



AUGUST 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.



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In this issue:

- » Women and the worldwide nature of our church—Page 2
- » Women by the Numbers: Survey Results—Page 5
- » Congolese clergy receive sexual ethics training —Page 6
- » Filipino Women are Front-Line Ministers—Page 8
- » A retreat model for women leaders—Page 11

GENERAL CONFERENCE

Women and the worldwide nature of our church

Do proposals go far enough to guard all women's rights?

[read more»](#)

WOMEN BY THE NUMBERS

Do women of faith or women surveyed by a secular magazine express more fulfillment from spirituality?

Ladies' Home Journal asked women readers "What does it take for a woman to feel happy and fulfilled?" How do the magazine results compare with the results among women of faith?

[read more»](#)

SEXUAL ETHICS

Congolese clergy receive their first sexual ethics training

A Texas clergy couple, both born in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, recently led what is believed to be the first-ever sexual ethics training for United Methodist church leaders in the Congo.

[read more»](#)

DEACONESS SERIES

Filipino Women are Front-Line Ministers: Deaconesses in the Philippines

This is the third and last in a series of Flyer articles on the unique ministry of deaconesses, a special category of commissioned laywomen whose work connects the church with a world of need—and possibilities.

[read more»](#)

BEST PRACTICES

A buffet of care: a retreat model for women leaders

Tennessee Commission on the Status and Role of Women chairperson Dawn Yelverton decided to create and fund a "regroup, relax and recharge weekend"

[read more»](#)

2012 GENERAL CONFERENCE AND YOU

Women and the worldwide nature of our church

Do proposals go far enough to guard all women’s rights’?

By Joey Butler*

For several years now, all eyes have focused on the upcoming 2012 General Conference. Some speculate about shrinking funds for ministries and the possible downsizing/merger of churchwide agencies—even a change in United Methodist practice of guaranteed appointments for clergy.

One thing is for certain: It will be a time of change.

Some changes could come from the work done by the Committee to Study the Worldwide Nature of The United Methodist Church. The international panel of United Methodist leaders is proposing several suggestions to amplify the church’s worldwide connection.

One such proposal is to divide *The Book of Discipline* into two distinct volumes – the first outlining universal church law such as the Social Principles, the Constitution and clergy orders. The second volume would contain other items that would be more open to interpretation depending on region and cultural practices, thus, allowing differences in country or custom to influence church policies.

Of particular interest to those passionate about gender equality is the mention of universal ordination rights.

The Rev. Bruce Robbins, committee member and pastor of Hennepin Avenue UMC in Minneapolis, said the two-volume *Book of Discipline* would protect things like ordination issues and would under no circumstance allow the prohibition of ordaining women.

“Those laws cannot be changed,” Robbins says.

Robbins and some other committee members say they have been diligent in advocating for universal acceptance of women’s ordination and bans on gender discrimination.

The committee reported the current structure and ethos of The United Methodist Church to be too “U.S.-centric,” and the two-volume proposal is a response to those findings. But there is concern that some of the items declared universal could still be perceived as the U.S. church asking other countries to follow its standards.

“One of the primary gifts of this study is clarification of that which is truly connectional and applicable to the

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.



The Rev. Bruce Robbins, right, confers with Zimbabwean pastor, the Rev. Forbes Matonga.

STORY CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

STORY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

global church,” explains the Rev. Tim McClendon, a district superintendent in South Carolina and a member of the Worldwide Nature Committee.

“I’ve found that adaptations vary from region to region and there’s disparity in whether what some people are adapting is, in fact, adaptable by church law,” McClendon says.

It is difficult for U.S. citizens to consider a scenario where a woman in the 21st century could still be considered property, or that an elderly widow could be cast out of her village over accusations of witchcraft. Yet, these scenarios are still a culturally accepted norm in many regions of the world. While trying to be sensitive to other cultures, church leaders are saying such practices are unacceptable in the ministry of The United Methodist Church.

McClendon used as an example the fact that there are still no women clergy in Poland, although one woman has been in the process for a couple of years. “It’s not forbidden; it just hasn’t come up,” he says. “We want to make sure there are rules in place to allow women clergy and the understanding that forbidding the practice is not allowable under the *Discipline*.”

