

As today is Bold Women's Sunday, the Women of the ELCA at St. Mark's are honoring bold women that we know or have known, past and present. Among others, we specifically chose to honor one of our own, **Margaret Trower**... We hope these stories will inspire you as well.

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To me, a bold woman is someone who sees a need and purposefully steps forward to fill it, even if it's out of her "comfort zone." St. Mark's is blessed with a wonderful group of such women that are *too numerous to name individually*. Consider the women who started and who work in ALL of the groups that keep the church "life" going! ... the Fair Trade sales, the Care Package program for our soldiers, the Hypothermia shelter efforts, the tape ministry, WELCA activities, church office, altar guild, Sunday school, and English as Second Language (ESL) classes, to name *just a few!* The list of these bold volunteers is virtually endless, and we thank you all, ladies! ~ *a church member*

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I consider my **Aunt Marion Billheimer** to have been a very bold and strong woman. She was widowed in 1960 at the age of 54, had to raise a teenage son, and started working to survive. She never learned how to drive a car, so she walked to the store and to her job most of the time, which were both several miles from her home. She walked everywhere, even when she reached her nineties. When she was 98 years old, she had to have her left leg amputated three times in one week due to circulatory problems. Her outlook on life continued to be strong and her faith never wavered. She was active in her church for as long as she could be and was always there for other people. Aunt Marion lived to be just shy of 100 years by one month. ~ *Julia Hale*

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I guess you could say **Margaret Trower** was both my Hero and Inspiration. She always had a cheerful word of greeting and was genuinely interested in you. When I lost my job and became a stay-at-home mom, Margaret invited me to join Esther Circle. I am still a member of that Circle and it has helped me become a better Christian and mother. I think of Margaret often and wish she were still with us. ~ *Marjorie Barnard*

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When Pastor Trower was away on a Sunday, **Margaret** often taught his Adult Sunday School class; we quickly discovered that she was even more of a "task master" than he was as she made us really think about and get involved in our lesson! ~ *Lohre Holter*

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At the checkout counter in the grocery store, **Margaret** would always take time to talk with the checkout clerk. She would use the person's name and if it was someone she had not met before, she would ask for his or her name. She was never too busy or preoccupied to not have a personal relationship with those who served her. This greatly impressed me and I have tried to follow her example. ~ *Gloria Haher*

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Pastor Trower recently attended the decommissioning of the *USS Kitty Hawk*, the aircraft carrier on which this incident happened some 48 years ago. I call this story "**Margaret, the Organist,**" as told to me by Pastor Trower... One of Chaplain Trower's Navy assignments was on the aircraft carrier *USS Kitty Hawk*. During it's building, the ship's Captain objected to having an

organ to be used for religious services on the flight deck, but consented to having it on an elevated platform. As organist, Margaret had to climb a ladder to the organ bench to play for services, causing her children much glee. She was indeed a brave lady going above and beyond normal circumstances to share her talent and inspire those attending services. ~ *Pat Martin*

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The Trower’s four children—David, Martha, Paul, and John—all graciously shared some wonderful memories of the bold woman they called “**Mom**”... Their universal feeling was that **Margaret** was a very strong woman in many respects, but especially in her faith in God, in her devotion to her kids and husband, and in her love and compassion for her fellow man. Collectively they expressed that they were lucky to have had both of their parents to teach them the many lessons of life and that much of Margaret’s faith was tied to her actions. Here are a few of those experiences they chose to share with us on **Margaret Trower**, a loving bold woman.

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As Margaret’s only daughter, I have a different perspective of my mother than that of my brothers... especially as the mother of her first grandchild. In 1977, my family was living in England and my parents lived in Newport, RI. When our oldest son was 22 months, Mom saw an advertisement for a great Delta Airlines deal—\$99 for 21 days of unrestricted travel in the continental United States. She arranged for Jonny and me to come for a month. Little did I realize how great it would be to see so many relatives, including two Great-Grandmothers, as we literally crisscrossed the country, but always going through Atlanta, Delta’s hub. Many of these flights were little puddle-jumpers with a few stops between the main cities. Throughout, Jonny was very good, but he became very fussy on the Tulsa-to-Atlanta-to-Los Angeles flights. The next morning in LA, we found Jonny covered in chicken pox! Looking back, it was a great opportunity to see many relatives and family, but it did take a BOLD woman to pull it off with a toddler who had never seen so many new faces—Mom definitely had faith and plenty of it! She had a great time with her first grandchild, and she was always very proud of each of her grandchildren with that whole “awe and wonderful” feeling that is so different from being a mother. I think that she (and we) certainly got her money’s worth... We lived in Norfolk in 1958, and Mom had heard that a mother with children needed a ride home from church and Sunday school. We drove out to Virginia Beach with the car filled with the lady and her children, plus all of us—no seatbelts and probably riding loose in the back of the station wagon. It was hot and sticky and took at least two hours to go out there and back, having already spent the whole morning in church. We were tired and hot, but we were not allowed to complain. She felt that it was important to make it possible for *anyone* who wanted to come to Sunday school and church to be able to do so. I remember my mother helping out like that *many* times. Then there were the unexpected guests for Sunday lunch that Dad would invite home! I don’t know if she was aware of the invitations or not, but she was very good at stretching the meals and everyone always had plenty to eat. Dad had faith that *she* had faith that, while we weren’t feeding the 5000, God would provide enough food for all. ~ *Martha*

