



women's concerns

Spring 1989

Sisters, Mothers, Daughters

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Women's Concerns is prepared three times a year by the Division of Mission in Canada of The United Church of Canada. It keeps women in touch with each other, as well as keeping us aware of issues that affect our lives. One of its purposes is to provide an opportunity for you to share your experiences as you grow and struggle on your journey to wholeness in Christ.

Send us your own story, a meaningful Bible study or poem, news about women in the church, or your reflections on issues of the day. The Editorial Committee reserves the right to edit for space and clarity, while maintaining the original intent. Articles in *Women's Concerns* not reproduced from other sources may be used with an acknowledgement.

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Lorna Crozier ends her poem, "In Praise of Women," (see p. 9) with these words:

Across borders,
across oceans and the endless reach of prairie,
our sisters, our mothers, our daughters
join hands. These women
make us holy.

I was born in 1940. For the first forty or so years of my life, my primary relationships were with men - God, my father, my fellow student leaders, my teachers, the male clergy, later my husband and sons. I thought these relationships were somehow primary and superior to relationships I might have with women - my mother, my daughter, my best friends, even teachers like Virginia Ramey Mollenkott. I talked to the men about ideas at parties; I was sure the women talked about "trivial" things like diapers, flower arrangements, recipes, feelings. I was well socialized by patriarchal values and stereotypes. I was male-defined and male-identified.

It was with reluctance that I attended my first all-woman (or almost all-woman) meeting at the 1980 Evangelical Women's Caucus in Saratoga Springs, New York. That meeting began a transformation in me and was a bit scary and threatening. I listened to women who had intellect and emotion well integrated; I talked with women about common experiences; I was served communion for the first time by a woman; and I began to think about adding female images to my understanding of God. That part of transformation was more than a little bit scary!

My journey since 1980 has put me in closer touch with myself as woman, with my mother, with my sisters and with my daughter. My job allows me to spend time with wonderful women in all regions of Canada and with overseas visitors here and partners in other countries. Through my experiences I have come to value sisterhood in the church and outside. I struggle to achieve a mutual relationship with my mother (see p. 12); I experience solidarity with my daughter as she recovers from the long-term effects of childhood sexual assault from a male baby-sitter; I value the insights of sisters like Swarna Sugunasiri (see p. 5) from other faith communities; I pray with lesbian sisters buffeted by society and the church; in the quiet of my third-floor study, I listen to the music of Carolyn McDade and Miriam Therese Winter. And I am blessed by my relationships with these women - they make me holy.

This issue of *Women's Concerns* explores the contradictions and complexities of relationships among women, especially the relationships of sisters, mothers, daughters. The contributors present us with a collection of pieces (song, poetry, ritual, story, review) which celebrate women's connectedness and acknowledge the pain as well as the joy which are inherent in the struggle to establish and maintain "right-relation" in biological and choice relationships among women.

(continued on page 10)

My Mother, My Daughter, Myself

by Frances Davis Lowe

No human relationship is stronger, more durable and more satisfying than that between mother and daughter, yet it is rarely recognized in our culture. Literature abounds with people in relationships, but there are almost no portraits of mothers and daughters.

When the image does appear, it is most often negative. Mother is either a shadowy figure in the background, or the spiteful, cruel and jealous witch/stepmother/queen of our folklore.

The story of Salome in the New Testament is typical:

Salome danced for the king, and he was enchanted. "I want to do something for you," he leered at the nubile child. "What would you like?"

The girl ran to her mother. "What shall I ask for?"

Herodias straightened her daughter's skimpy costume. "Ask for the head of John the Baptist on a plate," she said.

Salome stared at her, horrified.

"Go ahead!" her mother hissed, pushing the girl back into the king's chamber. "Ask him!"

These characters are so familiar we accept the story without question. But it is not the typical mother/daughter experience!

. . .

Margaret Mead and Jessie Barnard tell us that women describe this relationship with mother as close, important, supportive, satisfying - and deeply mourned when it is lost. Even in our alienated society, most mothers and daughters are close. For every woman who abandons her daughter to an abusive husband, there are twenty women meeting Mom for lunch. Mothers still fly in to help their daughters with birthings; daughters still care for their mothers (and their husband's mothers) in their last years.

Why, we have to ask, is this not confirmed? Where is Bertha, rejoicing because a daughter, the comfort of her old age, has been born to her? Where is Lydia, who does not sell her children into slavery, neither does she use them for her own sexual satisfaction?

Only occasionally, as when Mary runs to Elizabeth, her elder kinswoman, with news of her pregnancy, do we catch a glimpse of the relationship as most women experience it.

Surely nothing patriarchy has done to women is more destructive than the denial or distortion of this primary bond. It has alienated women from their best friends, from each other, from themselves. It has profound and tragic effects on society. It is crucial that we reclaim this bond.

Yet the distortion is so complete that even women do not recognize it. Religious tradition uses the father/son relationship as an image of the Creator/Creation relationship. Of late we have acknowledged the feminine in the Deity, but nowhere do we affirm the unambiguous, accepting, delight-in-the-other, joyful companionship between mother and daughter. Much less do we image it as the way the Creator "feels" about

creation; the way we respond to the Creator.

Psychology teaches that girls do not attain identity through separation from the mother, as boys do, but by identifying with her. In most cultures, a girl stays by her mother's side while her brothers go off to learn to hunt and fight. A woman bonds most closely with the child not taken from her.

Theories about feminine psychology are not entirely satisfactory, however. Sometimes they seem to be projections of the male experience, rather than authentic to women. Many women have real questions about the so-called Electra complex, for instance, sensing that it is not what the female experiences, but what the male wishes.

Most troublesome is the concept that a girl must reject her mother and devote total attention to her husband if she is to be whole, that continued close friendship represents "unhealthy bonding." If the bond is "unhealthy," it is strange that women who maintain close, female, kinship ties are healthier and happier than those who break away from them. In real life it would seem that mothers and daughters who are alienated are deeply scarred rather than mature.

Could it be that the feminine experience of having relationships of many kinds is healthier than the patriarchal construct that one "belongs" to another, to the exclusion of others?

If we view the scenario as patriarchal, it takes on quite a different colour. Like economic dependence, alienation among women assures their total accessibility to the male. The suggestion that a woman might have many sources of pleasure, many friendships, is deeply threatening to patriarchy, which wants her total attention. That is why our cultural tradition denigrates the important mother/daughter bond.

Mothers of folklore are often cruel and spiteful.

There are healthier models for this relationship. If we are not fortunate enough to possess them in our own experience, we can go far back into history to find them and search scripture carefully for their remnants.

Some scholars think there was a time before patriarchy when people worshipped female deities. By the time Greek mythology was formalized, the strong earth goddess had evolved into numerous lesser consorts of the male gods. This is the tradition in which our culture, and Christian tradition, has roots.

The Greeks recognized two types of goddess: strong, self-actualizing "virgins" and victimized goddesses-in-relation-ship. (Remnants of earlier goddesses exist, like Hestia, goddess of the hearth and home, but have not been affirmed in our tradition. Aphrodite, the love goddess, is almost pure masculine projection.)

