

NEW HORIZONS

Resources for Nazarene Clergywomen

Summer 2004

Inside this Issue

- 1 Rev. Dr. Jossie Owens Talks to *New Horizons*
- 3 How Did a Nazarene Like Me End Up Here?
- 4 The Care of Clergywomen
- 5 Women's Studies Program at NBC
- 5 What's Happening
- 7 Come to the Water Conference
- 8 Our Nazarene Foremothers

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Rev. Dr. Jossie Owens Talks to *New Horizons*

By Carol Blessing, Editor

"I'm having the time of my life!" This is how the Rev. Dr. Jossie Owens describes her work as the District Superintendent of the Church of the Nazarene. She was elected on the first ballot to her position of leading the New England District on May 28, after serving as interim D.S. since February, and as Associate Superintendent before that. She is the first woman ever to be elected to that position, let alone the first African-American woman.

Talking to Dr. Owens via a cross-country phone call, I could hear her strength and enthusiasm, making it easy to understand why she was elected. She does everything whole-heartedly because of her sense of God's telling her to be right where she is. Feeling led by God even as a young girl who had moved with her parents from Selma, Alabama to Boston, she became a member of the Church of the Nazarene at age 13. After graduating from Eastern Nazarene College in 1974 with an English degree and a secondary teaching credential, she says: "God sent me to work at Blue Cross/Blue Shield." Dr. Owens enjoyed her work there and envisioned herself as the first black vice president, seeing this as her lifetime career. She excelled at administration, especially assessing people's leadership capabilities. After she became a divisional manager, however, her life took another turn. The private Christian school her children attended had a changeover in principals, so she went to

see the school's president over some concerns she had. "That started a dialogue that continued to this day; he pursued me to teach there, and I took



Photo credit: *Holiness Today*

the position, thinking it would be for three months. It turned out to be 16 years." She moved from associate director to principal to president of the board of the school, stepping down recently to member of the board of directors.

Her story of becoming a pastor is as remarkable. One day, the pastor of the Nazarene church she attended put a ministerial training handbook in her hands. "It was red—and it seemed like fire," Dr. Owens recalls. She put it away because she felt she was too busy to pursue something else. But one day she opened it and felt led to call Nazarene Headquarters in Kansas City to find out about courses of study, and ordered some books. "God told me He wanted me to complete the course of study in four years, He had something for me to do," she says. She enrolled in the Reynolds Institute in Boston to complete her studies. When she changed congregations in order to gain a mentor, she was assigned to be minister of education at that church and pastor of the private school she worked at. At that time, though, she did not want to be a senior pastor: "I just wanted to preach and teach." One day, Dr. Owens called her friend and mentor Chuck Zink, whom she had met at a pastors and spouses retreat, about a nearby church that was without a pastor.

Zink said he would include her on the list of guest preachers. Meanwhile, Owens began to have dreams she feels were sent from God about becoming a senior pastor. When Zink asked her if she would consider becoming the senior pastor of the church, Dorchester Second Church of the Nazarene in the Boston area, her unusual silence gave away her what her answer would be. Her divinely-inspired dreams had been fulfilled.

That was in February 2004. Owens enjoyed leading Dorchester Second, and it was difficult to leave her position this February when she felt a call to resign. She sensed, though, that there was something else for her to do, once again a leading that proved correct. The experience of bringing together diverse segments of the multicultural church, which includes Haitian, English, and Cape Verdean congregations, has provided Owens a model for administering the New England District. The biggest challenge she sees for her new role is bringing the district churches together. "Each church sees itself as wholly separate unto itself," she explains. "We need to be united in order to grow. The New England District, in fact, is one of the few districts that are growing." To do this, Dr. Owens states: "we need to educate the pastors and laity. We need to bring more unity to advance the kingdom." Owens is currently working on reinforcing area directors and pastors through Bible study and pastors' retreats, "calling them to read the Bible more and calling them to accountability."

