

## From Sylvia's Desk \_\_\_\_\_

### **THE 2004 BIRTHDAY OFFERING: Is This What You Intend to Support?**


Once again, the PW Birthday Offering is being used to underwrite a program to which I assume many of its members would object if they knew the facts. Among this year's recipients is a new incarnation of the re-imagining God movement that plays down the authority of scripture in favor of the authority of human experience, and that generally understands the focus of theology to be economic and political rather than spiritual (at least in any historic understanding of the word).

Here are some of the facts:

1. All Birthday Offering grants are reviewed and selected by the "Creative Ministries Offering Committee. Grant recipients must meet the criteria established by PW and must be accompanied by a written endorsement of a Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) synod or presbytery." This year, The Institute for Theological Education of Bahia (ITEBA) in Brazil has been selected as a Birthday Offering recipient.
2. According to Horizons magazine, ITEBA will use the grant to build a facility to house a library, offices and classrooms.
3. After an interchange of e-mails with a PW spokesperson in Louisville, I learned that PW made the grant on the basis of a "focus statement" rather than a mission statement. The "focus statement" reads: "Funding of this proposal will ensure that ITEBA has the resources to achieve accreditation. Accreditation will allow ITEBA to continue meeting the demands for Leadership Development for churches, schools, and social services agencies which 'Plant the Reign of God and God's justice' (Matt. 6:33) in the favelas of Salvador." No statement of faith was required (or even requested) from the school.
4. A member of the VOW Network and her husband are Presbyterian Mission Workers in Brazil. She translated the opening paragraph of the school's bulletin from Portuguese. It reads: "In January of 1993, a group of women met around the dream of constructing a theology that grew out of their own universe of life experiences; (a theology) that would confront archaic religious structures and would re-imagine God as pluralistic, creative, universal and evolving."

Does Presbyterian Women have the right to support this project? Without question! However, I believe that PW also has an affirmative obligation fully to inform its own constituents as to how it intends to use their money. This PW has not done.

But, the ultimate responsibility is ours – mine and yours – not PW's. So long as we continue blindly to contribute to anyone or anything without requiring explicit and detailed information beforehand, and so long as we continue to make no demands for financial accountability as to how our gifts have been used, PW, et. al., will continue to underwrite whatever it sees fit to support – even if its choices undermine the very faith PW purports to confess.

Before you give another dollar, please satisfy yourself that your money will be used for what you want to support. That is as much a stewardship responsibility as is the giving of the gift in the first place. 

--by Sylvia Dooling

[The preceding article is an abridged version of a lengthy commentary that first appeared on the VOW website. You may read it in its entirety at [http://www.vow.org/pcusa/pw/financial\\_accountability/04may11-sdooling-2004\\_birthday\\_offering\\_intro.html](http://www.vow.org/pcusa/pw/financial_accountability/04may11-sdooling-2004_birthday_offering_intro.html) ]

## **Birthday Offering Grant Procedures: It's Time for a Change**

--by Marcia Slentz-Whalen

Each year PW's Creative Ministries Offering Committee (CMOC) awards money to selected recipients who apply for grants through the PW Birthday Offering program. These grants are funded by the Birthday Offering collections from local PW circles, and the CMOC is entrusted with a stewardship role in determining how those individual offerings will be spent.

It is time for the CMOC to change its way of doing things. It is becoming increasingly clear that monies are being directed to organizations whose programs and policies directly contradict the Biblical and Constitutional standards of the PC(USA).<sup>1</sup>

In response to reasonable requests for information about grant recipients, the CMOC has failed to provide complete and accurate disclosure. Specifically, requests were not honored for copies of the Mission Statements of each of the recipient organizations. In some cases, the response was simply that the grant applicant did not have a Mission Statement. In other cases, a "focus statement" was offered in lieu of the organization's overall Mission Statement. A simple "focus statement" addressing a specific need within the organization is inadequate. No matter how worthy a particular project may appear to be, if the mission of the organization is contrary in any way to PC(USA) reformed theology, then no PC(USA) financial resources should be turned over to such an organization. Even if the specific project is a worthy project, helping an unworthy organization fund a particular project simply "frees up" other monies at their disposal to finance their mischief-making.