This environment forces women into either/or dichoto-

mies. We can be virgins or whores. We can be strong and self-sufficient but virginal (in Christian terms physically virgin), or we can be in relationship but victimized. Such a construct is not authentic for women. We know that real women are neither virgins nor whores, nor do we live anywhere on the virgin/whore continuum. Mature women are, overwhelmingly, mothers; and mothers are rarely whores and never virgins.

***Our cultural tradition denigrates the
mother/daughter bond.***

It is women's experience that a woman can be daughter, wife and mother all at once. Typically, a woman will choose among these relationships only when forced to; she prefers to enjoy them all. Forced to choose, it is the overwhelming tendency of women to protect their children. When an angry Herodias uses her daughter to spite her husband, we can be sure that powerful cultural forces and/or survival needs are at work.

Fortunately, one model did survive patriarchal translation - the ancient myth of Demeter and Persephone.

Persephone is abducted and raped by the King of the Underworld, with the collusion of her father. Demeter mourns deeply and searches everywhere for her daughter. When she learns what has happened, she uses feminine wisdom and power to gain her daughter's freedom.

Demeter is the goddess of the fruitfulness of the earth; it is by her will that the earth brings forth food for mortals to eat and sacrifice to the gods. So Demeter uses her power to "hold back" spring and prevent the earth from bearing fruit. Deprived of their sacrifices, deeply wounded in their pride, the male gods relent. But Persephone has eaten some pomegranate seeds (sexual awakening) in Hades and cannot be restored to childhood. A compromise is worked out in which she spends part of the year in Hades and part on earth.

This myth has been interpreted as an example of unhealthy bonding, but these goddesses are, in fact, mature and powerful, intermediaries between heaven and hell, the conscious and the unconscious. They were hostesses of the most awesome of Greek religious rites, which indicates the power of the mother/daughter bond.

We should note that although Demeter is a sexual victim, she does not consent to the victimization of her daughter. She uses authentic feminine powers - knowledge of male pride and control of procreation - to achieve a solution which is best for everyone.

When, like Herodias, we abandon our daughters to sexual manipulation, we consign them to life in the Underworld. When we claim our authentic power and transmit it to our daughters through the mother/daughter experience, we are free for personal wholeness and healthy relationship, both sexual and non sexual. It is important to observe that this is a healthy model for both men and women.

A final story, from the Old Testament, provides a beautiful tribute to women's friendship and the mother/daughter bond. It is about Naomi who, finding herself widowed, resolves to

return to her own people and dismisses her daughters-in-law. Ruth, however, refuses to go, begging to be allowed to remain in relationship with Naomi.

Later, Naomi helps Ruth find a new love bond with Boaz, who is not threatened by the women's friendship. The outcome is happy and healthy for everyone. Its importance is revealed in the fact that the women are the ancestors of David, and thus of Christ.

We would like to think that, had Herodias chosen to be faithful to the mother/daughter relationship rather than overwhelmed by survival needs (she was quite right to see the prophet as a threat), she and Salome would have been similarly confirmed.

While we recognize that the mother/daughter bond may be distorted or broken, our archetypal image of it is a vital expression of the relationship between Creator and Creation. For some of us, our own histories provide the image.

My mother, my first and best friend, loved me before birth, past death, across the years and miles of our parting. Her acceptance, joy and love of me are my icon of the Creator's love. And my response to that love - my joy in her presence, my desolation in our separation - expresses my relationship with the Redeemer.

I have been blessed by the companionship of women who have formed the landscape of my feminine identity: mother, grandmother, aunt, teacher, friend, mother-in-law, my two daughters - beautiful inside and out.

In that company I find expression of the people of God, the church as it could be.

Frances Davis Lowe is a writer/journalist living in Lubbock, Texas. She is the only daughter of her 83-year-old mother and has two young, adult daughters of her own.

Reprinted with permission from the March/April 1988 issue of Daughters of Sarah.

Watch For

Don't Blame Mother: Mending the Mother-Daughter Relationship by Paula Caplan, author of *The Myth of Women's Masochism*.

This book will list and explore myths our culture uses to scapegoat mothers.

Coming in July from Harper and Row.

A Buddhist Girl Attains Womanhood, Bringing Joy To The Family

By Swarna Sugunasiri

I am going to tell you what happened when my daughter attained womanhood and how she was received. Indeed, it brings to mind all the pleasant memories I have of attaining this stage of my own life, back in Sri Lanka, in a Buddhist family.

Tamara was twelve when she had her first menstruation. That summer I had spent time talking with her, getting her ready, telling her how things were done for me when I first started menstruating. I remember her getting excited, and feeling proud of it. She would be the star of the occasion! I have a feeling she sort of looked forward to it.

It was coincidental that she started menstruating right on the date of her birthday, September 8. It was a Saturday and we were on our way back from London, Ontario. Nothing special happened for the next four days except for her to stay home from school. It was a time to experience the bodily changes taking place in herself, enjoy the moment, and psyche up to the new life.

On the fourth day, she had her first post-menstrual bath. The delay was to highlight the event with a bath with ritual overtones. Like Sri Lankan women do when bathing in a public place, Tamara wore a wrap-around. There were certain things that needed to be done, and my sister-in-law was there to help me. Together, we fomented Tamara's body with herbs and washed the hair with lime. After all, she was beginning a clean and healthy life! After the bath, she was given new clothes. The rest of her day was spent in the company of myself and the aunt.

In a private family gathering the same day, she was reminded of the stage of life she had now entered. Tamara was a respectful and honourable member of the family and the community. She had a dignified role to play, dad assured. She had freedom, and a lot, *a lot* of responsibility, mom emphasized.

The party time was to be that weekend. Relatives and family friends were invited to join in the "Celebration of the Treasury" (*kotahalu*, as it is called in Sinhala), symbolizing prosperity and happiness.

The music, the balloons and the festoons, and the people gathered made no doubt the world was celebrating. Then, as Tamara came out of her room at an auspicious moment, women sang songs of joy for her. She was first met by me, with a glass of water with a red rose in it, a symbol of her budding womanhood. Dad was there to welcome her as well. Then came the thunderous drumming of a community drum, rhythmically played by women and men. This was to be followed by taped religious music that brought a serenity.

Soon it was time for the new woman to present herself and receive acceptance. Holding a plate full of betel leaves (offering betel leaves is the Sinhalese way of inviting someone at

any occasion), Tamara went round meeting each and every one in attendance, showering each with a broad smile! She in turn was showered with gifts, mainly in the form of jewellery. Dad gave her jewellery, then her brother, then relatives and friends. By the end of the walk, she had gifts to last a lifetime! Was it ever a right royal treatment!

For the family, relatives and friends, it was a cultural renewal, an occasion to continue an age-old Buddhist tradition of treasuring a girl.

For Tamara, it was the day when she ascended to the throne of a princess, with a step toward responsible womanhood.

Anyone interested in making use of information in this article for drama, film or video is asked to contact the author, Swarna Sugunasiri, c/o Deborah Marshall, Women's Concerns, 85 St. Clair Ave. East, Toronto, Ontario M4T 1M8.

Swarna Sugunasiri, a Canadian born in Sri Lanka, is a teacher of English as a second language in a Toronto school. As a member of an interfaith panel, Swarna shared this story with participants at the 25th anniversary celebration of United Church Women in July 1987.

