

SAINT MARY MAGDALENE MASS & CELEBRATION

Sunday, July 24 at 9 am

Drexel Hill United Methodist Church, McBurney Chapel,

600 Burmont Road

Drexel Hill, PA 19026

Refreshments following service!

Questions or for Zoom access: Please call Eileen at 267-258-6966.

2022 MARY MAGDALENE

AWARD RECIPIENTS

Eleanor Harty and Mary Eileen Whelan

Tribute by Regina Bannan

As editors of *EqualwRites*, Ellie and Mary present Southeastern Pennsylvania Women’s Ordination Conference to the world. We honor their commitment to our mission and how their being true to it results in our readers’ deeper understanding of the possibilities for women in our church. They keep all of us on our toes and thinking! Together their planning and persistence result in always-improving submissions from those inside and outside our membership. In addition, they do all the editing, proof-reading, and layout to guarantee a quality presentation. All of us know that we would not have a publication if it were not for their efforts.

Each also does much more than that, first of all as faithful members of our Core Committee. Our little group – open to all – depends on consensus to do anything. For our witnesses, we have worked in pairs in recent years, Ellie and Maureen Tate on Holy Thursday and Mary and Judy Heffernan on Ordination Day. National WOC never ceases to present ideas for us to implement, and Mary and Ellie will never forget doing all the ribbons for the tables at the Women’s Ordination Worldwide in Philadelphia. Ellie has helped our Core Committee recharge in recent years by hosting and/or planning most of our retreats, with Mary’s help.

Treasurer in a small organization like this involves hands-on responsibility for dealing with two American institutions, The Bank and The Post Office. Mary assumed all the hassles involved years ago, and even moved us forward to implement PayPal so we can accept online contributions, working with webster Marianne Tucker. Mary keeps track of our budget and expenses and enables us to do what we want to do with the resources we have.

Mary’s earliest written contributions to *EqualwRites* were

the best appeals we’ve ever had for subscriptions, in addition to her very clever “Did You Know” entries as well as articles. But I think of her as our correspondent to Archbishops – asking each in turn to meet with us, finally successful in 2021.

Ellie writes a lot. She picks up the slack when we need to cover something in *EqualwRites* and ultimately shapes each issue to be the excellent product that makes SEPAWOC seem greater than the sum of its parts. Ellie also writes weekly for The Table, the National WOC blog. She applies a wide lens not only to women in the Church but to Mother Earth, bringing an ecological consciousness.

Finally, both are really nice people. We cannot imagine SEPAWOC without their caring and support.

**MARY MAGDALENE,
A SAINT FOR OUR TIMES**

More than ever, we need to celebrate and, where possible, imitate Saint Mary Magdalene.

In these, it seems, ever more troubling times, of increasing gun violence, eroding of individual – and especially women’s - rights, war and suffering throughout the globe, we need to be with Mary Magdalene: remembering her experiences, listening to her words, accompanying her at the foot of the cross, living with her through the anxiety, uncertainty, and confusion in the days following the crucifixion, and then joining her in the joy of the resurrection and its promise for our hurting world.

With that in mind, please join us in honoring Mary Magdalene’s life and legacy at our annual St. Mary Magdalene Celebration with the Saint Mary Magdalene Community.

Mark your calendars for: **Sunday, July 24 at 9 am**, Drexel Hill United Methodist Church, McBurney Chapel, 600

Continued on page 2

Ordination Day Witness – Sister Cities Park, Philadelphia, PA – 5/21/2022

One Catholic woman priest, Judy Heffernan, prepared and presided at our Mass at the park entryway across from the Basilica of Saints Peter & Paul. Another Catholic woman priest, Kathy Schuck, presented the homily. Inside the Basilica, men only were receiving the rite of ordination at another Mass.

Judy selected the following Gospel passage adapted from Luke 13:10-17:

On the Sabbath Jesus was teaching in a synagogue and a woman was there who had been disabled for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all. When Jesus saw her, He called her forward and said to her, "Woman, you are set free!" Then He touched her and immediately she stood up and praised God.

Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, a religious leader said to the people, "There are six days for work, so come and be healed on those days, not the Sabbath."

Jesus answered him, "You hypocrites. Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie your ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, who has been bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath?"

When Jesus said this, the leaders were not happy, but all the gathered people were delighted.

