

# **WOMEN IN MINISTRY:**

## **CHALLENGING THE CULTURAL OBSTACLES**

**by Lee M. Haines**

The right of women to respond to the call of God to serve both in lay office and lay leadership and in ministerial office and ministerial leadership is a matter that appeared at one time to have been forever settled in the churches of the holiness movement, including our own. But in recent years, while some denominations that for centuries had closed their doors to women leaders and women ministers are now opening their doors to them, we in The Wesleyan Church have in practice almost slammed the doors shut, even while we have strengthened our statements in every respect on equal rights as to gender.

I have written and spoken to this anomaly on many occasions. But I have been assigned a topic for today that I have never faced head on before: "Women in Ministry: Challenging the Cultural Obstacles." I must confess that I have found the topic intriguing and challenging.

### **Identifying the Cultural Obstacles**

We need to begin by identifying the cultural obstacles, including those in society in general, in the broader church world and in our own fellowship. I will mention nine.

The first cultural obstacle I would mention is the male dominant/patriarchal tradition underlying most cultures on this planet. It is pervasive in our Anglo-Saxon culture with roots traceable back to Greco-Roman and Jewish societies. It remains in place and in operation despite the efforts of those who support a biblical approach to women in the ministry as well as the efforts of those who come from a totally different perspective—radical feminism and the political correctness fad. Illustrations of it are beyond number. I will take time for three quick ones. In a ministerial training seminar in which I taught recently, an ethnic student told Maxine and me wistfully that he hoped we would soon get

back to the way things used to be. When his father would come home from work, his mother would meet him with a bowl of water for washing and a towel for drying. I'm afraid my answer dashed cold water on his hopes! In the Indianapolis *Star*, there recently appeared a story about Tanya Walton Pratt, the judge presiding over Marion County Superior Court 1 in Indianapolis. Granted that she is black as well as a woman, doubling the prejudice. But persons coming into her office area ask her, "Are you the clerk?" "Are you the secretary?" A Democratic consultant commenting on the perceived difficulty of women being elected as governors said, "People accept women more readily as advocates than as executives." It appears that the glass ceiling is still securely in place in our society.

The second cultural obstacle that I would mention is the fact that the Bible, including both the Old Testament books and the New Testament books, was written against the background of male dominant/patriarchal societies. I am assuming that most, if not all of us, are committed to equality of the sexes. And I am assuming that most of us believe that the weight of the Scriptures, the trend or trajectory of the Scriptures supports the concept of equality. But we cannot deny the fact that there is much in the Bible that seems to assume and reflect as well as seeks to regulate and mitigate male primacy. If this were not true, we might not need to deal with this topic in this symposium.

The third cultural obstacle has to do with the universal church—the Church Militant as it is sometimes called. Christianity is divided today on the role of women in the home, in society and in the church. But the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches as well as a host from the Reformed tradition constitute a huge majority holding to a male dominant structure of the church. And they believe it to be sanctioned by the Bible and the unbroken tradition of the churches.

The fourth cultural obstacle comes even closer home to us. Among fundamentalists and evangelicals who accept the inerrancy of the Scriptures, a great number have minds firmly closed on this issue. A few key prooftexts are all that they need to make certain of God's plan. And they have written articles and books, preached in great superchurches and on television and radio, until the Christian public is saturated with their position. This is especially ironic since it was evangelicalism that gave birth in the nineteenth century to the original women's rights movement.

The fifth cultural obstacle actually underlies some of what I have already mentioned. It is the widespread concept that women are by nature inferior to men, and particularly that they are far more easily deceived than are men. J. Lee Grady treats this one well in *Ten Lies the Church Tells Women* (pp. 119-134). This was a view widely held by Greek philosophers, ancient Jews, many early church fathers, and is still held to the present.

