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Young Clergy

July-September 2008

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Wrap Up: General Conference 2008

Church legislators declare more 'open doors' for all, strengthen stance on sexual misconduct, pornography



By the time the gavel fell just before midnight on May 2, delegates to the 2008 General Conference had celebrated a number for "firsts" for The United Methodist Church and its women leaders, including the election of the first woman president of the Judicial Council and a visit and address by the first woman president of an African nation—herself a United Methodist laywoman.

Under the theme "A Future with Hope—Making Disciples for Jesus Christ for the Transformation of the World," the 992 delegates, representing the 11.5 million United Methodists around the world, worked for 13 days to set church policy, structure and mission emphases. Early in the conference, lawmakers affirmed a proposal from the Connectional Table, the Council of Bishops and churchwide agency leaders to set priorities for 2009-2012 based on four areas of focus:

- 1 Developing principled Christian leaders;
- 2 Creating new congregations and renewing existing ones;
- 3 Ministry with the poor; and
- 4 Improving global health by attacking killer diseases.



Marian McCray (left) of Fairview Heights, Ill., and Marion Moore-Colgan of Plattsburgh, N.Y., deliver a report about inclusiveness on the final day of General Conference.

EDITOR'S NOTE: The 2008 General Conference convened April 23-May 2 in Fort Worth, Texas, to set missional and financial priorities for the worldwide United Methodist Church for the next four years. This summary is compiled from United Methodist News Service and other reports. All General Conference photos are courtesy of United Methodist News Service.

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Key
The



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

By the well...at the gate

Jesus Christ, Savior of the world, never served as a pastor of a church. Once he began the Methodist movement, neither did John Wesley.

My pastor pointed this out to me the other day as I labored over what to say in an address during a retreat for pastors in the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference. And with that, Pastor Sonnye raised another concern, “Nothing in our training by the church really teaches clergy to get out there, beyond the walls of the sanctuary or academy, to hang out with and learn from people on the margins.



“If pastors don’t know how to do that, how can they lead and walk with laity as we take the name of Jesus into the world?”

Among my favorite Bible stories are those of Jesus’ encounter with the woman at the well and the blind man at Bethsaida. In both cases, Jesus was not standing in a pulpit or sitting in the pastor’s study waiting for poor, marginalized and dispossessed people to find him. Rather, he went into the streets and the byways and the corners where they hid themselves. Wesley, too, in seeking to renew the Church of England, established ministries of presence in the form of clinics and schools to serve the poor; he didn’t just wait for the poor to get “unpoor” and make their way to the moneyed, well-heeled halls of worship.

As clergywomen continue to celebrate women’s increasing presence and power, we are called to emulate Jesus by leaving the relative comfort of our sanctuaries and going into a troubled world and claiming it for Christ. How to begin? Talk to directors of domestic violence shelters, women’s prisons, and homeless shelters for women and children. Ask local police officers and chaplains where women are hurting and what role the church might play. Visit your local public school and find a way to partner, especially with children who are troubled.

As we continue to push for full participation of women—lay and clergy—at all levels of church life, it helps to remember why such participation is vital. We serve a God who calls us to go to wherever people are hurting, pushed around and unaware of the transformational power of Jesus Christ. And all of us are needed to answer that calling. So, while we are needed in pulpits and Sunday school classes, there are also children of God who are waiting for us by the well, at the gate and on the roadside. Let’s make sure we’re there.

Serving with gladness!



M. Garlinda Burton, General Secretary

The Flyer

July-September 2008

The Flyer is published four times yearly by the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (GCSRW) in The United Methodist Church. Primary distribution of The Flyer is through the Annual Conference Commissions on the Status and Role of Women and Response Teams. Women outside the United States, please ask your bishops’ office to make sure you get The Flyer.

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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- ★ A constitutional amendment that makes it clear *all* persons shall be eligible to attend United Methodist worship services and, upon taking vows, become church members.*
- ★ Stronger guidelines for addressing ministerial misconduct of a sexual nature, including defining use of pornography as sexual misconduct.



◀ Election of the Rev. Susan Henry-Crow of Atlanta as the first woman president of the Judicial Council, which is the denomination's "supreme

court." Four women—two lay and two clergy—now serve on the high court.

- ★ Resolutions on issues where women, children and youth are particularly vulnerable, including "Sudan: A Call to Compassion and Caring," "The Girl Child," "Abolition of Torture, Resisting Hate" and "Mercury-Containing Drugs."

- ★ Continued participation of The United Methodist Church in the Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice.

- ★ Six young people—including three young women—who presented the first-ever young people's address to the General Conference.

- ★ Georgina Dapceвич, a lay > speaker and president of United Methodist Women at Sitka (Alaska) United Methodist Church, was the first Native Alaskan elected as a delegate to General Conference.

- ★ The first time that the president of the Council of Bishops and the presenters of the Episcopal and Laity addresses were all women (Bishop Janice Riggle Huie, Bishop Sharon Brown Christopher and Lyn Powell, head of the North Georgia delegation).

- ★ The conference's tangible commitment to offering greater voice and leadership to United Methodist churches in Africa, Europe and the Philippines.



The conference also formally admitted into membership the 677,355-member Coite d'Ivoire Annual Conference, making it the largest regional conference in the global United Methodist Church. (By comparison, Virginia, the largest regional conference in the United States, has 341,264 lay members.)



ist Church. (By comparison, Virginia, the largest regional conference in the United States, has 341,264 lay members.)

