

From: "The Flyer Online" <lgraham@gcsrw.org>
To: lgraham@gcsrw.org; jrubinet@drew.edu
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THIS MONTH

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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, please send a \$25 check payable to GCSRW, 77 W. Washington Street, Suite 1009, Chicago, IL 60602. Please provide a name and address to send the pin.



**Commission still
leads battle against
abuse**

More than 300 United Methodists working to prevent—and bring justice in the aftermath of—sexual misconduct in church settings agree that our congregations, mission sites and church agencies are safer places than they were 25 years ago.

That our church is a more "reliable and credible" witness to the life-giving Gospel of Jesus Christ in that we're more vigilant about confronting the reality of abuse is due in large part to the ongoing advocacy, resource creation, education and prodding of the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (GCSRW).

"Do No Harm 2011," a denomination-wide summit on sexual abuse prevention held Jan. 26-29 in Houston, brought together United Methodist laity, clergy, bishops, Safe Sanctuary practitioners and Crisis Response Team leaders to improve policies, procedures, prevention education and response to reduce incidents of sexual misconduct by church leaders—particularly clergy. (Read more about "Do No Harm.")

The women's commission convenes the churchwide Sexual Ethics Task Force, which is an interagency, inter-disciplinary team working to help the United Methodist Church at all levels to address misconduct and champion healthy sexuality. The task force, mandated by General Conference in 2000, includes members from eight churchwide agencies, the Council of

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.

Staff

M. Garlinda Burton
gburton@gcsrw.org
S. Kim Coffing
kcoffing@gcsrw.org
LeeAnn Goldman
lgoldman@gcsrw.org
Elaine Moy
emoy@gcsrw.org
Darryl Stephens
dstephens@gcsrw.org

Communications
Coordinator/The Flyer
Editor
Heather Peck Stahl
hstahl@gcsrw.org

Web Editor
Lindsey Graham
lgraham@gcsrw.org

www.gcsrw.org

www.umsexualethics.org





Bishops and seven annual conference
Response Teams.
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Commission helps counter abuse

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Darryl Stephens

Sexual misconduct is "not just a women's issue," says the Rev. Darryl W. Stephens, GCSRW's assistant general secretary for sexual ethics and advocacy since 2009, and GCSRW's first male executive-level staffer.

"But it's the persistence of the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women that has brought us to this place," he adds.

"This place," Stephens says, "is one of growth and progress across the denomination, led by the women's commission. Among them:

- ▶ Most annual conferences in the United States require clergy to attend sexual ethics training before they are assigned to a congregation.
- ▶ "Sexual misconduct" is named as a chargeable offense for United Methodist clergy and laity in United Methodism's law book, *The Book of Discipline*.
- ▶ Most U.S. conferences and many congregations have Safe Sanctuary ministries, developed by the General Board of Discipleship, which help individual congregations develop practices and guidelines to keep prevent abuse of children and vulnerable adults. ([Read more about Safe Sanctuaries.](#))
- ▶ In 2010, GCSRW convened a group of seminary professors who are working to include sexual ethics and healthy living as topics taught to United Methodists clergy-in-training.
- ▶ Bishops and cabinets and church agencies concerned with discipleship, ordained ministry, church and society, church finance and administration, and ministries with men women and children have come together to create educational resources, training modules and intervention strategies on sexual misconduct.
- ▶ United Methodists in southern Mozambique, South Africa and the Panganisan region of the Philippines have recently begun ministries of women's empowerment and sexual abuse prevention.

Victims' calls spur action

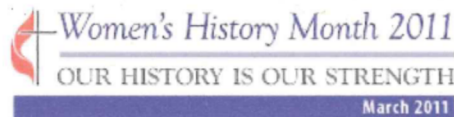
It was the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women that began fielding calls from women—and men—affected by clergy sexual misconduct. "That was in the early 1980s. There was no place else to call, so women started calling us," says M. Garlinda Burton, GCSRW general secretary since 2003.

"Across the church, as women increased in visible leadership—particularly as pastors—"a culture of silence was broken, and we couldn't ignore the fact that sexual abuse, harassment and misconduct was happening in our church. And GCSRW got to work," Burton adds.

