

# ‘Finding my place as a lady missionary:’ Mennonite Women Missionaries to Puerto Rico, 1945–1960

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In 1975, 20 years into her 36-year career as a missionary and church planter of Puerto Rico Mennonite churches in the New York City and Quin-Cities (on the Illinois/Iowa border) areas of the United States, and in Bayamon, Coamo, and Ponce, Puerto Rico, Gladys Widmer reflected on her role:

Finding my place as a lady missionary was not always easy. Many mistakes were made in the learning process.... I am discovering more how to rely on the Holy Spirit to know when to step in, and when to stand back in giving advice, guidance, encouragement, moral support.<sup>1</sup>

Women missionaries like Gladys who served the church in Puerto Rico were motivated by a sense of divine call and leading, even as they were conscious of their own limitations and their gender. And such women, as I discuss below, were instrumental in building the Mennonite Church in Puerto Rico.

In this paper I explore the role of women missionaries to Puerto Rico during the years immediately following World War II through the 1950s. Outnumbering men by almost two to one, 37 North American women and two Puerto Rican

women *misioneras* served the Mennonite Church in Puerto Rico through 1960 under Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities (MBMC), based in Elkhart, Ind.<sup>2</sup> These women—roughly half single, half married and serving with their husbands—were committed missionaries. The average length of service was 12 years, though many women, both married and single, served 15 to 30-year terms. Some women missionaries married nationals and settled in Puerto Rico; others continued living and working in Puerto Rico after their terms ended and even into retirement. During and after their service, a significant number spoke of Puerto Rico as their home, or described themselves as “belonging to Puerto Rico.”<sup>3</sup>

My concern in this historical research is to investigate the role of gender. In this I am following historian Joan Wallach Scott’s definition of gender as a “constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes.”<sup>4</sup> That is, the differing roles that male and female Mennonite missionaries filled in post-World War II Puerto Rico grew out of particular understandings about appropriate masculine and feminine behavior accepted by Mennonites at the time. As I argue below, women missionaries did not so much challenge existing gender roles—in fact, most embodied maternal qualities that were quite acceptable in both North American and Puerto Rican contexts. Rather, in some cases, they side-stepped gender norms. Rosemary Gagan has entitled her study of Canadian Methodist women missionaries, *A Sensitive Independence*, and I think this title may accurately describe the spirit with which Mennonite women missionaries in Puerto Rico also fulfilled their role.<sup>5</sup> Making independent decisions of considerable responsibility in areas over which they had control, while being sensitive to the gendered limitations of their assignments, is the situation which I describe below.

Historically, Mennonite mission activity built on a foundation laid by Civilian Public Service workers, both men and women, during the war. Beginning in 1943, women volunteers serving as nutritionists and nurses joined CPS men in the rural La Plata Valley of central Puerto Rico. In 1945, Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities (MBMC) began direct mission work in Puerto Rico. By 1951, Mennonite missionaries had founded five churches and three mission outposts, organized rural health clinics in two remote areas (Pulgillas and Rabanal), and established Betania (Bethany) Mennonite school, an elementary school which later expanded to include high school. (A second Mennonite school in Summit Hills, a suburb of San Juan, was eventually opened.) In addition, MBMC assumed responsibility for the hospital and agricultural activities at La Plata beginning in 1950, continuing to run a program there for service workers on two-year terms until the 1960s. In this paper I focus on long-term, MBMC mission workers who had a self-awareness of themselves as missionaries and who, in general, were more fluent in Spanish and more immersed in local culture than were those short-term volunteers at what amounted to the La Plata mission compound.<sup>6</sup>

## Post-war Mennonite Missionary Milieu

As I have argued elsewhere, the postwar years were a watershed that offered North American Mennonite women greater service, educational, and professional opportunities than they had ever experienced before.<sup>7</sup> Women who would commit themselves to mission work in Puerto Rico were part of this impetus toward women's wider roles. Many of the female nurses and teachers who served in Puerto Rico acquired their vocational training with the goal of church service in mind. Marjorie Schantz Martin, originally of Cambridge, Ontario, who served as a nurse-midwife in Puerto Rico from 1947 to 1970, planned to be a missionary nurse from childhood and completed nurse's training with this goal in mind. Civilian Public Service confirmed some women's interest in missionary service: Carol Glick Kauffman, originally of Sugarcreek, Ohio, served with CPS in Ypsilanti, Michigan, before volunteering in Puerto Rico. And many women—including nurse Linda Reimer, originally of Steinbach, Manitoba, and dietician Mabel Miller, of the Amish-Mennonite conference, from Wilmot, Ohio—participated in MBMC's short-term service program in Puerto Rico before opting for longer terms as Mennonite missionaries.

Women's growing interest in church service paralleled and—through women's participation in the Women's Mission and Service Auxiliary (WMSA) of the Mennonite Church—promoted the growth of Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities. Under the direction of J.D. Graber, who became MBMC's first full-time, paid leader in 1944, Mennonite mission work dramatically expanded. From the end of World War II through 1958, MBMC founded new missions in 15 countries, including Puerto Rico. This rapid growth exponentially increased the need for missionaries to serve, including new opportunities for unmarried women (married women having always been appointed with their husbands).<sup>8</sup>

In fact, the particular nature of Mennonite missions at that time opened the door for single women. MBMC work in Puerto Rico built on the missionary experience in Argentina, made explicit by family connections, with five Argentine missionary children (three of them women) serving in Puerto Rico<sup>9</sup>. Historian Theron Schlabach has noted that Argentine mission experience taught Mennonites the importance of institution-building: hospitals, schools, and church buildings helped missionaries establish "a respectable place in their communities" and demonstrated their intention to stay.<sup>10</sup> Unlike Argentina, Puerto Rico's status as a U.S. commonwealth meant that MBMC faced few of the government restrictions that had limited Mennonite institutions on foreign soil. Thus, hospitals or clinics and schools were integral parts of Mennonite missionary outreach in Puerto Rico, and single women teachers and nurses to staff them were key to the mission endeavor. As Buelah Litwiller noted, "I felt that as a single girl I could be used more effectively there [in Puerto Rico] than in Argentina."<sup>11</sup>

In addition to institution-building, MBMC's theology of missions, as articulated by J.D. Graber, validated the work of women. Under Graber, the mission board committed itself to melding word and deed, that is, evangelism

and social programs, such as education and health care. In his book, *The Church Apostolic*, published in 1960, Graber made his argument for the "slow and difficult task of church building" as opposed to "mere 'saving souls.'" Graber contended that followers of Jesus who were "unable or unwilling" to address such human needs as "disease and illiteracy" were ineffective and developed "a bad conscience." This radical departure from how earlier generations of Mennonite missionaries, influenced by Fundamentalism, had seen their task, opened doors for women. Rarely assigned to full-time evangelism and never to pastoring, single women missionaries were expected to serve as nurses or teachers with their evangelistic work happening on the side. Just as Graber cited Jesus as one who both "changes the course of people's lives" and "heals the sick," nurse Linda Reimer wrote that "medical aid has proved to be one of the quickest methods in gaining the confidence and friendship of many," thus providing an entry point for visiting homes and sharing the gospel. Missionary nurses in Puerto Rico were known officially as nurse-evangelists, for this reason.<sup>12</sup>

