

Central Conference Clergy by Gender by Amanda Mountain and Leigh Goodrich

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Women by the Numbers (WBN) recently received data breaking down active United Methodist clergy in the vast majority of Central Conferences by gender. In considering these statistics, it is important to note that the term “clergy” can be defined differently throughout our United Methodist Connection, so these numbers may not be comparable in the strictest sense. It is also important to note that not all of the annual conferences in our Central Conferences have not yet reported their data. However, while acknowledging the ways that this data is incomplete, we believe that the data and directionality of these figures is helpful. Our data appears below.

For the purposes of this analysis, WBN combined data from nearly all conferences in Africa and Eurasia, in addition to analyzing the conferences individually. You will notice the table above reflects that 12% of all United Methodist clergy in the African Continent are women. Breaking the numbers down by individual conferences, Nigeria has the lowest percentage of female clergy at 6%, and Cote D’Ivoire follows with 8% of clergy being female. The African conference with the highest percentage of female clergy is Zimbabwe at 34% followed by Mozambique at 30% and Sierra Leone at 23%. It is interesting to note that female clergy make up a larger percentage in both Zimbabwe and Mozambique than in the Southern/Central European reporting countries (22%), the Philippines (27%), and the United States (27%, see WBN, Dec. 2015).

Another interesting finding is the makeup of clergy across Europe. Of the 113 total clergy reported from Southern/Central Europe, Lithuania, and Latvia, 32, or 28% were women. When looking at individual conferences in Europe, Latvia and Lithuania have the highest percentage of women at 70% and 50% respectively (Notably, these percentages are based on a very small pool of clergy). In addition, the following annual conferences are not yet included in the numbers reported: Germany East, Germany North, Germany South, Denmark, Norway et al. Further, we don’t yet have the gender breakdown of clergy in Finland, Austria, Czech and Slovak, and Switzerland-France Conferences. The numbers from Russia improve for women, where 42% of the 102 clergy reported are women. Finally, women in the Philippines comprise 27% of the 1,511 clergy reported.

In summary, female clergy comprise 12% of all clergy in African conferences, and 28% of clergy in Eurasia. When combining all Central Conference countries that are currently reported, women comprise 16% of all Central Conference clergy. As indicated earlier, the term clergy is sometimes used differently throughout the Connection, so our data should be regarded with some degree of moderation. Further, we did not consider the 2,922 retired clergy in these conferences. Given all of these considerations, this data represent directionality and some basic trends in the United Methodist Connection worldwide,

and point toward the need for more women in leadership positions throughout our denomination to better reflect our membership.

CORRECTION: This installment of Women by the Numbers is based on data collected by our sister agency prior to July, 2016. Since that time, the Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe of The United Methodist Church reported these numbers:

Thank you to the Central Conference of Central and Southern Europe of The United Methodist Church for reporting this data to GCSRW.