



# 9

Worth Watching



# 10

Sister Speak



# 11

Alliance Formed

April–June 2008

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[www.gcsr.org](http://www.gcsr.org)

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## Women can influence elections at jurisdictional conference

By Victoria Rebeck

At the five U.S. jurisdictional conferences that will meet July 13-19, United Methodists will elect 11 bishops and name directors and commissioners to denominationwide agencies. The Commission on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW) in each annual conference should take the lead in organizing female delegates to expand diversity.



“Women must take the initiative in getting organized,” says the Rev. Lynn Scott, director of Sabbath Way in Eau Claire, Wis.

“A goal of electing more women to the Council of Bishops needs to be grounded spiritually and theologically,” she says. “Younger, older and international people bring a dimension of God—the fullness of God’s presence incarnated as best as we can as we represent God to the world. It’s not just a numbers game by any means.”

Further, women should look at the larger picture of leadership in the denomination. “Listen for candidates’ vision for and experience in leading the whole church,” Scott says. “The world is much larger, and different, from our own backyard.”



Women delegates can meet regularly to discuss the qualities they seek in episcopal leaders and the perspectives they believe are needed on denominationwide agencies. Above: The Rev. Heather Murray Elkin (right) and the Rev. HiRho Park (center) strategize.

### Orienting and networking

Kim Coffing, assistant general secretary for the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (GCSRW), suggests that conference commissions sponsor orientation sessions to inform women delegates about the issues to be considered by their jurisdictional conference. Initial meetings should help women build trust and alliances across lines—lay/clergy, women of color/white women and younger women/older women.

*continued on page 3*

# Key Takeaways



# Adding 'gender' is a global justice issue

If you've been reading about ethnic strife in the Republic of Congo and Kenya, you know that warring factions are using rape of girls and women as a primary tool of intimidation and destruction.

In a recent television news special on ethnic warring in Congo, physicians treating rape victims explained that husbands, brothers and sons are often forced to watch as opposition soldiers sexually assault their wives, sisters and daughters.



In the same broadcast, women told stories of being disowned and shunned by families and community members after being sexually violated. Girls as young as 3 years old bled to death or were left permanently disfigured as a result of rape.

In these war-devastated nations, many church leaders are working hard to find peaceful solutions and to protest the violation of women. At the same time, in some cases, the church is fearfully silent, either because of fear of violent reprisals or because of cultural beliefs that a woman who is raped is "spoiled" for marriage or society.

I recently had a conversation with a clergywoman from the Southern Hemisphere who explained that, because the United Methodist Constitution is the only portion of the *Book of Discipline* that is binding across national lines, her efforts to address institutional sexism in her African church context are often rebuffed. When she tried, as a pastor, to intervene in a family where a woman had been beaten nearly to death by her abusive husband, she says her district superintendent "told me that men have a right to run their house the way they want in our culture."

"I told him that as Christians, we cannot tolerate violence against women in the name of culture," my clergy sister said. "But I didn't have much church law to back me up."

This spring, this Commission will again ask delegates to vote to include "gender" as a protected category in the denomination's Constitution. Many people argue that "gender" is a given and doesn't need to be spelled out.

We argue that in a world where women's rights and equality are not universally recognized, even among Christians, that United Methodists must be crystal clear in our beliefs: Women are equally valuable, equally precious children of God, and to discriminate against or violate them in any way is to violate the Body of Christ.

Adding "gender" to the Constitution is one way to make this declaration to the world.

To God be the glory,

M. Garlinda Burton, General Secretary

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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.

#### GCSRW Officers

Mary Virginia Taylor, President  
Eva Thai, Vice President  
Dianne Spencer, Secretary

#### Staff

M. Garlinda Burton  
S. Kim Coffing  
LeeAnn Goldman  
Elaine Moy

#### Communications Coordinator

Heather Peck Stahl  
hstahl@gcsr.org

#### Web Editor

Lindsey Graham  
lgraham@gcsr.org

[gcsr@gcsr.org](mailto:gcsr@gcsr.org)

#### Correspondence/change of address

Individual subscriptions of The Flyer are \$15 (US) annually. Send a check with your mailing address, email address and phone number to: General Commission on the Status and Role of Women, 77 W. Washington St., Suite 1009, Chicago, IL 60602, 312.346.4900 Direct change of address information to the above address.

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## Elections *continued from page 1*

A conference COSROW may provide data about where women are and aren't represented as leaders in the church. Coffing suggests that orientation include analysis of specific proposals to be considered by jurisdictional delegates.

### What kind of bishops do we need?

"Women need to talk to each other to find their common ground in order to know what to tell a delegation," says the Rev. Debbie Pitney, pastor at First UMC in Eugene, Ore. "Members of a small delegation can share what is important in their spiritual lives. From that kind of deep sharing, they can move on to discuss their concerns for the church."

These discussions will help women identify the characteristics they will seek in candidates for bishop. In the Western Jurisdiction, where presently three women bishops serve, the women's caucus and the ethnic women's caucus have been meeting together, says the Rev. Eveline "Tweedy" Sombrero, pastor of Holbrook (Ariz.) UMC, and member of the Desert Southwest Annual Conference.

