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THIS MONTH

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European UM clergywomen claim their Christ calling

Seminary leader says more women in seminary, breaking barriers, serving Christ

By M. Garlinda Burton*

The only woman president of a United Methodist seminary in Europe said that women in her region still face opposition when they have answered the call to ordained ministry, even in countries where women have long held leadership posts in secular arenas.

Still, she said, seminary enrollment of European women has risen steadily, nations like Russia now have more women than men in pulpits, and the presence of the first United Methodist woman bishop in that region has inspired greater inclusion and gradual acceptance of female pastors.

In a mid-September presentation to the board members of the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (GCSRW), Meeli Tankler of Tallinn, Estonia, gave the commission's voting members—most of whom are from the United States—a crash-course in European United Methodism.

United Methodism in Europe is organized into three Central Conferences (which are comparable to the U.S. jurisdictional conferences)—spanning an area from Norway to Algeria and overseen by four bishops.

Women in top ministerial leadership are

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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To honor the Commission's work and ministries toward full participation of women throughout the United Methodist Church, GCSRW offers our commemorative pin. This attractive piece featuring the Commission's logo may be worn as a pendant. To purchase a pin please send a \$25 check payable to GCSRW, 77 W. Washington Street, Suite

European UM clergywomen

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Meeli Tankler (photo by Lindsey Graham, GCSRW)

"While people are used to women leaders in other aspects of society, there is still opposition to women pastors," explained Tankler, GCSRW voting member since 2005 and president of the Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary in Tallinn. The school includes 150 students from Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Moldova, Ukraine and Finland, and is one of three United Methodist seminaries in Europe.

Among the 23 European nations with United Methodist judicatories are many formerly communist nations, where women have long worked and served as leaders alongside men in secular arenas. However, Christians in these nations are often most resistant to women pastors, Tankler explained, in large part because the Russian Orthodox Church, with which many Eastern Europeans identify, does not ordain women. It is one reason that non-Orthodox Christians are looked upon "with suspicion in many places," she added. "For many people, you are not authentically Russian if you are not Orthodox, and Orthodox churches do not accept women."

The Serbia/Macedonia Provisional Conference has the only woman district superintendent in all of Europe, and the church in Bulgaria has only one woman pastor, the Rev. Margarita Todorova.

More women than men in Russian pulpits

Still, Tankler said, United Methodist women are breaking barriers in the European church, as evidenced by the marked increase in women attending seminary and seeking ordination. In the five annual and provisional conferences in Russia and the Ukraine, for instance, clergywomen actually outnumber clergymen, 33 to 29. Among the women pastors in that area is the Rev. Kaija-

Rooka, wife of the region's bishop Hans Växby. Växby oversees the Northern Europe and Eurasia Central Conference, which comprises nine countries, from Norway to the Ukraine.

Even in nations like her own, where reception of women has been relatively slow—United Methodists have ordained women for more than 50 years, yet the first two Estonian women elders were ordained only five years ago—Tankler says women are challenging conventions of their culture to preach the Gospel. She recounted the story of Thea Land, who has been a probationary member of her annual conference since 2006. Land and her two sisters led Russemae United Methodist Church, a congregation in southern Estonia, started 50 years ago by the father in their farmhouse. The three laywomen kept the congregation together and growing, yet were never appointed as local pastors, as is the custom, Tankler said.

"Normally, when laypersons start and grow a church in our country, they are named as a local pastor and encouraged to attend seminary," Tankler explained. "But the conference appointed a man pastor there because they would not allow women to carry on the work. They have a brother, but he is not a Christian."

In the 1990s, however, Thea Land and another sister came to the Baltic Methodist Theological Seminary. Land was turned down for ordination in 2009, "because she was a woman—it wasn't said, but we all knew," Tankler said. "But she will try again. She has really been a pastor all her life. If she is not a minister of the Gospel, who is?"

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WOMEN BY THE NUMBERS

Laywomen and clergymen form basis of leadership in North Central and Northeastern Jurisdictions

by Craig This*



Women make up 63% of the annual conference employees in the North Central (NCJ) and Northeastern (NEJ) Jurisdiction in The United Methodist Church. Most of the women employed in these regions of the denomination hold support positions. Approximately 282 of the 481 or 59% of the women employed by the NCJ and NEJ are employed in categories 4-6 (technicians, administration/clerical support, service/maintenance workers) (see [Table 2](#)). Of the 199 women who are employed in categories 1-3 (executives/directors, professionals, managers/administrators), only 19 or 10% of those women hold executive/director positions.