Kathy then reflected:

Let's begin with the most famous hunchback, The Hunchback of Notre Dame! In the Disney movie, Quasimodo had a back deformity from birth. Being bent over was a metaphor for Quasimodo's desire to hide.

We now know kyphosis is a spinal disorder where the spine bends, usually because of degeneration of the discs or the spacing between them. It commonly appears in older women with osteoporosis and can be the result of bone disease, infection, arthritis, and poor posture. With that as background, let's look at the characters in Luke's story of the bent over woman.

1st) Bent over woman: We know Disney's not queued up to create a movie around her story. We know she has been bent over for a long time and her disability impacts every aspect of her life. We know she can't look up and see the sky or the trees. We don't know what caused her spine to bend. We don't even know her name. In Jewish society, she would be considered unclean. People would be hesitant to touch her or speak with her. We can speculate - she may have been oppressed or abused. We know she suffered, was ridiculed, ignored, invisible. She was humble and once able to stand, she is grateful.

2nd) Jesus: We know he's teaching in the synagogue. Jesus sees her, knows what she's been through, and understands her oppression. He has compassion for the bent over woman, singles the woman out, calls her forth, and sets her free, healing her. In response to being reprimanded, Jesus isn't afraid to call the leaders hypocrites.

3rd) Religious Leaders: We know the energy shifted from Jesus and the woman once the leaders engaged. We know the leaders were indignant that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath. We know they were not happy when Jesus called them hypocrites and identified the woman as a Daughter of Abraham and Sarah.

4th) Gathered People: We know they were delighted.

Here we stand in the shadow of the Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul for another Ordination Day witness. Do we feel bent-over in spirit? Traumatized by the injustice of not being seen fully? Years ago, I was on retreat where we were asked to form teams and role play the Gospel story of the bent over woman. It was a powerful experience of being severely hunched over and then being able to effortlessly stand tall after hearing "You are set free." The fact is we are all four of these characters. I urge you to consider role playing the woman, Jesus, the leaders, and those gathered.

Once again, Jesus makes it clear compassionate action supersedes the law. Each of us is called to set others free and to challenge and hold the religious leaders of our day accountable.

As the people gathered in Sister Cities Park today, my friends, what delights you today?

Judy Heffernan, MDiv. was ordained by the Community of the Christian Spirit.

Kathy Schuck, MTh. is a Roman Catholic Woman Priest.

MARY MAGDALENE,
A SAINT FOR OUR TIMES *Continued from page 1*

Burmont Road, Drexel Hill, PA 19026.

The Saint Mary Magdalene Community promises:

- **We come together as a community rooted in the gospel and the catholic tradition, yet always evolving.**
- **Our group is inclusive of anyone seeking to join in the celebration of the Eucharist as a living sacrament.**
- **Diversity is valued and we embrace all those walking the paths of peace, tolerance, equality, compassion and justice.**

FutureChurch, which is also presenting a celebration of Saint Mary Magdalene Day which you can access on their website, put it this way: Let us join together to "consider how Christ is calling us to join Mary as bearers of the Good News in a world so desperate for it today."

Editorial Staff of *EqualwRites*
A Publication of SEPAWOC

Editors: **Ellie Harty, Mary Whelan**

Regular Columnists: **Judith A. Heffernan,**
Marian Ronan, Eileen DiFranco

“All About Eve” ... and Others

By *Ellie Hart*

In case you missed some or all of them, you might want to check out the Women Erased series FutureChurch has been hosting. Recordings of all presentations are available on the website, but I would like to focus specifically on one offering, a three-part series titled “All About Eve”.

Presenter, Professor Carol Meyer, has an impressive biography: “Carol Lyons Meyers is an American feminist biblical scholar. She is the Mary Grace Wilson Professor Emerita of Religious Studies at Duke University. Meyers' field of research is focused on biblical studies, archaeology in the Middle East, and the study of women in the biblical world.”

In the first of three sessions, Dr. Meyers turned her focus on “the latest on our own First Lady, ‘Eve’,” whom she sees used in the Bible as merely a literary device to tell a story. The “latest” Dr. Meyers refers to reveals what ‘Eve’ truly was, the prototypical Iron Age woman who became, in Biblical and other ancient stories, a device for interpreting the origins and fate of “every woman”. The ramifications of these interpretations are exactly why we, as supporters of women and all genders, focus on the Eve story and its origins. Rampant misinterpretations and misconceptions, as we know, prevail and affect us to this day. The conclusion that women are lesser creatures to be dominated by men, for example, has resulted in domestic violence, curtailment of rights, restrictions of choices based solely on gender, and even legal matters and decisions still affected by how 2,000 years of art, literature, theology, culture, (Churches!) have told us what Biblical stories have told us.

