

“Reminded”  
2 Timothy 1: 1-7  
Rev. Debbie Weatherspoon  
May 4, 2014

How are you with remembering people’s names? Some names you never forget, like Jim Jimmerson, Pete Peterson and Andy Anderson. They were members of the first church I pastored. I remember Mr. Anderson as a quiet gentleman who volunteered in the office. He told me once that he thought of sermons as letters like the ones he received when he was a soldier. He couldn’t wait to read them. Sometimes they didn’t say much at all. Sometimes they were just what he needed to hear. What mattered is that they were written for him, but he had to open it, and be open to it, to receive the message. There were tears in his eyes as he shared his understanding of the word proclaimed for him. Our scripture reading today is a letter. It calls the recipient to remember the roots of his faith. It’s good to “get a history” like this, and it inspired me to share a glimpse of my “herstory”.

My birthparents came from two different countries. My mother’s roots are in the United States (Ohio and West Virginia) and my father’s Mexico and Spain. When I was four years old we moved to Mexico City from my birthplace of Chicago. We lived with family there for six months until mom and I moved back to the United States where we have remained, leaving my father and extended family, ending those relationships although they remain in my heart’s memory. I can relate to Timothy, at least in the way that the Apostle Paul sees him, believing that my

sincere faith first lived in my grandmother Viola, my mother Alice and now, lives in me. The saying goes that there are two things we give our children, one is roots and the other is wings. Sometimes we need the wings to connect with our roots. In my adulthood I have been able to fly to connect with my roots through my studies and cross-cultural immersions. For example, when I learned of the Latin America and Caribbean Methodist Women Leadership Conference that was taking place this past January I did not hesitate to attend. When I told some of you, your responses were: “seems like it was made for you” or “of course you have to go”. This congregation knows there are two things you can give your pastors, roots and wings.

With deep gratitude for your support I will share a bit about that event, which took place at the Kawai Retreat Center near Lima, Peru. Organized by the Methodist Church of Peru and the Council of Methodist Churches of Latin American and the Caribbean, the event was supported by U.S. general agencies of The United Methodist Church. It was the first of its kind for that area and would not have taken place without Rev. Dr. HiRho Park, Director of Clergy Lifelong Learning at the Division of Ordained Ministry, pictured here with invited guest, Bishop Linda Lee of our Council of Bishops of the UMC. Cynthia Bond Hopson, assistant general secretary of the Black College Fund and Ethnic Concerns for our denomination was also an invited guest. The Upper Room and the United Methodist Women were sponsors as well. This panel of presenters includes Upper Room Publisher Sarah Wilke and United Methodist Women General Secretary, Harriet

Olson. They supported women from many different countries to participate in the event. These leaders shared the impact of The Upper Room, or Aposento Alto, as a resource for spiritual formation in their communities. There were representatives of diverse ethnic groups such as Mestizo, Quechua and Aymara. The workshops were engaging, the plenaries entertaining, and the worship invigorating!

There were inspiring young women such as one from a rural Ecuador and one from the La Selva of Peru who passionately expressed their faith in Christ as it related to their relationship with mother earth, Pachamama, and their own mothers who support their call to ministry. A few women brought their children. David was the star of our gathering. We celebrated his first birthday, encouraged him to read the Upper Room and learned how his mother cares for him. I wonder if a child like David will be reminded of the faith of his mother, and the inspiration she found from other women in ministry. We're all in this together, all around the world. The Apostle Paul met Timothy while he was traveling and sharing the gospel message. We can read about their first meeting in the book of Acts 16:1: Paul went on also to Derbe and to Lystra, where there was a disciple named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer; but his father was a Greek. Timothy became one of the most important leaders of the church, which has continued to grow into a global community.

I met Liliana at this event and she invited me to worship at her church the day after the conference ended. After worship and lunch, I invited her to my church. We worshipped with you online on Africa Awareness Sunday.

On the screen is our church leader, Jan Lull, speaking about the African Student Education Fund that you as a church support to provide scholarships for women at Africa University, a Methodist related institution in Zimbabwe. Just before Jan spoke there was a video message from a scholarship recipient. Yes, that's right: we were in Lima, Peru watching the same video that you were watching in worship in Los Altos, CA, of an African student in Zimbabwe. I am reminded that we are indeed UNITED Methodists. As women of faith, we can easily become discouraged by conditions and circumstances. It is vital to our survival to be reminded of how far we have come and how far we are able to go. This is why women gather and this is why we support women in their education, in their ministry and in their health and wellbeing.

Just after I returned from Peru, church member Barbara Ferguson joined Pastor Mark and his wife Bonnie Bollwinkel, on a visit to the Casa Materna in Matagalpa, Nicaragua. Since 1991, Casa Materna has welcomed nearly 17,000 mothers who come to the Casa shortly before their due date to receive the care needed to survive their high-risk pregnancies. One of Casa's supporters is the U.S. board of directors known as Friends of Casa Materna. Susan Lambert, one of the board members, accompanied Mark, Bonnie, and Barbara. Susan shared one of their stories in a recent newsletter. One night as they were leaving for dinner, they discovered that Judit, one of the women they had grown to love, had been having contractions for a few hours and was on her way to the hospital to have her first baby so they joined her in the back of the ambulance. Judit told them that she had, in a sense,

made this very same trip once before, 18 years earlier, when her own mother carried her in utero from the Casa Materna to the same regional hospital. Two days later, just before our final celebratory meal with the women and the staff, Judit and her mother returned to the Casa with her newborn son. Judit tenderly held and nursed him as Juana admired her daughter and grandson with pride, perhaps remembering how she herself had felt some 18 years ago, in the same home surrounded by the same loving staff. Casa Materna reminds the women that they are loved. Please consider remembering your mother, grandmother or other women in your life by giving to the Casa Materna in their honor or memory. You can stop by the connection points, either in the entryway of the sanctuary or in Creekside, to find a donation envelope and a Mother's Day card to give as well.

Worship for this day has been planned as a sort of "stand alone" Sunday, in that it isn't part of a worship series. Our next worship series is Pastor Mark's Greatest Hits. On Easter Sunday we concluded our most recent series titled, "Final Words from the Cross" so we considered calling the next one, "Final Words from the Boss" but we didn't. Personally, this Sunday feels more connected to Pastor Mark's series than it does as a "stand alone". I stand on the shoulders of giants. I am reminded they come from all the way back to Timothy's grandmother and mother who nurtured him so that Paul could call him, so that the church could grow. I am reminded that they come all the way from my family origin, my extended family and my church families. I am reminded that they are the many generations in this congregation: past, present,

and future. I can only imagine what it would be like to get a letter someday, like this one from the Apostle, only it would be from the apostle Mark. I can imagine him writing to all of us in the months ahead something like, “Recalling your tears, I long to see you, so that I may be filled with joy.” Next year it could be a letter encouraging me, as it encouraged Timothy or, maybe, in the too near future, it could be a letter to certain boys’ on the occasion of their confirmation, a variation of verse 5, “I have been reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmothers and in your mother Debbie.” God comes to us this Easter Season in the Risen Christ, who knows our past, who meets us in our present, who leads us into our future. Welcome this Strength who meets you in your weakness, making firm the roots of your faith so that you may soar as who you are called to be, and where God calls you to go. Amen.