Correction

Maureen Scott Kabwe, author of "Development Means Dancing To Your Own Tune" has indicated that the price given in the article for a loaf of bread should have been 52 Zimbabwe cents and not "52 Zimbabwe dollars."

Mother and God

Words and music by Miriam Therese Winter

$\text{♩} = 92$

The musical score is written in treble clef with a key signature of two sharps (F# and C#) and a common time signature (C). The tempo is marked as quarter note = 92. The score consists of seven lines of music, each with a corresponding line of lyrics. Chord symbols are placed above the notes. The lyrics are: 'Moth - er and God, to You we sing: wide is Your womb, warm is Your wing. In You we live, move, and are fed, sweet, flow - ing milk, life - giv - ing bread. Moth - er and God, to You we bring all bro - ken hearts, all bro - ken wings.' The final line of music ends with a triple bar line and a '3' indicating a triple measure rest.

Moth - er and God, to You we sing:

wide is Your womb, warm is Your wing.

In You we live, move, and are fed,

sweet, flow - ing milk, life - giv - ing bread.

Moth - er and God, to You we bring

all bro - ken hearts, all bro - ken wings.

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The Dancer

For My Mother

by Estelle Amaron-Ellis

She danced the dance of the seven veils,
bare feet beating her life blood
into the polished stage floor.
The music crescendoed,
the last veil
- a gossamer sheath of angel's hair -
slipped delicately through long, slender fingers.
Naked for a split second -
her moment of power - hers to control -
then black out
and an audience cheered -
cheered my mother,
my mother as I never knew her
in a pre-war London.

My mother at seventy
lives alone,
her gypsy feet in comfortable shoes
with pads and bandaids protecting calloused toes and
soles.

Her dancer's spirit at peace, now
with the struggle that was her life.
Half remembered memories
reluctantly shared when pressed by her eager children
desperate to know the reasons
for our own realities.

The stories, when they come, haunt me.
They tell of a little girl too pretty
for a post-Victorian school mistress
who daily caned and shamed
the dressed-up doll that was my mother.
I picture her in her party-white dress
and floppy bow giving up its struggle
to hold back her black and bouncing curls,
dressed to fill her older sister's fantasy
and punished for being pretty
in a school of starched black tunics
and thick wool stockings.

Her father was a circus star,
"Royalty," my aunt once told me,
and at home he was the King,
a petty tyrant who ruled his wife and bullied his children,
punishing the older ones with hours of juggling.
Drop a ball and start again - hour after hour.
A king who beat his tiny daughter,
bashing her head with a shovel
and locking her in the dark, damp coal cellar
for what outrageous crime?

There was a half-brother, thirty years old,
who exposed himself and laughed and teased
and I can't shake the image of the frightened child
who ran and never told
and I ask myself, was that all?

Then came the foster homes
and mother, too young to travel with her circus family,
was separated from the gentle brother who loved her
and the sweet mother she adored.
She was passed from relatives to strangers;
Some were kind - a special aunt - but most were cruel
or at best, indifferent
and childhood dimmed.
Shared stories end
until the time she knew that she could dance
and dancing became her salvation
and her cross.
Dancing meant travel and independence,
but it didn't mean freedom
and it didn't mean choice.
A chorus girl dyes her black hair red
when a redhead is needed to fill the line.
A chorus girl stands naked
while naked eyes stare at curves and lines
(and I wonder, was my mother there,
in her naked body
or did she find some place to hide?).

Her sister was a dancer too,
"But not as good as me," my mother says.
I suspect she had a sideline and
tried to pimp my mother.
Saved by her sixteen-year-old innocence
the man sent my sobbing mother away
untouched. I wonder.
You might not touch a body but how deeply
do you wound a soul?

The war broke out and my mother
met my father, the young Canadian journalist.
The nightclub she danced in was bombed
and my father made a grizzly search
among the sheeted corpses.
She was safe - her number wasn't on yet
and she danced again to celebrate survival.

To do "her bit" for England
she joined the Royal Air Force and traded
one set of rigid disciplines for another.

Five o'clock roll calls
and liver "tough as shoe leather but you were so hungry
you ate it anyway and wanted more."
Days spent typing at a teletype machine
and nights trying to forget the war that raged around
(and I suspect, within).
Good memories, too, of the comraderie and zaniness
that only war survivors understand.
The good times told to forget the horrors;
a calculated hysteria to blunt the edge
of a time I can't get my head around.

War is a time for dreaming and she dreamed.
She wanted children and a real home,
the kind she'd read about.
So she found her prince and followed that dream.
The war ended and she married.
I wonder what she thought as she waved goodbye
to London, Paris, Monte Carlo
and the crazy, wild, dancer's life?
As she sailed away to Canada did she shed a tear
for the Bluebell girl who danced with seven veils
in the famous Folies Bergere?
And would she ever dance again?
What thoughts went through her mind
as she approached that massive unknown land
to meet my father's family
of ministers and ministers' wives,
of school teachers and scholars;
the educated and the righteous?

With pious scorn they looked down their
aquiline noses at this English chorus girl
with the blood-red nails and painted lips.
How could their baby boy choose such a tart?
And so began my mother's life as wife,
living with her mother-in-law's disdain
and my father's increasing withdrawal.
Living alone in a world of silent hostility
and open reproach. She wasn't good enough!
How lonely I think she must have been,
nursing, to her death, that cantankerous old woman
and bearing her children in sterile rooms
with no husband or friend to hold her hands
and help her bear her pain.
How lonely - but there was no one to complain to
and complaining was not her style.

From Montreal and Sherbrooke to Toronto,
three children and a home in the suburbs,
the Rockwell portrait of the perfect fifties family.
But now the memories are my memories
and I remember my mother at home:
fixing meals - porridge in winter, corn flakes in summer,
spaghetti on Saturday, roast beef on Sunday
(and maybe a glass of wine - rosé);
my mother playing the Principle Boy in the annual
Christmas Pantomime - because she had the best legs
she said;

my mother dressed for a party in her crushed red velvet
dress,
the crinolines rustling and red rhinestones glistening,
the perfect fairy queen in my little girl's fantasy.
My beautiful mother with the exotic past
and the secrets I didn't know,
who tried to teach me to dance
and gave me her spirit instead.

My father, passive, gentle and kind,
withdrawing more and more, escaping his own demons
in work, in alcohol, in another woman's bed.
My father gone, leaving Mom to tell us
he wasn't coming back - and no one to tell us why.
And so my mother went to work fulltime
and we stayed at school for lunches
and helped start dinner and had more chores to do.
And when the pain of divorce became too much
the Rockwell painting split again
and my brother went to live with my father and his new
wife
and my Mom, my sister, and I moved to California.
She learned to drive a car and work the ghetto jobs for
women.
My father stopped sending money
but she already knew how to stretch a dollar
and how to go without so her daughters ate and dressed
well
and never knew that we were poor.

When I was old enough she set me free
to find my own gypsy feet
and moved to Vancouver.
With her children gone she had time to travel
and thirty years after she left
she went home, to London.
How it had changed, she said,
so crowded, so dirty, so noisy.
But the old Windmill Theatre, where she'd danced
her famous dance, was still there,
now a bawdy strip-club for sleazy stand-up comics
and "bump and grind" strippers.
"It wasn't like that then," she said.
"We never did that. We were always ladies."
And in the telling I can see that sparkling dancer's twinkle
in her soft grey eyes.
My lady mother was a class act.