- ★ The witness of students

from Africa University, which the United Methodist church launched in 1988. Nine AU grads were General Conference delegates and 15 helped provide translating services to the other delegates in French, Portuguese and Swahili. ✍️

* Constitutional amendments approved by General Conference must be ratified by a two-thirds affirmative vote of the aggregate number of voting annual conference members: votes on amendments will be taken at the 2009 annual conference sessions.



Conference Quotable))))

“Most people do not like church work, but they love doing the work of the church, and they will seek out a church that understands the difference.”

—Lyn Powell, North Georgia lay leader and delegation head and member of Snellville (Ga.) Church, in the Laity Address

Mentoring young women leaders

Two women nurture the next generation

**Who do you count as role models?
What difference does it make
when an experienced leader takes
a novice under her wing?**

The Rev. Debbie Pitney, senior pastor of First UMC in Eugene, Ore., and the Rev. Elizabeth Lopez, superintendent of the Metro West District of the Minnesota Conference, say that mentoring young women into ministry is an important expression of thanks that veteran church leaders—women in particular—owe to those who opened doors for them.

Pitney and Lopez say that mentoring young women has become central to their ministry, and that they learn as much as they teach. Both also say that mentoring sometimes means graciously stepping aside to provide opportunities for new women to assume church leadership roles.

“I have always felt that because wisdom was passed on to me, I need to pass that wisdom on to other women,” says Lopez.

Lopez brought two 20-something clergywomen to the 2008 General Conference in Fort Worth. The younger women joined Lopez on the GCSRW monitoring team, helping to monitor inclusiveness in committee sessions, meeting with church leaders on pressing issues, and asking hundreds of questions to build their base of knowledge about the polity and mission of the United Methodist Church they serve.

“[The young women learned] that the church needs them and their gifts to help transform the world,” Lopez says. “They left General Conference with a determination to get elected as delegates and chairs of legislative committees or sub-committees.”



(From left) Brooke Heerwald, the Rev. Liz Lopez and Carrie Binnie enjoy their time together during a plenary break at General Conference. Lopez mentored the two young adults throughout the two-week conference.

Lopez was in her 20s and fresh out of seminary when she was tapped to become a voting member of the General Council on Ministries. She recalls that some older, more experienced members balked at giving such a responsibility to someone so “green,” and some demanded that she list her qualifications. Flustered, she made a poorly prepared speech.

Immediately afterward, Nancy Grisom Self, a stranger to Lopez, hugged her and told her, “That will never happen to you again. From now on I will see to it that your voice will become shaped and formed and filled with a new spirit that can speak anywhere.”

Those words and Nan’s friendship changed her life, Lopez says. Self, a founding general secretary for GCSRW (1973-1991), became a mentor to Lopez


and she introduced her to other churchwomen who also become her supporters.

Pitney's first mentor was the Rev. Ed Stanton, who, in 1976, was assigned as her "counseling elder" in her first clergy assignment. Stanton, she said, supported her and encouraged her when she was "a young woman fresh out of seminary, serving in an area where no one had even heard of a clergywoman."

Even as she grew in confidence and skill, Pitney says Stanton's wise words and calming influence helped when she was struggling. "He was also a pastor to my family and me and baptized our second child."

Today Pitney, a district superintendent, serves as an official mentor to women and men entering the ordained ministry. "I hope I have been a good listener and better friend, supporting a person in their ministry and believing in their gifts and grace for ministry," she says.

For Pitney, mentoring goes beyond sharing one's knowledge and experience; it is also preparing young leaders to take her place and being willing to step out of a leadership role and give others a chance. Last summer, some clergy in her annual conference backed her for election as a delegate to this year's General Conference. Pitney, though, decided it was time for fresh perspectives. She rallied behind another candidate and encouraged others to vote for her.

"Someone had to step aside to allow me to lead, so it is natural for me to step aside to allow another to lead." 

Lopez and Pitney's tips for mentors

- » Listen for new voices and advocate so that those voices are heard.
- » Talk with women you believe have leadership potential and support them.
- » Seeks ways to empower them and focus on their strengths.
- » Establish trust and provide ongoing communication. Actively listen.
- » Mentor with the idea that the person will and can take your place as a leader. Be willing to step aside when the time is right.
- » Value and affirm new or young women as colleagues.
- » Offer an alternative perspective or options and challenge points of view compassionately, but avoid giving know-it-all advice.
- » Pray with and for those you mentor.



The Rev. Debbie Pitney



Racial-ethnic clergywomen commit to future training, nurture and presence

By Pamela Crosby

Last January, more than 300 United Methodist racial-ethnic clergywomen held a national gathering for the first time in nearly 25 years. Since then, they have laid the groundwork for supporting one another, keeping their concerns and gifts to the church on the front burner of the denomination, increasing their numbers, and building new alliances with other women of color in the United States and beyond.

Consultation participants called for regular contact with one another at regional and churchwide levels and recommended to church executives attending the January conference to allocate more resources to nurture women of color pursuing theological training and vocations. As a result, plans are underway for gatherings every four years in all five U.S. jurisdictions, in Africa and in Europe, beginning 2010, and a worldwide consultation every eight years, beginning in 2014.

