



# WOMEN'S CENTER

208-885-6616

East of Commons Construction

Vol. 27, No. 1

August-September 1998

## Faith and Feminine Values

by Susan Palmer

After spending years of graduate school studying the positivism of Auguste Comte, the historical materialism of Karl Marx, coupled with feminist philosophy, it seemed almost paradoxical that I would voluntarily spend an entire Saturday at *Faith and Feminine Values: A Community Conversation*. About twenty-five people gathered at the Campus Christian Center on a warm Saturday in mid-August to spend the day pondering faith and feminine values. Although overwhelmingly self-identified as Christian, the group was not exclusively so. Personal journeys and histories of denomination shopping, atheism, Judaism, Catholicism, and lifelong unwavering faith were disclosed among participants.

Sharon Kehoe, interim director of the Campus Christian Center, transformed the *Summer Break Idaho* tradition into an open exploration of the relationship among issues of gender, feminism, and faith.

In her letter of invitation Sharon wrote, "Maybe one of us thinks that there is no such thing as a feminine value, or if there is, that it has no place in faith. Someone else is lonely; she looks for a relationship with Christ but cannot find her place within the explicit and implicit masculine language and imagery. One man's daughter wants to be ordained and he is adamantly opposed; he has tried to tell her about the Biblically faithful woman and her role as set forth in Scripture...A pastor wants to talk about Sophia. An English professor is interested in women's stories from the Old Testament. The Sunday School teacher is wondering about Mary Magdalen and the others in the circle of women around Jesus." With that, Kehoe extended an open invitation for community members to come learn from each other.

Once assembled and properly introduced, our first task was to define what we meant by *faith* and *feminine values*. The definitions were assorted. Definitions of faith were both spiritual and secular. They included, "believing, trusting, accepting, and knowing" God.

Someone offered that faith was "an awareness of my being a part of intentional existence." Another suggested that faith was, "total belief in something that cannot be demonstrated, seen, or proven." Others spoke of a "creator" and a "deep belief in a firm principle and abiding religious being." Yet others focused on human potential, and an awareness of human connectedness, or the struggle to find one's place in a community of love, justice, and creativity. One asserted that faith was simply a belief in ultimate goodness.

Without coming to any consensus about a definitive definition of faith we turned our attention to individually defining feminine values. Although these weren't necessarily gender specific, it wouldn't surprise either Carol Gilligan or Deborah Tannen that many participants characterized feminine values as connectedness, openness, nurturing, cultivating relationships, collaboration, inclusiveness, mutuality, receptivity, confirming others, caring, and listening. Yet there was more to it than that. Additional values included the right to develop to one's full potential and ability, the right to participate fully as equals with men, as well as strength and resourcefulness. Some argued it was impossible to distinguish feminine values from human values, or perhaps even masculine values. Others wisely pointed out that feminine and masculine are socially constructed characteristics that vary across cultures, specifically citing some Native American illustrations where the "Creator" is perceived as both feminine and masculine, female and male. Still there was no urgent need for consensus. This was, after all, a community conversation.

What followed was an expression of participant concerns about reconciling certain faith issues with issues of gender, and sometimes feminism. One man described his "love-hate relationship" with his church as he both works and waits for a convergence between his personal beliefs and church doctrine. A self-proclaimed feminist questioned whether the Christian Church had room for her. A local minister expressed frustration at the "swirl of contradictions" he encounters. Representatives from a host

of denominations discussed one clash or another between feminine values and faith.

Coincidentally, the summer issue of our WQ: *The Wilson Quarterly* subscription had arrived only a few weeks prior to this gathering. The feature article, *Is the Bible Bad News for Women?* addresses many similar issues. The author writes, "God in the Bible is not devoid of gender. God is described most often with male imagery, a circumstance that prompts a good deal of literal-mindedness even now." Yet Tikva Frymer-Kensky, the Biblical scholar most cited in the article, "sees a recurring tension in the Bible on the issue of gender." The author notes, "On the one hand, she [Frymer-Kensky] says, the authors [of the Bible] are conscious of gender and of the fact that the social position of women is inferior to that of men, and on the other hand, the authors recognize that women and men are innately equal and that they are in exactly the same position with respect to God." So, her answer to the title question is...not necessarily so. At best, she suggests, the Bible is gender-neutral, and at worst, gender-blind.

