



Stewardship for Liberation

By **Rev. Dr. Dietra Wise Baker**

There is a new Pharaoh running the empire, one that does not know Joseph (Exodus 1). The exodus story begins by reciting the names of descendants of Joseph in Egypt. Joseph and all his brothers have died, but their children and grandchildren have grown in number and strength. The growth has not led to any economic security but has made the Israelites vulnerable to oppression, extraction, and exploitation.

It's in this biblical context that God calls a pair of midwives into a place where oppression is rampant. God calls them via their vocation as midwives. God calls us first to be stewards of who we are, not just we have. The midwives teach us that faithful stewardship has a nature: we offer what we have in ways that resist oppression and build community. Stewardship is an act of resistance, to resist a narrative that says we are not enough, that we don't have enough. Stewardship which centers people who appear to have little or no power to change things. In witnessing the midwives, they give us renewed energy to remember our call: when

the ministry of women, when our very bodies, aren't safe at church, the streets or in our own country. God calls two women to act together through faithful stewardship of what they had and who they were. This act of stewardship in the face of an extraction economy and empire, they become midwives to liberation.

"The king of Egypt said to the Hebrew midwives, whose names were Shiphrah and Puah, 'When you are helping the Hebrew women during childbirth on the delivery stool, if you see that the baby is a boy, kill him; but if it is a girl, let her live.' The midwives, however, feared God and did not do what the king of Egypt had told them to do; they let the boys live." (Exodus 1: 15-17).

Shiphrah and Puah resist and refuse to obey the decree of the King in the inaugural act of liberation. Notice these two midwives act first, God acts later. This is critical insight on stewardship. Stewardship is the place we are called to partner with God. Is it possible that God needs something to work with, that God is not a magician, but needs choices, risks, possibilities, for our communities to do something concrete, to act decisively in the offering of our gifts, to be stewards, to create a new path of liberation!

A new threat to liberation meets us in our time and place, and therefore a renewed call of stewardship. Yes, celebrate the liberative work we've already done in partnership with God and community. The victories and battles already won. The Lord God promises us that together as indispensable stewards of liberation, that indeed we are midwifing liberation. So go midwife liberation in the church, in the community with the people of God everywhere.

Because of **YOU** our church changes lives.