Of the nearly 45,000 active United Methodist clergypersons in the United States, nearly



During the 2008 Racial-Ethnic Clergywomen's Consultation in Los Angeles, the Rev. Renae Extrum-Fernandez (right), a district superintendent in the California-Nevada Conference, shares her experiences as a Latina clergywoman.

one-fourth—about 10,000—are women, and 1,050 of them are racial-ethnic women.

At that January meeting, the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) pledged to the gathering of women bishops, pastors, theologians and seminarians from five racial-ethnic groups that the agency will:

- Recommend that all 13 U.S. United Methodist seminaries require cross-cultural studies for all students pursuing master of divinity degrees;
- Promote more ardently cross-racial, cross-cultural appointments of clergy to local congregations, and create training resources to help churches prepare for such pastor assignments;
- Champion greater access to theological education and interchange for women around the world.



The Rev. HiRho Park, director for continuing formation for ministry with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, greets participants at the beginning of the 2008 Racial-Ethnic Clergywomen's Consultation.



Liturgical dancers perform in the opening worship ceremony at the 2008 Racial-Ethnic Clergywomen's Consultation.

GBHEM staff met with staffers from other churchwide agencies in April to identify systemic issues facing racial-ethnic clergywomen and how agencies can partner to address them. Among their plans: to conduct a U.S.-based study to compare status, salaries and career tracks of racial-ethnic clergywomen with those of white women, white men and men of color, says the Rev. HiRho Park, GBHEM's director of continuing formation for ministry.


Park says she is encouraged by the number of young (35 and under) women who attended the January consultation, and promises to help the church become more welcoming and willing to receive the spiritual, professional gifts young women of color offer to the denomination.

"We provided scholarships to 11 youth, 20 clergywomen under 35 years old and seminarians, and they were all there," she says.

The Rev. Teresa Cook, a 26-year-old pastor in North Carolina, said the January gathering and the follow-up have helped her continue her ministry with hope and enthusiasm. She recalls being surprised—and overjoyed—to know that women of color are serving the church in ever-increasing numbers.

"Just knowing that you exist is a big blessing to me!" she says. "I was comforted so much to find out that many of you began in the ministry at a young age like me and that you know how I feel in my cross-racial appointment."

Park says that racial-ethnic clergywomen have experiences and insights that will help The United Methodist Church remain relative and effective in sharing Christ in a diverse world.

"The social and cultural context we are living in is becoming more and more multicultural and global. Acknowledging this reality will enhance the church's mission and ministry with more practical strategies and understandings of people," Park says. 

Pamela Crosby is an independent writer/producer in Nashville, Tenn., and serves as interim executive director of Black Methodists for Church Renewal.

www.gbhem.org

To learn more about racial-ethnic clergywomen's concerns, for scholarship and fellowship information, or to join one of the five affinity groups for clergywomen of color, visit www.gbhem.org (select "Communities," then "Clergywomen.") Check there for information on future of clergywomen's consultations, and for Women of Color and Georgia Harkness scholarships.

Zimbabwean widow, now seminary student, strives for bright future

By John A. Lovelace

Christinah Kwaramba credits God for the life-changing events in her life and the lives of her two children.

A widowed Zimbabwean pastor, she is one year from a master of sacred theology degree at Perkins School of Theology. Her 22-year-old son Farai—Shona language for “be happy”—is one year from a bachelor’s degree with a major in chemistry and chemical engineering at United Methodist-related Southwestern College in Winfield, Kan. Her 18-year-old daughter Tendai—Shona for “let’s be thankful to God for the blessing of a daughter”—is in final exams at a private high school in Zimbabwe, eyeing a future in medicine.

Education, prayer, sacrifices, cell phones and text messages bind these three who lost their husband/father nine years ago. His death and Christinah’s three-year intestinal illness plunged the family into poverty.

This lifelong United Methodist tells of a vision that followed her 20th and final surgery—of herself, a school teacher for



The Rev. Christinah Kwaramba

21 years, standing atop a mountain full of people, wearing a white gown, preaching, laying hands on one after another, saying, in Shona, “In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit” and seeing lives restored.

From this she concluded, “I think God is telling me to do something besides teach, to enter the ministry and be a pastor.” She gave three months’ notice on her job, counseled with her pastor and district superintendent and moved the family

Q What is your favorite hymn, and why?
“Jesu Ndishamwari Wedu” (#220 in the *Shona Hymnal*), a translation of, “What a friend we have in Jesus.”

Q If money were no object, what would you like to do?
I would improve United Methodist orphanages, hospitals and schools in Zimbabwe and help children in Zimbabwe whose parents have died of AIDS. I’d help educate a student at Africa University and would obtain a Ph.D.

Q When you were young, what did you want to be when you grew up? When I was a child, I was the main actor in my church’s dramas and that’s when I developed the idea of being a pastor.


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.



some 200 miles from Zimbabwe's capital city of Harare to Mutare to enroll in Africa University. They lived in the Old Mutare Mission Home to save money.

Christinah's admission to Perkins School of Theology has its own "God knows" aspect, an unsolicited e-mail invitation for the Africa University bachelor of divinity graduate with honors in evangelism to apply to enroll in 2007 on a scholarship. She greets it with the belief that God "wants to utilize me more" with a graduate degree.

She says her entire life was turned around at Africa University and she sees a position on its faculty as one possibility for her future.