Graber's word-and-deed theology also validated the importance of Mennonite education—and by extension, female missionary teachers—since "the missionary seeks to pass along [Christian values] by his teaching program."<sup>13</sup> Carol Glick Kauffman, a Puerto Rican missionary who worked in Mennonite education for some 40 years, noted that leadership training was an important goal of Mennonite schools. As well as nurturing indigenous church leaders, the Mennonite schools in Puerto Rico proved a good way to bridge class differences. Most Mennonite missionaries shared with their Puerto Rican counterparts similar rural, working class roots, though different in degree (Puerto Ricans being more rurally isolated and poorer), by virtue of the fact that MBMC established churches in areas of economic hardship and underdevelopment. The main difference between MBMC workers and nationals, however, was the missionaries' access to higher education. Puerto Rican church leaders who attended the Mennonite schools, a number of whom later taught in those schools, began to bridge that gap. Thus, for these reasons, the female teachers at Betania, and later Summit Hills, Mennonite Schools, as well as Alice Kehl, who taught church leaders at the Puerto Rican Bible Institute, were integral to the missionary effort.<sup>14</sup>

### Women's Call to Missions

While the word-and-deed theology of missions created opportunities for women to serve, would-be missionaries were expected to have demonstrated a personal sense of call. Prior to their appointment to Puerto Rico, women exhibited their call to missions by teaching local Sunday School or summer vacation Bible School. Noting the importance of "spiritual qualifications," J.D. Graber wrote to applicant Anna Kay Massanari, "The fact that you have been an active worker in the Dewey S.S. is a splendid recommendation."<sup>15</sup> But a

woman's call needed to outweigh the sense of personal limitations that most labored under. School principal Carol Glick Kauffman, remembered for her exemplary service, "never felt capable," since she lacked formal training in administration. And Gladys Widmer echoed this sentiment: "I always felt from childhood that the Lord wants me somewhere but I never felt that I was capable." Most missionary women relied on their faith in God's leading to overcome their doubts about their own abilities.<sup>16</sup>

While a woman's personal feeling of inadequacy did not prohibit her from service, however, it was considered essential that her calling be validated by male leadership. Often a woman's local pastor would write the Mission Board on her behalf, as was the case with Anna Massanari, long-term teacher in Puerto Rico. Gladys Widmer made her sense of call known to J.D. Graber, her uncle, for whom she worked as office assistant. In other cases a woman would confide to a traveling male missionary on church-wide itineration about her desire to serve, and then wait to be contacted. (This was in contrast to missionary nurses, who were more often actively recruited by MBMC personnel.)

Rhetorically, both applicants and the mission board used the language of call, often to quite different effect. Correspondence between Anna Kay Massanari and J.D. Graber, who handled missionary placements, illustrates the gendered nuances of this discourse. Urging Massanari in 1945 to get some college experience, Graber encouraged her "to seek the Lord's guidance in this as in all matters. If the Lord wants you to have college training he can easily make it possible." Massanari wrote back a month later:

You said in your letter I should seek the Lord's guidance and I will.... However, I am quite sure that I could not go [to college] for four years and I feel that the need in the foreign [field] is so great one should spend no more time in preparation than necessary. Naturally, one would want to be well enough equipped as I believe He deserves the very best we can possibly give Him.<sup>17</sup>

Note that in their correspondence, both rely on "the Lord's guidance" to support quite different interpretations of God's will. After finally heeding Graber's advice and completing a B.A. in Education and Spanish proficiency, at some financial sacrifice, Massanari wrote him again in May of 1950, knowing teachers were needed in Puerto Rico beginning that August:

I do not want to appear too much in a hurry but there are arrangements I need to make soon if I do not go to Puerto Rico. Needless to say I have been praying much that the Lord's will might be done. I want you to know that I am not unaware of problems confronting the Board when such decisions have to be made—problems such as my inexperience and problems concerning the sending of single girls to Puerto Rico. I would like to say again, however, that I am willing to be so used if the Lord so directs the Board. I will continue to pray that God's will may be done as these important decisions are being made.<sup>18</sup>

Her humble yet tactful urgency was heeded; the next note in the file is an Aug. 16 cable from San Juan, Puerto Rico: "Arrived safely." One wonders whether a male applicant would have needed to make his case so persistently.

The language of call, moreover, could also feel heavy-handed. After serving one missionary term in Puerto Rico, Buelah Litwiller Gonzalez was asked to delay her marriage for three or more years in order to teach for a second term. In her letter disagreeing with this interpretation of God's will for her life, she writes:

Lester, in one of your last letters to me, you presented the need at the Betania School and you also mention[ed] the fact that often we need to put aside personal desires to put in first place the work of the Lord. Certainly, I realize the need for another teacher at Betania for next year; however, I am confident that the Lord will supply this need in some [other] way if He desires that phase of the work to go on.<sup>19</sup>

While noting her "desire to be used of the Lord" somewhere "in a Spanish speaking field," she declines "a definite call to work at a definite place" (i.e. Puerto Rico). Thus the language of call provided an important framework both for (and in this case against) a woman's missionary service.

### **Preparation, Placement and Singlehood**

A woman's call to mission, while important, usually was inadequate to insure her a missionary placement without college experience. In one of several instances in which MBMC supported Puerto Rican Mennonites to study at Mennonite colleges in the U.S., the mission board funded Paula Santos, a Puerto Rican *misionera* who had been serving her local church for several years, to attend Goshen College so she could gain training for additional church service. Even Mabel Miller, a trained dietician who wished to be more actively involved in evangelism, was advised to attend college as general preparation for missionary service. MBMC general secretary J.D. Graber considered college courses in Bible and education to be most important, presumably since most of these women would become missionary teachers.

For such applicants, Graber's recommendation of college also seems to have been age-related. As Graber wrote to Anna Massanari's home pastor, college education "seems to us to be sound advice for a girl of twenty." To Massanari, herself, he wrote, "If you follow this schedule your age at the time of the completion of college [age 25] will be what I feel more ideal for taking up a foreign mission task." The mission board clearly preferred women who had been out of college some years; many that I interviewed were in their late twenties when they began missionary service. Age was important since the mission board wanted women who possessed a certain level of maturity. Missionary service was not expected to be easy: an important question on the missionary candidate form used in 1948 asked, "How do you regard hardship, suffering, and peril incurred in missionary work, and to what extent have you considered them," leaving a single line for response.

But the mission board's preference to assign older, college-educated women

also may have been an indication of its preference that these women already have made a choice against marriage. MBMC's application form queried whether the applicant had "pledged her heart to anyone," and whether that person was in sympathy with her plans. The median marriage age for Mennonite women of this generation was about 22 years; by her late twenties a woman was beyond the age at which many Mennonite women could expect to marry.<sup>20</sup>

Though being unmarried may have caused some women to look toward missionary service, I argue that—given the strong call to mission that many women felt—singlehood was more the result of a woman's choice to pursue a missionary calling than cause. Evelyn King Mumaw, who completed a master's thesis interviewing unmarried women graduates of Eastern Mennonite College, later refined her thinking in a book outlining why a woman might choose to remain single, as follows:

Among Christian women who have chosen to remain unmarried are those persons who have a clear sense of divine calling to work that requires singlehood. They have chosen to follow and remain in this leading even though they were aware that this choice was also most likely the choice to remain unmarried.<sup>21</sup>

This clearly was true for many Puerto Rican missionary women. After an initial term of service in Puerto Rico, Carol Glick Kauffman remembered, "I had a boyfriend at home and I felt that we were going to get married... But when I came back I knew that it was not the thing for me." Thus for some women, the choice *for* missionary service was a decision *against* marriage.