### Interview, nominate and monitor

At jurisdictional conferences, delegates have the opportunity to interview episcopal candidates. Be prepared with probing questions and listen for answers—and for what is not being said. Also be prepared to confront sexist or racist questions asked by others in the delegation (e.g., asking a female candidate how her husband feels about relocating or how she will balance child-rearing and increased demands on her time).

Delegates will also nominate persons to serve on denominational boards and commissions. Make sure that the total slate is diverse as to race, gender, age and experience *and* that persons are not assigned to agencies in stereotypical ways. "Delegations can bring a diverse list of people," says Garlinda Burton, GCSRW general secretary. "Not only should the pool of names be diverse, but so should the group sent to each agency. Women, particularly COSROWs, need to monitor the jurisdictional pool process."

### Plan strategy; reach out to other groups

The earlier women start organizing, the better. Judith Anna, chairwoman of both the Holston Conference and Southeastern Jurisdiction COSROWs,



UMNS photo by Mike DuBose

*The Rev. Eveline "Tweedy" Sombrero (left) joins with others in a 2003 silent vigil against the U.S.-Iraq war. In a bishop, she looks to those with "integrity, deep spirituality, standing for all persons, commitment to inclusiveness and a strong, dependable character."*

says lay and clergywomen in those areas are now strategizing on how to get women elected as delegates and nominated for general agencies in 2012.

"They are developing ways of getting women to work together, as presenters at annual conferences or on committees, so they are more known," she says.

Once women in a jurisdiction have identified a candidate of interest, they should develop strategies to affect balloting. The Rev. Liz Lopez, a district superintendent in Minnesota, says this was an important aspect of the North Central Jurisdiction's women's caucus work for the 2004 jurisdictional conference.

Developing relationships beyond one's own conference delegation—and beyond women's organizations—is also important, Lopez says.

"You always need someone on the delegation who is well connected in the general church and can get things done," she explains.

"You have to watch how other delegations vote, and have contacts in those delegations so you know what they are saying and can have conversations with them," Lopez adds. "You also have to know people in Black Methodists for Church Renewal, MARCHA, and other caucuses. They will have their people out there, and you have to network. That is critical." ❧

*The Rev. Victoria Rebeck, communications director for the Minnesota Annual Conference, is also a delegate to the 2008 General Conference and the North Central Jurisdictional Conference.*

# Make your mark on jurisdictional conference

EVEN IF YOU'RE NOT A DELEGATE, YOUR VOICE CAN AFFECT THE ELECTION OF A BISHOP AND REPRESENTATION ON CHURCHWIDE BOARDS AND AGENCIES

During the week of July 13-19, United Methodist delegates in the five U.S. regions (called "jurisdictions") will convene to elect bishops and representatives on denominationwide agencies.


The jurisdictional conferences meet every four years, just weeks after the General Conference, where church law, mission emphases and budgets are set and where delegates speak on behalf of the church on the pressing moral, spiritual and social issues of the day.

Bishops, elected for life in the United States, oversee the spiritual, missional and administrative work of the church, both in their assigned areas and for the church as a whole. A total of 11 U.S. bishops will be elected to fill posts left vacant because of retirement, resignation or death. About 50 bishops serve in the United States, with another 30 elected by and assigned to oversee The United Methodist Church in Africa, Europe and the Philippines.

Jurisdictional delegates also select, from a pool of lay and clergy nominees, their regional representatives to the churchwide agencies mandated to

carry out the church missions and ministry on a national and international scale.

Even if you are not a voting delegate to your respective jurisdiction, you can have an impact on elections at jurisdictional conference if you:

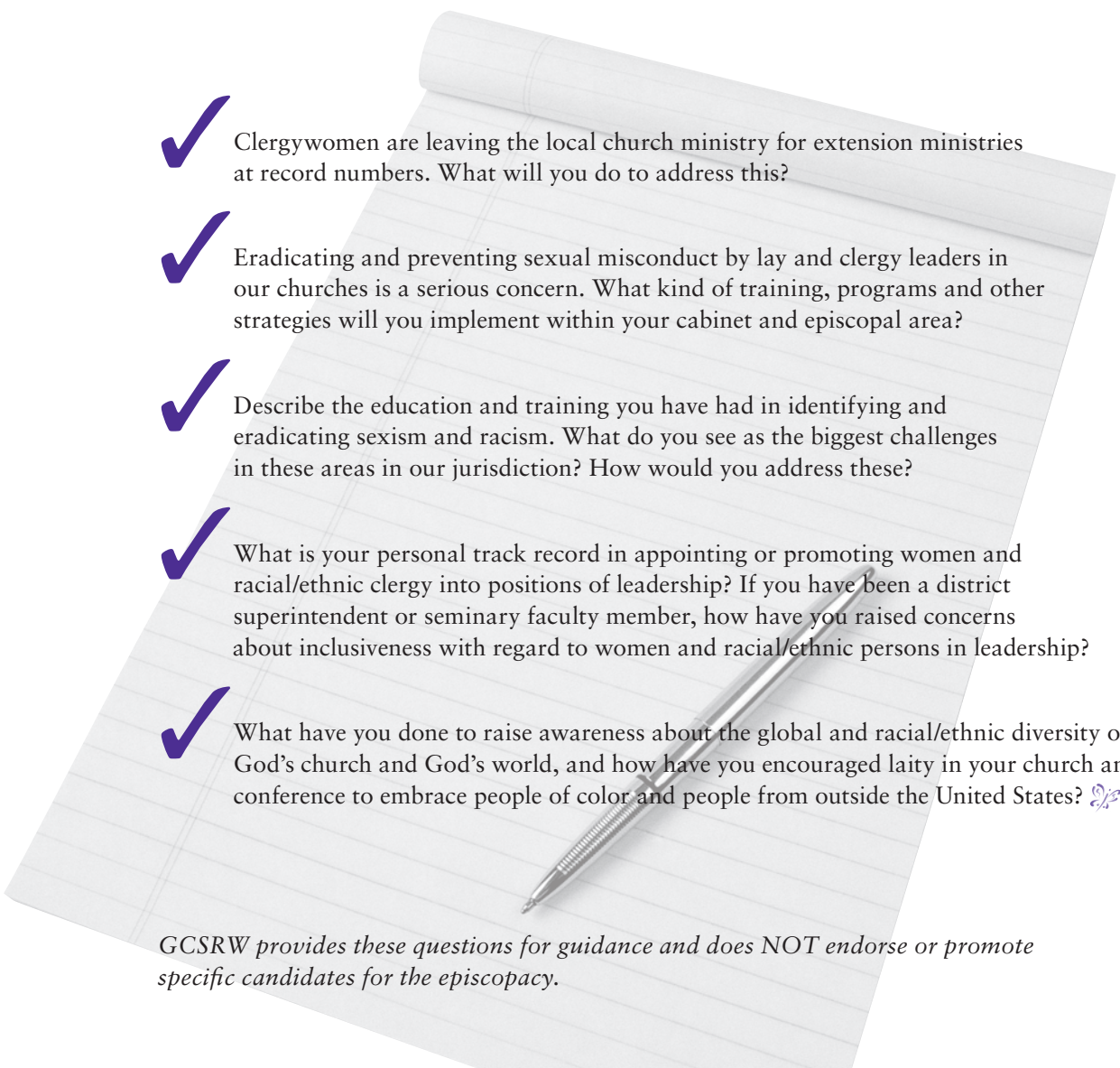
- » **Write or email delegates** (ask for a list from your annual conference office) and ask them to support candidates for bishop who care about issues of concern to you. If you have a particular candidate in mind, be prepared to list her/his qualities and gifts you think will best serve Christ and the international church;
- » **Tell those you know** who seek the office of bishop about your hopes and expectations for episcopal leaders, specifically with regard to addressing sexism and racism, breaking barriers in assigning women and people of color to new places of leadership and influence, and shaping a budget that directs church resources to serving and empowering women, people of color, young people and the poor;
- » **Offer literature to your local delegates** on addressing institutional sexism and preventing sexual misconduct in the church. (Call or email GCSRW at 312.346.4900, [gcsrww@gcsrww.org](mailto:gcsrww@gcsrww.org) for brochures, or direct delegates to [www.gcsrww.org](http://www.gcsrww.org));
- » **Pray**—and ask your congregation to pray—for the influence of the Holy Spirit at all jurisdictional conferences. 

Learn more about jurisdictional conferences, including the upcoming 2008 sessions, at [www.umc.org](http://www.umc.org).



# Questions every episcopal candidate should answer...

Attention, jurisdictional delegates! Ask would-be bishops where they stand on issues of inclusiveness, particularly when it comes to engaging women and people of color as area leaders.

- 
- ✓ Clergywomen are leaving the local church ministry for extension ministries at record numbers. What will you do to address this?
  - ✓ Eradicating and preventing sexual misconduct by lay and clergy leaders in our churches is a serious concern. What kind of training, programs and other strategies will you implement within your cabinet and episcopal area?
  - ✓ Describe the education and training you have had in identifying and eradicating sexism and racism. What do you see as the biggest challenges in these areas in our jurisdiction? How would you address these?
  - ✓ What is your personal track record in appointing or promoting women and racial/ethnic clergy into positions of leadership? If you have been a district superintendent or seminary faculty member, how have you raised concerns about inclusiveness with regard to women and racial/ethnic persons in leadership?
  - ✓ What have you done to raise awareness about the global and racial/ethnic diversity of God's church and God's world, and how have you encouraged laity in your church and conference to embrace people of color and people from outside the United States? ✍️

*GCSRW provides these questions for guidance and does NOT endorse or promote specific candidates for the episcopacy.*

GCSRW provides “palm cards”—a list of questions printed on a card small enough to fit in one’s hand—for delegates to use when interviewing episcopal candidates. These cards will be sent to COSROW chairs and will be free for download from [www.gcsr.org](http://www.gcsr.org).