And so, at seventy, she lives alone,
her memories stored in boxes in a locker
or in the deepest part of herself.
There's no bitterness, no anger, no regrets.
There's forgiveness and acceptance
of what was, and mostly
of what has become,
of who she is and what she's done
and what she's given.
My mother lives on in that part of me
that longs to dance

my dance of the seven veils, too.
And I will give that part to my daughter
and the dancing will never end.

Estelle Amaron-Ellis is a student at George Brown College in Toronto, preparing to work with assaulted women and children. A mother of two young children, Estelle describes herself as a "constant seeker of spiritual truth."

In Praise Of Women

by Lorna Crozier

It is not only the women we know,
our friends and sisters, our mothers
climbing the stairs after work,
weariness heavy on their backs. It is also
the women of Greenham Common, their chain
of endurance and belief stretching the heart.
The women of El Salvador, of Nicaragua,
keening for sons and husbands, the lost
villages, the empty places where nothing grows.
The women of Argentina, searching for grandchildren
through the dark pages of their history. The women
of Chile, carrying the faces of the *desaparecidos*
past the soldiers to the gates of torture,
to the cemetery, *NN* painted on the graves.
The women who walk with stones in their hands,
with numbers on their wrists, with pieces of their
bodies missing. The women, blinded with hoods,
raped and beaten in secret rooms across America.
Though they have been broken, they hold babies,
load guns, wash the bodies of the dead. Across borders,
across oceans and the endless reach of prairie,
our sisters, our mothers, our daughters
join hands. These women
make us holy.

Lorna Crozier lives in Saskatoon and teaches at the University of Saskatchewan. She is the author of seven books of poetry. The above poem appears in her latest collection.

From Angels of Flesh, Angels of Silence, by L. Crozier. Used by permission of the Canadian Publishers, McClelland and Stewart, Toronto.

Our Mistake

We regret that the credit line for "The Single Mom Express," the photostory in the last issue, was not included with the photostory.

Deborah Barndt should have received credit for the photographs. The photostory was reprinted with permission from the Winter 1988 issue of *The Moment*, a quarterly publication of the Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice, 947 Queen St. E., Toronto, ON M4M 1J9. The issue of *The Moment* in which the photostory appeared was entitled "Understanding Economics: Starting With Our Lives" and was co-produced with the Economic Animation Project of The United Church of Canada. For more information about *The Moment*, write to the address above.

Kenya: Sisters For More Than Survival

by Paula Butler

As we wait for others to arrive, several of the women form a circle at the front of the meeting room and begin singing boisterously in Kenyan languages: Kiswahili and Kikuyu. The songs celebrate God's presence and proclaim the devil's impotence; everyone should place her trust in God. Although the singing begins as a polite expression of welcome for the guests - United Church missionary Rennie Keates, her mother Eve Keates and myself - it ends up releasing a great joie-de-vivre. Everyone is reluctant to sit down and begin the meeting!

The meeting place is a room in a small community centre in Mathare Valley, the large slum which drives a wedge through the modern city of Nairobi. The slum grows larger annually as fresh waves of Kenyans from rural areas arrive in search of jobs and the glamorous life of the city. Yet many of the Mathare Valley people are second-generation residents who have developed a strong sense of community in the face of the adversity and harassment with which they cope daily.

The women who are gathered here represent three informal women's groups which the women have formed to deal with common problems. Most of the women have between four and ten children, and most are raising their children alone. In fact, seventy-five per cent of the population of Mathare Valley are youth and children under age 25, and the majority are unemployed. The women's lives revolve around the double challenge to earn enough money to feed and clothe their children, and to pay their school fees. All are determined to secure a good education for their children.

To do so, most are engaged in some form of petty-trading: selling vegetables and fruit, or eggs, or charcoal; producing handicrafts; or brewing "chang'a," the local beer. It is a survival existence, and often the only real security the women have is belonging to a group. The women meet regularly to discuss problems of individual members as well as to undertake group income-generating projects.

But belonging to the group means more than just being present at meetings; it means being ready to come to the aid of any other member of the group at any time, as well as the comfort of knowing there are others who will do the same for you. If one member suffers some misfortune - if she must nurse a sick child and cannot carry on her trade, or if her kiosk is pulled down by police, or if she gets robbed - her sisters rally round, providing care for her children, donating some of their own meagre cash to pay school fees, or helping her set up in business again.

The women speak too of sharing each other's joys and successes. When Jane Nyambura's eldest daughter passed her sixth form (secondary school) exams with top marks and won a scholarship to study social work, all the members of Jane's group shared in the happiness.

There are a variety of agencies trying to provide services to the people of Mathare Valley, and the women gathered here speak warmly of one female psychologist from the National Council of Churches of Kenya who has been teaching them about family planning, nutrition, child care and legal rights.

Still, they rely on each other more than on the services of agencies. Through their groups, the women are occasionally able to carry out projects which generate additional income for all the members. One group was able to acquire access to a small plot of land on which they constructed a poultry house and planted a vegetable garden. By pooling their resources they had eventually been able to purchase 300 hens, whose eggs they were marketing. Tragedy struck when a common poultry disease killed almost all the animals overnight. Unable to qualify for credit in order to replace the hens, the women had to begin again from nothing.

As we sat together talking about such hardships, the conversation was strangely full of joking and laughter. Near the end of our time of sharing one of the group leaders, Alice Wangali, said: "You know, people say that because we are Mathare Valley people we are crazy people, mad people!" (Everyone laughs.) "But I might really have gone crazy if it wasn't for these sisters of mine. Sharing my difficulties with them kept me sane."

Paula Butler is Area Secretary - East and Central Africa in the Division of World Outreach of The United Church of Canada.

Editorial continued from page 2

In this issue we join hands with women across national borders, across cultures, across prairies, and across economic class. These sisters, mothers and daughters make us holy.

We thank readers who responded quickly to the feedback form printed in the last issue. From these forms we already have many ideas for future issues. Note the feedback form in this issue.

Deborah Marshall

Issues In Daughter-Mother Relationships

by Mary Dell and Marilyn Boynton

On a trip once, I met a daughter and mother who still lived together, although the daughter was forty years old. They both painted roses on everything in the house from bathroom sinks to ceilings, from paintings on the walls to teacups. I didn't know where mother left off and daughter began. They had never cut the umbilical cord. This was an over-involved relationship in which the pair have agreed not to disagree, or not to be different.

The first step in becoming our own person is to leave home physically, usually in our early twenties. Then, in our thirties, we are ready to leave home emotionally. Some adult children disconnect physically by moving halfway across the world, or by having little or no contact for a period of time. This may provide space to give up the parent-child roles, to mourn this loss, and to work towards becoming equal adults together.

In creating a different relationship with mother, it helps to reflect on the kind we had in the past.

Over-involved relationships

There are two styles of over-involved relationships, the one just described and a conflictual one. The latter is one in which daughter is apt to say: "I can't stand my mother." Mother and daughter have agreed to disagree. They are bound together in constant conflict. The task of this couple is to disconnect from the negative patterns and to reconnect in more positive ways.

