

National Poetry Month Recognized

Focus on Marsha Mathews, author of *Hallelujah Voices*

By David R. Altman
Progress Books & Writers Editor

Editor's Note: As part of April's National Poetry Month, the Progress feature the work of Georgia poets. National Poetry Month is a month long celebration of poetry established by the Academy of American Poets. According to the Academy, the focus is "to widen the attention of individuals...to the art of poetry, to living poets, and to our complex poetic heritage."

Marsha Mathews, a native of Florida who now teaches at Dalton State, is a former ordained Methodist minister (she was profiled in the *Progress* back in March 2013).

Her first book of poetry, *Northbound Single Lane*, was published in 2010.

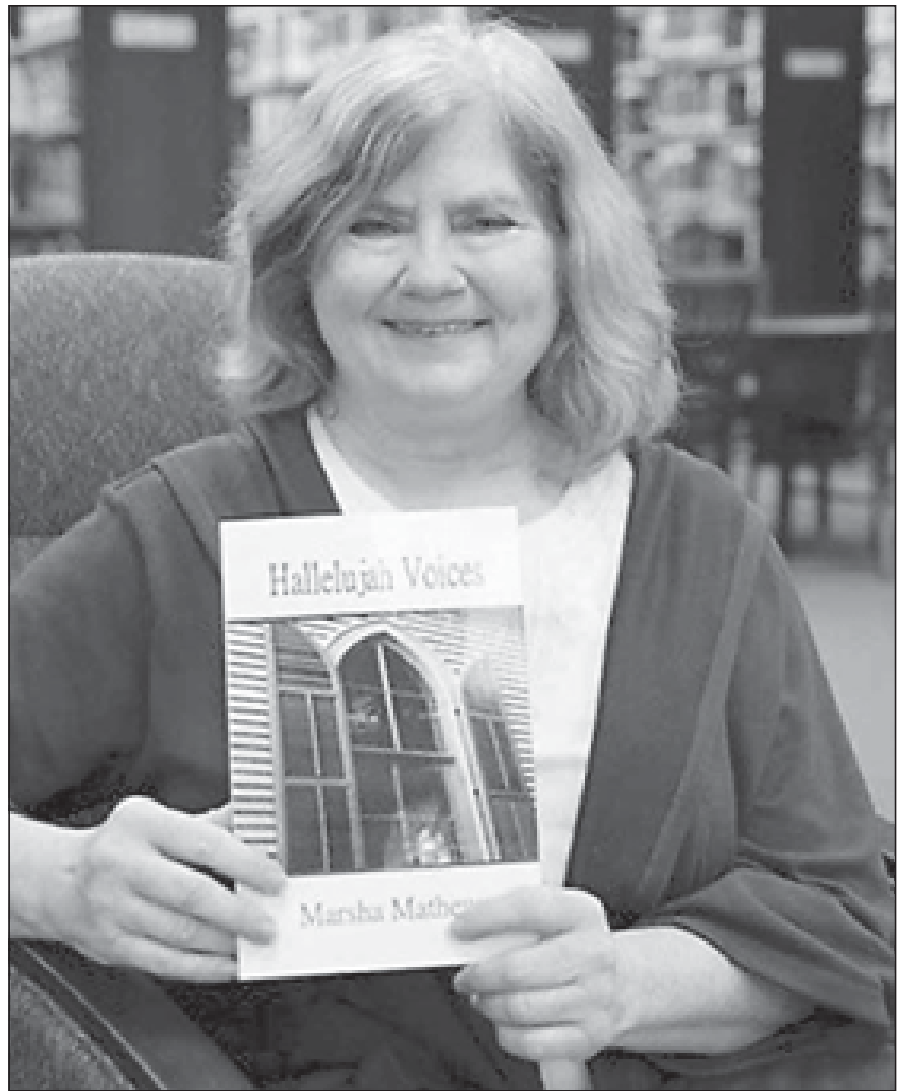
Her chapbook, *Sunglow & A Tuft of Nottingham Lace*, won the 2011 Chapbook Competition and was published in hand-bound collector's volumes (a chapbook is generally a small books of poems, up to about 40 pages, but its origins go back to 16th century Europe).

Her latest book of poems, *Hallelujah Voices*, was published by Aldrich in 2012. Mathews was nominated for Georgia Author of the Year in 2011.

Mathews' work has also been published in the *Raleigh Review*, *Los Angeles Review*, *Apalachee Review*, *Appalachian Heritage*, *Greensboro Review*, *Kansas Quarterly* and *Inkwell*, among other publications.

Mathews acknowledges that poetry is not as popular as it once was, but believes "it is making a comeback."

She has recently completed work on *Heartstoppers*, a poetry chapbook, and is currently working on a full-length collection of poems called *Beauty Bound*, which she hopes to complete in



Dr. Marsha Mathews with her book, *Hallelujah Voices*.

2014.

Mathews, who earned her PhD at Florida State and a Divinity degree from Asbury College in Kentucky, teaches Advanced Creative Writing at Dalton State and advises the campus literary magazine, *Tributaries*.

This poem is from Mathews' book, *Hallelujah Voices*:

"Everything to Do With Being a Lady Preacher"

Rupert

The first few Sundays, we left our women home and circled the church parking lot in our F-150's, gunning the engines, spitting tobacco into the gravel while the new lady preacher the

Bishop sent us preached to empty pews. We thought she'd cry. We thought's she'd quit. But, no.

So we followed her car into icy hollows, along dirt roads, and waited while she trudged through snow, disappeared into a double wide. We passed binoculars, one to the next, peered through a window, watched her open a small case, take a cup, pour purple, break bread then, turn the man's wheelchair to face sunlight.