# Research examines well-being of U.S. church employees

## Ecumenical study shows good health for laity linked to worship attendance

By Craig This

**Clergy and lay employee health and well-being have become increasingly important for churches.**

In 2006, the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits of The United Methodist Church partnered with Duke University to publish *The Church Benefits Association: Health, Well-Being, Spirituality, and Job Characteristics*, an examination of self-rated mental and physical health, religious beliefs and practices, job stressors, and pharmacy claims for clergy and lay workers of 10 denominations.

A total of 11,123 lay and clergy workers participated in the study; 7,611 were United Methodists. Researchers assumed that the health and wholeness of clergy are linked to the health and wholeness of their congregations.

### OVERALL FINDINGS

**Clergy:** According to the study, as clergy get older, their physical health declines but their mental health improves. The physical health of clergywomen declines with age more than it does for clergymen. Clergy, particularly clergywomen, who serve rural parishes and those who rated their job stresses as more severe reported more health problems. Clergy listed the following as job stressors: job demands, criticism, feelings of loneliness, and isolation and stress due to challenges from laity.

The report noted that for clergy, unlike laity, church attendance does not improve physical or mental health. Attending church can be a place of communal worship and support for both clergy and laity.

Clergywomen who exercise tend to have better physical health than clergymen who exercise. Married clergywomen tend to have worse physical health than married clergymen. Physical health improves for all clergy if they feel that family and friends understand and support them.

As clergy get older, their mental health improves but more so for clergywomen. The study noted that an increase in job stress decreases the mental health of clergymen more than clergywomen. Increased income, though, tends to improve the mental health of clergymen more than clergywomen.

**Laity:** As with clergy, the physical health of lay workers improves when income and exercise increase and when they have support and understanding from family and friends. The study also found that the more frequently laity attend worship, the better their health.

Researchers note that the physical health of laity declines with age and job stress; they urge denominations to take appropriate measures to avoid burnout among laity just as they would for clergy.

Job stress resulted in worse mental health for men and women, but more so for men.



Being married and female was associated with poorer physical health.

## UNITED METHODIST RESPONSES

**Clergy:** United Methodist responses are similar to the overall sample. One difference, however, is that United Methodist clergy report declined physical health when working in rural settings. The report concluded that this might be a byproduct of the UMC appointment system and the patterns of appointments to rural parishes.

While married clergymen are healthier than single men, marriage seems to have a negative impact on the health of clergywomen, the study found. (The study did not explore the impact of child-rearing on clergy or lay employee health.)

More United Methodist clergymen than clergywomen report improved mental health when their social network gives them feelings of understanding and support. Higher job stress, however, has a stronger impact on men. Clergywomen with strong, supportive social networks have better overall health.


Male clergy use fewer antidepressants and fill fewer endocrine/diabetes prescriptions than women, but females fill fewer cardiovascular prescriptions. Overall, pharmacy claims are associated with a number of variables, including exercise and job stressors.

**Laity:** As United Methodist laity get older, their physical health declines, but their mental health improves. While clergywomen reportedly have better mental health than clergymen, laywomen employees experience more mental health challenges than laymen.

Also, lay workers with higher household incomes and those working in rural settings have fewer mental health problems than those earning less and those working in urban or suburban posts.

## CONCLUSION

Good health among lay and clergy workers translates into more energy and strength to do the mission and ministry to which they are called and sent. In recent years, the cost of providing health insurance for clergy and lay employees has forced many U.S. congregations, conferences and church agencies to cut mission, education and programs. Promoting better self-care and improving working conditions for church employees is a matter of fiscal and spiritual stewardship.

For more details about the health study, visit [www.gcsr.org](http://www.gcsr.org). 

*Craig This is data analyst in the Department of Institutional Research of Wright State University in Ohio.*

# Let's define use of pornography as misconduct

By S. Kim Coffing and Brian Soper

**The use of pornography by clergy or laity in leadership distorts their view of other people as precious children of God and affects their ability to be in ministry. GCSRW is asking the 2008 General Conference to add the use of pornography to the definition of sexual misconduct, which is a chargeable offense for United Methodist clergy and laity.**

■ You're the church secretary, entering your office to start the workday. The door to the pastor's study is open; you walk in to say good morning. And you're shocked to discover the pastor masturbating while watching pornographic images on the computer.

*This man is your pastor and your boss. What do you do?*

■ An 11-year-old daughter has just returned from church camp. As the family sits down to a fried-chicken dinner, her dad asks her, "Do you want a drumstick or breast?" The daughter bursts into tears and runs from the table. Later, she tells her mother that a counselor at the camp showed her and other campers sexually explicit pictures from a porn magazine, calling it "sex education."

*This has happened to your child, under the auspices of your church. What do you do?*

These are not made-up stories, but were real occurrences in United Methodist settings. In both cases, complaints were filed. However, current church law does not forbid use of pornography, even by those serving the church and world in Christ's name.

