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## As ‘boomers’ retire, Lilly project seeks ‘busters’ to fill pulpits

*By Linda Green, United Methodist News Service*

**A new program of the Atlanta-based Fund for Theological Education is intended to address pastoral leadership concerns in the UMC and other denominations by cultivating young candidates for ministry vocations.**

The program, “Calling Congregations,” will organize U.S. churches in grassroots programs to find and support the next generation of pastoral leaders for Christian denominations. It is being launched with a \$6 million grant from the Lilly Endowment Inc. Calling Congregations will be rolled out later this year in the Midwest, with additional regions being added in 2007 and 2008.

A number of faith groups are concerned about pastoral leadership in the future. As baby boomers retire, a need is growing for pastors, especially younger ones. Statistics indicate clergy vacancies rank among the highest for professions requiring an advanced degree, and the number of U.S. clergy under age 35 is relatively low across denominational lines. According to the Pastoral Leadership Search Effort, fewer than 13% of UM clergy in the United States are under age 40, while half are older than 50.

While ministry has become an uncommon calling for today’s youth, there are committed students who want support in exploring the call to ministry. The Calling Congregations program will establish a national network of 500 congregations and church-related institutions from four regions across the country by 2009. The congregations will be members of an ecumenical partnership committed to supporting vocational discernment among their young church members with particular emphasis on ordained ministry. 

Key  
The



# Newness of life



Lately, I've heard myself speaking a little condescendingly to younger (under 35) women in my local church leaders group, saying things like, "You'll know better when you're older," "When I was your age..." and "That idea surfaced before you were born, and it didn't work then, either."

While it is true that time and experience teaches us many things, it's also true that if you do what you've always done, you'll likely get what you've always gotten. So, there's something to be said for looking at faith, work, relationships, mission, ministry—almost everything—through new eyes. Too many times, however, those of us who are older, who have battle scars, war stories, and a bit of a "been-there-done-that" edge miss the wisdom our younger sisters have to offer.

A significant part of our celebrations should be listening to what young women see for our future.

Maybe that's the reason that many annual conference Commissions on the Status and Role of Women have trouble attracting younger people. Maybe it's the reason the average age of a United Methodist is considerably older than the general population. Maybe that's why the congregations that have vibrant worship, offer urgent and meaningful mission opportunities, are overrun with wonderful and noisy children, and invite youth and young adults into leadership—and actually let them lead—are churches that have learned that young folks offer fresh perspectives and needed new ways of looking at the world.

Sometimes we need that, saints.

My colleague, Kim, said that one shortcoming of this year's 50th anniversary of celebration of full clergy rights for women (and the 30th anniversary of our Commission) is that we are spending most of our energy looking backwards, instead of facing our future. I am constantly celebrating those upon whose shoulders we stand; but how are we preparing, calling, supporting, and hearing new women among us? Yes, our foremothers brought us this far by faith, but it is our daughters and granddaughters who will usher us into the newness of life.

A significant part of our celebrations should be listening to what young women see for our future. Along with the wrinkled hands that have pulled the church to this point, I hope we will spend part of our celebration moments embracing the smooth, unblemished hands that also are pushing us to where God calls us.

Celebrating our future!

M. Garlinda Burton, General Secretary

## The Flyer

April–June 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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# Young Methodist up close:

## Taylor Briggs

Taylor Briggs is what some might call a “cradle United Methodist.” She freely admits that she is a part of The United Methodist Church because she was born into it. At age 14, she is active in her local church and in the United Methodist Women. “Being part of The United Methodist Church challenges me to get outside of my comfort zone,” she said. “I know I can help and that I can make a difference.”

It’s a challenge being a young woman in the UMC in 2006. Taylor has made her inroads into leadership through the United Methodist Women. The 8th grade honor student believes that more young people would be willing to be involved if they were only asked. “Most young women are scared or intimidated to come out and say, ‘I can do that!’ or ‘I’ll help!’” she said. “Too many older women say, ‘Well, you are too young or inexperienced. You can watch.’ Young women don’t want to watch and listen and sit in long meetings about mission. We want to DO mission.”

