Evangelism played important role for author
adapted from interview by Letha Dawson Scanzoni in Christian Feminism Today

Martha Grace Reese is a brave woman. She directed a major study and authored several books about—of all things—evangelism in mainline churches. “I call it the ‘E word’ in the book for a reason!” she said in a recent interview. “People recoil in horror when you say the word.” In her book, Unbinding the Gospel: Real Life Evangelism, she writes, “The ‘E word’ seems to have replaced sex and money as That Which Must Not Be Named in our churches!” (p. 4).

Yet, she has dared not only to name it but to encourage churches to practice it. [FCC will begin its second “round” of study using Reese’s book Unbinding the Spirit this weekend, as four new study groups launch six weeks of small group discussions and prayer. Check calendar for days and times.]

Reese comes from a prominent Ohio family dedicated to community service, but her family was not at all involved in church. “I didn’t even attend Christmas or Easter services until I was in college and had had a conversion experience and became a Christian,” she said.

That’s why she is so excited about evangelism. “There is no way in the world that I would be a Christian were it not for a friend talking to me about Christ and the Bible when I was going to college in Spain,” she says. “So I’m the product of someone being brave enough to share her faith. My life was changed so dramatically that I’ve always been stunned by the mainline church’s reticence about sharing this powerful faith and the theology and community that’s possible in mainline churches. It doesn’t always exist there, but, boy, is it possible!”

To read more about Martha Grace Reese, including details about her conversion experience and how she came to be a Disciples of Christ minister, see the full interview by Letha Dawson Scanzoni in Christian Feminism Today online: http://tinyurl.com/mgreese
Christian Unity movement commemorated and considered in worship

This month marks the 200th Anniversary of Thomas Campbell’s Declaration and Address, a founding piece, document, position paper of what became to be known as the Restoration movement. The Restoration movement basically holds the position that restoring New Testament practices of worship, evangelism, mission, and teaching would restore the unity of the Church, and begat the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), as well as the Independent Christian Churches and Churches of Christ, and the Church of Christ (non-instrumental). (In other words, what began as a movement for Christian unity spawned three more churches when the Independents and the Non-Instrumentalists broke away from the Disciples after the Campbellites and Stoneites came together in 1832. Go figure.)

Last Sunday, Russell and Enid Griffin and I attended a worship service marking the Anniversary. Admittedly, this wasn’t something I promoted very heavily; in fact, I simply announced it in worship on Sunday. I myself was not even planning on attending, but then decided at the last minute to journey down to Valley Christian Church in Rosemount for the occasion. I’m glad I did. Besides supporting Shane Isaac as the Disciples representative in worship leadership, I also got to meet several Independent and A Cappella (as the Non-instrumentalists call themselves these days) church people and pastors, and even discovered that there’s a small Independent college down in Rochester which, apparently, used to be in the Twin Cities as a Disciples school 100 years ago. (Did anybody here know this?)

The worship style drew from all three traditions. We sang formal hymns (Disciple), moved to praise music (Independent), and ended up with a cappella music (that is, music without instrumental accompaniment). The sermon talked about whether pursuing Christian Unity was still a valid cause, and concluded that it was (though in a different way that we Disciples would normally interpret it.) We shared communion together.

All of this led me to the conclusion that there’s a lot more we Christians have in common than what we have that divides us. In the midst of our continuing deliberations about transformation, that’s something to think and pray about.

I’d like to see YOU on Sunday, Bob

In our prayers

We pray for Mary Lou Cain and the Curry’s three grandchildren, that they may recover from illnesses and injuries; in continuing concern for David Pyles and Lois Cobbs; in thanksgiving that Kathy Merkel’s mother-in-law is out of the nursing home, and that Todd and Mary Hall continue to recover from transplant surgery, and for the recent wedding of John Billman’s son, Jim; for Belinda Flanagan’s cousin Diane and Kevin Berkey’s friend Ryan; in celebration of the recent birthdays of Tristan Whitaker (age 1) and Ali Hesano (age 18); for all those in our congregation and community who are out of work; and for our homebound members including Helen Smith and Lois Swenson, Amen.
Art of the Covenant Class off to a great start

September 13 was the first class for this new arts-based children’s ministry and it was a blast. Five children showed up on that Sunday and six showed up the following Sunday.

