



THIS MONTH



WOMEN BY THE NUMBERS:
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conference leadership
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Women-
friendly
churches shar
e stories,
ideas

By Kristin Knudson*



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Last fall, we asked friends of GCSRW on our Facebook page to describe congregations they viewed as opening and welcoming to women. The question sparked lively discussion—about why they love their congregations, what they wish for and work for in their personal and corporate faith in Christ, what they hope for the church as a whole, and how women and girls are engaged—or not—as equally respected and beloved children of God. The result: Readers nominated United Methodist congregations from around the world that engage, disciple, honor, teach and learn from women. **The Flyer** presents the stories of these congregations in a new series.



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UM WOMEN'S ASSEMBLY
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In this month's issue, we explore two different congregations that are welcoming to women:

St. Mark UMC in Atlanta offers a transitional housing facility for women trying to get on their feet. The congregation opens its doors to the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered community in various ways. And, for more than 20 years, St. Mark has had at least one woman associate pastor and several women church leaders and delegates elected to annual conference and General Conference.

Farmville (Va.) UMC has an active United Methodist Women's group and currently has more women in leadership roles than men. Farmville members help at the local pregnancy center, food pantry and Meals on Wheels. Recently, the church received a grant for mentoring elementary school children. Gender-inclusive language for God and humanity is used in worship and the church participates in an internship program for students discerning the call to ministry.

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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.

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Advocacy for Women

ENDOWMENT FUND

Your contribution to the **Advocacy for Women Endowment Fund** will expand GCSRW global work as we: advocate for women; identify discriminatory policies and practices; prevent inequities; develop women as leaders; raise awareness of issues and concerns of women; and much, much more.

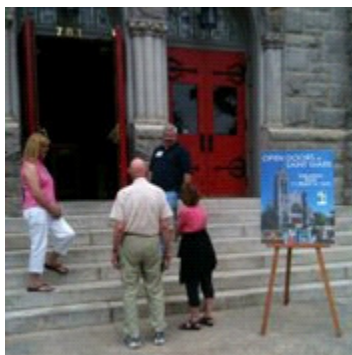
Women-friendly churches

(continued from page 1)

St. Mark UMC, Atlanta

Jimmy Moore is ending his pastoral appointment at St. Mark UMC in Atlanta, Ga., yet he feels the congregation is ready for their first woman senior pastor, Beth LaRocca-Pitts.

Founded in 1870, the popular wisdom at the time was that the church would flounder and fail because it was too far out of town. The



Members of St. Mark UMC, Atlanta, welcome visitors.

congregation built their current facility in 1903 in what is now the heart of Atlanta. Averaging about 425 Sunday worshipers in two services, St. Mark was once the “premiere pulpit” in Atlanta in the mid-40s. The church was the voice of racial inclusion in the segregated South in the 50s and 60s and is believed to be the first “white” Methodist Church to receive an African-American member in Atlanta. Through the turbulent 60s and 70s, the congregation did their best to reach out to a decaying neighborhood.



Children in the Atlanta community attend vacation Bible school at St. Mark UMC.

Times have changed and so has the neighborhood in which St. Mark finds itself. The congregation sponsors Wiggins House, a no-rent housing community that offers women a chance to get back into the workforce and get better housing options.

Currently, 70%-80% of the congregation is lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgendered. “The

church was welcomed at the Gay Pride parade and the word spread. There’s been a great revival – in money, attendance, spiritual growth and mission,” says Moore, who adds that the neighborhood is changing again. Condos are being built and the congregation is trying to reach out to the new people of the area.

St. Mark has two meal programs. The Breakfast Club serves 65 men and women each Saturday, and the Supper Club on Tuesdays serves guests through a cafeteria line. Members have also reached out in mission with Appalachian Service Project, relief work in Haiti, and through UMCOR with Katrina relief.

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Farmville (Va.) UMC



Children get face paintings at a Farmville (Va.) UMC festival.

The Rev. Sylvia S. Meadows grew up in Farmville, Va., a community of approximately 7,300 full-time residents. The town’s population ebbs and flows with the enrollment of the two colleges in town – Longwood University and Hampden Sydney College.

Meadows is in her fourth year as senior pastor at the 240-member church. In the late

1990s, she was served four years as associate pastor at Farmville. “I have been supported and respected as a pastor here,” Meadows says. “The people have really welcomed me.”



Children sing at the spring musical at Farmville UMC.

Members come from a wide variety of ages, education levels and economic levels. The church has an energetic United Methodist Women’s group that participates in Operation Christmas Child, a mission sponsored by the Samaritan’s Purse organization, and

recently collected 500 health kits and 150 birthing kits for to be used by in Haiti.