One mother-daughter dyad began this process with a therapist. The daughter had hoped mother would see how hurt, lonely and unmothered she had felt as a child. The mother began to realize she didn't know how to mother her daughter because she had never been mothered herself. Some healing happened as they both cried together over their childhood losses. They left the therapy session feeling they had made a deep connection on which they could continue to build.

Under-involved relationships

Another basic kind of relationship is under-involved, lacking connection.

Wanting to avoid contact with her mother, the daughter moved half-way across the country. Although she went home on a duty visit only once a year, she felt anxious about it weeks ahead. She went home feeling miserable. One year she decided to arrange the trip her way. Staying at a hotel nearby, she told her parents the times she had to visit and asked them out to dinner. This allowed her to feel good about her visit. Her mother hadn't changed, but daughter had acted like an adult in charge of her life, instead of trying to meet the assumed expectations of her parents. The connection in this kind of relationship is through the negative feelings of dislike and distrust. The task is to disconnect from the negativity, and reconnect in more positive and satisfying ways.

Emotional cut off is a term used for another type of under-involved relationship that exists in a vacuum. The daughter says, "When my mother dies, I won't feel anything. We didn't

have a relationship; I'm a stranger to her, and she is the same to me." While other mother-daughter pairs may connect through their mutuality or conflict, their pain or distrust, the pair who are emotionally cut off have no connection at all.

The task here is to build bridges, to become involved. Drawing a genogram (which is similar to a family tree) of the last three generations might be a way to begin. After all, the mother and daughter both come from the same roots and sharing this history helps them to bond. Visiting ancestral homes, talking about family heirlooms and snapshot albums can continue to nurture this fragile connection. Taping mother's and grandmother's (or other family members') memories of their growing up years extends this exploration. Who knows, daughter and mother might choose to make a trip together to an ancestor's country of origin!

While this is delicate and dedicated work for under-involved pairs, it can also be meaningful and fun for all of us. In reclaiming our own personal power, many of us like to reconnect with past "heroines" in our family, or to develop a new, extended family that suits our present needs better. To be surrounded by objects that symbolize energy, love and power for us, promotes this process. Often these objects are family heirlooms. Sometimes they are symbols that surface in our dreams. Choosing the ways that help us in this individuation is our work as daughters.

Open, warm relationships

A healthy, functional relationship exists when there is a strong bond between a mother and her young daughter which supports the little girl's growth, while it also allows her to move out into the world as she feels ready. This open, warm involvement creates the possibility of reconnecting as equals, when daughter is about thirty years old. Over thirty seems to be a good time developmentally for adults to work on the emotional aspect of their relationships.

Saying goodbye to mother in her role as mother, and hello to her as a person, or giving up our role as little girl, is fulfilling and maturing work during this stage of life.

Problems for adult daughters

Letting go of what she wanted and didn't get from mother, as well as what she got that she didn't want is the biggest problem facing an adult daughter. We can let go of these unrealized desires by feeling and expressing distrust or fear, sadness or pain, resentment or anger, in a safe place, with a safe person. As daughters come to see, hear and know the lost little girl within us, we begin to find ways to get what we want in the present. Often mothers are just waiting in the wings. Certainly there are more possibilities for two adult women in a relationship than there was in the parent-child role.

Adult daughters may not like their mothers as persons, but the inner child's past hurt is still a present reality. These wounds need to be opened up and healed. Of course there are

scars, and these are the visible evidence of our life journey. We can't live with the poison of festering wounds, but we can live with scars. Even if scars are the only connection some daughters have with their mothers, that is a deep and authentic connection.

Saying goodbye to the role of a flesh and blood mother, as well as the fantasy mother we wanted but didn't have, allows us to build other relationships that are more enriching and fulfilling. It was only a childhood illusion that "mothers know best." Mothers never were the experts, daughters are!

Mary Dell and Marilyn Boynton are psychotherapists in private practice, Mary with Therapy and Life Management Centre and Marilyn with Boynton, Reed and Wright Associates. They have been working with mothers and daughters for eight years.

Hymn for The Decade

Of women, and of women's hopes we sing:
of sharing in creation's nurturing,
of bearing and of birthing new belief,
of passion for the preciousness of life.

We praise the God whose image is our own,
the mystery within our flesh and bone,
the womanspirit moving through all time
in prophecy, Magnificat and dream.

We labour for the commonwealth of God
and, equal as disciples, walk the road,
in work and status, asking what is just,
for sisters of the family of Christ.

Forgiving what is past, we seek the new:
a finer justice, and a peace more true,
the promise of empowering for our day
when men and women roll the stone away.

Words: Shirley Murray, New Zealand

Music: can be sung to the following tunes in *The Hymn Book*, #344(either tune); #370, #295.

A Mother's Day Story

I want to share a Mother's Day story. It's about my mother, an independent but traditional woman who has a difficult time understanding her daughter and where my faith journey is taking me.

Mother is a member of a small, fundamentalist Baptist church in Massachusetts, in which men do the talking, the praying in mixed company, the serving of the Lord's Supper and the serious decision-making. The minister is young, male, serious and treats women solicitously. But he does listen to my mother. *She* keeps the minutes of the church as clerk.

In March I spent a weekend with mother and attended Sunday school, morning and evening services with her. At the evening service the song leader announced the hymn, "Faith of Our Fathers." I sang lustily, at least part of the time, "Faith of Our Mothers," and looked carefully at the words. Mother took note but said nothing.

Later that evening, I said, "Mother, do you think the pastor would consider having the congregation sing "Faith of Our Mothers" on Mother's Day this year? I think it would be nice to acknowledge that women as well as men are imprisoned for the gospel and suffer for the faith. What do you think?"

Mother thought a minute and then answered, "Yes, I don't see anything biblically wrong with that. I'll wait until a few weeks after you've gone and then I'll suggest it to the pastor."

Mother did just that.

A few weeks ago, during our ritual Thursday morning phone conversations, she let me know what was happening. "Deborah, I went to the pastor and suggested the change in the wording of 'Faith of Our Fathers' - for Mother's Day. He didn't seem to have a problem with it; but he asked that I talk to the song leader and clear it with him. He says fine; he'll have the mixed quartet sing it at the morning service." There were a few more hitches and misunderstandings, but mother stuck by her resolve and convinced both men that the change in wording was biblically sound.

Monday morning this week I got the report. Yes, the quartet had sung "Faith of Our Mothers." No one had commented. But mother had felt, well, almost tearful as she heard the new words to the old familiar hymn. She felt, she said, included; she felt important; she felt reborn; she felt like Mother's Day. She has begun to turn her world upside-down.

Deborah Marshall

Come Daughter

© 1973 Hyannis Music
Words & music by Carolyn McDade

The musical score is written on a grand staff with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat (Bb). The time signature is 3/4. The melody is written on the upper staff, and the lyrics are written below it. Chord symbols (F, Bb, Dm) are placed above the notes. The lyrics are: "Come, Daugh-ter come with me To where rush-ing wa-ters flow to the sea. We'll share what has been and what's yet to be for now's the time for liv-ing Go Daughter, be bold Go Daughter, be bold and climb the moun-tains up to the sky. Race the waves a-roll-ing so high Yell with fu-ry and some-times cry Your life is yours for liv-ing".

