



NOVEMBER 2011

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



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OUR WORLDWIDE NAUTRE

Philippine clergywomen celebrate gains

Hoping for a woman bishop, more opportunity, women pastors in the Philippines ‘lift up, level up and lead on’

When the Rev. Elizabeth (“Pastor Beth”) Bautista began working as a United Methodist pastor in 1984, only two or three clergywomen had answered the call to ministry.

“The clergymen didn’t know what to do with us—and lay people were not sure about women leading their churches,” she recalls. “But look at us today.”

Bautista, superintendent of the Aurora District in the Middle Philippines Annual Conference, was among the 220 women elders, deacons, local pastors and pastors-in-training who gathered Oct. 6-7 in a historic meeting in the Philippines, sponsored by the **General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM)**.

United Methodist clergywomen and laywomen from across the Philippines have held conferences in the past. However this was the largest gathering ever of Filipina pastors convened by the denomination’s agency responsible for clergy oversight and education.

ORGANIZING REGIONAL NETWORKING

In 2011-2012, GBHEM is sponsoring a series of clergywomen consultations in each of the five U.S. jurisdictions and in Europe/Eurasia, Africa and the Philippines. The Rev. HiRho Park, a staff member of the Nashville-based agency, says the purpose is to celebrate the gains won by women in ordained and licensed ministry and to encourage each region to organize an association of clergywomen for networking, advocacy and mentoring.

Clergywomen, who represent nearly 22 percent of all United Methodist pastors around the world, organized in clusters even before predecessor denominations opened their doors to ordaining and licensing women more than 50 years ago.

The first gathering for U.S. clergywomen of The United Methodist Church was held in 1975. What is new in these regional gatherings is the sheer numbers of women entering ministry. Just 25 years ago, only three or four Filipina’s were ordained; in October, their numbers filled a hotel ballroom to overflowing.

Much of the time at the Philippines gathering—organized under the theme, “Clergywomen: Lift Up, Level up, Lead on!”— was devoted to hugs and celebration. Presenters focused on topics ranging from “strengthening preaching skills” to “self-care and healthy living for stressed-out clergy.”

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Philippine clergywomen gather in October

All photos in this article by M. Carlinda Burton



The Rev. Elizabeth Bautista

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Participants and presenters also named concerns and issues which, they say, the Philippines' church—and the entire United Methodist communion—must address if the church is to remain relevant to women in developing communities in Asia and Africa, including:

- » Continuing efforts to counter sexism and create opportunities for all people to express their Christian faith;
- » Electing a Filipina bishop so that the values and voices of women from the Philippines are represented at the highest levels of church;
- » Increasing educational opportunities for clergy, and:
- » Allocating more resources and other tangible support for ministries with young adults, youth and children.

Bautista—who has twice been a candidate for bishop—and other women pastors like the Rev. Leslie Dela Cruz of Manila, acknowledge that gender bias still exists in many corners of church and society. Still, they say, barriers to women's advancement are coming down, and women themselves must become better organized and united in order to accomplish even more.

“If clergywomen and laywomen in the Philippines can come together, we can elect a woman bishop. We can't just say that men don't want us; the men I work with support women pastors and they want to see a woman bishop,” says Bautista.

“Women, though, have to unite, get behind the strongest candidates and make that happen,” adds Dela Cruz, who is leads a mission congregation at Gamachile UMC in Manila. “And we also need for United Methodist churchwomen around the world to support the idea of women bishops everywhere!”

The Rev. Nerissa Palafox, the chairperson of the design team, agrees. “Women have been successful in challenging the patriarchal culture in the Philippines, and we are gaining ground, but we still need to work harder at uniting to make lasting changes.”

DEACONESSES, LAYWOMEN PAVED THE WAY

Palafox and others also acknowledge the role of laywomen and deaconesses in paving the way for ordained and licensed women pastors. Before the church allowed women to become clergy, consecrated United Methodist laywomen women known as “**deaconesses**” spread the Gospel and improved the lives of people across the Philippines, teaching Sunday school, instituting preschool and elementary education programs, providing health care and even convening house churches.

Indeed, many of today's Filipina clergywomen—including Palafox—began their ministries as deaconesses. And many deaconesses still lead United Methodist congregations in that nation.

Palafox received her early training at United Methodist-related Harris Memorial College, a pioneer in elementary education. Until last June, Palafox served for six years as one of eight women superintendents in the 25 districts of the Baguio Episcopal Area. She says her work as a deaconess and a stint as district



The Rev. Leslie Dela Cruz of Manila

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superintendent honed her administrative skills and buoyed her confidence to confront gender bias in any ministry setting.

