

# *Table Talk*

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vol. 30, no. 5

Lent, 1995

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*A Publication of the Student Body  
at the Lutheran Theological Seminary  
at Gettysburg*

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*Table Talk* is published eight times during the academic year by the Student Association of the Lutheran Theological Seminary at Gettysburg. The view and opinions expressed here do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the editorial staff, the Student Association, or the Seminary.

*Table Talk*

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# Thank You

by Mary Amundson

Dear the Men of the Gettysburg Seminary Community,

As graduation approaches, and the time to say my good-byes draws ever closer, I have found myself reflecting on the blessings of my past four years here.

You are one of those blessings.

When I first arrived, I was afraid of you, and on some level, also angry at you. This was not anger or fear of any of you personally, but of all of you collectively, because you were men. Before I met you my experience of men was very limited. My parents divorced when I was five and I spent most of my growing up years with my mom and my sister. When I was eleven I was sexually assaulted by a stranger. Two years later my mother remarried. He was a wonderful man, but at the time I could only experience him as the great intruder and disrupter of my life. Of course I have had other experiences with men since then, many of the positive. Unfortunately, though, the good experiences have stood out in my life as the *exception*.

With the help of many who loved me, I had long since begun the healing process before I stepped onto this hill. In fact I had even taken the risk of getting married. But I was still afraid of you. I was afraid to be alone with any one of you in the library. I was afraid when I found myself walking to my car in the parking lot and I ran into you there. I was afraid you would laugh at me and think me stupid. I was afraid you'd notice that I didn't really know what to say to you or how to carry on a normal conversation with you. I didn't have any brothers. Our family never got into sports. I didn't really appreciate your humor. Being in your presence always made me feel awkward, humorless and inarticulate. I didn't understand you. And I didn't think you understood me.

Over the past four years, though, I have been listening to you, watching you, loving you and giving thanks for you. I have watched you love your wives, your girlfriends, your daughters and your sons. I have been moved as you walk with your families, push your children in the swing, and carry your little ones to child care. I have watched you play together, study together, support one another, love each other. I have listened to you both publicly and privately reflect on your experiences and struggle with life's challenges. We have prayed for one another. And I have been touched by God's presence in your proclamation of the Gospel. I

have found my voice, trusted my instincts and discovered my gifts because you often listened to me, encouraged me and saw good things in me that I had not yet noticed. I have seen you comfort the grieving among us. Indeed, you have held me with compassion as I have grieved. You have challenged me to grow and to see with a wider vision. And you have tempered my energy and enthusiasm with gentle calls to remember where other people are on their journey. For the past four years I have been living in a community of *exceptions*.

In all these ways, and in ways I have no words for, you have blessed me. In you I have seen the image of God.

You have helped me continue to heal. You may sometimes feel I don't value you. Quite the opposite is true. In many ways, because I have felt loved and valued by you, I have learned to value myself and the women around me. As I say my good-byes it is important that I say thank-you to all you Men. In the way you live and love and have touched my life God has exorcised a demon that warped my seeing. I no longer consider the good men in my life the exception, but the rule. I am glad to see you individually, created uniquely by God. It is with great joy now that I come across you in the parking lot or library. I have learned to love you rather than fear you or be angry. What an important gift as I head out to proclaim the Gospel to men and women. I have been shaped and changed by God these past four years. And I hope you realize just how powerfully God has been using you. It is individuals I say good-bye to now.

With great respect and love, thank-you Mark, Tim, Tom, Rick, Joe, Duane, Rich, Viking, Lew, George, Terry, Jack, Eric, Darrell, Chip, Jefferson, Steve, Darrold, Kurt, Bob, Chip, Mike, Wayne, John, Lee, Richard, Red, Phil, Paul, Dan, Harold, Scottie, Andrew, Gregg, Jay, Don, Brian, Nelson, Doug, Ed, Petteri, Gumbo, Jim, Ken, Andrew, Kieth, David, Larry, Frank, Hans, Skip, Dmitrij, Bill, Walt, Frank, Tony, Charles, Scott, Stefan, Jeff, Ron, Joel, Ken, Brook, Glenn, Gerry and Dave, Gary, Bill, Joel, Dennis.

And thank-you, most especially, Steven, my husband, who with tenderness and patience as journeyed with me, and more than anyone has taught me how to love and be loved.

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MARY AMUNDSON is a fourth year student from the Metro Washington, D.C., Synod

# Diaconal Ministry

by Nancy Gable

## Some History

"What is a diaconal minister?" "What's the difference between a diaconal minister and an associate in ministry?" "What does it mean for LTSG to be named the Center for Diaconal Ministry Preparation and Formation?"