Fortunately, thanks to Professor Meyers and others, renewed scholarship centered on studying the Bible and other texts in the original languages, examining the latest archaeological data and iconography of the period, and adding ethnographic insights to uncover roles and their meanings observed from 19th and 20th Century cultures still using ancient practices have dispelled major misconceptions about Eve specifically and the women of ancient Israel in general.

Examination of the text in its original language, for instance, revealed: there was no apple in the story; no “sin” was mentioned (the term first use came in the Cain/Abel story); there was no “fall” (this concept came from later Plato and Greco-Roman additions which divided the world into binaries, including good and evil; Eve, the Woman, needless to say, fell on the negative side); no temptation nor curse were mentioned either. In the original language, only the serpent and ground are cursed. Interesting, too, Eve is never again mentioned after Genesis.

Examination of archaeological and ethnographic data helped reconstruct what was actually taking place in the area of ancient Israel in 1200-600 BC, especially in the lives of women. People lived an agrarian life on subsistence level family farms. Women helped harvest and then ground the grain for hours daily; they also produced textiles and made clothing, fashioned pottery for everyday use and even built ovens for cooking...as well as, let's not forget, giving birth and caring for children. No wonder life expectancy for women was 25. Most had four – eight pregnancies, and half of the children died before age five. Life for women and the prototypical ‘Eve’ consisted of hard work and reproduction. The green paradise that was Eden would only have been a dream.

In light of recent and expanded examinations of ancient Biblical lives, Professor Meyers offered a “re-conception of Eve.” One example challenged patristic interpretations that claimed, because

of her ‘sin’, ‘Eve’ and thus all women were damned not only to experience intense pangs of childbearing but an actual increase in that pain. In new translations based on more careful parsing of the original language, however, “increase” seemed to mean “better”; “pangs” to mean “work” and “childbearing” to mean “pregnancy”. The words from God, “I will make great your toil and your pregnancies,” rather than condemning, would actually validate both women and their roles in an area and era in which food production and increasing number of healthy offspring were critical to keep families alive.

This new evidence also affirms God's further validation rather than deprecation of ‘woman’. The text makes Eve far more dynamic than her male partner. It is she who “saw”, “took”, “ate”, “gave”. (A simple “He ate” is all we have for Adam). It is she who engages in the first Biblical dialogue and the first to refer to ‘God’. Finally, her ancient Hebrew name, Havah, is linked to life, not death as the patristic interpretations imply.

In the second session, Professor Meyers took us to ancient Israel to add even more evidence to support the fact that women were not subordinate, dependent, unvalued chattel, but highly esteemed, prestigious, important members of the community. In the agrarian society of the times, the household was the most essential economic, social, cultural, and religious unit, and, once again, it was the women who were central. Food production, especially in the form of bread which made up 70-75% of diets, was most important to the life of the community, and women were the producers. True, men and women together did the plowing, seeding, and harvesting, but it was the women who threshed, ground, prepared, and baked the bread, a two-to-five-hour daily chore essential for subsistence. And, as mentioned before, they also spun and wove textiles, created pottery and utensils, tools, and ovens.

All of these indispensable economic tasks required great technical expertise and skill. Significantly, women honed these skills even further by working together. They taught each other; they shared wisdom as well as techniques, effectively creating informal networks that eventually became main communication channels for the community's survival and viability. As they practiced the kind of dynamics involved in producing this major necessity, bread, women gained decision-making, organizational, and managerial skills and one additional benefit. Because of its major role in sustaining life, bread itself had become sacred, and those who generated it were elevated, revered, and essential practitioners in the households' religious rituals as well.

The above was not the story we were told in the Old or even the New Testament. This was also certainly not the story we were told down through the ages by Christian as well as many other religions' patriarchal interpreters. As the post-Biblical age world saw economic changes in which, for example, bread could be bought in shops rendering individual producers less critical, and philosophical influences in which, for example, the world was split into good and bad, superior and inferior, indispensable versus inconsequential, included and excluded, women as “woman” lost crucial sacred power and sacred value. Their stories were hidden and then buried until other persistent and courageous women – and men – resurrected them.

