

WOMEN BY THE NUMBERS

Women, clergypersons of color earn less

Less seniority, lower-paying pulpits lend to pay gaps

by Kristin Knudson

U.S. clergywomen in The United Methodist Church on average earn 13% less than their male counterparts, and clergypersons of color—Black, Hispanic/Latina, Native American, Asian- and Pacific Island-Americans—earn 9% to 15% less than white clergy.

These were the finding of a recent study of U.S. clergy salaries, led by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM), with support from the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (GCSRW), the General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR), the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA), the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits (GBPHB) and United Methodist Communications (UMCom).

The study found that race and gender do play a role in clergy salaries. However, researchers Eric B. Johnson of the Princeton Center for the Study of Religion and the Rev. Hee An Choi of the Anna Howard Shaw Center at Boston University School of Theology explain that the gender and race gaps also stem from different causes:

- » The gender gap is due largely to differences in seniority between male and female pastors, and can be expected to decrease over time as female pastors gain seniority.
- » The race gap results from the assignment of non-white pastors to congregations that pay lower salaries.

*People of color and women
earn less because bishops
and cabinets consistently
appoint them to lower-
paying appointments.*

This study, which tracks salary of clergy serving the church between 1997 and 2008, is the first-ever attempt to research United Methodist clergy pay and any impact according to race/ethnicity and gender, according to the Rev. HiRho Park, GBHEM's director of continuing formation for ministry.

Among the study's other findings

- » Associate pastors and part-time pastors earn about 30% less than elders who are lead or sole pastors.
- » There is only a moderate gap (approximately 10%) between salaries for full-time local pastors versus elders.
- » Average pastor salaries differ substantially among U.S. annual conferences. Even after adjusting for variation in average salaries due to congregational, appointment and personal characteristics, more than \$14,000 separates the conference with the highest average salary from the lowest.

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» The gender gap also differs among annual conferences and is generally greater in the Southeastern and South Central jurisdictions.

Johnson of the Princeton Center is a specialist in the dynamic interaction between large-scale institutions and concrete social processes. Choi, who is also a lecturer at Boston University School of Theology, is a specialist in women’s studies and theology in multicultural and post-colonial contexts.

Combining their specialties, Choi and Johnson give The United Methodist Church a look into how the denomination fares with regard to salaries of male, female, and racial-ethnic clergy within the religious community and in comparison to secular salaries.

U.S. SALARIES ON RISE

According to Johnson’s summary, U.S. clergy salaries overall have increased substantially over the study period (1997-2008), exceeding the general rate of inflation by approximately 2% per year, resulting in a 20% total increase over the past decade. (It is important to remember that this study examines salaries among clergy only in the United States.)

And while race/ethnicity and gender differences are evident, it is the size of congregations served that is the largest differentiating factor for pastor salaries, reflecting the importance of appointment status as a mark of “upward mobility” for pastors.

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Working toward equity in clergy compensation

With regard to clergy salaries, career paths, and effectiveness, GCSRW challenges:

Annual conferences

- ✓ Research and track clergy salaries, with an eye toward gender, race/ethnicity, age and seniority, to determine if unintentional biases are present.
- ✓ Make deliberate plans to plant new congregations in high-growth areas where people of color, single adults, young adults and women-headed households are present.
- ✓ Educate and orient laity (particularly staff-parish relations committees) about United Methodist practices of open-itinerancy and of ordaining women. Plan special Bible studies and orientations for congregations who will receive their first woman pastor or first pastor from a racial group other than their own.

Boards of Ordained Ministry

- ✓ Shore up mentoring plans for candidates, and assign mentors to women and people of color who have particular interest, knowledge and sensitivity to the unique issues they face in a predominantly white, largely male-led clergy system.
- ✓ Emphasize cultural competency as a requirement for ordination and licensing of all clergy, and provide continuing education for veteran clergy on confronting sexism and racism and engaging in ministry with all people.
- ✓ Bring women and people of color with skills in human resources and counseling onto your board, to help all members better understand, track and support candidates and clergy who are women and/or people of color.
- ✓ Meet with women pastors and pastors of color for insights and reflections on how to improve your support systems for female and racial/ethnic candidates and clergy.

Bishop and Cabinets

- ✓ Encourage women and people of color publically to participate in affinity groups for support and network; count it as continuing education and renewal time.
- ✓ Ask the conference commissions on Religion and Race and the Status and and Role of Women to assist with tracking your clergy roles for progress in ordaining/licensing people of color and women.
- ✓ Break the mold with regard to appointments. Be intentional about grooming and appointing women and people of color to new church starts and to formerly “closed” pulpits. Appoint white men and women as associates in large congregations of color. By your actions, let your conference know that each congregation is called to be a diverse, vigorous reflection of God’s love, mission and justice.

—Kristin Knudson

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The study finds that women and racial/ethnic pastors receive lower compensation, not because of education or seniority, but mainly because cabinets consistently appoint women and racial/ethnic pastors to congregations and multi-church charges that pay lower salaries.

The differences in how appointments are made within annual conferences as well as the various formal and informal practices regarding salary setting made the statistical analysis challenging, however, Johnson started with a baseline of five possible predictors of pastor's salaries:

- 1 Gender and race
- 2 Congregation attributes
- 3 Seniority of the pastor
- 4 Other appointment characteristics (urban, rural, yoked)
- 5 Other characteristics (ethnicity and/or gender)

The data was collected from GBPHB and the GCFA. Retired pastors serving congregations and supply pastors were excluded because their data is generally excluded from the Board of Pension data. Part-time and other local pastors serving local congregations have been included as their numbers are greater.

The salary figures used for the analysis include the salary and any housing allowance (if any) paid to the pastor and reported to GCFA. It does NOT include other forms of compensation, such as benefits and contributions to pension funds.

More than 80% of the pastors in the study held full-time appointments, even though both the number of part-time appointments and the proportion of pastors being paid for half- or quarter-time have increased over the past 10 years. During the study years, the percentage of full-time pastors in the data decreased from 89% in 1997 to 79% in 2008; also, the percentage of pastors earning half- or quarter-time increased from 3% to 17%.

The differences in salaries? Hour for hour, three-quarters-time pastors earn 73% of what their full-time colleagues earn, half-time pastors earn 64% and one-quarter time pastors earn 41% of what full-time pastors earn.

LITTLE GAIN IN CLERGY OF COLOR

While the number of women pastors steadily increases, the majority of United Methodist pastors serving U.S. appointments are men. When the study began in 1998, 20% of U.S. pastors were female. In 2008, that percentage had increased to 29%. (Remember, women make up 57% percent of the U.S. population and at least 57% of United Methodist membership.)

The number of pastors of color lags even farther behind, with racial/ethnic clergy comprising only 12% of United Methodists serving clergy appointments. (The U.S. population is 35% non-white; membership in The United Methodist Church in the United States is about 5% racial/ethnic, according to the GCORR.)

According to Johnson, the number of racial/ethnic clergy has not changed dramatically over the past 10 years. The majority of non-white pastors are Black (7%), followed by Asian (3%), and Hispanic/Latino (1%). Racial/ethnic groups that fall within the "other" category also account for about 1% of United Methodist pastors. These

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