For all their bright futures, mother and son don't ignore the future for Tendai. To help pay her school expenses and to reimburse a relative with whom she lives, Christinah and Farai have covenanted together to eat only one meal a day. 

John A. Lovelace is the former news editor of Together and Christian Advocate magazines and in 1973 was founding editor of Newscope. He joined the United Methodist Reporter staff in 1981 and retired as the editor in 1997.

» BUILDING STRONG LEADERS

Five ways to be a good team player

By Margaret Steen

When it comes to choosing a candidate for a new job or a promotion, employers consistently say they want "a team player." But how, exactly, do you go about showing that you're a team player? Experts offer the following five suggestions.

1 Meet your deadlines.

When you're doing one part of a larger project, you can hold up everyone else if you don't get your work done on time. A good team player is someone other team members know they can depend on.

2 Adapt quickly.

You may work with teams whose members are in different locations. It's likely you'll be a member of several different teams at work, too, each focused on a different goal.

Today, with advances in technology, increased globalization and more diversity in the workplace, team players need to demonstrate they are adaptable and can change the way they work. Attitude is important, too. In today's fast-paced business world, there may not be time to gain trust, so team players should assume that their coworkers are capable, dependable and engaged.

3 Be candid.

Companies used to have a one-dimensional view of a team player: someone who worked hard and didn't ask questions. However, the idea of just supporting things is not as valued as it once was. This doesn't mean managers want to be undermined—but many do appreciate suggestions and constructive criticism.

4 Appreciate others' work styles.

One person may be good at facilitating communication; another likes to challenge the group's assumptions. The best teams will have a mix of these styles and members who appreciate one another's contributions.

5 Avoid politics.

Team players avoid politics and do not get distracted by issues that aren't crucial to the team's mission.

Margret Steen is a writer for Yahoo! HotJobs. For more information, visit <http://hotjobs.yahoo.com/career-articles>.

Madame President 'in the house'

Amid dozens of speeches and sermons, a convention highlight was the April 29 appearance of Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, president of the African nation of Liberia. A United Methodist laywoman who became the first woman president of an African nation in 2006, Sirleaf told the conference that she has worked to improve living conditions and a spirit of hope and promise in her nation. She praised the United Methodist Church as a "forerunner and leader" in health care, education and financial support in the development Liberian culture. She attributed her own success to education and nurture by United Methodist schools and churches.

In a dinner honoring her that evening, sponsored by the United Methodist Commission on Christian Unity and Interreligious Concerns, Sirleaf was given an award for playing "a significant role in building global community and dismantling barriers that separate people."

Sirleaf accepted by saying, "Today, we can start anew." She cited two of the programs her government has started: a Liberian education plan that includes renovation of 50 schools, training of 500 teachers and scholarships for 5,000 girls; and a "market women" fund to



Laurie Hays Coffman examines boots and shoes that symbolize people killed in the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq. They were placed in a park across the street from the 2008 United Methodist General Conference in Fort Worth, Texas, on April 29. A UMNS photo by Paul Jeffrey.

General Conference delegates received and acted on

1,564

proposals, 540 fewer than the number processed by the 2004 session.

provide space for women to sell their wares and have a small school for their children.

Women bishops call for hope, justice

Women bishops figured prominently at General Conference as keynote speakers, worship leaders and pivotal voices for justice, theological integrity, church growth and inclusiveness. Bishop Janice Riggle Huie of Houston opened the conference with a call for United Methodists to serve God by offering tangible hope to a hurting world.

Huie, who is ending a two-year stint as president of the Council of Bishops, said that hope was not only the theme of the 2008 General Conference, but it is also the "nerve center" of Christian life.



Joan Carter-Rimbach raises a question during a plenary report to the 2008 General Conference.



GCSRW member the Rev. Bill Wilson, assistant to the bishop in the West Virginia Conference, and the Rev. Liz Lopez, a Wisconsin district superintendent and GCSRW monitor, report to General Conference delegates on diversity concerns.



Erin Hawkins, general secretary of the General Commission on Religion and Race, makes a presentation to delegates at the 2008 General Conference.

The message of hope, unity and the church’s untapped potential was echoed in the Episcopal Address, offered on behalf of the Council of Bishops by Bishop Sharon Brown Christopher of Springfield, Ill. Christopher pointedly told delegates and visitors that squabbles and power struggles within the church had hampered the denomination’s ability to address spiritual and physical pain among God’s people.

Specifically, she said, a 40-year membership slide in the U.S. church, and glitz and division distracts church members from these primary tasks.

“We abase one another as if our own salvation depends on the destruction of our Christian and United Methodist brothers and sisters. In the name of God, we do harm to one another,” Christopher said.

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In other action, General Conference...

- ✓ Funded a \$642 million denominational budget for the next four years;
- ✓ Created a 24-member standing committee on faith and order to help bishops and the church reflect on matters of faith, doctrinal teaching, order and discipline.
- ✓ Forwarded to annual conference 23 constitutional amendments that would make it possible to change the church’s U.S.-centered structure to a more uniform global structure. The amendments must be ratified by a two-thirds vote of the aggregate total of annual conferences.
- ✓ Retained the church’s stances on homosexuality, including the declaration in the church’s Social Principles that homosexual practice is “incompatible with Christian teaching.” (Delegates also continued the policy of not funding groups that promote the acceptance of homosexuality.)
- ✓ Urged United Methodists to divest funds from companies that support the government of Sudan in order to end the genocide in that area.
- ✓ Urged the U.S. government to implement the universal school lunch program.
- ✓ Approved a full communion agreement with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, in which each church recognizes the other’s ministry, mission, baptism and Eucharist, and the interchangeability of ordained ministers. (The ELCA’s assembly will act on the agreement in 2009.)
- ✓ Marked the 40th anniversary of the founding of the denomination, the dissolution of the Central Jurisdiction, a racially based structure, and the formation of the Commission on Religion and Race.

