



Reflections



On Marjorie



Research Power

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50th anniversary of full clergy rights for Methodist women

By Vicki Brown

Fifty years after the former Methodist Church approved full clergy rights for women, about 9,500 United Methodist clergywomen from the United States, Africa, Europe, and the Philippines serve the church at every level, from bishops to local pastors.

“The decision [to ordain women] forever changed the face of ordained clergy. Because of the 1956 General Conference action, bishops were required to appoint every pastor in good standing within the conference. The effect was that any woman in full connection and in good standing would receive an appointment,” says the Rev. Mary Ann Moman, associate general secretary of the Division of Ordained Ministry of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

A yearlong celebration of this year’s 50th anniversary will include worship services, books and articles celebrating the lives of pioneering clergywomen; special observances at annual conferences; and a banquet and concert during the International United Methodist Clergywomen’s Consultation in Chicago, Aug. 13–17. A worship service is planned in Minneapolis, Minn., on May 4, the anniversary of the former Methodist Church’s General Conference affirmative vote.

Bishop Susan Morrison of the Albany (N.Y.) Area, episcopal liaison to the task force planning the celebrations, says that while the 1956 conference action

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We’ve Moved!

The General Commission on the Status and Role of Women announces our new home.



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The



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

A year of celebration— and action!



This new year brings with it many reasons for celebration among all United Methodists, especially women. Fifty years ago the former Methodist Church extended full clergy rights to women. Although some predecessor denominations ordained women before 1956, it was that historic vote that paved the way for the more than 9,500 United Methodist clergewomen serving around the world today.

Twenty years later, in 1976, the denomination established the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women as a permanent, internal watchdog agency. Our purpose then—and now—is to help the church continue the hard work of tearing down walls of institutional sexism that would prevent women from realizing their full Christian calling. Our commission has also taken the lead in calling clergy and lay leaders to the highest moral conduct, so that vulnerable women (and others) find in the church a sanctuary from sexual exploitation and abuse.

Most annual conferences are gearing up to celebrate these two milestones in our denomination through worship, special events, song, and prayer. I'm looking forward to the festivities.

I would only caution us against becoming too self-satisfied. God has brought us a mighty long way since 1956, but we still have miles to go. As long as there are congregations that refuse a woman pastor; as long as there are members of boards of ordained ministry who question the equal fitness of women for ordination; as long as women of color are marginalized from leadership at any level of the church; and as long as one person has to bring a sexual misconduct complaint against a church leader we have a charge to keep and work to do.

So, let's celebrate the foremothers of the church for tearing down walls and answering the call in the name of Jesus Christ, who comes to save us all. And as we sing and praise and remember, let's rededicate ourselves to the struggle. God still goes the long road with us. We can do no less than to walk that road together with courage and determination.

Lead on with the Light!

M. Garlinda Burton, General Secretary

The Flyer

January–March 2006

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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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Editor's Note:
In the October–December 2005 issue of The Flyer, statistics were not included for the Virginia Annual Conference because they had not been received at press time.

Clergyman reflects on women's ordination

By the Rev. Newell P. Knudson

“This should have happened a long time ago.”

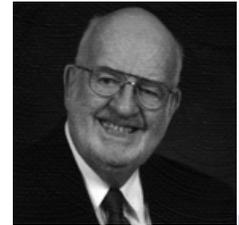
That was the general feeling in my annual conference when in 1956 the first three women in the now California-Nevada Conference were voted into conference membership “on trial” and, two years later, into full connection.

All three had held the status of “local elder,” which authorized them to preach and carry on a pastoral ministry within the bounds of their respective appointments. However, they had neither voice nor vote in annual conference sessions, nor were they guaranteed appointments, a privilege reserved only for elders in “full connection” in our denomination.

One woman had served as pastor of a local church and was now on the conference staff; one was a hospital chaplain; one was a Christian educator. All were highly respected in the conference and had served with distinction in their respective appointments. Through the years, a number of other women had served local churches in the conference as “approved supply pastors.” Some were later elected into conference membership and were welcomed as ministerial colleagues. Others chose not to become conference members, but remained available to serve local churches.

While the admission of women into conference membership was celebrated, it was not always easy for male clergy to understand or be sensitive to the specific needs of their female colleagues. There were a few reservations about the “rightness” of the action. Because we had “always done

it this way,” some men—and women—found it hard to accept what they felt was a radical change in the leadership of the church, especially the ideas that a woman might someday become the pastor of large and prestigious church, a district superintendent, or a bishop.



Newell P. Knudson

Accommodations had to be made for women pastors who brought their children to clergy gatherings and other official church functions. Bishops and cabinets faced the new challenge of appointing clergy couples. And the ordination and appointment of women were often even more difficult for laypersons, many of whom were hesitant about having women pastors in their churches.