On the issue of women in ministry, Owens has some definite ideas, echoing Rev. Jeren Rowell's sermon at the Wynkoop Center for Women in Ministry. [This sermon is available on the web at <http://nazarene.org/ssm/adult/women/>

clergy/wynkoop.html] "The District Superintendents are going to have to push this issue, including putting names forward to the church boards" when pastoral vacancies arise. "We also need to educate the boards, to tell them to spend time in prayer that the best candidate would come forward, regardless of if it is a man or a woman. The laity needs schooling." She also is adamant that the language the church uses be more gender inclusive, for example, not assuming that a senior pastor would be male. When asked if she had encountered any difficulties in becoming a pastor as a female, she says: "I can tell you a lot of horror stories," including exclusion from fellowship with other ministerial students. Things became so frustrating that three times she asked God to remove her from the Church of the Nazarene, but three times she was answered back "faster than an email" that this is where she was to be. The third time, "God said: 'you are not to ask me again!'" A woman who was following Owens' career wondered why she would stay in the Church of the Nazarene that is "all white males," to which Dr. Owens responded "I am here because God sent me."

Dr. Owens credits Chuck Zink, her "spiritual brother" with helping her greatly. "He literally stepped aside for me," she says, describing Zink's leaving his position as District Superintendent to become head of Clergy Services, thus opening the DS slot for her. However, her calling is strongly reinforced by the vote she received in May. She is only the second district superintendent in the United States to be elected on the first ballot—"that is affirmation." She went into the vote thinking it would be remarkable if that occurred, feeling God had told her it would, and it did.

Women thinking about entering the ministry need mentors, as Dr. Owens has found through Zink and others. She

suggests those females who feel a call to ministry should first meet with at least one women pastor in their district, to discuss all that entails. Being a part of an accountability group is crucial as well; she formed one four years ago, comprised of professional women from different denominations, including the Rev. Mary Paul, who co-pastors with her husband another Boston area Nazarene church. The group still meets once a month. Unfortunately, though many of the obstacles Owens has encountered are from other women who are critical of a woman in authority. "Sisters need to bond with one another," Dr. Owens asserts.

Besides her mentors and accountability group, Dr. Owens thanks the support of her husband of 26 years, Tom, her "soul mate and best friend" who has been completely behind all she has done. She also has two grown children and puts her family high on her priority list, right below God and above any of her positions. "Sometimes people just don't understand that—my relationship with my Father comes first, then my relationship with my family, and then my job." She also has a strong educational basis of support in leadership and administration with a Master's degree in Public Education from Northeastern University and a Doctor of Education in Policy, Training, and Administration from Boston University.

There will be difficulties in the path to ministry. Rev. Owens knows that as an African American and a woman she is subject to increased scrutiny and that the criteria for her success are more difficult than the norm. However, these facts have not deterred her, and she says they should not deter others. In her matter-of-fact manner, Owens states: "a sister who feels a call must become like the woman in Luke 18" who refused to

give up. “We weren’t called to be comfortable.”

Carol Blessing is the Editor of *New Horizons Resources for Nazarene Women Clergy*, and a Professor of Literature at Point Loma Nazarene University in San Diego, California.

How Did a Nazarene Like Me End Up Here?

By Rebecca Laird

Often when I park my car in one of the three clergy spots and head up the sidewalk toward one of the main entrances to Central Presbyterian Church, the carillon rings. More than once, I’ve looked up at the stone bell tower sounding the tune to “Great is Thy Faithfulness” and asked myself, “How did a Nazarene like me end up here?”

For the past year and a half, I’ve been serving as an associate for spiritual development for a fairly large and vital congregation. Either providence—if you are more reformed in your theology—or a free and God-affirmed choice—if you are more Arminian—brought me here.

I was ordained on the Metro New York district in 1995. I received a welcome and a few invitations to preach, but nothing more. I talked to a few churches informally but nothing came of the discussions. There never seemed to be a good fit for someone like me who feels specifically called to adult spiritual development and spiritual direction. I knew that I would need to find church with a multiple staff. Few of those exist near me. I also spent most of one decade before ordination and another after working in publishing wondering why I felt led to be ordained when I didn’t seem to fit anywhere. Had I

misunderstood God’s guidance? Or was placement, which I believe is the number one problem for women ministers in our denomination, simply tripping me up too?

