

TouchPoint

The North American Baptist Conference Women's Ministry Newsletter

July/August 2018

NAB Women's Ministry Is Refreshed! Our New Name Is:

NORTH AMERICAN BAPTISTS

women's connection

NAB Women Connecting with God and Each Other

The Women's Ministry Leadership Team excitedly brings to you a new look and focus for North American Baptist Women. We will be known as Women's Connection and our bimonthly newsletter is now TouchPoint. We hope that these changes will give new strength and energy to the connections we have as women in our North American Baptist churches.

What a joy it is to watch women with the same focus connect across

the street, in our churches, across time zones, and international borders, sharing their stories that challenge and encourage each other.

This past year we have been encouraging you to connect more deeply with God through the study *Enjoying Jesus* produced by the IF organization. Through studying and applying the spiritual disciplines, we have invited you to experience a deeper relationship with God.

We will broaden our focus to

include connecting with our family and friends and offering you opportunities to connect with your community more intentionally.

We are praying that God will use this new season in the life of NAB Women's Ministry to develop a closer partnership not only with Him, but with each other and the communities into which He has placed us.

– The North American Baptist Conference WMLT

Our guiding theme this year is

"...until Christ is formed in you." – Galatians 4:19

Through the study, *Enjoying Jesus*, we have been exploring the spiritual practices that help us connect with God in a deeper way.

In this issue of TouchPoint, Susan Reese will help us see how God uses Silence and Solitude to draw us closer to Himself.

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Our Vision

Our desire is to connect with women of the North American Baptist Conference and help them fulfill their calling

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Our Mission

Our desire is to connect with women of the North American Baptist Conference, encouraging them in their desire to serve God, and providing them with valuable tools and resources to accomplish what God is calling them to do.

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Our Core Values

CALLING AND WORTH
 We value the essential role women play in ministry.

QUALITY RESOURCES
 We value God's Word and seek resources that are Biblically sound, applicable and accessible.

BROADER CONNECTION
 We value supporting the broader vision of the North American Baptist Conference and developing a connection among North American Baptist Conference women.

LEGACY & THE FUTURE
 We value the legacy of women who have gone before us and are committed to engaging the next generation.

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Quieting the Inner Noise



BY SUSAN REESE

My day started with several texts of concern: a friend whose mother did not receive adequate care at the hospital, a relative who is a bit overwhelmed with a home remodel project, a friend whose husband applied for a job in another city and the family is uncertain about a move, and a relative with concerns and updates about her actively dying father. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayers!

Do you ever find that you long for silence or that “silence” simply finds you? The kind of silence where you do not have words for what is happening around you but you are aware that God is inviting you into the silence, into prayer.

Dr. Margaret Guenther, author of *Holy Listening*, describes our lives as Christians as chased by the dynamics of over activity, loneliness, anxiety, and longings. In her ministry of spiritual direction she found that many Christians fear of being out of control and perhaps not knowing how to be intimate with God. She also found many people were busy doing ministry, which can be good, but neglecting the sense of being loved by God.

What keeps us from silence – from quieting the inner noise? Take a few moments to consider the roles you fulfill in life each day. What does each role require of you spiritually, emotionally, physically, mentally, and socially? How demanding does each of these roles feel to you? Is there anything in your daily expectations that keeps you from engaging in silence and solitude?

What is silence? According to the *Renovare Spiritual Formation Bible*, silence is closing off our souls from “sounds” whether noise, music, or words, so that we may better still the inner chatter and clatter of our noise hearts and be increasingly attentive to God. Silence is a discipline of abstaining from noise and distractions to center our entire being and attention to God. In *Conformed to His Image*, Kenneth Boa writes, “*Silence is a catalyst of solitude; it prepares the way for inner seclusion and enables us to listen to the quiet voice of the Spirit. Few of us have experienced silence, and most people find it to be uncomfortable at first. Silence is at odds with the din of our culture and the popular addiction to noise and hubbub.*”

This discipline relates not only to finding places of silence in our surroundings but also to time of restricted speech in the presence of others.” (p.83) Silence, which moves us to solitude, is the space and place where we worship, pray and hear God’s will and purposes for our daily living. Silence and solitude ground us in God’s loving embrace for the circumstances we experience in life.

