

**Marie Fortune:
Removing the Yoke
of Sexual and Domestic
Violence/Removiendo el Yugo de la
Violencia Sexual y Doméstica**

1. Getting to Know Marie/Aprendiendo a conocer a Marie

Name/Nombre:	Marie M. Fortune
Career/Profesión:	Addressing Sexual/Domestic Violence/Hablar sobre violencia sexual y doméstica
A.B. Recipient/A.B. honor:	1987
Color of Hair/Color de pelo:	Brown/Castaño
Color of Eyes/Color de ojos:	Blue/Azul
Brothers or Sisters/Hermanos o hermanas:	One older brother/Un hermano mayor
Favorite School Subject/Asignatura favorita:	Biology and civics/Biología y ciencias del gobierno civil
Hobbies/Pasa tiempo:	Had a dog; worked with mom in garden, reading/Tuve un perro; trabajé con mi mamá en el jardín; leer
My friends and I liked/A mis amigas y amigos nos gustaba:	To spend time together and go to the movies. In high school, I was not particularly in the social scene in high school./Pasar tiempo juntos y ver



películas. No estuve particularmente en la escena social en la escuela superior.

I looked up to/Admiro a:

My mother and my grandmother/Mi mamá y mi abuela

Heros/Héroes:

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

2. Could I be engaged in social change work and still make a living?

As a college sophomore, Marie Fortune was torn between biology and the humanities. Her guidance counselor was heavy-handed in telling her that she could not do both.

Upon choosing humanities, she discovered that the religion department at Duke University was an exciting place. The quality of the faculty was excellent. The courses offered were right for her. She realized that theology, particularly ethics, was her interest. She finished undergraduate school with a BA in religion.

"Approaching graduation," Marie said, "I had no clue what I was doing professionally. We used to talk a lot in the Student YWCA about how we could be engaged in social change work and still make a living. That was a dilemma."

She pored over each monthly newsletter of a national group called Vocations for Social Change.¹ At least somewhere people were having this conversation, trying to figure this out. Marie would, too:

I am grateful now that I found a way to do that. Having not had to choose between my deepest concern and making a living is one of the greatest blessings in my life. I get to go to work every day and do something that I really want to do and get paid for it.

My hope for young people today is that they are struggling with that question as well – in terms of work that they would want to be doing and still support themselves. That sense of congruity is important for all of us.

¹ Visit <http://homepage.mac.com/stevenreedjohnson/ceta.html>.

3. A Chat with Marie

Marie Fortune began her lifework in 1976 as a volunteer at a Rape Crisis Hotline in Seattle. She would become the earliest voice in the church to name sexual violence and abuse and to begin to address it there. She founded the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence, known now as FaithTrust Institute. She is the institute's senior analyst. She is an author, speaker, teacher and advocate for ending sexual and domestic violence.

They have healed also the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace (Jeremiah 6:14, KJV).

Dee: In your life work, Jeremiah 6:14 has been an important passage for you.

Marie: Faith groups have tended to “heal the wound lightly, saying ‘peace, peace,’ where there is no peace.”

Dee: Your goal has been to heal the wound deeply.

Marie: Healing the wound deeply takes years. It takes much more engagement from our faith communities than people are willing to offer – the willingness to challenge the misuse of texts and scripture, to check the passivity and corruption.

Dee: Your years of work have brought many resources to persons living with domestic violence. You are a bringer of courage so people can do what they need to do for themselves.

Marie: So that they will be able to come back to their true selves, to their own country and not feel like a stranger to themselves. As we are sustained in the spirit, we are able to transcend our immediate givens. That enables us to imagine, to envision, and to place value.

4. Caution: Not too loudly, not too seriously; be careful.

The important thing, Marie Fortune said, about her growing up in the 1950s and becoming a young adult in the 1960s and 1970s, was the pivotal nature of that period of political turmoil.² She kept track of

² Phone interview with the Rev. Dr. Marie M. Fortune on December 27, 2007 11:00 a.m. Among other resources are her ordination paper

Martin Luther King's work in those years. She appreciated what he meant to this country. This societal inheritance provided the context for her undergraduate education.