When I learned by either providence or serendipity while attending a one-time adult education seminar led by my husband at Central Presbyterian Church that they were searching for an Associate Pastor to focus on adults, my eyebrows went up. I asked to see a job description just for my information. I never imagined working outside the Wesleyan/Holiness tradition. It is clearly who I am.

But I looked and prayed and decided to make a phone call. The committee



called me back and for nine months we were tested with denominational hurdles. Denominations with historic high walls to protect

themselves theologically have lots of protocols and safeguards. Several times we all nearly gave up. They looked at other candidates. I looked at other ways to use my gifts.

Finally, the path became clear: If I would take the ordination exams required of all seminary graduates seeking ordination as a Minister of Word and Sacraments, they would recognize me as a corresponding member of the Presbytery with all rights and privileges. It was an understandable but weird request. I was free as a fully ordained person to preach, teach, perform weddings and funerals yet I was barred from officiating at the sacraments—but only for this local congregation. My Nazarene ordination freed me to freely serve in every way everywhere else. I didn’t like the idea of proving myself, but I felt God’s hand on my shoulder. I decided to study for

the exams and do my job without fighting the polity. It was the right decision.

I’m still Nazarene and on loan for a few years. The Presbyterians don’t understand why I don’t want to come all the way over, but they’ve learned to trust who I am. Most seem to also understand that someone from a spirit-focused and holy living denomination like ours has something good to offer a church steeped in the right thinking tradition of the Reformers.

Over the past year and a half, I have fallen in love with this congregation, and they with me. That to me is the greatest mark of God’s activity in this odd arrangement. Our small group ministry is off to a good start. People who would never pray aloud are beginning to volunteer to pray sometimes. People are knocking on my door and believing that I’ll listen and point out the ways God’s activity is apparent in their lives. I’ve learned to trust more in providence and encourage others to assert their free will. It’s a good trade off in learning about the fullness of God’s presence among all the faithful.

I’m in my second year now. I’ve walked up the sidewalk listening to the carillon in the snow, while the leaves fell, while the flowers bloomed, and now in the heat of a second summer. That question, “How did a Nazarene like me end up here?” still has no perfect answer. I’ve decided to just accept that the Spirit led me here for a good reason even though it is not clear to me why or for how long. But that is where faith kicks in. I’ll lean on that and try to listen to the music from the bell tower day by day without demanding any final answers.

Rebecca Laird is currently serving as Associate Pastor for Spiritual Development at Central Presbyterian

Church in Summit, New Jersey, an ordained minister in the Church of the Nazarene, and author of *Ordained Women in the Church of the Nazarene*.

The Care of Clergywomen

By Donna Techau

A recent study of female clergy in the United Methodist Church has caught the attention of many of us involved in the preparation of women for ministry. In an article* summarizing their findings, Frame and Shehan note that three main areas of concern arise for women clergy: 1) the effects of gender on their work, 2) special challenges (personal and professional) clergywomen face, and 3) positive and negative coping strategies. While the number of clergywomen has increased significantly over the past 30 years, clergywomen continue to report a considerable amount of role strain, finding themselves caught in impossible conflicts between pastoral duties and family responsibilities. "Much of this role overload is a result of being in a profession that is considered a 'sacred calling,' a 'way of life,' and a job whose demands are unrelenting twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week" writes Frame and Shehan.

The first area of concern, the effects of gender on clergywomen's work, has implications for the female pastor, and if she's married, her spouse, as well as her congregation. Gender here is understood not as biological characteristics, but as social construction. That is, we "do" gender by our assumptions of what we consider to be normal and appropriate roles for persons in a specific sex category (male or female). These gender-based expectations carry over into the ministry. "Clergy women are expected to be caring and compassionate and

function as loving mothers to their congregations." Research has found that some clergywomen *do* 'mother' their parishioners *as a means of overcoming resistance to women holding authority in the church*. Research also indicates that these women are more likely to work at being approachable, emotionally vulnerable, tactile, and willing to share of themselves personally with their congregations. Their focus tends to be more on pastoral counseling than administration. This study indicates that by relying on traditional female roles, the congregation is often more comfortable having a female minister, but "the fallout from this relational approach ... is that many clergywomen experience more overload than their male colleagues."