“I think some younger women are active in the church because they see they can make a difference and because they have been encouraged by their church,” Taylor said. “Many young women are not involved in the church or UMW because they have other things that are more important to them.” Taylor cites sports, school, and just “chillin’ with friends” as

stumbling blocks to more young people being involved...that and the fact that a lot of meetings are just “plain boring.”

As a part of the Creighton, Mo., United Methodist Church, Taylor knows that it’s important to include younger people in The United Methodist Church. “My generation is the future of The United Methodist Church,” she said. “Our church needs to tell young women how they can serve and lead. We must learn to tell the story [of The United Methodist Church] in new ways so to reach our youth or we might not have a United Methodist Church at all!” she said.



*Taylor Briggs*

As a grade-schooler, Taylor had thought about going into the ordained ministry. “On career day in elementary school I said that I wanted to be a pastor. A boy told me I couldn’t be a pastor because I was a girl,” she said. “I told him I could be anything that I wanted to be because God told me that with hard work and trust I can do anything.”

Now a little older, Taylor is considering a career in ministry as a registered nurse. “My dream is to work at Children’s Mercy Hospital in Kansas City, and help kids with special needs,” she said. “My church and United Methodist Women have encouraged and supported my dream. I believe God is right. With hard work and trust, I can do anything.” ✨

# Generations

## A view of the church, life, and commitment from

**Judith Siaba and her daughter, Marta, are both lifelong United Methodists. Living in the same household, one might expect unanimity of thought about their involvement in The United Methodist Church. Yet, each has her own story and experience of the church and her involvement in it.**



Mother

Judith Siaba is a fourth generation Methodist—on her mother’s side—born in Mexico City. At age 7 she moved with her family to a Polish neighborhood on the south side of Chicago. In her neighborhood, there were two Catholic churches and even though her father had been raised in the Catholic church, the family traveled to Hammond, Ind., each Sunday to attend a Methodist church. The pastor there had been a missionary to Mexico and the family felt at home in that congregation.

As Judith grew up, she became active in her local church, district, and the annual conference. Eventually, she married Fernando Siaba, who currently serves as a pastor in the Northern Illinois Annual Conference.

Judith started her leadership development with United Methodist Women (UMW). “It was my basic training,” Siaba said. “That’s where I got my training in parliamentary procedure, how to be effective on committees, and the importance of follow through.”

Through the UMW, Judith became more aware of justice issues affecting the lives of women, children, and youth locally and around the world. She learned about the diversity of the United Methodist Church—not just the diversity of the people, but the diversity of the ministries

the UMC does. “For me, The United Methodist Church is a place to study the Word, grow in faith, and, in turn, put that faith into action,” she said.

“We are called to engage in social action.”

Judith taught music at area elementary schools before becoming coordinator of a second stage housing agency for women, children, and families through her local church. She became active at the annual conference level and was elected as a lay delegate to two General Conferences. She was also a director of the Women’s Division of the General Board of Global Ministries and the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (GCSRW). Now she serves the church as support staff for the director of congregational development and connectional ministry in the Northern Illinois Conference office.

Judith believes in the ministry provided for by GCSRW and the Women’s Division. “It’s easy for men to overlook women, children, and youth,” she said, reflecting on the early work of pioneering church women. “It was a small group of just 6–8 women so long ago who heard about a doctor overseas who treated men and women equally. The women had the guts and ingenuity to set aside one cent a week to reach women who had less than they did. They proved it

*continued on page 14*

50 years ✨

# mother and daughter

## Daughter

Marta Siaba is a 20-something preacher's kid. She grew up in a parsonage in the Northern Illinois Conference. She's been involved with the youth program, a member of various committees and served as secretary of her local unit of the United Methodist Women (UMW) for two years. She attended the UMW School of Christian Mission and was a member of the District Youth Council. She's now serving her third year as the secretary of her district UMW. Like her mother before her, Marta is also in her second term as a member of the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (GCSRW). The first term was 1996–2000 when she served as a youth representative on the commission at age 17.

When Marta was in college, she tried out other churches but returned to the UMC. "There's a mission focus [in the UMC] that you don't find elsewhere," she said. She attended a number of churches in various denominations and non-denominational churches. "They seemed to focus on 'bringing in' and 'growing up' Christians," Siaba said. "There's no 'sending out.' It just stops. God wants you to *do* something."