Significantly, while half of the women missionaries to Puerto Rico through 1960 were single, the mission board placed no single male missionaries. This raises provocative questions related to gender; for example, what particular understandings about sexuality explain the fact that only men partnered with their wives were assigned to missionary service? If out of a concern that single men not fall in love with local women, was not the reverse also of concern for single women, two of whom married and one who had a love affair with Puerto Rican men?<sup>22</sup> Interestingly, a number of the missionary couples who served in Puerto Rico first met and married through the short-term service program at La Plata, but what of unmarried, would-be missionary men? Did the mission board help with matchmaking between mission-minded men and women in a manner similar to that of Dean Harold Bender of Goshen Biblical Seminary during this same time period, who reportedly would remind seminarians nearing graduation that it was time to find a wife?<sup>23</sup> More research is needed on these questions; thus the answers must be speculative.

### **Missionary Women's Church-building Activities**

Single or married, missionary women participated in similar church-building activities. Women missionaries did home visitation, taught Sunday School (often at more than one location each week) and vacation Bible School,

facilitated bible studies, ran summer camps for children and youth, organized women's meetings and young people's meetings, led singing or played piano in church services (one interesting bit of correspondence refers to the purchase and shipment of "a practical piano for a missionary" to be sent from Indiana to Puerto Rico),<sup>24</sup> and helped with the Puerto Rican church's annual meeting, Bible Institute, and evangelistic meetings.

North American missionary women, as well as men, accepted responsibility for maintaining ties with the church back home, an important aspect of MBMC's constituency relations. J.D. Graber's philosophy of "A mission outpost for every congregation" was designed to foster personal connections between missionaries and their home congregations and extended kin.<sup>25</sup> While both male and female missionaries assumed communication and correspondence responsibilities (e.g. both wrote articles for Mennonite Church periodicals), women shouldered more of these duties by virtue of their gender role socialization toward "the work of kinship," as anthropologist Micaela Di Leonardo discusses it.<sup>26</sup> Women missionaries frequently wrote articles for the WMSA monthly magazine and corresponded more often than did their male counterparts; Bonnie Driver remembers sending back weekly letters with family photos as this was "the only way [friends and family back home] could see our children grow up" (furloughs for missionary families being once every five years). Children from Marjorie Shantz Martin's home congregation in Cambridge, Ontario, sent letters to Puerto Rican children, care of "Marjorie the missionary". Moreover, women's close connections with individual congregations and family members often resulted in particular sources of financial assistance to MBMC. Supporters of Linda Reimer underwrote her furlough travelling expenses and a ladies group from her church covered the \$17 shipping charge on her trunk. One mother made monthly donations from her salary at a Mennonite church publishing house to cover her daughter's missionary allowance in Puerto Rico.<sup>27</sup> According to Di Leonardo, maintaining this "sense of family" and actual or fictive kinship ties takes time, intention and skill. It is achieved at long distance through letters, cards, and visits, and "is largely women's work."<sup>28</sup>

In addition to fostering kin and church connections back home, missionary women adapted themselves to local Puerto Rican customs of dress and housing. Following J.D. Graber's philosophy that missionaries determine "the kind of package in which [they] present the Gospel" by making the "wrapping as familiar as possible,"<sup>29</sup> women missionaries in Puerto Rico adopted the *mantilla*, or black veil, the traditional Catholic head covering worn in worship and mourning, in lieu of Mennonite-style head coverings.<sup>30</sup> Missionary living conditions varied. Single nurses, in particular, seem to have accepted rudimentary accommodations, for example, sleeping in army cots set up at night in the Rabanal church building several days a week. John and Bonnie Driver, among others, opted to live simply, sometimes more so than their rural, Puerto Rican neighbors. After living for some time in one community, the Drivers remember being asked if they "weren't quite settled yet," given that their only furniture



was a bed, table, and a few chairs. In part, sparse accommodations reflected economic realities, since, at least in the early years, money from home, especially for missionary families, was often a welcome supplement to meager MBMC stipends. But simple living also reflected a sincere desire on the part of many missionary women to identify with the people they were serving. As Marjorie Shantz Martin reflected upon retirement, “Because I lived there [in Puerto Rico] simply and with such poor people, I never wanted an elaborate home or fancy things when I came back [to North America].”<sup>31</sup>

Providing transportation was another aspect of women’s missionary service. Bonnie Driver often drove patients in to the Mennonite hospital from outlying areas. Carol Glick Kauffman and Anna Kay Massanari had a covered truck to haul students. Gladys Widmer remembers kids cramming into her little car so she could drive them across the island to attend church-wide youth meetings. And Marjorie wore out three jeeps during her 23 years in Puerto Rico, driving children to Bible School, and, overall, providing “an impromptu taxi service.” In addition to creating church community, providing transportation was a form of witness, as well. As Jose Ortiz remembers, “If Mennonites came by in a jeep, they would pick you up. They could always fit in one more.” (This was in contrast to the local Catholic priest in Ortiz’ home community who rode around in a Lincoln Continental and refused to give rides to passers-by.)<sup>32</sup>

### Single Women Missionaries and *Misioneras*

The day-to-day responsibilities of women missionaries differed according to marital status. Single women—usually assigned as teachers or nurses, and occasionally as a secretary or dietician—were often able to be more closely involved in the lives of local people through home visitation than were married women, who faced the tension of caring for their own families, as well. Single women, however, shouldered a heavy work load. In addition to seeing patients at the bi-weekly Rabanal clinic (where 3,702 patients were treated in 1961), Marjorie Shantz Martin recalls that she sometimes delivered three babies in three different homes within 24 hours.<sup>33</sup> Teaching loads could be equally demanding. Teachers at Betania Mennonite School were often responsible for several subjects or grade levels and were encouraged to spend time each day visiting school children in their homes; at least one missionary teacher asked to be re-assigned because the teaching load was ruining her health.<sup>34</sup>

Adding the demands of teaching or nursing to their evangelistic duties, it was not unusual for a single woman to have church responsibilities almost every night of the week. Doris Snyder, a widow who was in the unenviable position of shouldering the workload of a single missionary while caring for two adolescent children, described the time crunch she felt as a teacher, as follows:

I cannot continue doing what I am now doing.... I will only have the children with

me for a few more years. After that it won't matter much whether I am home; in fact, I will probably be glad not to be. At present I am home only a few hours a day. From 8:30 a.m. til 3:30 p.m. I am at school. I have every night out except Monday night. Then, there are all those extras like committee meetings and activities that are not on the schedule. I have discussed my schedule here with Carol [the school principal] and we try but instead of getting less it seems to be more. The question is, as I see it, is it possible to stay here and yet change either my schedule or my work? [sic]<sup>35</sup>