Clergymen and laywomen constitute the largest number of Category 1-3 employees in the North Central and Northeastern Jurisdictions (19 annual conferences reporting), according to a 2009 desk audit by the General Commission on Race and Religion and the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women. (Annual conferences NOT reporting: East Ohio, Indiana, Northern Illinois, Susquehanna, New York and Greater New Jersey.) Of those employed in Categories 1-3, 33% are clergymen and 28% are laywomen (see [Table 1](#)).

Men make-up 36% of those employed in the NCJ and NEJ jurisdictions. However, men make-up 52% of the persons employed in Categories 1-3 positions. Of the 216 men employed in categories 1-3, 110 (51%) hold an executive/director position. Only 66 men are employed in categories 4-6 (19%).

Race/Ethnicity

Racial/ethnic persons make-up 130 or 17% of those employed by the annual conferences in the NCJ and NEJ. Eighty-two of those 130 are employed in categories 1-3 with 31 (38%) holding an executive/director position. More racial/ethnic laymen and laywomen are employed in categories 4-6 than in categories 1-3 and racial/ethnic laywomen outnumber laymen in the categories 4-6 at a rate of 5 to 1. As with the overall trend in these two jurisdictions, the largest numbers of racial/ethnic persons employed are clergymen (35) and laywomen (23). No racial/ethnic clergy are employed in categories 4-6, but few clergy are employed in those categories.

Lay/Clergy Status

Clergy hold 230 or 30% of the positions in the annual conferences of NCJ and NEJ. Again, clergymen hold 139 positions in the categories 1-3, the largest number of any one status. Laywomen hold 117 of the categories 1-3 and all totaled, 256 of the 415 positions are held by clergymen and laywomen. However, clergymen hold 88 executive/director positions compared to just 19 for laywomen. Clergywomen hold 47 executive/director positions, which represent 57% of the clergywomen employed in categories 1-3. The laywomen's largest numbers can be found in categories 4-6, where 274 or 70% of the laywomen hold positions. Likewise, of the 63 racial/ethnic women employed, 40 or 63% hold positions in the categories 4-6. Laymen constitute 19% or 142 individuals employed by the annual conferences. Of those 142, 77 or 54% are employed in categories 1-3 while 46% are in categories 4-6. Only one racial/ethnic layman is employed in an executive/director position compared to 22 white laymen.

The November *Flyer* will examine the employment in the Southeastern, South Central and Western Jurisdictions.

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

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SEXUAL ETHICS

A call to criminalize clergy misconduct

by Darryl W. Stephens*

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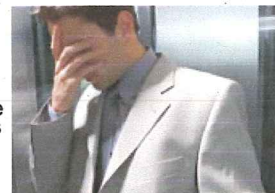
In 2009, the National Organization for Women (NOW) called for the criminalization of sexual exploitation of women by clergy. NOW urges state legislatures to make it illegal for a pastor to have sex with a congregant, just as a physician, psychiatrist or licensed counselor may be held criminally liable for "unlawful sexual relations" with those in their care. Is this a good idea?

Where the church is slow to act, the state is being asked to take responsibility. The problem, as NOW President Terry O'Neill explains, is "law enforcement authorities need to step up their investigations of sexual abuse in religious organizations because it is apparent that many church officials will not act in a prompt and responsible manner."

While criminal statutes might help address the most egregious violations by clergy, the church is better situated than the state to protect the integrity of the ministerial relationship and the vulnerable party in it. Churches must clearly communicate appropriate boundaries, the differential in power inherent in a ministerial relationship, and expectations of ministerial responsibilities. Churches must also hold all persons in a ministerial role of leadership accountable to these standards.

Misconduct of a sexual nature is not an "affair"; rather, it is a violation of the power and authority of ministry. Genuine consent to sexual activity is not possible within a ministerial relationship. The United Methodist Church defines sexual abuse in ministry as "a form of sexual misconduct [that] occurs when a person within a ministerial role of leadership (lay or clergy, pastor, educator, counselor, youth leader or other position of leadership) engages in sexual contact or sexualized behavior with a congregant, client, employee, student, staff member, coworker or volunteer." (The Book of Resolutions 2008, p. 135). Sexual abuse is a chargeable offense for laity and clergy and is subject to no statute of limitations in church law (Par. 2702.4).

Clergy and other leaders in the church engage in Christian conferencing with one another about healthy professional boundaries, particularly about the appropriateness of dating congregants. Opinions among laity and clergy in the church differ widely on this topic. Theoretically, the case of a single pastor in an amorous relationship with an unmarried parishioner would fall under this category of offense. While dating does not necessarily include sexual contact, the degree of emotional intimacy involved in dating goes well beyond the boundaries appropriate to a pastoral relationship. Protecting the vulnerable and maintaining the integrity of the ministerial relationship requires that the church clarify expectations for all ministerial leaders and the people they serve.