At Illinois Wesleyan University, Marta participated in Inter-Varsity Christian fellowship. She found that it allowed her to connect spiritually on campus with others, but there was no mission focus. "I think the United Methodist Church would appeal to younger people if they had a better idea of what the UMC did."

Marta's father has been at his current appointment for 8 years, and except for the congregations she attended while she was in college, he has been her only pastor. Now that she is married and has a career as a mutual fund retirement plan specialist, she says she'll stay at the church even if her father is appointed elsewhere. "In the Hispanic tradition, you're a 'youth' until you get married," Marta told me, "and the youth and young adults are involved in changing the church."



As a GCSRW member, Marta still sees a problem—that women are relegated to the bottom rung in both the workplace and the church. "Subconsciously, we segregate jobs for men and women," she said. "There are people who say that women can't handle family and corporate jobs. It's always present and when it happens in the church, it's hurtful."

Involving younger women in the church is a delicate balance, according to Siaba. "We're really stretched thin," she says. "The 'women's group' is for married people and the UMW is for married people and moms. Younger women think that women's church groups are about bake sales and knitting and rummage sales." She cites numerous examples of women's groups that meet during

*continued on page 14*

# Advocacy for Women Endowment Fund grows in 2005

*Thank you*

The General Commission on Women would like to thank the 47 contributors to the Advocacy for Women Endowment Fund. This represents a 150% increase in donors over 2004 and a more than 125% increase in donations received, for a total of \$12,190.

Funding for women's ministry opportunities is shrinking. In the 2001–2004 quadrennium, only one cent out of every \$1,000 placed in a local church's offering plate went to fund the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women. Contributions to the Advocacy for Women Endowment Fund allow the commission to respond to emerging needs in women's ministry without endangering ongoing ministries.

You are invited to participate in this celebration of women's ministry. Give a gift in honor of a new seminary graduate, newly ordained clergywoman, or in celebration of the 50th anniversary of the granting of full clergy rights for women. Perhaps a gift to the fund would be an excellent way to honor a parent on Mother's or Father's Day or commemorate 30 years of advocacy by the General Commission on Women. Each donor will receive a one-year subscription to *The Flyer*. Send your contribution to:

**Advocacy for Women  
Endowment Fund  
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50th Anniversary of Full Clergy Rights for Women (3)

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50 years 

# Memories of a new agency

By Sharon Zimmerman Rader

**1972>** The General conference adopted a resolution to study the creation of a Commission on the Status and Role of Women. It would get itself organized, do the task of incorporating women more fully into the church, and then go out of business in four years. 1976. Thank goodness it was recognized that there was yet more work to be done. It was that year the new standing commission was created.

**1973>** In 1973 I began seminary, first at Evangelical Theological Seminary, and then continuing at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary when the two seminaries merged in 1974. There were growing numbers of women in the seminary, but neither the faculty nor the male students were sure just what to make of us. One man wanted to know “why I wanted his job.” Another wondered “why I wasn’t home caring for my children and husband.” There was work for a Commission on the Status and Role of Women to do, not only on behalf of clergywomen, but on behalf of lay women as well, as they claimed their many gifts and sought to offer them in leadership and full participation in the church.

The denomination and the general agencies knew there should be more women hired to direct the programs and ministries of the church. But somehow the



Sharon Zimmerman Rader

agencies found it very difficult to identify and recruit women for open positions. The Commission (only two years old and with only two staff persons) clearly had work to do, and Judy Leaming Elmer and Nancy Grissom Self simply could not do all that needed to be done. They were answering the phone, writing letters, developing training events, counseling women troubled by the church’s response to them, challenging sexist language and, indeed, sexism, attending the never-ending round of church meetings, advocating for greater inclusion...the list went on and on.

Thus, the Commission decided to hire an intern to assist in the office and develop a

*continued on page 15*

## General Commission celebrates two anniversaries with Herstory

The year 2006 heralds the 50th anniversary of full clergy rights for women in the Methodist tradition as well as the 30th anniversary of the creation of the Commission on the Status and Role of Women. To mark these events, a series of resources for local congregations has been developed. Designed to be printed on both sides of a half sheet of paper, these publications on each topic can be downloaded for use in bulletins and newsletters or as part of the worship service.

