

“Do You Hear the Spirit Calling?” by Barbara Anderson
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Do You Hear the Spirit Calling?
By Barbara Anderson

Originally given at the Closing Worship of the Massachusetts American Baptist Women’s Conference in June, 2008. You have permission to adapt this for use in your own setting. If you would like to use the visual aids that Barbara used, you will need a chime of some sort (wind chimes are referenced), and a jar with a picture of a butterfly inside.

As women and girls, we have always had special women in our lives; women who have become mentors, friends, are mothers, sisters, or a neighbor. Sometimes we don’t even realize the impact the woman has had on us until many years later. Margaret Bristol was a sweet, older, unassuming woman who lived a few door’s down from my parent’s home in Ocean Park, Maine. When I was a child, as I rode by her house on my bike several times a day, she would always say “Hi” as she worked in her yard. Her husband, then deceased, was an American Baptist pastor. In later years, Margaret served as an American Baptist missionary in Japan teaching at the Sundai Girls School. Each summer I would see her hosting girls from Japan that had come to visit her in Maine. Margaret was also very active in AB Women’s Ministries.

I remember sitting in a neighbor’s house one evening when I was about 12 or 13 years old, looking at Margaret’s slides from her days in Japan. I can remember how bored I was to be in a room full of “older” people watching these slides. But now, as I look back on the life of Margaret Bristol, I realize what a role model she must have been to many women and girls over the years and how filled with the spirit she was—you could see it in all that she did.

Margaret had a lovely set of wind chimes hanging from her carport. In browsing through the devotional book *Songs of Miriam* I found that she had written a devotional about her wind chimes. She wrote that they were nice to look at when they were still, but there was no real inspiration from their silence. When the winds began to stir, however, they would give out a gentle or lively sound. Guests coming to her door would often stop to listen. Looking at the expressions on their faces, Margaret said you could often see that they were uplifted by the chimes. What makes the difference? It is the wind that blows through the chimes, the wind that moves them, that makes the difference.

Margaret wrote in her devotional that we are like those wind chimes. We can be “good to look at” but no *real* good to anyone. If God’s spirit dwells within us, great things can happen. Maybe it is like the gentle breeze to the chimes. We can be a help or an inspiration to others. Sometimes God’s spirit gives us a nudge to action. Sometimes we need hurricane force winds to get us moving. Whatever we feel, let us be aware to the sound of the spirit of God within us and act. Let us be a sounding chime that brings inspiration and help to others.

Do you hear the Spirit calling? (*Ring chimes.*) The women and girls of Massachusetts have heard the spirit calling as we have brought awareness to the issue of human trafficking in our churches and our communities and have raised over \$10,000 for the Break the Chains Project.

Do you hear the Spirit calling? (*Ring chimes.*) To date, over \$91,000¹ has been raised for Break the Chains by American Baptist Women across the country and in Puerto Rico. New projects are being funded in 2009 because we have heard and have been led by the spirit. Let us celebrate that we have helped a new ministry in Ghana that will provide safe care and job-skill training to women and children rescued from sex slavery in a culture where families will daughters to priests of traditional religions to “atone” for misfortunes experienced by the family. Let us celebrate that Debra Kelsey, ABC missionary in Italy will receive support from Break the Chains for a new

¹ Amount at the time of Barbara’s presentation. As of January 26, 2009, \$219, 648.93 had been raised. For a current total at the time of your own celebration, visit www.abwmbreakthechains.org and click on “How Do I Give?” You will find a tally on the right hand side of that page.

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ministry, “Women to Women”. Churches will begin building relationships with immigrant women through language tutoring, employment training, and outreach ministries.

Do you hear the Spirit calling? (*Ring chimes.*) Sarah Chetti, another American Baptist missionary, has heard the Spirit calling her to this ministry dealing with human trafficking in Lebanon. She has begun the “Maids in Lebanon” project which will minister to the foreign maids that are in prison (they are considered illegal immigrants there, and their human rights are ignored) and help them to get back safely home to their families.

In the U.S. Rev. Janice K. Blackmon from Kansas City, Missouri, was selected to receive funding for the Good Samaritan Project, a new ministry that will engage urban community in education about human trafficking, prevention efforts, and outreach ministries to persons at high risk of being targeted by traffickers in this high-profiled transit area of our nation.²

Many of you know me personally, and know how the Spirit has moved and called me to become very involved in the Break the Chains Project, and to bring awareness in my own community about the issues of human trafficking. I know that the Spirit has called many of you as well. As I was looking at the Break the Chains website one day, I noticed that in the Break the Chains logo was a butterfly. I immediately thought about how God gives new life not only to all of us, but especially to women who are rescued from human trafficking. I thought about a common childhood activity: When you were a child, did you ever catch a bug or butterfly and want to keep it captive so that you could look at it whenever you wanted? Maybe your mother gave you a jar. and you placed the cover over the jar so you could look at the butterfly—but yet it wasn’t free. It was held captive. (*Show jar.*) This reminds me of those who are victims of human trafficking. Their captors have trapped them like the butterflies in the jar, and they have put on the lid. In the beginning, the butterflies are beautiful to look as they are young and innocent. But like the butterflies in the jar who eventually die, many trafficking victims do die; many die physically, many others feel their soul has died.

As Christians, God has given us not only the opportunity, but also the responsibility of acting as the Spirit is calling us to action to help end this horrible, violent crime of human trafficking. All of us have different gifts that can be used—we can pray, we can raise awareness, we can help fundraise for Break the Chains. God has given all of us the power through him to unscrew the lid off the jar and let the butterflies go free so that they may receive new life through Christ.

Do you hear the Spirit calling? (*Ring chimes.*) For me, I know God is calling me to do more. What about you? What might God be calling out for you to do?

Do you hear the Spirit calling? (*Ring chimes.*) I hear him—God’s calling all of you!

Let us pray: Awesome Spirit! You have inspired us this day to be witnesses to God’s love and power. Help us to be joyful in our service and strong in our faith. Let us hear the Spirit Calling. Amen.

Barbara Anderson is a fervent advocate on behalf of victims and survivors of human trafficking. A former president of AB Women’s Ministries of Massachusetts, Barbara now engages in many speaking engagements annually throughout the northeast on the topic of trafficking and the AB Women’s Ministries national mission project, “Break the Chains: Slavery in the 21st Century.”

² At the time of this writing, grant applications were still being sought for 2009; they have now been filled. Please see www.abwmbreakthechains.org for a description of all six projects designated for 2009.