

Redwoods Presbyterian Church
Larkspur, California
Suellen Barnett
Celebrating the Gifts of Women
March 3, 2013

Today we are celebrating the gifts of women. This celebration came about by action of the Presbyterian Church (USA) General Assembly in Orlando, Florida, in 1993. It is scheduled each year on the Sunday closest to March 8, International Women's Day.

International Women's Day dates back 90+ years. Shortly after the turn of the last century, women in this country and in Europe established an annual day focusing attention of the movement for women's rights and universal suffrage. March 8 commemorates the first demonstrations by women workers in the needle trades in New York in 1906 that helped to bring about improved working conditions and the right of women to vote in the United States, which didn't happen until 1920.

This year the Presbyterian Church is celebrating the 83rd anniversary of the ordination of women elders. The General Assembly voted to ordain women as elders in 1930 and women as pastors much later – in 1956!

The month of March is designated by Congress as Women's History Month – and each year the National Women's History Project designates women in various fields to be honored. This year the project is honoring women in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics. So in a few minutes we will give tribute to some of these women. They will be honored with roses, which traditionally means deep gratitude and appreciation.

Each of us has women in our own lives whose gifts we celebrate; and we also have our own gifts that God has given us for service to others. The Scriptures which Polly read, selected by the Presbyterian Women's Program in Louisville, encourage us first in the Psalms, through God's love and care for us, and through the great power of love in the Corinthians chapter, that indeed we all – women and men alike – can continue to offer our talents in love to those around us and to the world.

Please take a moment to share with the person closest to you, a special woman in your life whose gifts you appreciate.

Will those participating in our celebration of women, please come forward.

Polly:

Patricia Bath – Ophthalmologist and Inventor (1942 - Present)

Patricia Bath was the first African American woman doctor to receive a patent for a medical purpose. Her invention of the Laserphaco Probe was an important milestone in the advent of laser cataract surgery. She co-founded the American Institute for the Prevention of Blindness (1976) committed to "protect, preserve, and restore the gift of sight."

Georgene:

Elizabeth Blackwell – Physician (1821 – 1910)

Elizabeth Blackwell was the first fully accredited doctor in the United States. Dozens of medical schools turned down her application, but she was finally accepted by Geneva College, a small medical school in upstate New York. She, along with her sister, Emily, founded the first medical school for women, resulting in greater acceptance of female physicians, more opportunities for meaningful work for American women, and stricter standards for medical schools as a whole.

June:

Katharine Blodgett – Physicist and Inventor (1898 – 1979)

Katharine Blodgett was the first woman awarded a Ph.D. in Physics from the University of Cambridge (1926) and the first woman research scientist for General Electric's New York laboratory. Blodgett received eight US patents, most famously for inventing low-reflecting "invisible" glass. Her inventions and methods have helped shape modern products such as camera lenses, computer screens, and eyeglasses.

Anna:

Rita R. Colwell – Molecular Microbial Ecologist and Scientific Administrator (1934 – Present)

Rita Colwell, Ph.D., served as the first woman Director of the National Science Foundation (1998 – 2004), where she taught the importance of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education in schools and colleges, and the increased participation of women and minorities in science and engineering. Colwell has also served in many leadership and advisory positions for scientific organizations and government agencies. Her award-winning scientific work is focused on water borne diseases of public health significance.

Melissa:

Grace Murray Hopper – Computer Scientist (1906 – 1992)

Grace Hopper was a pioneering computer scientist and Rear Admiral in the United States Navy. Hopper joined the Navy Reserve during World War II and worked as one of the first programmers of the Harvard Mark I Computer. She later wrote the first computer programming compiler (1952) and conceptualized COBOL, one of the first modern programming languages (1954). Upon her retirement she was awarded the Defense Distinguished Service Medal, the highest noncombatant award given by the Department of Defense.

Debbie:

Julia Morgan – Architect (1872 -1957)

Julia Morgan was the first woman admitted to the architecture program at the National School of the Arts in Paris, and the first woman architect licensed in California. Morgan designed over 700 buildings in California and is best known for her work on Hearst Castle in San Simeon. Many of

her projects, including designing numerous YWCA buildings and facilities at Mills College, sought to advance opportunities for women.

Ani:

Flossie Wong-Staal – Virologist and Molecular Biologist (1946 - Present)

Flossie Wong-Staal is one of the world's foremost authorities in the field of virology. She was a pioneering researcher of retroviruses and with her team deciphered the structure of the HIV virus as the cause of AIDS. She was the first to clone and complete the genetic mapping of HIV making it possible to develop HIV tests. Wong-Staal continues her pioneering work in developing first-in-class therapeutics against Hepatitis C virus.

Nancy:

Dian Fossey – Primatologist and Naturalist (1932 – 1985)

For 18 years Dian Fossey studied, lived among, and befriended gorillas of Rwanda. She made many discoveries about gorillas, including understanding gorilla vocalizations, gorilla group hierarchies and social relationships, and gorilla diet and recycling of nutrition. Her book, *Gorillas in the Mist* documented her study of these animals and the need to protect them from the threat of poachers and neglect.

Tani:

Susan Solomon – Atmospheric Chemist (1956 – Present)

Susan Solomon is the Ellen Swallow Richards Professor of atmospheric chemistry and climate science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Her groundbreaking research on chlorofluorocarbons as the cause of the Antarctic ozone hole was part of the basis of the international treaty that has effectively regulated damaging chemicals. She is also a leader in climate science, and is best known for seminal work showing that climate changes due to human increases in carbon dioxide will last for more than a thousand years.

After the service these roses and others will be in the Fellowship Hall and may be taken home by the women of the church whom we really appreciate.

Let us pray...