

“Trust by Design: The Beautiful Behaviors of an Effective Church Culture”

www.abingdonpress.com

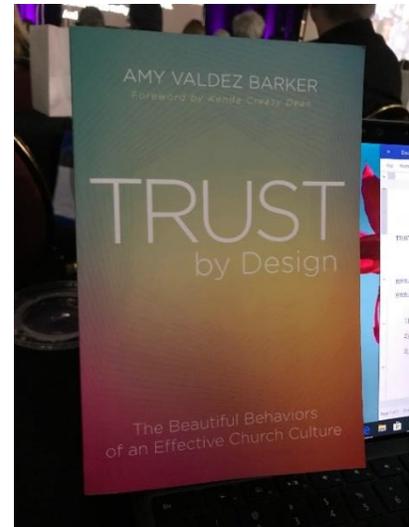
www.amazon.com

Rev. Dr. Amy Valdez Barker

Executive Director of the Global Mission Connections Unit
of Global Ministries

The United Methodist Church

Avaldezbarker@umcmmission.org



ISAIAH 58:1-12

1) Trust through Faith: People of Israel - Historical Context of Isaiah

- Search the story of the people of Israel. God desires for the people to trust God and God’s intention for creation. (Genesis 1:31)
- What stories of the Old Testament remind you of how God is inviting the people to put their trust in God?
- Why is Isaiah calling out the people of Israel who seem to be putting their trust in things of the world, rather than things of the Divine?
- How does Isaiah poetically bring the people back to God in this passage?

2) Trust through Faith: People of the early Church

- The value of being “The Repairer of Broken Walls” and the “Restorer of Livable Streets.”
- The people of the early church built walls AND they worked at tearing them down.
- In what ways have walls been used for good? In what ways have walls been used as negative barriers?
- How has the Christian Church throughout time built walls that have kept people from coming to know Christ? Trust in Christ? And trust in the Church?
- What does the “Western Wall” symbolize for people of the Jewish faith?
- How does Christ symbolize the “livable streets” for people of the Christian faith?