"I spent the first seventeen years of my life in a small, parochial city in the mountains of Western North Carolina," she wrote in preparation for ordination in the United Church of Christ. "I was raised in the church. My grandmother was a lay leader way before the women's movement. Although she died when I was a child, I heard the important stories about her."

While Marie had a sheltered, average, white middle class upbringing, she was aware that all was not well with the world. Her United Methodist Church was an active, moderate congregation in Asheville, NC. First-rate preachers of this large, downtown church engaged scripture and discussed issues.

"Ministry," Marie said, "was not on my radar then because I was female. Entering ministry never occurred to me, but this base allowed me to go to college with that foundation in place."

The commitment of her parents in seeing that she participated fully in the life of the church was important to her:

It was here that I received my phase one education in the Christian faith. Between my parents and the church, I was given grounding in a life stance that requires answers to the hard questions posed by the Christian gospel. This stance values human persons implicitly.

As a girl-child, Marie was raised to value independence and strength as well as gentleness. As a Christian, she was taught humility and self-sacrifice, love and justice:

But the message which stands out most clearly is caution. Yes, ask the hard questions but not too loudly. Take the Gospel seriously, but not too seriously. Live life to its fullest, but be careful.

(December 11, 1975, New Haven Association of the United Church of Christ) and "Looking Back/Looking Forward: Reflections on 30 Years of FaithTrust Institute"

(http://www.Faithtrustinstitute.org/downloads/winter_2007_newsletter.pdf). All material is used by permission.

This part of her survival education served her well in some ways. "But I do regret," she said, "that for a very long time it blinded me from seeing the contradictions of my own existence. For this I do not fault my community, my church, my family. It is the fault of a culture that values security above love and justice, that promotes a lower consciousness."

5. A childish thing I put away was my self-conscious commitment to the Christian faith.

At Duke University as well as in society, much was happening in terms of racism, and then there was the war. Marie became more aware and educated about those issues in her college years. She saw that the church was not keeping up with what was going on. In the late 1960s her liberal Southern university ran head-on into its own racism and complicity in the Indochina War:

I began then the process of "putting away childish things" and becoming a woman. Right on schedule, I "left" the church behind.

I was impatient with the superficiality and sluggishness of the church. My understanding of the Christian faith could not keep up with my intellectual and political experiences and thereby became irrelevant. Nevertheless, my need for grappling with the hard questions remained. So I kept studying religion.

6. The National Student YWCA – Being Part of Change

Marie's answers began to come from academic activity in religious studies. She also was politically active in a non-self-conscious community of faith (YWCA) involved in social action:

I recognized the obvious. I was a white, American, middle-class woman, born, raised, educated in the South and living off the affluence and suffering which result from an unjust society.

I gravitated to this campus organization because it addressed these issues. During those years nationally the YWCA took on the imperative to eliminate racism. For me, that was a lot of learning.

It was opportunity to meet other young women from other colleges. Here I learned about racism and dealing with my responsibilities as a white woman and being part of change.

Marie was exposed to national YWCA leaders like Dorothy Height³ and Letty Russell.⁴ Through the YWCA, she experienced the early women's movement as a multiracial movement. She was trained to do anti-racism work and to develop leadership skills. It was here that she really began to understand the possibilities of social change.

"It gave me a little different foundation," she said, "for understanding my call to ministry."

Attentive to her life and the lives of many with whom she associated, she became more aware of the religious dimension. While this often was expressed in Christian words and symbols, often it was not. In any case, the experience of that community grounded, supported and challenged her.



My decision to enter seminary was one of exploration. I explored the religious experience and the Christian faith. I studied the church as an institution within which I might effectively participate in social and political change. My question was framed: Finding, knowing and remembering who I am so I will know what is to be done.

7. Is the church the institution within which I can do the work I feel called to do?

Marie used seminary to pursue this question. Through seminarian friends, she realized that "seminary is where you can go and keep studying religion." Seminary also was the most familiar place to continue the exploration of her question. But it was also the place to study the church as an institution and to try to discern if this was where she could work productively.