Get complete coverage of the
2008 General Conference
at www.umc.org.

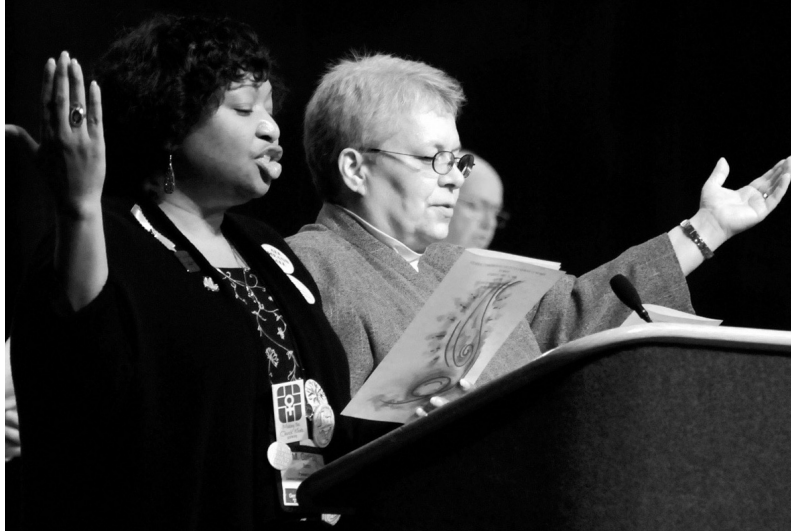


General Conference *from page 11*

She added that church members harm one another when they fight over the nature of God, the authority of Scripture, the identity of Jesus and their relationship to Jesus, the societal issues of the day, who is welcome at the United Methodist table and how the table should be set.

Voices for inclusion

The denomination's first Latina bishop, Minerva Carcaño of Phoenix, advocated for stronger ties between the United Methodist Church and autonomous Methodist churches in Latin America. She was also among many church leaders who called for a stronger United



GCSRW staffwomen Garlinda Burton (left) and Kim Coffing read the litany during a worship service sponsored by the commission during the 2008 General Conference.

Methodist voice in advocating for immigration reform in the United States.

In a sermon to the conference, Carcaño appealed for a change in how immigration issues are approached in the United States and abroad. "Jesus is not an American, German, Filipino, Liberian or even Nazarene. Nor is Jesus beholden to U.S. immigration policies or the policies of any nation." Her statements were met by enthusiastic applause.

The bishop further called on the church to confess that it may be complicit in poverty—that many U.S. members may have more than they deserve and have not been faithful stewards of their resources.

Since 2005, Carcaño has chaired a study on the relationship The United Methodist Church and the Autonomous Methodist Churches in Latin America and the Caribbean. The committee successfully lobbied General Conference to strengthen ties with the Latin American Methodists, including

translating more United Methodist resources into Spanish and collaborating on evangelism and mission.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, president of Liberia, addresses the 2008 United Methodist General Conference.

Sirleaf is a United Methodist and the first female head of state in Africa.

Preaching a few days later, Bishop Violet Fisher of the Albany, N.Y., area,

40%

of 2008 delegates were laywomen and clergywomen, many of them 35 and younger.



further tackled issues of exclusion for which the church must repent. She also asserted that United Methodists must put resources and mission energy into making the church more racially diverse.

The church must create and build “ministries that are culturally congruent with God’s children,” said Fisher, elected in 2000 as the first African-American woman bishop in United Methodism’s U.S. northeast region.

Fisher challenged the denomination to make the elimination of racism a priority over the next four years so that when leaders return to the 2012 General Conference, they will come bearing the fruit of inclusivity.

GCSRW at General Conference

For the ninth consecutive quadrennium, the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (GCSRW) and the Women’s Division of the General Board of Global Ministries sponsored an orientation for women delegates on April 23, the afternoon before the conference convened.

More than 450 women—many of them first-time delegates—attended. Participants met in legislative groups to network and help one another learn everything from salient issues to how to become a committee chair and navigate parliamentary procedures.

*Lay delegate
Christine Flick,
an economist
from
Wendlingen,
Germany,
discusses a
proposal before
the conference.*



*Grace Cajjuat,
associate pastor
of First Church,
Appleton, Wis.,
leads a GCSRW-
sponsored worship
service at the 2008
General Conference.
Cajjuat also wrote
the music for a
proposed new creed,
which delegates
made into a litany
to accompany the
present social creed.*




Words of challenge were offered to the women’s orientation by the Rev. Dorothy Watson-Tatem, a delegate from Eastern Pennsylvania later elected vice chairwoman of the General Administration Legislative Committee.

Watson-Tatem told the women that God had called them to this time and place and that each of them could be an agent of change.