Now, 50 years later, some of the gender issues or, at least, their ghosts are still present in our denomination. However, a new generation of laypersons and pastors—male and female—have accepted women pastors as a fact of life. On the whole, women have made their place in the California-Nevada Annual Conference; today women make up nearly one-third of the ordained ministers in our conference.

In fact, United Methodists I know wonder why it took so long for the church to recognize and make use of the talents of women as spiritual, temporal, and administrative leaders. 

Newell P. Knudson is a retired clergy member of the California-Nevada Annual Conference.

Reflections on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of ordination of women

By Dawn M. Hand

Seminary is hard work. Thanks be to God, I'm entering into my last semester. When I think about the thousands of women who have paved the way for me to go to seminary, my hard work pales in comparison. Their stormy struggles and courageous commitments help put my journey into perspective.

I thank God for the countless women who went before me—most of whom I will never see face to face, know their names, or know their personal stories. I praise God for the women who bravely went through those doors who have now transitioned into the Church Triumphant. I honor God for the women who are still serving among us (active and retired) and letting their lights shine.

Because of the women who helped pave the way, I am...

- able to attend seminary.
- able to express myself.
- able to have a place at the table.

I know many women today still feel disenfranchised, rejected, put down, and put out. And, yes, this is a reality for many women. There is also another reality. God has not brought us this far to leave us. Through all of the hurt and despair, we are overcoming. I believe the possibilities are endless.

I grin when I hear people say that the time is just not right for women to serve in *named* capacity. One need only remember all the women servants throughout Holy Scripture. I believe the time has always

been right for women to be in ministry serving as pastors, all sorts of extension ministries, district superintendents, and bishops. We (the church) simply have not been ready.

Well, 50 years later, we had better ready ourselves! The Lord God whom we love and serve continues to call women to preach and teach.

God continues to raise up women servants who are offering themselves in ministry to God's people. Watch out... a woman may be coming to you, and soon! I implore you to give God the praise that one of God's called and claimed servants will get the privilege to serve among you.

Our church is richer, bolder, and stronger because of the countless clergywomen who have emptied and humbled themselves to serve God through The United Methodist Church. I thank God for all the women who have paved the way, opened doors, and strengthened God's church. One of my ardent prayers is that I will faithfully stand on the broad shoulders of these women, be true to my calling and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ. ✨

Dawn M. Hand is the director of communication for the Western North Carolina Conference. She will graduate from Hood Theological Seminary Salisbury, N.C. in May.



Dawn M. Hand

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opened an official door that was embarrassing to have closed, change was slow.

“In one way it [the 50th anniversary celebration] reminds us that throughout history the church has not always been open to diversity and inclusiveness,” Morrison says.

The Reverends Grace Eloise Huck and Marion Kline, two of the first 27 women accepted in 1956, plan to be at the August clergywomen’s gathering.

Each recalls that she was simply following God’s call.

“I didn’t know I was a foremother. I never dreamed I’d see women like this in the ministry. I only thought I was doing what God wanted me to do with my life,” said Kline of Des Moines, Wash., now 94.

Kline, Huck, the Revs. Grace Weaver, of Salem, Ore., and Jane Ann Stoneburner Moore—the only surviving women of those first 27—all faced discrimination and resistance in varying degrees.

“At one of my early churches, when the district superintendent told them he was appointing a woman pastor, one of the men pounded the pew and shouted, ‘There will be no skirts in this pulpit while I’m alive!’” Huck recalls, adding that the man became one of her staunchest supporters. Huck lives in Spearfish, S.D.

The Rev. Patricia Thompson, author of *Courageous Past—Bold Future*, noted the path of clergywomen has been complex.

“Although women in the United Methodist tradition have been called to preach since the early days of Methodism in England, and both the Methodist Protestants and the United Brethren in Christ began ordaining women as elders and granting them full clergy rights at the end of the 19th century, full clergy rights for women in the Methodist Church did not come without a bitter struggle and often tremendous personal sacrifice on the part of both women and men,” Thompson says.

UMNS photo by Paul Jeffrey



Bishop Beverly J. Shamana (left), San Francisco Area, is greeted by Bishop Judith Craig after Shamana’s sermon during morning worship at the 2004 United Methodist General Conference in Pittsburgh.

In addition to Thompson’s book, the Upper Room has published a collection of writings by United Methodist clergywomen, *Courageous Spirit: Voices from Women in Ministry*. Huck has published her autobiography, *God’s Amazing Grace*, by Sand Creek Printers in Spearfish, S.D.

Moore, 74, who had just finished seminary when the conference voted, applied for full clergy rights immediately.