Currently, there are more women involved in leadership roles than men, Meadows notes. But adds that gender inclusiveness is not a problem.

The members of Farmville volunteer at the local pregnancy center and at the community food pantry. They have also been recognized as the most significant donor to Meals on Wheels in their area.

Recently, the congregation was awarded a grant to serve as mentors in the local public elementary schools. School staff identify children who might benefit from having a relationship with an adult outside their own family. These children meet weekly with church members for both academic and personal mentoring. Meadows calls it a part of their restorative justice program at the church.

The church serves its community through vacation Bible

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WOMEN BY THE NUMBERS: Annual conference treasurers, 2005 vs. 2009

A current look at annual conference leaders

by Elaine Moy*



According to the denomination's most recent figures (2009), men hold 73% of the top staff leadership positions in the U.S. annual conferences, women hold 27%.

"Top positions" in an annual conference include bishops, directors of connectional ministries (DCM), district superintendents (DS) and treasurers. Women—who make up more than 50% of total United Methodist membership in the United States—are least represented as district superintendents (26% are women), while the highest number of women in top leadership are treasurers and directors of connection ministry (33% in each category).

As of 2009, the highest number of women in top-level conference positions was in the Western Jurisdiction (41%) and the least positions in Southeastern Jurisdiction (20%). Western Jurisdiction also has the highest percentage of clergywomen and laywomen serving in these leadership positions (36% and 5%). Southeastern Jurisdiction has the lowest percentage of clergywomen and laywomen serving in these leadership positions (17% and 3%).

The highest percentage of women bishops is in the Western Jurisdiction (50%) and the lowest percentage is in the South Central Jurisdiction (18%). The highest percentage of women DCMs is in the Northeastern Jurisdiction (46%) and the lowest is in the Western Jurisdiction (14%).

The largest percentage of women superintendents is in the Western Jurisdiction with 44%, and the lowest is in Southeastern Jurisdiction with 17%. And the largest percentage of women treasurers is in North Central Jurisdiction with 45% and the lowest is the South Central and Southeastern jurisdictions, which each have about 27% women as superintendents.

Conclusion

Does the face of top leadership in U.S. annual conferences represent who we are and who we want to be as The United Methodist Church? Do our conference leaders reflect the people of God whom we serve? For example, 19% of all the leadership positions held are by racial-ethnic persons, yet the United States has 35% racial-ethnic people. And 28% of all the positions are held by women; meanwhile 50% of the population is women. 92% of the leadership is clergy, while most of the denomination is laity.

If we want our leadership to represent the people they serve, we may need to change some of the ways we train, nurture, call, hire and elect our leaders. We need to be intentional in looking at clergy/lay, women/men, racial ethnic/white balances in our conference offices and committees. We need to look at how the existing structure helps or hinders us from becoming all we want to be.

Neither the United Methodist Church nor the wider society have an extensive track record of including women and racial ethnic persons in leadership. Valuing gender and racial inclusion as a part of our organization DNA is a relatively new addition. If our call is to nurture and making disciples of Christ to transform the world, we need to start close to home and broaden our concepts and diversify our pool of present and future leaders at all levels of church life.

—Elaine Moy is assistant general secretary of finance and administration for GCSRW.

*** In 2005, laywomen were more likely to be conference treasurers than in other positions** (*FLYER*, Jan-Mar 06). Laywomen as treasurers were between 20%-50% of every jurisdiction. Laymen were between 63%-33%. Lay persons were 60%-88% of the treasurers.

*** In 2009, laywomen are now 33% of the treasurers (27% to 45% in each jurisdiction).** Laymen are 41% (18%-67% in each jurisdiction). Layperson are 74% of all the treasurers (from 47% in South Central to 100% in Northeastern).

*** Compared to 2005, two jurisdictions have increased clergywomen in the DCM position: Northeastern (25% to 46%) and South Central (7% to 31%).** Clergywomen in DCM position have lost ground in North Central (23% to 17%), Southeastern (27% to 19%) and West (17% to 14%).

For details on bishops in the UMC and other church leadership statistics, click [HERE](#).



How does the statute of limitations affect the church's legal response to cases?

by Darryl W. Stephens*

Question: An active elder in your district does not deny the allegation of clergy sexual abuse. One of his victims submits a signed letter of complaint to the district superintendent. According to the *Book of Discipline*, no legal action can be taken. Why is this, and what other means of response is available?

