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Erica Saunders Receives Fourth Annual Nancy A. Hardesty Memorial Scholarship from Christian Feminism Today

Indianapolis—The fourth annual Nancy A. Hardesty Memorial Scholarship, sponsored by Christian Feminism Today, has been awarded to Erica Saunders.

Erica Saunders is a rising second-year student at Wake Forest University School of Divinity, where she is working toward a Master of Divinity degree. Originally from Asheboro, NC, she has a B.A. in French, Spanish, and philosophy and religion from Queens University of Charlotte.

After completing her M.Div., Erica aspires to be ordained in the Baptist tradition and to pursue a Ph.D. in New Testament. Her research interests include feminist and decolonizing approaches to the New Testament and the Pauline epistles, particularly the Corinthian correspondence. Through her scholarship she hopes to bring to the fore the voices of those who have been silenced, to “reconstruct New Testament sources whose voices have been lost to antiquity.”

Ms. Saunders cites the positive influence Christian feminism has had on her own spiritual development. “Growing up in a fundamentalist church that stressed literal interpretation of Scripture,” she recalls, “I was taught a religion of exclusion on the one hand and subjugation of women as lesser than men on the other.” Discovering Christian feminism as an undergraduate, says Ms. Saunders, “allowed me to turn from the darkness of self-hate toward acceptance as a woman ‘fearfully and wonderfully made’ (Ps 139:14).”

In a recent women’s and gender studies symposium, Ms. Saunders presented a paper on 1 Cor 5–6 in which she offered “a reconstruction of Pauline sexual ethics for the Corinthian *ekklēsia* and communities like it that respects human dignity, bodily autonomy, and mistreatment of fellow humans” that reflects her interest in matters of sexual ethics, social justice, and their intersections.

The Nancy A. Hardesty Memorial Scholarship is awarded to a student who aspires to exemplify the values and achievements of Nancy A. Hardesty, a founding member of the Christian Feminism Today organization, formerly known as EEW (Evangelical and Ecumenical Women’s Caucus). The purpose of the \$1,000 scholarship, awarded every June, is to help a student who wants to be in a leadership role that supports and promotes Christian feminism.

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Nancy A. Hardesty (1941–2011) was a founding member of the Evangelical Women’s Caucus, which, over the past 44 years, has grown into Christian Feminism Today (CFT). Until her death, Dr. Hardesty was a professor of religion in the Department of Philosophy and Religion at Clemson University, in Clemson, SC. Previously, she had taught English and writing at Trinity College in Deerfield, IL, and had worked on the editorial staffs of *Eternity* magazine and *The Christian Century*.

Ms. Hardesty’s first book, co-authored with Letha Dawson Scanzoni, was *All We’re Meant to Be: A Biblical Approach to Women’s Liberation*. Originally published in 1974, the book has gone through several editions and has influenced countless Christian feminists, from evangelicals to mainline Protestants to Roman Catholics. In 2006, *Christianity Today* magazine ranked *All We’re Meant to Be* among the top 50 books that had influenced the evangelical Christian movement over half a century.

Nancy A. Hardesty was born in Lima, OH, and earned her Bachelor of Arts degree from Wheaton College in Wheaton, IL. She went on to earn a master’s degree in newspaper journalism from the Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University in Evanston, IL, and her Ph.D. in the history of Christianity at the University of Chicago.

Her dissertation, *“Your Daughters Shall Prophesy”*: *Revivalism and Feminism in the Age of Finney*, was published by Carlson Publishing in 1991.

Christian Feminism Today is a Christian feminist organization with a long history of working for gender equality. EEWc welcomes members of any gender, gender identity, race, ethnicity, color, creed, marital status, sexual orientation, religious affiliation, age, political party, parental status, economic class, or disability. Its biennial conferences sustain spiritual connectedness and foster learning about critical Christian feminist issues. The *Christian Feminism Today* website (<https://ewc.com>) provides Christian feminist news, articles, book reviews, blogs, Bible study, audio, links to explore, and inspiration. CFT members network with and support each other through regional events, biennial conferences, and the Internet.

For more information about Christian Feminism Today or the Nancy A. Hardesty Memorial Scholarship, contact CFT’s Director of Public Information, Marg Herder, at office [at] ewc [dot] com or 317.414.8157.