Currently, Palafox is pastor of 500-member Cauayan City UMC, where her husband, the Rev. Beny Palafox, is associate pastor.

“My husband and I work together well, and we are very clear about our roles and responsibilities. He is quick to remind congregants that I am the lead pastor,” says Palafox. “We’re teaching every day about the equality among women and men in ministry.”

Retired Bishop Daniel Arichea of Manila and Baguio Area and Bishop Rodolfo Juan were among those who urged the women to further their education and hone their preaching and teaching skills. Juan celebrated the “sacrifices that women have made to answer God’s call” in serving the church, and encouraged participants to continue their own theological education and to encourage younger women in ministry to fine-tune their preaching, teaching and mission skills.

Juan also committed himself to support clergywomen and to help dismantle institutional sexism in the Philippines and the larger United Methodist Church. Reflecting on an earlier sermon by the Rev. HiRho Park, in which she admitted “the church is often not a friendly place for clergywomen and women of color,” Juan says, “I promise I will not be the source of storms in the lives of clergywomen.”

MINISTRIES WITH INDIGENOUS PEOPLE

Filipina clergy agreed on the importance of reaching out to youth and young adults, children and indigenous groups, such as the Aetas (known as “black people of the Philippines,” because of their brown skin and curly hair).

The Rev. Angie Pelayo, 24, is a local pastor and an Aeta who serves Baguilan UMC in the West Middle Philippines Annual Conference. Pelayo’s congregation of 20 people has an outreach to 40 children in a low-income Aeta community.

“The United Methodist Church should be a church that walks with the poor and with people who face discrimination,” says Pelayo, a 2010 graduate of United Methodist-related Immanuel Bible School.

“The church that is following Christ is the one that stands with people who are suffering,” adds Pelayo, who attends college classes weekdays and then walks two hours one way to spend the weekend tending her flock Friday through Sunday. The 200 pesos (about \$4.50) for a one-way motorcycle-taxi ride is too expensive for the young pastor, who lives on a monthly salary of less than \$30.

In an address, M. Garlinda Burton, top staff executive of the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women in Chicago, praised the Filipina clergy, adding, “You who are on the front lines of ministries with the



(from left) The Rev. HiRho Park and the Rev. Kim Cape of GBHEM and Baguio Area Bishop Rodolfo Juan

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poor and still tearing down walls of gender injustice have something to teach the whole United Methodist Church. Make your voices heard and speak truth to power so that we can become a more faithful, more vital, more relevant body of Christ!”

A gathering of clergywomen from across Africa will be held Feb. 1-4, 2012 in Zimbabwe.

Meet more women pastors from the Philippines.



The Rev. Angie Pelayo



To support ministry with the Aetas in the Philippines, please donate to the Advance Special Project No. 3021219 by calling (888) 252-6174 or at the website www.givetomission.org

Meet Filipina clergywomen who are serving God across their nation



**The Rev.
Starlett C.
Gapuz**

*Pastor of Lawig
United Methodist
Church since
2007*

The youngest of six children, Gapuz says her parents were reluctant to encourage her to respond to call to ministry. In her culture, the youngest child stays home to care for her family. Her mentor and former pastor, the **Rev. Delailah Benicta**, recognized her gifts and urged her on.

Now in her sixth clergy appointment, Gapuz, 35, says, "I would like to date and maybe marry."

She loves being a pastor and especially enjoys visiting the sick and those facing challenges in their lives, "It's not enough to see the people in church on Sunday; you to have to walk with them, visit their homes and pray with their families."

Today, her parents are proud of her.

"They know this is what I was born to do," she says.



**The Rev.
Ednaly D.
Guillermo**

*Superintendent
of the Isabella
North District
North Central*

Philippines Annual Conference

As a teen, Guillermo briefly rebelled against her strong United Methodist upbringing. However, it didn't take long for her to return to her faith and "devote my whole life to the Lord." In ministry for 23 years, she hopes "never to stop serving God."

Guillermo is among four women superintendents serving with Bishop Rodolfo Juan in the Baguio Area. A former local pastor who became an elder in 1999, she said she is proud that "most pastors in our area are women." In fact, her husband has been nurtured by the clergywomen around him and has begun the process for ordination. The couple are parents of an 8-year-old son.

A member of the planning team for the October 2011 clergywomen's event in Baguio, she says being in a room with more than 200 other Filipina clergy was the fulfillment of a dream. "God is doing great things for us," says Guillermo.



