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Vol. 41, Issue 6, June 2010

THIS MONTH



**WOMEN BY THE NUMBERS:
A SNAPSHOT
Annual Conference
Treasurers, 2005 vs. 2009**
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**Inclusive
language...again?**

By Kim Coffing*

The Flyer is published monthly by the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women in The United Methodist Church.

The General Commission on the Status and Role of Women, an agency of the Worldwide United Methodist Church acts as advocate, catalyst and monitor to ensure the full participation and equality of women in the church.



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"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" opens the Gospel according to John, and thus began humanity's struggle with finding language to express and experience the height, breadth, depth, width, undomesticated, inviting, discerning, wholeness-seeking-and-making, love demanding, justice relentlessness, scandalous nature of God's Word.



**DEFYING
DEFINITIONS
Scholars discuss
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Consider making a business card for God. What name will you use? Logo? Slogan? Contact information? What audience do you have in mind? What purpose(s) to distribute your card? Is this a card to create "once and for all" or "for a moment?" Will it be for a circumstance? For English-speaking only? For rural or town or suburban or urban folks? And what pronoun(s) will you use?



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What did you experience while doing this exercise? Easy and simple to construct – you've got it now and forever? Stymied by which name and descriptors to use? Frustrated – caused by specifically what? Worried about being accurate, correct or wrong? Wondering what card you will want to make one hour from now?

It's hard to fit God onto one card; into one language and location; by one accessible avenue; for whomever you may meet

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today, tomorrow or in 10 years. Even in our Holy Bible, God is known by many names throughout all time.

It's challenging to be consciously attentive, rather than rote, in to how we talk about God and God's relationships with and among humans. It's challenging to speak *descriptively* our experiences of and with God, realizing that whatever words, pictures, motions or music we use, they are our attempts to relate what cannot be captured by any one word or picture or motion or musical expression. Yet, it seems

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Inclusive language...again?

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Yet, it seems many continue to wrestle with *descriptive* speech and try to push us into *prescriptive* speech – what someone holds to be the *only* way to speak correctly about God.

Awareness, scholarship and educational materials related to the inclusiveness and expansiveness biblical descriptors about and for God appear to have been at their height in the 1980s and 1990s. During this time, many local churches in our denomination used *Words That Hurt, Words That Heal* (no longer in print), a study guide that invited congregations to study, discuss, and discover how male-focused and male-dominated the English language is. Worship materials and hymnals published during this time of discovery incorporated the growing awareness inclusive images of humanity (not being generically male or white only); of God (not only as male); and of power (not being perceived as dominance or "power over" but rather "power with").

Yet, The United Methodist Church and mainstream Christian denominations continue to struggle with the influence of male privilege, power and dominance as they influence the church's words, images, music and ministries. Why have we missed, or dismissed, the richness in diversity in Scripture, traditions and hymns that are feminine in nature?

Our task in this *Flyer* is to gain some understanding of how our English language became patriarchal as well as continue challenging the United Methodist Church to be faithful students of the Bible's myriad images of and metaphors for God.

When wrestling with how to make a liturgy or prayer or other "church chat" more inclusive, it may seem easier to fall back into familiar phrases, metaphors and stereotyping images. In such instances, the Garden scene in Genesis 3 comes to mind. You know...God asks the come-out-of-hiding-shameful-humans why they are now covered in a "fig-fashioned" covering. Paraphrased, the male exclaims, "The woman you gave me, Lord, to be with me gave me the fruit from the tree...and I ate." This scene often becomes transported into a more personal scene of listening to someone give an "eating my words" excuse for thoughtlessly and defensively using sexist language: "The patriarchal language you gave me, Lord...I did speak!" This reveals the scapegoating excuse and avoidance to be more attentive, sensitive, soulful, and self and socially critical in being inclusive in speaking.

Essentially inclusive language means we use language that recognizes one another's made-in-God's-image humanity rather than

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How did we 'English speakers' normalize sexist, male-privileged language?



Jacquelyn Grant

Jacquelyn Grant, professor of theology and womanist studies at Interdenominational Theological Center, Atlanta, Ga., proposes four incidents that led many churches to normalize male-privileged language. Grant draws from the 1974 book by Sharon Neuffer Emswiler and Thomas Neuffer Emswiler, *Women and Worship: A Guide To Non-Sexist Hymns, Prayers, And Liturgies* (New York: Harper and Row).