“When I went to annual conference, I was sitting there with my colleagues, and they could all vote, and I couldn’t. I thought, I want to be a full participant,” says Moore, who lives in Dekalb, Ill.

Now a United Church of Christ minister, Moore says women must still enlarge their understanding of power and expand their vision with the confidence that they can take on more.

“Not to take away from others,” she says, “but to make the church truer to the gospel.” ✠

Vicki Brown is a staff member of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (www.gbhem.org/clergywomen/information.asp).



Marjorie Matthews (1916–1986)

A bishop called Marjorie

By Arlene Radloff Krause

When I was first asked to do an article on my experience as administrative secretary to the late Bishop Marjorie Matthews, I thought, what can I say that hasn't already been said? The stories of the first woman elected bishop in the mainline Protestant church are numerous.

Then the flood of memories began. Marjorie S. Matthews: mother, grandmother, friend, mentor, leader, pastor, and finally bishop. She was humble, caring, thoughtful, astute, fun-loving, gracious—and definitely a trailblazer.

Bishop Matthews started college after her son graduated from high school. She was proud of the fact that she worked in a business office and then as a part-time local pastor. She never forgot her roots or her struggles. Many times regarding her election as bishop she would say that she felt “put there by the Holy Spirit.”



Arlene Radloff Krause (left) and Marjorie Matthews

Bishop Matthews was a leader who was determined not to be simply a figurehead. She was a hands-on bishop with great executive ability, who could be firm and tough when needed. But she was an iron hand in the velvet glove, rather than just the “iron” hand. She was not afraid to speak out on issues or take a stand.

It was not easy being the first woman bishop. When she first arrived in Wisconsin it was to a less-than-stellar welcome by many in the annual conference, although the “formal” welcomes were very polite. She had to overcome many roadblocks. No matter how positive her response to the press and church leaders, the fact is Bishop Matthews was not well received or widely supported in the beginning of her tenure. She had to prove herself and she did.

She won over people who were skeptical and reserved when she first arrived in Wisconsin. She also made a difference on how bishops who came after her have been received and accepted by Wisconsin United Methodists.

Bishop Matthews, who was 64 when she became a bishop, maintained an extremely heavy work schedule that would have exhausted a far younger person. She felt she needed to do as much as possible because of her unique role as the first woman episcopal leader. She crammed eight years of work and ministry into one four-year term. She was extremely organized and made lists. She always said, “The best action is to be intentional, having a goal in mind, rather than simply reacting to situations.” In order to get as much work done as possible, she often asked me to work with her at her home.

Even though she worked hard, however, the bishop knew how to delegate responsibility and did not need to have absolute control over everything. She had a way of making me feel that I was truly a valued member of her team. She valued ideas and input from other people, whether or not she agreed with those ideas.

Bishop Matthews was not caught up in the trappings and ceremony of the office of bishop. She was not given to “airs.” She often laughed at the fact that, because she was only 4'11", she often carried a footstool when she preached in local churches so she could see over the pulpit.

“Marge,” as friends called her, was a die-hard football fan whether it was the

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Our work is not finished, California-Nevada COSROW chairwoman declares

By Kat Teraji & Willa Sudduth

“When we pray, we also have to move our feet.”

—Rep. John Lewis (D-Ga.)

Last June, during the California-Nevada Annual Conference session, Willa Sudduth gave a presentation on the revival of that conference’s Commission on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW).

Sudduth is chairperson of the California-Nevada Commission and brings a long history of social activism to the role. She studied labor history at the University of California at Berkeley and was a founding member of the International Association of Women Machinists.

As a single mom raising five children, Sudduth always fought for equal rights and benefits for women. She also served on the State Civil Rights Task Force, where she was appointed by former Gov. Jerry Brown.

Now her work with COSROW and United Methodist Women (UMW) allows her to combine her passion for justice and her Christian witness to further champion women and children.

Sudduth was a delegate to the conference held just after the 1976 General Conference which established the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women. When she meets with younger women interested in advocacy work, Sudduth uses a precious piece of church history: the original cassette tapes from the 1977 churchwide Status and Role of Women Conference held in Houston.

Sudduth recalls that when men who had been staying at the Houston hotel in 1977 heard about the churchwomen’s conference, the

men refused to check out to prevent women from bringing their luggage into the hotel.

But the movement could not be stopped. In 1980, the late Marjorie Matthews was elected in the North Central Jurisdiction as the first woman bishop in United Methodist history. In 1984, Leontine T.C. Kelly, an African-American pastor, was elected by the Western Jurisdiction, and became the denomination’s first woman of color bishop.

“Even though a lot seems like it has changed we are still fighting for the same issues,” Sudduth says. “Many things have not changed enough.”

