
More Than 40 Years of Faithful Service

Alva Bullock Receives LSTC 2006 Distinguished Service Award

by Jan Boden



Mrs. Alva Bullock accepts the LSTC Distinguished Service Award.

When Alva Bullock talks about her long-time service to the seminary, she uses words that aren't often heard these days: duty and obligation. For her, those words are expressions of faith and love.

Alva Bullock has supported and advanced LSTC's mission in numerous ways from the early 1960s, when the new seminary in Chicago was announced. She and her late husband, Hiram, contributed to the LSTC building fund and have continued to support the seminary with donations to the annual fund and scholarships. Mrs. Bullock has also been a member of the LSTC Guild for over 40 years.

In gratitude for her faithful service and support, the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago presented the Distinguished Service Award to Mrs. Alva Bullock on May 15 at its annual leadership dinner.

"The Distinguished Service Award seeks to recognize and celebrate faithfulness to the mission of the seminary," said President James Kenneth Echols. "Alva has been a generous and faithful supporter of LSTC. Keeping with

her commitment to the mission of the seminary, she recently made arrangements for an estate gift in order to continue helping gifted women and men prepare for ministry for years to come. We are grateful for her service and for her support."

Mrs. Bullock's congregation, Salem Lutheran Church on Chicago's south side, is not far from LSTC. "I thought that the seminary coming here was a wonderful thing for Chicago and for my church," she said. It was her pastor who first told her about ways she could support the work of the seminary.

"Pastor Nelson encouraged me to get involved at LSTC," Mrs. Bullock recalled. "I felt I needed to support it. It is part of my duty – part of my work as a member of the church."

Norman A. Nelson, who was pastor of Salem from 1961 – 1970, describes Alva as a dedicated Christian person. "She became superintendent of the Sunday School while I was pastor at Salem and was one of the first women to serve on the church council," he said. "Alva always participated in life at Salem even though she was also serving on synod and seminary committees."

What would become the LSTC Guild first began at Chicago Theological Seminary at Maywood 61 years ago. It joined with similar support organizations from the other predecessor seminaries to "make seminary life richer, both spiritually and physically, for those who are preparing themselves to preach and teach our Christian faith." The motto of the LSTC Guild is the parable of the mustard seed, Matthew 13:31-33. The organization has typically collected the "small things," like pennies, and trusted that they will grow much larger to support the mission of the seminary.

In addition to her dedicated service to LSTC, Mrs. Bullock has served on the Metropolitan Chicago Synod and the ELCA governing councils as well as in her home congregation. Her service has taken her around the world, to churches in Tanzania, China, South America and Europe. In 1993, Mrs. Bullock joined the board of the Tithing Foundation, where she continues to serve.

Remembering Prasanna Kumari Samuel

by George Zachariah (2002, Th.M.; 2006, Ph.D.)



Dr. Samuel Meshack accepts the posthumous doctor of philosophy degree awarded to his wife, Prasanna Kumari Samuel.

When tragedies hit home, it is always difficult to accept them with serenity and peacefully reconcile them with reality. It is sheerly human to ask “Why?” The LSTC community experienced this on the dawn of March 16th when we received the news of the passing away of Prasanna Kumari Samuel. When the end came, she was working on the final chapter of her doctoral dissertation, anticipating her graduation with the class of 2006. As we celebrate Prasanna’s life once again through this tribute, I will not quarrel with the Risen One about the ill timing of the end; rather I will join with thousands of brothers and sisters all over the world to thank God for a beautiful and meaningful life well-lived in our midst.

Prasanna was nurtured into Christian faith by her late mother. After her theological education at the United

Theological College, Bangalore, she became one of the first women to be ordained as a minister in the Lutheran church in India. The United Evangelical Lutheran Church in India, the National Council of Churches in India, and the Lutheran World Federation are some of the church bodies that she helped lead in various capacities over the last three decades. Prasanna was also involved in the ministry of theological education in South Asia through the Senate of Serampore College and the Gurukul Lutheran Theological College and Research Institute. The Church Women’s Center and the Women’s Studies Program are living testimonies of her commitment to women’s empowerment and equal rights.

Prasanna was part of the LSTC community for the last six years. She was a great student, ever open to learning new things. She believed in collegiality, respected other students and was eager to learn from them. She was a great pastor who provided love, comfort and strength to people who were going through difficult times. She fostered a culture of ecumenism through recognizing and celebrating diverse denominational traditions. Prasanna and her husband, Samuel Meshack, always opened their home for others. There she nourished all with food, love, prayer and laughter. She loved the church and regularly was at Sunday services. She made it a point to develop strong friendships with other church members and found time to pray with them. Prasanna was concerned about the future of the church and she encouraged and groomed a new generation. Her struggle with illness was a great witness to her trust in God. She had a wonderful family; a family which is committed to continuing her witness through their own involvement in church and society.

March is a special month for women all over the world. We celebrate International Women’s Day on March 8th every year. Now for the Christian women in India, March brings another occasion to celebrate: to celebrate the life and witness of Prasanna Kumari Samuel who lived a life in its fullness, affirming the dignity and rights of women who are created in the image of God. The greatest tribute that Prasanna deserves is our commitment to continue her unfinished work.