

## A Note from Dee<sup>1</sup>

A new song sings me  
With its own cadence  
A true, trusting air  
Whose tempo is set

Whose grace notes blend  
A unique rhythm  
Of pause and voice,  
This new song  
That sings me.



I love it when God's music starts to sing inside me. I trust its gift, even its first, almost whispered hum. I know its source -- whose creation song it celebrates, its holiness, my holiness of be-ing who I am meant to be.

A year ago an idea came. How about writing a book for young adult girls? It would tell the faith journeys of clergy women whom the United Church of Christ has honored for excellence and pioneering. Their stories encourage young women on their journeys of finding voice. The "book" became a gift, a free downloadable e-book on [www.ucc.org](http://www.ucc.org).

As I prepare each story, I listen with the ears of a young adult on the cusp of this spiritual journey. You will meet each woman as a young adult. You will visit her as a maturing adult, still open to the continual unfolding of God's hope for her.

Since my own early years, the following four Bible verses have drawn me toward the truth that God calls us because God needs us as partners:

*I know what I'm doing. I have it all planned out—plans to take care of you, not abandon you, plans to give you the future you hope for.* - Jeremiah 29:11 ([The Message](#)<sup>2</sup>);

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<sup>1</sup> Dallas Dee Brauning has practice in trusting God's music. She respects possibility. She understands the art of choosing hope. Three developments in her life -- blindness, type 2 diabetes and rheumatoid arthritis -- have taught her that the goal is not the impossibility of overcoming a challenge but to live fully within it. As her life unfolds, she adjusts her career as an ordained minister.

"I am grateful," she said, "for an imaginative Creator, who always has something in mind for me. I enjoy putting my whole self into life while sitting almost still at a computer as flexible as the person to whom it has given words to sing in a joy-filled life."

Dr. Brauning also serves as a mentor, news editor for UCC Disabilities Ministries; author of numerous books and many articles for Christian Education, worship, and national periodicals; newspaper feature writer/columnist; and disabilities ministries columnist for her conference. She co-chairs the Nebraska Conference Disabilities Ministries Board and serves on the executive committee of the UCC DM Board.

<sup>2</sup> Peterson, Eugene. [The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language](#). WORDsearch Bible Study Software at [www.WORDsearchBible.com](http://www.WORDsearchBible.com) or 1-800-888-9898.

*[God] has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does [your Creator] require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God? - Micah 6:8 (New Revised Standard Version);*

*Now that I've put you there on a hilltop, on a light stand—shine! Keep open house; be generous with your lives. By opening up to others, you'll prompt people to open up with God, this generous Father in heaven. - Matthew 5:16 (The Message);*

and

*The fundamental fact of existence is that this trust in God, this faith, is the firm foundation under everything that makes life worth living. It's our handle on what we can't see. - Hebrews 11:1 (The Message).*

Some readers journal about the "What About You?" section. Others use it as a study group tool in peer teams, intentional parent-daughter chats, women's groups, confirmation classes, youth groups, and congregational vitality sessions. A "Church Family Project" and a "Still Curious?" resource section complete each chapter.

Whenever you embrace and trust your capacity to explore, as did African American, LaVerne and other recipients, may you dare to wonder and to listen to the questions coming from deep within you ("Woman of Empowerment"). As you let your calling unfold, you might savor the process of finding voice with a mighty, "YES," as did Joan ("Bridge to Understanding"). Laurie just knew. Perhaps you already have the energy of knowing "that" without yet knowing the "how" of your life plan ("A Day in the Life of a Prison Chaplain").

Dosia, whose pioneering journey is a study in the art of overcoming a difficulty, found what brings her joy and makes a difference beyond her ("A Christian, An Alleluia").

Have you begun to listen to the yearning? That is how it was for Gretchen, a long yearning and gradual awakening "not without its doubts and fears" ("Seed-Planter").

Ruth saw a need that nudged her faith into a life of creative, responsible action ("Birth of a Hymn"). The capacity of Barbara to listen with trust carried her forward during a life-transition ("In Her Own Words"). Leila's exclamation, "At last, a home missionary" suggests that she may already have been envisioning the wholeness of her song. Have you been, too?

And what about the two other Barbara's, Annie, Davida, Yvonne, Alice, Henrietta and Ansley? How did the Spirit guide Beatrice, Marie, Joyce, Anne and Marilyn? How did the true voices of Eleanor, Peggy, Mary Ann,

Rosemary, Jan, another Ruth, Betty Jane and Maria Teresa show themselves?

I appreciate support of my life mate, Bob. I also am indebted to the Rev. Margaret (Peg) Slater for her contagious enthusiasm for the project and to Ms. Deborah Bailey, Ms. Marcy Dory, Ms. Ann L. Hanson, and the Rev. Carolyn Landers Pettigrew, also members of the advisory team, for their counsel.

Thank you, Daniel Hazard and Michelle May, for your web advice. Sonia Bustamonte, student at the University of Lincoln-Kearney, translated opening material into the Spanish language.

While the web-text is not interactive, reader comments are welcome. Please direct them to Deborah Bailey, UCC Minister for Women's Concerns.<sup>3</sup>

With hope and blessing throughout your quest to find your own voice,

Dee Brauning  
Pentecost Sunday, June 4, 2006

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<sup>3</sup> A member of the Worship and Education Ministry Team of the Covenanted Ministries of the United Church of Christ, Deborah Bailey rejoices in presenting these awards at the Women in Ministry Luncheon at General Synod. She can be reached toll-free at 1-866-822-8224.