**The Rev.
Demelita
Paduit**

*Pastor of a
two-point
charge in
the Eastern*

Philippines Annual Conference

The Rev. Demelita Paduit knows what it means for the church to provide shelter in the time of trouble. After her ordination in 1990, she lived with an abusive, alcohol-addicted husband, who terrorized her and her three children for more than five years.

Past and current United Methodist bishops Rodolfo Juan, Benjamin Justo, Daniel Arichea and Leo Soriano all offered support, from financial assistance to accompanying her to court hearings. The social worker who advocated for her is the wife of a United Methodist district superintendent. And the whole time she was battling for her freedom and her children, Paduit persevered as a woman and a pastor.

"The church helped me fight for my rights; the God who claimed me stood with me," she says.

Today Paduit, 55, is a happy single mother, pastoring a two-point charge. She is helping 20 youth and young adults become financially self-sufficient by selling homemade soaps and coin purses.

GENERAL CONFERENCE

Vital Congregations Project part II: Do membership and worship attendance tell the whole story?

By Julie Kathleen Schubring

In last month's Flyer, I provided an overview of the UMC **Vital Congregations Project**. Since then I have had the opportunity to visit the Rev. Amihan Valdez Barker, manager of the project, and I have followed conversations on the project through social media.

The most frequent complaint is that church vitality must be measured by more than numbers.

One of the critiques of the project relates to collecting membership and worship and Sunday school attendance numbers and having those numbers publicly posted. Some view this process as one that could shame a congregation without understanding its purpose.

Others view counting numbers as an inadequate measurement of the denomination's goal to "make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

While I agree that numbers alone do not provide the big picture of the vitality of an individual congregation, they do keep us accountable to one another.

Editor's Note: *General Conference, the top law-making body of The United Methodist Church, convenes April 24-May 4, 2012, in Tampa, Fla. The FLYER is offering a series of articles to inform, prepare and urge delegates and all church members to consider how actions will hurt or hinder lay or clergy women.*

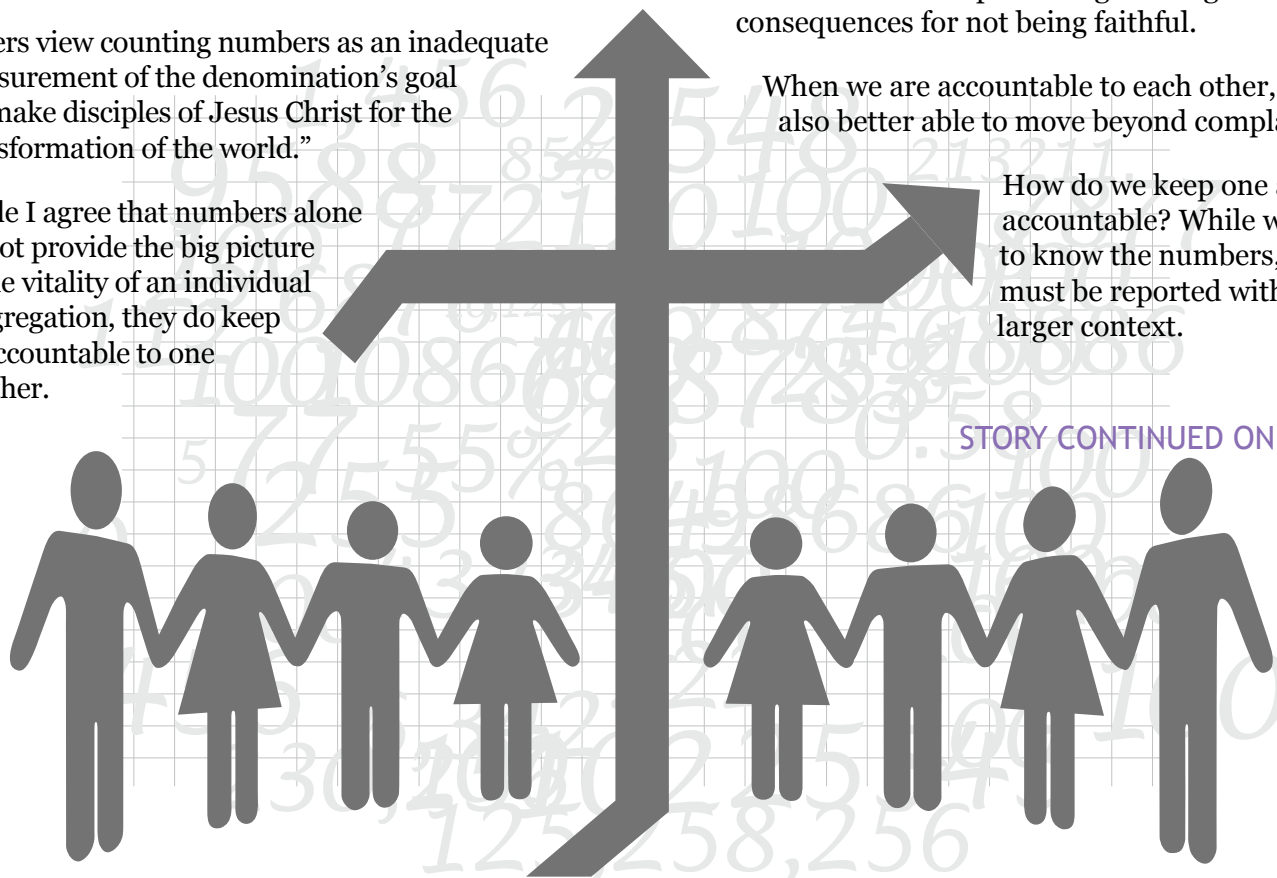
This piece of Wesleyan heritage should be simple to accomplish, yet it is usually just passed around as a catch phrase instead of living into the practice.