She grew closer to discerning her life work. The needs of the people at any particular time and place would determine the specific form of her ministry. She named areas of acute, immediate concern: the oppressions of racism, sexism and economic injustice. She wanted to work with women. The church is where women were.

³ Read about Dorothy Height at <http://www.thehistorymakers.com/biography/biography.asp?bioindex=546>.

⁴ Read about Letty Russell at <http://www.nccusa.org/news/070716lettyrussell.html>.

Her definition of ministry became clear: Ministry is our actions giving translation to God's love and justice. Ministry is incarnation, liturgy, sustenance, vision and empowerment.

In a ministry of liberation, the Gospel impels us to action. We are called to be present to one another in times of joy and sorrow, pain and healing, and so we enable each other to know the sustaining presence of God.

"The format of my ministry," she wrote prior to ordination, "will be adult education. It will be organizing with the 'churched' and 'unchurched' in ways which can bridge the gap between the 'church' and 'secular' communities."

8. "That Woman Who got Ordained without a Church Call"

Marie began to focus on the justice issues of violence and abuse. She found the presence of violence or the real threat of it to be common to all women, regardless of race, class, religion, age, physical ability or sexual orientation. She also discovered that this fact was seldom brought up in religious settings.

Encouraging mentors advised that if she planned to address the church as an institution, she would need the credential of ordination. "At that point, I did not fully understand how right these people were," she said. "With that credential, I would have a place to speak within the church. Certainly as a woman I needed to be ordained. I had support for that."

The problem was, of course, that she was not going into the parish. Even though she viewed the United Church of Christ as more flexible than other denominations, serious reservations still emerged for some about her call to ministry. At that time, the call still equaled a place of employment: What job do you have?

"We had to work that through," she said. "I was applying for ordination in the New Haven Association. I am amazed now that people were supportive. There was no "job." No one was doing this work. I would have to create this ministry from the ground up."

"It is much more doable now than it once was then in terms of specialized ministries," she added. "I became the folk story at Yale Divinity School of 'that woman who got ordained without a church call.' I prefer to say that I was ordained with a call but without a job."

9. I saw quickly the need for the work that I wanted to do.

After seminary, Marie returned to Seattle and served a local church. She needed employment. She is grateful for that concrete sense of the struggles of parish ministry, she said. "It has served me well in understanding and appreciating the local church and parish clergy and what they are dealing with."

The church has a particular responsibility in leadership. It is one of those unique situations where women in one-on-one time with pastors or with each other, disclose past experiences of violence. Pastoral work was needed.

But the church also was part of the problem:

It seemed that much of Christian theology when confronted by the suffering caused by sin had sought to explain the suffering in a way that makes it possible to be lived with, not in a way which makes it possible to change its causes.

Faith groups tend to "heal the wound *lightly*, saying 'peace, peace,' where there *is no peace*." Part of what women were hearing in church was the misuse of scripture to justify or to excuse abusive behavior. This was wrong, she said. It was contrary to Jesus' teaching in the Gospels. It was a matter of trying to bring a corrective to that.

Healing the wound deeply would take years. It meant the willingness to challenge the misuse of texts and scripture, the willingness to stand by the victim and call the abuser to account. *

After a year, she was able to respond to the terms of her educational project. With support from United Presbyterian Women, she began to train clergy in Seattle. "Yet," she said, "I never had a view of long term commitment or a ten-year plan for this work."

10. The Way Things Are is Not the Way Things Have to Be

In 1976, while leading the United Church of Christ pastorate in rural Carnation, Washington, she also volunteered at Seattle Rape Relief, a hotline for rape victims.

She learned that if the rape victim discovered that she was a pastor, the woman often began to ask the spiritual questions: "Why did God let this happen? Do I have to forgive my rapist? Does God still love me?"