These questions are frequently raised as I travel out and about the ELCA. These questions are frequently asked here on campus. In many ways the answers are yet unfolding. However, many pieces have fallen into place. Future issues of *Table Talk* will include additional information as the shape of diaconal ministry, and the role of LTSG in the preparation and formation of diaconal ministers takes shape.

"What is a diaconal minister?" and "What's the difference between a diaconal minister and an associate in ministry?" are two questions whose answers overlap. An understanding of history is one part of the explanation; join me for this brief excursion.

During the time of preparation for the merger of the LCA, the ALC, and the AELC into the ELCA the rosters of lay public ministers became problematic. Some were certified, some consecrated, some were commissioned; some had theological training, some had college training, some had high school training; some were programmatic ministers (education, music, youth, evangelism, etc.), some were support staff (secretaries, custodians, etc.); some were permitted to preside at baptisms and communion. This quite diverse set of people couldn't be pigeonholed or lumped together - and representatives of every group had strong thoughts and feelings about the shape of lay ministry in the ELCA.

In an effort to vision ministry - not base it on predecessor bodies' practices - the Commission for a New Lutheran Church (CNLC) placed in the ELCA constitution the charge, through a continuing resolution, for a six year "Study of Ministry". Two of the three areas of special attention in the continuing resolution mandating the study related to shapes of ministry:

one was the study of a threefold ministerial office of bishop, pastor, and deacon; the second was the appropriate forms of lay ministries to be officially recognized by the ELCA.

The roster of associates in ministry, which took life with the formation of the ELCA, was constitutionally a temporary roster! Associates in ministry, as a recognized roster, ceased to exist when the opening gavel of the 1993 ELCA Churchwide Assembly fell. Any roster for recognized lay ministry, any roster but that which the church has known as pastor, had to be voted into existence by a 2/3 majority of the 1993 churchwide assembly. For those of us who had prepared to serve the church, successfully completed a candidacy process, and believed we had faithfully served the church these years were filled with tension and uncertainty.

Following five years of study, many hearings, and several drafts of documents the task force for the Study of Ministry proposed quite a different vision for recognized ministries in the ELCA - two rosters for ordained ministry (pastor and diaconal ministry) and several rosters for lay ministry (deaconesses, associates in ministry, licensed lay ministers of Word and Sacrament). By reading **Together for Ministry**, the task force's final report and recommendations submitted to the 1993 Churchwide Assembly, you can get details of the study. If you would really like to understand the politics and debate this study created stop by my office and ask to see the daily assembly newsletters. I was a voting member of the assembly and, as one greatly effected by these actions, kept most all of the information.

Questions about the distinctive characteristics of these rosters came as one part of the hours of pre-vote discussion and debate. That put the cart before the horse ... the roster of associates in ministry was never envisioned as a permanent roster. Qualifications for persons desiring to serve on this roster were developed, and subsequently published, as **Interim Criteria for Certification** (I know this as I helped develop those interim criteria). It was only after this roster became a permanent recognized roster, and diaconal ministry became a recognized roster, that distinctive characteristics could be developed.

### **Lay Ministry - What are all of those Rosters?**

In the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) there are several opportunities for recognized, professional, service in ministry. The most

commonly known is that of pastor, an ordained roster of the church. Three recognized rosters for public lay ministry have been approved and developed - diaconal ministry, associate in ministry, and deaconess.

Persons desiring to serve the church on any of these rosters must satisfactorily meet and maintain the following basic standards: commitment to Christ; acceptance of and adherence to the Confession of Faith of this church; willingness and ability to serve in response to the needs of this church; academic and practical qualifications for ministry; life consistent with the Gospel and personal qualifications including leadership abilities and competence in interpersonal relationships; receipt and acceptance of a letter of call; and membership in a congregation of this church. Placement on each of these rosters includes participation in a synod's candidacy process - entrance decision, endorsement and approval. Candidates for any of these recognized rosters most often have earned a college degree, and each requires a minimum of 20 semester credit hours in theological studies.

An associate in ministry (normally) must have a bachelor's degree in a field appropriate to her/his specialization - education, music and the arts, administration or service and general ministries. Twenty credit hours in theological education is minimal and includes one course in each of the following areas: Old Testament, New Testament, Lutheran theology and confessional writings, introductory systematic theology and Lutheran church history (including the North American context). These courses can be taken at an accredited college, seminary or through SELECT. In each case this course of study must be approved the candidate's candidacy committee. Supervised field experience is a minimum of one year and includes 600 supervised hours; CPE may be included as appropriate.

