

## 2012 Book of Discipline ¶644:

### *Annual conference Commission on the Status and Role of Women*

¶ 644. There shall be in each annual conference, including the central conferences, a conference commission on the status and role of women or other structure to provide for these functions and maintain the connectional relationships.<sup>84</sup>

1. The responsibility of this commission shall be in harmony with the responsibility of the general commission (see ¶ 2103), with the following objectives established as guidelines for adaptation to the needs of the respective annual conferences:

- a) To be informed about the status and role of all women in the total life of the conference. Data shall be gathered that relate to all structural levels of the conference, including the local church. Such information will be regularly updated and disseminated.
- b) To initiate cooperation with United Methodist Women at the annual conference level and other levels as appropriate in order to achieve full participation of women in the decision-making structures.
- c) To develop ways to inform and sensitize the leadership within the conference at all levels on issues that affect women, which shall be projected into and through all districts within the conference by the commission.
- d) To focus on major priorities of issues related to women, which may include sexual harassment policies and procedures, and to enlist the support of the bishop, cabinet, and conference staff in policies, plans, and practices related to those priorities.
- e) To advise the general commission about the progress and effectiveness of efforts to achieve full participation of women in the life of the Church.
- f) To participate in connectional programs and plans initiated or recommended by the general commission, and to utilize the resources available from the general commission as needed.

2. The basic membership of the conference commission shall be nominated and elected by established procedures of the respective annual conferences. Each annual conference shall determine the number and composition of the total membership. All must be members of The United Methodist Church. Special consultants without vote may be used as resource persons. It is recommended that the addition of the at-large membership ensure that the total membership maintain a balance of one-third laywomen, one-third laymen, and one-third clergy. The majority of the commission shall be women, including both clergy and lay. In an annual conference where there is not a sufficient number of clergywomen to meet the recommended balance, additional laywomen shall be elected beyond the one-third proportion to bring the total membership to a majority of women. A person or persons serving as member(s) of the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women from that annual conference shall, by virtue of their office, be member(s) of the conference commission on the status and role of women (see ¶¶ 610.6

---

84. See Judicial Council Decision 712.

and 710.6). Selection of commission members shall ensure adequate representation of racial and ethnic groups, youth, young adults, older adults, and persons of varying lifestyles.

At least one member shall be named by the conference United Methodist Women.

3. The chairperson of the commission shall be a woman.

4. The commission shall propose a budget and submit it for inclusion in the budget of the annual conference according to procedures for funding of all boards, commissions, and agencies of the annual conference.

## **2012 Book of Resolutions #3444**

### ***Eradication of Sexism in the Church***

WHEREAS, sexism continues to be a pervasive and systematic force within our church and our society; and

WHEREAS, sexism deprives the church and society of the opportunity to use the skills and talents that women have; and

WHEREAS, a General Commission on the Status and Role of Women 2007 survey of local churches in the United States found that only 55% of small churches and 62% of large membership churches have policies against sexual harassment; inclusive language studies are rare in local congregations with only 4% of laity and 31% of clergy indicating they use inclusive language when referring to God; and urban congregations more frequently have inclusive language studies, harassment policies, and diverse use of female lay persons (as Board of Trustees members and ushers, for example); and

WHEREAS, the Church remains committed to the eradication of sexual harassment against children, employees, volunteers, clergy and their families, and congregants. Yet sexual misconduct remains a serious problem in our conferences with 1 in 33 women experiencing sexual harassment in local church meetings and worship, and an alarming number of local congregations do not have policies, procedures, or training in place for laity and clergy in stopping and preventing sexual harassment and misconduct; and

WHEREAS, women comprise 58% of the denomination's membership but hold only one-fifth of the top leadership positions in the U.S. annual conferences and as leaders are largely relegated to committees without much financial power like women's ministry and advocacy, racial-ethnic concerns and youth ministry rather than committees which exert considerable influence and control over funding as well as the allocation of money in annual conference ministries, and women employed by general church agencies hold 77% of administrative and clerical support positions (Data from the General Council on

Finance and Administration 2009; Women by the Number: issues November 2010, December 2010, January 2011 and March 2011; THE FLYER);

WHEREAS, the Church continues to lose clergywomen from local church ministry into more welcoming forms of ministry indicating a persistent, subtle, and often unchallenged sexism denies women in The United Methodist Church the opportunity to participate fully and equally in all areas of the Church;

Therefore, be it resolved, that the General Conference continue to commit itself to eradicating sexism in the church and that it affirm the work and tasks of the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women and of the annual conference related commissions and counterparts; and

Be it further resolved, that each annual conference commission or counterpart be given the financial backing to pursue projects that are aimed at educating the members of the local churches about the issues of sexism and at sponsoring the leadership events that enable the annual conference commission members to be better advocates for all who seek equity and inclusiveness; and

Be it further resolved, that each annual conference, United Methodist seminary, and all United Methodist-related institutions are called to have policies on sexual harassment and equal opportunity; and

Be it further resolved, that each annual conference and local congregation a called to have policy, procedures, and training opportunities in place for lay and clergy in stopping and preventing sexual harassment and misconduct; and that progress to full compliance will be reported through the Episcopal Office to the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women at the Commission's request. The Commission will be responsible to report to General Conference 2016; and

Be it further resolved, that the General Conference support the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women as the advocacy and monitoring agency of women's issues for increasing opportunities for females in leadership, promoting equality in filling decision-making posts, and fostering inclusiveness in all facets of The United Methodist Church.

ADOPTED 1996

AMENDED AND READOPTED 2004, 2008, 2012

RESOLUTION #48, 2004 BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS

RESOLUTION #40, 2000 BOOK OF RESOLUTIONS

See Social Principles, ¶ 162F.

# Index of Related Official United Methodist Policies

## Book of Discipline

### Women and Equity

- Page 21: Historical Statement, history of women's ordination
- ¶16.1 – church membership shall not be restricted due to gender, race or status
- ¶161.E – *Women and Men*
- ¶162.F – *Rights of Women*
- ¶162.G – *Rights of Men*

### Ethics: Ending Discrimination & Harassment

- ¶161.G – *Family Violence and Abuse*
- ¶161.H – *Sexual Abuse*
- ¶161.I – *Sexual Harassment*

### About the Commission:

- ¶644 – Annual Conference Commission membership & responsibilities
- ¶2101 – 2109 – General Commission Organization, Membership & Tasks
- ¶705.1, 705.5 & 705c – member selection
- ¶702.3 & ¶906.1c relationship & accountability to Connectional Table

### United Methodist Women (Cooperation and Shared Mission)

- ¶1318-1329 – UMW membership, structure, mission and governance
- ¶1010 – UMW United Nations Office
- ¶1322 – Historical and related groups

## Book of Resolutions

### Women and Equity

- 3441, 3442, 3443, 3444 – Eliminating Sexism
- 8018 – Support for Clergy Women
- 8011 – Biblical Language (Imagery about God)

### Sexual Ethics, Ending Harassment and Discriminations

- 2043, 2044, 2045, 2046 – Defining and Prescribing the Church's Response
- 2081, 2082, 8014 Pornography

### Clergy Family Care

- 2024, 2026, 2028