According to this study, clergywomen perceive themselves to have fundamentally different leadership styles than their male counterparts: clergywomen see themselves as not using power over the congregation, and instead being intentional about empowering the laity. When questioned about their greatest perceived challenges, the clergywomen surveyed most frequently mentioned struggling with gender-based discrimination, institutional issues such as the bureaucracy of the church, and the lack of role models. Frame and Shehan also suggested that their findings indicate that male clergy may perceive themselves to be more supportive of female clergy than clergywomen experience.

Personal and professional challenges that contributed to clergywomen's role strain tended to revolve around issues of being able to delineate clear and appropriate boundaries in order to balance personal and family needs with professional demands. These women reported that they found it challenging

to find time to nurture their own spiritual lives because of perceived demands from family and church. The issue of sexuality for clergywomen was manifest through accounts of isolation, loneliness—particularly in single clergywomen. Themes that emerged clustered around the balance of work and family, boundaries, the need for more free time, cultivating more support, sexuality, and having an opportunity to develop their own spiritual lives more fully.

Respondents to Frame and Shehan's survey indicated that coping with role strain involved both healthy and unhealthy coping strategies. Positive coping strategies included taking time for self, being involved in support groups, seeking counseling and spiritual direction, and the maintenance of a strong friendship network both within and outside of the church. Negative coping mechanisms included addictive behavior, such as overeating and substance abuse.

Frame and Shehan conclude: "The responses of the participants in this study reveal that the most effective way for female clergy to gain acceptance and authority is to extend their roles as caregivers in the home into the workplace. As a result, this extra caring, along with other life stresses, often leave clergywomen depleted, depressed, and discouraged about their future in ministry. Based on the results of this study, we believe there is a tremendous need for care for the caregivers."

While this article is written for clinicians, we must ask ourselves what we (as parishioners, DSs, board members, etc. and even clergywomen ourselves) can do to help alleviate unnecessary role stress on our female clergy? How can clergywoman better care for ourselves? Can we (clergy and lay alike) abandon archaic notions of 'a

woman's place' or what it means to be 'feminine'? Can we respect boundaries of 'time off' and the need for pastoral sabbatical? Can we alleviate outside stressors, such as financial concerns, in order to free up these women for better service? Can we *listen* to the needs of these women (instead of presuming to know what they are and in turn imagining that we are meeting them adequately)?

* Marsha Wiggins Frame and Constance L. Shehan "Care for the Caregiver: Clues of the Pastoral Care of Clergywomen", *Pastoral Psychology*, Vol. 52, No. 5, May 2004, p. 369-380.

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Women's Studies Program at Nazarene Bible College

By Prof. Janice L. Duce

In order to prepare women for relevant ministry in today's society, Nazarene Bible College has changed the name of its program, from Women's Ministries to Women's Studies. The Women's Studies program is focused on women who plan to be in a supporting role to their male spouses who are ministerial students. Since the beginning of the college in 1967, there has been a program focused on training women. By the mid-1970s, topics covered included general and practical instruction relative to work in the local church, the role of the minister's wife, and speech training. Women were not barred from pastoral ministry classes, it was simply assumed that the interest of most would be in that of a supportive role. Thus a special program was designed which would focus on what a

1986 catalog outlined as three objectives: spiritual enrichment, personal growth and development, and equipping for service. By 2001, there was in place an Associate Degree in Women's Ministries, which emphasized support of the male spouse in pastoral ministry and/or training for women who were interested in developing women's ministries in local churches.