Three changes need to be made immediately:

1. The CMOC must revise its application procedure to REQUIRE each grant applicant to submit a copy of the organization's Mission Statement.
2. The CMOC must rule out any request from any faith-based organization whose Mission Statement is not in alignment with the Biblical and Constitutional standards of the PC(USA).
3. Those Mission Statements must be published by the CMOC at the same time that they publish the list of grant recipients. (Previously, the announcement of award recipients has included only a brief statement

about the specific project toward which the grant money will be directed by the organization.)

Even if your PW circle already has submitted its Birthday Offering contribution for 2004, it is not too late to press for accountability. Contact PW Officers in Louisville and request copies of the Mission Statements for each of the organizations that were selected for the 2004 grants. If even one Presbyterian woman from every circle will take just a moment to make a quick phone call or send a brief note or e-mail message, the national PW leadership may finally get a sense of their responsibility to be accountable to the women of the church in gathering and providing relevant information regarding financial stewardship. Even if it does not change anything for this current round of grants, it is likely that gentle but persistent calls for disclosure will, over time, make a difference for the better.

The bottom line here is that no organization should even be considered for a Birthday Offering grant unless a copy of that organization's Mission Statement has been submitted with the application. And if that Mission Statement in any way contradicts the Biblical and Constitutional standards of the PC(USA), that grant application should be eliminated from further consideration. ¶

Points of contact for those in charge of the Birthday Offering grant awards:

Fannye Belt      E-mail: [fbelt@ctr.pcusa.org](mailto:fbelt@ctr.pcusa.org)

Ann Ferguson (PW Program Coordinator)  
E-mail: [aferguson@ctr.pcusa.org](mailto:aferguson@ctr.pcusa.org)  
Phone: 888-728-7228 ext. 5365  
Address: Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)  
100 Witherspoon St.  
Louisville, KY 40202-1396

<sup>1</sup> See accompanying article by Sylvia Dooling entitled *The 2004 Birthday Offering*

. Also see the VOW webpage for articles on past problems. Begin at

[http://www.vow.org/pcusa/pw/financial\\_accountability/financial\\_accountability\\_menu.html](http://www.vow.org/pcusa/pw/financial_accountability/financial_accountability_menu.html)

### Alternative Possibilities for PW Mission Giving

VOW has been asked to suggest alternatives for PW mission giving – alternatives that fit the criteria that we have suggested for our national officers to follow. One that comes immediately to mind is The National Center for the Development of Dalit Women. Read about it below.

## By Women, For Women Responding to Women in India Will You?

Women born as Bhangi Untouchables according to the Indian Caste System are trapped in filthy work that others above them consider polluting.

Mothers train their daughters and daughters-in-law to do this work so that they can eventually retire, ensuring continuing despair.

Today the National Center for the Development of Dalit Women is planned. Through faith development, literacy, job skills, and subjects like childcare and nutrition, this center will empower hundreds of women from across a wide area in India.

Myrna Klassen has met many women on her trips to India and is spearheading this effort of raising \$300,000. She comes to you having already raised \$100,000 for the planned three-story center.

For more on this amazing effort read the printed VOW Newsletter or contact Myrna Klassen at 415-641-4044. If you would like to make a contribution, send your check to Witnessing Ministries of Christ, 4717 N. Barton Ave., Fresno, CA 93726-1119, indicating “Women’s Center” on the check.

\*Witnessing Ministries of Christ is a validated, Extra Commitment Offering Opportunity of the Presbyterian Church (USA).