The inserts and other resources are available on the commission’s website at [www.gcsr.org](http://www.gcsr.org). Click on “New for 2006.”

## Clergywomen in local churches

By Craig This

Previous “By the Numbers” articles in *The Flyer* have focused on the gains made by clergywomen in serving The United Methodist Church as local church pastors, district superintendents, bishops, and conference officers. This article examines and analyzes where and how clergywomen serve the local church.

### The Big Picture

Of those clergypersons serving local churches in the United States, 26% are clergywomen and 74% are clergymen (see Table I). In other words, 1 in 4 churches is served by a clergywoman. But, while the number of women pastors has increased dramatically over the past 20 years, this data needs to be carefully ana-

lyzed to determine what level of pastoral leadership women have attained in comparison to men.

A different picture emerges when the data are separated into *senior* pastor and *associate* pastor. Of those clergy serving as senior pastors, 22% are clergywomen and 78% are clergymen. One in 5 churches, then, is served by a clergywoman as senior pastor. This also indicates that women are less likely than men to serve as senior pastors in larger congregations with multiple pastoral staff positions.

The distribution of clergywomen and clergymen as associate pastors is much more evenly divided, as 49% of associate pastors are clergywomen and 51% are clergymen (see Tables I and II).

### The Jurisdictional Picture

The jurisdictional numbers look good for the most part. All of the jurisdictions appear to have a greater percentage of clergywomen serving their local churches than the national average with the exception of the Southeastern Jurisdiction where clergywomen make up only 15% of United Methodist senior pastors (see Tables III and IV).

As with U.S. churchwide statistics, the percentage of clergywomen serving as associate pastors is nearly identical to that of the men. In fact, in three jurisdictions, North Central, Northeastern, and Western, clergywomen represent a greater percentage than clergymen serving as associate pastors (see Table V).

**Table I**

Percent of Total Clergy Gender by Appointment Status

	Clergywomen	Clergymen	Total
Senior Pastor	22%	78%	25,407
Associate Pastor	49%	51%	4,156

**Table II**

Clergy Gender by Appointment Status

	Clergywomen	Clergymen	Total
Senior Pastor	5,596	19,811	25,407
Associate Pastor	2,023	2,133	4,156
Total	7,619	21,944	29,563

**Table III**

Percent of Total Clergy Gender by Jurisdiction

	Clergywomen	Clergymen
North Central	28%	72%
Northeastern	31%	69%
South Central	27%	73%
Southeastern	19%	82%
Western	35%	65%

**Table IV**

Percent of Clergy Gender as Senior Pastors by Jurisdiction

	Clergywomen	Clergymen
North Central	24%	76%
Northeastern	29%	71%
South Central	22%	78%
Southeastern	15%	86%
Western	30%	70%

Next Issue: *Where Do Racial/Ethnic Clergywomen Serve the Local Church?*



50 years



# e numbers

**Table V**

*Percent of Clergy Gender as Associate Pastors by Jurisdiction*

	Clergywomen	Clergymen
North Central	55%	45%
Northeastern	51%	49%
South Central	48%	52%
Southeastern	42%	58%
Western	57%	43%

**Table VII**

*Percent of Clergy Gender as Senior Pastors by Church Size*

	Clergywomen	Clergymen
1–199 Members	25%	75%
200–499 Members	22%	78%
500–999 Members	12%	88%
1000+ Members	5%	95%

**Table VI**

*Percent of Total Clergy Gender by Local Church Size*

	Clergywomen	Clergymen
1–199 Members	26%	74%
200–499 Members	25%	75%
500–999 Members	25%	75%
1000+ Members	30%	70%

**Table VIII**

*Percent of Clergy Gender as Associate Pastors by Church Size*

	Clergywomen	Clergymen
1–199 Members	44%	56%
200–499 Members	55%	45%
500–999 Members	53%	47%
1000+ Members	45%	55%

## The Local Church Picture

The real story, though, lies in the analysis of the data by church size. When the aggregate collection of data is analyzed, the number of women pastors in local congregations is increasing steadily. Twenty-five percent of the clergy serving in churches with 1–199 members, 200–499 members, and 500–999 members are clergywomen. In churches of 1,000 or more members, only 3 in 10 (30%) clergy serving are women (see Table VI).