The reality today at Nazarene Bible College is that more women than ever before are coming to the Colorado Springs Campus or enrolling in the NBC online program to pursue ordination in the Church of the Nazarene. Some seek to be ordained themselves, with their male spouses in supportive non-ordained roles. Some are seeking ordination along with their spouses. Granted, there are still many who see themselves in roles supportive of their male spouses, yet these wish to define the role according to their own sense of calling, instead of being put into the mold of a traditional preacher's wife.

It has become more apparent that what is called for is an academic focus which encompasses a broader study of women, in order to minister more effectively in today's society.



The term Women's Ministries, because of the way it is normally used in church life, tends to limit the role as well as the realm

through which women's gifts for ministry can be expressed. This was a problem in terms of how the program was being perceived and developed at the college. Therefore, the name Women's Studies was chosen because of its usefulness as an academic term encompassing a larger scope. This term involves a much needed examination of women's issues and ways of developing

ministry in light of contemporary female concerns.

The names of courses and descriptions have been changed to reflect a commitment to a more diverse understanding of ministry, particularly the diversity of professions related to and enhancing the ministry of a local church for which one can receive training at NBC. So whether one is preparing to be a pastor, teacher, counselor, or a layperson, there are courses provided for those interested in preparing for pastoral care to women. Some program specifics regarding course development and its ongoing place and function in the curriculum have yet to be determined, but the desire to promote women in ministry as lay or clergy leaders in the Church of the Nazarene will be the guiding principle of our endeavors at NBC.

Rev. Janice Duce is presently a Professor of Women's Studies and Christian Thought at Nazarene Bible College, after serving in the pastoral ministry for 17 years.

What's Happening

By Vicki Copp

We are in PALCON season. The last time I thought about going to a PALCON, I was just beginning to respond to my call and was not feeling confident enough about it to attend. I was afraid I might not be able to adequately justify my presence there. So, I opted to stay home. When I heard that the conferences would be conducted again, I didn't want clergy women to hesitate to attend. So, I approached Ron Blake in Clergy Services with a request to have something offered specifically for women clergy. I figured this would be a clear call for women clergy to

participate. With his blessing, I began to locate women clergy in each of the regions who decided to organize and administrate two workshops and also to staff an exhibition booth. As of this writing, four of the regional conferences have been held: Olivet Nazarene University, Southern Nazarene University, Northwest Nazarene University, and Eastern Nazarene College. I want to share with you some of the exciting reports that have come back to me from these dedicated women clergy.

Deborah Bell, associate at College Church in Kankakee said, "I believe there has been a major paradigm shift in the Church of the Nazarene regarding women clergy since last Sunday. This is something I sense in my spirit." Margie Bryce, who also helped with the workshops said, "I have to say... if the PALCONs that follow are anything like ours, God will be present in a mighty, mighty way. The Holy Spirit was definitely upon us. It was indeed incredible." Jeanne Serrao, a New Testament professor at Mount Vernon, was pleased with the turnout there. "We had some great discussion and I personally was excited to meet so many more of the women clergy on our educational region and begin to develop some relationships."

Dee Boyt, a pastor on the SNU region reported, "The networking on Tuesday was great because we were able to connect with each other at the beginning of the week. That helped us to intentionally look for opportunities to be together throughout the week. We used every chance we got to share, encourage and pray with each other. (We also laughed a lot, which we all seemed to need) The workshops remained

positive, uplifting and educational. One of the most exciting things was an impromptu ladies' prayer and share time in our dorm which lasted until almost 2 am. We rejoiced in victories and prayed for each others' families and ministries. We prayed also for Pastor Metcalf who was to speak the next evening. It was a fantastic experience. I believe that our presence was noted in a very positive way. We were wonderfully received by our fellow ministers and by SNU leadership. I also believe that there is a greater intentionality to include us and to give us the opportunities necessary to fulfill God's calling upon our lives. May God be glorified as we continue to yield ourselves to his service."

