

# From Our Conference Minister

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## **Courage Born of Love (Exodus 1:8-2:10)**

The scripture passage begins with an update on recent changes: “*...a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph*” (Ex.1:8). Under the previous king, Joseph influenced decisions that helped to save his brothers and the Hebrew people from a famine that threatened the land. Joseph saved them by bringing them into Egypt where he could feed and care for them. Egypt started out as a land of salvation for the Hebrew people but with a new king, things were about to change for the worst.

The new king feared the Hebrew people because he could not understand or control them. He used his political power to pass laws and supported systems that disproportionately oppressed the minority population in the land. He doubled the workload of the people of Israel, forcing them to work longer hours. Laws were enacted removing the males from families to kill and weaken them.

The Hebrew midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, were told to kill the male children at birth or drown them in the Nile River. Their story gives us a glimpse into the lives of two ordinary women with extraordinary courage.

Since the Hebrew midwives “*...feared God; they did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but they let the boys live.*” (v. 17) The order (law) was created to kill, but God used it to save the Hebrew people. God called out these two ordinary women, midwives, to help preserve the entire Hebrew race from extinction. The impact of the midwives’ civil disobedience to Pharaoh undulated like metaphorical labor pains, signaling God’s impending action to liberate the Hebrew people.

The courage of these two women, Shiphrah and Puah, was born out of fear (love) of God. According to Riane Eisler, “*... It was the courage to risk your life, not in war, not in battle . . . but out of love and a sense of injustice that has to be challenged.*” Eisler also asserted, “*It takes far more courage to challenge unjust authority without violence than it takes to kill all the monsters in all the stories told to children about the meaning of bravery.*”

Courage does not always conform to one definition. Mary Pipher says, “*the kind of courage that's really interesting is someone whose spouse has Alzheimer's and yet manages to wake up every morning and be cheerful with that person and respectful of that person and find things to enjoy even though their day is very, very difficult. That kind of courage is really undervalued in our culture.*”

For all the courageous moments in our ordinary lives, God is with us. Whether it is during the loss of a spouse who has passed away from a long-term illness or children going off to college for the first time this fall, God is with us.

May we respond to life's moments with courage born of love – a love of God and neighbor that passionately declares and demonstrates the courageous love of Christ!

*In Christ,*

*Monica*

Rev. Dr. Monica Dawkins-Smith, Conference Minister and President