In addition to the basic standards listed above, the diaconal minister must be rooted in the word of God; be trained to carry out a particular service; be committed and prepared to equip the baptized for ministry in the world and in the church; give particular attention to ministries at the boundaries between church and world; exemplify the life of Christ-like service addressing all forms of human need; and be grounded in community. In addition to a bachelor's degree a diaconal minister will have satisfactorily completed a first professional degree from an accredited theological school in North America, demonstrated competence in at least one area of specialization, satisfactorily completed the formational component of the preparation process, and completed an internship. Of particular attention



is the ability to reflect theologically on issues of faith and life, personal spiritual formation and ministry identity, the ability to effectively witness both verbally and in action, and a commitment to develop the whole child of God and assist in the equipping of God's children for ministry in daily life - especially in those places where society meets the church.

A deaconess is a woman (yes, this recognized roster is gender specific) who holds a bachelor's degree and at minimum of 20 semester credit hours in theological studies of Old and New Testament, church history, Lutheran confessions, systematic theology, ethics, pastoral care and counseling, and worship/ liturgy. Field education is also required, as well as completion of the Deaconess Candidate Seminar.

These ministries compliment one another and each works closely with those serving as ministers of Word & Sacrament. The vision of ministry is the essential difference between these rosters, not academic preparation. The associate in ministry may have a seminary degree but have a vision of ministry that is rooted in programs of a congregation or agency; in other words, looking inward at the life of those in the church. The diaconal minister's vision of ministry is always looking outward to the places where the church meets the realities of the world and s/he will constantly probe how the baptized live in the world each day and how an individual might better embody his/her baptismal covenant.

The ELCA has selected LTSC as the Center for Diaconal Ministry Preparation. Gettysburg will be the place where every candidate for the diaconal ministry will come for formation events and some course work. This seminary will guide other seminaries of the ELCA in curriculum development for persons desiring to serve the church as diaconal ministers.

It is an exciting time to be a member of the ELCA!

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~~NANCY CABLE is an AIM and Director for Admissions, Financial Aid, and Continuing Education at LTSC~~

# We Are Not Getting Pastoral Care

by Dave von Schlichten

I have found disturbing the persistent and sometimes puissant loneliness and sense of insignificance I have been feeling since I started seminary. There is hope, though.

I have found distressing that most of the pastoral care I have received from the community has exacerbated my problems. Granted, to use proper CPE parlance, I have chosen to allow the pastoral care to exacerbate my problems. In every model of destructive pastoral care I present below, the receiver is just as responsible for the destructive pastoral care as the giver. It is generally up to the receiver to get the care s/he needs. Nevertheless, pastoral care givers also have a responsibility. Chiefly for the sake of pastoral care givers, I present below three examples of what pastoral care is not.

The first example I call the Monologue Model. The application of this model looks something like this:

Receiver: Can we talk?

Giver: Sure, what's wrong?

R: I feel lonely and worthless, and I don't know why.

G: I know how you feel. I can remember two years ago I felt lonely and worthless. I hated my job, and there was no one I could talk to. My father had moved out, my dog had died, and I didn't have a friend in the world. That was such an awful time for me, but eventually I got over it. So hang in there. You're not alone, and things will get better.

The chief feature of the Monologue Model is that the pastoral care receiver ends up listening to the giver talk about h/her own problems. I suspect that the giver talks about h/herself in an attempt to give the receiver some empathy and assurance, but the result is often that the receiver's needs are ignored. Granted, we as givers may end up monologuing because we ourselves need pastoral care, but when someone approaches us with a problem, that is not the time for us to dwell on ourselves. Mentioning our experiences can be helpful, but not if we eclipse the needs of the receiver.

I suggest that the giver would be more effective if s/he worked harder at listening than talking. A giver cannot help a person if s/he does not know the problem, so let us take the time to listen thoroughly.

R: Can we talk?

G: Sure, what's wrong?

R: I feel lonely and worthless, and I don't know why.

G: Do you always feel lonely and worthless?

R: Well, no. I especially feel lonely in the refectory at meals because no one seems to listen to me.

G: What gives you that impression? [and so on]

A second example of what pastoral care is not is the Levity Model. Its chief characteristic is the giver making light of the receiver's need in some way: by joking around; by offering a platitude or some shallow optimism; or by ignoring the receiver. For example, one time when I was among a group of my close seminary friends, I announced that I was depressed, and the response I received was a moment of silence followed by someone else changing the subject. I presume that no one knew what to say. Shall we do this in the parish?

Another time, when I was in the refectory kitchen, upon being asked how I was, I said that I was distressed about how my internship interviews had gone. One person said, "Oh, it'll be all right," and another person made a joke. Both responses hurt.