However, the progress of women is mitigated by church size and senior-versus-associate-pastor status. For example, while clergywomen comprise 25% of the all clergy working in congregations of 500–999 members, clergywomen make up only 12 percent of the senior pastors in these churches. Women are more likely to be associate pastors in these settings. Likewise,


clergywomen comprise 30% of all clergy serving local churches with 1,000 or more members. However, women account for only 5% of senior pastors in 1,000+ member churches (see Table VII).

## Conclusion

Clergywomen continue to make gains in positions of authority across the church, such as district superintendents and bishops. Clergywomen continue to gain in numbers in serving the local church; however, they lack a greater representation in the area of senior pastors in those churches of 1,000 or more members.

Why is this so critical? Forty-seven percent of the clergy delegates to the 2004 General Conference came from churches with 1,000 or more members while only 10% came from churches with 1–199 members. Clearly, the elections of delegates to General

and Jurisdictional Conference as well as the assignment of clergy to churchwide agencies tend to favor those who serve large churches. In many instances, too, appointment as district superintendent or other annual conference-level post—even election as bishop—tends to favor clergy from larger and more influential congregations. In order for clergywomen to have access to these avenues of vocational advancement and influence in the decision-making life of the church, it follows that ordained women must be better represented as senior pastors.

The challenge for the denomination is to see that women are supported, groomed for, and given opportunities to become the lead pastors in large congregations. 

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

# Sexual ethics event to target prevention and just resolution

## Register today to ensure space at Nashville forum

Top leaders in the field of Christian sexual ethics and effective methods for addressing sexual misconduct in the church will headline a national conference, to be held July 26–29 in Nashville, Tenn.

The event, “Do No Harm... Do All the Good You Can,” will focus on prevention, intervention, and just resolution in cases of sexual misconduct in congregations, agencies, and seminaries.

Space is limited to the first 200 registrants, so send in your form (available at [www.gcsr.org](http://www.gcsr.org)) today. Safe Sanctuary groups, annual conference Response Teams, district superintendents, bishops, chancellors, and seminary students and faculty are urged to attend. Featured presenters include:



< **James Newton Poling**, a trainer with the Faith-Trust Institute and professor of pastoral care, counseling, and theology at Garrett-Evangelical Theology Seminary in Evanston, Ill., whose books include *Understanding Male Violence: Pastoral Care Issues*, *The Abuse of Power: A Theological Problem*, and *Deliver Us from Evil: Resisting Racial and Gender Oppression*

**Marcia McFee**, a consultant on preaching, worship, and the arts, who has designed worship for national and international events, including the GCSRW-sponsored worship service at the 2004 General Conference, and author of *The Worship Workshop: Creative Ways to Design Together*



< **Monica A. Coleman**, professor of religion and womanist studies at Bennett College, Greensboro, N.C., an ordained elder in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, and author of *The Dinah Project: A Handbook for Congregational Response to Address Sexual Violence*

**Minerva Carcaño**, United Methodist bishop assigned to the Phoenix Area, Western Jurisdiction



< **Joy T. Melton**, an attorney, United Methodist deacon in the North Georgia, and author of *Safe Sanctuaries: Reducing the Risk of Child Abuse in the Church* and *Safe Sanctuaries For Youth: Reducing the Risk of Abuse in Youth Ministries*

**Traci West**, associate professor of ethics and African-American studies at Drew University Theological School, and author of *Disruptive Christian Ethics: When Racism and Women's Lives Matter* and *Wounds of the Spirit: Black Women, Violence and Resistance Ethics*

**Jim Allen**, Nashville, Tenn., chief counsel for the General Council on Finance and Administration of the United Methodist Church

**Andrew Sung Park**, professor of theology at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, and author of *From Hurt to Healing: A Theology of the Wounded*, and co-editor (with Susan Nelson) of *The Other Side of Sin*

**William Dew**, retired United Methodist bishop, who has trained new district superintendents on legal issues, including sexual misconduct complaints