- 1) In 1553, Thomas Wilson argued "before an almost-exclusive male audience in England" that it was more natural that man precede woman in writing or speaking. "Husband and wife" and not "wife and husband" would be reflective of the natural superiority of men over women.
- 2) By 1646, Joshua Poole argued that the male should take the "pride of place," because the male gender is the "worthier" gender.
- 3) Continuing the notion that the male is better, more important, preferable, toward the notion that the male is universal, John Kirkby argued in his "Eighty-Eight Grammatical Rules" of 1746 that the male gender was "more comprehensive" than the female gender.
- 4) Finally, an Act of [British] Parliament in 1850 declared legally the word "he" also stood for "she." As Grant notes, "... what we see is the process of the institutionalization of the so-called generic/universal language as male language."

*Grant, Jacquelyn. "The Power of Language And the Language of [Em]Power[ment]. *The Journal of I.T.C.* p 84.

WOMEN BY THE NUMBERS: Annual conference treasurers, 2005 vs. 2009

Most U.S. annual conference treasurers are White laity

by Elaine Moy*

There are 61 U.S. annual conference treasurers; 67% are men (41) and 33% are women (20); 77% are lay (47) and 23% are clergy (14).

For more details on annual conference treasurers, visit [HERE](#).

North Central Jurisdiction has the highest percentage of women treasurers (45%), followed by Northeast with 38%, then Western with 29%. In both the South Central and Southeastern 27% of the conference treasurers are women. North Central and Northeastern jurisdiction tie for having the largest number of women treasurers – five each.

Of the 41 men who are U.S. conference treasurers, 14 are clergy (35%) and 27 are laity (65%). All 20 women treasurers are laypersons (In 2005, only the Northeastern Jurisdiction had a clergywoman conference treasurer.)

Lay people hold most of the treasurer positions among U.S. annual conferences. Laymen are the highest percentage of all treasurers (44%), followed by laywomen (33%), then by clergymen (23%).

Of the 61 treasurers, *all but three* are White (95%). All the women treasurers are White (100%) and 92% of all men treasurers are White. The North Central Jurisdiction has one Asian-American man as a conference treasurer, and the Northeastern and South Central jurisdictions each have one African-American man serving as a conference treasurer.

The number of women holding treasurer positions did not change significantly between 2005 and 2009. The percentage of women treasurers in the Southeastern Jurisdiction climbed from 20% to 27% and in the Western Jurisdiction from 25% to 29%. The number of women stayed constant in the Northeastern and South Central jurisdictions. And the number of women dropped in the North Central Jurisdiction, 50% to 45%.

Treasurers are among the most influential leadership positions of an annual conference. With the current data, they tend to be White (95%), lay (77%), and male (67%).

—Elaine Moy is assistant general secretary of finance and administration for GCSRW.



Currently, 61 annual conference treasurers serve across the UMC in the United States

- * **67% (41) are men and 33% (20) are women.** Among the men, 35% are clergy (14) and 65% are laity (27). Among the women, 100% are laity.
- * **77% (47) are lay and 23% (14) are clergy.** Among all conference treasurers, laymen are 44%, laywomen are 33%, clergymen are 23%, clergywomen are 0%.
- * **95% (58) are White and 5% (3) are racial-ethnic people.** Of the racial-ethnic people, two are Black (men) and one is Asian (man)



Burden of Proof: Notes on church law

by Darryl W. Stephens*



"Innocent until proven guilty" is a fundamental mantra of the legal system in the United States and the United Methodist Church. The question is, what does it take to prove guilt?

The burden of proof required in U.S. secular courts **is different from that required in church trials.**

For a criminal conviction in a secular court, the evidence must point to guilt "beyond a reasonable doubt." This is the strictest level of proof required in our legal system. What is "reasonable" must be agreed upon by a jury.

For a civil case in a secular court, the winning side need only show "the preponderance of evidence" is in their favor. "Preponderance" is simply a majority. This is a much lower threshold than for criminal prosecution.

In United Methodist Church law, the burden of proof **lies somewhere between these thresholds.** For a church trial, the evidence must be "clear and convincing," a standard that is more than a "preponderance" but less than "beyond a reasonable doubt."

It is up to the "trial court" (jury) to determine whether the evidence meets this standard. At least 9 of the 13 members of the church trial court must agree that the evidence is "clear and convincing" in order to sustain a guilty charge (*Book of Discipline (BOD) 2008* Para. 2709 and Para. 2711.2).