3) Trust through Faith: People of our world today



Miriam the Prophetess by

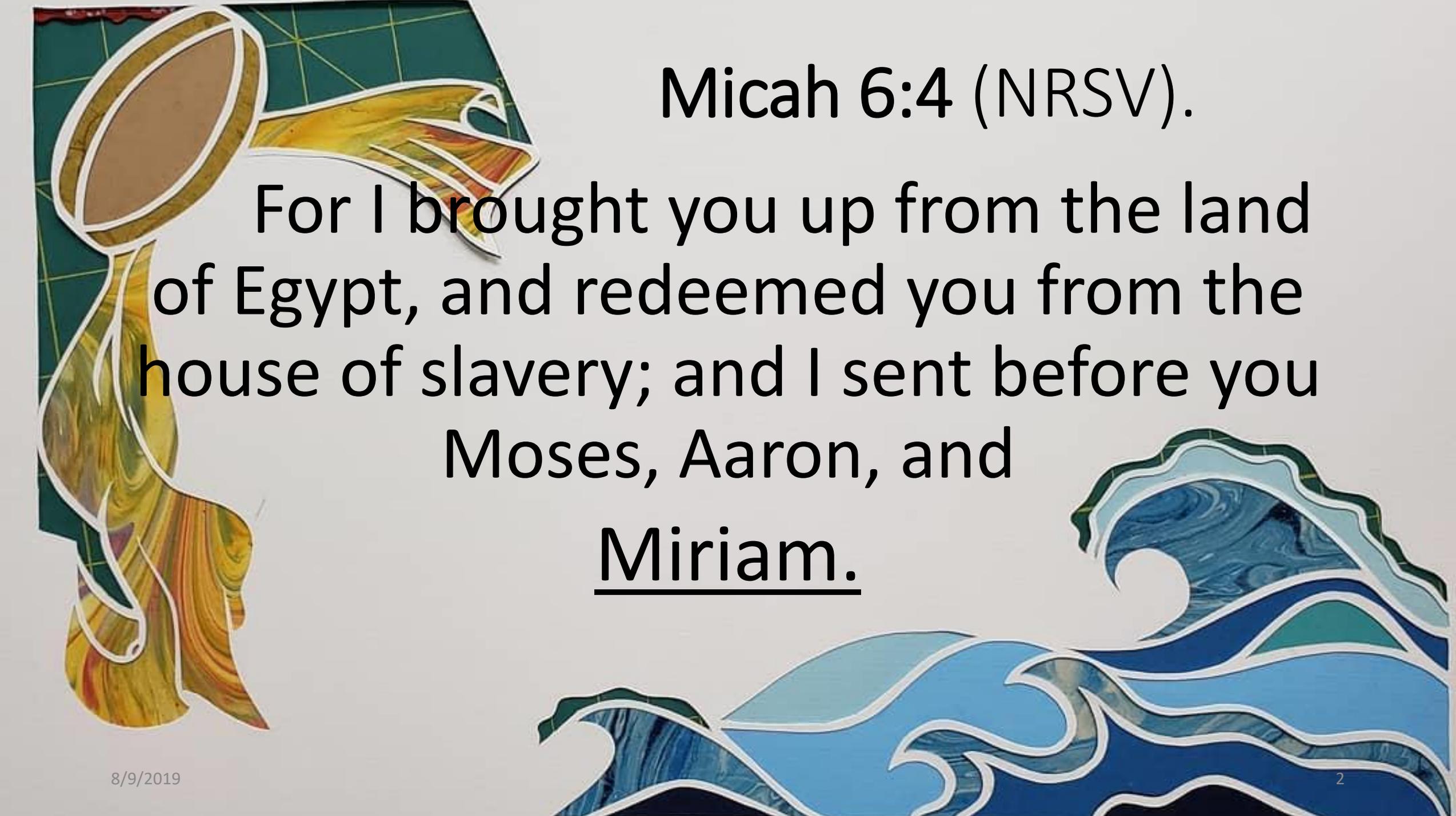
Rev. Dr. Niveen Sarras

Immanuel Lutheran Church of
Wausau, Wisconsin

East Central Synod of Wisconsin

And Miriam the prophetess
the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel
in her hand, and all the women went
after her with timbrels and with
And Miriam answered the
Sing ye to the Lord, for
hath triumphed gloriously

Exodus XV. 20



Micah 6:4 (NRSV).

For I brought you up from the land
of Egypt, and redeemed you from the
house of slavery; and I sent before you
Moses, Aaron, and
Miriam.

“What makes Micah’s simple statement so remarkable, and so puzzling, is the fact that nowhere in the tradition are the three siblings presented in a shared leadership role.”

Psalm 77:20 (NRSV)

**“You led your people like a flock
by the hand of Moses and Aaron.”**

Susan Ackerman explains that the texts that reveal Miriam's leadership belong to a liminal period of anti-structure, where the community of Israel was more likely egalitarian.



Exodus 1-2

Exodus 6:20 (NRSV).

**“Amram married Jochebed,
his father’s sister and she bore him
Aaron and Moses, and the length
of Amram’s life was one hundred
thirty-seven years.”**

The Babylonian Talmud identifies the two midwives, Shiphrah and Pu'ah', with Miriam and her mother Jochebed.

Shiphrah, which means fruitful, was Jochebed because the Israelites were multiplied in her days. Miriam was 'Pu'ah' because she cried out [po'ah] to the child and because she cried out through the Holy Spirit prophesying: 'My mother will bear a son who will be the saviour of Israel'.

Exodus
15:20-21



Exodus 15:20-21

“²⁰ And Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand; and all the women went out after her with timbrels and with dances. And Miriam answered/sang them:

**“Sing to the LORD,
For He has triumphed gloriously!
The horse and its rider
He has thrown into the sea!” (NKJV)**

Miriam is called הנביאה, *nebiah*,
“the prophetess.”

A prophet (נביא) *nabi* is a person called
by God.

Some translations like NRSV, NIV, NLT,
and CEV translate *nebiah* as a prophet,
not a prophetess.

