



For immediate release

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Christian Feminism Today Celebrates 40 years

In 1974, during a conference of Evangelicals for Social Action, a group of women formed a caucus to show that gender equality in church, home, and society is a justice issue.

Their approach became known as biblical feminism. From that small group emerged the Evangelical & Ecumenical Women's Caucus (EEWC), now more popularly known as EEWC-Christian Feminism Today.

The organization celebrated its 40th anniversary on June 26-29 in St. Louis at the Sheraton Westport Plaza Hotel with presentations by current and pioneering Christian feminists and social justice advocates.

Christian Feminism Today is EEWC's online publication featuring articles, blogs, book reviews and other commentary at www.eewc.com.

In addition to continued advocacy for women's rights, the organization in 1986 adopted a resolution supporting civil rights for LGBT people within the church and community, making EEWC one of the first evangelical organizations to do so.

Pre-eminent among the pioneers was plenary speaker **Letha Dawson Scanzoni**, whose groundbreaking *All We're Meant to Be: Biblical Feminism for Today* was named by *Christianity Today* as one of the "top 50 books that have shaped evangelicals." She recounted her questioning of a 1963 *Eternity* magazine article on the proper place of Christian women and subsequent steps toward leadership in feminist awakening.

"Fundamentalism is like a sword that broke off in us," reflected another speaker, **Susan Campbell**, quoting her brother and her memoir *Dating Jesus: A Story of Fundamentalism, Feminism, and the American Girl*. After 25 years as a columnist and feature writer for the *Hartford Courant*, she now co-writes Hot Dogma: The Belief Blog with former AP religion writer Tom Breen.

Reviewing ideas still current in conservative evangelical popular culture regarding women's nature and roles, **Dr. Kendra Weddle Irons** of Texas Wesleyan University and **Dr. Melanie Springer Mock** of George Fox University underscored the need to deconstruct those ideas. Their forthcoming book will contribute to that effort.

"Let Justice Roll On like a River!" was the recurrent theme at this year's biennial gathering near the junction of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers, echoing the prophet Amos: "But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" 5:24 (NIV).

Student presenters McKenzie Brown, Ashley Cason, and Jacinda Thomas dazzled old-timers with feminist theory and historical research. The first **Nancy A. Hardesty Memorial Scholarship** was awarded to **Jennifer Newman**, double majoring in politics and in philosophy at George Fox University with a minor in women's studies.

A rousing performance by **The Troubadours of Divine Bliss** filled Saturday evening. This folk-bluegrass-gospel duo from Kentucky has released six albums and made headlines at festivals around the globe.

Four ordained women brought their talents to the Sunday morning worship service: the Reverends **Jan Clark** (North Carolina, Baptist), **Leslie Harrison** (New Jersey, African Methodist Episcopal), **Shawna R. B. Atteberry** (Illinois, Episcopal), and **Jann Aldredge-Clanton** (Texas, Baptist). In addition to hymns with inclusive-language lyrics by Aldredge-Clanton, music was performed by **Vickie Bragg** of Oklahoma, The Troubadours of Divine Bliss, and **Marg Herder** of Indiana.

Notable among the workshops was **Susan Cottrell's** on "Being the Love of Christ: It's Not That Complicated." She addressed ways in which the church is called to respond to the LGBTQ community, one part of the larger calling to embrace all who are marginalized, oppressed, and otherwise disenfranchised. Author of *"Mom, I'm Gay" — Loving Your LGBTQ Child without Sacrificing Your Faith*, Cottrell is a national speaker, teacher, counselor, and founder with her husband of FreedHearts Ministries.

Other speakers included:

- **Dr. Sharon Groves**, Director of the Religion and Faith Program for the Human Rights Campaign, the largest civil rights organization in America working to achieve equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people.
- **Dr. Mary E. Hunt**, Roman Catholic feminist theologian, co-founder and co-director of the Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER).

Dr. Reta Halteman Finger of Messiah College led a workshop on how to counter the Bible's legacy of violence against women. She edited the quarterly journal *Daughters of Sarah* based in Chicago from 1976 to 1996.

Other workshop leaders were the Reverend **Deb Vaughn** on current grief therapies, **Peg Conway** on childbirth and empowering women through body theology, **Esther Emery** on finding our most authentic voice, and **Dr. Paula Trimble-Familetti** on giving voice to Bible women whose claim to fame was neither motherhood nor prostitution.

More information is available on the *Christian Feminism Today* website.

<http://www.eewc.com/Conferences/2014>

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