When we are tempted to give up in our struggle for equality and inclusion and leadership in the Church or any area of life, we can refresh and revitalize ourselves thanks to scientists and scholars like Carol Meyers showing how valued we once were and should always have been.

Ellie Hart is the co-editor of *EqualwRites*.

Fragile Hope for the Synod *By Eileen McCafferty DiFranco*

Emily Dickinson called hope a feathered thing perching in the soul that sings its little heart out through storm and chill.

Hope and I have long had a good relationship. It is this cardinal virtue that usually encourages me to sing one more song even though the chilly storms of life too often deplete my repertoire. I am simply loath to call defeat. My personal sense of hope makes me an eternal optimist. I always think that things can be or get better. This ever present sense of great expectations prevents me from becoming bitter. It keeps my feet marching and my soul singing.

Like all virtues hope has a very distinct downside. Gamblers always hope their next bet will hit the jackpot. Addicts keep hoping for a perfect high, romantics, for a perfect lover. The naive expectation of success without plan, practice, or study often gets renamed as hope. In my case, my optimistic side has a twin named cynicism that presents its face when the landscape becomes too familiar.

Unfortunately, my cynical side slides right into place when I think about the upcoming synod. As much as I would hope that the Catholic Church would or could change, I am not the least bit hopeful that the synod will do anything to change the trajectory of an ecclesiology that arcs towards the preservation of power rather than justice. In fact, I fully expect that the church will turn its back on many if not all of the heartfelt suggestions made by hopeful, faithful Catholics who only want the best for their church. How do I know this? History and experience.

While history is certainly not destiny, it often fills in the upcoming blanks. Faithful people have been trying to reform the church for the last thousand years. Their efforts have never been rewarded. Instead, the names of the reformers fill the ranks of heretics while those who defended the church against reform and persecuted the reformers have received the esteemed title of saint. The faithful actually pray to men who have preached bloody crusades against their fellow Christians.

Arnold of Brescia (1090-1155), John Wycliff (1331-1384), John Hus (1369-1415), and Marguerite Porete (1250-1310) tried to recall the church to the kingdom values of Jesus, to make the word of God accessible to the people of God, and to be advocates of the Prince of Peace. All except Wycliff met with a disastrous end via execution. Wycliff's remains were disinterred and thrown into the Thames some thirty years after his death via an edict issued by the Council of Constance (1414-1418). The bishops in attendance at the council had Czech reformer Jan Hus executed after promising him safe conduct. In an egregious sin against hope called presumption, the mitred attendees declared there was nothing more to do with a man whose only request was to be proven wrong. Before his execution, Hus knelt down and prayed for the men who ordered his execution.

While reformers in the twenty-first century don't lose their lives, they often lose their livelihoods. Theology professors like Charles Curran lost his position at Catholic University for supporting birth control. The very few priests like Roy Bourgeois and Tony Flannery who dared to speak up for women were defrocked even as their confreres who engaged in the sexual abuse of minors were protected. Orders of nuns were visited by modern agents of the

inquisition. Men and women in religious orders were silenced; their books, condemned. Members of the laity who support the ordination of women allegedly excommunicate themselves as do women who are ordained.

While Francis appears to be a kinder, gentler version of the far too numerous to count popes who rampaged through history calling for crusades and inquisitions and hurling anathemas at anyone who disagreed with them, he remains at the mercy of a thousand year plus deeply entrenched bureaucracy which has rarely examined its conscience to determine its own role in causing the repeated call for reform. Why shouldn't John Wycliff and Jan Hus have condemned crusades waged by Christians against fellow Christians? Why would Arnold of Brescia not denounce the princes of the church who lived in sartorial splendor in gleaming palaces? Why wouldn't Marguerite Porete deplore ascetic practices like beating and starving oneself for Jesus? In a world filled with vast inequalities, the misapplication of natural resources, and climate degradation where women constitute 66% of the world's poor why wouldn't theologians like Charles Curran support birth control?