However, the in-church experience of many of this gathering's participants was not so gender-neutral or gender-blind. Inclusive language, church board leadership and participation, feminism's encounter with religion, the ordination of women, and the masculine and feminine aspects of humanity, were among the many topics with which several local parishioners and congregations are wrestling.

At the conclusion of the day, though, nearly all the participants expressed the overarching importance of their own faith and church in establishing and maintaining their sense of community. Their places of worship help them sharpen and sustain their personal values and their relationship with their Creator, in whatever form. Sense of community joined the circle of hands to close this day-long exploratory retreat.

A follow-up program is scheduled in the Women's Center on Wednesday, September 16. Whether you attended *Summer Break Idaho* or not, you are invited. See the inside calendar for details.

## No Rest for the Wicked

Dear Sisters,

I do not want to write about Monica Lewinsky, and yet I feel a strange compulsion. (Is this beginning to sound familiar?) I know that Monday's speech from the White House Map Room was supposed to mark closure to this affair, but I can't seem to shake it. When I close my eyes, visions of red lips and bouffants dance before me. I drove past TR Video on the Troy Highway the other day, and they were advertising The Big Lebowski. I had to circle through the parking lot just to make sure it wasn't The Big Lewinsky.

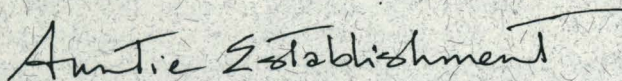
Sisters, I am at a loss as to why all of this bothers me so much. I'm not naive, I'm not a prude, and I have read my U. S. history. Presidents who have been faithful to their wives have always been stark exceptions, never the rule. Some of the most egregious philanderers, like Thomas Jefferson, are still widely admired and held up as role models for school children. If the polls are to be believed, in common with about 65% of the population, I found Mr. Clinton's mea culpa speech wholly adequate to the occasion. Sure, it was the Yale-educated equivalent of "Your Cheatin' Heart," but I neither expected nor desired more.

So what is it? Why do I feel so squalid and tawdry? Why since early January have I felt that the entire country needs a damn good scrub in a very hot shower?

Perhaps it's because I expected something more from humankind as we round on the millenium. Mr. Clinton's story is not new. When Abraham told it to Sarah, she gave him the same look that Hillary is now giving Bill. Likewise, Miss Lewinsky's story is as old as sex, and, more sadly, I think we can all predict her future. She's only twenty-five, but her course has already been charted by the countless Donna Rices and Jessica Hahns who came before her. First, plastic surgery and Slim-Fast followed by a photo spread in Playboy. Then, a stint in the Betty Ford Clinic followed by a dramatic religious conversion. Finally, she will wind up her eclectic career by doing television commercials for everything from pizza and blue jeans to headache powder and jock-itch cream.

Sex and power, money and politics. In ten millenia, we have not changed. We're not better, we're just digitized. In a week or two, I'll probably find that comforting, but just at the moment, I'm relying on long, hot baths.

Zestfully yours,



Auntie Establishment

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## Savory Moments with Auntie Pasto

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Greetings My Culinary Cousins,

It was September 5, 1882, when twenty-five thousand workers from fifty-three unions marched through New York City's Union Square in the nation's first Labor Day parade. Some twelve years later (1894), President Grover Cleveland signed legislation declaring Labor Day an official national holiday. Although many of us take the holiday for granted, here is a recipe for all of you hard-working people. The fruits of your labor are plentiful. We celebrate and thank you.

