

## Clergy hold majority of executive/director positions in annual conferences

By Craig This\*



Half (52%), 286 of the 547 executive/director positions\* in the annual conferences of The United Methodist Church are held by clergymen, according to the annual conference desk audits conducted by the General Commission on Religion and Race (G CORR) and General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (GCSRW). Couple those 286 clergymen with the 151 clergywomen in executive/director positions and clergy hold 80% of all executive/director positions in the annual conferences (see Table 1 [HERE](#)).

### Clergy/Lay Status

Examining the clergy/lay status at the individual jurisdictional levels highlights the dominance of the clergy. In three of the five jurisdictions, clergy hold over 75% of the executive/director positions. In the Western Jurisdiction, clergy hold 90% of the executive/director positions, 80 of the 89 positions. In the Southeastern Jurisdiction clergy hold 139 out of 176 positions.

Of the 437 clergy, 96 (22%) are racial/ethnic clergy. There are fewer racial/ethnic clergy in leadership position than the total number of lay persons (110). Racial/ethnic lay persons fare worse than their clergy counterparts with only 7%, 8 out of 110, racial/ethnic lay persons in leadership positions. (Even when the 8 racial/ethnic laity are removed, the number of racial/ethnic clergy (96) is less than the total number of white lay people —102!) The North Central Jurisdiction reports zero racial/ethnic lay persons employed in an executive/director position although they do report having 17 racial/ethnic clergy serving.

### Gender

Men dominate the executive/director positions with 61% (336 out of 547) of all the positions. In only the Western Jurisdiction, women do outnumber men, 57 to 32. In all other jurisdictions, men outnumber women, with a low of 47 to 30 in the Northeastern Jurisdiction and a high of 128 to 48 in the Southeastern Jurisdiction. Laymen hold just 50 of the executive/director positions, which puts them at a 1 to 5 ratio with their clergy counterparts. Likewise, clergywomen hold a 2 to 1 advantage over their lay counterparts. Nevertheless, the clergymen dominance is such that even without laymen being counted, clergymen have more representation than clergywomen and laywomen combined.

### Race/Ethnicity

Racial/ethnic persons make-up 19% (104 out of 547) of the executive/director positions in annual conferences. As noted above, racial/ethnic persons make up 7% of the laity and 22% of the clergy. The tables show that not only is the number of racial/ethnic persons low, but the distribution of leadership is not even among certain racial/ethnic groups, like the Pacific Islanders and Native Americans recording zeroes in most jurisdictions. African-Americans make-up half (55) of the 104 racial/ethnic persons who serve in these leadership positions. Asian Americans make-up 15% and Hispanics make-up 13% of the racial/ethnic persons.

### Conclusion

So, does it matter that laity and racial/ethnic persons have small numbers in executive/director positions? An answer may be found in *The Wisdom of Crowds*. Author James Surowiecki writes, "Ultimately, diversity contributes not just by adding different perspectives to the group but also make it easier for individuals to say what they really think" (p. 39). As The United Methodist Church continues to lose members on an annual basis and as the United States becomes more racially and ethnically diverse, might it not be helpful to increase the number of laity, women, and racial/ethnic persons in leadership positions?

—Craig This is a data analyst at Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio.

\*Positions that report directly to the bishop such as district superintendent, treasurer, director of connectional ministries.

[<<Back to Page 1](#)

[<<Previous Page](#)   [Next Page>>](#)