

HER Story

A Guided Conversation for Morning Worship
United Congregational Church of Westerly, UCC
May 12, 2019
Text: 2 Timothy 1:3-7

Blessing moment connection: This week the Blessing Moment is to be a set-up for the Guided Conversation which will take place in the morning message timeslot.

- *Begin by talking about Mother's Day and the reality that it can be a difficult holiday as much as a joyous one which is why some churches refuse to acknowledge it in any way. This misses a unique opportunity for us to reflect on the strong women who have had such an impact on our lives.*
- *Invite folks to find the strip of colorful paper in their bulletin, take it out and hold on to it.*
- *Point out the books on the altar using them to spring board into very brief conversation on the role of strong women in the world and in our lives. Start making a list on the piece of paper.*
- *End with singing a revised version of "This Little Light of Mine" – This little light of mine, she put it in my hand. (3 x)
Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine!*

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I first encountered this text, a unique one in the Bible, many

years ago when I first began attending Christian education conferences and training events. The facilitator of that workshop used this text as an entry point into a conversation about the strong women who had influenced our lives. She also introduced me to a new concept in that regard: the notion that we stand on the shoulders of the persons who have gone before us as we construct our own lives and attempt to give them meaning. This is essentially what this text is describing. Paul is writing to Timothy and recalls for Timothy that he sees the influence of his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice in the way Timothy is living his life and practicing his faith. What he is describing in these words is this whole notion of standing on the shoulders of the ones who have gone before us as we strain to find our own way through life.

I admit I had a difficult time visualizing the women in my life standing on the shoulders, literally, of the women in their lives who had come before them, just as I was being asked to acknowledge that I stood on their shoulders. For a second it conjured up in my mind this image of my great Aunties forming a pyramid with my own grandmother attempting to climb up on top of them, like some octogenarian cheerleaders. Thankfully, the image quickly faded as the facilitator continued to talk. But, I get that this is a confusing image, but only if you overthink it. In reality, the notion of standing on the shoulders of the women, and

men, who set you up to live your life as you choose is a wonderful one, and quite powerful. It's a wonderful image because it reminds us that we are able to see further, able to act more dramatically, able to imagine new possibilities for ourselves even more creatively because of these people who have gone before us and transformed our lives and our futures just by being part of them. That's what we are going to do together this morning.

I want you to take out that little strip of colorful paper and look at your list of the strong women who have made a difference in your life. Maybe it includes your mom or your grandmother, maybe it doesn't. Maybe it includes a teacher or an incredible friend or a co-worker. Maybe it's an aunt or even a college roommate. For the purposes of our conversations here this morning, I am going to ask you to focus on the women who have influenced your lives who are NOT related to you. You can have your mother, and your grandmother and your female relatives on your list, of course. But to prepare for our conversation together, I want you this morning to pay particular attention to the strong women in your life who are NOT family. I'm asking you to do this in recognition of the reality that not all women are mothers but this does not diminish their importance, their worth to God or to us. Strong women are all around us if we only take the time to notice them and pay attention to what they have meant to us and to our lives. So, at this moment, I'd like you to look at your list

and add any names which come to mind. We'll pause for just a minute or two while you do that.

Now, I'd like you to look at your list and pick one of those women to focus on. Then, I'd like you to find someone nearby to be your chatting partner. Groups can be 2-3 people but no more than that because there won't be enough time for everyone to talk. Chatting groups all set? Great! Now, you are going to tell each other the story of this one strong woman in your life. And, to save time, I will help you figure out who goes first! It will be the person who's birthdate is closest to today! Ready, set, chat!!!!

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So, tell me what you've heard about strong women in your conversations. Did anything surprise you? Did anything you heard remind you of the strong women in your life?

Thank you for participating in this joint conversation and celebration about the strong women who have been, are, and always will be part of our lives. I invite you to take your list home with you and place it somewhere special where you will see it from time to time. My suggestion for you today is that if your strong woman is still alive, give her a call today and let her know you're thinking about her. If she is already in God's nearer presence, find a nice quiet place and just spend some time with her in thought. I promise you, she'll know... Amen.