Despite the heavy workload, single women missionaries found their work satisfying. Especially interesting to study in this regard are the Puerto Rican women who served as *misioneras* in the early years of building the Puerto Rican Mennonite Church. Lydia Rodriguez Cender, a "helper" at Coamo Arriba who assisted Lester Hershey in mission outreach, was later funded by the Pulgillas congregation as their *misionera*. In that capacity she was responsible for children's activities, women's meetings, and visiting homes to read the Bible and distribute tracts. Paula Santos was also an active lay leader, teaching Bible classes for several years prior to 1951, before being appointed a *misionera*. She then served for two and a half years in the La Plata congregation, working with young people and children as well as visiting patients in the Mennonite hospital, before receiving further training at Goshen College. Financially, national church workers, including *misioneras*, were supported with funds from local congregations, with reimbursement supposedly based on "[financial] need and funds available," though here some gender bias is evident. While Puerto Rican single male pastors received \$70 to \$80 a month plus housing, *misioneras* were paid \$50 to \$60 a month for their work.<sup>36</sup> Writing about *misioneras* in 1959, John Driver noted that "this type of service by the women of the church is effective. If more women workers of this type were available they would probably be used in the churches."<sup>37</sup>

Like *misioneras*, North American missionary women experienced satisfaction in their calling. On the field, long-term missionaries earned respect from mission colleagues for their expertise in nursing/midwifery and in education, the one mission subcommittee which women always chaired. Back home in North America, through writing and public speaking, single women gained some degree of recognition for their accomplishments. Speaking itineration while on furlough in the 1950s gave access to pulpits rarely granted to other Mennonite women at the time. Moreover, single women functioned as role models and promoters of missionary service. Into the 1950s—when air rather than boat passage became standard means of travel to Puerto Rico, and paved roads began to replace dirt paths within the commonwealth—Puerto Rico still seemed a distant, exotic and somewhat impenetrable location to northern Mennonites. Women's experiences in remote Puerto Rican locales—fording streams on horseback, encountering machete-wielding farmers<sup>38</sup>—struck their listeners as bold adventures. Thus, as Jane Hunter describes in relation to her study of turn-of-the-century missionary women, audiences at home could thrill

to the stories of “female heroism in distant corners of the world” brought back by single missionary women.<sup>39</sup>

### **Models for Singleness/Missionary “Mothers”**

But unmarried missionary women functioned as role models in another way as well. Ruth Compton Brouwer, in her discussion of Canadian Presbyterian missionaries in India, argues that single women “modelled spinsterhood or delayed marriage as respectable, feasible options.”<sup>40</sup> One Canadian Mennonite laywoman remembers speaking engagements by missionary women on furlough whom she and her friends termed “spinster missionaries,” a term which kept the idea of missions—and singleness—before them.<sup>41</sup> By 1962, arguably in part due to the example of missionary women like those in this study, 15.5 percent of unmarried women graduating from Eastern Mennonite College said they had entered college with “a conviction for Christian service,” and 11.5 percent did so out of an “Interest in preparing to live well and usefully as an unmarried person.” (Another 26.9 percent entered college out of an interest in teaching or nursing, additional examples of women preparing themselves for professional careers, not marriage.)<sup>42</sup>

Interestingly, for a number of the women in my study, remaining unmarried did not preclude mothering. Two women adopted children of their own (a rare occurrence in that era). Several other women raised Puerto Rican children in what amounted to foster care relationships over time. Single women also had ongoing relationships with missionary children: they babysat for them; in one case, two missionary teachers were cited in correspondence as being willing and able to “keep the children in school” and look after their care while their parents returned to the U.S. for several months of health leave.<sup>43</sup>

In fact, single missionary women, though unmarried, were steeped in the ideology and practice of maternity, or what Sara Ruddick calls, “maternal thinking.”<sup>44</sup> The traditionally female occupations (nurses/midwives, teachers) of Puerto Rican missionary women were those of nurturing and caretaking. Much of their work was with women and children. As Jane Hunter argues as a result of the missionaries she researched, so, too, the women in this study “placed feminine qualities of empathy at the center of [their] lifework.”<sup>45</sup> For example, mission correspondence notes a session of the Puerto Rican Conference annual meeting, when Carol Glick Kauffman, secretary of a board being criticized, “answer[ed] the charges in a quiet and peaceful way (which saved the day).”<sup>46</sup> Of necessity they occasionally stepped outside 1950s traditional gender roles; as church planter Gladys Widmer said of fulfilling male pastoring functions such as preaching, “I had to do it; there was no one else.”<sup>47</sup> While it may be overstating the case to suggest that such women were married to the mission in a manner akin to that of Catholic sisters—an understandable frame of reference for Puerto Ricans in that country’s Catholic context—certainly their

long terms of service bespeak a deep commitment to the missionary endeavor in its feminine attributes.

I have coined the term, “missionary motherhood,” to describe the perspective and practice that characterized women missionaries to Puerto Rico during the late 1940s and 1950s. In this regard I cite researcher Linda Rennie Forcey’s reflections on mothering, as follows:

At the heart of mothering as it is commonly understood in contemporary Western society is an ethic of caring—of knowing, feeling, and acting in the interests of others. Although mothering usually refers to the thoughts and activities of women who have willingly assumed the responsibility for the caring, nurturing, and socialization of their biological, adopted, or stepchildren, the process of defining mothering is not this simple or clear-cut. I have *all* “caring labor” in mind when I speak of mothering—from birthing labor, to all kinds of teaching, to care of the disabled and of the frail elderly.<sup>48</sup>

Single women missionaries exemplified Forcey’s concept of caring labor through their occupations as well as through their commitment to care for aging parents at home in North America. In the correspondence files of every unmarried missionary woman are requests to return home for family events, illnesses, or emergencies which the mission board always honored. Gladys Widmer interrupted her service in Puerto Rico for the better part of four years to attend to her parents during their final illnesses and deaths. And nurse Arlene Shoup was encouraged to book plane passage back to the U.S. as soon as possible when her mother was diagnosed with possible cancer. Tacitly acknowledging the greater responsibility that single women shouldered toward their parents, mission board policy was changed in the mid-1950s to allow all single women a three-month furlough after every two years of service.<sup>49</sup> (This was in contrast to married workers who gained a one-year furlough after five years on the mission field.) In these ways, which expressed feminine caring without challenging traditional gender roles, unmarried women exemplified the concept of missionary motherhood.