More information is available by calling 312.346.4900. Registration is \$450 per person through June 15. This event is co-sponsored by the following United Methodist agencies:

- General Commission on the Status and Role of Women
- General Board of Discipleship
- General Board of Higher Education and Ministry
- General Board of Global Ministries
- General Council on Finance and Administration

50 years

# Women in leadership— the challenge and the rewards

**Margaret Dewyer Goad is in her third year as pastor of North UMC in Manchester, Conn. She and her husband, Mark, who currently serves South UMC in Manchester, have served churches together and separately through their 30 years of professional ministry.**

Throughout her career, Margaret has noticed differences in how she is regarded as a leader both in the communities in which she has lived and within the New England Annual Conference. Goad has served the annual conference as a member of the Conference Commission on the Status and Role of Women, on the Board of Pensions, the Board of Ordained Ministry—twice—and as the first woman to chair the Council on Finance and Administration.


“Local churches sometimes have difficulty with women in leadership,” she said. “When we served as co-pastors, my husband would often get more credit and recognition in the local church while I had more opportunities at a conference level.” Sometimes, she conceded, it’s not a question of talent, but Disciplinary requirements that place women in leadership

positions. Local churches, for example, are required to have a minimum of three women on their Board of Trustees.

“I find more women than men in leadership in local churches as well,” Goad said. “Women prioritize ‘church.’” In her current appointment, Goad noted that the congregation’s administrative council

is about 50-50 when it comes to percentages of men versus women. On the various committees, she indicates that the ratio is 65% women, 35% men.

In her career, Margaret has never served a church that has had a woman pastor prior to her appointment. “If you go to a church and love the people, they’ll work past their discomfort. If you spend time and energy on the discomfort, you lose focus on the Gospel.” Goad goes on to say, “The best thing you

can do is give leadership chances to young men and women to lead in worship and other areas,” she said. “The best thing I can do is model that you can be a woman with a balanced life and be faithful to the Gospel.” 

“I find more women than men in leadership in local churches... Women prioritize ‘church.’”

## Worth Repeating

“Many people would just as soon the Conference go away and leave ‘their church’ alone. But it’s not their church, or yours or mine: there are many congregations, and each one is part of the one Church—God’s Church, which is the Body of Christ in the world.”

— United Methodist Bishop Mary Ann Swenson, Los Angeles Area



passing legends

**Addie Davis**, the first woman ordained a Southern Baptist minister, died in December at age 88. Davis served churches in Vermont, Rhode Island, and North Carolina.

**Carrie Sahmaunt**, who was the oldest living member of the Kiowa Indian Tribe, died Jan. 15 at the age of 101 at her home in Meers, Okla. She was the first president of the former West District Women's Society of Christian Service in the UMC's former Indian Mission.

**Ruth Nichols**, 85, widow of Bishop Roy Nichols, died Jan. 22 at her home in San Jose, Calif. Ruth Nichols was a podiatrist and an active supporter of Africa University.

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](mailto:kcoffing@gcsr.org).

# Subscribe, Support!

## Support women in the church

*The Flyer* invites you to subscribe and show your support for women in The United Methodist Church. As one of the communication tools of the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women, *The Flyer* offers its readers updates on women's issues and resources for annual conference and local church women's groups. Your subscription includes four issues of *The Flyer* per year. Make checks payable to GCSRW, 77 West Washington St., Suite 1009, Chicago, IL 60602.

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◀ **Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf**, an active United Methodist, was sworn in as the 23rd president of Liberia. She is the first woman head of state in Africa.

★ **Michelle Bachelet**, a Socialist, pediatrician, and former political prisoner and exile, was sworn in as the first woman president of Chile. Bachelet was elected to a four-year term in January, winning 53.5 percent of the vote in a runoff. Her accession to power is a milestone: though six other women have served as presidents of Latin American countries, Bachelet, a single mother of three, is the first on the continent to be elected who is not the widow of a political leader and has built a career on her own.

★ **Robin Kilgore** is the new Nebraska United Methodist Conference director of administrative services and conference treasurer. Kilgore has served as the Nebraska United Methodist Conference comptroller since January 2005.

