

## **Living Luke's Gospel Today Women Explore Jesus' mission**

Interpretation matters. The insights readers find in the scriptures depend on the questions we bring to the text. The bible can seem hopelessly dated, silencing women, accepting slavery, using male images of God, but as women have become theologians and scripture scholars their new methods actively engage today's readers in critical and creative dialog with scripture.

What really happened is a historical question. Which version of a parable is oldest is a redaction question about how the scriptures were woven together. Which son is lost, the prodigal or the elder brother, is a literary question about characters in a parable. A feminist theologian sees God's intent for all women in Jesus straightening up the bent over woman. A liberation theologian laughs with Luke at the Rich Fool's full granaries and embraces Jesus' mission to raise up the poor.

Eight sessions explore the gospel stories and teachings unique to Luke. Two sessions explore its sequel, the Acts of the Apostles, especially house churches and early Christian women such as Tabitha, Lydia, Phoebe, and Priscilla. Sessions will link movements today that address themes in Luke, such as sex trafficking, MeToo, incarceration, payday loans, women's ordination.

The April 29 session will feature Chris Schenk, CSJ, talking about her research on early Christian women and her book *Crispina and Her Sisters, Women and Authority in Early Christianity* (2018).

**Texts:** *NRSV New Testament; Luke's Gospel, Written for Us* by Joan Mitchell, CSJ

**Instructors:** Joan Mitchell, CSJ, Ph.D, Rev. Barbara Lund; Andrea Pearson Tande, MA  
**Guest Lecturers:** Nancy Heitzeg, Ph.D,

February 11, 2019 through May 6, 2019, 6:30-8:30 pm. No class March 18, 2019

- Feb 11      **From Living Voice of Eyewitnesses to a Written Orderly Account**  
"Introduction," *Luke's Gospel, Written for Us* (Luke 1.1-4). The gospel takes form in oral tradition, handing on Jesus' teachings in dialogue, story, parable, poem.
- Feb 18      **Great Joy for All the People: The birth of two mothers and two sons.**  
Read Luke 1.5-2.52, and *Luke's Gospel, Written for Us*, Chapter 1.  
We explore these familiar birth narratives in the light of Australia's *Earth Bible*, the light of Israel's scriptures, the context of the Roman Empire, and the context of American empire today. Mary gives to Jesus her flesh and DNA that has unfolded over 13.7 billion years.
- Feb 25      **Jesus Inaugurates His Mission: an Era of Jubilee**  
Read Luke 4-5 and *Luke's Gospel, Written for Us*, Chapter 2  
Fulfilling the prophet Third Isaiah, the Spirit anoints Jesus to bring good news to the poor, release to captives, sight to the blind, and freedom to the oppressed. Who continues this work of justice in our age of payday loans, the incarceration industry, jail time for people who can't pay their fines? How can we practice the

- jubilee tradition of forgiving debts? Guest Lecturer: Sociology and Women's Studies Professor Nancy Heitzeg, PhD.
- March 4 **What Do You See and Hear? Do You See This Woman?**  
Read Luke 7-8.3 and *Luke's Gospel*, Chapter 3. Jesus heals and forgives in Luke 7. The people in this chapter appear only in Luke—the Centurion with a sick slave, the widow with a dead son, and a woman who loves much. How does tradition conflate and prostitute both this woman and Mary Magdalene? What is the #MeToo movement teaching us?
- March 11 **Journey to Jerusalem, Crossing Borders and Barriers**  
Read Luke 9.51-11.13; 12.13-34; 13.1-17; 14.1-14; *Luke's Gospel*, Chapters 4-5. What is Jesus up to by making a heretic Samaritan the model good neighbor to a Jew robbed and left to die? What's better about Mary's silent listening than Martha's energetic hospitality, especially if her home is a house church? What bends women over? What stands women straight?
- March 18 No class
- March 25 **Lost and Found. It's About a God Who Sweeps**  
Read Luke 15, and *Luke's Gospel*, Chapter 6. Tax collectors and sinners form the audience for three stories on the reconciliation theme—a shepherd who searches out one lost sheep, a woman who sweeps until she finds one lost coin, a father who has two sons with complicated relationships. **Ritual:** Remembering people in our lives whose memory we have lost or women lost to history.
- April 1 **How Jesus' Parables Keep on Teaching**  
Read Luke 16.1-31; 17.11-19; 18.1-14; 19.1-10; *Luke's Gospel*, Chapter 7. Outsiders teach from the margins in Jesus' parables: Lazarus and Rich Man, Persistent Widow, Pharisee and Publican, Zacchaeus. What do the parables teach us today? Let's tell stories about persistent women.
- April 8 **Jerusalem, the Final Act**  
Read Luke 19.28-48; 23.32-56, *Luke's Gospel*, Chapter 8. Jesus confronts the officials of temple and empire in Jerusalem. Forgiving the good thief on the cross is Jesus' signature act in Luke. Women and acquaintances accompany Jesus to the crucifixion and burial.
- Eyewitnesses & Ministers of the Word, Emmaus**  
Read Luke 24.1-27, and *Luke's Gospel*, Chapter 9. Three resurrection appearances—women at tomb, Emmaus, and the shore breakfast. Liturgy of the word and table. What is the meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection? What does “it is necessary” mean?
- April 15 **Spirit-fired Community: Pentecost, Tabitha, Cornelius**  
**Read the Acts of the Apostles 1-2; 9.36-43; 10.1-33.**

Fiery tongues, new breath—where do the Pentecost signs take us today? Women in the Pentecost community. Who is this slave Cornelius cares about? Where does showing partiality count? Where does being impartial count? Who are Tabitha's friends? Who belongs to the community that saves her?

April 22

**Lydia and Her House; Priscilla and the Universal Praise That Is Her Due**

Read Acts 16.13-17, 40, 16.16-18; Acts 18.1-3, 18-19, 24-28.

A women's household becomes a house church with Paul. What is the power of house churches today? Priscilla and her husband Aquila are coworkers with Paul and anchors of a house church wherever they are. She teaches Apollos the full gospel message.

April 29

***Crispina and Her Sisters, Women and Authority in Early Christianity.***

FutureChurch founder Christine Schenk, a Sister of St. Joseph from Cleveland, will present her research on what sarcophagi and catacomb frescos show us about early Christian women as leaders and ministers of word and sacrament.

May 6

**Creative Projects**

Remembering women important to us.