Bishop Rosemarie Wenner of Germany, one of only two women bishops serving outside the United States, agreed that The United Methodist Church in every area must be unequivocal on the issues of full rights for and full inclusion of women.

“We are not at the point that women receive full rights,” Wenner says. “Economic and social injustices hurt women and children more than men. It is on all of us to take the good work that the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women and others are currently doing, in order to make bold steps into a future with more integrity and more justice.”

“There may still be pushback from central conferences [where in some areas women clergy and women in top leadership are still very new],” says McClendon. “This could be seen as limiting their power to adapt or interpret areas of church law. But our study committee is globally constructed and we agreed things like upholding the Social Principles need to be a worldwide practice.”

According to Robbins, the goal is not to perpetuate U.S. dominance in

STORY CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

What you can do

- ✓ Review the Worldwide Nature group’s covenant and discuss it in light of women’s concerns in your area and around the world.
- ✓ View and discuss GCSRW’s PowerPoint presentations and reports on the lives and ministries of women in Europe and the Philippines. <web address from Lindsey>. A presentation from African women members of our commission will be available in October.
- ✓ U.S. congregations and COSROW groups: Invite local women seminarians or college students from outside the United States to share their experiences to help you understand the status and role of women in their home areas.
- ✓ Urge members of your annual conference delegation to the 2012 General Conference to vote “yes” on including gender as a protected category in the Constitution.



The Rev. Tim McClendon

STORY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

church bylaws, but to more clearly define the United Methodist connectional system.

“There is tension in that all of us want to create a more flexible *Discipline*, but we want to protect that which is most essential to Wesleyan tradition. If this committee has erred, it has erred on the side of protecting the connection’s Wesleyan heritage,” Robbins says.

The women’s commission says that an important step in insuring universal rights for women in the global church is to insure “gender” as a protect category in the denomination’s Constitution. GCSRW has tried unsuccessfully to petition General Conference to make this amendment; it will try again at the 2012 General Conference.



Bishop Rosemarie Wenner, left, visits with Bishop Gregory Palmer of the Illinois Great Rivers Conference.

daughters’,” she says. “Our sisters from outside the United States are telling us they need the whole church to help address obstacles they face in the ordination process, or in having their voices heard in leadership settings. If that’s what they’re saying, we need to hear it.”

Read the latest information about the work of the Worldwide Nature Study Committee and see a draft of their recommendations [here](#).

Joey Butler is content editor at United Methodist Communications.

The reality that gender is not “an explicitly protected class” offers wiggle room for individuals and church structures that “claim they are not ready for women in leadership,” says M. Garlinda Burton, GCSRW general secretary.

“Our commission has spent much of our energy in the past few years listening to and talking with women in Africa, Europe and the Philippines, and they are saying to us that sexism is an issue in their churches and communities, just as it still is in the United States,” Burton says.

“An essential aspect of the global witness of Christ’s church is that we say with one voice and in all languages, ‘We will not tolerate sexism and marginalization of God’s

WOMEN BY THE NUMBERS

Women, faith and spirituality

Do women of faith or women surveyed by a secular magazine express more fulfillment from spirituality?

By Julie Kathleen Schubring

A recent poll among the readers of the *Ladies' Home Journal* produced a report in the July 2011 issue titled: "What Does it Take for a Woman to Feel Happy & Fulfilled?" I found a few of the responses surprising, and it prompted me to conduct my own quick informal survey among fellow active women faith leaders via Survey Monkey and Facebook.

The *Ladies' Home Journal* survey was conducted among their target audience—women ages 18-65. I wanted to know if the magazine responses are similar among same-age women who are active participants in their faith tradition.

Two particular survey questions and answers stood out to me. The first question:

Q *How important is each of the below in making you feel fulfilled?*

- A** 74% "Being at peace with myself and my decisions"
72% "Having the freedom to make the choices I want"
71% "Leading a life that has meaning"
30% "Religion/spirituality"

This begs the question, what makes a life meaningful since it isn't religion or spirituality for the respondents?