All of the executed and punished reformers throughout the centuries have asked the church appropriate questions that deserved well reasoned responses. Instead, the church's response has always been an act of physical, spiritual, or mental violence. Their rationale? Only they, the men with clay feet peeping out from under their watered silk cassocks know the mind and intention of God who specifically chose to reveal "himself" to violence prone, power obsessed ecclesiasts. Reforms from outside of this carefully constructed framework of inward-looking privilege are not only unwelcome, they are heretical.

Even the cataclysm of the Reformation did not change the mindset of the hierarchy. Instead of trying to understand the underpinnings of the greatest threat to their sovereignty, they shored up their power with the Council of Trent, spottily attended by mostly Italian cardinals who often jockeyed for the title of pope which came with immense wealth for them and their families. Trent "discovered" sixteen hundred years after the founding of Christianity that ordination came with an indelible mark on the soul and an accompanying magical connection with the divine that endowed the clergy with a power that brooks no challenge. This self-conscious understanding and adoption of ordained power is also a sin of presumption. The sin is visible to even the most casual observer. The all important indelible mark of ordination quite obviously has not made the ordained kinder, wiser, better, or holier men.

It was the good feelings inspired by from Vatican II that obscured the ongoing egregious omissions and commissions of the church. The Council also gifted believers with an unwavering source of encouragement and nurtured the hopes of subsequent generations of Catholics. Entrenched practices like the Latin language and the priest facing away from the people disappeared, seemingly overnight. These changes put a human face on a faith largely focused on life in the next world rather than life on a problematic earth. All things seemed possible in the reconstruction of the church as the People of God, an entity seemingly endowed with agency.

This hope for ongoing change was but a gossamer thing whose perch was roughly dismantled and ground into the dust by John Paul II. He and his cadre of obedient bishops and priests nailed

continued on page 6

To The Editors of *EqualwRites* on our 30th Anniversary:

Regina: Thank-you for birthing and then nurturing *EwR* all these thirty years. How I remember those many SEPAWOC meetings of joyfully coming up with our name, our newsletter's name, and our mission statement!

Karen, thank-you for your dedication to *EwR* in sickness and in health. How I remember when you came to our meeting to answer the call to be our next editor and the laughter you brought to all of us--except maybe to Regina--when Regina asked you what kind of computer you had and you replied, "A brown one!", Regina learned for sure her work was not yet done!

Magda, thank you for being Karen's wonderful support and confidant, who dreamed with Karen and were instrumental in carrying out those dreams,..who helped each *EwR* edition come to fruition--and, for typing my column for each issue during those years...

Ellie and Mary, thank you for stepping up and reaching out when we lost our beloved Karen. Your tireless efforts, collaboration, teamwork and creativity have made us all so happy to be contributors in word, in donations, in long-haul faithfulness.

Marianne and Tom—Thank you for posting *EwR* on our website--oh, and for our website, too-- and for singing while you work!

Thank you to all these who folded our early issues, our postage buyers, stamp sticker-owners, mailers, mailbox-checkers, and gifted printers and advisors through the years..

Thank you to all our writers and readers past and present - and to come - supporters in so many beautiful and sundry ways; to those who send notes to us, who have wondered, suggested, encouraged, who are dreaming, working and praying with us.

As I sent my Scripture Reflection column on March 1st--ahem..it was due on Feb.15th-- I realized for 30 years, I have been late for every issue--even the one issue I co-edited with Mary when our Karen was very ill, and Magda was by her side.

So dear Editors, with heartfelt gratitude for your patience and compassion...I celebrate that with the Spirit as Your Guide and Partner, you, too, are "gracious and merciful, abounding in kindness".

And to all of you who read this, I give thanks that we are all united in this wondrous *EwR* ever-expanding circle of love and mutual respect. Let us all rejoice and give thanks on our 30th anniversary.

Love to All.

Judy Heffernan

St. Mary Magdalene Community

Drexel Hill – Sunday at 9
Drexel Hill UMC-McBurney Chapel
600 Burmont Rd.
Drexel Hill, PA 19026

Wilmington DE
New Jerusalem Community
Sunday Liturgy:

For updated information and zoom links,
contact Eileen at 267-258-6966

Community of the Christian Spirit

Committed to peace and social justice,
CCS welcomes you to join in our Sunday
morning celebrations, liturgies
in the Roman Catholic tradition which
explore Scripture and contemporary readings.