We encourage you to tell others about VOW, and to invite them to place their names and addresses on the VOW mailing list. This is a positive way for women and men to feel supported, and to learn what they can do to work for reformation in our church. Also, as we can communicate more frequently and more economically by e-mail, we really would like to have your e-mail address. Please feel free to drop me a note at: [Sdooling@aol.com](mailto:Sdooling@aol.com) and be sure to visit our website at <http://www.vow.org>



**Valuación por la Junta de VOW del  
Estudio Bíblico "Horizons" para el 2004-2005  
Traducido por: La Rda. Aída M. Diego**

Cuando la Junta se reunió en April, revisamos cuidadosamente el Estudio Bíblico de "Horizons" para el año 2004/05, titulado: *"Lo que ella dijo: Mujeres Citables en la Escritura"*, por Dale Lindsay Morgan. Estudiamos las lecciones a la luz de las preguntas evaluativas publicadas en Inglés en nuestra publicación de Marzo próximo pasado, que traducimos para ustedes, nuestras queridas lectoras de habla hispana:

1. ¿Se adhiere la autora al "contexto" de la Escritura? Esto significa, ¿toma ella en consideración cuando se escribió el pasaje Bíblico, por qué se escribió y para quién fue escrito? Además, establece ella el sentido claro y simple del mismo, antes de intentar aplicar sus significados a las vidas de la mujer de hoy?
2. ¿Existe algún "plan/agenda" filosófico, teológico, político-contemporáneo" con el que la autora "lee" dentro de su interpretación del texto, ó permite ella al texto "hablar" por sí mismo?
3. ¿Qué "habla" a la autora con más autoridad – el simple significado de la Escritura misma, ú otra fuente extra-Bíblica?
4. ¿Escribe la autora consistentemente desde una perspectiva Trinitaria, elevando al Dios quien se nos ha revelado como Padre, Hijo y Espíritu Santo?
5. ¿Cuál es el énfasis misiológico del estudio? ¿Eleva éste a la persona y la obra de Cristo, y Su poder de transformación de vidas individuales, tanto como cambios políticos, sociales y económicos?
6. ¿Cuándo uno ha terminado de estudiar cada lección, se ha adquirido una comprensión más profunda de lo que significa ser un obediente discípulo de Jesucristo?

También tomamos en consideración las necesidades y preocupaciones de varias mujeres en nuestro grupo, y como resultado, acordamos y adoptamos la siguiente declaración:

En general, nos sentimos animadas por la dirección a la fidelidad del testimonio Bíblico en el estudio de este año, pero es necesario llamar la atención sobre algunas cosas para ayudar a la decisión de las mujeres a usarlo.

Sabemos que hay grupos de mujeres que no han usado el estudio de "Horizons" por varios años, y que este grupo de lecciones no cambiará sus decisiones tan fácilmente.

A algunas de ustedes les gustaría estudiar el mismo material estudiado por el resto de las Mujeres Presbiterianas U.S.A.

Algunas están todavía tratando de trabajar con sus pastores y comités de sus consistorios sobre Educación Cristiana, sobre la decisión de 'que *curriculum* usar?' y esperamos que las sugerencias que a continuación expresamos les ayuden a alcanzarla:

*Nosotras creemos que el Estudio Bíblico Horizons, con algunas modificaciones, es aceptable para ser usado por las Mujeres Presbiterianas, y las invitamos y encarecemos a cada una a que utilice las preguntas aquí formuladas, a medida que se adentran en sus propias evaluaciones del mismo.*

*Para aquellas que deseen usar el estudio de Horizons, las invitamos a nuestra página electrónica, [www.vow.org/pcusa/pw/horizons](http://www.vow.org/pcusa/pw/horizons), donde publicaremos sugerencias, así como preguntas suplementarias para cada lección.*

*Para aquellas que deseen estudiar las mismas lecciones de Horizons, pero prefieren otra alternativa, podrán encontrar las lecciones escritas por el Rdo. Steve Bryant. Estos materiales suplementarios y sus alternativas deberán de estar listas para este próximo Otoño.*

Como siempre, animamos a todas las que usen el material de Horizons, a que expresen sus preguntas y preocupaciones directamente a la administración de Horizons en 100 Withespoon Street, Louisville, KY, 40202.