The second question:

Q *How satisfied are you with these areas of your life?*

- A** 51% "very satisfied with their family life"
46% "very satisfied with their marriage or relationship"
45% "very satisfied with their spirituality"
25% "very satisfied with work life"

There seems to be a difference between being fulfilled in "religion/spirituality" and being satisfied with spirituality.

This prompted me to survey my family and friends. The demographics are similar to the *Ladies' Home Journal* online panel of women, however the people I polled are ALL women of faith.

The first question I asked was:

Q *How satisfied are you with these areas of your life?*

A 75% "religion/spirituality"

The second question:

Q *As a person of faith what fulfills you?*

A 45% "very satisfied with their spirituality"

Women of faith find more fulfillment in their "religion/spirituality" but the same percentage of all women are very satisfied with spirituality. I had originally thought that active women of faith would have had a higher percentage of satisfaction with their spirituality than the general population. Therefore what is the difference between fulfillment and satisfaction when asking about religion/spirituality? It is very unfortunate that we don't have the meaning to "fulfillment" and "satisfaction."

But I hope that this gives us something to ponder – Does our spirituality fulfill us in our daily lives? I hope that we all are able to be more than satisfied with our faith journey.

A student at Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary, Julie Kathleen Schubring is currently serving as a summer intern at GCSRW. She is also a commissioned Bishop Handy Young Adult Missionary.

SEXUAL ETHICS

Congolese clergy receive their first sexual ethics training

By Heather Peck Stahl

A Texas clergy couple, both born in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, recently led what is believed to be the first-ever sexual ethics training for United Methodist church leaders in the Congo’s Katanga State to raise awareness about behaviors that lead to sexual misconduct and encourage lay leaders and pastors to care for those being abused.

Two one-day educational trainings were led by the Rev. Kabamba Kiboko, associate pastor of Holy Covenant UMC in Katy, Texas, and her husband the Rev. Kalamba Kilumba, director of the Wesley Foundation at Prairie View A&M University. The two pastors have served as volunteer mission interpreters and liaisons for the Southern Congo/Zambia Episcopal area since 1986.

Each say frank discussion about sexual abuse and violence—in the church and beyond—is especially important as the Congo has the highest incidence of war rape (**Rape as a weapon of war**), by the Rev. Kabwita Kayombo, Sex and the Church series, Faith in Action, General Board of Church and Society, July 15, on record. A recent study published in the American Journal of Public Health reported **48 Congolese women are raped every hour**.

After attending a Texas Conference clergy misconduct seminar in 2006, Kiboko and Kilumba shared what they learned with Southern Congo Area Bishop Katembo Kainda. The bishop, in turn, asked them to adapt and bring the training to his episcopal

‘For too long, these issues were swept under the rug. This is long overdue for our church.’



Kabamba Kiboko leads a training on sexual ethics in the Mama Kawabwa Fellowship Hall, Jerusalem UMC Campus in Lubumbashi, April 7, 2011.



At the training in Lubumbashi, participants discuss cultural traditions that are conducive to sexual misconduct.

STORY CONTINUED ON PAGE 7

STORY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

area. So, Mary Tumulty, Texas Conference sexual ethics committee chairperson, trained Kiboko and Kilumba.

In addition, Kiboko attended a January 2011, denomination-wide summit on sexual ethics in Houston. More than 300 Response Team and Safe Sanctuary leaders, bishops and superintendents attended “Do No Harm 2011.”

Kiboko says during their sexual ethics trainings, she and Kilumba trained more than 300 Congolese laity and clergy. The two also served as facilitators for the worldwide April 6 Leadership Summit, she reports.

“The primary goal of the trainings was to initiate a conversation about this taboo subject sexual misconduct,” she says. “We needed to raise consciousness about certain behaviors that lead to sexual misconduct and to encourage church leaders – lay and clergy – to be the keepers of those being abused, especially children and women.”

Kiboko says they used two biblical stories of David and Bathsheba (2 Sam. 11) and the rape of Tamar (2 Sam. 13) to underscore their discussions about abuse of power and sexual misconduct by ministerial leaders. The couple also talked with participants about clergy self-care and spiritual discipline and sexual victims and perpetrators in the pews. She says they also adapted the Texas Conference’s sexual ethics seminar into the South Congo/Zambia’s culture.