Professor Diane Leclerc of Northwest Nazarene University reported, "On Thursday morning, we had the gender mutuality workshop. There were about 20 people there, including four men. I had asked Dr. Rob Thompson, professor of philosophy to speak for a few minutes on gender inclusive language in the church, one of his passions. There was great response and discussion about that. Then I had a panel of six persons answer questions regarding being on staff with the opposite gender. The discussion was most elaborate around two or three issues, including what male pastors can do to validate women on staff, and the appropriate boundaries needed in a mutual staff relationship. I thought it was a great workshop." Carol Rotz, another NNU professor who assisted said, "The women and men who met for the workshop on networking and resourcing highlighted the need for ongoing community. The participants plan to keep in contact with one another for sharing, mentoring and encouragement. PALCON both affirmed women clergy and underscored the need for further acceptance."

Mary Paul, a pastor on the Eastern Nazarene College region reported, "It

all went well. There were around 15 women at the networking workshop and then around 30 came to the gender mutuality workshop. I was encouraged by the ten men who came. They were specifically there because they were planning to or in the midst of hiring women on their staff. Their desire was to find ways to not only work well with the women on their staff but also to find ways in which they could help their churches effectively transition into accepting this new leadership. I also noticed that many women were gathering around Jossie Owens throughout the week--she was a great encouragement to all."

I am looking forward to attending my first PALCON on my own PLNU region. I plan to share the reports I receive on the remaining PALCONs in the next issue of New Horizons.



District Superintendent Carlton Hansen Recalls the Influence of Women Clergy on his Life and District...in his own words

The Church of the Nazarene has always encouraged women to respond and serve where God has called them. When I was 19, a lady evangelist, Gertrude Ward, came to our church, and on Sunday morning May 8, 1960, I accepted Christ as my personal Savior. Gertrude was confined to a wheelchair because as a young 20 year-old she was stricken with polio. Her husband, an ardent supporter of her ministry, took all the necessary steps to assure that she could fulfill her God-given call. Through the years, Gertrude won many

to Christ. Her example was a deep influence on me as a young pastor. I saw then that God used both men and women to fulfill the Great Commission.

When pastoring in Dayton, Ohio, my first staff person was a licensed deacon. I did my best to encourage her to seek ordination, which she did. She was with me for nine years. Although she is retired now, I have her serving a small church in Dayton. There have been five women pastors on the district and each of them has been used of God.

One of these ladies founded a church; now at retirement age, she just resigned to enter back into the field of evangelism.

One lady pastor has been in her current assignment for 16 years, and God has used her to touch young people as well as adults of all ages. She has a great cadre of men who follow her leadership.

After watching these ladies and others I have known through the years, I am convinced that women have a unique role in the church and often bring a perspective to the ministry that men do not have. My associate in Dayton was able to bring a perspective that I could not into counseling other women.

I am glad that at the foot of the cross both men and women are equal, and He uses people for His glory without regard to their gender.

Carlton D. Hansen, District Superintendent, Southwestern Ohio District

Rev. Vicki Copp is Assistant for Community and Equipping in the Arizona District.

Nazarene Women Clergy Attend “Come to the Water” Conference This Spring

by Pamela Thompson

Over 150 Nazarene clergy women attended the Wesleyan Holiness Women’s Clergy Conference, “Come to the Water,” in Cincinnati, Ohio on April 15-18, 2004. Nazarene participants traveled from the USA, Canada, and even Russia for this conference. There was also strong attendance from each of the Nazarene colleges/universities and Nazarene Theological Seminary. General Superintendent Dr. Bond and Mrs. Bond attended the 10-year anniversary service of the conference, and General Superintendent Dr. Jerry Porter and Mrs. Porter were there for the denominational leaders’ meeting. General NMI director, Dr. Nina Gunter, was also in attendance.

Dr. Porter hosted a question and answer time for the Nazarene contingent, responding to questions of gender inclusivity, education for churches regarding the Biblical basis for women in ministry, and the Church’s support of women clergy. “We celebrate the exceptional company of devoted women who are valiantly responding to God’s call to ministry in the Church of the Nazarene. It behooves all of us to cooperate with the Holy Spirit encouraging, facilitating, and assisting these servants of the Most High as they fulfill their challenging missional assignments,” commented General Superintendent Porter.