Muchas bendiciones a todas, y nos vemos en la Asamblea General si Nuestro Señor lo permite. ✝  
Vuestra hermana en Su amor y en Su Servicio, Aída

**2004 VOW BUDGET**

Advertising	\$ 1,000.00
P.W. Gathering	\$ 2,000.00
Supplies	\$ 1,000.00
Postage	\$ 4,000.00
Web Page	\$ 750.00
Printing	\$ 1,000.00
Resources	\$ 1,000.00
General Assembly	\$ 4,500.00
Telephone	\$ 1,000.00
Travel & Hotel	\$ 3,000.00
Annual Meeting	\$ 1,000.00
Exhibits, other venues	\$ 500.00
Contingency	\$ 1,000.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$21,750.00</b>

## My journey to ministry...



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My name is Tracey Karcher, and I am the Moderator of the VOW online discussion. I am 44, widowed, recently re-married, have two children, a grandchild, and live on a farm in northwestern North Carolina.

My journey down the path to ministry began when I accepted by faith the Lord's claims as to his identity as a teenager. While I don't think that "church hopping" is healthy, the Lord led me to different congregations at different times in my life to ensure that I had a well-rounded education!

In 1994, my husband had just died and I was a single mom with two young kids. I weighed my options and decided that I would be a stay-at-home mom, working part-time, and living on our Social Security benefits. I was a latch-key child in the 60s and 70s, and I was determined that my kids would grow up with at least one parent around! So things were a bit tight for us, and I learned total dependence on God.

It was during this time that I attended a church ministry event at the invitation of a friend. I had been a Christian for 16 years at this point, barely out of "kindergarten"! A minister at this event was focusing on individuals in the crowd and...she came to me! Well, this "prophet" laid hands on me and began to pray; then she spoke. She said many things in that short exchange, and like Mary, I "...kept all these things, and pondered them in [my] heart."

Among the things that she said, was that I would be "clothed in garments of praise" (Who? Me!?) and that I would "preach, teach, and prophesy." (You've GOT to be kidding!) She also qualified her statement by including an item about my birth that I was not even aware of, and later confirmed. Sceptic that I am, I disregarded her; but, I **was** curious. At that time, even after being a good Presbyterian (USA) for eight years, I did not agree that women should accept the call to ordained leadership or pulpit ministry. I also thought that she was a "quack." Didn't she know that prophetic ministry ended long ago?? And yet, there was something...

It took four long years of struggle, and a Southern Baptist Church of all things, to come to terms with my call. God led me to a man of leadership and vision who taught me, supported me, and affirmed me as a woman. He was a pastor who was serious about ministry, and equipping others for ministry. I finally realized that my call was a gift, that the gift came from God, and all I had to do was accept it at face value. When I went to my pastor, knowing the stand that the SBC had recently taken concerning women, I didn't know what he would say. I excitedly told him, "Pastor Wade! God wants me to preach!" He didn't laugh, or even smile, but thoughtfully said, "If that's what God wants you to do, then that's what you will do."

I had spent three years there, under the leadership of Pastor Wade, but God said it was time to go. After I had told God years ago I didn't like the PC(USA) and some of their unorthodox statements, AND that I would NEVER go back there again . . . yep, you guessed it! He plunked me right smack in the middle of a small, rural, traditional, PC(USA) congregation and said, "I want you here." "But, God!" I replied. "Are YOU sure!?" I asked God if **He** was sure! Not only that, but He put me right in the middle of a church fight! Soon after joining, I suggested to the Session that I might be interested in pursuing vocational ministry with the PC(USA). From time to time, my pastor asks me, "Are you **sure** you want to be a pastor?" I am sure, and grow more sure with every passing day.

I love this congregation with a love that defies all understanding. I am working hard for them as a self-proclaimed "ministry assistant," active in many areas of church life, supporting Pastor, and learning the stuff they don't teach in Seminary. I am currently working on my BA in Religion, and hope to become an official Inquirer soon.