Kiboko says feedback from participants included, “For too long these issues were swept under the rug. This is long overdue for our church. We needed this seminar to bring children and women abuses to the light and deal with them in the open. We need more of these trainings, and need all our pastors and lay leaders to be trained.”

She adds, “Clergywomen came to us ... to say thank you. Being a single clergywoman is like a curse [because of sexual harassment by laymen].”

Kiboko adds that Bishop Kainda plans to sponsor sexual ethics training and Safe Sanctuaries throughout his episcopal area.



Participants at the training gather in front of the Mama Kawambwa Fellowship Hall in Lubumbashi.

Heather Peck Stahl is editor of The Flyer.

DEACONESS SERIES

Filipino Women are front-line ministers: deaconesses in the Philippines

by Myka Kennedy Stephens

Ask any 10 United Methodists in the Philippines who first taught them to read, who conducts their church choir, who staffs their community clinics or who leads Christian education in their community, and at least nine of them will name a deaconess.

“Deaconesses are superwomen in the church because they are expected to do everything,” says Chita Milan of Pangasinan, the Philippines, who is a deaconess and former vice president of the board of directors for the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women.

Deaconesses do everything,” adds the Rev. Cerna Rand, a clergywoman in the Northern Illinois Conference who started her ministry as a deaconess in the Philippines. “Deaconesses are very flexible. They are strong leaders in the church, community and in the world.”

Milan has been a deaconess for 40 years, serving primarily as a kindergarten teacher and eventually as the Conference Coordinator of the Commission on Early Childhood Education and Development.

Rand says she heard the call to ministry and servant leadership as a child and served as a deaconess in the Philippines for four years. Responsibilities of her appointment as deaconess of the First UMC in Dagupan City included coordinating Sunday school for children and youth; leading Bible studies for youth, young adults, and women; conducting women and children’s choirs; assisting worship and preaching, and visiting those who were sick or who stayed at home.

The order of deaconess—women set apart for ministry that connects faith with real-life concerns—has been particularly influential and important in the United Methodist Church in the Philippines. The deaconess office was established in the U.S. Methodist Episcopal Church in 1888; however, the ministry of deaconesses took on a dramatic life of its own in the Filipino church, largely because of different geographic and cultural needs.

In 1903, U.S. deaconess Winifred Spaulding of Kansas went to the Philippines to establish Harris Memorial College for the purpose of training young women for ministry with children and youth. Today, Harris College remains the premier deaconess training school in Southeast Asia. On March 24, 2011, four deaconesses and the first

Editor’s Note: This is the third and last in a series of Flyer articles on the unique ministry of deaconesses, a special category of commissioned laywomen whose work connects the church with a world of need—and possibilities. You can support the work of deaconesses through:

1. Educating yourself and your congregation about this specialized ministry.
2. Encouraging women and girls to consider becoming deaconesses.
3. Supporting deaconesses through your prayers and financial gifts and by volunteering your help in their places of ministry. To locate deaconesses at work in your area, your conference chairperson of United Methodist Women may be able to help.

Learn more»



Photo by Janet McCarty

Michael E. Buscano is the first home missionary to enroll and graduate from the Southern Philippines Methodist Colleges program for a Bachelor of Early Childhood Education. He has blazed a trail for other males to enter the program, which historically has been only for women.

STORY CONTINUED ON PAGE 9

STORY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Filipino home missionary graduated from Southern Philippines Methodist College in Kidapawan City, of which U.S. deaconess Janet McCarty serves as president.

As the Philippine Methodist Church grew, the need for well-trained women to work with children, youth and women also grew. Filipina deaconesses fill these needs and more.

Filipina deaconesses complete a degree in Christian or early childhood education. They are then appointed and ultimately commissioned to serve in a local church or community setting. Most teach or supervise Sunday school, serve as church musicians, oversee ministry with children and youth, and generally relate to all the lay organizations within the local church. While deaconesses complete coursework in early childhood education, not all local churches have preschools.

In more remote areas, where circuit pastors may visit their congregations only a few times a month, deaconesses are expected to perform all the functions of the pastor, except administering the sacraments.