One time I said, "I feel unloved," and someone responded, "Look at the Cross." Granted, Jesus loves me. Thanks be to God. God's love is the greatest gift. I believe that God loves me always. Amen. Now, where was I? Oh yeah. "I feel unloved."

As an alternative to the Levity Model I suggest that we not fear listening to each other and not be quick to slap on a band-aid. Hearing that everything will be all right does not help me face and deal with my problems. Anxiety, fear, anger, self-centeredness, self-hatred are all mightier than such flimsy assurance.

A third example of that pastoral care is not is the Boss Model. The chief trait of this model is that the giver dictates to the receiver what the receiver's problem is and what to do about it.

R: I am a worthless piece of crap.

- G: No you're not. Everybody loves you. Come on. You're just depressed because of midterms.
- R: Well, maybe that's part of it.
- G: Sure it is. Why don't we go out tonight? That'll help.

Once again, the giver has not listened to the receiver. There has been no attempt to understand the receiver, and what the receiver has expressed has been discarded as wrong. It may be wrong, but that does not mean the receiver thinks it is wrong. Further, a key axiom of pastoral care is that the giver should help the receiver help h/herself; the giver who uses the Boss Model disregards that axiom by telling the receiver what the problem is and how to solve it.

At times, any of these above models may appear to provide some amelioration. However, in each model, the receiver's true feelings and problems are ignored. Like getting drunk, the above models may temporarily alleviate some pain, but when the receiver sobers up, the problems will still be there.

Are we taught to preach without having first done an exegesis of the text, the season, the congregation, etc.? Similarly, we must exegete a receiver of pastoral care, and to exegete a receiver means to listen carefully, patiently, painstakingly, whether we want to or not. We ask for terms to be clarified and for emotions and thoughts to be expressed, keeping our own agendas and issues out of the way. Remember the propensity of Drs. Larson and Crump for asking "What do you mean by . . . ?" As pastoral care givers, our first and chief task is to ask, ask, and then to listen, listen, listen. Only then can we know how to help.

I finish my diatribe with a few qualifiers. First, a couple of you indeed have been attentive, active listeners, and I thank you. Second, I realize that pastoral care is difficult and requires practice. I, too, have been guilty of employing the models I explicate above. Further, so much is demanded of church leaders already that it seems unrealistic to expect us to be good pastoral care givers as well. Nevertheless, pastoral care is central to what it means to respond to Christ as a church leader.

I apologize for being harsh, but I have not deleted. We do not get the concept of pastoral care. I pray we shall.

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DAVE VON SCHLICHTEN is a second year student from the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod

## Psalm Resources

by Mary Amundson

[Editors's Note: In the Advent issue, a portion of this article was inadvertently omitted. Due to demons in the Internet, the article did not arrive at the editor's e-mail box in one piece. We apologize for any inconvenience that may have caused, and now print the article in its entirety]

Wonderful surprises hide themselves on the reserve shelf in the library, just waiting for the unsuspecting treasure hunter to discover them.... I have been so fortunate!

This article is part of a series sponsored by the Worship Committee, so that you too may know of some of the wonderful treasures available for your use as you plan fun, spirit-filled, meaningful Chapel services.

Take the Psalms for instance . Our LBW offers us a fine collection, translated and marked for spoken or chanted use. But did you know we have five different additional resources available? And treasure they are. Two of these resources, *The Psalms: A New Translation for Prayer and Worship* and *Psalter for the Christian People*, primarily offer new translations of all the Psalms. *The Psalms: A New Translation for Prayer and Worship* offers translations intended for use in private prayer or worship. The translations remain poetic while using punctuation and contemporary language to vividly communicate the Psalms message. This resource, along with the *Psalter for the Christian People*, avoid gendered language for God. *The Psalms: A New Translation for Prayer and Wroship* translations are not marked by verse, making it difficult to read the Psalms responsively. The *Psalter for the Christian People* numbers the verses, and indicates with an "\*" the half verse mark. The *Psalter for*

*the Christian People* does not include the marks for chanting, though. This was to make the resource as inclusive as possible. Traditions vary in how they chant the Psalms. The *Psalter for the Christian People* includes an essay on how to mark the Psalms for chanting depending on your tradition. If you wish to copy these Psalms into your bulletin for Chapel worship, you need to obtain copyright permission to do so.

Of the three Psalm text translations on reserve I favor *Psalms for Praise and Worship: A Complete Liturgical Psalter*. One reason is that using it is easy. Copyright permission for use in worship is already given with the copyright information. In addition it offers a variety of reading styles for each Psalm. Not only are the Psalms marked for chanting, but the author also formatted them with light and dark print to enhance the responsorial character of the Psalms. For example, some Psalms have many speakers: God, people, evildoers, etc. In addition, some Psalms move between first, second & third person verbs. To just read these Psalms by alternating verses misses much of their drama. Therefore, the author used light and dark print to indicate an alternative responsive reading. And that's not all - the author also developed a collection of refrains (a repeated phrase every 4th verse or so) to be used with the Psalms. Every Psalm has at least one response, many have more than one. The book includes an index in the back to suggest which responses go with which Psalms. In addition to all these great options, this resource also uses inclusive language for God.