To those sensitive to such issues, it seemed more than a little ironic that Sudduth’s presentation on COSROW at the 2005 annual conference session was cut short because earlier speakers—all of them men—had spoken beyond their allotted times.

However, in the time she was granted, Sudduth reminded the assembly: “We need to know women’s history in order for the story of our church to be inclusive. If it doesn’t include all women—Native-American, African-American, Asian-American, European-American—then we have only part of the story, and we want to have the whole story told.” 

Kat Teraji is communications coordinator for California-Nevada Annual Conference United Methodist Women. Adapted from At the Cutting Edge, Summer Quarter 2005, Volume XI, No.3.

Only one-fifth of U.S. conference leaders are women

‘Stained-glass ceiling’ remains in The UMC

By Craig This

Women hold 22% of the chancellor (attorney), director of connectional ministries (DCM), and treasurer positions in the annual conferences across the U.S. United Methodist Church (Table I).¹

This percentage mirrors the percentage of women district superintendents and clergywomen in the denomination. According to these numbers, although women comprise 60% of the denomination’s membership, they only hold one-fifth of the top leadership positions in U.S. annual conferences.

Jurisdictional numbers reflect national percentages

At the jurisdictional level, the percentage of women in leadership roles reflects the national average. The North Central (26%) and Southeastern (24%) jurisdictions actually have a greater overall percent of women in leadership positions than the Northeastern (21%), South Central (18%), and Western (17%) jurisdictions.

¹ Not all U.S. annual conferences employ full-time chancellors; some employ part-time lawyers or contract for services as needed. The issue is not the status of that individual (full or part time), but rather the gender of a person that serves in a leadership position. This is similar to the categories of clergy in *The United Methodist Church* (Elder in Full Connection, Deacon in Full Connection, Full-time Local Pastor, Part-time Local Pastor, etc.) and the previous issues of *The Flyer* that dealt with clergywomen in the church. Included in that previous study were part-time and full-time local pastors as well as ordained elders and deacons. The question was not what clergy category that women had achieved, but rather the percentage of women “designated” as clergy. So, too, it is with the top three positions in an annual conference—chancellor, connectional ministries director, and treasurer. The issue is not so much which position women hold—although that is important—but rather are women being allowed to hold any of these positions, full-time or part-time? The question is, are women being allowed to serve in positions of authority?

Table I

Percentage of Women and Men in Top Three Annual Conference Leadership Roles (Chancellor, Director of Connectional Ministry, Treasurer)

	Male	Female
Overall	78%	22%
<i>North Central</i>	74%	26%
<i>Northeastern</i>	79%	21%
<i>South Central</i>	82%	18%
<i>Southeastern</i>	76%	24%
<i>Western</i>	83%	17%

Further analysis paints a disappointing picture of women’s influence in these three leadership posts at the annual conference level (see Table II).

With the exception of the Northeastern Jurisdiction, the percentage of clergywomen serving in these leadership positions is less than 10%. Likewise, laywomen have less than 20% representation in these three positions. By comparison, men—lay and clergy—remain at 24% or better throughout all five jurisdictions. In other words, the men’s lowest percentages are still greater than women’s highest percentages.

Laywomen more likely as treasurers; more clergywomen are directors of connectional ministry

Laywomen (see Table III) are more likely to be conference treasurers than they are DCMs or chancellors. The percentage of conference treasurer positions held by laywomen goes from 50% in the North Central Jurisdiction (the highest) to 20% in the Southeastern Jurisdiction (the lowest).

Clergywomen, on the other hand, are more likely to serve as directors of connectional ministries (DCMs), although there are slightly fewer clergywomen DCMs than women treasurers. Whereas laywomen hold 20% or more of the conference treasurer positions, clergywomen hold 20% or more of the DCM posi-

e numbers

tions in three jurisdictions: Southeastern (27%); Northeastern (25%); and North Central (23%). In the Western Jurisdiction, clergywomen account for only 17% of the directors of connectional ministries and only 7% of DCMs in the Southeastern Jurisdiction. Overall, laywomen are more likely than their clergy sisters to find employment at the upper levels of annual conferences.

Conclusion

Some might argue that the lack of women in these leadership positions is not all that problematic since both clergywomen and laywomen are increasingly well represented as delegates to the General Conference, the denomination's highest decision-making body. (Of the 1,000 international delegates to the 2004 General Conference—half clergy, half lay—34% of clergy delegates were women, 51% of lay delegates were women.) However, the General Conference only meets for two weeks every four years to establish churchwide programs, budgets, and policies. Annual conferences meet annually, and their staff members carry out the day-to-day implementation of those budgets and program priorities.

Therefore, while women are increasingly involved in setting the big-picture course for the church, their voices are still greatly diminished at the place where we influence and live out our faith and work. For the most part, the leadership of annual conferences has been entrusted to men.