For information, call 215-545-9649,
or write P.O. Box 353, Abington, PA 19001

Fragile Hope for the Synod *Continued from page 4*

shut the windows so joyfully opened by John XXIII, ushering in a new chill that froze the hope blooming all over the world.

The spirit of Vatican II was and remains an anomaly, a fleeting feathered hopeful blip upon the church horizon. What appeared to be seismic changes were mere window dressings. Even the much vaunted Catholic social teaching, largely a creature of Vatican II, got quickly buried by the church's power paradigm. The sainted, heresy hunting John Paul II refused to understand the base communities in Central and South America as a reform of unjust ecclesiastical and secular power structures. Instead, he chose to view reform as Communism. He left the archbishop of El Salvador, Oscar Romero, out to dry. Romero, six churchwomen, and the Jesuits and their housekeepers at the Central American University and countless numbers of innocent people were assassinated by loyal, obedient church going death squads who feared sharing their privileged place in the world with those beloved by Jesus.

Institutions based upon power and privilege usually talk a good game, promising rewards in this world and more importantly, in the next. The voices offer comfort on a stick as they cajole and finally threaten. We should always examine what they do instead of what they say. The upcoming synod is a prime example.

Many bishops are not leading their flocks in any sort of forum to discuss reform. Maureen Tate, a core member of SEPAWOC was dismayed by the listening session she attended in the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. In her words, "The archdiocese did a process to say they did but did not do so with a lot of energy, passion, or creativity." The very same thing happened at a synod held in Philadelphia in 2002. I attended one of those sessions. That synod was a rubber stamp wielded by a iron fist. We were directed that any topic that did not reflect church dogma and doctrine was verboten.

The bishops' lack of engagement in the synod process should not be surprising. They already know without a shadow of a doubt what the hopeful are hoping against hope for won't come true. My cynical self knows the answer. Nothing will change so why bother?

As many faithful Catholics like to say, the church is not the hierarchy. It is, however, the hierarchy who sets the policies, the procedures, the rules and regulations that all are obliged to follow. It is the hierarchy who foisted the new order of the Mass with its clunky translations and its constant, annoying reference to the Almighty as "He." It is the church that continues to pursue gay people and fire them from their jobs. It is the church that bans women from ordination. And it will be this same church that will control the outcome of the synod. The obedient clergy will follow in lock step. Their very livelihood depends upon their unwavering obedience, even in the face of great sin. It is for this reason that the church cannot and will not be reformed.

It is that mode of church that has hurt and continues to hurt people across the centuries. It is that model that must be discarded and replaced, not in the Vatican's glacial pace, but now with the voices of the synod as a corrective. My cynical side assures me that this will not happen. However, other things will.

As the poet Langston Hughes so plaintively asked, "What happens to a dream deferred?" Does it fester, stink and sag? Does it explode?

I would say that the institutional church will gradually fizzle out like a deflated balloon. Declawed and defanged by its own excesses, most people are simply walking away from the Catholic Church to different sects or engaging in what are for them more life-giving rituals and practices.

And that is not bad news. Resurrection is the core belief of Christianity. A resurrected body might look different and feel different from the one we are used to seeing. It may even be unrecognizable at first as the resurrected Jesus was to his friends. That doesn't mean a new, different looking church without ecclesiastical accoutrements is not real or true or worthy to be called the church of Jesus.

The good news in leaving the institution is that we can always find God in the breaking and the sharing of the bread, however, whenever, and wherever that occurs. For it is in the sharing of bread for the life of the world that hope in our souls springs eternal and the world is made new.

Eileen McCafferty DiFranco is a Roman Catholic Woman Priest, member of the St. Mary Magdalene Community and SEPAWOC Core Committee.

SOME WORDS FROM THOSE WHO (WE THINK) ARE WISE!

SEPAWOC's Regina Bannan and Ellie Harty both post commentaries weekly for The Table blog at www.womensordination.com. Besides offering their own reflections on current events affecting women in the Catholic Church and the world, they also bring us insights from other sources you may have missed. Here are some recent samples.

"When you cure the perception of emotional frailty and physical incompetence in a young woman, you kill the idea that there are some things she is constitutionally unfit to do. And you seed a new idea in her, that she has the inalienable right to choose her professional interest and to work at it with an unembarrassed shout-ing passion." - Sally Jenkins in the Washington Post

"Sacred Heart (parish in Uvalde, Texas) was meant to be a gathering place not only for practicing Catholics, especially now... People want to pray... People want to help. All the community beyond the parish is so connected." - Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller of San Antonio, Texas.