Pornography portrays aggression, violence and dehumanization (most often against women and children) as sexually pleasing. It represents sexual intercourse, not as

a mutually shared gift from God, but as something that must be taken by force.

Research shows that people who use pornography cease to view those persons portrayed as human beings and beloved creatures of God. Therefore, pornography users cannot help but objectify the women they counsel or children they chaperone at camp.

Free and easy access to hardcore pornography is available to anyone with an Internet-accessible cell phone, laptop computer or PDA. These private and portable devices also make it possible for those addicted to pornography to keep it a secret from friends and relatives, co-workers and congregations.

GCSRW has proposed a policy to the 2008 General Conference that would define the use of pornography as sexual misconduct, a chargeable offense for clergy and laity. It would further

allow charges to be brought against church leaders who access pornographic material on church property or who use equipment purchased with church funds to view or access pornography (e.g., a cell phone or laptop computer purchased by the church for a pastor).

As The United Methodist Church endeavors to be Christ's disciples toward transformation of the world, we must have ministerial professionals who can clearly see all persons are cherished creatures of God. Banning the use of pornography by church leaders is an important step in the right direction. ✠

**Kim Coffing** is GCSRW's assistant general secretary for education and advocacy; **Brian Soper** of Cambridge, Wis., is a GCSRW board member (2000-08).





# The Rev. Anne Robertson: Breaking gender barriers

The Rev. Anne Robertson of Boston confronted sexism as the first woman pastor of several churches. She is now the first woman to lead the Massachusetts Bible Society, which has distributed more than 1 million Bibles in more than 200 languages.

As the top staff executive, Robertson is helping the 199-year-old society harness the latest technology to spread the Gospel.

“I was hired to reinvent the way we do things,” says Robertson, who was serving as pastor of the Westford (Mass.) UMC when she was hired by the Bible society in April 2007.

“We are upgrading our technology, including a huge re-do of our website. We are working on an enormous partnership with a nearby seminary that will help us produce DVD resources and perhaps get into broadcast media. And we are planning for our 200th anniversary in 2009.”

Called to the ministry at age 14, Robertson says she was the first woman pastor in three of the four churches she served from 1994 to 2007. In these churches, she says she was stalked by men and called “evil” because of her gender. Many in those congregations patronized and belittled her and expected her to serve as both the pastor and the pastor’s wife, she recalls.

However, she says that being the first female pastor allowed her to create new structures and systems to enhance the way churches function. She has helped women of all ages pursue their calling to ordained ministry or church leadership roles. She also taught children to think of God in female terms.



*The Rev. Anne Robertson*

She says that the “simple presence of a woman in a historically male role” can provide greater insights than a host of educational programs.

## **Q** What is your favorite hymn, and why?

“Be Thou My Vision.”

The words have been my prayer since childhood.

## **Q** When you were young, what did you want to be when you grew up?


I love animals so wanted to be a veterinarian.

As my faith grew I wanted to be the first woman pope.

## **Q** If money were no object, what would you like to do?

I would love to be a philanthropist. I’d love to be as generous in my love for others as God has been with me.

## **Q** Do you have any words of advice for our sisters in the UMC?

Sexism is real; don’t take it personally. But aside from a few just plain nasty people, most of the people just need to be taught a better way. Sometimes just being the Body of Christ for them is all it takes. 



*This regular feature in The Flyer highlights women who are making a positive impact on our society or our world. If you would like to nominate someone to be considered for Women Worth Watching, please email Heather Peck Stahl at [hstahl@gcsr.org](mailto:hstahl@gcsr.org).*

*In praise of my sisters...*

## A young woman honors those who came before

*In January, racial-ethnic clergywomen and seminarians from across the United States met in Los Angeles for only the second time in nearly 25 years. Erica Granados-De La Rosa was among them. A freshman at Loyola University and organizer of an anti-racism movement on campus, she is the daughter of a United Methodist clergywoman. Speaking to the Los Angeles assembly, she paid tribute to the women who have battled gender and racial injustice to serve Christ and the church. These are excerpts from her remarks.*



Erica Granados-De La Rosa

“These last few days I have witnessed in an amazing way the manifestation of God’s work. Each day you continue fighting a fight that should not have to be fought, teaching lessons that should not have to be taught, and speaking truth that should not have to be spoken.

You continue breaking silences with each breath and not only do you rock the boat, you create the waves, swim through the waters and fight a whole institution to simply get on the boat that then you will have to begin to rock again. And for that, I thank you.

For you see, however scary it may be for me to say, I too am not just alive, I am living. I am living because I am conscious of the challenges that I am beginning to face in my own journey. And, like you, I am becoming a woman of strength, courage, wisdom, faith, love, and beautiful, beautiful color.

I live because you are here with me on common ground, on the ground that we must walk together; so I ask that you take the hand of a future generation and lead us down the road of Jericho—the road of life. Lead us and teach us that we can effectively stand in solidarity, not to simply change the face of the status quo within the bureaucracy of The United Methodist Church, but to always have the power to challenge the institutionalized sources that fuel all injustices.