In order to bring a case to trial in the UMC, the committee on investigation is the first to weigh the evidence. This committee is not responsible for determining guilt or innocence, so the burden of proof at this stage in the process is very light. All that is needed is simply enough evidence to say that something likely occurred—a very low threshold. In legal terms, the committee must determine if "reasonable grounds exist to support the charges" (*BOD 2008* Para. 2706.1).

What is "reasonable" when weighing evidence in the church? Consider the example of sexual harassment, which is considered a form of sexual misconduct in the UMC. The determination of guilt depends how the accused person's behavior is "reasonably perceived." The Social Principles defines sexual harassment as "any unwanted sexual comment, advance or demand, either verbal or physical, that is reasonably perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating, or coercive" (*BOD 2008* Para. 161.1).

The criterion "reasonably perceived" is not a completely subjective measure based on the extreme sensitivity of a rare individual. Rather, it is the impression of a typical person—a standard that can be agreed upon within a moral community or its representatives. In a church trial, the determination of what a reasonable person might perceive is made by the trial court. To share your insights or questions, please email [Darryl W. Stephens](mailto:Darryl.W.Stephens). For more information on church policies and practices regarding misconduct of a sexual nature by clergy and other ministerial leaders, visit umsexualethics.org.

—Darryl W. Stephens is assistant general secretary of sexual ethics and advocacy for GCSRW.

Resources

Administrative and Judicial Procedures Handbook. General Council on Finance and Administration of The United Methodist Church. http://www.gcfa.org/Is_AdminJudProcHandbook.html, p. 82.

The Book of Discipline 2008. Para. 161.1, Para. 2706.1, Para. 2709 and Para. 2711.2.

The Book of Resolutions 2008, "2045 Eradication of Sexual Harassment in The United Methodist Church and Society," pp. 139 – 144.

Women-Positive Churches

Celebrating 'woman-friendly' congregations in Virginia, Mississippi

by Kristin Knudson*

EDITOR'S NOTE: Last fall, we asked friends of GCSRW on our Facebook page to describe congregations they viewed as opening and welcoming to women. The question sparked lively discussion—about why they love their congregations, what they wish for and work for in their personal and corporate faith in Christ, what they hope for the church as a whole, and how women and girls are engaged—or not—as equally respected and beloved children of God. The result: Readers nominated a small group of United Methodist congregations from around the world that engage, disciple, honor, teach and learn from women. The Flyer presents the stories of these congregations in a new series.

Wellspring UMC, Williamsburg, Va.



If you went to watch the church co-ed volleyball team from Wellspring UMC play, you might be perplexed to hear team members shout out "GIRL!" as the ball is lobbed from one player to the next. The team's "official" unofficial rule is that if the ball is hit three times on their side, one of those hits must be made by a female player, according to Claire Olney, lay leader at Wellspring.

Founded in 1979, Wellspring United Methodist Church is relatively "new" when it comes to congregations. With a membership of approximately 400 and an average worship attendance of approximately 235 divided between two worship services, the community is made up of a significant number of military families and older adults. The congregation itself has a lot of younger families and is very diverse with regard to race and socioeconomic status.

"From our inception we felt very strongly not to have United Methodist Women and United Methodist Men. We felt that it polarized people," Olney said. "It didn't allow people to use gifts equally. Hospitality has both male and female qualities."

Currently, Olney says there are many women in leadership roles within the congregation. She is the lay leader. Women chair the church council, the trustees, missions, outreach and staff-parish relations committee. Of the nine staff members, only three are male, including the senior pastor, Jim Harris. Much of the churches' outreach is focused on helping children and families. Work with members of the Mattaponi tribe about 75 miles from the church includes the Healing Eagle Clinic that is staffed weekly by nurses from the congregation. That ministry has been so well received that the conference awarded a grant to assist in the development of curriculum and other program components for work with children and youth.

Being part of the congregation Olney says isn't a matter of being "woman-focused," it's a matter of being skill- and gift-focused. The congregation has spent significant time working to put the right people in the right positions of leadership. "We're not tied to a traditional role or plan," Olney said. "We're asking, 'What gives you passion? What do you feel your strengths are?' Once you figure out what lights your fire, we going to plug you in to where you can demonstrate that."

The congregations' commitment to women and children is also evident in their community outreach. They provide activities for the neighborhood children such as vacation Bible school, Easter egg hunts, Thanksgiving community dinner – things that would bring children and women into the church, but not necessarily on a Sunday.