## Married Missionary Women

By contrast with single missionaries, married women usually went as unassigned spouses with their husbands who fulfilled assignments as pastors, doctors, or mission administrators. While the missionary wife’s participation varied somewhat according to ability, personality, and childcare responsibilities, husband and wife were expected to work together at particular churches and/or mission outposts (usually more than one), with the husband preaching and his wife providing emotional support, as well as assisting in music or Sunday School teaching. Wives served with their husbands on the Evangelistic Committee, meetings which were not attended by the nurse-evangelists nor by Gladys Widmer, the sole woman engaged in full-time evangelism, suggesting

that the mission saw wives as extensions of their husbands' ministries. In fact, many couples thought of the husband's assignment as joint, as John Driver acknowledged, using the plural to refer to himself and his wife, Bonnie: "We pastored." This was particularly true in the case of Kathryn Troyer, whose husband, Dr. Troyer, was deaf. As Carol Glick Kauffman reflected, "His wife was always with him," assisting in medical matters and facilitating communication.<sup>50</sup>

Much as missionary wives contributed to their husband's assignments, however, these women participated in ministries of their own. As Jeannine DeLombard reminds us in her article about Black Baptist women missionaries in Liberia, we should not let the term "missionary wives" obscure the fact that such women "identified themselves as missionaries in their own right."<sup>51</sup> Sometimes wives advocated for vocational assignments of their own: as Moses Beachey wrote to the mission administrator, "Ada has had quite a bit of dietician experience and feels she could do more than take care of our three boys."<sup>52</sup> Often missionary wives provided hospitality to visiting missionaries or home office personnel. As John Lehman wrote, "Margaret has been very busy with hostess and home duties. There seems to be a terrific amount of visiting going on here."<sup>53</sup> Nor were women limited to the domestic sphere. Fidel and Patricia Brennehan Santiago pastored the Guavate church for a year until she was too pregnant to continue. In addition to homemaking and childcare responsibilities, at least five missionary wives in Puerto Rico also worked as nurses or taught school part-time. As an at-home parent raising young children, Bonnie Driver worked as a nurse one day a week when the doctor visited her clinic; the rest of the week she was the only medical person in her community; one month she counted 80 visits to her home for basic first aid care or counsel.<sup>54</sup> In these ways, missionary wives fulfilled wider vocational roles.

Regardless of whether or not they pursued vocations outside the home, MBMC validated married women's contributions to the mission by assigning them a full salary to match that of their husbands. In the 1950s, this amounted to \$70 per adult; parents were allotted \$12.50 for each child (barely enough to cover the cost of canned milk for a growing child, as one missionary mother remembered). That the wife's salary was, in part, designed to supplement the cost of her children's care was made clear when in 1954 the missionary allowance was amended to address the situation of Doris Snyder, a widow with two children. A "parent alone with children [who] maintains a household on a mission field" was now allotted half an adult allowance for each of the first two children, thus equalling a married couple's salary.<sup>55</sup> In these financial arrangements the mission board recognized women's domestic responsibilities as furthering the mission endeavor, whether or not they also worked as teachers or nurses.

Despite the dual salary, missionary work itself often took a toll on family life. The guiding mission philosophy—that missionaries should "plant churches and move on"—resulted in frequent family moves. John and Bonnie Driver

remember living in seven different houses, moving every two years or so, while pastoring eight different congregations during their 15 years in Puerto Rico.<sup>56</sup> Moreover, unlike single women who were able to travel home on furlough every other year, missionary wives faced long separations from their extended family at home, since their furloughs came every five years. This meant missing most major family events: Bonnie and John Driver were able to attend the funeral of only one of their four parents who died during their terms of service. Traveling back and forth from Puerto Rico, which seems relatively close now (with direct flights from New York City and Toronto) was distant and expensive then; in fact, until 1950, missionaries traveled back and forth by boat, a week-long voyage, which was cheaper than flying. As Bonnie Driver reflected, "Because we lived overseas we didn't expect to get back."<sup>57</sup>

In addition, the missionary wife had to contend with the frequent absences and heavy workload of her spouse, which the mission board sanctioned if not expected. At one time John Driver was responsible for hospital chaplaincy, mission administration, and evangelistic work in several locations. Lawrence Greaser taught school part-time each day while pastoring the Betania church and its three mission outreach points. And Lester Hershey ran the Puerto Rican radio ministry while pastoring three congregations. (It should be noted that, in some cases, the administrative work of single women secretaries made such workloads possible.) To what degree missionaries recognized this overwork as a problem is unclear, though it seldom motivated men to reduce their workload. As Lester Hershey noted in a letter to the home office:

Perhaps to be so very busy, even in the Lord's work, and not have time sufficient for one's family, may in the end be not too profitable. We try to give them as much time as possible, keeping one evening a week for just our children.<sup>58</sup>

Busy in the Lord's work, without sufficient time for family life, male missionaries were also often away from home on church business. At times, missionary wives remained in Puerto Rico with their children when husbands traveled to the U.S. for mission board meetings. Even on furlough, mission demands often entailed long absences. While doing a circuit of speaking itineration in U.S. churches, Luke Birkey, long-term service worker whose situation paralleled that of MBMC missionaries, wrote in May of 1954: "I'm anxious of course to be with the family again, haven't seen the children since January so I'll be quite a stranger there."<sup>59</sup> One wonders about the implications for missionary wives of such four-month separations and busy schedules. Married women kept households running during such absences, trying to maintain a semblance of domestic normalcy—an interesting bit of correspondence concerns the shipment of several barrels of empty canning jars back and forth from Puerto Rico before and after a year-long furlough.<sup>60</sup> And wives made nurture of children and family life a priority when their husbands could not. As Bonnie Driver noted, "It was assumed that family was my primary task, since missionary men's time was so taken up with church work."<sup>61</sup> Certainly married

women needed a spirit of both sacrifice and self-reliance to manage the household and hold the family together in what often amounted to an absent, preoccupied, or exhausted husband and father of her children.

### **Full-time Female Evangelist**

While both married and single women were involved part-time in evangelism efforts, only one woman—Gladys Widmer—eventually moved into full-time evangelism and church planting. Originally assigned to teach at Betania Mennonite School, both Gladys and mission personnel came to realize that teaching was not a good fit for her. Having shown success winning new converts through what would later come to be called relationship or friendship evangelism<sup>62</sup>, Gladys was reassigned to full-time evangelistic work at the recommendation of J.D. Graber, her uncle and MBMC director.<sup>63</sup> Gladys was not the only single woman who wanted to do direct evangelism; other workers who expressed similar preferences were assigned to teaching.

For Gladys, planting churches—in Bayamon, Coamo, and Ponce, Puerto Rico, as well as with Puerto Ricans in several U.S. locations—was a matter of following the Spirit's leading. In her evangelistic work Gladys visited people and made connections as the Spirit directed her, something she came to refer to later as “bridgework,” or building bridges across lines of difference and distance (Puerto Rico-U.S. migration). As she said in working with the emerging church in Brooklyn, N.Y., in 1957, “This was a new work with no guidelines, no planning and no Spanish leadership. We were truly dependent on the Spirit.”<sup>64</sup> This Spirit-led approach has implications for gender. Elaine Lawless has studied Pentecostal women whose emphasis on the leading of the Holy Spirit creates space for them to assume public roles as pastors.<sup>65</sup> If a woman feels called to preach, for example, or, in Gladys' case, become a full-time evangelist and church planter—a role heretofore reserved for men only—who would challenge the Spirit's leading? So, too, Gladys' male missionary colleagues came to recognize and validate her Spirit-led call. As J.D. Graber wrote approvingly to her father after Gladys had achieved some successful church plants, “her whole heart is in this sense of call she has to spread the Gospel and win people to faith in Jesus Christ.”<sup>66</sup>

Full-time evangelism was a high-status occupation otherwise reserved for male missionary pastors, most of them ordained. Not that being assigned to do this work assured Gladys of such status among her missionary peers, however. Evangelism Committee meetings, at least through the early 1960s, did not include her, and she tended to work independently of other mission personnel in outlying areas away from the mission hub, thus leaving her somewhat removed from normal channels of communication.

