

A Woman of Vision

from the November 4 memorial service for Roberta Winter

—Greg H. Parsons

Over the last few weeks, many of us who've been close to the Winter family have had time to reflect, cry, and examine ourselves. One of the things we reflected on was what we remember about Roberta Winter.

Recently the Pasadena staff of the U.S. Center for World Mission gathered to share our memories of her. I'd like to share some of their thoughts with you.

Many of us have experienced her challenging us to grow in new areas, to go beyond our own experiences and growth—even if it hurt.

You never wondered what she “really” thought; she was a person who was clear and direct.

She and Dr. Winter had a close family that worked together, involving their girls early on with important things where they all contributed and felt like they were really part of something big—often it really was. I've never seen a family work as well as a team on a broad range of things.

Nor have I seen another couple who worked so well together. She was deeply respectful of her husband, as he was of her—even in disagreement. I've rarely if ever seen a couple so inextricably involved in ministry and life and who communicate through thick and thin.

If you were around the Winters for long, you realized that the areas in which they could converse in depth were broad. The books in their home—which take up much of the space—attest to this.

She had mothering instincts with many beyond her own four girls.



Rev. Greg Parsons is General Director of the U.S. Center for World Mission. He's been on staff at the USCWM for 19 years.

Many staff noted things she did and ways in which she cared and gave to them in times of need—be it practical, like getting a refrigerator, or encouragement or challenge.

Through the Center's ministry,

She was a woman of vision. Not a single focused vision, but a vision for what might be in God's Kingdom.

we see and hear from the people around the world who have been touched by and tracked with the Winters for years. They have been with us in heart and prayers in these difficult days, and we've seen evidence of that in many ways.

Mrs. Winter was a woman of vision—a picture, a future—of what might be for people groups—like the Muslims described in the newspapers every day now—or like the Dalit Hindus gathering today in Delhi in protest of their ill-treatment under the caste Hindus.

That vision, for the Winters and others, has expanded in the last few years. It has grown toward a sense that to truly represent God to the world, we must take on evil wherever we find it. We can no longer sit back and hope it doesn't touch us or our neighborhoods.

Perhaps we are learning that as we talk about establishing the church in places where there are none, one of the greatest battles will be against distortions created by the enemy of our souls. Our enemy—instead of us—tells the world what God is like, but without truth and light. Instead, Satan disseminates error about God and His nature by distorting His creation at every level.

Roberta Winter lived with the passion to get the message of truth out. She wanted to live, to the end. When she was diagnosed with cancer, she asked that God might give her 10 years, though the prognosis was 2-4. She got five.

In Joshua 3, the nation of Israel is just about to leave 40 years of wandering in the desert and cross the Jordan River. They are instructed to watch the Ark of the Covenant from a distance to be able to know which

way to go. At the end of v. 4 we learn the reason: “for you have not been this way before.” The U.S. Center is moving into a time without one of our two founders. We haven't been this way before.

Of course, Dr. Winter and her family will greatly miss her in so many ways. Pray for them and for the vision God has given and is giving. That vision is before us. Let's pray that we will not let God's vision for any of us grow dim.

For all of us—post-September 11—the whole world is moving toward a largely unknown future. We too, like Joshua, need to know from God which way to go.

Lord, lead us and give us faith to follow.

Strategy Gathering for Reaching Unreached Peoples Called

A gathering focused on strategies for reaching unreached peoples has been called for October 28-31, 2002. Participants will include: field church planters, mission executives focused on the unreached, leaders of Centers for World Mission, and researchers. This will be an invitation-only meeting. If you would like to be considered for an invitation, please email: greg.parsons@uscwm.org.