GCSRW volunteers also teamed up with staff and volunteers from the General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR) to monitor conference proceedings for gender and racial inclusiveness. Students from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Ill., and Claremont (Calif.) School of Theology also helped monitor legislative committee meetings, worship services, rallies and plenary sessions during the two-week conference.

A joint GCSRW-GCORR team also wrote daily reports on the conference’s racial, gender, age and national inclusiveness stats, and made live presentation in plenary sessions.

Forty percent of 2008 delegates were laywomen and clergywomen, many of them 35 and younger. Delegates in the 13 legislative committees elected a diverse slate of officers (each had a chair, vice chair and secretary), including at least three officers from outside the United States. Nearly half of the officers were women. 

Where have the young clergy gone? How can the church get them back?

These and other challenging questions are facing The United Methodist Church and other U.S. mainline Protestant denominations.

By Dawn M. Hand

A 2005 study, *Clergy Age Trends in The United Methodist Church*, conducted by the Rev. Lovett H. Weems Jr. at the Lewis Center for Church Leadership at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, examined the decline of young pastors for the past 20 years.

Since 1985 there has been a dramatic drop in the number and percentage of ordained United Methodist elders age 35 and under, the study found. The number of young elders dropped from 3,219 (of 45,000 U.S. clergy) in 1985 to 850 in 2005. Said another way, in 1985 elders 35 and younger accounted for 15% of all United Methodist clergy; 20 years later, less than 5% of elders are young adults.

The average age of elders in the church has increased from 47 to 51. And most church trend-watchers fear that, without an influx of young pastors who can relate to young adults and youth in their pews, The United Methodist Church in the United States will grow older and cease to be relevant to seekers.



The Rev. Taylor Meador Fuerst (left), associate pastor of St. Luke's UMC in Houston, and the Rev. Jason Burnham, senior pastor of St. Luke's UMC in Bryan, Texas, wear owl hats to suggest that young clergy are like spotted owls—an endangered species.

The Rev. Lauren Richardson, pastor of Central UMC in Winston-Salem, N.C., says, “As the definition of ministry broadens, more young people going to seminary are finding ministry outside the local church to fulfill their calling.”

Richardson, 32, a probationary elder, also believes some young pastors are reluctant to lead churches where most of their members are old enough to be their parents or grandparents. (Recent studies also indicate that United Methodist congregations overall are aging; the average age of U.S. members is 57.)

“As the congregation ages, it creates more of a gap causing more challenges for young pastors,” she says.

The Rev. Taylor Meador Fuerst, 26, associate pastor at St. Luke's Church in Houston, says while young pastors may want to try new ministries and new forms of worship, older congregations may be reluctant to sacrifice the comfort of the familiar.

“[U.S. mainline] churches have become more focused on the aging population. They have more of an inward focus on folks already in the church rather than an outward focus,” says Fuerst.

Nurturing young people's calling

Young pastors and younger members are vital to the church's ongoing work and witness. So what can the church do to reverse the aging of our congregations and pastoral leaders?

Weems, who conducted the 2005 study, says congregations are the primary places where people first discern a call



For more information about the study, visit www.umc.org (and see the March 27, 2006 article by Linda Green) or www.churchleadership.com. To learn more about young clergy in the denomination, visit youngclergy.blogspot.com, youngpastorsnetwork.org and www.txcumc.org, and search for “spotted owls.”



The Rev. Lauren Richardson, pastor of Central UMC in Winston-Salem, N.C., enjoys time with her brother, sister-in-law and parents.

to ministry, yet many churches don't provide opportunities for young people to explore and nurture God's calling.

Richardson agrees, recounting that she first considered ministry at a youth event after she was complimented for her speaking ability.

Fuerst says congregations and pastors cannot begin early enough to help children and youth listen for God's will in their lives. “We have to present ministry as a viable way of spending your life. We need to be affirming them and naming their gifts for ministry.”


She says, too, that young people in general—and younger clergy in particular—want to be part of faith communities where relationships are genuine and fuel a desire to serve God beyond our comfort zones. “This generation seems to be savvier in sniffing out authentic relationships. They are looking for authenticity in the church,” she says.

Meg Lassiate, director of student ministries, vocation and enlistment for the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, says laity and clergy should look for opportunities to nurture young people into missional leadership. Her agency regularly sponsors Exploration, a churchwide conference for young people considering church vocation. Lassiate also works with annual conferences to provide scholarships for ministry candidates and leadership development for youth and young adults.

Improving the ordination process

Another turn-off for some young people is the process for ordination in The United Methodist Church, which normally requires four years of undergraduate and three years of graduate study.

The 2008 General Conference voted to streamline the candidacy and ordination process by allowing annual conferences to shorten the probationary period from three years to two years. Another change by General Conference will permit “provisional members” to train in ministries beyond local church pulpits.

“We're not going to get young clergy without the church being more hospitable to the ideas and gifts of younger people,” said Bishop Gregory Palmer of the Des Moines (Iowa) Area and recently elected president of the Council of Bishops. Part of that welcome must include accepting young pastors who are single (or single and dating), or married or rearing children—issues facing most 18- to 34-year-olds. 

The Rev. Dawn M. Hand is associate pastor of discipleship at Matthews (N.C.) UMC.