My initial hunch that there also was significant pastoral work here was confirmed. The church was unprepared to discuss sexual assault and the sexual assault programs were unprepared to talk about religion. Yet somehow, both intuitively knew that these conversations were important.

The timing was right. Seattle was the place to try this experiment. She told Rape Reduction Project staff, "I want to train clergy to respond to sexual assault when persons in their congregations are victimized." They had been looking for someone to do just that.

11. The Plan Emerges

FaithTrust Institute was about to be born. In the early 1970's, Seattle was a forerunner in the development of direct services to victims of sexual assault and abuse. An early survey of clergy revealed that more than 70% did not know of a single resource for victims of sexual or domestic violence – even though several resources were in place.

By 1977, the Rev. Marie Fortune had founded FaithTrust Institute. She wanted to serve within the church by addressing women's experiences of racism and sexism. She believed that violence against women is a critical intersection of racism and sexism.

The FaithTrust Institute would work to mobilize the resources of faith communities to help end sexual and domestic violence. With basic direct services in place, Marie could focus on education and prevention within the religious community. Using a leadership development model, FaithTrust Institute would provide communities and advocates with tools and knowledge for addressing the religious and cultural issues related to abuse.

12. Becoming Multi-

"My sense of working with women in the late 1970s was that the issues of sexual and domestic violence were finally being spoken about across the country," Marie said.

But it was immediately clear that none of us could address violence against women only from our own particular social location, i.e. for me, being a white woman. Our vision and our resources were too limited. We needed everyone's ideas,

strengths, and energies. We needed to work across lines of race, class, age and faith.

FaithTrust Institute would become an international, multi-faith training and education organization. It now works with many communities, including Asian and Pacific Islander, Buddhist, Jewish, Latino/a, Muslim, Black, Anglo, Indigenous, Protestant and Roman Catholic. It launched the National Declaration by Religious and Spiritual Leaders to Address Violence Against Women⁵ in 2006.

13. The Curriculum

Healing the wound deeply means engagement from faith communities. Healing the wound deeply means being willing to examine the misuse of texts and scripture and to draw on the spiritual resources of our faith traditions.

In 1978, FaithTrust Institute received a grant from the Department of Justice to develop a training model for use in rural communities to address domestic violence. The strategy was that the church was central to rural and small town life and thus the perfect place to begin this work.

From this project, the first curriculum to train clergy and laity to address domestic violence emerged. It made hope concrete through teaching. Subsequently the curriculum has been used in the United Church of Christ and most other Protestant denominations. It offers a guide to study and question the parts of traditional teaching that have not been helpful and then to look at what texts are helpful for persons meeting sexual and domestic violence.

Fortune knew that domestic violence was destroying families and that family ministry at the time was not adequate to address it.

"The church needs to speak to the victim, the abuser and the children where there is domestic violence. The church needs to be part of the whole process of change and transformation," she said. "It will take some fundamental rethinking of our theology and our experiences."

14. I began writing and kept on writing.

When the funding from the Department of Justice pilot project was cancelled, FaithTrust Institute was forced to pause and evaluate its sustainability.

⁵ To read this declaration and petition, go to <http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org/petition/petition.php>

The editor of Pilgrim Press gave Marie the chance to write her first book in 1979. Paul Sherry, later to become President of the United Church of Christ, took a chance on the young, inexperienced author and a subject that people were only beginning to recognize. No one wanted to hear about. There was nothing else in the religious literature on the topic of sexual violence.

Marie Fortune's first book, Sexual Violence: An Unmentionable Sin, was in print for more than twenty years. In 2005, she revised it. More than an update, the second round is a major rewrite, she said.

"With a chance to go back," she said, "I found that I had more to say in terms of my analysis. I looked again at what this is all about. I revisited what we have to understand theologically. The new title, Sexual Violence: The Sin Revisited, feels like completing the circle with that material."

FaithTrust Institute stayed the course and found new funding to continue its work since 1980. With the freedom of sabbatical time from the FaithTrust Institute to focus on the bigger projects, Fortune has continued to write:

Writing books is an area of my work that I had not anticipated. Everywhere I go to speak, people speak to me individually about a portion of a book and what it has meant to them. That is the point. The writing is an important part of the work.