Answer: The obstacle of a statute of limitations can impede the United Methodist Church's legal response to cases of clergy misconduct and requires that the church be creative in implementing other forms of response. The following provides information when a statute of limitations does and does not apply and what other avenues of supervisory response might be available if a church trial is not an option.*

The 2008 *Discipline* (Par. 2702.4) observes a six-year rule for filing charges, except for allegations of sexual or child abuse, which are not "time barred" from prosecution, i.e. subject to a statute of limitations. In the case introduced above, the offense occurred in 1991 and the complaint was brought forth in 2009.

At the time of the incident, a statute of limitations applied, even in cases of sexual abuse. No complaint could be considered for actions that occurred more than two years prior (*Discipline 1998*, Par. 2623.1b). General Conference removed the statute of limitations for charges involving sexual or child abuse in 1992, but this legislation was not applied retroactively. The church must honor the language of the *Discipline* in effect at the time of the alleged incident (*Discipline 2008*, Par 2702.5). Thus, incidents of sexual or child abuse that occurred prior to Jan 1, 1993 are subject to a statute of limitations (*Discipline 2008*, footnote on p. 754).

Since a church trial is not an option in this case, the church must be creative in exploring other options for achieving the best possible approximation of justice and healing.

One of the most important steps toward healing for a victim is to ask what that persons desires from this process. Recourse to secular courts, in which the same time limitations may not apply, can often be avoided if the complainant feels that he or she has been listened to, responded to, and cared for by the judicatory. At the least, the church should consider offering to pay for counseling for the victim and the family affected.

Some measure of justice may be achieved through a supervisory response. A copy of the complaint and any written response to the allegation should be kept in the clergyperson's personnel file. The bishop may also decide to continue monitoring the clergyperson's professional conduct. Judicatory leaders should consult the conference chancellor and be aware of any mandatory reporting laws in that state or municipality.

*Resources used in preparation for this article include the newsletter *Vide Infra* published by the General Council on Finance and Administration (Summer 2009, pp. 3-4) and *Administrative and Judicial Procedures Handbook*. General Council on Finance and Administration of The United Methodist Church. http://www.gcfa.org/ls_AdminJudProcHandbook.html, pp. 82-83.

—Darryl W. Stephens is assistant general secretary of sexual ethics and advocacy for GCSRW.

Early registration ends soon for Do No Harm 2011

July 31 is the last day for the early registration discount for Do No Harm 2011. Standard registration period begins August 1.

Encourage your conference to bring a team of response and safe sanctuaries persons to Do No Harm in order to gain the full benefit of the numerous workshops, networking opportunities and conversations. For detailed information on leadership, workshop offerings and registration go to www.umsexualethics.org.

Top 10 ideas

Suggestions for conveying courtesy and care for women in the church

by Stephanie Alschwede*

1. Never ask a new comer (female or male) if what they do for a living, if they have children, or if they are married.
2. Never try to set up a blind date for a woman in your congregation unless she specifically asks you to do so.
3. Never tease unmarried women about whether they will ever find "Mr. Right" or ask why she doesn't have children.
4. Never ask a woman if she is pregnant or congratulate her unless she has told you herself she is pregnant.
5. Even if she volunteers, do not allow the youngest woman on a committee to be the one taking the minutes.
6. Remember to recruit men to be Sunday School teachers and nursery workers.
7. Childproof the sanctuary. Outlet covers in the sanctuary communicate a concern for children and their parents.
8. Always have an extra roll of toilet paper in the women's bathroom.
9. When selecting post-worship treats include fresh fruit.
10. If your church has permanent nametags, include an option with a magnetic or non-pin back.

Others ideas:



1. Provide ample space for hanging coats and umbrellas.
2. Post instructions for making coffee in any quantity next to coffee pots so that *anyone* can brew it.

—Stephanie Alschwede is pastor of Dietz UMC in Omaha, Neb.

Women-friendly churches

(continued from page 2)

St. Mark UMC continued:



Members act a scene from the Bible for vacation Bible school at St. Mark UMC.

St. Mark has had numerous female associate pastors and female lay leaders.

In addition, the church has women serving as trustees, on the staff parish relations committee and on the administrative council.

Currently, three women from St. Mark are currently in the process of entering into the ordained ministry. One candidate noted it was her experience at St. Mark that helped her identify and respond to the call to ministry.

Partnership between men and women are modeled by the church staff. “We have an ongoing emphasis on diversity and inclusiveness,” Moore says. “We do it to some degree without thinking. Committees, boards and groups that have worked together for so long that people are accustomed to that, and they feel [the lack of diversity] it if it isn't there.”