Well, if you'er not already running off to the reserve shelf to pick up this resource, let me share two more with you. Sometimes I prefer singing the Psalms instead of chanting or speaking them, especially for a change. Two resources, *Hymns, Psalms and Spiritual Songs* and *The Psalter: Psalms & Canticles for Singing* sit on reserve bursting with treasure. Both of these resources include sung versions of most Psalms (those not in the lectionary aren't included) and some Psalms have more than one sung version. *The Psalter: Psalms & Canticles for Singing* is arranged for a cantor to sing the text and the community to respond with a refrain. Copyright permission to

reprint the refrain in the bulletin is included with the copyright information. This resource, in addition to the Psalms includes familiar canticles like the **Magnificat**, and some suggestions for seasonal use of these materials. *Hymns, Psalms and Spiritual Song*, as you can tell by the title includes more material than just the Psalms. This resource is the Presbyterian Hymnal. You can find the Psalms in the middle between hymns about the church year, and topical hymns. This book includes many contemporary hymns, and in addition to a traditional topical and hymn name index, it includes an index showing which hymns reflect or speak to specific Scripture verses. So, as you plan worship, this resource has many uses! As with the other books mentioned, these two treasures also use inclusive language for God. Almost all the resources include an essay describing the criteria used to make language decisions. You may want to peruse these essays if you have particular interest in this issue.

That's about all the treasure I've discovered recently. I hope you find these resources useful and inspiring as you plan worship. Now that you know what's available for Psalms, it may be easier to incorporate them into your planning!

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MARY AMUNDSON is a fourth year student from Metro Washington, D.C. Synod

## Will This Ever End?

by Daniel O. Donmoyer

"You have a lot going for you and one of those, in a big way, is that *you are male.*"

I was shocked and angered at this statement. I see myself as sensitive to this and similar feminine concerns, yet I shied away from the issue. I let it slide, but my silence must have rang in this person's ears. "What I mean is that the female seminarians that were here before you will have a more difficult time finding a call just because *they are female.* They are good, talented, but you are male and won't have problems finding a church."

I believe the statement was a sincere lament. What this person from my Teaching Parish site awkwardly expressed was their sadness at a reality that I have been hearing about in classes and sidewalk discussions since I began course work here at LTG last Fall. I hate that this is the case for women, but I also hate to admit that, a few days later, I discovered the self-righteous nature of my advocacy.

Looking through the bills and notices I pulled from my mail slot, I frowned in self-pity, though not because of a bill. I found two articles which were to be read in preparation for preaching class. I caught myself thinking, "I am getting tired of this. Why must we trudge through more of these readings concerning feminine issues? Will this ever end?"

I was shocked again, but this time it was my words. This self-proclaimed advocate is a hypocrite; no better, no worse, than any other male whose progress in this area is limited to having learned how to be somewhat politically correct. I stuffed the readings into my bag and slithered away, embarrassed.



A few days ago I dug these articles out of my bag. Still embarrassed, I began reading *We Had to Sacrifice the Woman: Social and Sexual Forces Between Pulpit and Pew*, by Thomas Troeger. The theme brought me back to the discussion I had with the previously mentioned parishioner. **SPLASH!!!** Like the victorious football coach who is nearly knocked off his feet by the deluge of ice-cold Gator Aid poured upon him by jubilant players, I realized the implications of what the parishioner had said. I recoiled! Do my gifts not matter? **You are male.** What about my qualifications? **You are male.** What about the women and their gifts? **They are female.** What about their qualifications? They have just as much to offer as any man; possibly, probably more. **They are female.** Through tears, I realized gender is the issue!

Thank you, Dr. Hedahl, for helping this blind beggar see!

In a different sense than originally asked, the question still stands: Will this ever end?

---

DANIEL O. DONMOYER is a first year student from the Lower Susquehanna Synod

## Seminary Weekend

by Jackie DePhillips

It's that time of year again. Spring daffodils and crocuses push through the earth, creating their own arrangement of yellow, white, and purple flowers on multi-lengthened stems. March winds will soon turn into April showers, and the season of Lent ends with Jesus' journey to Jerusalem. On Palm Sunday weekend, we here at Gettysburg Seminary will wait to welcome prospective new students. On April 7th, 8th, and 9th, students, staff, administration and faculty will greet those gathered to explore and investigate the curriculum and worship and community life.