David Cloud is a writer whose articles are distributed by the Fundamentalist Baptist News Service. Grady quotes (p. 122) an article Cloud wrote in 2000:

The woman has a different makeup than the man. She was designed for a different role in life—that of a wife and mother. Her emotional, psychological, and rational makeup are geared perfectly for this, but she was not designed for leadership. In the Garden of Eden the devil deceived her. This was not true for Adam. He sinned, but he was not deceived. Eve had allowed herself to be thrust into a position of decision-making she was not supposed to occupy. It is no coincidence that women have been responsible for starting many of the false Christian movements and have played key roles in spiritism, New Age, mind science cults and such. Human nature has not changed, and neither have God's restrictions against women preachers.

One wonders whether Cloud has ever tried to enumerate the stupid errors of men or the false movements started by men!

The sixth cultural obstacle deals with our own kind. The steadily narrowing concentric circles I have referred to up to now have left a relatively small group committed to equality in our terms. Included are the Quakers (the first group to deliberately seek and practice equality), the Salvation Army and most of the holiness and Pentecostal denominations as those most open to women in the ministry. And yet even among these, there are many traces of male dominance and inconsistencies in application and practice. Women are usually limited to serving under the leadership of their husbands or in positions not able to secure male ministers. And while mediocrity is widely accepted for male ministers, only the most highly gifted and effective women come close to equal opportunity—that is, opportunity equal to that of mediocre men!

The seventh cultural obstacle is one that plays on the fears of all the church groups I have mentioned. It is the reaction of genuine Christians against the apostasy brought on by liberalism in its many forms. These include the radical feminists who are agnostics or atheists or even pagans. Some have taken a cue from the female personification of Wisdom in the Proverbs and worship a female deity called Sophia (the Greek word for "wisdom"). Also included are the "mainline" liberal denominations which have just

recently begun ordaining women and are lending support to radical feminism. Some of them have already accepted the ordination of practicing homosexuals and others are debating the issue. Also included are rank social liberals who promote the ordination of women in the same breath with which they promote the ordination of practicing homosexuals. The cover of the May 6 issue of *Newsweek* carries the headline, "What Would Jesus Do? Beyond the Priest Scandal: Christianity at a Crossroads." Inside, the cover article was headlined "Sex and the Church: A Case for Change" by Jon Meacham. Immediately beneath it were two highlighted sentences by Meacham, "Cracking down on predators is long overdue. But beyond the scandal, it's time to rethink sexuality and the sacraments." He goes on to treat three major points: I. The Gay Dilemma. II. Celibacy and Marriage. III. Factoring in Women. In the latter, he wraps together the ordination of homosexuals with the ordination of women. There is no doubt in my mind that this kind of thing taints the whole issue and makes those of us calling for true equality of the sexes guilty in the minds of many by association.

The eighth cultural obstacle is the shortage of readily available models of women in ministry and the lack of teaching that supports such a role for women. It is true that one or two have shown up here and there on television. The following describes the problem well:

. . . for the most part, there is no reason why persons in a congregation would believe that the Scriptures do not prohibit women from pursuing and filling pastoral positions in the church. Likely few persons in one's congregation:

- have heard one sermon which would condone and affirm it,
- have seen or read a book or an article condoning or affirming it,
- have known any female pastor to serve as an exemplary role model,
- have been exposed to responsible principles of biblical interpretation on the controversial passages about women, such as studying the statements in context; understanding the difference between descriptive and prescriptive passages, and carefully examining the general tenor or direction of Scripture in order to arrive at the meaning or principles to be applied to the specifics. (J. Peifer, *Pastoral Theology Lecture Notes*, 1992 quoted by Janet M. Peifer, "Women in the Pew, but Destined for the Pulpit, in *Evangelical Visitor*, October 1997, pp. 8-9.)