Sunday worship brings women and men together in leadership. Currently, the worship team leader is a woman

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Trinity UMC in Marks, Miss.

Trinity UMC has a great example of women and men sharing leadership: their pastors. Emma and Eddie Ward are co-pastors of the 300 member congregation near Oxford, Miss. The congregation participates in 21 different ministries throughout the Mississippi Delta region. [READ MORE](#)

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Inclusive language...again?

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Essentially inclusive language means we use language that recognizes one another's made-in-God's-image humanity rather than use words that are demeaning, insulting, excluding, stereotyping or trivializing of people on the basis of particular attributes or membership of a certain group. It also means listening to how others *describe* themselves and their relationship with God rather than to *prescribe* how the words, images and metaphors they should use.



The Presbyterian USA website has a helpful educational tool, "Well Chosen Words!" (www.psusa.org/women) Among the suggestions for making language more inclusive, welcoming and accurate:

- consider using chairperson, chair, moderator, group leader, department head, presiding officer – instead of chairman;
- consider saying ancestors, forebears, forebearers – instead of forefathers
- consider "Stand at your discretion" – instead of "Stand as you are able"
- consider constructed, human-made, synthetic – instead of man-made
- consider visitor from another country, immigrant – instead of foreigner, alien

Additional contributions and helps for using and exploring inclusive and expansive language will be published in future issues of the *Flyer*. Meanwhile, make another business card, this time with your local church in mind. How is God identified in your church? What do the pictures in your church reveal about God the Creator, Christ the Redeemer and the Holy Spirit as Comforter? How does your congregation's mission statement influence what you would put on the card? How do the liturgies, scripture readings, sermon themes and musical offerings influence your card? If someone who had never attended a Sunday service before arriving at your church and never heard of God as proclaimed and practiced by your church, how do you think they would complete this business card exercise?

Where do you sense God's invitation to be included in your life? Church? Family? Neighborhood? Prayer? Bible Study? Justice practices? Speech?

—Kim Coffing is associate general secretary for General Commission on the Status and Role of Women.

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Defying definitions

Deconstructing inherited assumptions

By Barbara Fears*



Barbara Fears

UM-related Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary recently hosted a group of female scholars who addressed the subject of "Women Thinking at the Intersection of Race, Sexuality, and Coloniality."

Panelists shared their current research efforts during this Women's History Month event in March, which was sponsored by the Gladys Crane Lecture Fund and was moderated by Nancy Bedford, Georgia Harkness Professor of Applied Theology at Garrett-Evangelical.

Who are the panelists?

By Anne Joh*



Anne Joh

The panelists at the recent event, "Women Thinking at the Intersection of Race, Sexuality and Coloniality," are a working group of feminist theologians. We have coalesced because there are not many theologians who directly address the conflation of these dimensions in their work. We share our works in progress with one another for critical feedback and encouragement.

While we did not critique each other's work during the panel, we did share our work with one another for critical feedback because we trust each other's scholarship. Our sessions are often rigorous and at the same time exciting, and they generate much creativity in our exchanges with one another.

*Joh is a professor at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary.



Front (from left): Lallene Rector, Ruth Duck, Cynthia Wilson. Back: Kim Coffing, Pamela Lightsey

Christian claims in a postmodern world?

Susan Abraham of Harvard University explained that we can express Christian claims in a postmodern world as long as we recognize these four realities: (1) reason – of which she says we must be suspicious; (2) grand truth – which she said we must refuse because all truths are embedded in a rhetorical framework; (3) history – of which we must ask, "Who is telling the story?"; and (4) the idea of the self—which, Abraham says, does not exist outside of the institution.

Anti-sexist, anti-racist, anti-homophobic theology

Laurel Schneider of the Chicago Theological Seminary examined White privilege and accountability. More specifically, she proposed a theology that engages anti-sexist, anti-racist, anti-homophobic rhetoric. For her, "theology is a map, not a terrain."

The changing images of race

Stephanie Mitchem of University of South Carolina focused her work on generational differences and race as a moving intersection. Mitchem suggested that there is no biological basis for dividing people by race. Rather, she said, any differences are socially constructed. She highlights three images of Black women recently featured on the cover of White-owned and operated magazines: Michelle Obama, who she described as elegant; Wanda Sykes, a popular comedian and "out" lesbian; and "Precious" lead actor Gabourey Sidibe, who is big. Their images do not fit the typical media stereotype of Black women, Mitchem noted, adding that only recently have these categories of Black women been featured in mainstream (read: "White") media.