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One evening before our first day of school, Mom decided we kids needed haircuts. I went last after the other three, and I remember hearing a gasp and a long pause as she began working on my head with the hair trimmer—in the rush and late hour she had forgot to put the crew cut attachment onto the trimmer! While she was cutting my hair, she began asking if I remembered going to see “The King and I” and how much I enjoyed the way the King looked. She continued to talk about the movie and finished up by saying that now I too had a “King look.” I thought

that was pretty cool, UNTIL I remembered I had to walk into a new classroom at a new school the next morning. Mom took us to school and explained to the principal what happened. The principal walked me to the new classroom, introduced me to the teacher and class, and explained why I was bald. I was scared of what the other kids were thinking, but by recess all of the other boys wanted a haircut like mine! Mom had diffused the situation and put a bright light on it. ~ *Paul*

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Many of my most vivid memories of Mom seem to involve being in the car. As a third grader living in Yorktown, VA, I drove with Mom during one terrible hurricane through flooded roads in high winds to take our cleaning woman home to her family some distance away. Another time a funny episode occurred when Mom sped past a policeman on the highway, only to look over, slam on the brakes, and get behind him again. There were also many road trips, usually when we were moving from one home to the next. These car encounters could also involve serious conversations, however. One Easter when I was in high school, Mom announced as we sat in our driveway after church, "I know that my Redeemer liveth." Partly to challenge her unqualified assertion, I asked her just how she knew that. She responded somewhat defensively, in such a way that I never forgot, even if I didn't agree with her, how very firm her faith in the Lord was. Mom was a remarkable woman—born of sturdy stock, raised in relative hardship, never complaining, and always ready to do what was necessary to make life work. Throughout her nearly 80 years, she met many challenges and people with apparent ease. I now recognize that it was her abundant trust in God that made this possible. ~ *David*

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I learned much about my mom by watching her interact with others in her family-at-large that also included her four brothers. Family was always a very high priority of hers, the basic set of relationships in life. Mom took a keen interest in how everyone was getting along. She wasn't the most faithful correspondent—she meant to be—but her letters almost always included fond hopes and Biblical quotations, exhortations of faith meant to encourage the person to whom she was writing. Growing up, I came to know my mother as a person whose deep Christian faith was life-giving and life-sustaining—"a very present help in time of trouble"—as well as the wellspring of her optimistic confidence to trust the future. My parents saw their parental roles as their faithful response to God's creation.

Thanks to the Navy, Mom had a busy, peripatetic life that often required her to adapt to new situations, sometimes without much notice. She just did what was needed, not putting herself first and never complaining about the inconvenience, the hard work, or the disruption involved in moving so many times. Instead, wherever we lived, she was supportive of us children, although she certainly expected us to pitch in, too. She had a great conviction that, if we all did our parts, the family would thrive. It did. The summer of 1961, Dad was on board the *USS Kitty Hawk* sailing from New Jersey to California by way of Cape Horn at the tip of South America. Mom had to drive us all from coast to coast by herself, and this was before all the Interstates were completed. My mother had great faith and trust in the Lord, and the quiet, gentle reassurance that comes with it. She truly believed that "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me." My mother made great lemonade. We learned from her example that life will hand you lemons, but it is up to each us what we make of them. ~ *John*

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[The Trower siblings had some collective memories of the way Margaret handled getting their Navy family to new duty stations, and one move in particular stands out, with several stories they recalled about that trip John wrote about (above) from New Jersey to California... ] On the cross-country trip, Mom took us up to Niagara Falls—we hadn't seen them before—and while there, she called her mother in Vandalia (near St Louis) to let her know where we were and that we would be in Vandalia in four or five days. Grandma told her on the phone that Aunt Elfriede (grandma's sister) had arrived unexpectedly from Germany and that Mom just *had* to be there to help and to see her. Mom packed us all up in the car and drove non-stop for a marathon 14 hours so we could be there to see Aunt Elfriede. Mom had a way of putting a positive spin on almost any situation. Continuing our journey, the morning that we left our grandparents' house in St. Louis, the car overheated as we were just outside Joplin, MO. It was a typical hot, humid, sweltering summer day in the Midwest. Mom got the car to a repair shop and they told her it would take at least 4-5 hours to repair the radiator. How awful to have to wait around with four children for so long with nothing to do in some strange town; things were looking pretty dim. However, instead of just waiting for the car to be fixed, Mom produced a picnic in the park across the street for us. We ate lunch and had fun playing in the warm summer sun on a beautiful day, and those hours passed quickly. It was kind of disappointing when the work on the car was finished and it was time to leave.

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*Our thanks again to everyone who contributed to these stories to honor the **BOLD WOMEN** they have known. And to all you bold women out there, keep up the good works!*