As I enter this period in my life, I wonder at the changes that God has wrought in my life. I remember the day that it finally dawned on me that I was actually *living* the fruit of the Spirit, and I remember the day that I realized that He had kept his promise, given back in 1994, that I am now clothed in "Garments of Praise." And I remember the day that I finally learned to love life, the day I finally said to God, "I want to stay here and work for you."

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"...and Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart."

[Editor's Note: Tracey tells me that she is available 24/7 to help you get started with the online discussion. You can reach her at [traceyk@goboone.net](mailto:traceyk@goboone.net)]



Become part of the VOW network.

- Yes, add my name to the VOW network list.
- I want to help contribute. Enclosed is my gift of \$\_\_\_\_\_.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ Church: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to **VOW**, 2409 N. Estrella Ave., Loveland, CO 80538

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## *"The 'Girl Preacher' "*

--by the Rev. Tracee Hackel

The Girl Preacher has actually been preaching this month! A four-week series while the Head Pastor was out of town. I preached through the book of Jonah—four weeks, four chapters—worked out kind of neat that way. I always come across a lot of great insights while preparing that I don't get to put in the sermon, and Jonah was no exception. For instance...

John Calvin, in writing about the repentance of the Ninevites in Chapter 3, goes off on a long sidetrack about worship. His discourse contains a wonderful passage in which he explains that the King of Nineveh did not show us the proper way to repent for all time—that it was not the outward form, but the inner change of heart that was significant; the outward forms were simply pointers to the inward reality. He cautions the Church to remember this when they consider their worship practices and says, "But the disposition of man is prone to imitate what is evil: for we are all very like apes; we ought therefore always to consider by what spirit those were actuated whom we wish to imitate, lest we should be contented with the outward form and neglect the main thing." We ought not to ape the practices of others just because they "work"; but we ought to look to the leading of the Holy Spirit who always, without fail, points to the main thing, which is Jesus Christ, our one and only Savior.

During the summer here in South East Alaska we are deluged with rain and tourists. Our "historic" log chapel is on the tour list for many bus companies. So we hire "tour greeters" every summer to tell these bus-

loads of visitors about the Chapel, our ministry here, and to share the gospel as opportunity arises.

One of our greeters, Barbara Smith, recently told me about the kinds of questions people ask about the church. She said one fellow wanted to know if we had a "regular pastor"—if we had someone year-round.

Barbara told him, "Not only do we have a full-time Pastor, but we also have an Associate Pastor, and a Youth Director, and an Administrator, and a Nursery-Toddler- Pre-School Coordinator."

The man was surprised and replied, "Oh! Well then you have a lot of programs to keep people coming!"

Barbara's response would have made John Calvin proud. "No," she said, "it's not about programs, it's about Jesus. That's what keeps people coming."

So often we are tempted to build programs and events for the purpose of attracting or keeping people, usually of a certain age or culture. We go to seminars about how other churches in completely different cultural and social contexts from our own have attracted huge numbers; we then try to imitate their "success" in our own churches. When we look to a certain outward form of ministry to resurrect a dying church, or to preserve a thriving one, then we have forgotten the "main thing." Are we supposed to be building programs to keep people in our buildings? Or are we supposed to be building one another up in love to know and serve the Lord and to proclaim to a dying world the astounding truth of salvation in Jesus Christ alone?

Our works—even though carefully patterned after a "successful" ministry—will not save us from dying; only Jesus can do that. Our only salvation will be in keeping the main thing the main thing.



# Voices of Orthodox Women

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June, 2004

Pass this newsletter on to a friend.

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Share the good news!

## THE PURPOSE and WORK OF VOW

Voices of Orthodox Women is a nationwide network of women and men committed to the renewal of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) through the promotion of the doctrines and practices of historic, biblical and confessional orthodoxy against those of an encroaching culture.

The work of the VOW network will include:

- 6 Purposeful and specific prayer for our church and its ministries
- 6 The encouragement of like-minded individuals and groups
- 6 The political empowerment of orthodox women
- 6 Education
- 6 Calls for accountability
- 6 A faithful and gently assertive presence