Embodiment studies

Mayra Rivera of the Pacific School of Religion is investigating the descendents of indigenous/Native women who were raped during the U.S. Colonial Era. Their offspring, Rivera said, incarnate colonialism, rape and greed, and thus require a discussion of the same. Traci West of Drew University is researching the experience of gender violence activism in Ghana, South Africa and Brazil, exploring women whose abuse included religious persecution, but who have engaged religion as a form of activism and resistance. [READ MORE](#)

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Third Wave Womanist Religious Thought

Panelists at Claremont share current research about race, sexuality and coloniality

By Anne Carter Walker*

"That man over there says that women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, or over mud puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man - when I could get it - and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried out with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman?"

—**Sojourner Truth, 1851 Women's Convention**

Womanist religious thought is a strain of theological scholarship derived from and addressing the concerns of women of African descent. Grounded in the everyday lives of Black women, womanist religious scholarship seeks to liberate Black women and those they love from the onslaught of oppression and struggle for survival toward mental, physical and spiritual wholeness. This third generation of womanists follows two previous "waves" of womanist theological scholarship.



Monica Coleman and Sharon Welch share a smile at the Third Wave conference.

First wave of womanism

The first wave of womanism addressed Black women's religious lives emerged in defiant response to White and middle-class theologies that set normative boundaries for theological discourse. These boundaries marginalized Black women's religious experience as a source of theological knowledge.

These reflections were presented at a recent inaugural conference held at UM-related Claremont (Calif.) School of Theology. To view a list of the presenters at the "Third Wave Womanist Religious Thou conference, click [HERE](#).

To view Monica A. Coleman's inaugural address, click [HERE](#).

Second wave of womanism

Second-wave womanist scholarship added theological complexity to the first generation, pushing beyond issues of gender inclusion to explore more holistically the religious lives of Black women. As conference presenter Darnise C. Martin states in her conference paper, "I know that these African-American women have demanded and created

theological and communal spaces for our voices, but also with an intention for all members of the community who have been marginalized."

Third wave of womanism

Thus, one of the priorities of third-wave womanism is to bring voices previously marginalized to the center of the womanist conversation. The voices are "geographically expansive, queer, multicultural, diasporic, and representative of a rich tapestry of religiosities within and beyond Christianity," says Coleman. On the first night of the conference, Coleman articulated the nuances of third-wave womanism during her inaugural address as associate professor of constructive theology and African-American religions at Claremont School of Theology.



Nessette Falu, Rhaedorah Stewart and Monica Miller enjoy time together at the Third Wave conference.

"Third wave womanism," says Coleman, "redefines and extends, from within and from without, what it means to place Black women's religious experiences at the center of theological activity and religious reflection." Coleman stated that the third wave of womanist scholars is moving beyond the issues of identity associated with the first and second waves of feminism, and "on to the work that is grounded in Black women's religious experiences."

The activism of the third wave, she says, is grounded in the work toward "survival, health, and freedom" associated with the first and second waves, but departs from the previous waves in describing what is "Black, woman and religious." Thus, the third wave seeks partnerships "across the academic disciplines" toward equal sharing of "personal freedom and power."

On the second day of conference proceedings, conference participants presented papers on womanist religious thought in the areas of: religious pluralism, popular culture, gender and sexuality and politics.

—Anne Carter Walker is a Ph.D. candidate at Claremont School of Theology and a certified candidate, Tulsa District, Oklahoma Conference, UMC.

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Two newer, women-friendly congregations tell their stories

Trinity United Methodist Church, Marks, Miss.

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Trinity UMC in Marks, Miss., has a great example of women and men sharing leadership: their pastors. Emma and Eddie Ward are co-pastors of the 300 member congregation near Oxford, Miss. The congregation participates in 21 different ministries throughout the Mississippi Delta region.

"You all are always doing something!" is something that Emma Ward often hears from people who visit the church on a Sunday morning. "That's why they chose our church," she says.

The congregation is focused in ministry with women and has an affinity group for single women. "They go on outings, and come together to encourage each other," Ward says.

Activities are mostly social – dinner, movies, a bus trips to Atlanta. The group provides community because that's what they need. In reflecting on a recent bus trip, she noted that 55 women had signed up to go before the official announcement of the trip was made.

