



JULY 2011

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



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 also be worn as a pendant. To purchase, please send your name, mailing address and a \$25 check payable to GCSRW, 77 W. Washington Street, Suite 1009, Chicago, IL 60602.

## Advocacy for Women

### ENDOWMENT FUND

You can make a donation to the Advocacy for Women Endowment Fund to fund antisexism ministries around the world, a permanent GCSRW internship, and research about women. Click [HERE](#) for more information.



The people  
of the United  
Methodist  
Church®

### In this issue:

- » Church Systems Task Force Releases Recommendations—Page 2
- » Women by the Numbers: Maternity Leave—Page 5
- » Congregational Intervention Best Practices —Page 6
- » Seeking gender role balance—Page 7
- » Women Worth Watching: A mother's request —Page 9
- » United Methodist Deaconesses Today —Page 10

## GENERAL CONFERENCE

### Church Systems Task Force Releases Recommendations for Better Clergy and Church-wide Health

“Unhealthy clergy cannot lead healthy congregations.”

[read more»](#)

## WOMEN BY THE NUMBERS

### Responses to the church's revised maternity leave policy

In February 2011, The United Methodist Church revised its maternity leave policy to allow a mother who just had a baby to have 18 days paid time off, medical leave and vacation days.

[read more»](#)

## SEXUAL ETHICS

### Congregational Intervention Best Practices

*Editor's note: This is the third in a series of FLYER articles.*

[read more»](#)

## SEEKING GENDER ROLE BALANCE

### What do we see in our publications?

Your local church and annual conference COSROW can become constructive instructors and reporters about how genders are represented.

[read more»](#)

## WOMEN WORTH WATCHING

### A mother's request: Teaching that God is not male (or female)

Early in 2010, Carol Napier decided to begin a ministry that educates people about sexism in the church – specifically the fact that God is not male (or female).

[read more»](#)

## DEACONESS SERIES

### Called to the Edges: United Methodist Deaconesses Today

*Editor's note: This is part two of a series.*

[read more»](#)

## 2012 GENERAL CONFERENCE AND YOU

# Proposals address clergy health and its impact on congregations

*By Mary Catherine Dean*

“Unhealthy clergy cannot lead healthy congregations,” says Mackie L. Norris, health-care professional, clergy-family advocate and a member of a United Methodist task force that studied clergy health and well-being and its impact on the energy and vitality of congregations.

Norris and other members of the Church Systems Task Force (CSTF) were mandated by the 2008 General Conference to study clergy health and how church employment policies and practices relate to congregational vigor and effectiveness. The task force was convened by the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits and the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

“We need healthy clergy who will create and lead healthy congregations that will transform the world for Jesus Christ,” says Norris. “The mission is not being attained and cannot be attained without healthy clergy and healthy congregations.”

As stated in the CSTF Report, 25 years ago clergy members were among the healthiest of professionals. Clergy health has been in decline ever since, with increases in both the number and cost of health and disability claims. The prevalence of chronic conditions among clergy has also increased, exceeding that in other professions—even when adjusted for differences in demographics. The CSTF Report Online Appendix contains research results of various studies provided to the task force. Findings included:

1. Medical risks are present for clergy and need further study. While clergy do experience emotional health problems, evidence suggests that they are more prone to medical issues like blood sugar, blood pressure, cholesterol and the like (Online Appendix, p. 3). Stress and job satisfaction are largely a function of the nature of congregational life. “Although stress and satisfaction were related significantly to working hours, salary and benefits, they were much more strongly related to characteristics of the congregation’s functioning, including its morale, the presence of conflict, lack of a shared understanding of the role of pastor and problems with other staff or lay leaders” (Online Appendix, p. 4).
2. Serving multiple churches and serving rural churches were associated with poorer mental health (Online Appendix, p. 6).

