



EEWC-Christian Feminism Today

PO Box 78171, Indianapolis, IN 46278
317-414-8157, office@eewc.com, www.eewc.com

For immediate release

July 15, 2016

Indianapolis— For 42 years EEWC-Christian Feminism Today has maintained a prophetic voice in the Christian community—most recently at the group’s June 2016 gathering in Indianapolis, June 23-26.

Amid a summer of shootings and violence, this was a coming together of women and supportive men who emphasized peace, justice, gender equality, and love of God and neighbor. Three women pastors joined to lead the group’s Sunday worship service: Leslie Harrison, a grandmother and 4th-generation member of the African-Methodist Episcopal Church; Deborah Vaughn, a Baptist and hospice chaplain, and Erica Lea, a young clergywoman and lesbian with both Mennonite and Baptist affiliations, who preached the sermon.

“Prophets in Every Generation” was the gathering theme. Attendees ranged from nursing mother Jan Huckins of San Diego with her husband and their one-year-old twins to 87-year-old Jeanne Hanson, a current council member who had organized the group’s Seattle conference back in 1982.

This year’s prophets included Diana Butler Bass, author of nine books including *Christianity for the Rest of Us* and *Grounded: Finding God in the World*; Austin Channing Brown, blogger and multicultural liaison at Calvin College who speaks out for racial justice and reconciliation; and Grace Ji-Sun Kim, professor of theology at Earlham School of Religion and author or editor of nine books on global justice, the power of love, and intercultural theological understandings of spirituality.

Three graduate students from universities and seminaries, Cherice Bock, Katie Deaver, and Jennifer Newman, also gave plenary presentations.

In addition to the organization’s long history of full inclusion of LGBTQ people, the use of inclusive language to address and refer to God is another area in which EEWC-CFT is using its prophetic voice today.



Although EEWC-CFT members use a variety of Bible translations, each registered participant was provided with a copy of *The Divine Feminine Version of the New Testament*, a gift from Mark M. Mattison, one of the editors of this version, which uses *Mother* and female pronouns to refer to God instead of *Father* and male pronouns. Mattison also gave a workshop on the development of this translation.

Attendees were also provided with a sample booklet featuring the book of Ephesians from the Common English Bible as it is presented with annotations from an array of female scholars, including three members of EEWC-CFT, for the forthcoming *CEB Women's Bible*.

Wisdom is personified as female and as an expression of God in *Wisdom of Solomon* 7:27, an apocryphal book of the Bible and the inspiration for the conference theme.

“Although she is but one, she can do all things, and while remaining in herself, she renews all things; in every generation she passes into holy souls and makes them friends of God, and prophets.” (NRSV)

New Testament scholar Reta Halteman Finger spoke about the way Jesus is presented in the *Gospel According to John* as the “Logos” or “Sophia”, the fulfillment of the Wisdom tradition, often demonstrating wifely and motherly attributes and duties as they were practiced in a patriarchal culture.

Hymnist, pastor, and professor Jann Aldredge-Clanton led an evening of singing. Many of her hymns centered on “the Christ-Sophia,” a Christology that grows out of the Wisdom/Hochmah writings in Hebrew Scripture.

Therapist Teresa B. Pasquale spoke about a new area of ministry: the healing of spiritual trauma inflicted by the church. She described being at an evangelical summer camp and being told that Catholics were not Christians and therefore not going to heaven. When she asked, “What about Gandhi?” the answer was “Great guy—totally going to hell.” Counselors at the camp told her that if she did not accept these answers, “You’re not a Christian.”

“Okay, I’m out,” she concluded—and it took years before she fully recovered her faith.

Seeking help from the church after such wounds—often experienced by LGBTQ persons or women seeking to be priests—is “like going back to your abuser,” she said.



Kristin Kobes Du Mez spoke about 19th C. Christian anti-trafficking activism and the work of Katherine Bushnell. Du Mez is a professor of gender and religion in American history at Calvin College and currently writing a religious history of Hillary Rodham Clinton.

She explained that Bushnell's theology was shaped by the sexual abuse of women she encountered in her anti-trafficking work. "The crime is the fruit of the theology," she wrote. Christianity gave men "free reign to their own egotism under the excuse of 'headship.'"

Bushnell wrote a re-translation of the Bible, *God's Word to Women*, but did not abandon orthodox theology.

In another workshop, Professors Kendra Weddle Irons and Melanie Springer Mock guided participants in "finding hope in the midst of change," drawing upon their book, *If Eve Only Knew*.

Writer and composer Elisabeth Mehl Greene and multi-talented creative artist Mitra Motlagh performed monologues and dialogues from Greene's recently published book of poetry, *Lady Midrash: Reclaiming the Voices of Biblical Women*.

Alicia Crosby, a Chicago-based writer and activist, presented a workshop about radical inclusion as prophetic action.

EEWC-CFT's voice has been prophetic in calling for gender equality in church and family since 1974, when few churches or denominations were ordaining women.

Its outstanding website, <https://ewwc.com/>, and the many books, blogs, and articles of its leaders give the group a presence far beyond its size. A Google search of the words "Christian feminism" produces EEWC-CFT's home page in the top ten hits.

For more information, contact: Marg Herder, EEWC-CFT Director of Public Information, office@ewwc.com or (317) 414-8157.