Friday night's welcome includes registration and the annual talent show. Saturday starts with a tour of the campus and available housing and includes introductions and Morning Prayer. After lunch, the perspective students sample theological and field education, as well as financial aid possibilities. The evening concludes with dinner, Eucharist, and a reception at Singmaster. On Palm Sunday, a bus leaves for Washington, D.C., for a tour of the educational opportunities through the Washington Theological Consortium. Lunch is hosted by the Luther House of Studies.

The community at Gettysburg is comprised of people of varying talents, gifts, ages and experiences. Seminary Weekend expands this community to welcome these perspective students. We earnestly pray that those involved can use this opportunity to explore how they might use their time, talents, and gifts to proclaim the gospel message of Jesus' birth, death and resurrection for us, God's people. Welcome!

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JACKIE DEPHILLIPS is a second year student from the Allegheny Synod

## 25th Anniversary of Ordination of Women

A special event this August marks the 25th anniversary of the ordination of women. It is 25 years since the predecessor churches of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America decided to ordain women to the ministry of Word and Sacrament. All ordained women, lay rostered women, and all members of the church are invited to attend a churchwide anniversary gathering in Minneapolis, immediately preceding the ELCA Assembly.

Participants will gather under the theme "Break Open the Jar: Remembrance and Hope." The theme is based on the account of the faithful, generous, and audacious woman at Bethany who broke open the jar of precious ointment to anoint Jesus (Mark 14:3-9). Her bold and unexpected witness is echoed in the ministry of women everywhere, including more than 1600 Lutheran women who have been ordained in this country since 1970.

The ELCA Churchwide Assembly in Minneapolis will provide many occasions for this church as a whole to celebrate the anniversary and recognize the ordained ministry of women.

Participants in "Breaking Open the Jar" will gather for two days to renew friendships, attend workshops and Bible study, and worship. At a preassembly banquet with ELCA leadership, participants will look to the challenges facing ordained women and the church in the future.

The gathering is sponsored by three churchwide units: the Division for Ministry, the Commission for Women, and Women of the ELCA.

Three students from LTSG will attend. Ann Rowe-Church, Cindy Rasmussen, and Jackie DePhillips are the delegates selected from LTGS. Mary Amundson, Elaine Berg, and Lisa Bobb are the alternates

# Resource Seminar for Youth Workers

by John Brock

Every year, those magnificent folks at Youth Specialties put on their marvelous **National Resource Seminar for Youth Workers**. These one day events are designed to equip not only veterans of youth ministry but first time volunteers (or interns) with some of the latest ideas, training, and resources to get you - and your youth group - through the year.

They will help you get a better handle on: how to work with volunteers; how to make the most of your time; how to define roles and goals for adult and youth leaders; and specific and practical ideas and tools for building and maintaining relationships with youth.

The people who lead these one day seminars are all experienced youth people. They'll show you how to use music, commercials, videos, movies, magazine, print ads, television, and much more to relate to youth, and to teach and instruct them. In addition to the free notebook you receive, YS has an astonishing amount of resource material there for the purchase.

Youth Specialties has dates in over 100 cities, and two are relatively near Gettysburg. Philadelphia has an event scheduled for April 22, 1995, and Pittsburgh has one on May 20, 1995. Cost is \$49, BUT WAIT! There's more! If you are a full-time student, and register 30 days in advance, your cost is ONLY \$29. You can call Youth Specialties at 619/440-2333, ext. RS, fax them (with a credit card number) at 619/440-4939, or write them at National Resource Seminar, Youth Specialties, 1224 Greenfield Drive, El Cajon CA, 92021.

As a former full-time youth director, at both congregational and synodical levels, I highly recommend this event to any and all. It's well worth the time and money for the resources, people, and spiritual support.

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JOHN BROCK is a second year student from the New England Synod

# A Sermon for Epiphany

## Matthew 2:1-12

by Anne Dwiggins

(This sermon was preached on March 2, 1995, in the homiletics elective, "Preaching the Principal Festivals," Susan K. Hedahl, Instructor. )

When I was a kid, my favorite vacation spot was my cousins' place. Many Thanksgivings and often for a week or so in the summer we used to travel from our home in suburban Maryland to their home in rural Massachusetts. Now there were a number of reasons why I loved to visit. These three boys had a seemingly inexhaustible supply of Hardy Boy books. And they had this wonderful jalopy that we would pile into and just take off over the fields - which to me seemed a wonderfully daring thing to do. The fact you had to rummage around on the floor to find the handle to roll down the window made the adventure just a little more exciting. But most fascinating of all, they had a closet. And my cousins said that this closet, this very closet in their bedroom, had been a stop on the Underground Railroad.

