

Women's Prophetic Voice




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Cover: Photos from MW USA's Strategic Planning Retreat, Amigo Center, Sturgis, Michigan, March, 2009. Collage by Nancy Miller, Hesston, Kansas.

"Women's Prophetic Voice" can sound like an intimidating topic, but really, it is just ordinary women who see a need and begin with small steps to meet that need before others recognize it and respond. One example is a founder of the NAACP, Mary White Ovington. After reading about "race riots" in Illinois, she began to contact other white allies who met in a New York City apartment and began to organize what would become the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) which is celebrating its centennial anniversary this year. Mary had a conviction that lynching had to stop. She saw this need and acted persistently to do something extraordinary to meet it.

Mary White Ovington was a prophetic voice as was Mennonite woman Selma Platt Johnson who helped organize the Newton Interracial Fellowship to integrate movie theaters, restaurants, soda fountains, etc. in Newton, Kansas. Mennonite women organizing sewing circles in the 1890's was a prophetic voice in response to the needs of women in the church then as Sister-Care is today. Mennonite city mission worker, Catherine Niswander, too, was a prophetic voice to the churches. Recently, Sara Wenger Shenk has responded to God's call to accept the appointment as President of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary and will be a prophetic voice in her new role as she identifies needs and moves to address them. Sharing our stories helps us identify needs and seek ways to respond to God's call for us.

In this issue of *timbrel*, Kiki Klassen writes about Edna Byler's determined response to the call for meeting an economic need for women as she slowly began what became Ten Thousand Villages. In her article, Joanna Shenk writes about women in leadership and the prophetic voice they can bring to our Mennonite institutions and organizations. Sara Thompson tells about her experiences with women who have a prophetic voice in the church in Ghana.

Not all of us hear God's call to be a prophetic voice, but when someone answers that call, we are there to follow where the response to need leads. As we share our stories, we hear God's call. With God guiding the footsteps of women answering God's call, much has been achieved as the world ushers in God's kingdom just as Mary, Jesus' mother, prophesied in Luke 1:47-55. 

Sister Question for January-February

In preparation for the next issue of *timbrel*, which will focus on Loneliness in Community, consider: **What has helped to change the situation when you have felt lonely in your community?** Send your response to <PattyB@MennoniteWomenUSA>.org>.