There is a ninth cultural issue on which I must confess I have difficulty getting a grasp. I am told repeatedly by district superintendents that often the persons in local churches most strongly opposed to women ministers are other women. On the surface this seems strange. Many of the most zealous champions of women in ministry are women. Why would others be in the forefront of opposing it? My wife tells me that surveys have shown that many women prefer to work for a male boss rather than a female. Is it jealousy? Is it such a departure from past experience there is fear of the unknown? Is it a confidence that a male pastor can be manipulated more easily than a female pastor? What psychological tensions are revealed here? Andrew D. Lester, in an article entitled, "Some Observations on the Psychological Effects of Women in Ministry" (*Review and Expositor*) LXXXIII: 1, Winter 1986, pp. 56-57), speaks to this tension. He suggests three reasons: (1) The jealousy which wives feel toward any professional woman with whom their husbands work; they feel disadvantaged by the woman who appears competent, nicely dressed, free from burdens of homemaking and intellectually sharp. (2) The resentment that some women feel toward radical feminism with its put down of those devoting themselves to the vocations of motherhood and homemaking; they may assume a woman minister will do likewise. (3) Some women will be jealous because they wish they were doing something more creative with their own lives.

### **Focusing on The Wesleyan Church**

Let's turn our attention now to focus more closely on our own field of ministry in The Wesleyan Church.

All that I have outlined to this point bears heavily on this issue in the grass roots of The Wesleyan Church. Our ministers and members are affected by the pervasive impact of our traditional culture, by the example of the oldest branches of Christianity, by the strong segments of the religious right that proclaim and publish their interpretations of the Scripture. They definitely do not want to be joined to the radical feminists in their anti-Christian rantings nor the social radicals who call for ordination of women *and* homosexuals.

One of the most serious failures of those of us who have been or are the leaders of The Wesleyan Church has been our failure to renew our distinctives from one generation to the next. We have tended to struggle with an issue, resolve it to our satisfaction, enshrine it in some official statement, and consider it forever settled. We have done this with our struggle over slavery and racism, secret societies, the alcohol and tobacco lifestyle issues, and the role of women in the ministry as well. So new generations arise with weak or missing foundations on such issues. We can add to this the recent rapid growth of many

of our churches, and the importing of twenty percent of our ministers from outside The Wesleyan Church. The result is that probably a large majority of our people know neither our history nor our current position on this issue. And the shrinking number of Wesleyan women ministers and our ignoring of the ones we have leave us without models needed to bring about change.

There is still another factor that hinders our putting into practice our purported beliefs in women's right to participate in lay and ministerial office and leadership. We have a strong negative residual effect from the ministries of two high profile Christian leaders who have been heard widely across The Wesleyan Church. One held seminars on church growth and proclaimed loudly that he required his church to have an all-male local board and he credited much of his success to an all-male prayer circle that met with him each Sunday morning prior to the services. Only the Lord knows how many young pastors were led astray as they sought to emulate him. The other held so called "youth institutes" promoted by our districts, in which he tortured various New Testament passages into teaching what he called "male headship" and a "chain of command" for the Christian family. Some homes were wrecked or deeply disturbed as a result and many pastors were thrown into confusion and echoed his teachings. While neither of these leaders was primarily dealing with women in the ministry, the fallout has certainly been to the disadvantage of that issue.

I have referred more than once to our history relative to women in ministry. The truth is that our history on this issue is not nearly as bright as we wish it had been nor as bright as perhaps we sometime paint it. Please know that there has never been a time in our history free of prejudice on this matter, never a time when women had an equal opportunity. This is true even though we have lost much of what was good in our past.

The Wesleyan Methodist Church is the oldest branch of our family tree and is often looked to as the bold pioneer for women in ministry. It is true that early Wesleyan Methodist leaders spoke about female equality, that Luther Lee preached the ordination sermon in 1853 for the first woman ordained in America, that the Illinois Conference licensed Mrs. Mary A. Will as a minister in 1860 and ordained her in 1861. This event set off a controversy in the 1864 General Conference. Neither a motion to disapprove of women in the ministry nor one to provide for licensing and ordaining women could muster a majority vote. Subsequently Illinois deposed Mrs. Will from the ministry, apparently after reconsideration of their action. Mrs. Mary DePew was perhaps the most influential person in ushering in the intensified holiness revival among Wesleyan Methodists, and she preached throughout her ministry with neither license nor ordination.