**Editor’s Note:** *General Conference, the top law-making body of The United Methodist Church, convenes April 24-May 4, 2012, in Tampa, Fla. The Flyer is offering a series of articles to inform, prepare and urge delegates and all church members to consider how actions will hurt or hinder lay or clergy women.*



*Dr. Mackie L. Harper Norris,  
Church Systems Task Force member*

***“Unhealthy clergy cannot lead healthy congregations.”***

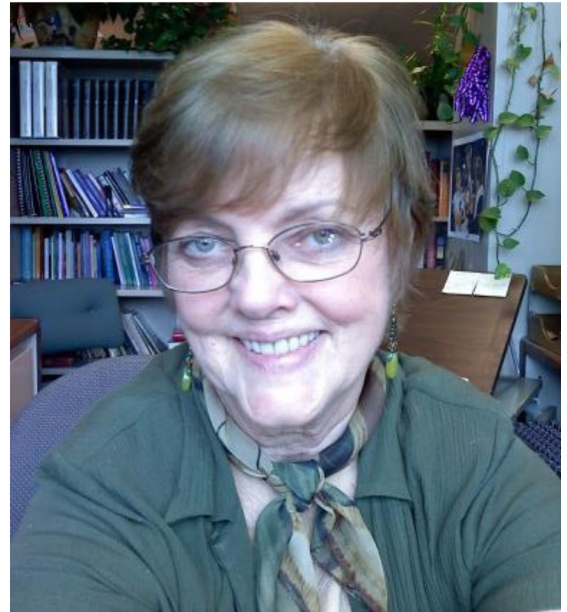
STORY CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

STORY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

*“The recommendations are equally important to the health of both men and women clergy.”*

3. Being female is associated with more pharmaceutical claims (Online Appendix, p. 7).
4. Clergy with multiple appointments, those who serve smaller churches and those who move frequently have higher health risk scores (Online Appendix, p. 9).

The 21-member task force, chaired by Mississippi Bishop Hope Morgan Ward, will report its findings to the 2012 General Conference and recommend ways the denomination can foster healthier living among clergy and help clergypersons who no longer hear “the call” or feel they are in the right vocation to transition out of professional ministry. These recommendations address:



*Pamela Dilmore,  
an elder in connection with  
the Missouri Conference*

1. **Candidacy for ordination.** The task force recommends more rigorous screening of clergy candidates throughout the ordination/licensing process. Further, the task force recommends teaching and reinforcing candidates the importance of self-care as well as healthy boundaries with colleagues and those with whom they minister.
2. **Development of specific guidelines to support work/life balance.** The task force states that clergy health requires that bishops, cabinets and boards of ordained ministries encourage—even require—pastors to take renewal leave and vacations, engage in spiritual discipline and study, get physical exercise and nurture intimate, life-giving relationships.
3. **Longer appointments and use of interim pastors.** The group pointed to several studies suggesting that congregations benefit and grow when effective pastors are assigned for seven years or more. Although United Methodist clergy are appointed annually, the task force recommends longer-tenure clergy appointments and using interim pastors to help congregations in crisis or transition.
4. **Clergy supervision.** The task force recommends revising district superintendent leadership training and emphasizing responsibilities with clergy and families; coaching, nurturing and providing feedback; setting an example; monitoring clergy health and wellness; and providing spiritual guides for clergy throughout their careers.
5. **Exiting ordained ministry.** The task force identifies a need for establishing a standardized program for deacons and elders who wish to withdraw from ministry, providing for a grace-filled exit.

Citing the gospel and the Wesleyan tradition, the recommendations acknowledge the need for attention to clergy health from the time people discern God’s call. They state that the denomination at all levels must encourage and support a healthy approach to the many and varied demands of ministerial life.

STORY CONTINUED ON PAGE 4



## STORY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

“Health affects the whole connection: family, congregation, community and the wider church itself,” the task force report reads.

The task force identified 13 factors in current church systems which negatively impact health. Among these factors are (see p. 13 of the CSTF Report for the complete list):

- **Personal centeredness**—feeling a lack of control over one’s life; ruminating about the past; difficulty experiencing the presence of God
- **Work/life balance**—having difficulty balancing multiple roles; feeling guilty taking time to exercise; avoiding health care because of time demands; struggling to achieve overall work/life balance
- **Job satisfaction**—feeling dissatisfied with one’s appointments; feeling isolated at work; feeling disappointed with ministry; wishing for a way to exit the system
- **Marital and family satisfaction**—low marital satisfaction among clergy with families; low appointment satisfaction among spouses and/or children
- **Appointment changes and relocation**—more frequent appointment changes; more frequent long-distance moves

The group admittedly has not looked specifically at the findings in terms of gender, and whether women clergy are more or less healthy or need more or less support. However, the Rev. Pamela Dilmore, an elder in Missouri Conference who is appointed to edit church school publications, says, “The recommendations are equally important to the health of both men and women clergy. Stress, health, emotions, attitudes, thinking, and skills for ministry are important considerations for all who want to serve as healthy ministers.”