"Tradition is the guarantee of the future, not the container of the ashes. Tradition is like roots which give us nutrition to grow. You will not become like the roots. You will flower, grow, and bear fruit.... The tradition of the church is always in motion." - Pope Francis

"Pope Francis has said this synodal process is not a democracy, this is not vox populi. He wants to listen for the will of the Holy Spirit in these things. I remember covering two conferences once in the same week. One was a woman-church meeting in Canada, with liturgies for the onset of menopause and after an abortion, etc. The other was a Pentecostal group, Women Aglow. You could not find two more different groups; they both invoked the Holy Spirit, but the Holy Spirit gave two totally different responses. So I don't know of a pedagogy by which a group can discern the will of the Holy Spirit—do you?" - Kenneth Woodward in America

Book Reviews

Zachary M. Schrag. *The Fires of Philadelphia: Citizen-Soldiers, Nativists, and the 1844 Riots over the Soul of a Nation*. New York: Pegasus Books, 2021. 419 pages. ISBN13: 9781643137285. \$29.95.

Reviewed by Regina Bannan

If you like to read about insurrections, have a I got a book for you! Zachary Schrag's *The Fires of Philadelphia* is full of marvelous detail about a moment in the 19th century when popular forces overcame law and order – and the Catholic church was the target. My interest is less in the militia and the posse and more in the Nativist rioters and Irish victims, so that's what I am going to highlight. But if your interest is in the first, you can find many old Philadelphia names – Cadwaladers, Peales, even Samuel F. B. Morse, just to begin – among those leading the defense. If you're into Philadelphia's political history, you'll know that city and county were unified in 1854, ten years after these riots, which revealed the ineffectiveness of the defensive forces and the need for more effective governments than the various local authorities in the county could provide. It's all here.

If, however, you are interested in the conflict between Bishops Kenrick and Conwell or the shocking revelation that three Catholic churches were attacked and two actually burned by mobs, you may be as inspired as your *EqualwRites* editors and I were and take a tour of the neighborhoods that were the sites of the action.

What built the crisis? After a short review of the 1830s trusteeship controversy, in which the Pope's man Kenrick diminished the lay control allowed by the more tolerant Conwell, Schrag sets up the Irish threat. Kenrick had built nine new churches to serve the new immigrants by 1843. "The Gospel of the Devil," otherwise known as the King James bible, had long been rejected by Catholics in favor of the Douay version. As Irish children flooded public schools, the debate was reignited and not really resolved by compromises Kenrick arranged in 1843 and 1844. Some Nativists organized into a political party to defend Protestant morality in the schools; others took to the streets, joined by youths attracted by the ruckus as the attacks accelerated.

Deaths resulted. One of the first skirmishes was at a former nunnery at Second and Phoenix streets in Kensington; another was at the corner where SEPAWOC met at the Philadelphia Catholic Worker for many years, Fourth and Jefferson. The real target was the new St. Michael's Church at Second and Jefferson; church and

parsonage burned to the ground until the militia arrived, reluctant to attack "fellow citizens," but finally restored order there.

St. Augustine's, within the City at Fourth and New Streets, was next. A more prominent building with a new bell tower, it contained two large libraries, one of which served the Augustinian seminary located nearby. All burned. The other city churches took steps to protect themselves and their schools and orphanages, and crowds gathered to see the damages.

After a relatively peaceful Fourth of July parade, the action shifted south. St. Philip Neri on Queen Street in Southwark was a new church with a prominent pastor who fortified the perimeter and accumulated weapons. Both police force and mob formed and reformed during a battle that dragged on for a week. The mob acquired several cannons and despite misfires in the neighborhood of tiny streets around Second and Third, they eventually were able to breach the church walls and trash the interior. Deaths resulted, once again, on all sides this time.

What did these attacks accomplish? Nativists won many of the immediately following local elections, but the allied Whigs lost to the Democrats as more immigrants were able to vote. The churches were rebuilt, and the Irish poured in even more as the Great Famine took hold. The King James version of the Bible continued to be read in the public schools, and teachers did what they had done before: most let the Catholic students leave the classroom.