What if women were placed in these positions of authority? What new insights would they bring? What new ways of doing things might they introduce?

Is the church ready to allow more women to enter these spheres of influence? Is the church really committed to open hearts, open minds, and open doors? 

Craig This is part of the Center for Applied Social Issues at Sinclair Community College.

Table II

Percentage of Women and Men by Clergy/Laity Status in Top Three Annual Conference Leadership Roles (Chancellor, Director of Connectional Ministry, Treasurer) by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	Laymen	Clergymen	Laywomen	Clergywomen
North Central	47%	28%	19%	7%
Northeastern	55%	24%	12%	10%
South Central	47%	35%	16%	2%
Southeastern	41%	35%	15%	9%
Western	57%	26%	13%	4%

Table III

Percentage of Women and Men by Clergy/Laity Status in Top Three Annual Conference Leadership Roles (Chancellor, Director of Connectional Ministry, Treasurer) by Leadership Role and by Jurisdiction

Jurisdiction	Laymen	Clergymen	Laywomen	Clergywomen
North Central				
Chancellor	88%	6%	6%	0%
DCM	0%	69%	8%	23%
Treasurer	33%	17%	50%	0%
Northeastern				
Chancellor	94%	0%	6%	0%
DCM	0%	75%	0%	25%
Treasurer	54%	8%	30%	8%
South Central				
Chancellor	90%	0%	10%	0%
DCM	7%	73%	13%	7%
Treasurer	33%	40%	27%	0%
Southeastern				
Chancellor	69%	19%	13%	0%
DCM	0%	60%	13%	27%
Treasurer	53%	27%	20%	0%
Western				
Chancellor	89%	0%	11%	0%
DCM	0%	83%	0%	17%
Treasurer	63%	13%	25%	0%

Data source:

General Council on Finance and Administration (based on 2000 figures)

Note:

Due to rounding, some rows may not add up to 100%.

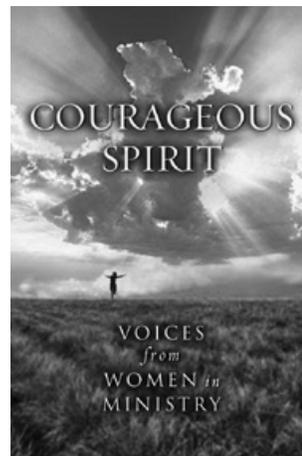
Women's stories, women's history

Two books celebrating women's ordination in The United Methodist Church are due for publication soon.

Courageous Past—Bold Future is a history of firsts for women in our denomination—the first women to be ordained with full clergy rights, the first women district superintendents, the first woman bishop, firsts for racial and ethnic clergywomen—and their stories. A project of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, the book was written by Patricia J. Thompson, an elder in the New England Conference who currently serves in a Vermont hospice. It will be available in spring 2006 from Cokesbury, www.cokesbury.com or 800.672.1789.

Courageous Spirit: Voices from Women in Ministry, a collection of writings by clergywomen published by the Upper Room, is available now. Order from www.upperroom.org or call 800.972.0433.

Also available later this year will be an updated edition of *The Journey is Our Home*, by Carolyn Henniger Oehler, which chronicles the history of the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women. This update comes as the Commission celebrates its 30th anniversary, also this year. For more information contact Ariel Alonso at aalonso@gcsrw.org or call 312.346.4900. 



We're not listening to women!



A media study titled “Who’s Talking Now?,” conducted by The White House Project, says women aren’t getting a word in edgewise.

According to the study, between November 2004 and July 2005, women accounted for only 14 percent of guest pundits appearing on TV news programs like “This Week,” “Meet the Press,” “Face the Nation,” and “Late Edition.” Not only do women not headline the shows—they are more likely to appear in secondary segments that run later in the programs—but they are significantly less likely to make repeat appearances.

Similarly, at www.womenTK.com, Ruth Davis Konigsberg, a deputy editor for *Glamour* magazine, has kept a running tally of male and female bylines appearing in five leading general-interest news magazines, including *Harper’s*, *The New Yorker*, and *Atlantic Monthly*. Between September 4, 2005 and January 16, 2006, men out-wrote women 581 to 190. 

Source: www.womensEnews.org

★ **Cynthia Astle**, former editor of *The United Methodist Reporter*, has been selected as associate editor of *Zion's Herald*, an independent religious magazine whose mission is to provide a wide-ranging forum of opinion and reflection on issues pertinent to organized religion, to society and culture, and to individual spiritual development. The publication is based in Boston.