The church cannot delegate responsibility to the state for determining ethical standards for clergy, but where there is a clear professional relationship restricting freedom of consent by a parishioner, abuse of pastoral power and authority should be against the law.

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

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GLOBAL IMPACT

Our impact is going intercontinental

New conference CSRWs at work in Africa, Philippines

By M. Garinda Burton*



Thandiwe Masumpa

The ministry of battling sexism in the United Methodist Church is going global, with the creation of three new annual conference Commissions on the Status and Role of Women (CSRW) in Africa and the Philippines.

With the creation of a women's commission in South Africa, three annual conferences outside the United States—Mozambique South, Pangasinan (in the Philippines) and South Africa—now have CSRWs, all established in the past year.

In March, Thandiwe Masumpa of South Africa convened a group of lay- and clergywomen in Cape Town to form the Commission on the Status and Role of Women for the South Africa Provisional Conference. Masumpa told the 25 persons gathered, "Women have carried this church for many years, and it is time that our voices and leadership are heard in every corner of Africa. It is our time!"

After being trained on the basic work and scope of the Commission, Masumpa and company plan over the next two years to:

- Introduce the work of CSRW and create gender-justice ministries in each district;
- Audit and evaluate the South Africa Conference and districts to determine where women are—or are not—represented in leadership, representation and decision-making;
- Monitor annual conference sessions to raise awareness about how women's voices and leadership are evident in current policies, practices and traditions.

This is a defining moment in the history of women's advocacy in the United Methodist Church, because the **General Commission on the Status and Role of Women**, like most other churchwide agencies, were originally conceived to serve and operate in the context of the United States.



Joaquina Nhanala (center)

However, while U.S. church membership has waned, United Methodism outside the United States is enjoying rapid growth. And with that growth has come increased influence and decision-making power about on the mission and financial priorities: 222 of the 1,000 voting delegates to the 2008 General Conference were from Africa, Europe and the Philippines, an increase of 18% over the international delegates in 2004. That number is expected to climb in 2012, particularly in delegations from Africa.

Yet gains in influence and power for women from Africa, Europe and the Philippines have not kept pace with the U.S. church. Of the 19 bishops outside the United States, only two are women—Nhanala and Rosemarie Wenner of Germany. None of the eight bishops in the Philippines are women. (Currently, in the United States, women comprise 28%—14 out of 50—active bishops.) [READ MORE](#)

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New conference CSRWs at work in southern Africa, the Philippines

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Thandiwe Masumpa with a widow in Mozambique

At least one European conference has only accepted its first woman candidate for ordination in 2010, and laywomen and clergywomen in several non-U.S. areas say institutional sexism is still overt in church and society. Therefore, the work of GCSRW is timely and relevant to empowerment.

Masumpa first became aware of the Commission on the Status and Role of Women last December when she, her husband and three other South African church leaders traveled to Mozambique. The occasion was the 30th anniversary celebration of ordaining women in that neighboring African nation.

Woman bishop raises global awareness

During the anniversary festivities, Joaquina Nhanala—elected in 2008 as the first African woman bishop and administrator of the United Methodist Church in Mozambique and South Africa—gathered 30 people from both countries to learn about the history and current status of anti-sexism work by United Methodists in the United States.

It was after Nhanala was elected to GCSRW's board of directors that she better understood the intersection of gender injustice, growth and influence of The United Methodist Church leadership and voices improving the lives of women in Africa. "It was amazing to learn that the denomination had an entire agency where men and women are concerned about listening to women and equal rights for women and fighting sexism," Nhanala says, recalling her first GCSRW meeting in September 2008.

For Nhanala, a GCSRW board member, empowering, supporting and breaking down barriers to women as a key component of her new ministry. She has targeted improving literacy as critical to equipping laywomen to lead Christian education in their communities; has appointed an unprecedented number of women pastors, including three women district superintendent in the Mozambique South Conference; and offered through the church loans to women starting small businesses and education and homes for displaced women of all ages.

Last November, Nhanala appointed the Rev. Maureen Fyglan as the first woman superintendent in the South Africa Conference. "She has a bachelor of theology—more than many men pastor who were already ordained as elders, yet she was not yet an elder," Nhanala says of Fyglan, who oversees the Cape Coastal District. [READ MORE](#)

—M. Garlinda Burton is general secretary for GCSRW.



(from left) Blessing Ambrosio-Yap and Chita Millan of the Philippines

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