A snapshot of delegates to the 2008 Jurisdictional Conference

In mid-July, delegates to the five U.S. Jurisdictions are electing bishops and assigning representatives to church agencies. As the church reaches out to geographical areas with ministries and new church starts, are the appropriate demographic groups and voices represented in the decision-making process at jurisdictional conferences?

- » Only one area, the Western Jurisdiction, elected more women than men as jurisdictional delegates. Overall, 56% of the jurisdictional delegates are men.
- » In both the South Central and Southeastern Jurisdictions, clergymen were elected 2 to 1 over clergywomen. Clergymen represent 63% of the total number of clergy jurisdictional delegates. Laywomen have a slim majority of two delegates more than laymen, with just three of the five jurisdictions electing more laywomen than laymen. Still, laywomen represent 50.3% of the total number of jurisdictional lay delegates.
- » White delegates are 75% of the total; the next large racial-ethnic group are African Americans (17%). For all racial-ethnic groups (8%), their total number of jurisdictional delegates (55) is less than the number of white delegates for just one jurisdiction, with the exception of the Western Jurisdiction.
- » Racial-ethnic people represent 28% of the total number of clergy delegates; laity represent 22% of the all lay delegates.
- » White delegates represent 74% of clergywomen, 76% of lay women, 72% of clergymen and 81% of lay men.

Jurisdictional Delegates by Status, Gender and Race

Clergywomen	North Central	North-eastern	South Central	South-eastern	Western	UMC Total
Black/African American	5	6	6	7	0	24
Asian	2	1	0	0	2	5
Hispanic/Latino	0	2	0	2	1	5
White	22	16	17	32	8	95
UMC Total	29	25	23	41	11	129
Laywomen	North Central	North-eastern	South Central	South-eastern	Western	UMC Total
Black/African American	8	7	4	10	1	30
Asian	0	1	0	3	2	6
Hispanic/Latino	0	0	0	1	0	1
Multi-racial	1	0	0	0	0	1
Native American	1	0	2	0	1	4
Pacific Islander	0	0	0	0	1	1
White	29	22	28	49	6	134
UMC Total	39	30	34	63	11	177
Clergymen	North Central	North-eastern	South Central	South-eastern	Western	UMC Total
Black/African American	6	7	9	16	1	39
Asian	3	3	0	1	4	11
Hispanic/Latino	2	1	4	1	0	8
Multi-racial	0	1	0	0	0	1
Native American	0	0	2	2	0	4
White	28	26	36	65	4	159
UMC Total	39	38	51	85	9	222
Laymen	North Central	North-eastern	South Central	South-eastern	Western	UMC Total
Black/African American	4	6	4	8	3	25
Asian	0	0	0	0	1	1
Hispanic/Latino	0	0	4	0	0	4
Multi-racial	0	2	0	0	0	2
Native American	0	0	0	1	0	1
White	26	25	32	54	5	142
UMC Total	30	33	40	63	9	175

Source: General Council on Finance and Administration

How gender affects resignations, terminations at churchwide agencies

Almost two women for every one man left an agency as an employee during 2006, according to the desk audits conducted by the General Commission on Religion and Race and the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women.

The number one reason that women and men left agency employment was that they had secured a new job. Beyond that, though, the variety of reasons offer a snapshot of why male and female employees leave general agencies of the church.

Other reasons employees leave:


- » 41 women and 9 men lost jobs as a result of position termination/restructuring. 18 of the 50 people who lost their jobs were racial-ethnic women (36%).
- » 18 women and 0 men left the employment of the general agencies for “personal” reasons; and 42 individuals (men and women) left for “other” reasons—e.g., to attend school—or because they were dissatisfied with their pay or work environment. A total of 60 persons left the general agencies for “personal” or “other” reasons (representing 15% of the total number of individuals who left).
- » 32 women and 12 men said they resigned their agency positions through “mutual agreement” with their supervisors.
- » 27 women left the agencies because of performance, compared to 15 men; almost 2 to 1.
- » 10 women (9 were racial-ethnic women) and 3 men were dismissed because

they violated agency policies or failed to improve their performance after a warning and probationary period.

- » 8 women and 1 man left their jobs at general church agencies because of family (8) and spouse relocation (1).

The Women by the Numbers article in the January-March 2007 issue reported that women made up 68% of the general agency workforce in 2006; men made up 32%. Racial-ethnic employees—including those from Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Pacific Islands—account for 27% of agency employees, according to our April-June 2007 article.

Women outnumbered men as employees of general agencies in 2006, although they were more likely to hold clerical jobs than executive posts. Still, based on these findings, the percentage of women (and racial-ethnic women in particular) employees that had their positions terminated by church agency or terminated due to policy violation and probation failure was greater than their proportion of the workforce.

Therefore, general agencies of The United Methodist Church should examine their hiring, performance appraisal, promotion and retraining processes for institutional racism and sexism. Although most agencies have rigorous policies in place to encourage inclusive staffing, a closer examination of who leaves church employment and why can help us not only hire a more diverse team but maintain and nurture ongoing inclusion. 

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

New Jersey COSROW sponsors health event

As a way to encourage laity and clergy to better attend to their physical health, the Greater New Jersey Annual Conference COSROW sponsored a healthcare symposium last October for conference clergy and laypersons and for the community surrounding St. John's UMC in Hazlet.

The Rev. Theresa Hoover, chairperson of the conference COSROW, says, "The health symposium related to the theme of inclusion as well as empowerment. With a focus on women and self-care, we broadened the arena to include men as a way of fostering equity and respect for individual differences."