★ **The West Michigan Conference** will continue domestic partner benefits as a part of its health care plan. According to a report from the *Michigan Christian Advocate*, the conference Council on Finance and Administration decided Dec. 15 that the program did not violate *Discipline* ¶ 612.19. The Judicial Council referred the matter to the CCFA in October. During the debate within the conference council, members agreed conference funds would be spent on domestic partner benefits.

★ **Laurie Haller**, co-pastor of First UMC, Grand Rapids, Mich., will be appointed superintendent of the Grand Rapids District, effective July 1.

★ **H. Sharon Howell**, pastor of First UMC, Lawrence, Kan., is the new president of Scarritt-Bennett Center, Nashville, Tenn.

★ **The Women's Division**, General Board of Global Ministries, is planning to launch what it terms as the first official online community for UM Women. Currently in a pilot period, the community will be available to all UMW members before the assembly in May. Greater availability to others will be provided in 2007. In creating the online community, the Women's Division hopes to increase communication and make it possible to hold online Bible studies, in addition to sharing other information and ideas. Further information and updates about the site will be posted at <http://gbgm-umc.org/umw/>.

★ **Bishop Sally Dyck** (Minnesota Area); **Lois McCullough Daway**, assistant general secretary with the Women's Division, General Board of Global Ministries; **Motoe Yamada**, a youth delegate\* and associate pastor at Wesley UMC, San Jose, Calif.; and **Akissi Jeannette Aneye**, from the UMC in Cote d'Ivoire, were elected Feb. 22 to the World Council of Church's Central Committee. The 150-member Central Committee now has 63 women (42%), 22 youth (15%), and six indigenous people (4%).



Sally Dyck



Motoe Yamada

\*The WCC classifies anyone aged 30 or under as a "youth."

★ **The Dove Campaign for Beauty** surprised viewers when it joined with the "usual suspects" in advertising their fund for building self-esteem in girls in the United States during the Super Bowl. Dove's partnership with Girl Scouts of the USA has led to the development of the "uniquely Me!" program. Girl Scouts of the USA promotes the development in girls of leadership skills, strong values, social conscience, and self-esteem. ✨

## Generations

# Mother

*continued from page 4*

didn't have to support their local church or the mission. They could do both."

A self-proclaimed "older member" of the UMC, Siaba thinks that some younger women aren't interested in becoming part of the UMW and other opportunities in The United Methodist Church because "they haven't seen what we're about."

She agrees that different strategies and programs need to be employed depending on the area around the church. "In a city, young people can be more involved in church. In lower income areas, we have to think about times that might be feasible for shift workers outside of Sunday morning.

"We need to find something that touches lives," she said. Budgeting, parenting, communication with each other, and child development are all examples of possible topics that might interest younger women. She also stresses that when trying to attract younger women, childcare must be provided. "Allow the women to see the advantage of being together."

"Yes, I'm a feminist," Siaba says, "in that I respect women's decisions that they make on their own. I share information so that they can decide what's right for them." The problem with labels like "feminist" is that if someone hears and doesn't like the label, they're not likely to get to know the person, she said. "That's the problem with labels. You can always think of someone who *is* or *isn't*." ❀

# Daughter

*continued from page 5*

the day and for lunch and on weekdays. "They appeal to retired and non-working women. It's what we've always done."

Marta thinks that to attract younger women to churches there should be a combination of Bible and action—a combination of social time, scripture and spiritual fulfillment. It's not about pure recreation, she says. If people want recreation, they'll go out with their friends. That's about fun, not filling the spirit.

Marta has taught adult Sunday school classes and led Bible studies with people of all ages. "Young people don't just want to be talked to," she said. "They want to create a bond. They want to use their talents to provide leadership within the church. They want to know that what they're doing is a vital part of the congregation." Marta thinks

that programs for younger people should examine subjects like relationships—what to look for in reality, not what is portrayed on TV—self-esteem for younger women, and providing places where young people can be heard and where they can develop deep friendships. "Churches need to take time to find out what the needs are. ASK them. If the needs aren't being met, see what you can do to change that."