Nazarene presenters included Dr. Estelle Gross (plenary session speaker), Dr. Susan Armstrong (plenary session worship leader), Dr. Jeanne Searrao, Dr. Jan Lanham, Rev. Elaine Pettit, Rev.

Alice Piggee-Wallack, Dr. Laura Moore, Donna Techau, Norma Runion, and Rev. Mary Rearick Paul.

For many participants, in addition to the workshops and plenary sessions, the most beneficial aspect to attending was one that could not be placed on a schedule or fit into a workshop session. Being with other clergy women and sharing ministry over meals, through laughter and tears, was a powerful reminder that although being a woman in ministry can difficult at times, we are never alone. College and seminary students expressed appreciation for meeting women who have gone before them, to whom they now will look as mentors, as they begin their ministerial journey. One NTS student commented, “I came out of curiosity, and I left energized for ministry. I met women not only within our denomination, but also within our Wesleyan tradition, who are strong, competent leaders, who lead without apology, who preach the Word with excellence, and yet are not trying to be a man. This has changed my way of thinking. God can use me just the way that I am.” Another group of seminary students decided to make it a “classmate reunion” and plan to meet together at the next conference.

Rev. Vicki Copp, Arizona District Assistant for Community and Equipping, who represents the Church of the Nazarene on the planning board, commented: “The conference was a wonderful time of inspiration and sharing. It was especially encouraging to meet our female students who are preparing to serve our church and the kingdom.”

The next “Come to the Water” conference will be held in San Diego, California, on April 20-23, 2006.

Pamela Thompson is a recent graduate of Nazarene Theological Seminary,

soon to be the Communications Coordinator at Marysville Church of the Nazarene in Marysville, Ohio.

Our Nazarene Foremothers

The Clergy-Couple Who Birthed a Publishing Company

By Stan Ingersol

They are buried in Kansas City’s Forest Hill Cemetery, a four-minute drive from the Nazarene Headquarters and Nazarene Theological Seminary. Legendary baseball pitcher Satchel Paige’s tomb and monument are about 35 yards north of their graves. A small hill, across a shady lane to their east, is the burial place of Confederate veterans and their families, including General Jo Shelby, while west of their gravesite many African-Americans are buried.

He was an immigrant, born in Norway. She was a native of Kentucky. Their lives intersected, then joined, in Pasadena, California. A simple tombstone bears the immigrant’s surname: “Lillenas.” Footstones add details. One is inscribed: “Father & Husband, Haldor Lillenas, Hymn Writer. 1885-1958.” The other says: “Wife & Mother, Bertha Mae Lillenas, Hymn Writer. 1889-1945.”

The name is well-known to those raised in the Church of the Nazarene before 1970, and “Lillenas Publishing Company” has been imprinted on music published by the Nazarene Publishing House since 1930. Haldor and Bertha Lillenas were a Nazarene clergy-couple, and a splendid little tale hangs on that fact.

Bertha was the second child of W. C. Wilson, a Methodist pastor and evangelist. Her mother died in 1893. She and her three siblings were placed with different relatives while their

father, distraught and unable to raise them alone, regained his bearings. Wilson remarried two years later, and the children were reunited over time in the home their new stepmother provided. The family also grew, as four other children were born to Wilson and his second wife.

W. C. Wilson joined the Church of the Nazarene in 1905, after an appeal from C. W. Ruth, who assured him that the



Nazarenes represented a democratic form of “old-fashioned Methodism.” A few months later, the family left

Kentucky for California, where W. C. Wilson emerged as one of Phineas Bresee’s right-hand men, serving as pastor of key churches and as superintendent of the Southern California District.¹ In 1906 Bertha joined her brother Guy as a student at Deets Bible College, the small Nazarene school in Los Angeles that would grow into Pasadena College (now Point Loma Nazarene University).