Well, I have no idea whether that closet was truly a stop on the Underground Railroad or not. Certainly the house was big enough to hold numbers of freedom-seeking slaves. And having been built in the year 1700, it was certainly old enough. And it is true that one of the easterly routes of the Railroad did indeed head through Massachusetts on the way to Montreal. But I never knew for sure if my cousins' story was true or a figment of overactive imagination.

Nevertheless the story has continued to fascinate me. How did people who had no money, no resources, who might have had no family support, or had to leave their family behind, begin a journey of such magnitude? How did people have the courage to leave the known, no matter how oppressive, for the unknown? How did slaves deal with the uncertainty of meeting unfamiliar faces along the way, and wondering friend - or informant? How did they know how to make their way? Listen to these instructions:

When the sun comes back,  
 And the first quail calls,  
 Follow the Drinking Gourd.  
 For the old man is a'waiting for to carry you to freedom  
 If you follow the Drinking Gourd.

This means: Begin the trip in late winter or early spring when days begin to get longer, when the quail call.

The river bank makes a very good road,  
 The dead trees will show you the way.  
 Left foot, peg foot, traveling on,  
 Follow the Drinking Gourd.

Travel north along the Tombigbee River to northern Mississippi. Look for special markings on dead tree trunks.

The river ends between two hills,  
 Follow the Drinking Gourd.  
 There's another river on the other side,  
 Follow the Drinking Gourd.

Go north between the hills to the Tennessee River, and follow it north.

When the great big river meets the little river,  
 Follow the Drinking Gourd.  
 For the old man is a'waiting for to carry you to freedom  
 If you follow the Drinking Gourd.

When the Tennessee meets the Ohio River you are near to Illinois, where the organized segment of the Railroad will assist you to Canada.

Did you catch the key in this song? The Big Dipper, disguised in the song as the Drinking Gourd, points to Polaris, the North Star. Slaves in Alabama and Mississippi learned this song called "Follow the Drinking Gourd," and even children could point out the North Star that meant freedom.

This star expressed the hope of African-Americans in bondage in the 1800's - and a star compelled the magi to make a journey some 2,000 years ago. These men were astrologers, men who studied the stars. And in those days everyone knew that the births and deaths of great men were noted by signs in the heavens. Jesus had been born and the magi observed a star heralding the birth of the king of the Jews. So they journeyed to Jerusalem - where else would they be able to find out more information about this Jewish king? "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we have observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage."

Try to get the picture here. We already know from the very first lines of Matthew's gospel that Jesus is the long-awaited messiah of the Jews. He is the son of David, a mighty king who will rule over all Israel. He is the son of Abraham, the father of a multitude of nations. His name is Emmanuel, God with us. And here come these foreigners, Gentiles, right into Herod's court - no, let's get this right, the court of Herod, King of the Jews - asking "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews?" Not only that, but they have come to honor this new king and pay him homage and deliver gifts of great value.

Herod was a king whose press was frankly not too good - he is known to have murdered one wife, three sons, and assorted other expendable political figures. We have here someone who intended to maintain his hold on his throne. "Ruthless" would probably be an understatement. When those magi stopped by, think of what might have been going through Herod's mind! Troubled, disturbed, shaken is how our gospel story reports it. And not only Herod - we hear that all of Jerusalem is troubled also.

The magi had seen a sign from God in nature, but the Scriptures, God's revelation to God's people Israel, are essential to complete the picture. Herod wastes no time. He calls in the chief priests and the scribes. And we learn that Bethlehem, just five miles down the road, is the place. From Bethlehem "shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel." And we get a snapshot of the type of ruler this messiah will be - a shepherd, humble, one who gathers together.

Well, Herod calls in the wise men to get the exact astronomical information. He sends them on their way to Bethlehem with instructions to return with the location of the child because he wants to worship this new king too. But we know Herod is up to no good. In the Mediterranean world there is little privacy and business is conducted in public. Secrecy indicates dishonorable intentions, and Herod, operating in secret, is certainly not to be trusted. But God guides the magi. The star leads them to Bethlehem, indeed to the very house where the child may be found. After worshipping the child and presenting gifts due his status as King, the magi are warned by God in a dream to return to their home by another road. The magi answer to God, not to Herod.

Today we celebrate the Epiphany of our Lord. Epiphany means appearance. In Matthew's text, Jesus the Christ, the Messiah, has appeared in the world. God has sent a child from the Holy Spirit. God has entered our lives in this world in a new, a unique way. God is born and will live on this earth as we live on this earth. And this is the good news, the gospel, of this text. Jesus is the one who "will save his people from their sins." He is, in the words of one commentator, "God's royal liberator."