GCSRW successfully petitioned General Conference in 1988 to require that every annual conference in the U.S. "develop clear policies and procedures related to sexual harassment establishing grievance procedures for victims and penalties for offenders." In 1992, GCSRW—working with other groups—lobbied successfully to require every U.S. annual conference, every general agency, and every UM-related institution to have a sexual harassment policy and to forward these policies to GCSRW.

A year later, the National Child Protection asked was passed in the United States. In 1996, General Conference passed policies to protect children and youth from harm, and encouraged local congregations to do likewise. That same year, General Conference mandated that each annual conference adopt policies for addressing misconduct of a sexual nature by clergy and other "ministerial leaders." In 2000 General Conference established the Sexual Ethics Task Force and ordered GCSRW to convene it. [READ MORE.](#)

WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH



Our 2011 Women's History Month resources examine United Methodist women's shared history that unites families, churches, communities, and nations.

Although women's history in church and society is intertwined with the history shared with men, several factors—social, religious, economic, and biological—have worked to create a unique sphere of women's history.



Kendra Dunbar

With the 2011 theme, "Our History Is Our Strength," GCSRW offers six (6) reproducible bulletin inserts that take women out of the footnotes of our history, and place them in the main story line. These inserts include women such as Kendra Dunbar, executive of the General Board of Global Ministries' Global Youth Network.

In addition, GCSRW offers four (4) bulletin covers, each with a historical photo and a litany on back. These can be used at any time to present material for helping congregations honor women who have played significant roles in our church and in the world as champions for Jesus Christ. The free inserts are available (after Feb. 20) at

www.gcsrw.org.

Some notes on how to use them in your congregation:

- Print out one insert and/or cover each week, photocopy them and use them as bulletins and calls to worship in your worship services in the month of March. (NOTE: GCSRW does not print or mail copies of these resources; you must make your own copies. If you want color copies, you must either print these resources from a color printer in your office or save the inserts to a disk or flash drive and have them printed at a color-print store.)
- Print out all inserts at once and create a free Women's History Month booklet for members of your congregation. Write stories of history-making women from your church and include them in the booklet.
- Send us a copy of your bulletin or other creation using these inserts, or send us ideas on how to use them. We'll share your ideas with future users.
- Read the [Women called to ministry study](#), available in English and Spanish.

WOMEN BY THE NUMBERS

13%

higher than

Female Pastors

—From the *Salaries for United Methodist Clergy in the US Context* study. Read more [HERE](#).

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SEXUAL ETHICS

Sexual abuse mirrors injustice: theologians

Misconduct of a sexual nature by clergy and other leaders within the church may stem, in part, from long-held societal constructs of gender, racial and class domination, said Miguel de la Torre, associate professor of social ethics at United Methodist-related Iliff School of Theology in Denver.



Miguel de la Torre

De la Torre was one of the presenters during "Do No Harm...Do All the Good You Can," a Jan. 26-29 conference of 300 United Methodists and others who gathered to continue denominational work in preventing ministerial misconduct of a sexual nature.

Several presenters, including de la Torre urged church leaders to embrace the notion that "sex is great and life-affirming" when enjoyed in the proper context, with the appropriate partner, apart from some "misinterpreted" Christian views that sexuality between women and men depend on a tradition of gender oppression, abuse of power, and treating vulnerable persons—especially women and children—like chattel with no say over what should happen to their own bodies.

While Jewish traditions and the Talmud celebrate mutual sexual union between couples and the pure pleasure of sexual intimacy, de la Torre said early Christians created a dichotomy between the "good," spiritual side of human beings and the "bad," physical self with desires and needs.

This physicality-is-bad theology coupled with the tradition of women being viewed as property in early Christian tradition has left a legacy of male dominance as normative in the church and a legalistic, "power over" sexual ethos, de la Torre admitted.

"Our sexual ethics needs to be based on being free and open with each other," said de la Torre, a Southern Baptist and author of *Doing Christian Ethics from the Margins* and *A Lily Among the Thorns: Imagining a New Christian Sexuality*.

Citing 1 Corinthians 10:24 ("Do not seek your own advantage, but that of the other"), de la Torre said Christian sexual ethics should be anchored in the notion of doing no harm and not using one's power to abuse others. "With that understanding, I can't engage in a sexual act with anyone I have power over, such as one of my students. As the one with power, I have the responsibility to do no harm, even if the other says it's OK," he added.



