and greet those you meet. Don't be afraid to introduce yourself to them for the fifth time. And don't let your fear of "I should know them already" keep you from engaging with them. Your smile can provide a welcome that someone needs.

And third, when you can help connect people you know with someone they don't know in the congregation, you help to build a network of care that fosters deeper relationships.

And as a bonus....wear your name tags!

Blessings,
Pastor John

JUST TO LET YOU KNOW SOME OF AUGUST EVENTS

Prime Timers Table Fellowship for the 50+ crowd.

Tuesday, August 7 at 12:00 pm in the Blue Ridge Room at Sunnyside
(located in the Highlands Apartment Building).
This gathering happens every 1st Tuesday of the month.

**Some minds are like concrete
Thoroughly mixed up and
permanently set.**

**Be ye fishers of men.
You catch 'em - He'll clean 'em.**

Peace starts with a smile.

SINGING HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO OUR MODERATOR, DARLENE AT AUGUST CT MEETING



Compassion, Peace and Justice

Friends in Christ:

The 223rd Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) General Assembly is now a memory, but the decisions and directions of the Assembly will inform much of the work for Compassion, Peace and Justice for the next two years and beyond. The elusive quest for peace in the Middle East, South Sudan, and Korea, nuclear disarmament, climate change, environmental justice, racism, serious mental illness, immigration and refugees are among the key issues that were addressed.

Overall, this Assembly affirmed strongly that the church is called to work for justice, right relationships and peace in all aspects of life. The Assembly also approved the Mission Work Plan of the Presbyterian Mission Agency. This work plan calls on the Presbyterian Mission Agency to focus on these three priorities:

- Poverty, where the denomination fights unjust economic systems perpetuating destitution and need;
- Structural Racism/White Supremacy, where Presbyterians dismantle structures and ideolo-

gies oppressing people of color; and Congregational Vitality, where churches prioritize faithfulness over self-sufficiency.

Compassion, Peace and Justice will be focusing on the intersectional nature of these three priorities, with an emphasis on the connection between race and poverty. This is critical work for the entire church. I am pleased to announce that the Rev. Denise Anderson has accepted a call to serve as the Coordinator of Racial and Intercultural Justice to deepen efforts in confronting racism.

The ministries of Compassion, Peace and Justice are grateful to be your partner as the Presbyterian Church continues and strengthens our shared work for justice across our congregations, mid-councils and partners around the world, and with the whole Church, we are challenged to live this invitation from our Brief Statement of Faith:

***In a broken and fearful world
the Spirit gives us courage
to pray without ceasing,
to witness among all peoples to
Christ as Lord and Savior,
to unmask idolatries in Church and culture,
to hear the voices of peoples long silenced,
and to work with others for justice,
freedom, and peace.
In gratitude to God, empowered by the Spirit,
we strive to serve Christ in our daily tasks
and to live holy and joyful lives,
even as we watch for God's new heaven
and new earth,
praying, "Come, Lord Jesus!"***

A Promise for All

BY ROULA ALKHOURI

For use with Lesson One of the 2018–2019 PW/*Horizons* Bible study, *God's Promise: I Am with You* by Amy Poling-Sutherland

Scripture: Genesis 26:1–6; 28:10–22

Having grown up in the Middle East, the phrase “God’s promise” brings up a number of feelings for me. It has been misused by people of the three Abrahamic religions in that region to claim special status or a right to the land.

Some Israeli Jews view their ties to the Holy Land as justification for the forcible isolation or removal of Palestinians (both Christian and Muslim) from it. A few branches of Christianity have also used God’s promise as reasons to invade the Holy Land (during the Crusades) or to promote the Zionist belief that promoting the return of Jews to the Holy Land will hasten the second coming of Christ. Some Muslims have used God’s promise to impose their beliefs on others or to eliminate other beliefs.

A theology of exclusivist claims on God’s promise has been and is used to justify violence against others. As we approach this study, I hope that we can see the promise from God’s view, where *all* are included.

One important passage to remember is from Genesis 12:2–3: “I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” God blessed Abraham and his descendants so that they might become a blessing to all the earth. God’s promise to Abraham was inclusive of all the peoples of the earth.

