



Monitoring Your Annual Conference Sessions for Gender Inclusiveness

Introduction

An important and powerful ministry that a Conference Commission on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW) or other monitoring entity can provide for your annual conference is the ministry of monitoring for inclusiveness. The General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (GCSRW) has provided such a ministry to the legislative committees, plenary sessions, and decision-making processes of the General Conferences since 1996.

Style of the Ministry of Monitoring for Inclusiveness

The goal of this ministry is to build and strengthen inclusive participation in decision-making during your annual conference sessions. It is not designed to be used as a “weapon” to embarrass, humiliate or shame anyone. Very few of us are ever motivated to change by shame or humiliation. Utilize this powerful intervention in your annual conference processes with a compassionate and supportive spirit, remembering that most of our bias against one gender or the other is rooted in a subconscious level. Your ministry of monitoring raises the subconscious behavior to the powerful place of consciousness where change can actually take place.

Your Monitoring Team

The size of your Monitoring Team will vary depending on the size of your annual conference, the number of committees (legislative or similar sub-group decision-making body), and the physical setting for these groups. At a minimum, a team should include at least one monitor for each subgroup, and a team of at least two monitors for each plenary session.

It would be helpful if the Monitoring Team members be given this packet and provided a training session to ask questions, clarify when a “hash mark” is made, practice calculating percentages, and discuss reporting procedures. This training session could be done in one or two hours, and should take place on site prior to the annual conference session. It is suggested that “check-in” gatherings be held frequently during the first day and as needed afterwards.

These gatherings should include time for monitors to obtain uniform procedural answers to immediate questions that arise during any monitoring experience. A team leader (or leaders) may be responsible to convene these gatherings as well as calculate percentages and develop reports.

Preparation of Annual Conference Leadership

It is recommended that you introduce and present your monitoring ministry to all leaders, group facilitators/chairpersons, the bishop and presiding team in advance of the annual conference sessions. Remember, your ministry is not designed to embarrass or humiliate anyone. It is designed as a tool for leaders, program planner and those who preside. Its purpose is to help raise inclusiveness to a conscious level. You may also offer other tools for leaders.



Calculating Participation Rates

This is a simple comparative statistic.

1. First, make SURE you obtain the total number for all participants in the group, and the total number of male and female participants. If you are monitoring for other areas of inclusiveness, be sure to obtain this “baseline” total for each of these groups. (NOTE: Leaders or facilitators may invite participants to self-disclose racial/ethnic identity, age group, etc.)
2. Second, compute the representation percentage of male/female participants in the total group: Divide the number of male participants by the total number of participants; repeat this for female participants.

$$\frac{\text{Number of Males in Group}}{\text{Total Number of Participants}} = \text{Percentage of Males in the Total Group}$$

$$\frac{\text{Number of Females in Group}}{\text{Total Number of Participants}} = \text{Percentage of Females in the Total Group}$$

3. Next, count all “hash marks” representing the comments made by the total group. Count all the marks representing comments made by females; record the number. Count all the marks made by males; record that number.
4. Calculate the participation percentage of comments made by persons of each gender following the calculation percentage in #2 above:

$$\frac{\text{Number of Comments made by Males}}{\text{Total Number of Comments by Group}} = \text{Percentage of Comments by Males}$$

$$\frac{\text{Number of Comments made by Females}}{\text{Total Number of Comments by Group}} = \text{Percentage of Comments by Females}$$

5. Finally, compare the representation percentage to the participation percentage for each gender. For example, if males make up 59% of the group and made 73% of the comments, then males would be participating beyond their representation in the group. Parity in representation and participation would be one of the simplest, most basic goals for inclusive participation. This is to say that the participation percentage would be relatively comparable (say within 2%-5%) differential, then reporting this observation to the group would be helpful in pointing out inequities within the group. It may also be helpful to note the topic or content of the discussion or debate when reporting to the group.

Reporting

In addition to the above calculations reported to the presiding officers and to the group as a whole, other observations can be shared. These may include observations of HOW different persons’ contributions were received. Some examples may be: interruptions to persons who



General Commission on the Status and Role of Women

THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



are speaking, failure to be recognized before speaking, TAKING opportunities to comment rather than waiting to be recognized, use of exclusive or inclusive language, put downs, or subtle ways of devaluing contributions. The questions on the back of the monitoring form samples encourage each monitor to evaluate these admittedly subjective observations so they may be shared.

Summary

Good luck with this ministry! As you prepare appropriate feedback, remember that you can enable your annual conference to be made aware of ways in which participation of all persons can be facilitated. In doing so, you will realize your goal of building and strengthening inclusive decision-making in your annual conference. Please send a summary report of your efforts, the results, and how it was received by your annual conference to the office of GCSRW as soon as you are able following the annual conference sessions. Please do not hesitate to contact the GCSRW office (800-523-8390) or gcsr.org with questions or concerns.

May God bless your ongoing ministry of inclusiveness.