Anne Joh

Theologian Anne Joh challenged listeners to consider sexual abuse of individuals in the larger context of abuse and trauma experienced by marginalized people throughout history. With such a view of ministerial misconduct, United Methodist and other Christians must address and correct behavior of individual perpetrators, foster healing among individual victims and confront abuse and injustice against women and people of color in which the church often participates.

"We express outrage when a clergyperson abuses a woman or a child, but do we acknowledge the full impact of the misogynist culture in which we live?" Joh asked, citing popular video games that offer extra points for shooting or raping women, genocide, war, and events like the Holocaust, slavery of African Americans, internment of Japanese Americans and displacement of Native Americans by colonialists.

Joh, professor of systematic theology at Garrett-Evangelical Seminary in Evanston, Ill., said those who are marginalized because of gender, race/cultural, age or socio-economic bias understand that "these everyday events have created the atmosphere" in which sexual violence—in church and society—happens.

Joh, author of *Heart of the Cross: A Postcolonial Christology*, admonished church leaders concerned about preventing misconduct and bringing healing when it happens to tackle institutional sexism, racism and classism, and to listen to and honor the stories of marginalized people who daily encounter and survive trauma. She commended the transformational nature of Jesus' death on the cross, through which Christ converted a symbol of violence into a symbol of liberation and redemption.



Traci West

In her sermon just before the event closed with Holy Communion, the Rev. Traci West of Madison, N.J., acknowledge the sheer intimidation many Christians feel when called to consider sexuality as "God's good gift" in relationships that are mutual, loving and appropriate.

Nonetheless, West, professor of ethics and African-American studies at the Theological School at Drew University, urged listeners to "lift up all aspects of our bodies and our sexual selves as sacred spaces that God has named as holy and which deserve respect."

For the church to speak boldly about the sacred joy of our sexuality and to celebrate Jesus' triumph over his violent crucifixion, "is a statement of our rejection of the torture of Jesus," West said. "In fact, as we share Communion and as we work to create a sexual ethic that is healing, that does no harm, but is respectful and holy and life-giving, we are "re-membering" and restoring Christ's body, she added

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BLACK HISTORY MONTH

February is Black History Month— A prayer and litany for your worship

By the Rev. Tamara Lewis*



Gracious and Loving Creator God,
We Your humble children
revere and glorify Your sacred
presence which sustains the
earth in all compassion and
healing and renews us in the
face of suffering and despair.

Loving Savior, we sing gratefulness, deep and strong for Your faithfulness down in the valleys and Your mercies in the storms;

With the same Spirit that empowered Harriet Tubman to free Your people with the valor of Moses;

and that same anointing that compelled Sojourner Truth to proclaim "Ain't I A Woman?", a sacred and honored creation;

Through the very force that lifted Jarena Lee, a black woman, a Methodist woman to answer the call "Whom shall I send?" and so she went, preaching, in Your name;

Using the same razor-sharp brilliance of Ida. B. Wells-Barnett to confront the demons of race-hatred, lynching, and segregation;

Employing the very intelligence and learning of Mary McLeod Bethune to build schools and institutions for building up the lost and the displaced;

Incorporating the same bravery and resilience of Ella Baker to mobilize and empower the people to stand for righteousness;

Deploying the same willpower that elevated Fannie Lou Hamer to speak truth to power, to shake against the walls of injustice, to proclaim Your year of favor---

We rededicate and consecrate ourselves to the legacy of our ancestors, to the beautiful; saints of old, women and men who followed Your call; to walk in their footsteps, and sing their songs, and tell their stories;

Until the good news is preached to all, release is

A litany of prayer

By the Rev. Tamara E. Lewis*

Leader: Glorious God, Creator of all nations, peoples, and races

All: We gather in praise and adoration of Your faithfulness in the journey of Africans Americans

Leader: Loving God, Your long-suffering and mercy was with us

All: In the horror of capture, the pain of the whip, the tightening of the shackles, and in the bowels of the slave ships

Leader: Gracious God, You sustained us and kept us

All: Through the brutalities of slavery, the endless exploitation, the wrenching apart of families.

Leader : Holy God, Your comfort and grief was with us.

All: As our sons and daughters were lynched, as our children were raped, as our communities were terrorized.

Leader: Delivering God, You stayed up all night with us

All: During the long night of Jim Crow and segregation, where we were kept separate and unequal.