One recommendation stands out for Dilmore: “The recommendation for longer-tenure appointments would help both men and women. In the case of women, remaining in the pastorate longer gives time for adjustments the people might need to make in their thinking about women as pastors.”

To delve deeper into how the 13 factors affect women clergy in particular would require additional research, says Norris, who did a pilot study on clergy spouse concerns for GCSRW in 2005. “Looking at various factors such as gender differences, regional differences, and so on would provide data for further study and would allow the 13 areas of concern to be refined.” While the work of the task force is completed, the GBPHB’s Center for Health is planning to launch in 2012 an annual clergy health survey that will be representative in terms of racial-ethnic minorities, gender and jurisdiction. The survey will focus on physical health, emotional/mental health, spirituality, church environment and vocational experiences. The annual data resulting from the survey will allow further analysis to identify ways to best support the health needs of female clergy.

Dilmore suggests that the task force report might not emphasize sufficiently “the explicit identification and acknowledgement of God’s call as a primary source of health and wholeness in ministry. I am speaking of health and wholeness in the biblical sense. The single biggest health factor for me is my own sense that I am doing what God has called me to do.”

**The full report of the CSTF is available at <http://www.gbphb.org/TheWell/Root/CFH/4225.pdf>.**

—Mary Catherine Dean is associate publisher and editor-in-chief at The United Methodist Publishing House.



## WOMEN BY THE NUMBERS

# Why the change in UM agency maternity leave matters

By Heather Peck Stahl

Earlier this year, policies governing United Methodist general agencies were expanded to allow women up to 18 days of paid time off after the birth of a child. The General Commission on the Status and Role of Women had pushed for this change for 11 years.

Until this change, adopted in February by the Committee on Personnel Policies and Practices, women employees did not have paid maternity leave. Instead, they had to use vacation days or sick leave after giving birth. Adoptive parents, however, had 22 days of paid adoption leave plus vacation days and fathers could have 22 days of paid paternity leave plus vacation days.

The new policy grants the same amount of time—18 days—for adoptive leave, paternity leave and maternity leave. Personnel services manager at General Council on Finance and Administration, Joanne Concepcion explained that the new policy is in addition to the six to eight weeks of paid medical leave afforded new birth mothers, but also adds 18 days paid time off for the birth of their newborn.

The Rev. Lynn Hill of First UMC in Franklin, Tenn., chairperson of the churchwide personnel committee, says the intent of the old maternity policy “was not intended to be harsher on new mothers and more generous to new fathers and adoptive parents. I think it was more of a lack of understanding of the needs of new mothers/fathers and the important role these first few months play in the life of both the child and the parents.”

“The new policy now recognizes the significance of these early days in the life of the child and parents by now making a provision for this,” Hill adds. “It can only improve the health (physical and mental) of both parents and child. It should be a positive message for the morale of working mothers by acknowledging this importance.”

Office manager of the Connectional Table of The United Methodist Church, Stefany Simmons says, “Having paid maternity leave is crucial, because as a new mother you are experiencing so many stressful challenges, one of the main ones is lack of sleep. It is impossible to work productively during a time of such exhaustion, yet the bills still have to be paid.”

“[Under the new policy] I feel like working mothers and soon-to-be mothers are getting a fair amount of time for leave without using all of their vacation time,” says Frances Jett Roberts, assistant general secretary for administration and human resources at the General board of Church and Society. “We are the church so we should be better than corporate America with our policies.”

**Editor’s Note:** In the June issue of The Flyer, we reported that GCSRW successfully championed a change in policy for United Methodist churchwide agencies that grants maternity leave for new mothers after giving birth. In this issue, church leaders explain why this change matters.



The Rev. Lynn Hill



Stefany Simmons

—Heather Peck Stahl is editor of The Flyer.