Books are a vehicle for getting something into the people's hands. Books make it accessible for information and for discussion that people find useful in their own experiences.

15. Video Series Uses only Teen age Young Adult Voices

FaithTrust Institute also developed a DVD curriculum for teens called – Love: All That and More.⁶ The video is used with schools, in Jewish and in Christian settings.

As good material already existed about date rape, they took the tack of what a healthy teen relationship looks like, what a teen wants in a relationship. In the videos, only teenage young adults speak. Some reflect their negative experience and what they learned from that. Others look at what a healthy relationship looks like.

⁶ Six 50-minute sessions. Three videos: "What Do You Want?", "Let's Talk About Sex", "Putting It All together." See www.faithtrustinstitute.org

For that age group, she said, what a healthy teen relationship looks like is critical information and critical discussion. "The church needs to be the place that they can bring those things to think about and discuss," she said. "Kids today have really heavy issues to deal with." FaithTrust Institute also developed curricula for children, for Bible school and other settings. "This is one of the places we can talk to children about many vulnerable situations," Marie said, "and prepare them without scaring them. They need to learn what God's love means to them even if they are faced with the pain and suffering of abuse."

16. Doing more programming.

"Learning as I went along as Executive Director, I managed to keep the FaithTrust Institute afloat for the first 25 years," Marie said. Then it reached a point where, she said, another person with greater administrative skill could move the institute forward.

"Continuing as an executive director was not the best use of my gifts. I was able to use my skills elsewhere in the institute. I wanted to be doing more programming."

Now as Senior Analyst, she continues to do the teaching, speaking and training out on the road, writing, and the conceptual leadership of envisioning into the future –

. . . the pieces I do best. I feel fortunate that I get to do the part that I enjoy. It is my vocation. Our work at FaithTrust Institute will continue until our churches and synagogues, stakes and assemblies, mosques and temples are effectively responding to victims and abusers, bringing forth healing and justice.



17. So What About You?

- What does a healthy teen relationship look like?

List important qualities of that relationship.

- Young adults have heavy issues to deal with. The church needs to be the place that they can bring those things to think about and discuss.

On a scale of 1 to 10, how do your pastor, your church and/or your youth group measure in responding to the issues young adults face?

Why?

How could you be involved in beginning or improving a discussion?

- Jeremiah 6:14 (Messenger paraphrase) reads: *My people are broken – shattered! – and they put on band-aids saying, "It's not so bad. You'll be just fine!" But things are not just fine!* Read from the viewpoint of a young adult woman experiencing sexual or domestic abuse.

How do you think she might respond?

- Marie appreciates the importance of knowing who you are so that you will know what need to be done. As you explore the voice of who you are, you will come to know "what you are doing here among us." Read Jeremiah 17:9-10 and Matthew 10:16-31 in The Messenger.

What do these passages say about self-honesty?

What did you learn about the value of each person from God's perspective?

- Look up in both The Messenger and the NRSV study some of the following passages that also are important to Marie Fortune:

Jeremiah 17:5-14, especially verses 5-6, 10 and 14

Jeremiah 31:15-17

Isaiah 58: 6-9a and 9b-12, especially verse 8

Matthew 10:16, 26-31, especially verses 26, 27 and 28

Hebrews 12:12-13

Record your thoughts about each passage:

What might it say to persons suffering from sexual or domestic violence?

What surprise do the "if-then" passages suggest about suffering people who take action?

What call does the passage offer to persons wanting to end this violence?

What does it tell you about who you are and who you want to become?

18. Church Family Project

In your youth group, view and discuss the first DVD of FaithTrust Institute's three-DVD series, "What does a healthy teen relationship look like?" Make plans to view the second and third videos.

19. Still Curious?

❖ Poetry Important to Marie Fortune

"Light One Candle" by Peter Yarrow. At <http://fact.on.ca/quotes/candle.htm> and in Celtic Daily Prayer: Prayers and Readings from the Northumbria Community. Northumbria Community. HarperSan Francisco. 2002

"Inspired by Love and Anger" (inclusive) by Wild Goose of Iona. See Celtic Daily Prayer.