Women are encouraged within the congregation to take leadership. In 2009, of the 20 new members at Trinity, 80% were women. Three women are involved in the conference's lay speaking course.

Trinity UMC was formed when three congregations united in 2002 to provide a more effective ministry to their community. A new facility was built in 2005. Programs include a Bible study, prayer breakfast, and every fifth Sunday, they join with two other congregations for a service of race and reconciliation. Another program is a lock-in once each month for a time of prayer and fasting as a community.

The congregation does have a very active United Methodist Women's unit and a United Methodist Men's group that combine for outreach within the community. "We do work for the Delta Mission Foundation," Ward says. "The church travels from house to house in the community seeing what needs to be done and works together to fix things up." Another outreach ministry that sets Trinity apart is their jail house ministry. Many congregations invite inmates to do work around the church's physical plant, but Trinity is the only congregation that provides service to the inmates. Because of the nature of the ministry, the jail-house administrators request that men lead a worship service for the inmates and the women cook and serve a meal.

The Wards trade off worship leadership and inclusive language "just happens," Ward says. "We have a bulletin, but we just let the spirit flow."

Ward believes that women should be encouraged to be leaders in the church. "There are no males or females in Christ Jesus," she says. "If the Lord calls, we have to do what the Lord says. Don't worry about poverty or education. Everybody has power. Try to help them see their power and use it. We're all the same before God."

—Kristin Knudson is a freelance writer living in Baltimore.

Wellspring UMC, Williamsburg, Va.

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Cross Purposes Band performs at Wellspring UMC.

Currently, the worship team leader is a woman and is the music director. The pastor makes sure that images and examples feature women and the church council has voted that all visuals projected during worship must show gender and racial diversity.

When asked what advice she would give congregations about creating "woman friendly" congregations. Olney has one word of advice, "pray."

"Think about the women Christ valued in the Bible. There are so many different examples of that," Olney says. "He valued their intelligence, what they could provide – their gifts and themselves

were what they could offer and perhaps they could provide more because of their nurturing nature."

Olney says a congregation intentionally trying to include a woman is admirable. "Value the strengths a person brings and do not be blocked by [biases against people's] gender or race. Look past that to the gifts God has given them. Reach out on God's behalf and take advantage of those options."

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Deconstructing inherited assumptions

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Panelists share their current research at the March Garrett-Evangelical event

Sexualized, racialized violence

Anne Joh, also of Garrett-Evangelical, examined the ways in which violence is sexualized and racialized. In particular, she highlighted two prominent images of Asian women – the "dragon lady", who is a sort of dominatrix, and

the hyper-sexualized Asian woman.

On the other hand, Asian men, she says, are typically de-masculinized in popular media and other areas of social consciousness. She notes that one is not born "whatever" (i.e. Black/White/Asian, male/woman, etc.), "but becomes "whatever" through socialization. For Joh, however, these categorizations are binaries, which are not clearly defined.

To view additional photos from the event, click [HERE](#).

—Barbara Fears is a Ph.D. student at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary and works part-time at the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits.

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Third Wave Womanist Religious Thought presenters included*:

- Victor Anderson – Professor, Vanderbilt University Divinity School
- Elonda Clay – Ph.D. Student, Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
- Dianne M. (Stewart) Diakite – Associate Professor, Emory University
- Nesselte Falu – Ph.D. Student in Religious Studies, Rice University
- Stephen C. Finley – Assistant Professor, Louisiana State University
- Barbara A. Holmes – Vice President of Academic Affairs and Dean/ Professor, Memphis Theological Seminary
- Tracey E. Hucks – Associate Professor, Haverford College
- Eddie Komegay, Jr – Ph.D. Candidate, Chicago Theological Seminary
- Debra Majeed – Associate Professor, Beloit College
- Damise C. Martin – Visiting Assistant Professor, Loyola Marymount University
- Monica R. Miller – Ph.D. Candidate, Chicago Theological Seminary
- Ronald Neal – Assistant Professor, Claflin University
- Xiumei Pu – Ph.D. Candidate, University of Minnesota
- Arisika Razak – Program Chair, Ph.D. in Philosophy and Religion, Concentration in Women's Spirituality, California Institute of Integral Studies
- Roger Sneed – Assistant Professor, Furman University
- Raedorah Stewart – Artist, activist, independent scholar
- Sharon D. Welch – Professor and Provost, Meadville Lombard Theological School

*compiled by Anne Carter Walker

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