## SEXUAL ETHICS

# Congregational Intervention Best Practices

By Sally B. Dolch

Response Team intervention following a case of alleged sexual misconduct requires strong partnerships with judicatory leaders, timeliness and careful planning.

Healing the breach is the goal of congregational intervention: moving through disorientation to reorientation and from grief to hope and renewal of ministry in Jesus' name. Response Teams can make the difference between a church that is wounded but able to heal and a church that is mortally damaged.

Based on field research with Response Team leaders in more than 30 U.S. United Methodist annual conferences, I have identified eight congregational intervention best practices to help church members make the choice to heal:

1. **Respond quickly.** Timely communication about misconduct conveys love and respect for the congregation and mitigates deception and the spread of misinformation. Rapid response also minimizes fear, empowers church members and hastens the healing process.
2. **Carefully plan devotions.** Devotions offer theological foundations upon which to build an intervention. Carefully planned devotions reflect strengths and capacities of the congregation and can build bridges of understanding and respect between church members and responders.
3. **Meet with church leaders and the district superintendent prior to congregational intervention.** Key leaders, staff parish relations or personnel committees are empowered to fulfill their leadership roles when they meet with a judicatory official prior to the congregational intervention. Such a 'pre-meeting' also facilitates careful planning for the intervention.
4. **Ensure time for questions and sacred listening.** Responders reflect God's love to congregations experiencing trauma. They encourage church members to ask questions as they patiently and compassionately listen.
5. **Have a judicatory representative read a disclosure letter and provide assurances about the congregation's future.** A written disclosure letter read to a congregation encourages factual and consistent information sharing. The presence of a judicatory leader speaking assurances brings hope to the congregation and empowers the response team.
6. **Meet with the congregation as often as they request and check in with the congregation periodically.** Empowerment following misconduct involves walking alongside a congregation until shock and grief diminish enough to give the work of healing and the care of the people back to the congregation. Responders that meet multiple times with disorientated congregations report the most encouraging healing outcomes.
7. **Guide the congregation to theological reflection that assists healing.** Responders that revisit biblical stories of accountability and godly expectations of the church help congregations perceive and accomplish the work of healing. Often congregations experience God's abiding care in constructive new ways.
8. **Offer a non-anxious presence to people experiencing great stress.** During a congregational intervention empowerment and accompaniment are the goals, so pressure is absent, and patient kindness abounds. Responders offer a presence, compassion and affirmation delivered with seasoned sensitivity.

**For more information on congregational intervention, see GCSRW's "Guide to Using a Response Team."**

—The Rev. Sally B. Dolch, pastor of Salem and Bethany UMCs in Pocomoke, Md., completed her doctor of ministry thesis, "Healing the Breach: Response Team Intervention in United Methodist Congregations," at Wesley Theological Seminary in 2010.

## SEEKING GENDER ROLE BALANCE

# Seeking gender role balance in UM church media

*By Kim Coffing*

Your local church and annual conference Commission on the Status and Role of Women can serve as constructive teachers and reporters for how women/girls and men/boys are represented in congregational and conference publications and other media.

Newspapers and newsletters, websites, brochures, photo galleries, worship resources and other church media—including the hymns, themes and images used in worship—are “snapshots” that reflect the people, programs, priorities, values and overall culture of The United Methodist Church.

What picture does your media portray? Monitor and collect about six months of newsletters, websites, etc., and evaluate them. Use this checklist for how gender roles are portrayed and perceived through your church media.

### **In a snapshot of your church on a Sunday morning, what would it reveal about gender roles? Gender balance? Gender bias?**

What do women do?

What do men do?

Where are women generally located?

Where are men generally located?

### **In a snapshot of the worship service of your church, what is suggested about gender identity and gender roles of those in the congregation?**

Of those in the Bible?

Of those in the hymns/songs?

Of those in the prayers of the church?

Of God?

Of authority?

Of power?

Of needs?

Of priorities?