In her church-planting work in Puerto Rico and the U.S., Gladys was careful not to overstep the bounds of appropriate gendered behavior. She never led

revival meetings or baptized; she relied on missionary pastors to come in and do formal preaching and found or developed local (male) leaders, taking on public leadership only when she felt she had to for lack of anyone else. However, as John Driver has noted of the churches she brought into being, "In reality, Gladys was the church leader."<sup>67</sup> Recognizing her ministerial responsibilities in practice if not in title, the Puerto Rican Mennonite annual church assembly in 1982 remembered the then-retired Gladys as a missionary who "served in a pastoral function and had helped start churches, though she had never been ordained."<sup>68</sup>

### Women Building the Church

In effect, of course, all women missionaries were doing the work of evangelism and church building. Katie Funk Wiebe has spoken of the often overlooked importance of women's connections in creating church, noting, "Female bonding has held the church together and helped it to grow."<sup>69</sup> The home visitation work of women missionaries and Puerto Rican *misioneras* and their important roles organizing church women (women's meetings were initiated early on in all the congregations) and assisting new churches were central to the development of the Puerto Rican Mennonite Church. None of these women were pastors, of course, but as John Driver observed, "You'd have to be blind not to see the relationship between what they did and what pastors do."<sup>70</sup>

Moreover, missionary women in Puerto Rico modeled the importance of women's leadership in church affairs. Assessing the impact of missionary women in China, Jane Hunter has noted that their example of involved and vocationally active womanhood—the "message transmitted by their lives"—rather than their specific religious agenda, constituted their most significant contribution to Chinese women's history.<sup>71</sup> For mission workers in Puerto Rico, I argue that both their lives and their calling to build the church were instrumental in shaping a Puerto Rican model of female influence and authority in church affairs. Bonnie Driver has noted that, in Puerto Rico, women "were the backbone of the church, the really faithful ones." Women have served in local congregational leadership positions as deacons, Sunday School superintendents, and church council members. Patricia Brenneman Santiago remembers that already in the early 1960s, women—including Carol Glick Kauffman and Mercedes Melindes, a former Baptist who "became very excited about Mennonite theology"—began to serve on church boards in the Puerto Rican Mennonite Conference.<sup>72</sup> By 1982, influenced by the example of female mission workers who had gone before, the Conference was already discussing whether or not to utilize women as pastors (a discussion that is still going on in parts of the Mennonite Church in North America today). Marie (Maruchi) Rosado de Alvarado, then associate director at Betania School, pointed out during the 1982 discussion, "Let's be realistic. Most of the work in our church has been done by women."<sup>73</sup>



Nor has Puerto Rican women's church work excluded pastoring. Following in the footsteps of women missionaries, Johanna Flores, former pastor in Ponce, was influenced by Gladys Widmer, whose parents Gladys converted. Damaris Bonilla, pastor of the Palo Hincado congregation where Carol Glick Kauffman and Anna Kay Masanari were active, is originally from Botijas, where Majorie Shantz Martin worked. Two additional Puerto Rican congregations are currently led by female "*Diacanados*," i.e. deacons, or congregational leaders.<sup>74</sup> Luz Neida Ortiz, *diacanado* of the Aibonito church, was influenced by missionary nurse Virginia Showalter, among others. As a recent article in the Mennonite monthly, *Christian Living*, noted, "Puerto Rican women, like Ortiz, have kept the church going. . . . Their hope and hard work is helping give the church new vision."<sup>75</sup> Thus, without the leadership of women, the Mennonite church in Puerto Rico would never have come into being.

As historian Theron Schlabach has argued of missionaries prior to 1945, Mennonites sent their ablest members, "the cream of their communities' talent" to the mission field.<sup>76</sup> So, too, the women who served the church in Puerto Rico post-World War II were extremely capable, personable, and unwavering in their commitment to building the Puerto Rican Mennonite Church. In fact, one wonders whether the Mennonite Church in Canada or the U.S. during the 1950s would have given these women the same opportunity to use their gifts that they experienced in Puerto Rico. Could Carol Glick Kauffman have served as school director and high school principal at any Mennonite school in North America at the time? Where on the mainland could nurse-evangelists like Marjorie Shantz Martin or Virginia Showalter have had the same independence and medical responsibility for everything from sutures to complicated deliveries? Or consider the case of Alice Kehl, who taught for many years at the Puerto Rican Bible Institute which Mennonites launched to provide leadership training for the indigenous church; where in Mennonite circles in North America could she have taught male seminary students during this time period? In fact, one wonders if Mennonite women were attracted to missionary service, in part, because they could experience more fulfilling vocations than was possible through Mennonite Church work in North America at that time.

Even in Puerto Rico, of course, gender was a factor. As Gladys' colleagues reflected on her work as a church planter in the mid-1950s:

Certainly her strength is her ability to bring churches into being. When you think of what she did first at Coamo and then at First Mennonite in Brooklyn, and what she did with very great effort for the church in the Quint Cities and then again in the Bronx [and later in Ponce and Bayamon, Puerto Rico], this is really *an enviable record for a missionary lady* (emphasis added).<sup>77</sup>

Indeed, hers is an enviable record for any missionary, male or female. Missionary women like Gladys have left us a legacy of dedication, hard work, compassion, and accomplishment, for without them, the Puerto Rican Mennonite Church would not have been built. One writer has argued that to reflect on women's contribution to the history of North American missions is to "glimpse

a vision of the church less [as] an institution than a way of life...."<sup>78</sup> Through their lifetimes of service and commitment to Puerto Rican Mennonites, postwar women missionaries in Puerto Rico model for us such embodiment.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Gladys Widmer, "The Unchanging Message of Reconciliation," in *Being God's Missionary Community: Reflections on Mennonite Missions, 1945–1975* (Elkhart, Ind.: Mennonite Board of Missions), p. 94.

<sup>2</sup> After the Convention of Puerto Rican Mennonite Churches was established in 1955, promoting national, rather than expatriate, leadership became a priority. Mission appointments to Puerto Rico tapered off after 1960; just five missionary couples were assigned to Puerto Rico during the 1960s and 1970s. From 1989 on, MBM has appointed only short-term Overseas Mission Associates. *Mennonite Board of Missions 1994 Working Reports* (Elkhart, Ind.: MBM, 1995) pp. 86–88.

<sup>3</sup> Correspondence from Ophia and Royal Snyder, 1–3–51, and from Anna Kay Massanari, 3–11–54, in "Mennonite Board of Missions: Overseas Missions: Puerto Rico Files," IV–18–14, Archives of the Mennonite Church (AMC), Goshen, Indiana. Phone interviews with Carol Glick Kauffman on 10-16-98, with Marjorie Shantz Martin on 10–11–98, and with Patricia Brenneman Santiago on 10–10–98; interview with Gladys Widmer, 3–23–96, tape recording in the author's possession.