To share your family recipes with Auntie Pasto, write to: *Auntie Pasto*, c/o Women's Center, University of Idaho, Moscow, Idaho 83844-1064. You can find Auntie Pasto's recipe box on the web. Surf to the UI Women's Center Home Page <<http://www.uidaho.edu/~wcenter/>>.

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### Labor Day Pasta Salad

2 cups (lightly packed) whole fresh basil leaves	2 ounces finely crumbled bleu cheese
2 tablespoons olive or vegetable oil	2 tablespoons white wine vinegar
1 pound penne or mostaccioli, uncooked	salt and pepper, to taste
12 plum tomatoes, quartered, or halved cherry tomatoes	
8-12 ounces boneless chicken breast (optional)	

Note: Use the smallest leaves of basil for this recipe. If the leaves are longer than 1 inch, tear them in half crosswise before adding to tomato mixture.

Toss the tomatoes in a bowl with basil leaves, bleu cheese, oil, and vinegar. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Refrigerate and let marinate for 45 minutes to 24 hours. Just before serving, cook pasta according to package directions; drain thoroughly. Transfer pasta to a mixing bowl while still warm. Add tomato mixture and toss to mix. Let stand at room temperature about 15 minutes before serving.

Option: Grill 8 to 12 ounces boneless, skinless chicken breasts. Cool 5 minutes after cooking, then cut into thin strips. Toss chicken while still warm with pasta salad. Serve immediately.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS AND BROWN-BAG LUNCH PROGRAMS  
**WOMEN'S CENTER**

Free! Public Welcome 12:30 p.m. Women's Center Lounge August-September 1998 885-6616

Sept 15  
Tuesday

**WOMEN'S CENTER OPEN HOUSE** 11:00 a.m.—1:00 p.m. Join us for refreshments as we ponder what the coming year will be like with the Commons construction just outside our door. For those of you who are able to navigate your way to the Women's Center (it can be tricky), we will reward you with a Women's Center notepad to complement the refreshments offered. Much of our programming over the year will take place off-site, to minimize the disruption that noise and dust create. Already this semester, former and new Women's Center regulars are planting themselves on the couches between classes despite the trembles from beyond. Come see for yourself! Everyone is welcome to the open house. We encourage you to bring a friend! *Women's Center Lounge.*

Sept 16  
Wednesday

**FAITH AND FEMININE VALUES** SHARON KEHOE, Interim Director of the Campus Christian Center and STACY ROSEVEAR, Lutheran Campus Minister will facilitate this program on faith and feminine values. This is a follow up to *Summer Break Idaho*, a Campus Christian Center tradition. In mid-August, about twenty-five participants engaged in a discussion about a variety of issues including feminism and religion, inclusive language in places of worship, the ordination of women, the meaning of a gendered identity in God, and the status of women in the church, and more. The day-long conversation drew area ministers, lay churchgoers, and a host of participants. Although not all women want to pursue theology, divinity, or ordination, this program will be of special interest to anyone who has an interest in faith and/or gender issues. See the related feature article on the front page of this newsletter. *Women's Center Lounge, 12:30 p.m.*

Sept 21  
Monday

**IDAHO WOMEN'S NETWORK** IWN is a statewide non-partisan coalition of organizations and individuals who actively work "to promote justice, secure equal rights, and fight oppression...IWN works to improve the quality and opportunity in the lives of women and their families." Last fall, Idaho House Representative Tom Trail participated in the Walk-A-Mile project organized and co-sponsored by IWN. This program provided 36 legislators with a first-hand experience with low-income families. JEN RAY, IWN executive director, and LEE FLINN, field director, will be in town to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Idaho Women's Network. They will identify key legislative issues forthcoming before the Idaho State Legislature, and discuss the short- and long-term goals for the IWN. *Women's Center Lounge, 12:30 p.m.*

Sept 25  
Friday

**"BEST IN THE WEST" STAFF APPRECIATION AND INFORMATION FAIR** Visit the Women's Center table at this annual Staff Affairs Committee-sponsored event in the *Student Union Ballroom* from 11:00 a.m.—3:00 p.m. Our staff joins other offices and groups to share with you the services we provide for staff members. Pick up your Women's Center notepad while you're there. Like last year, we will give away another prize! Stop by our table to enter your name in the drawing, and find out what's new at the Women's Center!