She notes that studies indicate needs for health- and self-care among all people, but especially for clergy who, she says, have a rate of chronic illness higher than most professions.

The October event included blood pressure screening, nutrition information and discussion on lifestyle changes, such as increased exercise, to improve the quality of participants' health,


according to Hoover, a full-time United Methodist pastor and former practicing attorney.

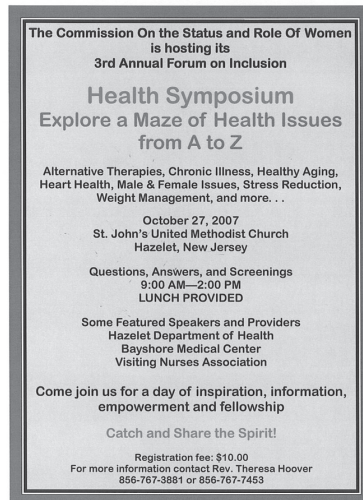
The Greater New Jersey commission has held forums on inclusion the past three years, each with a different emphasis "to help people in the conference obtain a better understanding of

who COSROW is as an agency and what we are about." The 2005 theme was "Women in Leadership;" the 2006 theme was "Women in Leadership—Women Empowered;" and the 2007 theme was "Health Symposium—A Maze A to Z."

Participants at the October 2007 event included women and men, clergy and laity, church members, the bishop, district superintendents, seminary deans, members of the local COSROW, United Methodist Women, other conference agencies

and healthcare providers.

For more information about the New Jersey COSROW symposiums, contact Hoover at integralas@aol.com. 



This regular feature in The Flyer offers ideas for programming, monitoring and advocacy for your conference or district COSROW or related ministries. If you have a success story from your Commission, please let us know; email details to Heather Peck Stahl at hstahl@gcsrw.org.



Conference Quotable

“Congregations are to be centers that invite people into God’s grace and send people into the world to heal, proclaim, work for justice, encourage people to have a personal relationship with Christ, and feed the spiritually and physically needy.”

—Bishop Sharon Brown Christopher, Springfield, Ill., in the Episcopal Address

Understanding Judicial Council and how its decisions affect women

By J. Richard Peck

The Judicial Council is the highest judicial body in The United Methodist Church. The nine-member body is frequently referred to as the “supreme court” of the denomination.

The 2008 General Conference elected three new clergy members and two new laypersons to serve on the council. The council also elected its first woman chair, the Rev. Susan Henry-Crow. Visit www.gcsr.org for a complete listing of officers and members.

The council is in session during General Conference, and if one-fifth of the delegates or the Council of Bishops request, the council will rule on the constitutionality of any General Conference decision.

When requested, the council also determines the constitutionality of actions by jurisdictional or central conferences or any body created or authorized by General Conference, a jurisdictional conference or a central conference. The council also reviews decisions of law made by bishops in central, district, annual or jurisdictional conferences.

Each bishop is required to submit his or her decisions of law to the council.

The council will also consider any appeal from a bishop’s decision when the appeal is made by one-fifth of the persons voting in a central, district, annual or jurisdictional conference. It also rules on whether acts of other official bodies of the denomination conform to *The Book of Discipline*.

The council has a history of significant decisions affecting women in the U.S. and around the world.

For example, in 1955 the Northwest Philippines Annual Conference asked the council if it was legal to ordain a woman a local deacon. The council ruled that since the central conference has no law prohibiting the action, the conference had the power to ordain the woman. (A year later, in 1956, the General

Conference of the former Methodist Church granted full ordination rights for women.)

In 1978, the General Council on Ministries noted that General, jurisdictional and annual conferences have an equal balance of lay and clergy members; it asked the Judicial Council if it was constitutional for the *Discipline* to require a balance of one-third laywomen, one-third laymen and one-third clergy on annual conference and general church agencies. The General Commission on the Status and Role of Women filed a brief with the council supporting the three-part division. The council ruled that General Conference has the right to define the size and representation of boards and agencies and it does not have to use the same formula of equal representation of lay and clergy.

In 2002, following a comparison of salaries paid male and female clergy, the Kansas West Conference allocated \$50,000 for “lump sum payments to women pastors that have been taken advantage of.” The first salary-adjustment plan to correct inequities was ruled unconstitutional because it failed to consider performance or whether all women were underpaid. In a second plan, proposed in 2004, a review committee provided funds to women clergy on a case-by-case basis. Judicial Council approved the second plan.

In 2003, the Pacific Northwest Conference Committee on Investigation refused to file charges against a self-professed practicing lesbian clergywoman. That action was upheld by the Western Jurisdiction Committee on Appeals. However, Judicial Council ruled that there were “egregious errors of church law” and asked the conference committee to uphold the *Discipline* or to appoint a committee who would act in accordance with church law. ✨

J. Richard Peck is the former editor of *Newscope*, *Circuit Rider*, *International Christian Digest*, *Abingdon Books* and four-time editor of the *Daily Christian Advocate for General Conference*.



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Conference Quotable

“ Jesus is not an American, German, Filipino, Liberian or even Nazarene. Nor is Jesus beholden to U.S. immigration policies or the policies of any nation. ”

—Bishop Minerva Carcaño of Phoenix,
the denomination's first Latina bishop

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