Stretch your vision o'er the water so blue
The big rounded sky speaks to you too
Pick your own star and to it be true
And let it speak of living

Tell your story and sing your song
Learn to be gentle, learn to be strong
For living takes a whole life long
Your life is yours for living

Learn to give and learn to love
Nurture all life under heaven above
Learn of the eagle, learn of the dove
Your love is yours for giving

Taste the grapes on a far distant vine
Fill your cup with a different fine wine
Sit at the table with strangers and dine
For you must learn of living

Dance with the milkweed, dance with the rose
Let the sun burn the sand that drifts through your toes
Let the sweat of your body drench all your clothes
For you must do your living

Daughter, dear, you're leaving today
Take my love as you go away
Pass it out to those on your way
What I give is yours for giving

Daughter, daughter, hold your head high
Laugh and dance, weep and cry
But never whimper and seldom sigh
And boldly do your living

Reprinted with permission from Songs by Carolyn McDade, Surtsey Publishing, 1982. See the review of Carolyn McDade's music resources in the Fall 1988 issue of Women's Concerns. Songs by Carolyn McDade is available from Womancenter at Plainville, 76 Everett Skinner Road, Plainville, MA, 02762.

A Liturgy to Begin

“Who Will Roll Away The Stone?”

The following liturgy was created to launch the Ecumenical Decade: Churches in Solidarity with Women (1988 - 1998) on Sunday, September 18, 1988, at Kerrisdale Presbyterian Church, Vancouver. The speaker at this event was Pauline Webb, British broadcaster and theologian.

Presentation of Symbols

Symbols point beyond themselves; they are entrances to the holy. The symbols presented here suggest the common elements of creation.

Bread represents the *earth*, source of food and nurture. It recalls the seed which falls into the warm, moist soil, which grows into grain and is gathered, crushed and formed into loaves. It symbolizes the womb, the soil of the earth from which we are made and to which we return. It reminds us of our earthiness, our humanity; it is the body of Christ, the brokenness and the wholeness of the world.

The *jug* contains *water*, the source of life. Water cleanses, and it sustains life. It recalls the waters of the womb from which we came, the waters of rain and mist and dew which replenish the soil, and the waters of new birth. It is the “deep waters” of suffering and death, and it is Christ the “Living Water.”

The *cauldron* symbolizes *fire*. Fire is the element of purification, which is destructive and terrifying as well as transforming. It is the warmth and light which sustains humanity. Fire comes to us in the light and heat of the sun, the glow of moon and stars, the flash of lightning, the northern lights, and in hearth fires. It is the fire of the Holy Spirit, which energizes and transforms.

With *incense* we become aware of the element of *air*; the aroma symbolizes the perfume of adornment, the fragrance of the world which is offered back to God in the gift of ourselves and all that we do. The rising of incense is symbolic of prayer. Its pervasive presence joins us together with one another and with all the company of our forebearers throughout the ages, in communion and praise to God.

Call to Worship

All: Now is the time to live:

to come to God who is creator of heaven and earth;
to come to God who is the source of light and life for all of creation;
to come to God who calls us to new life in Jesus Christ.

Now is the time to come alive:
to invite the whole world to join in praising God.

We invite all to celebrate with us, to glorify God's name,
to dance with God's spirit, which fills us.

Let us worship God.

Prayer of Approach

All: Creator of all, we give you thanks for a world full of wonder. You have called us into a holy fellowship with you and with each other. Guide us in the ways of this your new creation, rooted and grounded in Jesus Christ. Amen.

Hymn: “Come, Let Us Sing,” #90, *Songs for a Gospel People*

Creed

All: I believe in God
who created woman and man in God's
own image
who created the world
and gave both sexes
the care of the earth.

I believe in Jesus
who discussed theology with a woman
at a well
and first confided in her
his messiahship
who motivated her to go and tell
her great news to the city.

I believe in Jesus who received anointing
from a woman at Simon's house
who rebuked the men guests who scorned her
I believe in Jesus
who said this woman will be remembered
for what she did -
minister for Jesus.

I believe in Jesus who healed
a woman on the sabbath
and made her straight
because she was
a human being.

I believe in Jesus
who spoke of God

as a woman seeking the lost coin
as a woman who swept
seeking the lost.

I believe in Jesus
who thought of pregnancy and birth
with reverence
not as punishment - but
as wrenching event
a metaphor for transformation
born again
anguish-into-joy.

I believe in Jesus
who spoke of himself
as a mother hen
who would gather her chicks
under her wing.

I believe in Jesus who appeared
first to Mary Magdalene
who sent her with the bursting message
GO AND TELL. . .

I believe in the wholeness
of the Saviour
in whom there is neither
Jew nor Greek
slave nor free
male nor female
for we are all one
in salvation.

I believe in the Holy Spirit
as she moves over the waters
of creation
and over the earth.

I believe in the Holy Spirit
the woman spirit of God
who like a hen
created us
and gave us birth
and covers us
with her wings.

Rachel C. Wahlberg
(Used with permission of Paulist Press)

Prayer of Confession

One: We confess

All: that often we have not let ourselves feel covered by
your wings.

(Silence)

One: We confess

All: that often we have refused your transformation.

(Silence)

One: We confess

All: that often we have failed to care for the earth.
(Silence)

One: We confess that often we have found it hard to
listen to women
and to like them
and to like ourselves.

(Silence)

Kyrie

One: Lord have mercy

All: Lord have mercy

One: Christ have mercy

All: Christ have mercy

One: Lord have mercy

All: Lord have mercy.

Words of Assurance

One: Sisters and brothers, believe the good news:

All: In Christ all things are become new.

God's love breaks in upon the world and transforms us,
transforms anguish into joy.

Holy Scripture

Sarah's Story: from Genesis, Chapters 18-21 (selected)

Women at the Tomb: Mark 16:1-8

Woman anointing Jesus: Matthew 26:1-13

Theme Address

Hymn: "The Servant Song," #133, *Songs for a Gospel People*

Silent Meditation

Offering

Declaration of Faith

One: Today we gather at the dawn of the Decade

All: Meeting together to consider
where we have been
and who we can be.

We come to be challenged
to encompass a new vision
to find a new sense of order
as human beings.

God is with us

in this space and time
as we affirm and shape the changes
in our understanding of the Way.

We commit ourselves
to rolling away the stones
that have been set before,
in order to embrace
the living breathing growth
of each and all.

In prayer and dialogue
we go back to see where we have been
we steady ourselves

for the journey forward.
 We are here
 to reconcile all that we were,
 our trust...our hopelessness
 our joy...our despair
 our confirming...our betrayal.
 To confess, absolve, reconcile, renew.
 To be.
 Each step along the way
 we will roll away a stone
 permitting another
 to be.
 Knowing that God is here,
 we are freer in our interaction,
 more daring in the sharing of our personal visions,
 loving in our confrontations,
 deeply silent in consideration and
 accepting in the choices that help us
 to define our actions.
 In God's presence
 we meet to order ourselves anew,
 to consider where we stand
 and who we are.
 Today we gather at the dawn of the Decade.