<sup>4</sup> Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 42.

<sup>5</sup> Rosemary Gagan, *A Sensitive Independence: Canadian Methodist women missionaries in Canada and the Orient, 1881–1925* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992), p. 209.

<sup>6</sup> For history, see *We Enter Puerto Rico*, ed. by Gladys Widmer, (Elkhart, Ind.: Mennonite Board of Missions and Charities 1952).

<sup>7</sup> I address this point in detail in "A Feminist Look at the Speech, 'The Anabaptist Vision,' and its Impact on Mennonite Women, 1940–1960," unpublished paper in author's possession, presented at Goshen College, Goshen, Ind., October 1994.

<sup>8</sup> For MBM history, see "Foreword," by Wilbert R. Shenk in *Being God's Missionary Community*, pp. 9–15. After 1960, mission programs, in general, came under fire for their association with colonialism, and MBM entered a period of consolidation, with few new programs through 1975. For information on J.D. Graber's leadership see Theron F. Schlabach, *Gospel Versus Gospel: Mission and the Mennonite Church, 1863–1944* (Scottsdale, Pa. and Kitchener, Ont.: Herald Press, 1980), pp. 13 and 341.

<sup>9</sup> It would be hard to overestimate the impact of these second-generation missionaries in building the church in Puerto Rico, given the language fluency, cultural familiarity, and mission experience they brought from Argentina. Their work in Puerto Rico was foundational: Buelah Litwiller Gonzales completed an early feasibility study that laid the groundwork for Betania Mennonite School and Doris (Swartzentruber) Snyder Stephenson taught faithfully at that school for six years. Patricia Brenneman Santiago served the church in a variety of pastoral and lay

leadership positions before and after marrying and settling in Puerto Rico. Paul Lauver and his wife Lois were the first missionaries appointed to Puerto Rico; Lester Hershey and his wife Alta served 32 years as missionaries.

<sup>10</sup> Schlabach, *Gospel vs. Gospel*, pp. 130–131.

<sup>11</sup> Letter dated 5–11–51 from Buelah Litwiller Gonzalez in “J.D. Graber, General Secretary, Correspondence, 1951–55,” IV-18-10, AMC.

<sup>12</sup> J.D. Graber, *The Church Apostolic: A Discussion of Modern Missions* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1960), pp. vii, 26, 52. Reimer quote from *We Enter Puerto Rico*, pp. 48–9.

<sup>13</sup> Graber, *The Church Apostolic*, p. 38.

<sup>14</sup> Information from Carol Glick Kauffman interview. See also, “We Work for a Better Puerto Rico,” by James Snyder, *The Mennonite Community*, October, 1953, pp. 6–9.

<sup>15</sup> Letter dated 9-28-45 in “MBM General Correspondence, 1944–1950,” IV-7-5, “Anna Kay Massanari” folder, AMC.

<sup>16</sup> Carol Glick Kauffman and Gladys Widmer interviews.

<sup>17</sup> Letter to Massanari dated 9-28-45 and reply to Graber dated 10-20-45 in “MBM General Correspondence, 1944–1950,” IV-7-5, “Anna Kay Massanari” folder, AMC.

<sup>18</sup> Letter dated 5-2-50 in “MBM General Correspondence, 1944–1950,” IV-7-5, “Anna Kay Massanari” folder, AMC.

<sup>19</sup> Joint letter to Lester Hershey and J.D. Graber dated 5-11-51 from Buelah Litwiller Gonzalez in “J.D. Graber, General Secretary, Correspondence, 1951-55,” IV-18-10, AMC.

<sup>20</sup> According to the “Mennonite Family Census of 1963,” women who were age 40–44 at the time of the census (1963) would have been age 25–29 in 1948; according to the census the median marriage age for this group of women was 22.3. See Melvin Gingrich, “Mennonite Family Census of 1963,” vertical file, Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society archives, p. 8.

<sup>21</sup> Evelyn King Mumaw, *Woman Alone* (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1970), p. 18, a publication that harks back to her personal experience and earlier research from the 1950s.

<sup>22</sup> On one level, the existence of such relationships indicates a lack of racial prejudice. Unlike the feeling among earlier missionaries in Argentina that it was better for children to return to North America and marry someone from their home society, Puerto Ricans were ostensibly American (by virtue of U.S. citizenship), so prohibitions against intermarriage were less.—John and Bonnie Driver interview, 6-9-96, tape recording in author’s possession and personal conversation with Eileen Rutt Graybill.

<sup>23</sup> Comment from panel discussion at “Anabaptist Vision” conference, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana, 10-20-94.

<sup>24</sup> Correspondence from Paul Lauver dated 6-11-54 in “J.D. Graber, General Secretary, Correspondence, 1951–55,” IV-18-10, AMC.

<sup>25</sup> See Wilbert Shenk, “Foreword,” *Being God’s Missionary Community*. J.D. Graber also was fond of emphasizing that “our program asks for a mere \$20 per member, on the average, for the General Mission Board program, and \$6 per member for service and relief,” another interesting rhetorical example of personalizing mission budget and activity. See *The Church Apostolic*, p. 96.

<sup>26</sup> “The Female World of Cards and Holidays: Women, Families, and the Work of Kinship,” pp. 246–261, in *Rethinking the Family: Some Feminist Questions*, ed. Barrie Thorne with Marilyn Yalom (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992).

<sup>27</sup> Marjorie Shantz Martin interview; John and Bonnie Driver interview, 6-9-96, tape recording in author’s possession; Reimer letter dated 10-8-51, in “J.D. Graber, General Secretary Correspondence, 1951–55,” IV-18-10, AMC.

<sup>28</sup> Di Leonardo, p. 248.

<sup>29</sup> Graber, *The Church Apostolic*, p. 111.

<sup>30</sup> This was not unlike earlier Mennonite women in India, who covered their heads with an end of their sari, or Lancaster Conference women missionaries to Africa a decade later, whose charismatic awakening led them to forego Conference dress codes for a more culturally appropriate, African head covering.

<sup>31</sup> Marjorie Shantz Martin interview; John and Bonnie Driver interview.

<sup>32</sup> Driver, Kauffman, Widmer, and Martin interviews. Jose Ortiz and Dave Graybill, *Reflections of an Hispanic Mennonite* (Intercourse, Pa.: Good Books, 1989), pp. 15-16.

<sup>33</sup> "The Lord Added to the Church," 1951, xerox in author's possession obtained from Marjorie Shantz Martin, and "Tribute to Marjorie," by Helen Trumbo, *Christian Living* (March, 1963), p. 36.

<sup>34</sup> Carol Glick Kauffman interview.

<sup>35</sup> Letter to J.D. Graber in "MBM Overseas Missions, 1956-1965," IV-18-13, "Doris Snyder, 1957-64" folder, AMC.