I was walking through Hobby Lobby with a relative in a difficult season of life and saw a creatively made sign stating,

The Lord will fight for you, you need only be still. Exodus 14:14

I was silenced. Not because of the artistry of the sign, but because of the reminder that our Lord fights for us while we are in the stillness, in the silence, in solitude. This verse appears in Exodus before Moses led the Hebrews through the parting of the Red Sea. Can you imagine the courage it took to lead and live into that experience!?! That kind of courage comes from having heard the voice of God, in the stillness, in the silence, in solitude. In *The Cup of Life*, Joyce Rupp writes that solitude is not always being comfortable and comforting. Solitude can be a lonely, restless time, or a time when painful memories visit us. When we experience restlessness, loneliness, or other unwanted emotions in our solitude, we stay there with them. We don’t run away. We sit with our tears or our joy. We let our hunger for God growl in our hearts. We listen to the pain. We have compassion for ourselves. We trust that whatever is in our solitude will eventually bear fruits because God is there with us. Our solitude helps us to “be” with God. Give yourself time and permission to enter into silence, into solitude.

This is a favored practice of mine to enter silence:
 Silence your body, to listen to your words.
 Silence your tongue, to listen to your thoughts.
 Silence your thoughts, to listen to your heart.
 Silence your heart, to listen to your spirit.
 Silence your spirit to listen to His spirit—the Holy Spirit.

Written by Mama Maggie, a Coptic Christian who spends her life caring for children whose home is a landfill in Greece.

Susan Reese, EdD, Sioux Falls Seminary
 Professor of Spiritual Formation, Christian Spiritual Director, Certified Strengths Finder Coach

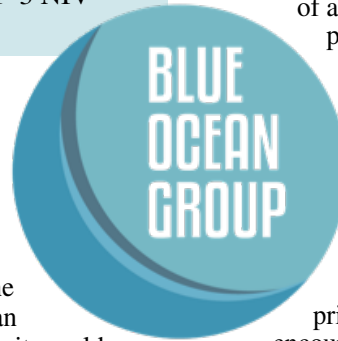
Reflections on My Blue Ocean Experience

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

– Hebrews 12:1–3 NIV

For My Job

In understanding our NAB family and heritage and the unique passions, initiatives, and ends that drive us, this Blue Ocean experience has been completely invaluable! It has been such a blessing to receive the opportunity to be a part of a group of thirty-five NAB pastors, leaders, and ministry partners who are trying to live with such intentionality and fully embrace the roles God has them in. I have been able to sit with them, hear their stories and testimonies, and be encouraged and challenged. It has also been a



privilege to be able to try to encourage them as a member of the International Office staff. Although there are ample opportunities throughout my day to pray for our NAB family, talk with them (mostly on the phone), and hear from others who spend time with them, most of us at the International Office do not often get opportunities to spend time with members of the wider NAB family. But at Blue Ocean, we got in small groups and discussed various topics, asking hard questions and working together to expose ourselves and examine how these topics and questions relate to our personal lives, walks, and ministries. I could have sat there for hours getting to know these amazing people and hearing about their challenges and victories, and I truly came back to work with a newfound devotion and passion for my job because I was able to come to know this Blue Ocean group, see the faces of some of the churches that are part of our conference, and meet our NAB family in person! In that sense, it has been such a fruitful and impactful experience!



BY JOANNA CLARK
Communications Director
North American Baptists, Inc.

When I transitioned into my new position as communications director at the

International Office last year, I was asked to consider joining Blue Ocean for the 2017–18 cohort. Although I'd worked with the NAB for four years, I still didn't fully know what that would entail, but I have been so encouraged by the energy, work, and passion Cam, Kent, and Lisa have put into these

missional and formational initiatives that I couldn't pass up the opportunity to find out firsthand what Blue Ocean really was. I was told I would be there to participate as a part of the cohort and not be there as an employee. However, I knew it would also be beneficial within my new role and my work at the International Office even as I knew I would glean much from participating.

As I reflect on my time this last year with Blue Ocean, there are two ways I think about it.

Share Your Blessing Compassion Project

Happy Feet, a ministry of IBM Churches (Iglesia Biblica Misionera – Bible Missionary Church), was created 6 years ago, to fill a huge need in the rural indigenous populations of Mexico.

It is a joy to see how the IBM community pulls together to donate new and used shoes for the cause. Last year, 2017, we distributed over 1,300 shoes in three different areas in Michoacan, Mexico, and we shared the Gospel with more than 400 people!

We work through a local church, so that they can follow up with these new believers.

– Paco and Shawna Damian, IBM



This is the Share Your Blessing compassion project sponsored by the Women's Ministry of the North American Baptist Conference. Contributions to purchase new shoes can be made to North American Baptist, Inc. from August 1 to October 1, 2018.

Project Appeal Name: WMPProjectHappy

**US Donations: NAB, Inc
1219 Pleasant Grove Blvd
Roseville, CA 95678** | **Canadian Donations: NAB, Inc
PO Box 57235
Toronto, ON M5W 5M5**

Women's Connection is inviting you to help IBM purchase shoes for their next distribution adventure.