The church facilities are open to many community groups including a variety of 12-Step programs and the congregation's drama program is well regarded in the community as well.

Moore says the primary way to be a women-friendly congregation is to model it with leadership—both among church staff and lay volunteers. “You must be intentional in inclusiveness, he says, “It doesn't just happen.”

—Kristin Knudson is a freelance writer living in Baltimore.

Farmville UMC continued:



Farmville members support several missions, including Operation Christmas Child.

church.

During worship, Meadows tries to be inclusive with her language. “I went to a black Baptist seminary in Virginia,” Meadows says. “I know what it's like to feel excluded.” She recounts a seminary textbook that highlighted the unique black-church experience that she hadn't witnessed and was very foreign to her. “That experience caused me to change the way I look at things.”

Meadows notes a Korean woman who worships at Farmville. The woman heard the Bible being read in Korean on World Communion Sunday. After the service, she told Meadows that it the first time she had really felt included in worship. “I want to celebrate who people are,” Meadows says.

Shared leadership among men and women is evident throughout Farmville's work. A husband and wife team heads the prayer ministry and women work extensively within the congregation in the such ministries areas of technology and congregational care.

Farmville also participates in the Virginia Conference's “Calling 21” summer internship program that invites a student to experience the various aspects of ministry firsthand to determine if he or she is truly called into the ordained ministry.

school (where half of the children who participate are not a part of the congregation) and Habitat for Humanity. They built a house for a mentally challenged couple who attend worship regularly. And opened its doors to another family with three children while their home was being built. As a result, the children attended confirmation classes and have now become members of the

How-to

How to best serve on a committee or board?

By Elaine Moy*



"Do you want to serve on the ___ committee?" or "Do you want to serve on the ___ board?" You're likely to get this invitation from your church, workplace, school, annual conference, or social or civil group. But before you say "yes," ask yourself if you are willing and able to do the following for the group that invited you:

1. Speak UP! Participate actively – you are there for a reason, so speak up. Don't just occupy a seat, but also lend your unique and needed perspectives.
2. Ask questions! Chances are, if you are unclear about something, others around you also need clarification. So, don't sit there thinking about it; ASK!
3. Know the goals and objectives of the group. What is it that this committee or group has formed to accomplish?
4. Promote and support the mission of the group.
5. Attend meetings regularly and ON TIME. Being a member of the committee should be a high priority – if you can't commit, do not join.
6. Prepare for meetings ahead of time. Read minutes and other printed materials, review audiovisual resources, and complete your assigned tasks prior to the meetings so that active, informed participation can happen.
7. Avoid conflicts of interest. You shouldn't vote on a hire if one of the candidates is your best friend or push for a certain vendor if he's your brother-in-law. Speak up when there is a personal or professional conflict and stand aside for those votes.
8. Maintain confidentiality – What is said and seen at meetings should stay there, and the group should agree on what can be shared beyond the group. Be particularly careful about sharing legal, personnel and financial information.
9. Respect the organization/committee, staff and other members of the group.
10. Be open and demonstrate courteous behavior during discussions; seek to understand different points of view, even those with whom you do not agree.
11. Act for the good of the organization, the church and the larger community.
12. Represent the committee/board in a positive and supportive manner at all time and in all places.
13. Don't "bad-mouth" your colleagues and staff members. If you have a concern, share it in appropriate ways with people who need to know.
14. Be active and participate – take responsibilities or tasks that need to be done.
15. Respond to communications (emails, surveys, completing expense reports) in a timely manner. Meet deadlines without being reminded more than once.

—Elaine Moy is assistant general secretary of finance and administration for GCSRW.

GCSRW at the UMW Assembly

GCSRW teaches, celebrates with Women's Assembly participants



Bishop Joaquina Nhanala of Mozambique was a keynote presenter during the Women's Assembly. (Photo by Harry Leake)

In late spring staff and members of the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women participated in the 2010 Women's Assembly, a gathering of about 6,500 women from all around the world. Sponsored by the Women's Division of the General Board of Global Ministries, the assembly meets every four years for worship, laughter, learning and social action, and then return to their communities better equipped for mission.

Held in St. Louis, Mo., this year's event was themed "Faith. Hope. Love in Action." Staff members of GCSRW sponsored a booth to educate participants about how the commission supports and advocates for women. General Secretary Garlinda Burton interviewed current board members and friends of GCSRW for the Commission's 40th anniversary video. And associate general secretaries Kim Coffing and Elaine Moy hosted an educational seminar on clergy spouse/family issues and led a dialogue on current challenges to gender inclusion in the church. Past and current board members of the Commission helped with everything from assembly training seminars and worship to staffing

GCSRW booth. Bishop Joaquina Nhanala of Mozambique, a GCSRW board member, was a keynote presenter during the assembly.