❖ FaithTrust Institute Resources for Young Adults:

(Phone 877-860-2255 or visit <http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org/>. Online store. Resource by Topic. Teen Relationships.)

Irit Eliav. Yad B'Yad: Working Hand in Hand to Create Healthy Relationships. A curriculum for grades 6-8

"Love – All That and More." A DVD Series and Six-session Curriculum on Healthy Relationships

Love Shouldn't Hurt: Building Healthy Relationships for Jewish Youth

❖ Web Resources:

FaithTrust Institute – www.Faithtrustinstitute.org

Joshua Children's Foundation
Assisting victims/survivors of child sexual abuse
www.joshuachildrensfoundation.org

The Linkup – Survivors of Clergy Abuse
<http://www.sexcriminals.com/directory/info-1094.html>

"Love Doesn't Have to Hurt Teens" -
www.apa.org/pi/pii/teen/homepage.html

Marie Fortune's Blog –
<http://faithtrustinstitute.org/drupal//index.php>

RAINN – Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network
www.rainn.org/about.html

SNAP – Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests
www.snapnetwork.org

❖ Other Resources⁷:

Fortune, Marie M. Family Violence: A Workshop Manual for Rural Families

_____. Forgiveness and Abuse: Jewish and Christian Reflections

_____. Is Nothing Sacred?: The Story of a Pastor, the Woman He Sexually Abused, and the Congregation He Nearly Destroyed. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1989. Reissued Pilgrim Press Publishers, 2004.

_____. Keeping the Faith: Guidance for Christian Women Facing Abuse. HarperSan Francisco, 1995

_____. Love Knows No Harm: Sexual Ethics for the Rest of Us. Continuum Publishing, 1995

_____. Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church: Trusting the Clergy? 2004

_____. Sexual Violence: The Unmentionable Sin. New York: Pilgrim Press, 1983. Revised as Sexual Violence: The Sin Revisited. Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2005

⁷ Some of Marie Fortune's books are out-of-print. Contact your library or the FaithTrust Institute.

_____ and Carol J. Adams, Editors. Violence Against Women and Children. Continuum Publishing

_____ and Natawan Boonprasat-Lewis, Editors.
Remembering Conquest: Feminist/Womanist Perspectives on Religion, Colonization, and Sexual Matters. Haworth Press, Inc.

_____ and Joretta L. Marshall. Forgiveness and Abuse: Jewish and Christian Reflections. Haworth Press

Hollies, Linda H. Inner Healing for Broken Vessels: A Domestic Violence Survival Guide. United Church of Christ Resources. 800-537-3394

Letters from My Sisters: Domestic Violence. 800-537-3394

Making Our Churches Safe for All. Free from www.ucc.org/church/safe/state.htm

Morrison, Eleanor. Created in God's Image: A Human Sexuality Program for Ministry and Mission

Powell, Lois W. An Article in Issue on Abuse. *Common Lot*, Spring, 2004, 10. 866-822-8224, ext. 3876

Reid, Kathryn Goering in collaboration with Marie Fortune. Preventing Child Sexual Abuse: A Curriculum for Children Ages Five through Eight. Pilgrim Press

Reid, Kathryn Goering in collaboration with Marie Fortune. Preventing Child Sexual Abuse: A Curriculum for Children Ages Nine through Twelve. Pilgrim Press

Reid, Kathryn Goering, and Ken Hawkly. *Children Together: Teaching Girls and Boys to Value Themselves and each Other*. 800-537-3394

"Spare us the False Shepherds" in SIECUS Report, Volume 28, Number 3, February-March 2000 – Marie Fortune's lessons learned about sexual exploitation from President Clinton's impeachment. *Journal of Religion and Abuse*, 1991, Volume 1, No. 1

Dallas (Dee) A. Brauninger. *Antoinette Brown Women: Finding Voice*, June, 2008