

PARTNERS IN
the spirit
JUNE 2006



The Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod

Women Clergy Gather

A Miracle of Faith: How One Man Beat the Odds

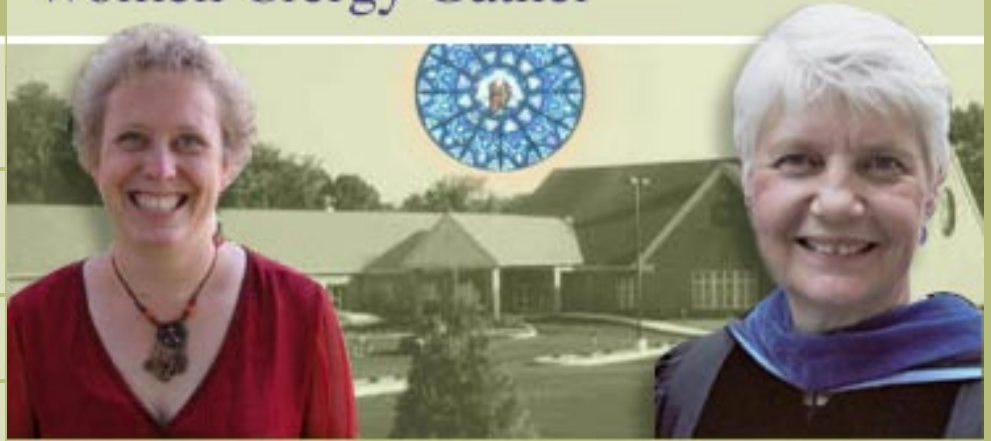
Rotation Workshop Model — Is It for Your Sunday School?

Good Friday for Children

Get Ready for a LIFT!

Update, Disaster Preparation and Recovery

Women Clergy Gather



By the Rev. Susan Ruggles

American essayist Annie Dillard said, “Spend the afternoon. You can’t take it with you.”

About 30 women leaders in the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod spent a morning and an afternoon — and they *did* take it with them. They met for a day of reflection and took from the day a freshness for ministry plus a continuation of friendships.

Gathered at Union Lutheran Church, Schnecksville, for what has become an annual event, women clergy began the morning with devotions led by Deaconess Deborah Matern Graf, with musical support from Associate in Ministry Linda Maule. Each woman was reminded of how the Spirit nourishes seeds of faith as she was handed a colorful dirt-filled pot and a mystery seed, which was pushed into the fertile seed “home.”

After the seed was sprinkled with water from the baptismal font, the different shaped and sized containers were carefully arranged on a table, looking like baby birds waiting patiently for the return of a feeding parent. I enjoyed the time to reflect quietly as we prepared to listen to Barbara Lundblad.

The day retreat was entitled *Book-Marked: Clergywomen and the Word*. The Rev. Barbara Lundblad, associate professor of preaching at Union Theological Seminary in New York City, reminded us how we might mark the *book*



and how the *book* marks us. She guided us as we looked critically at some texts and found surprises in the Gospels. We continued with a discussion of images in preaching.

After a break where we could choose between discussions on specific topics or wander on our own in the sunshine, Deborah Appler, associate professor of Hebrew Bible at Moravian Seminary, led us on a who's who of women in the Bible. From the Shuminite woman in 1 Kings to Orpah to Zipporah, the women we explored were ones in Scripture we usually overlook.

Much too soon, we gathered for the closing devotions and were reunited with our containers with the planted seeds.

In appreciation for the gathering of women leaders who share, encourage and gather in Christ's name, we look forward to the next annual women clergy gathering.