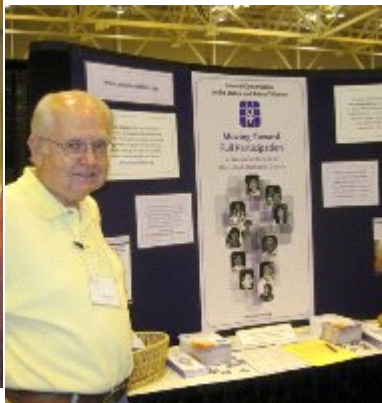
The Women's Division played a crucial role in the development of the GCSRW. In 1968, they petitioned General Conference to begin a study to document the extent to which women were involved in all structural levels of general program and policy making channels and agencies of The United Methodist Church. General Conference approved to form a study commission and this became the springboard for the April 1972 establishment of GCSRW.

Highlights of the 2010 Women's Assembly include:

- ▶ Erica Williams, 26, the Washington-based deputy director of Campus Progress, and Judy Woodruff, senior correspondent of "PBS News Hour," shared their insights about about millennials—people 18 to 29 years old—who are considered the most ethnically diverse generation in U.S. history. [READ MORE](#)
- ▶ Members of United Methodist Women joined others across the nation May 1 in a rally and march, making a public witness on the immigration debate. [READ MORE](#)
- ▶ Technology enabled women who were not in St. Louis to view selected portions of the April 29-May 2 assembly streamed live on the Internet and, in a few cases, the women could interact with on-site participants. [READ MORE](#)
- ▶ To view more photos of the three-day Women's Assembly visit GCSRW on Facebook [HERE](#).



Kim Coffing (left) and GCSRW Finance chairwoman Deb Pitney at the Women's Assembly.



GCSRW board member Corky Fowler staffs the Commission's information booth at the Women's Assembly.



Pals Andris Salter (left), a Women's Division executive and GCSRW General Secretary Garlinda Burton at the Women's Assembly.



Melissa Rivera, a GCSRW board member, attended the immigration rights rally during the UMW Women's Assembly.

Women by the numbers

(continued from page 3)

Bishops

There are 50 United Methodist bishops in the United States. Of those, 74% (36) are men and 26% (14) are women.

Women bishops range from 18% to 50% of the total number of bishops in their respective jurisdictions. (South Central has 18% women bishops and Western has 50%.) Even though the percentages may seem impressive, given that our first woman bishop was only elected in 1980, the church only has two or three women bishops in each jurisdiction.

Of the 14 women bishops, two are racial ethnic (Black and Hispanic). Racial-ethnic women bishops account for 15% of the women bishops and 4% of all bishops in the United States.

Men bishops account for 50% to 82% of the bishops in each jurisdiction (Western has 50% and South Central has 82%). The total number of bishops range from three to 10 bishops per jurisdiction. Of the 36 men bishops, 15 are racial ethnic (10 Black and five Asian). Racial- ethnic men bishops account for 42% of the men bishops and 30% of all the bishops in the United States.

The percentage of women bishops (26%) is higher than the percentage of United Methodist women elders (19%). The percentage of racial- ethnic women bishops (4%) is lower than the percentage of racial ethnic women clergy (10%). Of clergymen, 8% are racial ethnic, but they comprise 42% of the male bishops.

Why is there such a high percentage of racial-ethnic men bishops when they have such a low percentage of male clergy? What dynamics are at work while the Episcopal elections are being conducted? (Note: not all racial-ethnic groups are represented among the active U.S. bishops. Currently, there is no Native American or Pacific Islander bishops, no Asian female bishops, and no Latino/Hispanic male bishops.)

Other information

- ◆ 23% of conference treasurers are clergymen, but there are no clergywomen serving as treasurers.
- ◆ Most conference DCMs (90%) are mostly clergy.
- ◆ Clergy occupy 92% of the top conference leadership. (Bishops and superintendents are required by church law to be clergy).
- ◆ 19% of top U.S. conference leadership are racial ethnic people (14% men and 5% women).
- ◆ There is only 1 racial-ethnic laywoman in leadership (South Central Jurisdiction).
- ◆ There are no racial ethnic laymen in leadership positions in either the West and Southeastern Jurisdiction.

—Elaine Moy is assistant general secretary of finance and administration for GCSRW.