

Baptist Women in Ministry

Month of Preaching

Helen Barrett Montgomery



In 2007, Baptist Women in Ministry invited Baptist churches to participate in Martha Stearns Marshall Month of Preaching by having a woman preach during the month of February. This invitation became an annual event, one that has been a source of joy and discovery for many churches as they have celebrated the giftedness of women preachers.

BWIM named this annual preaching month for Martha Stearns Marshall, an eighteenth-century Separate Baptist woman, and for twelve years, hundreds of churches have celebrated Martha's influence and example. In 2019, BWIM redreamed this emphasis and has widened its circle of

significant preachers to include three other significant Baptist preachers: Ella Pearson Mitchell, Helen Barrett Montgomery, and Edna Lee de Gutiérrez.

Helen Barrett was born in Kingsville, Ohio, in 1861, the eldest child of Adoniram Judson Barrett and Emily Barrows. A graduate of Wellesley College and Brown University, Helen taught school before marrying William A. Montgomery and moving in 1887 to Rochester, New York. She and her husband generously committed their lives and resources to their church, Lake Avenue Baptist Church of Rochester, where Helen's father pastored.

At her church, Helen began what would become a 150-member women's Bible class, which she taught for forty-four years. She often preached in her father's place, and after his death in 1889, she filled the pulpit until the church was able to call a new pastor. In 1892, Helen was licensed to preach by her church.

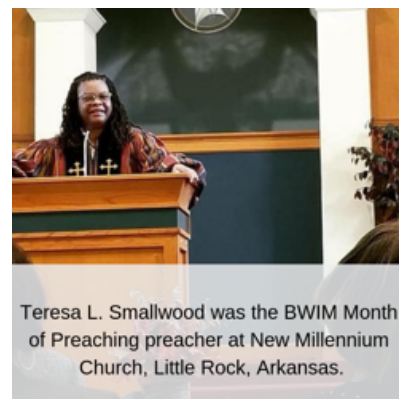
Both a denominational and ecumenical leader, Helen was elected as president of the Northern Baptist Convention in 1921, the first woman to serve as president of any American Protestant denomination. During her tenure, the convention found itself embroiled in controversy. Under her wise leadership, the disagreement was settled, and division avoided.

Helen passionately advocated for world missions and authored eight books on subjects ranging from prayer to missions. Her most notable work is her 1924 translation of the New Testament into "the language of everyday life," making her the first woman to translate the New Testament from Greek to English.

In Rochester, Helen was a pivotal figure for women's rights in educational and civic endeavors. In 1893, she helped organize the Women's Educational and Industrial Union, which served poor women and children. She led, along with Susan B. Anthony, in the women's suffrage movement and campaigned for temperance. She spearheaded the movement to make the University of Rochester coeducational and served as the first woman on the Rochester Board of Education.

At the 1923 meeting of the Baptist World Alliance in Stockholm, Helen was one of only two women speakers, addressing the crowd on "New Opportunities for Baptist Women." She preached that Jesus was "the great Emancipator of women," who "alone among the founders of the great religions of the world looked upon men and women with level eyes, seeing not their differences but their oneness, their humanity." She concluded, "In the mind of the Founder of Christianity there is no area of religious privilege fenced off for the exclusive use of men."

Upon her death in 1934, Susan T. Laws wrote, "Around the world women of many lands, woman of many denominations, join hands and hearts in praising God for the beautiful life of Helen Barrett Montgomery." Today Baptist Women in Ministry invites you to remember and honor Helen Barrett Montgomery and to celebrate the giftedness of Baptist woman who proclaim the gospel.



Teresa L. Smallwood was the BWIM Month of Preaching preacher at New Millennium Church, Little Rock, Arkansas.