In 1875 the General Conference declined to hear an appeal from Mrs. Will's deposition. The denominational periodical in those years reveals three views conflicting in its

columns: One extreme said women should stay home and leave church leadership to men; the middle view said women can preach but not be ordained or serve as pastors or in authority over men; the other extreme said women could be ordained on the same basis as men. The 1879 General Conference voted to license women as ministers but not to ordain them. The 1887 General Conference narrowly failed to approve women's ordination. The 1891 General Conference repealed the 1879 rule, leaving no statement at all in the *Discipline* and the annual conferences free to do as they wished.

The co-founders of what became the Pilgrim Holiness Church, Martin Wells Knapp and Seth C. Rees, were both married to preachers. And it seems that the ordination of women came more easily among the various groups merging into the Pilgrim mainstream. This is not to say that there was no undercurrent of dissent, however. At various points in Pilgrim history, thirty or more percent of all ministers were women. The Pilgrims also ordained deaconesses.

B. T. Roberts wrote an outstanding book on *Ordaining Women* in 1891 and was bitterly disappointed that his Free Methodist Church did not immediately adopt his position. In fact, it was 1974 before Free Methodists approved the full ordination of women—the period when we were last considering merger with them.. The Church of the Nazarene's 1894 founding constitution specifically provided for the right of women to preach.

The question is often asked, How many women ministers have served the Wesleyans? It is a hard question to answer as the groups now merged in The Wesleyan Church never segregated ministerial statistics between males and females. At one time many men and women were listed on district/conference rolls without first names—initials only. And there is evidence that some names we would consider female were used of males. My wife, the Rev. Maxine L. Haines, has been researching for a history of Wesleyan women ministers who began their service prior to the 1968 merger. She found so many she has had to restrict her research to those who were eventually ordained—well over 1,000 of them. She has been able to divide these by periods, not as to when they were ordained, but as to when they began service. Following are her figures which include only those eventually ordained:

prior to 1899 43

1900-1909 97

1910-1919 72

1920-1929 189

1930-1939 227

1940-1949 200

1950-1959 149

1960-1968 68

You will note that the peak period was 1920-1949, with a significant decrease in the 1950s, and a staggering decline in the 1960s. The decrease following World War II may have been due in part to the enormous tide of women moving into the job market at that time, carrying away some who otherwise would have entered ministry. Probably some of the cultural obstacles came more into play, as we came out of our isolation and joined the National Association of Evangelicals and teamed in various ways with other evangelicals with no tradition of women in ministry. And the somewhat later development of radical feminism with its accompanying backlash probably also played a part.

Since many of the women reflected in the statistics above served twenty, thirty and even forty years, and these are only those eventually ordained, not including those only licensed, there may well have been times when 400 to 600 women were serving at the same time across the branches of our family tree.

The sad thing is that most had anything but an equal opportunity for ministry. This is true across all our various family tree branches. Those in a husband-wife team had the best chance, but never that we know of with more than a single salary. And even here, some women had an effective, even outstanding ministry before marriage, only to be consigned to a subordinate role by the husband, left to do what he did not want to do. Others had to take churches no man would take, with little or no support. Many were never assigned by their district/conference to a church. They simply started one or more on their own, without assistance. Repeatedly as soon as a church so begun had grown to where it could support a pastor, a man would be brought in and the woman would have to start all over again. No doubt such sorry treatment of our daughters played a significant role in the eventual decline of their numbers.