Author Zachary Schrag spoke to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania when the book came out, and his talk was so lively and interesting that we decided to read the whole thing. If you want something between the brief summary I've provided and all the detail of every event and political twist and turn, you can access his talk at <https://youtu.be/9bwheBFKRls>. You will enjoy it, and maybe the two of us will inspire you to find these three historic churches and think about how mobs destroy and yet institutions survive.

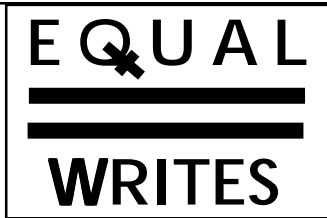
Regina Bannan is president of SEPAWOC.

Mid-year Financial Report

Your donations have enabled us to publish our first issue of *EqualwRites* in 2022. Thank you. We look forward to producing two more issues this year, as well as continuing our other endeavors. This can only happen with your ongoing support.

We accept PayPal as well as checks sent to our mailbox, SEPAWOC, P.O. Box 52046, Philadelphia, PA 19115.

We look forward to our continued collaboration.



SOUTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA
WOMEN'S ORDINATION CONFERENCE

SEPAWOC
P.O. BOX 52046
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19115

Non-Profit Organization
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Philadelphia PA
Permit NO. 5892

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

SUBSCRIPTION: To begin or continue receiving *EqualwRites*, please send a contribution and your name and address to above address. We deliberately do not set a specific fee because we want people to feel free to contribute what they feel they can afford: \$5, \$10, \$15, or more. If that's really impossible for you, just send your name and address and we will start your subscription. When you join WOC as a national member, you do not automatically join us, so if you want to support both, you need to contribute to both.

AFFILIATION: *EqualwRites* is published by the Core Committee of the Southeastern Pennsylvania chapter of the Women's Ordination Conference. We are inspired by, but independent of, the national office of the Women's Ordination Conference.

MANUSCRIPTS AND CORRESPONDENCE: If you would like to contribute an article, letter, or anything else to *EqualwRites*, please send it double-spaced, with your name, phone number, and a short biographical note. The next issue will be November 2022. Final deadline for submissions is October 15. Send to ellieharty65@gmail.com or mail to above address.

ADVERTISING: Advertising helps us support *EqualwRites* and helps you find people who support us. Our ad rates are \$30 for one issue, \$75 for three issues. To place an ad contact mewhelan@comcast.net.

WEB ADDRESS: www.sepawoc.org

Scripture Reflections

Romans 8:22: All creation is groaning

By *Judith A. Heffernan, MDiv.*

All creation is groaning... War, violence, hatred and division seem to be everywhere. As I write this, we have just learned of the deadliest human smuggling incident ever on U.S. soil.

Mayor Ron Nirenberg said that more than fifty lives were lost, and all on the abandoned truck suffered horrifically; then he added, "I urge you to think compassionately".

Think compassionately. Twenty-one-year-old James Chaney from Meridian, Mississippi was working with volunteers during "Freedom Summer 1964"- to register voters and be a light for justice and equality. On June 21, 1964 James Chaney and two volunteers from New York -Michael Schwerner and Andrew Goodman- were tortured and murdered by the Ku Klux Klan.

Their bodies were not found for forty-four days.

In May, 2022 I met Rev. Julia Chaney Moss. She was seventeen when her brother James was murdered. She was aware James told their Mother that he knew the dangers he faced, but he had to go forward.

Julia said she had to figure out a way to go forward after she lost

her brother. She had to ask herself what she was going to do with the rest of her life. Julia made the decision to continue living and to forgive; forgiveness, she said, is a life work that is engaged in every day.

Julia's decision reminds us that Romans 8 continues: The Spirit turns our groanings into prayer.

Prayer. Our SEPAWOC Holy Thursday and Ordination Day prayerful witnesses in these deeply sad times renewed our commitment to continue to go forward together, knowing that real justice and equality are all one piece, interconnected and inclusive. Our closing prayer from Ruth Fox, OSB renewed our strength: May we welcome God's gift of courage and believe that together we can make a difference.

In these sad times, may we open ourselves to Amanda Gorman's blessing: May we keep stepping out unafraid, knowing there is always light--if only we are brave enough to see it, brave enough to be it.

Judith A. Heffernan is a member of the Community of the Christian Spirit and the SEPAWOC Core Committee.