Today I stand in a historic place and time that God has used to call each of us to form “herstory.” *Hermanas*—my sisters—I thank you for allowing me to grow in a world where there is still hope that lives in you and by allowing God to show me that hope lives in you as it will always live in me.



### Worth Repeating



“Every woman everywhere should feel that her dignity is being affronted when another woman is subjected to what is happening in Darfur. It’s part of yourself that is being reduced to nothing...”

> Gracia Machel, humanitarian and wife of Nelson Mandela, reflecting on the rape and brutalization of women in Darfur



# Clergywomen association forms in 24 hours

By the Rev. Motoe Yamada

*It was a moment inspired by the Holy Spirit. During the January consultation for U.S. racial-ethnic clergywomen, Asian and Pacific Island American women came together in a new alliance, bringing to five the number of affinity groups for clergywomen of color. (For contact information, visit [www.gbhem.org/clergywomen](http://www.gbhem.org/clergywomen).)*

## During the Racial-Ethnic Clergywomen Consultation, we formed the Asian American and Pacific Islander Clergywomen's Association—within 24 hours.

The idea for the association began when I saw that the consultation schedule did not include Asian Americans. (Meanwhile, they offered caucuses for Native American, African American, Hispanic/Latina, White, Korean and Japanese women.) I talked with the Rev. Hikari Chang, the Rev. Flora Obayashi Wayne and the Rev. HiRho Park about the possibility of expanding the Japanese American caucus to include Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. I could not believe that the positive reactions they had!

During the lunch, we discussed why there was no association for Asian American and Pacific Islander clergywomen. With the encouragement of the group and with HiRho's help, we began forming such an association. We chose one representative from each ethnic group to serve on a steering committee to work on the bylaws.

We met the next morning to vote on the bylaws and elect officers (one woman from each ethnic group). During the closing worship, Bishop Linda Lee of Wisconsin and our other racial-ethnic sisters blessed our new association.

Since then, we have begun planning our biannual meeting and initiated conversa-



A UMNS photo by Marta W. Aldrich

*Elected as officers are (left to right) the Rev. Ingrid Wang, treasurer; the Rev. Motoe Yamada, vice chair; the Rev. Nizzi Digan, chair; and the Rev. SungJa Lee Moon, secretary.*

tions with other clergywomen associations. We plan to be present at General Conference, endorse candidates for episcopacy, and create a system to support young Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders who feel called to serve the church.

Organizers of the Asian American and Pacific Islander Clergywomen Association are Chair Nizzi Digan (Filipina), Vice Chair Motoe Yamada (Japanese), Secretary SungJa Lee Moon (Korean), and Treasurer Ingrid Wang (Chinese). Members at large are Mai Le (Vietnamese) and Kalesita Tuifua (Pacific Islander). ✨

**The Rev. Motoe Yamada** is pastor of Wesley UMC, San Jose, Calif.

## Seats for female General Conference delegates hold steady

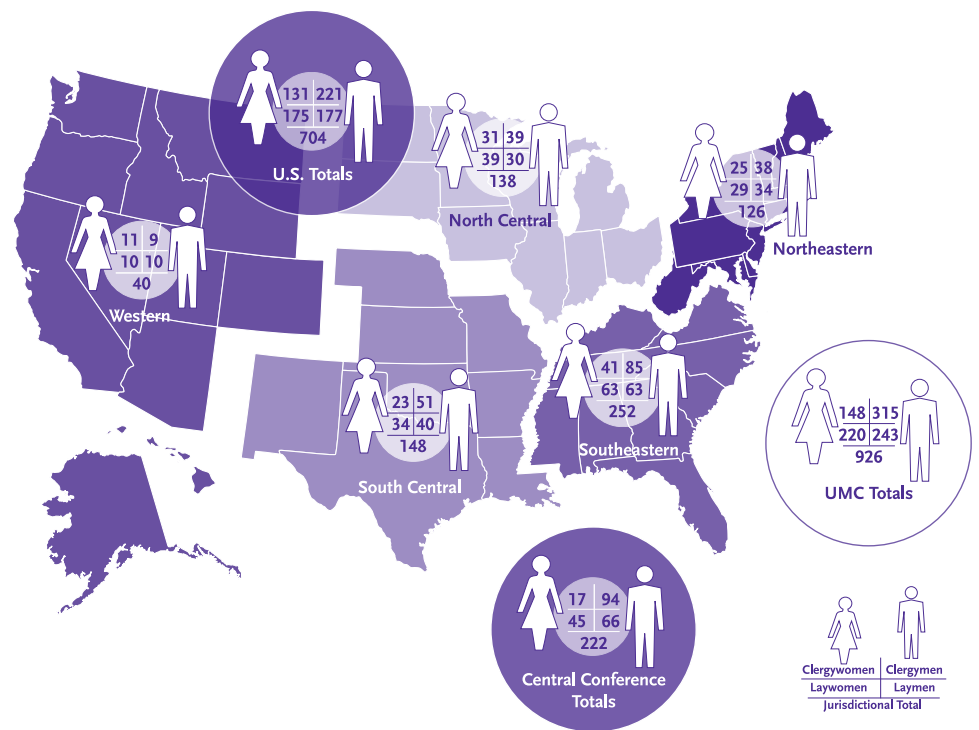
By Craig This and Elaine Moy

Increased global participation is a hopeful sign for our church, but let's make sure that our worldwide reach includes representation by women