A deaconess's salary is paid by the local church or organization where she is appointed, although each Philippine annual conference sets a minimum salary. These salaries are lower than those afforded to clergy, but housing benefits are often included. "They work long hours. They have no continuing education allowance. Most deaconesses have families of their own to support. They have big hearts for God and for ministry," says Cerna Rand.

Although ordination is open to Filipina women as with other United Methodist women, the number of clergywomen is still relatively low, and some congregations still rebuff women pastors. So many Filipina

STORY CONTINUED ON PAGE 10

Graduates of Harris Memorial College and deaconesses on active appointment in the Philippines*

Number of Harris graduates (1903-2003) 1,990
Number of Harris graduates (2003-2011) 280

TOTAL NUMBER OF HARRIS GRADUATES 2,270

Number of deaconesses on active appointment

Manila Episcopal Area 289
Davao Episcopal Area 39
Baguio Episcopal Area (no available data as of date)

Other information:

Number of Harris faculty and staff for 2011-2012

Full time faculty..... 46
Full time staff 21
Part time faculty 11

TOTAL NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES 78

Harris Enrollment for 2011-2012

College department

Deaconess program 142
Non-deaconess program..... 27
(education students)
Taking certificate in early childhood education ... 7
Taking professional educational units..... 2

TOTAL ENROLLMENT IN COLLEGE 178

Basic Education

Preschool

Pupils paying regular school fees* 9
Pupils enjoying highly subsidized school fees* .. 39
Elementary 187
High School..... 196

**TOTAL NUMBER OF PUPILS/STUDENTS
IN BASIC EDUCATION..... 431**

GRAND TOTAL NUMBER OF ENROLLMENT IN ALL LEVELS

FOR 2011-2012..... 609

**Information provided by Cristy N. Manabat, president of Harris Memorial College in the Philippines.*

STORY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

women, as young as 17 or 18 years old, answer the call to ministry by choosing to serve God as deaconesses. In this way, they continue the tradition of being the social conscience of the Philippine Methodist Church with heavy influence over the future and direction of the church's life and mission.

Administration of deaconess ministries remains localized in each geographic area or central conference. The Office of Deaconess and Home Missioner currently housed in the Women's Division of the General Board of Global Ministries only oversees U.S. deaconesses and home missioners whose church membership resides in a U.S. annual conference. Although a few currently serve outside the U.S., this is often the result of a dual commission as a standard service missionary.



Photo by Janet McCarty

Janet McCarty (second from the right) gathers with graduates from the Southern Philippines Methodist Colleges program in the Philippines.

*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.*

Best Practices

Calling all women conference leaders! A buffet has been prepared for you! Come!

By Kim Coffing

Recognizing that many women relentlessly contribute to the life of the UMC without receiving much “breathing space,” the Tennessee Conference Commission on the Status and Role of Women sponsored two days of rest, good food, conversation, meditation and prayer for women leaders from their conference.

More than 30 clergy, lay speakers, district and conference United Methodist Women leaders, and others were treated to a time of respite and rejuvenation April 8-10 at Beersheba Springs (Tenn.) Assembly. The women participated in mini-training and discussions on physical, mental and financial health. A massage therapist taught technique and offered massages.

In addition, the women engaged in biblical study, quiet time, a Taize service, and a Love Feast, using a specially prepared worship and mediation booklet.

The rest-and-respite gift was a long-held dream of Dawn Yelverton, chairwoman of the Tennessee Annual Conference Commission on the Status. When the commission received an unexpected financial windfall in late 2010 (proceeds from a conference CSRW bank account closed in the 1970s), Yelverton began to make her dream a reality.

Yelverton said the most meaningful part of the gathering was the chance for laywomen and clergywomen to commiserate about major stressors in their lives and ministries, and to dream together about ways to better enhance and engage the ministry of women in the Tennessee Conference.