Marta says she is *not* a feminist. "That word has negative connotations," she said. "I would say that I'm proud to be a woman. I'm not a stereotype. I have my own opinions, my own womanly instincts, and I'm sensitive to feelings. I won't let a man tell me that I'm right or wrong. I won't back down." ❀



## Memories of a new agency

*continued from page 7*

talent bank of women interested in making themselves available for employment in the denominational agencies. How convenient that Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary had offered to “house” the Commission in three tiny rooms it had available. I applied for the intern position and was hired. It was a time of great learning, increased sensitivities to the resistances and hopes of the church where women were concerned, and wonderful fun working alongside Nan and Judy.

Connecting through annual conferences and the United Methodist Women, we were able to receive the profiles and *vitae* of scores of women willing to serve the church beyond their local congregations. We assembled a book of women available and presented the book to the general secretaries of all the general agencies. No longer could they deny that there were women willing to be part of the church in employment and leadership! GCSRW was beginning to open the eyes of church leaders to the gifts of women.

Since its beginning, GCSRW has shown the church how to open doors and advocate for women. It has given women permission to claim who they are created to be. It has shown examples of how to claim God’s givenness of who we are created to be.

Some would say the Commission has done its work and now 30 years later can be

dissolved. I say NO! As long as there are places where some have difficulty envisioning women in leadership...as long as there are clergywomen who find congregations that are not open to receiving them...as long as women are pigeonholed into “traditional” roles...as long as salary discrepancies keep women from receiving their full worth...as long as people think there is only one leadership style...as long as women are subjected to inappropriate sexual remarks and behaviors, there is still a need for the Commission on the Status and Role of Women. The United Methodist Church needs GCSRW to lead us in advocating for the full inclusion of women in all areas of the church. They must continue to challenge the church about sexual ethics. We need GCSRW’s leadership in training and sensitizing bishops, general agencies, educational institutions, clergy, and lay people toward greater respect for and empowerment of women. We need GCSRW to guide us all into a more whole and healthy church.

Thank God for the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women. It’s been a great 30 years...unfortunately, there’s yet more to be done. ✨

*Sharon Zimmerman Rader served as Bishop of the Wisconsin Area from 1992 until her retirement in 2004. She serves as Bishop In Residence at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Ill.*

## Worth Repeating

“ Eleanor Roosevelt understood that every one of us every day has choices to make about the kind of person we are and what we wish to become. You can decide to be someone who brings people together, or you can fall prey to those who wish to divide us. You can be someone who educates yourself, or you can believe that being negative is clever and being cynical is fashionable. You have a choice. ”

— Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton





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## A bridge to now

### Reflections on the 50th anniversary of full clergy rights for women

By Lauren Heather Lay

**My initial call to ministry came when I was a Catholic schoolgirl. Even at the age of 10, I knew the calling was not to be a nun—the only role model of female church leadership I had witnessed at that time. When I finally responded to the call to ordained ministry within The United Methodist Church, I was a youth director in a church in San Francisco. I never hesitated on the grounds that I was a woman since my current frame of reference included Bishop Leontine Kelly.**



*Lauren Heather Lay*

I daresay that every clergywoman has a ministry history scarred with one or more stories of discrimination and abusive behavior from churches and colleagues based on gender. We are meant to thrive, and not just survive, as clergywomen!

I choose to thrive. I thrive because I have been intentional about building and maintaining relationships where I can vent, celebrate, and test-drive ideas for the ministry and for other areas of my life. I thrive because I approach everything with prayer.

I witnessed Bishop Kelly greet people of all stations in life with an embrace: clergy, laity, children, adults, and men and women waiting in line at the soup kitchen. Her stature required more often than not that she reach upwards. Her stance was unapologetic yet graceful.

That's the pastor I hope that people say I am: unapologetic about what God has created me to be, and graceful in my extension of words and behaviors toward others. I feel blessed to enjoy the special bond that I have with my clergywomen colleagues and pray that the next 50 years will unfold amazing stories of thriving ministry for all who respond to the call. Reach upwards to Jesus the Christ and all else will fall away! 🌸

*Lauren Heather Lay is pastor of Idlewylde United Methodist Church in Baltimore, Maryland. "A Bridge to Now" is a collection of reflections from women on ministry created by the Baltimore Washington Annual Conference in celebration of the 50th anniversary of full clergy rights for women.*