Deb Murphy, who is currently working towards her Master of Arts in Theology and Art degree, created the class to help children find new ways to both understand and express ideas about faith.

October Events and Notes

“Unbinding Your Heart” groups kick off with Oct. 11 Worship
Following worship on Sunday, Unbinding Your Heart small groups will start meeting. 46 people have signed up for the commitment of daily devotions and prayer, small groups (that are meeting on Sunday mornings, Wednesday mornings and evenings, and Saturday mornings), and weekly worship. People from our Prayer Team will be engaged in prayer over every small group gathering.

You can still sign up, get a copy of Unbinding Your Heart (suggested $5 donation), and take part!!!

Crop Walk Oct. 11
Pastor Dennis Sanders will lead FCC’s team in the Metro Minneapolis CROP Hunger Walk this Sunday. The Walk starts at 2 pm at Augsburg College. Pledges and donations can still be made. Contact Pastor Sanders or go online at:

http://tinyurl.com/FCCcrop

Feed My Starving Children, Oct. 24
Spots are still available to pack food for FMSC at the new Coon Rapids location Saturday morning, October 24. Contact Dennis Sanders to sign up.

Share-the-Care, Oct. 31
Remember to set aside Halloween morning to help clean up, paint up, and fix up around FCC’s buildings and grounds during the bi-annual Share-the Care project day, from 9am-1pm.

Advent Booklet contributions needed by Nov. 1
The Worship Committee is still looking for writers to contribute to a special 2009 Advent Devotional Booklet to be created by our own congregation.

Sign-up sheets are available in the Lounge. The format will be similar to that used by Upper Room publications: the Scripture reference, a reflection or medication of approximately 200 words, and a brief prayer. Submissions are due by Nov. 1.
Sundays at First Christian Church

Before Worship (9:15 am):
- Art of the Covenant Class
- Unbinding Groups

Worship 10:30 am
- Fellowship Hour 11:45 am

This Week at FCC

Sunday, Oct. 11.
- Unbinding Your Heart small groups begin
- CROP Walk 2 pm

Monday, Oct. 12
- Carter Circle @ Westphal’s 7 pm

Tuesday, Oct. 13
- Committees meet: Transition Team & Property 7 pm

Wednesday, Oct. 14
- Finance Committee 5:30 pm
- Unbinding Groups 10 am, 6 pm
- Bell Choir 6:30 pm
- Chancel Choir 7:45 pm

Thursday, Oct. 15
- Handcrafters 9 am
- Worship Committee 7 pm

Friday, Oct. 16
- Christian League dinner 6:30 pm

- Article deadline for next Courier

Saturday, Oct. 17
- Men’s Group 9 am
- Laura Lynn Circle 10 am
- Unbinding Group 10:30 am
- Meal at St. Stephens 6 pm

Next Week at FCC

Sunday, Oct. 18
- Food Pantry Sunday
- Elders Meeting 12 n

Monday, Oct. 19
- Book Group @ Westphal’s 7 pm

Tuesday, Oct. 20
- Mpls. Retired Teachers 11 am
- FCC Board Meeting 7 pm

Wednesday, Oct. 21
- Nikki 9 am
- Unbinding Groups 10 am, 6 pm
- Bell Choir 6:30 pm
- Chancel Choir 7:45 pm

Thursday, Oct. 22
- Handcrafters 9 am

Sat. Oct. 24
- Men’s Group 9 am
- Feed My Starving Children 9 am
- Unbinding Group 10:30 am

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Reflections on the Word

Pentecost 19, Oct. 11, 2009

“Jesus, looking at him, loved him and said, “You lack one thing: go, sell what you own, and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.” —Mark 10:21

What is this one thing the young man lacks? Jesus loves before he commands, before the young man gives anything, even before he follows Jesus. Giving away everything would make anyone anxious. And possessions would not possess us without anxious feelings behind them. Jesus meets anxiety with love. But this love needs to be received by faith, a gift of the Spirit.

Giving God, you know what we need before we do. Give us faith to see and receive your love into our lives, that we may give this love to others in need. Amen.

--Chris Wogaman

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