<sup>36</sup> For general information on *misioneras* see the following: pp. 38-39 in *We Enter Puerto Rico* and "Our Church is Growing in Puerto Rico," by Paul Lauver in *Mennonite Community* (Nov. 1953), p. 11. Financial information in letter from John Driver dated 1-18-56, in "MBM, Overseas Missions, Puerto Rico Files," IV-18-14, "John Driver, Secretary Correspondence 1954-1957" folder, AMC.

<sup>37</sup> Letter dated 1-28-59 in "MBM, Overseas Missions, Puerto Rico Files," IV-18-14, "John Driver, Secretary Correspondence 1954-1957" folder, AMC.

<sup>38</sup> See "Tribute to Marjorie," by Helen Trumbo, *Christian Living* (March, 1963), pp. 25 and 36.

<sup>39</sup> Hunter, p. 33.

<sup>40</sup> Ruth Compton Brouwer, "Opening Doors Through Social Service: Aspects of Women's Work in the Canadian Presbyterian Mission in Central India, 1877-1914 in *Women's Work for Women: Missionaries and Social Change in Asia*, ed. Leslie Flemming (Boulder: Westview Press, 1989), p. 26.

<sup>41</sup> Audience member response to public presentation of this paper at "Engendering Mennonite History" conference, University of Winnipeg, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, 10-19-98.

<sup>42</sup> Evelyn Elizabeth King, "A Study of the Status of the Unmarried Women Graduates of Eastern Mennonite College (M.A. Thesis, [James] Madison College, 1962), p. 47. She notes that well over half of all EMC women graduates were unmarried. By contrast, information from the Mennonite Family Census of 1950 did not even list missionary or Christian service as a category for "Occupations of Female Members (Unmarried)"—Mennonite Family Census of 1949-50, Box 10, File 32, V-7-28, AMC.

<sup>43</sup> Letter from Grace Nachtigal dated 5-17-54 in "J.D. Graber, General Secretary, Correspondence, 1951-55," IV-18-10, AMC.

<sup>44</sup> Sara Ruddick, *Maternal Thinking: Toward a Politics of Peace* (New York: Ballentine Books, 1989).

<sup>45</sup> Hunter, p. 38.

<sup>46</sup> Letter to J.D. Graber dated 1-28-59 in "MBM, Overseas Missions, Puerto Rico Files," IV-18-14, "John Driver, Secretary Correspondence 1958-1962" folder, AMC.

<sup>47</sup> Widmer interview.

<sup>48</sup> Linda Rennie Forcey, "Feminist Perspectives on Mothering and Peace," in *Mothering: Ideology, Experience, and Agency*, ed. by Evelyn Nakano Glenn, Grace Chang, and Linda Rennie Forcey (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 357.

<sup>49</sup> Reference to Arlene Shoup found in letter from Wilbur Nachtigal dated 6-13-52, and mission board executive committee decision regarding furlough plans for "single [women] missionaries" found in letter dated 10-5-55; both in "J.D. Graber, General Secretary, Correspondence, 1951-

1955," IV-18-10, AMC.

<sup>50</sup> John and Bonnie Driver interview, Carol Glick Kauffman interview.

<sup>51</sup> Jeannine DeLombard, "Sisters, Servants, or Saviors? National Baptist Women Missionaries in Liberia in the 1920s, *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 2 (1991), p. 331.

<sup>52</sup> Beachey letter dated 1-12-58 in "MBM, Overseas Missions, Puerto Rico Files," IV-18-14, "John Driver, Secretary Correspondence 1958-1962" folder, AMC.

<sup>53</sup> Letter from John Lehman dated 8-28-54 in "MBM, Overseas Missions, Puerto Rico Files," IV-18-14, "Luke Birky, 1947-1955" folder, AMC.

<sup>54</sup> Driver interview, Patricia Brenneman Santiago interview.

<sup>55</sup> Letter to John Driver dated 11-30-54 in "J.D. Graber, General Secretary, Correspondence, 1951-55," IV-18-10, AMC.

<sup>56</sup> Driver interview and "Being God's Missionary Community," by John Driver in *Being God's Missionary Community*, p. 18.

<sup>57</sup> Driver interview.

<sup>58</sup> Letter from Lester Hershey dated 7-23-51 in "J.D. Graber, General Secretary, Correspondence, 1951-1955," IV-18-10, AMC.

<sup>59</sup> Letter to John Lehman dated 5-26-54 in "MBM, Overseas Missions, Puerto Rico Files," IV-18-14, "Luke Birky, 1947-1955" folder, AMC.

<sup>60</sup> Letter from Lester Hershey dated 7-20-53 in "J.D. Graber, General Secretary, Correspondence, 1951-55," IV-18-10, AMC.

<sup>61</sup> Driver interview.

<sup>62</sup> See Art McPhee's book, *Friendship Evangelism: The Caring Way to Share Your Faith* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1978) or *Out of the Salt Shaker and Into the World: Evangelism as a Way of Life* (Intervarsity Press, 1979), by Rebecca Manley Pippert.

<sup>63</sup> Gladys describes her vocational switch as an obvious development: "I was always interested in that part of the work.... And naturally it became clear they needed help."—Widmer interview. However, correspondence in the files suggests that it was partly a "graceful way out of a very difficult situation" given Gladys' dislike for teaching. Letter from Carol Glick dated 3-7-53 and letter from Lester Hershey dated 3-14-53, in "J.D. Graber, General Secretary, Correspondence, 1951-55," IV-18-10, AMC.

<sup>64</sup> "Biography: Gladys C. Widmer," by Perry Yoder, unpublished manuscript, 1982 (copy in author's possession supplied by AMC); pp. 18-19, 25-26.

<sup>65</sup> Elaine Lawless, *Handmaidens of the Lord: Pentecostal women preachers and traditional religion* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988).

<sup>66</sup> Letter from J.D. Graber to D.W. Widmer dated 4-21-61 in "MBM Overseas Missions, Official Files, Series #2, 1956-1965," IV-18-13, AMC.

<sup>67</sup> Driver interview.

<sup>68</sup> Levi Miller, "Puerto Rican Mennonites: Searching for identity and mission," *Christian Living* (April 27, 1982), p. 7.

<sup>69</sup> Katie Funk Wiebe, keynote lecture, "Engendering Mennonite History," University of Winnipeg, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, 10-19-98.

<sup>70</sup> Driver interview.

<sup>71</sup> Hunter, p. 26.

<sup>72</sup> Driver, Kauffman, and Santiago interviews.

<sup>73</sup> Levi Miller, *Christian Living*, p. 7.

<sup>74</sup> Widmer interview; James E. Horsch, editor, *Mennonite Directory 1999* (Scottsdale, Pa. and Waterloo, Ont.: Herald Press), pp. 147–148.

<sup>75</sup> Steve Kriss, “Hermana en la fe: Sister in the faith,” *Christian Living* (September 1997), p. 32.

<sup>76</sup> Schlabach, *Gospel vs. Gospel*, p. 15.

<sup>77</sup> Letter from J.D. Graber to Lester Hershey dated 12-6-65, reporting on conversation with Boyd Nelson, in “MBM Overseas Missions, 1956–1965,” IV-18-13, “Puerto Rico, 1965” folder, AMC.

<sup>78</sup> Dana L. Robert, *American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice* (Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press, 1996), p. 417.