But it is clear from this text that God's action of liberation is getting mixed reviews. On the one hand we have the reaction of the magi. The magi travel a great distance to check out God's sign in the heavens. They endure court intrigue and a ruler not quite on the up-and-up to research this phenomenon. Their trip is extended as they must go beyond Jerusalem to seek the child in another location. But in Bethlehem they find the child. And our gospel lesson tells us the magnitude of their reaction - literally, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy. Matthew heaps adverb upon adjective as he expresses the incredible emotion that the magi experience when they find Jesus.

And then there is Herod and all of Jerusalem. We see here anxiety and fear. We see deception and trickery. And with the warning to the magi not to return to Herod, we even get an ominous hint that Herod is working actively against God.

Jesus' arrival on this earth sparked conflict. And this conflict we see arising at Jesus' birth continues right through Matthew's gospel. We have those who believe, and those who conspire against him. We have those who are threatened, and those who greet him with faith. And finally in the passion



narrative, we have a replay of this very Epiphany story, with Jesus' fate again intertwined with a political ruler - Pilate, this time; the religious leaders; and all the people who demand his crucifixion as King of the Jews. This story of the magi's search, which foreshadows the conflict which will eventually end Jesus' life on Calvary, seems particularly appropriate to begin the Season of Epiphany, that season of the church year that takes us from the birth of Jesus at Christmas time into the Lenten season and Good Friday.

Yes, the author of Matthew presents us with two differing and conflictive reactions to Jesus. Herod rejects - the magi respond. Well, we think, this lesson doesn't have a lot to teach us. We're responders! We're right here in this church, this very evening. It isn't even a Sunday! We already worship Christ. We don't reject him. We aren't caught by Herod's oppressive distress and confusion about the relation of Christ to our lives.

But are we really ready for God's radical liberation in our lives? Are we ready to travel the new road of freedom pointed to by God through Christ? Are we, like the magi, ready to take a different road home?

I have a confession to make to you. I am great at telling God what to do. My prayer life is too often a one way conversation: God, I need this. God, do that. I fear. I am anxious. I am Herod, right here in the twentieth century.

Perhaps there is a bit of Herod in all of us. Herod, going the wrong way.

Our gospel today shows us a better way. Our gospel gives us the example of the magi. Finding themselves at a crossroads, these are the faithful who follow God's star, not knowing where it will lead. These are the people who trust the message of God. These are people whose faith allows them to worship a mere child in a backwater town away from the political center of Jerusalem - but worship him as the King, with costly gifts that document their understanding of who Jesus is. These are people who have given themselves obediently to God's plan, who have trusted in God's constant presence on their journey. Like the American slaves on the Underground Railroad, these are people whose trust in God's star has ultimately led them to rejoice exceedingly with great joy.

The magi were responsive to God's signs in their lives. The magi listened

to God. And perhaps we all need to remember this when we consider our faith. The grace of God, the grace revealed in God's gift of Christ to this world, is a gift of liberation. We are freed from the anxiety of dependence on ourselves. We are free to trust in a God who unfailingly shepherds us through this sometimes difficult and painful earthly existence. We are liberated to follow with exceeding joy the route upon which God guides us. It's no longer, God, we need you to do this in our lives, but rather, God, what is your will for us in this situation? God, let us experience the liberation of trust in you. God, guide us as we seek to follow your star to worship your son.

Amen.

"Song of Liberty, Escaped Slaves Followed A Musical 'Drinking Gourd' North Toward Freedom" by Gloria D. Rall, The Washington Post, 8 February, 1995, pp. H1 and 7.

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# Augury

## April 2 - 8

- 4 The Bible MTV Style, Part II: Previewing  
American Bible Society videos of the  
Prodigal Son and the Magnificat  
Dr. Francis Gench  
Student Association (Coffee Shop, 4:00 p.m.)
- 5 Women in Southern Lutheranism  
Ms. Susan W. McArver, Duke University  
History of Christianity in America (LLR, 2:00  
p.m.)

## April 9 - 15

- 11 Adapting Corporate Models for Conflict  
Management to the Parish Setting  
Mr. David Rippey  
Student Association (Coffee Shop, 4:00 p.m.)

## April 16 - 22

- 21 Conflict Management Workshop  
Mr. David Rippey  
Student Association (Coffee Shop, 1:30 p.m.)

## April 23 - 29

- 26 Spring Convocation - No Classes

## May 7 - 13

- 10 Lutherans and American Christianity  
Mr. Frederick K. Wentz  
History of Christianity in America (LLR, 2:00  
p.m.)