How many Wesleyan women ministers are there today? Figures apparently pulled together by Education and the Ministry in March 2000 indicated a total of 211, of whom 108 were retired, 25 were without appointment, 26 were in "other service," 3 were in "interchurch service." This leaves 49 in some type of regular service to The Wesleyan Church: 2 senior pastors with staff, 19 solo pastors, 2 co-pastors, 22 staff pastors (associate, assistant, etc.), 4 supply pastors.

At the time of the merger, the right of women to any lay or ministerial office was protected by two constitutional sub-paragraphs. One declares that any member is eligible



to hold any office for which any other member is eligible (302:3), the other that any ordained minister is eligible for election to any office for which ordained ministers are eligible (313:2). The 1984 General Conference passed and the district conferences ratified a constitutional amendment that added the word "sex" to "ancestry" and "color" as conditions for which there could be no discrimination against any member or minister (360:3d).

## **Disarming the Cultural Challenges**

We have attempted to identify and characterize the cultural obstacles to women in ministry. We have attempted to focus more closely on the ways these obstacles hinder The Wesleyan Church in actualizing its stated positions. Now we need to plan and implement the strategies needed to disarm the cultural challenges. The ones that I will suggest include some that the people attending this symposium can implement. But I will also suggest some which will take a coordinated effort by all the leadership of the Church on the local level, the district level, and the general level. We can be thankful that we have at least one General Superintendent and one general officer with us to help carry over that part of our planning! I am going to group my suggestions under four headings.

First, we must be consistent in **providing a climate conducive to opening ministry to women**. We have much of this already. We have and have had women in the ministry. We have stated our commitment to it in no uncertain terms. We have a host of young women (about 200 in fact) testifying to God's call and that that has been sealed at local Wesleyan church altars, at Wesleyan youth camps and in Wesleyan youth conventions. We have perhaps the most committed leadership relative to this issue that we have ever had, on the general and district level, and in our educational institutions. In most of our churches, women are in the majority. In fact, a Lilly Endowment funded study called the U. S. Congregational Life Survey indicates that in local fellowships of all religious faiths in this country women outnumber men 62 percent to 38 percent. Women vote in Wesleyan local church conferences, they serve on local boards of administration and in various other local offices. On the district level, numerous women delegates sit in the district conference. Nearly all district boards of administration have one or more women members as do many of our district boards of ministerial standing. And women serve on district committees. I believe each of our colleges/universities has one or more women board members as does the General Board. The number of women delegates to General Conference seems to be growing each quadrennium.

But some of this at least is tokenism. The higher the level of board, the fewer the women, and the less likely that such membership has resulted spontaneously. Rather the chances are that someone clamored for some female presence. On the local level, how about women serving as ushers, assisting in distributing the Lord's Supper, leading in prayer,

serving as vice-chair of the LBA? Why not a stronger female presence on district, educational and general boards? Why not at least one effective ordained woman minister on each DBMD?

I want to probe a bit deeper. Gretchen Gaebelein Hull in *Equal to Serve*, surprised me with a statement about the terms "male headship" and "chain of command" with reference to the family. She says that although she grew up in a very conservative Christian environment, she knew nothing about such concepts as "male headship" and a hierarchical "chain of command" until the 1970s. Sunday school students sought her evaluation of literature on these topics. And she attended one of a series of popular seminars on life problems that promoted rigid roles for men and women, with the man always in the dominant role. I must confess that now I think of it that was when I first heard such terms. I was teaching at Indiana Wesleyan University at the time and I too had a student to bring me a seminar notebook for my evaluation, and I remember my uneasiness about what I read there. These concepts twist Scripture passages into terms not intended. They miss the whole message of Paul in Ephesians 5 which was mutual submission for the sake of the whole by all members of the family from the father to the youngest child. But this heresy had wide circulation among us and vestiges of it still remain. It is hard to have a climate conducive to women in ministry where these concepts persist.

We need to call for accountability of pastors and local church leaders and for district superintendents to deal with this matter of climate. We need to train the future ministers studying in our institutional and FLAME classes to be truly Wesleyan in this area. We need to make sure that our concept of women in ministry is reflected along with other distinctives in our membership training and discipleship materials.