★ **Allegheny County Girls as Grantmakers** mounted a “girlcott” against retailer Abercrombie & Fitch. The youths protested an Abercrombie & Fitch line of women’s T-shirts with sayings such as “Who needs brains when you have these,” “I had a nightmare I was a brunette,” and “All Men Like Tig Old Bitties” printed across the chest. The Grantmakers group, which was brought together by several nonprofit women’s organizations, will award \$10,000 in grants this year for youth projects involving women in politics, science and technology, and on the topics of bullying and stereotyping among girls. Abercrombie & Fitch has pulled two of the shirts from their line. Illinois State Senator Steve Rauschenberger says that the retailer is not off the hook and is calling for discontinuation of an equally offensive men’s line of T-shirts. Rauschenberger says he will call for a boycott of Abercrombie & Fitch if all of the shirts aren’t pulled.



★ **Wanda Bigham** >  is interim associate general secretary of the Division of Higher Education with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry in Nashville, Tenn.

★ **Cynthia Bond Hopson**, a former voting member of the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (1996–2005), has been named assistant general secretary of the Black College Fund and Ethnic Concerns for the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry.

★ **Dana Jones**, editor of *Response* magazine, was named 2005 Communicator of the Year by the United Methodist Association of Communicators.

★ **Young Ok Park** was elected > president of the Korean American UM Clergywomen. Park is a clergy member of the Northern Illinois Conference.



★ **Bishop Dick Wills** of the Memphis Conference (Nashville Area) has been upfront with the clergy members of the annual conference by announcing that the conference has been named in a lawsuit alleging clergy misconduct. In a letter to clergy members of the Memphis Conference, published in their local edition of *The United Methodist Reporter*, Wills outlines the charges pending and the course of action the conference will follow to resolve the issue.

★ **Bishop Robert Schnase** >  of the Missouri Area has appointed a task force on Covenant Accountability that will evaluate the conference’s Safe Sanctuaries policy and boundaries training with regard to conduct of professionals in ministry in the Missouri Conference.



UM clergywomen's event to combine celebration and sabbath

The International Clergywomen's Consultation will be held Aug. 13–17, 2006 at the Hyatt Regency McCormick Place in Chicago. The event invites United Methodist clergywomen from around the world to join together to renew their sense of call, refocus their vision, and celebrate their ministry. The theme is "Celebrating our Courageous Past—Claiming our Bold Future."

Registration deadline is May 15 and is limited to the first 1,500 participants.

Throughout the week, workshops will provide theological reflection, practical suggestions, and experiential opportunities. All 20 of the denomination's active and retired women bishops have been invited to lead a celebration of the 50th anniversary of full clergy rights for women in the United Methodist tradition. The consultation is coordinated by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. Information and online registration is available at www.gbhem.org/clergywomen/consultation2006/home.html. 

Rejuvenate your conference COSROW!

AC chairs to gather this summer in Chicago

The General Commission on the Status and Role of Women is offering a day of training for annual conference Commission on the Status and Role of Women chairs and members Aug. 18, 2006 in downtown Chicago, from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The day-long training is specially designed for those who have become COSROW chairpersons or members since the beginning of the 2005–2008 quadrennium. It is also ideal for COSROW leaders wanting a "refresher course" on how to plan and organize your annual conference commission.

On the agenda will be ways to monitor your annual conference agencies and committees, ideas for integrating justice ministries in every aspect of church life and work, and ways to step up advocacy for the full participation of women in your conference.

This training event is offered immediately after the 2006 Clergywomen's Consultation in Chicago, in case some chairpersons want to attend both events. It is open to clergy and laity who are interested in women's advocacy.

For more information call or email Kim Coffing, GCSRW assistant general secretary for education and advocacy, 312.346.4900 or kcoffing@gcsr.org. 

On the importance of survey research

By Gail Murphy-Geiss

Recently, the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women conducted a national survey on sexual harassment in our churches, denominational offices, and seminaries. The data was rich and the results will be helpful in planning educational programs for prevention as well as services for victims.

Unfortunately, a few people were angered by the survey. The most disturbing response was, “I am absolutely appalled at the amount of money that it must have taken to prepare, print, and mail this survey...I am in great sympathy with women who are victims of sexual harassment and abuse, but the collecting of data will hardly help to make their lives better.”

This respondent was wrong on two counts. First, the work done by the GCSRW is done on a shoestring; every penny is pinched. In this case, a professional researcher volunteered many hours to collect and analyze this data, simply out of commitment to The United Methodist Church. The minimal printing and mailing costs were necessary, but that leads to the second and more important point. Collecting this kind of data WILL help improve lives. The first UM sexual harassment survey, done in 1990, provided the information that led to hundreds of educational programs for clergy to prevent sexual harassment and foster a stronger commitment to ethical policies and practices among church leaders. Partly because of that survey and the actions that followed from it, the UMC is not the

denomination most often making headlines because of clergy sexual misconduct. In fact, our guidelines, legal processes, and educational efforts have become models for other Christian churches.