At the same time, God’s promise was understood by the people of ancient Israel to be specific to their own experience. The stories they shared about the people God used to fulfill the

universal promise of blessing were of certain human beings, human beings who *represent* the many faces and experiences of humanity. They are archetypes of the variety of ways we as humans struggle with believing that God is with us and will never forsake us.

Here is a brief overview of some of the biblical characters Amy Poling Sutherland highlights, and how they are included in God’s promise. See if you identify with their successes and struggles.

Abraham

Abraham lived around the year 1750 BCE. He was from the city of Ur, which was part of a sophisticated civilization. Archeology tells us the average size of home in that ancient civilization was 13–14 rooms. That means their economy was rich and well developed. Children went to school and wrote on clay tablets with styluses. Ur had canals and ditches for water, and was as culturally sophisticated as ancient Egypt. So, when we hear about God telling Abraham to leave his home and go to a land that God would show him, we should understand it was a sacrifice for him to leave the land of his ancestors and the comfort and wealth of his culture.

Abraham needed to let go of his worldly comforts to trust God more and to trust in God’s promise to be with him. Whenever he lost track of that, he faltered. Whenever he focused on that, he was able to be a blessing to others. Abraham’s peace didn’t come from arriving in the land God led him toward. It was about arriving into the heart of God’s love.

When was a time you left your comfort zone to follow God’s call?

Sarah

God promised Abraham and Sarah they would be parents, and give rise to nations (Gen. 17:6, 16). Many years passed (about 24), but nothing happened. Abraham and Sarah grew weary of waiting and devised a plan for Abraham to have a child with Sarah’s slave, Hagar. They tried hard to make the promise come true. Yet, God

did fulfill the promise that Sarah would have a son. Sarah laughed twice at the improbability of it all—the first time when three strangers predicted her pregnancy (Gen. 18) and again when she gave birth to Isaac (Gen. 21:6). The whole thing seemed so illogical, the only proper response was laughter and joy. Isaac's name reflects that because, in Hebrew, it means "to laugh."

When was a time that you, like Sarah, started to give up on God's promises because they seemed so unlikely or took so long to be fulfilled?

Jacob

Jacob was the son of Isaac and the grandson of Abraham; he was the father of the 12 sons who later became the 12 tribes of Israel. But Jacob was also a twin, just seconds younger than his brother Esau. As firstborn, Esau was to receive the traditional biblical birthright that granted superior rank in the family (Gen. 49:3), a double portion of the paternal inheritance (Deut. 21:17), the priestly office in the family (Num. 8:17–19), and also the Abrahamic blessing, which promised that his descendants would be a source of blessing for all the nations of the earth. With the help of his mother, Jacob tricked his way to the top in his family. Esau was so enraged, he wanted to kill Jacob. Jacob fled.

One night during Jacob's escape, he dreamt of a stairway to heaven, where the messengers of God were going up and down. The old translation of the stairway is "ladder," but biblical scholarship suggests that the passage references a structure like a *ziggurat*. Ziggurats were used as sanctuaries. An altar at the top level was used for sacrifices because people believed that the higher you went, the closer you came to God. This makes Jacob's experience of God even more amazing! God did not appear at the top of the stairway, but rather right beside Jacob at the bottom of the sanctuary, in the most ordinary of places.

At the lowest point in his life, Jacob received the sustaining presence of God. Not only that, but,

God's blessing that Jacob schemed so hard to get was simply given. It is not that God approved of Jacob's trickery, but that, in the lowest moment of his life, Jacob was finally open to receiving the gift of God's grace that had always been there for him, but that he had never recognized. Jacob's life was never the same after that encounter with God.

Where do you expect to find God's presence in your life and in the world?

Roula Alkhouri is pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Batavia in New York.

Unlikely and Reluctant, Yet Chosen

BY ROULA ALKHOURI

For use with Lesson Two of the 2018–2019 PW/*Horizons* Bible study, *God's Promise: I Am with You* by Amy Poling-Sutherland

Scripture: Exodus 3:1–12; Judges 6:11–27

By the time we reach the book of Exodus, it seems God's promise is no longer in effect. The book shows the people of ancient Israel living under a heavy burden of oppression in Egypt. Egypt was a great civilization, but one that was built on the backs of a vast number of Israelite slaves working for the king/pharaoh during the 18th dynasty (1570–1300 BCE). God's promises to ancient Israel were endangered by slavery, but redeemed and fulfilled through the leadership of Moses, an unlikely and reluctant leader.