Second, we must give ourselves to **teaching the biblical and theological bases for women in ministry**. I am going to limit myself severely here, lest I launch into a full-fledged exploration of this area. The more I read and study the louder is the testimony of God's Word to the equality of the sexes.

I believe that we must build our scriptural support on what I will call three "towers" of gender equality in the Scriptures. The first is Genesis 1:27-28, in which the author makes clear that God created male and female, both were His handiwork, both were in His image, both were given authority to subdue the earth and rule over the fish, birds, and living creatures. The *equality of creation* persisted until the fall of Adam and Eve in Genesis 3 and then rule by the man was part of the penalty—not part of God's original plan in creation nor part of the plan under redemption. The second tower is in Galatians 3:28 where Paul declared the remedy of redemption for the curse of the fall: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ

Jesus." While *equality under redemption* between Jew and Greek was implemented by the church in the New Testament age, the equality of slave and free was only achieved in the nineteenth century, and the full equality of male and female is yet being worked out. The third tower is one that binds the Old Testament and the New Testament together. It first appears in Joel 2:28-29 as a prophecy of the messianic age, predicting that God's Spirit would be poured out on men and women alike and that both sons and daughters would prophesy. It was fulfilled in Acts 2:1ff. when 120 men and women proclaimed the wonderful works of God in the languages of all the nations represented at the feast of Pentecost. And Peter tied it all together when he claimed it as the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy—*equality of ministry* in proclaiming God's message. Note the sequence of the three towers—*equality of creation, equality under redemption, equality of ministry*.

The Old Testament reveals that God has called, worked through, and blessed the ministry of women such as Miriam (prophetess, leader), Deborah (prophetess, judge—highest authority in Israel at that time), Isaiah's wife (prophetess) and Huldah (prophetess). In the New Testament, Jesus' attitude toward women and their prominent mention throughout the Gospels, Acts and Paul's epistles are totally in contrast with the culture of the times. Phoebe is described as a deacon, Junias as an apostle, Priscilla is depicted as the leader in her home and in the instruction of Apollos. Peter and Paul both speak of women as prophesying. And yet in the same contexts Paul seems to place restrictions on women, forbid them even to speak in the congregation. We must emphasize those passages which clearly indicate God's use of women in ministry. But we cannot ignore those passages in tension with such a concept. We must attempt to understand their meaning in the context of the totality of scripture. We must also recognize that some seem to defy understanding, as there are verses for which no consensus of interpretation has been achieved. And we must recognize that within the Scriptures God has at times temporarily adapted to His service cultural aspects which were not part of His eternal purpose. Jesus Himself pointed out that the Old Testament statute of divorce, commanded by God, was really God's adaptation to the hardness of the hearts of His people. And the New Testament Church in Acts 15, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, set aside the covenant mark of circumcision as unnecessary in the redeemed fellowship. We need to recognize that what Dr. David L. Thompson, our colleague at Asbury Theological Seminary, calls the trajectory of Scripture eventually made it impossible for the Church to tolerate slavery, and so the trajectory of Scripture also makes it impossible to continue tolerating the subjugation and limitation of females in the redeemed community. The eternal principles revealed in the Scriptures require the equality of the sexes in privilege and ministry.

This means that we need to communicate this more clearly than we ever have to our constituents and those seekers coming under our influence. We need persons in this assembly who have earned the respect and confidence of broad spectrums of The Wesleyan Church to publish one or more substantial books dealing with the biblical and theological issues. We need shorter pamphlets or booklets that will introduce these subjects convincingly. We need articles in *The Wesleyan Advocate*, in district publications, lessons in our Sunday school curriculum. We need instruction in the

classroom in these matters for our male ministerial students as well as the females so we will not perpetuate our present paralysis. General church and district leaders as well as our educators need to take advantage of preaching and teaching opportunities to share the truth broadly.