### **In a snapshot of your church’s lay leadership, what would it reveal about gender roles? Gender balance? Gender bias?**

**When men and women are named in the church’s publication(s), are they identified by their family status (married, single, parents)? Do you think it is important information? Why or why not?**

STORY CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



STORY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

**When men and women appear in pictures in the church’s publication(s), are the “framing” of the pictures consistence or different?**

For instance, are there more “head shots” of one gender and more “full body shots” of the other?  
Are there differences in where and how leadership is portrayed by the context of the picture(s)?  
If there are differences, what do these differences suggest about power and authority and how each merits value?

**When concerns for women/girls are mentioned in worship services, who tends to speak for women/girls? Who tends to speaks for men/boys?**

**How are gender stereotypes reinforced in your local church/conference?**

Where?  
How?  
When?

**How are gender stereotypes challenged in your local church/conference?**

Where?  
How?  
When?  
What happens to those who challenge gender stereotyping?

**How are gender roles becoming more “balanced” in your local church/conference?**

**How are gender roles represented in the church’s educational materials? In the materials displayed on the church’s walls (posters, reports, announcements, etc)?**

After you have reviewed several months of publications and have made your own assessment, meet with those who are responsible for your church’s or conference’s media “portrayals” and share your findings.

- Affirm where gender balance is present and consistent.
- Identify how the publications can be strengthened in their gender role portrayals.
- Partner with those producing the “pictures” of your church/conference to be reviewers of publications before they are distributed.
- Create an inclusive media guideline for the church/conference’s publications.
- Set a date (once a quarter or twice a year) for your next media review and evaluation.
- Report your findings and your “follow-up” monitoring.

—S. Kim Coffing is assistant general secretary for education and advocacy for GCSRW.

## WOMEN WORTH WATCHING

## A mother's quest: To know the God who is more than male or female

*By Heather Peck Stahl*

A year ago, Carol Napier felt called to the ministry of challenging sexism in the church, particularly the notion God must be male.

"If God is male, then male is superior and female is inferior. This is a harmful message," says Napier, a member of Glenn Memorial UMC in Atlanta, Ga.

So she launched, Our Heavenly Parent, a sexism education ministry that includes two bumper stickers that read: "God doesn't have boy parts or girl parts" and "You wouldn't say that God has white skin, so why do you say that God is male? Sexism hurts just like racism." Napier explains, "Often, we can recognize racism, but we cannot quite see sexism."

Napier was inspired to act on behalf of her daughters Sarah, 11, and Kate, 16, whom she says, are exposed to "more sexism in church than any other place." She notes that many churches refer to God as a male in prayers, creeds and hymns. She says her concern grew as she learned about girls around the world who are devalued and oppressed.

A Sunday school teacher, Napier says, "A great place to start to change the world is with children." She says she teaches children to pray to God Our Parent.

"My daughter, Sarah, sometimes worries about what people will say about our bumper stickers," Napier says. "I remind her that we must be the change we wish to see in the world."

Through her self-funded ministry, Napier says she also revises hymns, affirmations of faith and prayers to reflect the reality that God is neither male nor female. She also encourages people to share their revisions on their [Facebook page](#).

In addition, Napier distributes business cards that include facts about discrimination, and she gives away copies of "Half the Sky," a book by Nicholas Kristof and Sheryl WuDun that explains how gender discrimination and oppression affects women and girls.

"Basically, researchers know that when women/girls are given the same care as men/boys [e.g. health, medicine and nutrition], that women/girls have better survival rates," Napier explains. "Hence, you would expect to see more women/girls than men/boys in every part of the world."

Napier says most of the time, girls and women support what Our Heavenly Parent is teaching. However, she remembers a friend of Kate's saying, "I like referring to God as father because it reminds me of my own father." Kate responded, "Yes, but you have a loving mother too."

Napier notes that perhaps some people feel closer to their father than their mother, therefore the image of God as father feels right. "But what we are trying to get people to understand is that it's not about personal preferences," she says. "We want people to understand the possible consequences of the church teaching people that God is male."



*—Heather Peck Stahl is editor of The Flyer.*

DEACONESS SERIES

# Called to the Edges: United Methodist Deaconesses Today

*by Myka Kennedy Stephens*

**Editor’s Note:** *This is part two of a three-part series that explains the importance of deaconesses.*

In the 122 years since the establishment of the office of deaconess in the former Methodist Episcopal Church, women commissioned to this lifetime of service have pushed boundaries, broken barriers, and pioneered ministries in areas where other church workers have been either reluctant or ill-equipped to go.