Hymn: "Beautiful City," traditional spiritual or "We are called to follow Jesus," #18, *Songs for a Gospel People*
 or "Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness," #108, *Songs for a Gospel People*
 or "She Flies On," #126, *Songs for a Gospel People*

Benediction

All: May the God who shakes heaven and earth
 whom death could not contain
 who lives to disturb and heal us
 bless us with power to go forth
 and proclaim the gospel
 Amen.

Janet Morley

Hymn: "Halle, Hallelujah," #21, *Songs for a Gospel People*

The following people were part of the committee to prepare this liturgy: Leslie Campbell, Sally Clinton, Adam Con, Gwen Davis, Paddy Eastwood, Pearl Griffin, Gloria Grover, Helen Hobbs, Anne Johnston, Diane Latham, June Lythgoe, Valerie McIntyre, Pierann Moon, Patti Powell, Judith Rees-Thomas, Dorothy Robertson, Lynn Robertson, Anita Saari, David Stewart, Frankie Tillman, Pauline Webb. Thanks also go to Kerrisdale Presbyterian Church and to the Van Dusen Fund.

Ten Ways to Celebrate the Decade

1. Use the Bible study, "Jesus in Solidarity with Women" (*Exchange*, Winter 1989), for a local or presbyterial meeting.
2. Request the video, *A Woman Named Mary* from AVEL and discuss the feminine face of poverty in your area and how the church can respond.
3. Hold a history party in which you celebrate the contributions of women, past and present, to your church and community: include pictures, story-telling, music, prayers.
4. Use worship and music material by such women as Ruth Duck, Betty Turcott, Miriam Therese Winter, Carole Etzler, Carolyn McDade. Encourage women songwriters in your area to create music for the Decade. And sing!
5. Find out what groups like the Status of Women or the Council of Women are doing in your area. Join them in a project.
6. Ask a local women's shelter how you and your group can help.
7. As a group, look at your own congregation: what obstacles do you find to the full participation of women? What encouraging signs do you find? Discuss your findings with the Session.
8. Make a scrapbook of pictures and articles about issues raised by women in the Third World. Which issues are the same as ours? Which are different? What can we learn from these women?
9. Explore ways to dialogue with women who are different from you - culture, faith, sexual orientation.
10. Contact AVEL for two older filmstrip/tape resources on women in the church: *The Well/La Source* about women's participation in the 1983 Vancouver Assembly of the World Council of Churches; *Visions, Gifts and Deeds* about women's participation in various ministries within the church.

Dream up your own activity.

Deborah Marshall

Canadian Scene

Toronto

A Voice Of Our Own is a new Canadian documentary about the founding in 1986 of the National Organization of Immigrant and Visible Minority Women. Filmmaker Premika Ratnam has produced a film which challenges the white, Canadian, feminist movement and its preoccupation with middle class issues like pay equity, daycare and sexual harassment. This film identifies the issues of women of colour in Canada: language training, recognition of foreign qualifications, access to subsidized programs for up-grading, housing, schooling, social services, violence, racism. For more information about the film, call Premika Ratnam at (416) 921-5853.

Ottawa

For International Women's Day, the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women issued a report entitled, *Women, Paid-Unpaid Work and Stress*. It identifies low wages, job discrimination, single motherhood and sexual harassment at work as major causes of stress, and encourages governments to address the issues through public policy. Sylvia Gold, Council president, says that more research is needed on how stress affects ethnic, native, elderly, single and farm women.

Ottawa

Secretary of State Gerry Weiner has announced a \$21,212 grant to REAL Women of Canada for a Conference they are sponsoring, "Equality Revisited." Many groups, including The United Church of Canada, have presented briefs to the Secretary of State charging that REAL Women of Canada works to undo political and economic gains for women. This was the first government grant to REAL Women. REAL stands for "Realistic, Equal, Active for Life."

Toronto

On International Women's Day, March 8, 60 women, calling themselves the "Broads on Bay Street," briefly blockaded the street. They chose the heart of the city's financial district to protest what they said is a financial and economic system that oppresses women. Among issues they identified were the commercial distortion of the images of women's bodies for profit, the profiting from women labourers in the Third World, and the exploitation of immigrant women in Canada who work mainly as domestics, cleaners and sweatshop textile factory workers. Nineteen women were arrested by a waiting squad of more than 30 police officers, 10 of them women.

Montreal

The National Film Board (NFB) is changing the makeup of its award-winning Studio D. Its six permanent women filmmakers will be absorbed into other NFB units. The Studio D

budget will fund freelance opportunities for women, especially native women, new Canadians, the handicapped and other minorities. Founded in 1974, Studio D has made such films as *Not a Love Story*, *Behind the Veil* and *If You Love This Planet*.

Toronto

The December 1988 cost of a home in the only subdivision under construction in North York, part of Metro Toronto, was \$806,333.

Ottawa

Statistics Canada figures for 1987 show that Ontario women earned an average full-time salary of \$21,991, compared to \$33,636 for men.

Ottawa

A recent study by Timothy M. Smeeding has shown that 48.5 per cent of Canadian families headed by a single mother have incomes half or less of national median incomes. The figure is 55.2 per cent for the United States, 10.6 per cent for Sweden, 28.5 per cent for Britain.

Vancouver

Pulp Press has published a 95-page compilation of the wit and wisdom of Premier Bill Vander Zalm. On women, he is quoted to say, "Women make the best cooks and housewives and should be encouraged in that role." On hungry schoolchildren: "I don't know if it's really that difficult to get a lunch together for their children. Either (parents) are using their money for something else, or they're sleeping in."

Ottawa

Although more women than ever were elected to Parliament in last November's federal election (39 from 29), because of an increase in the number of ridings, the actual proportion of female members only rose from 10 per cent to 13 per cent. Many experienced women who spoke out on women's issues were defeated: Flora MacDonald, Lynn McDonald, Aideen Nicholson, Lucie Pépin (liberal critic on women's issues) and Marion Dewar (NDP critic).

Committee For 94 is working to get women into half the seats in Parliament by 1994. They are working hard, but are not optimistic.

Ontario

Women drivers have been hit hard by a new insurance system that bans rates based on age, sex and marital status. Some women with clean driving records face increases of up to 42 per cent.

Christie Jefferson, executive director of Women's Legal Education and Action Fund (LEAF), commented that "There seems to be something wrong with an approach to equality

that sees low-risk drivers paying much higher increases than proven high-risk drivers."

Since its founding in 1985, LEAF has initiated 60 test cases, chosen to make sure all Canadian women are treated fairly by laws, under the equality rights provision of Section 15 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Currently it is investigating a further 300 cases. Although most lawyers donate their services to these precedent-setting tests, LEAF is raising funds to cover its \$3,000,000 per year budget.

February 2-8, LEAF sponsored a traveling roadshow across Canada, featuring Margaret Atwood, Buffy Sainte-Marie, Lillian Allen, Connie Kaldor and Gloria Steinem.

Global Connections

Lusaka, Zambia

Over 700 women are involved in an income-generating project of hammering rocks into pebbles to sell to construction companies. Lillian Mwale, one of the labourers, commented, "Jesus can turn stones into bread. I am turning stones into *nshima* (staple maize meal) to keep people's lives going."

African Christian

Sofia, Bulgaria

Women meeting at a Christian Peace Conference in Sofia, Bulgaria, have identified disarmament as a priority issue for their celebration of the Ecumenical Decade of the Churches in Solidarity with Women. They stated: "Children suffer in particular by war, hunger and exploitation. With them the future of the world is threatened. Our main concern is with the children in Africa, Latin America and Asia."