Miriam's prophecy is very significant. Her prophetic office is associated with her song of victory or the Song of the Sea. Prophecy is revealed in the form of poetry, like her song. A poetic spirit is considered a source of prophetic activity.

Miriam's song is original for the following reasons:

Firstly, Moses' song is long. Scholars argue that a long text is usually developed from a short version.

Secondly, Moses' song vss. 13-17 describes the fulfillment of the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt.

Thirdly, victory songs typically belong to women.

“The women sang to one another as they made merry, ‘Saul has killed his thousands, and David his ten thousands’” (1 Samuel 18:6-7 NRSV).

Fourthly, there is a slight difference between the beginning of Miriam's song and Moses' song.

Moses sings:

אָשִׁירָה לַיהוָה כִּי-גָאָה גָאָה

'ā-šî-rāh: Verb, Qal imperfect, first-person, masculine, singular.

Moses is not a solo singer. He is presented as one of the people who refer to themselves as “I.”

Miriam sings:

וַתִּעַן , לָהֶם , מִרְיָם
Miriam, to them (3mp) and Sang
שִׁירָה לַיהוָה כִּי-גָאָה גָאָה

šî-rū: Verb, Qal imperative, masculine, plural.



Numbers 12:1-2

Numbers 12:1-2

While they were at Hazeroth, Miriam and Aaron spoke against Moses because of the Cushite woman whom he had married (for he had indeed married a Cushite woman); ² and they said, “Has the LORD spoken only through Moses? Has he not spoken through us also?” And the LORD heard it.

It states that *vated ber*, “she spoke.”
And yet, Miriam and Aaron spoke
against Moses in verse 2 questioning
his office as a primary leader.

God punishes Miriam with *tzara'at*,
“a scale, white disease of the skin.”

It is possible that the power struggle between siblings includes elements of gender struggle. It is likely that the intention of this narrative aims to end the gender struggle by silencing Miriam, and any woman who attempts to challenge a man's authority.

**“And Moses cried to the LORD,
“O God, please heal her.” But
the LORD said to Moses, “If her
father had but spit in her
face, would she not bear her
shame for seven days?” (NRSV
vss.13-14).**

Spitting is an expression of men's contempt for rebellious women. In other words, the author intends Miriam to be ashamed of her behavior.

Sifre Zuta 12:1.

She said, ‘happy are these and happy their wives’” ... Moses’ wife, Zipporah said to Miriam, “do not say ‘happy are their wives’ but rather ‘Woe to their wives,’ for from the day that God spoke with your brother Moses, he had not had relations with me.”



The Death
of
Miriam:
Numbers
20:1

Miriam's Well (Be'erah shel Miriam)

**“The Israelites, the whole congregation, came into the wilderness of Zin in the first month, and the people stayed in Kadesh. Miriam died there, and was buried there.
2 Now there was no water for the congregation; so they gathered together against Moses and against Aaron”
(Numbers 20:1-2 NRSV).**

Why a kiss?

עַל־פִּי יְהוָה: *al-pî Yah-weh*, “at the mouth of the Lord,” (Deut. 34:5).

NRSV translates it “at the LORD’s command.”

Rabbi Yosei

“The well was given to the Jewish people in the merit of Miriam; the pillar of cloud was in the merit of Aaron; and the manna in the merit of Moses.”

Why Do the Biblical Text and the Rabbinic Tradition Keep Miriam on the Margin?

Biblical androcentrism is understood to be a mechanism by which heterosexual males defined themselves as the norm by making all others as different.

Jewish Feminist Movement



Miriam's Tambourine & Bat Mitzvah Girls



The Prophetess Miriam and 50th anniversary of ELCA Women's Ordination.

Miriam's leadership role and prophetic position is indirectly a protest to patriarchal cultural values and refers to a period when Miriam's story was free from androcentric bias.



Fresco of Bitulia & Fresco of Cerula
the Catacomb of San Gennaro in Naples, Italy.

Ally Kateusz

Ally Kateusz, a Christian art expert, says the symbols of the vestment worn by these women, the open gospel books and their arms raised are associated with the bishops.