Leader: Empowering God, Your Spirit marched with us and sang with us

All: As we fought for our native born civil rights and constitutional inheritance

Leader: Helping God, You stayed us and assured us

All: In the midst of desegregation, in the facing of hatred, scorn, and rejection

Leader: Saving God, You are healing us and repairing us and reconciling us

All: As we learn to live and embrace one another—all colors, all creeds, all races—as truly sisters and brothers of one God.

given unto the captives, and no crying exists; and no more pain, for the old things have passed away, behold all things have become new! Amen.

Leader: Liberating God, Your transforming power is renewing us

*The Rev. Tamara Lewis, a United Methodist elder in the Tennessee Annual Conference, is a Ph.D. candidate at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn.

The General Board of Discipleship offers additional [liturgy resources](#) and a [planning calendar](#) for Black History Month 2011.

All: In our upward trek towards the dawn, clearing ground for our children and our children's children to love and not hate, to forgive our enemies, to seek peace, not war, to enter into the Beloved Community hailed by Your dear Son, Our Lord. Amen

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DO NO HARM

Dysfunctional congregation may be masking a painful, secret history

Church's silence about past abuse, crime can stymie ministry

If worship at your church seems stilted and lackluster or if long-time church members are inflexible, unfriendly and suspicious of newcomers, it might be that long-buried secrets about sexual abuse—or other severe trauma in the church's history—are creating a "culture of shame, instead of grace."

This was the message of a clergywoman and therapist to attendees at a Jan. 26-29 summit for United Methodist clergy and laity working to address sexual abuse and misconduct in church settings. The event, "Do No Harm... Do All the Good You Can," brought together more than 300 people representing annual conference Response Teams, Safe Sanctuary teams, bishops, superintendents and chancellors.

Prevention and intervention were key topics for most speakers. However, presenters also focused on the impact of sexual abuse—particularly perpetrated by pastors—on the life of the congregation. When a congregation "acts out," and members are contentious and unwilling to try new things or show indifference or lack of hospitality to newcomers, it is often because the congregation is living with a painful secret that has never been disclosed, mourned and respectfully put away.

Best Practices

Stopping sexual abuse takes training. The Kansas East Annual Conference has become a model for providing churchgoers a safe sanctuary from abuse. [READ MORE](#)

Collusion, secrecy = shame, mistrust



"Without knowing it, many congregations are sending out messages of shame to long-time and new members," said the Rev. Karen McClintock (healthycongregation.com), a trauma therapist and United Methodist clergywoman, who has written such books as *Sexual Shame: An Urgent Call to Healing*, *Preventing Sexual Abuse in Congregations*, and *Healthy Disclosure: Solving Communications Quandaries in Congregations*.

Disbelief, anger and grief are normal reactions to trauma, McClintock said. But secret keeping, silence, shame and blame should not be allowed to take root. Only with healthy disclosure, prayer, open mourning and closure can church members move forward as a vital, healthy, life-giving congregation.

Karen McClintock

"Keeping things under wraps and protecting the institution at all costs have contributed to our sense of shame," she said. "Even in our rituals, we say we are 'not worthy' of God's love. When bad things happen in church—like when our pastors abuse their power—church members don't just think a bad thing has happened. They think they themselves are bad," she adds.

She admonished listeners to help create more "shame-less" congregations, where pastors and other people in leadership help decrease notions of shame and help church members increase grace. Even as the denomination works harder to prevent abuse and remove ministerial leaders who abuse, the focus should be on becoming a more grace-filled body of Christ, rather than on "punishing bad acts by bad people."

McClintock says troubled congregations, especially those marked by past sexual misconduct, are less likely to become bitter, fearful and ineffective if church members are helped to:

- ▶ Accept their church's history—the good and the bad.
- ▶ Discover the source of lingering shame and talk openly about it.
- ▶ Consider reparations to victim-survivors of trauma—those in the congregation and those beyond.
- ▶ Proclaim the goodness of sexuality and intimacy and teach ethical, Christian sexuality as opposed to just making legalistic rules to govern behavior.
- ▶ Stop engaging in blame, secrecy, perfectionism and narcissism—all of which are signs of a "shamed" faith community.

—Compiled by M. Garlinda Burton, general secretary of GCSRW.

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