Sept 29  
Tuesday

**FROM ALTERNATIVE TO TRADITIONAL: OPTIONS FOR BREAST CANCER** As we approach October, Breast Cancer Awareness Month, we have invited DANA WALK, a former UI employee with American Language and Culture Program, to share her experience with metastatic breast cancer. Dana's breast cancer spread to her lymph nodes in the neck and chest area. Initially, Dana treated it with a strict whole foods diet, vitamins and supplements, and various alternative methods which were "very effective up to a point." She had limited success with acupuncture, meditation, and visualization, coupled with unsuccessful alternative treatment in the Dominican Republic. Finally succumbing to traditional treatment, including chemotherapy, Dana's cancer is currently in remission, despite the by-product of a damaged vocal chord. Join us for this personal journey to fight breast cancer. *Student Union Building, Gold Galena Room, 12:30 p.m.*

Oct 2  
Friday  
evening

**FROM THE STREETS OF SHAKESPEARE TO THE COURT OF ELIZABETH** TAMES ALAN, actress, historian, and fashion history teacher, first appears in an authentic lower-middle-class Elizabethan costume and talks about the life, times, fabrics, and dyes of the period. Later, she changes into an authentic, 62-piece Elizabethan court costume with full makeup. As she dresses, she describes each piece of clothing and its significance. Tames studied theater and history at Willamette University in Oregon, and theater at the American Conservatory Theater in San Francisco and Dell Arte School in California. She has worked as an instructor in Elizabethan dialect and culture. Whether your interest is women's studies, history, Shakespearean theater, textiles, or art, you will want to participate in this hands-on cultural experience! *Brink Faculty Lounge, 5:30 p.m.*

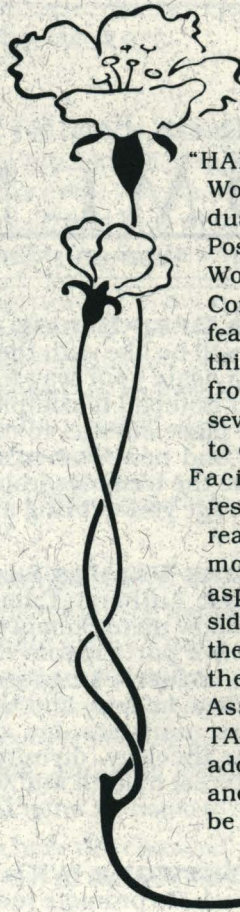
The Women's Center Newsletter is published six times during the academic year. It includes announcements and information about the many services and programs offered by the center to the university and regional communities. There are also items of general interest about women's and men's issues. If you have announcements or information to include in subsequent issues, please let us know. Suggestions for changes, improvements, or additional items are always welcome. Disability access is on the north end of the building through the TAAC. A taped copy of the newsletter is available on request for the visually impaired.

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Women's Center

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Office Hours ..... 8:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m., Monday-Friday



"HARD HAT?", you ask? Well, the Women's Center staff recommends dust masks, ear plugs, and a Global Positioning System unit to locate the Women's Center and endure the Commons construction. Although we feared we would become a ghost town this year, Women's Center regulars from previous years, in addition to several new faces, have found their way to our office.

Facilities Management has been responsive to needed alterations as the reality of the construction effects is more apparent. There is now an asphalt path and sign on the south side of our building. To gain entry from the north side, you must walk through the TAAC (Tutoring and Academic Assistance Center). Although the TAAC has been kind about the additional traffic, as our Palouse fall and winter weather approaches, just be sure to wipe your feet.

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