Harare, Zimbabwe

At a meeting of the Ecumenical Church Loan Fund (ECLOF) of the World Council of Churches (WCC), Mrs. Nyoni, a community development worker in Zimbabwe, testified that women use development money to organize community services while men spend it on prestige construction projects.

Later in the meeting the Board, agreeing that they could do more to increase women's participation and to fund women's projects, committed itself to 50/50 representation of women and men among non-ex-officio board members.

African Christian

Kampala, Uganda

The Uganda Women's Association has launched a Women's Legal Clinic as the first step towards creating awareness. The clinic gives free legal counsel and prepares information papers for women who are considering taking legal action. Out of the 150 women who have earned law degrees in Uganda since 1972, 60 have registered as Association members and render free legal assistance to the association's non-lawyer members.

African Christian

Cotonou, Benin

The All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC) is planning a conference October 11-17, to bring African women together to explore the implications of the WCC study, "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation," and to identify continental emphases for action during the Decade. Omega Bula is Director of the Women's Desk for the AACC. She studied in Canada during the early 1980's.

Boston, Massachusetts

On February 11, 1989, the Rev. Barbara Clementine Harris was consecrated as the world's first woman Anglican bishop. She is a controversial figure in the United States for her support of civil rights for blacks, women and homosexuals. Opponents have warned that her election will cause a schism in the 17-million member Anglican communion.

The Rev. Alice Medcof of Scarborough, Ontario, unsuccessful candidate for bishop in Toronto Diocese last year, was at Harris's consecration. She sees Harris as an important symbol and model for women fighting for equality in the church.

South Africa

A group of church women went to clean the tombs at a graveyard, as an expression of Easter and the women going to the tomb. It was the graveyard where the victims of the Sharpeville massacre are buried.

Lesotho

In the Lesotho Evangelical Church, the launching of the Decade coincided with the establishment of the Women's Desk of the Church. Women representatives from the 97 parishes of the church in Lesotho and South Africa took part.

Italy

The Congress of Waldensian Women and the Federation of Protestant Women in Italy have decided to work on issues concerning women's participation in decision-making bodies, sexual violence and solidarity with migrant women. Small working groups are organizing throughout the country.

Switzerland

In Basel an ecumenical celebration of the Decade involved celebrations in two churches and in a tower dedicated to three women who played an important role in the legends of the city: St. Chriscona, St. Ottilie and St. Margarethe.

Costa Rica

In San José more than 160 women representing 11 denominations, including the Roman Catholic Church and nine women's organizations, daycare centres and handicraft groups, launched the Decade. Indian Guayamie women at the border to Panama came travelling 18 hours to participate in the meeting. Children and men participated as well. Twelve male pastors cared for the children and other men prepared the refreshments following the service. New music was written for the benediction "May the blessing of the God of Sarah, Hagar and Abraham...."

United States

A national Hispanic women's meeting is planned for 1990, focusing on social justice issues related to the Decade and to the "Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation" program of the World Council of Churches.

Bhopal, India

On International Women's Day, March 8, about 800 residents of Bhopal, India, (many of them women wearing slogans on their saris) sat cross-legged in the parking lot of the Supreme Court, demanding that the Court scrap a settlement of \$470 million (US) agreed to as "full and final" compensation for the 570,000 people who claim damages from the 1984 gas disaster. About 140 demonstrators formed a human chain around the building and screamed, "We will not allow Union Carbide to get away with murder."

Gaza Strip

Also on International Women's Day, Israeli forces in Gaza used truncheons to break up marches by Palestinian women who were demanding the release of their jailed sisters.

Book Review

Inheriting Our Mothers' Gardens: Feminist Theology in Third World Perspective

Edited by Letty M. Russell, Kwok Pui-lan, Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz, Katie Geneva Cannon, The Westminster Press, 1988.

Inheriting Our Mothers' Gardens is reminiscent of *God's Fierce Whimsy* produced by The Mud Flower Collective in 1985. They are more than books, they are experiences in Christian, feminist methodology. How much we owe to Alice Walker, whose novel *The Color Purple* was a constant reference point in the earlier book, a function played in *Inheriting Our Mothers' Gardens* by Walker's essay, "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens."

God's Fierce Whimsy was subtitled "Christian Feminism and Theological Education," and was intentionally inclusive of Roman Catholics and Protestants, Hispanic Americans, Anglo Americans, black and white North Americans; even Canadian women were included. "Feminist Theology in Third World Perspective," the subtitle of the present book, indicates a move beyond the North American scene to include Third World feminist theologians. Kwok Pui-lan teaches religion and society in the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Mercy Amba Oduyoye is a Ghanaian theologian now working in Geneva with the World Council of Churches. Marta Benavides is a Salvadoran woman who worked with Archbishop Oscar Romero and is now an American Baptist minister. Chung Hyun Kyung is a Korean theologian, working on her Ph.D. at Union Theological Seminary in New York.

The North American contributors come from varied backgrounds and experiences. Katie Geneva Cannon is a professor at Episcopal Divinity School and a visiting professor at Yale, and is working on a book about the moral wisdom of black women. Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz is Cuban and Roman Catholic by birth. She is "a Hispanic, feminist activist-theologian" and is on the staff of Church Women United in New York. Joann Nash Eakin is one of the founders of the Center for Women and Religion of the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California. Cecily P. Broderick y Guerra is a native New Yorker with Jamaican/Puerto Rican parents. She is an Episcopal priest with a parish in New York. Letty Russell, the overall editor, is a Presbyterian minister, professor of theology at Yale Divinity School, the author and editor of many books on feminist theology, and has long experience of working in Harlem.

Even these brief biographical notes tell much about the nature of the book. Each chapter is the story of a woman who identifies herself with the conditioning and sometimes nurturing she has received from her mother, in some cases her grandmother as well. Theological reflection is based on these woman traditions. The gardens are an analogy for cultural roots, but in many cases the contributors remember real gardens as they search for wholeness.

In Part I, entitled "Claiming Our Mothers' Roots," Kwok Pui-lan, Mercy Amba Oduyoye and Chung Hyuan Kyung use autobiography as the basis for theology. In Part II, "Clearing Our Space," the pain of oppression is still strong for Katie Geneva Cannon and Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz. The reconstruction of theologies in partnership is shown to depend upon willingness to deal with these realities. In Part III, "Cultivating a Global Garden," Joann Nash Eakin, Marta Benavides and Letty Russell understand that a garden of shared community is largely a hope for the future, when partnership will replace exploitation. But there are already many connections between these women and among them, and the book is a product of dialogues and cross-fertilization, a global network. In the final chapter, Letty Russell says that by digging in our own context, we can prepare to move from garden to table - "a table where all people are welcomed to God's feast" and all may become the human beings God created.

Interspersed through the book are "love letters" to mothers, in native tongues. And finally there is a 16 page annotated bibliography for those who wish to do feminist theology in Third World perspective, prepared by Cecily P. Broderick y Guerra.

Marjorie Powles is an Anglican laywoman who has worked with women in Canada, Japan and other countries, and is interested in the development of a feminist theology based on women's experience.

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