For My Own Personal Journey

I have met some people who are not just doing incredible work and ministry, but more importantly, are truly seeking what the Lord is doing in their own lives, questioning how they have always understood and known the Gospel, and willingly opening themselves up to anything more God might have in store for them. I, too, have been struck by these same challenges. I have to reflect upon where God has me in ministry, how I am

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Triennial Women's Luncheon

At the time of producing this TouchPoint newsletter 216 women have registered for the Triennial Women's Luncheon on Friday July 27. These women will enjoy a time of connecting with other women of the NAB family, being inspired by Heather Hayashi and Debbie Mueller (potter) our team of speakers, and enjoying a delicious lunch.

Our theme is "Clay in the Potter's Hand"

"Yet you, Lord, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand."

— Isaiah 64:8

What a beautiful illustration—we are the clay in the hands of our master potter. God is constantly shaping and molding us. He knows what He wants His finished product to be and to look like. He created each of us with a purpose and just like the clay, we are to surrender to Him so that we can be shaped into vessels to be used by Him.



Heather Hayashi is a reader, writer, lover of coffee and curious about many things. She and her husband Randy live in Edmonton, AB and have two young adult sons. She is a graduate from Taylor Seminary with a Master of

Theological Studies Degree and received her training as a spiritual director from Urban Sanctuary. She is the author of 31 Days of Christmas, Pray Any Way and is currently working on a third book. Heather lives with chronic illness and pain and has come to love God deeply through this experience. It is from this ongoing need to surrender her will to God that she is honoured to write and speak about His goodness and grace!



Debbie Mueller has a passion for a deep relationship with God and for walking alongside others with a similar heart. She has been a mentor and friend to women in Africa, Guatemala, Fiji and here in North America. In

addition to being a wife and mother Debbie has been in leadership in Youth With A Mission and local churches in Canada and the United States. For the past 12 years she has worked as a ceramicist.

My Blue Ocean Experience

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embracing the places I am, what my role is, if God is using me, and how I can expand in what He is doing in and through me at work, at home, at church, among my friends, at my kids' school, etc. But, I also need to reflect on what I need to prune or simplify in my life as to not minimize how He wants to use me.

I have also been realizing recently that although God is at work in us all the time, it can be easy to feel a little jaded when your job is ministry, to feel like you are closely connected to God just because your job requires you to be. I spend every morning at work in prayer – for my coworkers, our regions and the regional ministers, our churches, our pastors, our missionaries, and more. You would think I have this fabulous walk and prayer life, but I realized that I was being less intentional in my own faith journey because at work I am consumed with faith-based ministry. And as I was exposed to this and chose to open up about this struggle, I realized three things: I have more in common with my cohort than I knew, God has been revealing some hard truths to me, and I've got some work to do! Even though I have the opportunity daily to be connected with Him and His people, I still have to intentionally meet with Him and every day choose to depend on Him in my own life. At Blue Ocean, I sat with a group of men – mostly – and

women – a few– but all of them Christ followers just trying to walk this road and journey with more intentionality, more passion. I found myself having more in common and more connection than I was prepared for.

That first time together, last October in Vancouver, British Columbia, I spent most of the time soaking up the stories and getting to know people. I felt like that was why God had me there – to meet this NAB family I am privileged to serve in my job.

We met two more times – in Auburn, California, in February and then in Chicago, Illinois, this past April – and God really grabbed my attention and heart and exposed some areas I need to explore. I walked away intimidated by all that God was impressing upon me and yet with a new passion and fire to grab others to journey with me into some of these topics and conversations!

As I come away from Blue Ocean challenged and convicted just as

much as I am encouraged, I could not be more grateful for the experience – the amazing "family" I've gotten to know, the deeper relationships I've built, and some personal work I need to undertake, specifically, asking the questions, digging deep for answers, and allowing myself to reimagine how God is at work and wants to be at work in me and through me. I am blessed to be a woman of God on a journey surrounded by others! I encourage you, women of the NAB, to jump in! Get in the tough conversations, get those around you to join you, and, if you are able, look into being a part of Blue Ocean!

It is exciting to be a part of the movement that God has placed the NAB – placed us – on! He has surrounded you and me with a great group of people – broken, loving, humble, prideful, quiet, loud, extroverted, introverted, male, and female – all on a journey! Let's find ways to embrace this journey together!

"The goal of Blue Ocean is to help its participants to think clearly and biblically about the church in this season of change in North America, and dream together about how we can form a community of leaders who can help lead our churches and our conference in the areas of mission and formation. With authors and practitioners in the area of mission and formation, we will reflect deeply together on missional theology, spiritual formation, and the church. Over the last few years, Blue Ocean has had a significant influence in building a community of leaders who are traveling together on this missional/formational journey we have been on at NAB."

—Kent Carlson NAB Vice President of Leadership Formation

Contact Kent kcarlson@nabconf.org if you would like to be a part of this adventure