Abraham Lincoln said, “Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.” Survey research is like sharpening the axe. It is a crucial use of church funds, for to spend willy-nilly without collecting data toward the development of fitting goals would be a waste. In this case, we would never have known that men more than women are targeted for sexual harassment by mail, or that church laypeople are the most common perpetrators of sexual harassment against clergy and other laypersons. And now that we know, we can begin to address these issues.

We are grateful to every person who filled out our survey. Be assured that the data has given us new tools and new inspiration in our work to eliminate sexual harassment in The United Methodist Church. ✂

The Rev. Gail Murphy-Geiss, a clergy member of the Yellowstone Annual Conference, is an assistant professor at Colorado College in Denver. She served as 1997–2004 chairperson of the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women.

Worth Repeating

“Do the best you can in every task, no matter how unimportant it may seem at the time. No one learns more about a problem than the person at the bottom.”

—Justice Sandra Day O'Connor



‘Breathe on me, breath of God’

By the Rev. Mary Lautzenhiser Fraser, Ph.D.

Today, in this moment, I am breathing in everything that is alive, well, loving, and compassionate. As I breathe out I am releasing what is broken, fragmented, painful, and hurt. But also in this moment, I am drawing in with my breath all that is suffering, yours and mine. As I inhale, I tend; as I exhale, I tend. I remember I am alive. I experience the pure joy of being on the planet. I am tending and befriending God’s world—and myself—simply by focusing on breath.

Breathing as prayer is a radical way of being well and extending wellness into the world.

First, to tend to our breath is the key to befriending ourselves. By breath, God gives us the gift of soul life and by breath we connect with that creative, creating Holy Spirit. If you want to care more for your authentic self, take a few moments, sit up straight and inhale deeply and slowly. Do it again. And again. With each in breath, imagine the light and love of God entering you. With each out breath, imagine that your worries and troubles are released into the greater wisdom of the universe. Receive with the in breath. Let go with the out breath. You can enjoy this technique every hour, wherever you are. Breathe. Tend. Befriend.

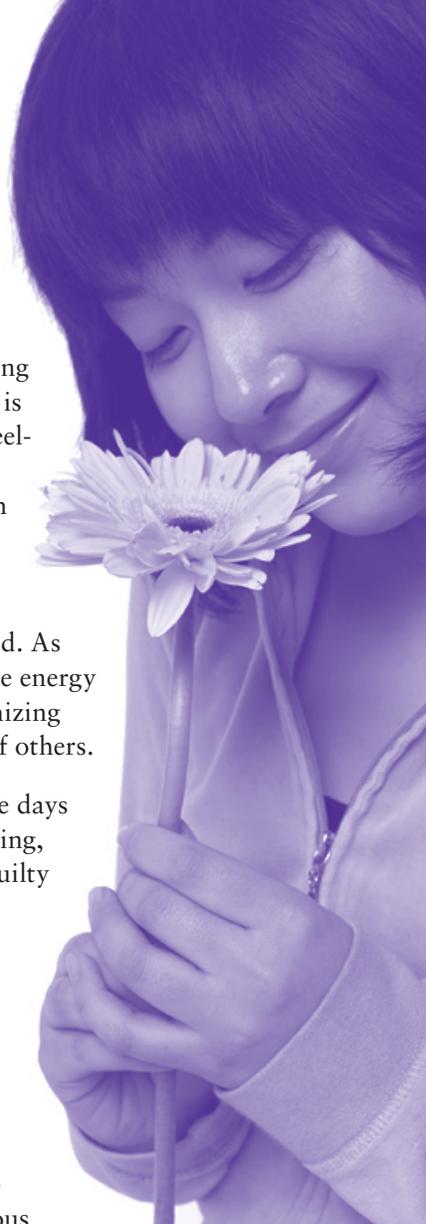
Next, imagine with each breath you take that you are breathing in the pain and suffering in your life. Do not be afraid. Pain and suffering frighten us when we try to deny or avoid them. Instead, honor those places of pain. Name each feeling tenderly as you breathe it in. Then, as you exhale, release the pain and injury. Let it go. Nothing is fended off or distanced. Everything is tended. The exercise is designed to create more space and room inside, not to eliminate feelings of suffering. Yet, this very space transforms the nature of

suffering into powerful, healing energy. The interesting result is that there is more room for feelings of peace, calm, joy, and self-acceptance. The in breath in this second exercise allows the inner self to feel valued. The out breath allows the negative feelings to be released. As more space is created, so more energy opens up naming and empathizing with the pain and suffering of others.