There Bertha met Haldor Lillenas, a young Norwegian born on an island south of Bergen. His family immigrated to America when Haldor was two, moving during his childhood from the Dakotas to Oregon, then back east to Minnesota. At 21, Haldor returned to Astoria, Ore., the place of many cherished memories. In 1906 he came into contact with the Peniel Mission there and experienced an evangelical conversion. He joined the Nazarenes

¹ W. C. Wilson was elected as one of the Church of the Nazarene’s general superintendents in 1915. Bertha and Haldor Lillenas were with him at the General Assembly in Kansas City when this occurred. They, and the whole church, were stunned when Wilson died from an infection just a few months later. He was only 49.

soon afterward and moved to Los Angeles to attend Deets Bible College.

Haldor and Bertha met through one of the college’s many traveling music groups. Her contralto and his tenor complimented one another. They married in 1910 and formed a talented team. Both preached, sang, and composed songs. Their careers alternated between co-pastorates and periods of full-time evangelism, but in whatever field of service they were in, they shared the preaching and music responsibilities.

Their first ministry together was at the Peniel Mission in Sacramento, which they led for one year. Next they co-pastored the Nazarene church at Lompoc, California, from 1911-1912. Both were ordained by Dr. H. F. Reynolds at the 1912 assembly of the Southern California District. They subsequently co-pastored at Pomona, Cal. (1912-1914), Auburn, Ill. (1916-19), Peniel, Tex. (1919-1920), and Redlands, Ca. (1920-23). The most pivotal pastorate of their career, though, proved to be Indianapolis First Church of the Nazarene.

The Lillenas served as the congregation’s pastors from 1923-26, the membership growing from 150 to 250 during their tenure. During these years, Bertha Lillenas’ sermon, “Christian Freedom,” was published in *The Nazarene Pulpit*, an anthology that showcased Nazarene preaching. Her brother, Mallalieu Wilson, states that during this pastorate, “as Haldor gave increasing attention to music, Bertha took more of the preaching responsibility.”²

² Mallalieu Wilson, *William C. Wilson: The Fifth General Superintendent* (Kansas City: Nazarene Publishing House, 1995), p. 71.

Indeed, Haldor dreamed of heading his own music publishing company, and in 1926 they resigned. Bertha began conducting revivals, assisted by Haldor when he could, but his energies were now focused on launching a successful Christian music business.

The Lillenas Publishing Company's success depended on Haldor's talent and enterprise, but it also succeeded partly because of his unique marriage—a true anomaly of its day. American women of that time, even those with college degrees, typically enjoyed careers only if they remained single. Those who married invariably gave them up. But



Nazarene clergy women were among the few exceptions. Bertha Lillenas' career was a key element in her husband's ability to put wings under his dream. The financial contributions she made served as the family's financial buffer as the Lillenas Publishing Company made its way through the rocky early years of its existence.

It was not an easy go, but it proved successful. The Nazarene Publishing House in Kansas City noticed. It wanted to improve its music program under the leadership of someone with a proven track record in the field, and in 1930 it offered to buy the Lillenas Publishing Company as a subsidiary and retain Haldor as its manager. The offer ensured the company's survival and fit the Lillenas' notion of churchmanship. It was accepted and they moved to Kansas City.

For the remainder of their marriage, Bertha and Haldor worked on music together and often traveled, promoting the product of the music company that bore their name.

Bertha's health declined in the late 1930s. In about 1940, the couple moved to "Melody Lane," a stone house that they built in central Missouri, near the Lake of the Ozarks. Haldor visited the publishing house in Kansas City one day a week for meetings but did composition and music editing out of his home office. Bertha assisted on many of his projects, and her death in 1945 ended a wonderful thirty-five year partnership.

After Bertha's death, Haldor married Lola Kellogg, a nurse. They traveled extensively together. He died in 1959 in Aspen, Colorado.

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If you have comments, news, articles, personal accounts of your journey in ministry, or other items of interest to Nazarene Women Clergy, please



contact Carol Blessing, editor, at CarolBlessing@ptloma.edu. Be sure to check out additional resources for Women in Ministry at

http://www.nazarenepastor.org/women_clergy.html.

Other helpful information is available at the Come to the Water website, for Wesleyan Holiness Women Clergy, <http://www.messiah.edu/whwc>.