### A LOOK AT 2008 GENERAL CONFERENCE DELEGATES BY GENDER AND JURISDICTION

The increase in delegates from Central Conference (including areas of Europe, Africa and the Philippines) has greatly affected the overall percentage of men and women serving at General Conference. The total number of Central Conference delegates rose from 188 in 2004 to 222 in 2008.

Women account for 15% of the 111 clergy delegates from Central Conference and 40% of the 111 lay delegates. Women make up 28% of the Central Conference delegation and 43% of the U.S. delegation. Overall, 40% of General Conference delegates are women.

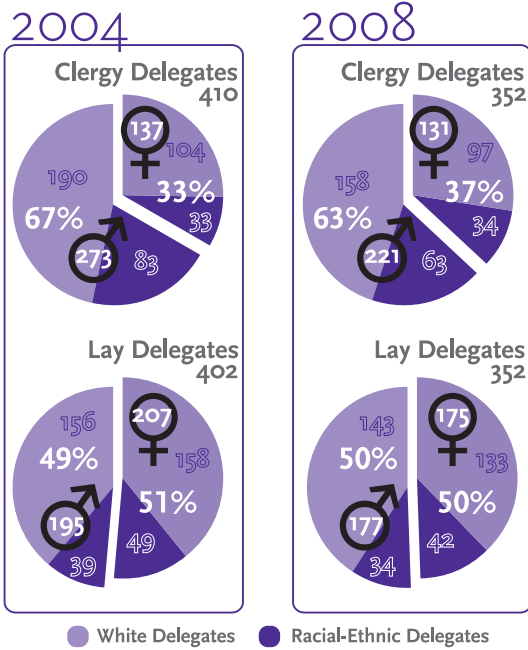


### 2008 DELEGATION HEADS INCLUSIVE?

In many cases, the head of an annual conference delegation to General Conference wields enormous influence about voting and assignment to legislative committees. For clergy, too, being the head of a delegation can be a step toward being elected a bishop.

For the 2008 General Conference, only 27% of delegates are headed by women; men make up 73% of delegation heads. With women as more than half the world's population (and the church's membership), we ask again, how serious is our denomination about becoming more inclusive and representative of women, people of color and people under 40?

# e numbers



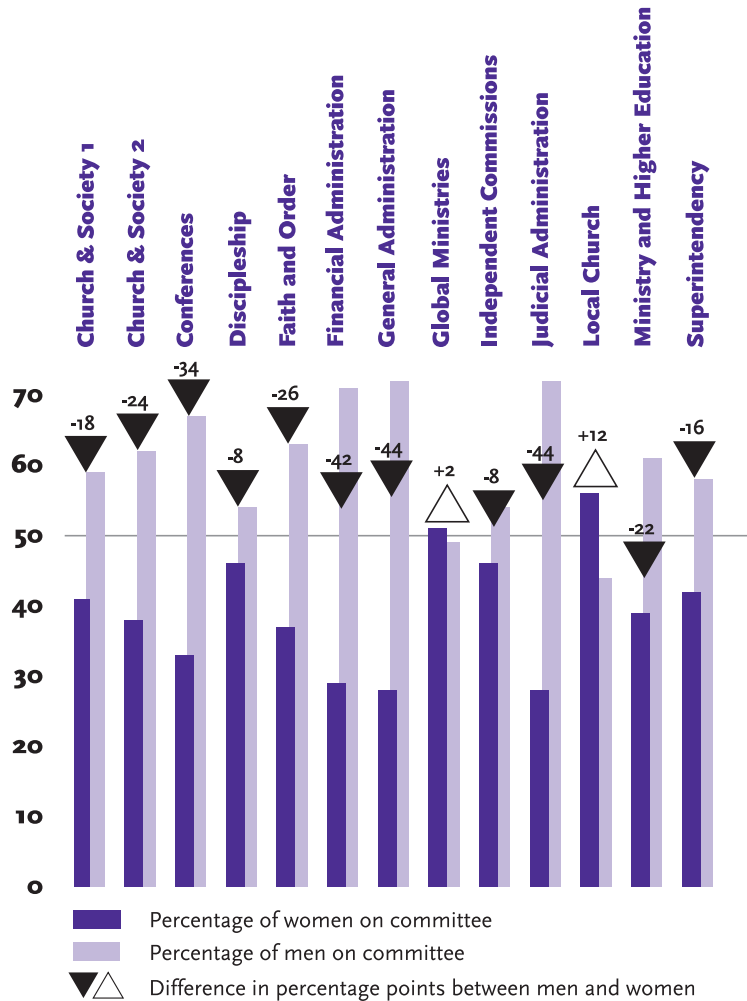
## A BREAKDOWN OF DELEGATES BY GENDER AND RACE, 2004 AND 2008

The overall percentage of women U.S. delegates in 2008 is 43%—about the same as in 2004. Representation by U.S. clergywomen decreased by six delegates, or 4% of clergy representation. And U.S. laywomen lost 32 seats, a 1% slide from 2004.