Pharaoh was threatened by the Israelites, seeing them as a potential drain on the wealth of his country. Seen as a threat to the economy and power of Egypt, the Israelites were exploited and oppressed. This was the only way pharaoh could think of to protect his own people, the Egyptians, because the logic of fear and scarcity had gripped his heart and his whole culture. This is often the way people behave when they believe that they are separate from their neighbors and the whole human race.

The irony of the story is that God found the most unlikely of people to save the Israelites from their misery—Moses. His life was threatened from the beginning, when Pharaoh gave orders to Egyptian midwives to kill all the Hebrew babies as they were being born. His mother and sister devised a plan to keep him alive. Once grown, Moses killed an Egyptian man and had to flee to the desert to stay alive.

Moses was an outlaw, a fugitive. Even though Moses had a passion for justice for his people and a mystical experience of God in the burning

bush, he was reluctant to accept God's call. He couldn't believe he could be a leader.

Moses was afraid he would be killed if he went back to the house of Pharaoh, as God was calling him to do. Not surprisingly, Moses had a whole list of excuses and fears that he shared with God: I am not eloquent in speech, I don't have miracles to show, I am a nobody, I don't even have a name for you. But God used him anyway, an unlikely person to lead the people to freedom in one of the most unusual liberation stories in human history.

Where do you see suffering, uncertainty, and exploitation in our world today? How are you called to risk and to work for justice and liberation?

The book of Judges shows a different model for government in which things seemed to run more democratically. The ancient Israelites didn't have a king or supreme ruler. Instead, individual tribes ran their own affairs, with judges to guide them. They had entered into the land of promise* and were living in God's abundance and grace. But, unlike fairy tales in which we hear the typical ending of "they lived happily ever after," the people of Israel continued to struggle. Their transformation was far from over. God's promise of using them to bless other nations seemed uncertain; they had threats on the inside and on the outside. They did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and failed to make peace with their neighbors.

The period covered in the book of Judges was around the year 1200 BCE. The Israelites were semi-nomads in the land of promise. Their national identity was emerging as they started to identify themselves as a unified people. Unfortunately, beyond their shared lineage and experience in Egypt, what the tribes seemed to hold most in common was a pattern of worshipping other gods and doing "what was evil in the sight of the LORD" (Judg. 3:12ff).

The Israelites needed guidance in order to remember how to live according to the ways of their covenant with God. God ultimately called Gideon as leader to help the Israelites realign

their lives with God's promise of love. Gideon had doubts about God's promise and guidance, and he doubted his own ability to be a great leader. He asked God for special signs. Then he struggled with following through on his commitments. In all of this, God was faithful and offered the Israelites a fresh start each time they failed. When they wavered or got lost in their evil and uncertainty, God offered them assurances and new guides.

I am mindful of the plight of the people of Syria today and the war and violence that has plagued them for the last seven years. I pray for peace for Syria and for God's promise of deliverance for the Syrian people during this time of great pain and uncertainty. I pray that we might be used to bring understanding and healing to a hurting people.

The story of humans oppressing or fighting with one another (or making allegiances with unlikely allies) for the sake of economic gain is as ancient as time. Whenever people get gripped by a sense of fear or scarcity, they often find ways to justify cruelty or indifference to "the other," those who seem to be a burden on the system. This mentality of scarcity and fear has threatened God's vision of abundance throughout much of human history.

The good news is that God always calls people to pro-claim God's way of abundance and sharing with all humanity and in all of our diversity. People like Moses and Gideon have used their gifts and even their shortcomings to bring about this transformative vision for our world. God's promise of love is alive and well because of people like Moses and Gideon who work for justice and who follow the lead of the Spirit, even when they are not sure how God will use them.

Who in your church history, our national history, or world history has been an unlikely yet life-changing leader? What fears or limitations did they have to overcome to be a leader?

Roula Alkhouri is pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Batavia in New York.

Note

* The land of promise, or Promised Land, doesn't have firm boundaries or clear stakes on ownership. For more about the terminology and theology behind "land of promise," see the 2009–2010 *Horizons* Bible study, *Joshua: A Journey of Faith*, by Mary Mikhael.