Members of the Tennessee CSRW listened carefully to concerns, issues, desires and joys to

SCHEDULE FOR WEEKEND

Friday, April 8

- 4-5:45 pm Gathering/Welcome/Introductions/
Orientation
- 5:45 pm Supper in dining hall
- 7-8:15 pm *OPTION A:* Sandy Baxter,
Health Issues
OPTION B: UMW Study “Finding Peace
through Action”
OPTION C: None of the above
- 9-9:30 pm Taize Service
- 11 pm Quiet Time until 7 AM

Saturday, April 9

- 7:15-7:45 am Lenten Worship Service
- 7:45 am Breakfast in dining hall
- 9-10:15 am *OPTION A:* Sandy Baxter: Health Issues
OPTION B: Small Groups
OPTION C: None of the above
- 10:30-11:45 am *OPTION A:* Ruth Tracy: Nutrition
OPTION B: Dawn Yelverton: Financial Services
OPTION C: None of the above
- 12 pm Lunch
- 1:15-2:30 pm *OPTION A:* Ruth Tracy: Nutrition
OPTION B: UMW Study: “Reconciliation: The
Real Life Journey of Rebecca’s Son Jacob”
OPTION C: None of the above
- 5:45 pm Dinner/Supper in dining hall
- 7-8:15 pm *OPTION A:* Dawn Yelverton: Financial Services
OPTION B: Small Groups
OPTION C: None of the above
- 9-9:30 pm Taize service
- 11 pm Quiet Time until 7 AM

Sunday, April 10

- 7:45 am Breakfast in dining hall
- 9:15-10:15 am Lenten Worship Service
- 10:30-11:30 am Love Feast
- 12 pm Lunch in dining hall

STORY CONTINUED ON PAGE 12

STORY CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

help them plan for their future advocacy. This retreat also allowed attendees to learn how they can participate in their active annual conference CSRW.

In conversations with churchwomen around the world, a common theme is the need for more sister-time—including space and time for building friendships and mentoring relationships, and sharing ideas with other women in church leadership.

This model of retreat, from a gift, was then offered as a gift of wholistic care where these needed relationships can be nurtured.

For further information about the retreat, please see the schedule and announcement/registration form on pages 11 and 12 of the Flyer.

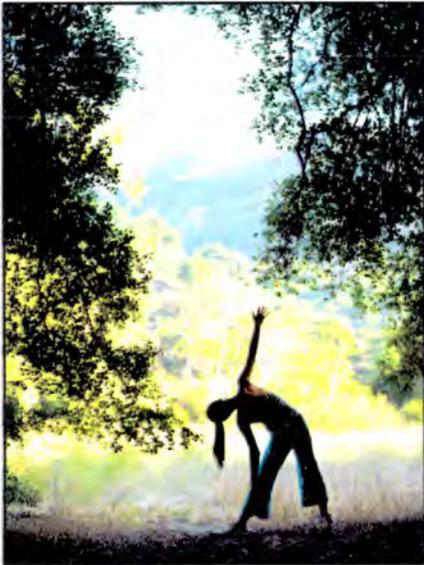
Kim Coffing is assistant general secretary for education and advocacy for GCSRW.



TN UMC
Tennessee Conference
of The United Methodist Church

*The Tennessee Conference
Commission on the Status & Role of Women (COSROW)
invites all Clergy and Laity Women to:*

Regroup, Relax & Recharge Weekend



- Spiritual meditation and chatting by the fireside
- Commune with each other, nature and God
- Opportunities to rest and relax
- Opportunities for non-invasive therapy
- Opportunity to participate in discussions regarding wellness: physical, mental and spiritual

**April 8–10, 2011 at
Beersheba Springs Assembly
(Turner Lodge)**

**Registration begins at 4:00 pm on Friday.
The retreat concludes after lunch on Sunday.**

The cost is \$15/person (double room)
Registration deadline is March 25, 2011

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____ Phone #: _____

E-Mail: _____

Local Church: _____ District: _____

Are you Clergy? Laity? (Circle one) And will you be staying Friday night? Saturday night? (circle all that apply)

Dietary restrictions? _____

Other special needs? _____

Roommate Preference? _____

Please return this registration form, along with your check for \$15 (made payable to Tennessee Conference) to: Tennessee Conference; Attn: Trish Myrick; 304 S. Perimeter Park Dr.; Nashville, TN 37211