The percentage of U.S. racial-ethnic delegates remained constant between 2004 and 2008 at 25% of the voting delegates. The percentage of racial-ethnic women delegates increased by 1%.

As a whole, the number of U.S. racial-ethnic clergy delegates remained virtually the same, with 28% of the total number of clergy seats. U.S. racial-ethnic clergywomen's participation increased slightly (2%, or 1 delegate), so that U.S. racial-ethnic clergywomen will hold 10% of the clergy seats at the 2008 General Conference.

U.S. racial-ethnic lay members have also remained constant between 2004 and 2008 with 22% of the lay seats. U.S. racial-ethnic laywomen remained constant as well, with 12% (or 42) of the lay seats.



## WOMEN UNDERREPRESENTED ON COMMITTEES

Eleven out of 13 legislative committees have more men than women members.

How will the gender ratio influence the discussion and decision-making in these committees? What impact will the decrease in women delegates have on the life, witness and mission of The United Methodist Church?

For more detailed information and complete numbers, go to [www.gcsr.org](http://www.gcsr.org).

**Craig This** is data analyst in the Department of Institutional Research at Wright State University in Ohio.

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

★ The Rev. **Kathey Michelle Wilhorn** was recently appointed superintendent of the Long Beach District in California. She is believed to be the first African American woman to serve as a superintendent in the California-Pacific Annual Conference.



< Bishop **Sally Dyck** (Minnesota) and Bishop **Scott Jones** (Kansas) were together recently named “United Methodist of the Year” by the *United Methodist Reporter* for their respectful and positive relationship despite their differing views, politically and theologically.



< On Feb. 12, the Rev. **Linda Koelman**, pastor of North UMC in Minneapolis and a chaplain for the Minneapolis Police Department, received a Bridge Award from the police department for her excellent ministry to families of the victims of the I-35W bridge collapse of August 2007.

★ The Rev. **Hilda R. Davis-Carroll** was named project coordinator for the Office of Global Health Initiative for United Methodist Communications, effective Feb. 18.

★ **Erica Milone Muñoz** > has been appointed as coordinator of children, youth and young adult ministries for the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference, effective May 27.



★ The United Methodist Church is engaged in a new global health initiative aimed at combating diseases of poverty such as malaria and HIV/AIDS. As a founding partner in the **Nothing But Nets** ([www.nothingbutnets.net](http://www.nothingbutnets.net)) malaria prevention initiative, the denomination has helped raise more than \$18 million for the purchase and distribution of mosquito nets to children and families in Africa since 2006.

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# What to consider when planning meetings

By Sandy Zeigler Jackson

Years ago I accepted the invitation to be on the district missions committee. Then reality struck! I was a working mom, employed full time, and it would be nearly impossible to make the meetings. After calling to express my concern, I was told that they would not change the meeting times; however, I was welcome to help with the spring event.

Can you imagine my feelings? I felt rejected, unwanted, and needless to say I was not inclined to just help at the spring event.

When decisions are made to hold meetings during the day or other times that may not be convenient or even possible for some members or interested persons to attend, it sends a not so subtle message that their presence isn't really important and that their input is not valued.

When meetings are held at inconvenient times, it also can limit the participation to clergy or retired people. Youth members are excluded and stay-at-home moms may find it difficult to attend, especially if childcare is not provided.

What would Jesus do? In Matthew 7:12 he said, "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets." (NRSV)

So when scheduling meetings or events consider those who may want to participate or who are members of the group, and try to be considerate when setting the meeting or event dates and times. Consider these ideas:

- Schedule meetings on a day and at a time when the most people can attend.
- Provide childcare for parents of young children.
- Offer handicapped accessible spaces to make differently abled people feel welcome and appreciated.



Sandy Zeigler Jackson

- Avoid scheduling meetings during holidays, to avoid disrupting vacation plans or family time.
- Set future meeting dates during the current meeting in order to get input from attendees on availability.
- Consult church calendars to avoid conflict with other events.
- Develop an agenda with time for prayer and worship and follow a pre-established list of tasks to be accomplished or items for discussion. Organized and prayerful meetings may be better attended and will be more productive.

All meetings of Christians should be times of holy conferencing. With careful and considerate scheduling and planning to meet the needs of the group members, you will be following the Golden Rule and creating a diverse, inclusive and caring atmosphere that fosters unity. ✨

*Sandy Zeigler Jackson is director of lay leadership development at the General Board of Discipleship.*



General Commission on the Status and Role of Women  
in The United Methodist Church  
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