Deaconesses are called to the cutting edges of ministry, a borderland between church and society where needs are constantly changing. Currently, 155 active service deaconesses are at work in the United States tackling everything from education to advocacy, medical research to engineering, and law practices to accounting.

Deaconesses are laywomen called by God and commissioned by The United Methodist Church to ministries of love, justice and service. This order was created to allow women called by God to serve the church and the world at a time before our forerunner denominations allowed women to be ordained. Since then, women are still answering this unique call to manifest God’s word through service to God’s people. Diverse in scope and focus, all deaconess ministries are shaped to fulfill the mandate of Jesus Christ to:

- Alleviate suffering
- Eradicate causes of injustice and all that robs life of dignity and worth
- Facilitate the development of full human potential, and
- Share in building global community through the church universal

In 2004 the office of deaconess became open to men, serving as “home missionaries.” Some deaconesses are appointed to positions with community service organizations or in helping professions, while others develop their own ministries.

Deaconess Cameron Kempson of Asheville, N.C., serves as executive director of LightShare, a “for-impact” nonprofit organization she founded and developed. Kempson started LightShare with an emphasis on intergenerational programming and a goal to connect and engage children, youth and adults in her community. Her ministry has grown to include afterschool programs, parenting classes, mentoring relationships, and family activities that build and strengthen community.

The journey toward becoming a deaconess/home missionary is different for each person. As a child, Cindy Johnson attended Sunday school classes taught by a deaconess, and she learn more about the order of deaconess through her teacher, her mother and her later involvement with United Methodist Women. Johnson grew up to become an educator, teaching children in grades 6-12 who had trouble with the law.

Moved by a strong call to ministries with youth, the poor and immigrant populations of her native Brownsville,

STORY CONTINUED ON PAGE 11



*Deaconess Cindy Johnson with Women’s Division Board President Inelda González*

Photo by Cassandra M. Zampini



STORY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10

Texas—and encouraged by her sister, a United Methodist clergywoman in the Southwest Texas Conference—Johnson attended a discernment event sponsored by the deaconess program office.

Johnson was commissioned as a deaconess in October 2009. She continues to minister as an educator and also serve in the Kyung Za Yim Internship for Immigration and Civil Rights, organizing public witness events, coordinating visits to the local detention centers, and leading workshops.

While the deaconess ministry began as an alternative to women who were denied access to ordination, today women choose to become deaconesses in response to God’s particular call to link United Methodist-style Christian response with emerging societal needs.

Deaconess and home missionaries are commissioned to their ministries under the guidance and shepherding of the Program Office of Deaconess and Home Missioner, which is administered by the Women’s Division of the General Board of Global Ministries. [Find more information here.](#)

*—A freelance writer and United Methodist deaconess serving in the Northern Illinois Conference, Myka Kennedy Stephens is founder and developer of Mission: Information, an online resource for library and information ministries.*

## Deaconesses around the world

According to the General Board of Global Ministries Deaconess Program Office in New York, N.Y., there are more than 155 active deaconesses serving in the United States. Among these 155, three are deployed overseas. One is in South Africa, one is in the Philippines and one is in Somoa. The deaconess program office (Women’s Division of the General Board of Global Ministries) only administers those deaconesses and home missionaries from the U.S. annual conferences.

Each central conference of the denomination administers their own deaconess program office. The Philippine Central Conference has the strongest community outside the United States, and this is due in large part to deaconess involvement in the establishment of Harris Memorial College, a United Methodist-related institution of higher education in the Philippines that is the center for deaconess formation in Taytay, Rizal, Philippines.

United Methodist deaconesses and home missionaries are part of the worldwide Diakonia community, which is made up of deacons, deaconesses and diaconal ministers from many denominations and churches.



Photo by Nicole Bell

*Deaconess Cindy Johnson prays at vigil held at Willacy County Detention Center in Raymondville, Texas*



Photo courtesy of Cameron Kempson

*Deaconess Cameron Kempson with participants of Lead and Learn, an afterschool and mentoring program of LightShare in Asheville, North Carolina.*