So much of our self-care these days is really self-shame, self-scolding, or even self-hatred. We feel guilty for overeating, hate ourselves for being unhappy, or shame ourselves into rigorous but mean-spirited hours of exercise, devotional time, or dieting. To tend and befriend oneself requires a different attitude. We must meet ourselves as though we were caring for a cherished and precious person...because that is who we are. We are God’s beloved. We are all loved!

Breath prayers help us reach a place of care and nurture and teach us to befriend ourselves, not through a new list or a new exercise or devotional regimen, but through the life source given to us by God. Take time to notice your breath. Allow it to carry images of light and tools of letting go. Soon you will find God’s love for you and the love you have for yourself sneaking up on you and welcoming you home. When you begin to tend to yourself in this way, you befriend the world God has created. Then, everything that bespeaks the way of holiness is yours. You begin to live from the deepest places of joy and pain, light and love. I call this wellness. 

Mary Lautzenhiser Fraser is the director of the Office of Pastoral Care and Counseling for the Iowa Annual Conference.



Executive director sought for Washington, D.C. commission

The General Commission on Religion and Race, located in Washington, D.C., is seeking a new Associate General Secretary for the Northeastern Jurisdiction and the White Constituency Portfolio.

This executive position is one of five Associate General Secretary positions on the Commission's staff. The person elected to this position must be committed to a reconciling ministry and able to use the tools of advocacy, monitoring, education, resourcing, and research. The incumbent relates to all racial/ethnic groups as well as the white constituency in leading consultations and workshops on racism and inclusiveness. Additionally, the incumbent relates to the Religion and Race chairpersons and other constituents that work to lead to the realization of the goal of full inclusiveness within The United Methodist Church. The incumbent serves as the primary staff person to the various levels of the church within an assigned jurisdiction. Primary responsibility also includes moni-

toring a specific sector of the church and its related institutions for inclusiveness.

The job requires approximately 50 percent travel. The successful candidate must hold a bachelor's degree and must be an active member of The United Methodist Church. Applications must be received no later than Feb. 15. Selected persons will be interviewed in April, and the finalist for the position will be recommended to the full Commission for approval in May. The goal is to have the new elected executive on staff by July 15, 2006.

To apply for this position you must request and complete an application. Resumes without applications will not be accepted. To request an application, or to recommend a candidate, contact:

Kimberly Dixon Harris
Human Resource Manager
100 Maryland Avenue, NE, Suite 400
Washington, D.C. 20002-5620
202.547.2271
kdixon@gcorr.org



A bishop called Marjorie

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Wisconsin Badgers or the Green Bay Packers. I learned quickly not to schedule any meetings for her on Super Bowl Sunday. She loved music, children, and collecting antique dolls. She always said that the antique dolls were her grandchildren's college fund.

I felt fortunate to be able at times to travel with her to various meetings. It was an

honor, privilege, and thrill to work for her. Marge Matthews was one of the best persons I have ever worked for, and I am blessed to be a small "footnote" in the history of the first woman elected bishop in the history of the Protestant Church. 

For 20 years Arlene Radloff Krause served as executive secretary to Wisconsin Area bishops, including Jesse DeWitt, Marjorie Matthews, David Lawson, and Sharon Zimmerman Rader.



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For better health for women and a healthier environment for our children,
our newsletter is printed on chlorine-free, acid-free recycled paper using soy inks.



To make an impact during annual conference:

- ✓ Sponsor a luncheon for local church and district COSROW members and others who support full inclusion of women in The UMC;
- ✓ Ask for time on the agenda to report on COSROW's work, including an assessment on how your conference is doing on providing full opportunities for all women;
- ✓ Offer a pre-conference orientation session for conference women and explain COSROW's position on specific proposals to be considered;
- ✓ Organize a monitoring team to track participation of women, and report findings each day to the full assembly (arrange with bishop's office);
- ✓ Set up a COSROW display near the Cokesbury store or other display areas;
- ✓ Create a souvenir item (bookmark, pen, button, sticky-note pad) with the COSROW logo;
- ✓ Assist in worship services and other events in celebration of the 50th Anniversary of Full Clergy Rights for Women;

- ✓ Contact Kim Coffing at the GCSRW headquarters, 312.346.4900 or kcoffing@gcsr.org, for more ideas.



Poster offers celebration ideas

A poster commemorating the 50th anniversary of full clergy rights for UM women has been mailed to every United Methodist congregation in the United States. Under the anniversary's theme, "Courageous Past – Bold Future," the poster lists 50 ways that local congregations, groups and individuals can raise awareness about the anniversary, learn about the individual women and organizations that opened doors for women in the church, and work to further support the full participation of women in the life of the denomination.

Additional posters are \$20 (ask about quantity discounts) and are available from:

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