Third, we must follow up all the above by **demonstrating that the Church believes that women in ministry are effective.** We must do our best to make up for the shortage of role models of women in ministry. We need more women ministers on our religion faculties on both the college/university and seminary levels. We need to headline the effective women ministers that we have. Include the most outstanding ones in the annual district superintendent pastoral awards at conference time—even if at first different criteria have to be applied. Have women ministers lead in devotions and/or pray in conferences, camp meetings, ministerials—get them before the public. Employ women ministers as speakers in camps, revivals, ministerials, campus chapels and spiritual emphasis weeks. We need to feature the most effective women ministers in alumni newssheets, in district publications, in *The Wesleyan Advocate*—tell the story of effective women ministers past and present. We may need to call for an annual denomination-wide Women in Ministry Sunday to help get done what is needed.

Fourth, we must be committed to **practicing the Barnabas principle.** Barnabas salvaged at least two outstanding potential ministers whose loss would have been catastrophic to the church. The first was Saul of Tarsus, the future Paul the Apostle. Barnabas twice kept him from drifting away from ministry, the first time when he was blacklisted because of his pre-conversion activity as a persecutor of believers, and the second time when he was sitting on the sidelines in his home city. The second one saved to the church was John Mark whom Barnabas rescued when Paul would have cast him aside for having been a dropout on his first missionary venture.

C. S. Cowles, in *A Woman's Place? Leadership in the Church* (pp. 191-92) declares the following:

It is just as unreasonable to expect that women preachers, teachers, educators, theologians, and leaders will emerge entirely on their own, full grown and mature—like bumblebees—as to imagine that male ministers come that way. All God-called and Spirit-filled potential ministers are "dead in the water" until someone in a position of authority recognizes their gifts, invites them to participate in increasingly responsible forms of ministry, supports them in

times of challenge and encourages them along the way.

We leaders who are committed to claiming our denominational birthright relative to women in the ministry must play the part of Barnabas for those women who now are qualified by grace, calling, gifts, training and effectiveness to enter into our ministerial ranks. Each one of us will need to take on championing the cause of one or more of these daughters of the Church and securing for them employment and opportunity. We need to secure internships for them in high profile churches, see that scholarships are provided that will make such an experience possible for them. We need to become their advocates in dealing with senior pastors, district superintendents, even local vice-chairs with the consent of the district superintendents. We may need through our educational institutions, districts and the general Church to provide special assistance for females that is not available to males to jump-start a vigorous renewal of a strong women ministry presence. And we should not hesitate to enlist others to assist us in both the championship and the fund-raising.

Two final suggestions: Whenever we are calling upon the Church to pray that the Lord will send out workers into the harvest, we must be sure to make it clear that we are seeking both men and women for ministry. And I even dare to suggest something which I wish I had thought of sooner. When General Superintendents are presiding over ordination services in which only male candidates are being ordained, it might kindle a fire if the General Superintendent would call attention to what is missing from the service—the ordination of some of the King's daughters to the ministry!

## **Conclusion**

It is my conviction that we male leaders must take the initiative in bringing about positive change for women in ministry in The Wesleyan Church. We must be the ones vigorously pursuing the development of proper strategies and initiating them. For young women, including my own granddaughter, who are preparing for ministry, I hate to repeat the sad old refrain—you will continue to need great patience. Seize opportunities for ministry small and large, as they come. If you see something that needs to be done that no one is doing, undertake it. Our women in ministry in the past had to create their own openings, start churches without assistance. You may have to find ways to do this again. Quite a few in the past paired up, two women called of God to minister and finding ways to do it while supporting themselves. And I am sorry that it is necessary to give women entering the ministry this admonition. Do not become belligerent. Do not become bitter. You will win much more quickly with grace and beauty of spirit. I believe we are on the verge of a breakthrough. May God grant that it be so.