The Wesley brothers believed in accountability. Each time members gathered in holy groups, covenant groups or assemblies, they were asked about their faithfulness since the previous gathering. There were consequences for not being faithful.

When we are accountable to each other, we are also better able to move beyond complacency.

How do we keep one another accountable? While we need to know the numbers, they must be reported within a larger context.

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It is interesting that the project is known only for the number portion, not all five components. What does that tell us about our relationship to numbers?

Members of vital congregations live out their membership vows on a daily basis, and they are not afraid of accountability, but we need to be reminded of the stories that go along with the statistics.

Vital congregations have leadership that is shared by both clergy and laity. The laity also takes ownership through small groups, education of all levels and contribution to mission.

The project's website is a place to gather numbers, share challenges, report successes, and receive

inspiration. It is also a place to receive information that will help us live out our mission statement.

As we attempt to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world, we must remember that numbers inform us about where we came from and where we are going.

But it takes more than counting to become a vital congregation.

*A student at Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary, **Julie Kathleen Schubring** is a commissioned Bishop W.T. Handy Young Adult Missionary.*

SEXUAL ETHICS

Sexual Ethics Task Force plans resources for laity

By M. Garlinda Burton

The 21-member panel charged with equipping The United Methodist Church to prevent and address sexual abuse in church settings say their focus must widen from training clergy only to engaging grassroots laity and laity in leadership in protecting people from sexual exploitation.

The Sexual Ethics Task Force established by the 2000 General Conference (the denomination's top legislative body) and convened by the women's commission, includes representatives from churchwide agencies, the Council of Bishops and practitioners in crisis response and Safe Sanctuaries teams from annual conferences in the United States.

Meeting earlier this fall in Chicago, panel members made plans to develop audiovisual training materials specially geared to local-church lay leaders, staff-parish relations committee chairpersons, trustees and Sunday school teachers. As with the more well-known training for United Methodist clergy, the purpose of the lay-focused resources will be to raise awareness about the fact that sexual abuse and misconduct can affect any congregation and to provide laity with the knowledge and tools to prevent abuse before it happens and to help foster justice and healing in the event abuse occurs.

The Rev. Darryl W. Stephens, assistant general secretary for sexual ethics for the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (GCSRW), said audiovisual resources would be designed to complement face-to-face training.

Members of the task force agreed that a multipronged approach to lay training would be most effective. Combinations of web-based vignettes, study guides for clergy/lay teams (including biblical and ethical foundations), and case-study discussion-starters are all being considered. GCSRW is already at work on a six-part study for congregations, to be released in late 2012. Stephens said the proposed cache of audiovisual resources will build on the first-phase curriculum for local churches.

In January, the task force sponsored **"Do No Harm,"** a churchwide conference on sexual ethics, which included more than 300 annual conference staff and volunteers whose work includes prevention training, response and justice-making in the aftermath of sexual misconduct in church contexts. Participants in the gathering held in Houston urged the task force to expand training and resources to equip, inform and challenge laity.

Other recommendations included support for culturally specific resources and training for United Methodists in Africa, Europe and the Philippines.



The Rev. Darryl W. Stephens, assistant general secretary for sexual ethics for the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women

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New to the team is a clergywoman from the Republic of Congo, now a U.S. citizen and member of the Iowa Annual Conference. The Rev. Kabamba Kiboko, who conducted sexual ethics training for **300 United Methodist pastors in the Congo** in April, told other task force members, “Sexual misconduct is an issue for the entire church, in every corner of the world. Our pastors and other leaders are asking for more frank conversation and more training on this issue.” This work of the task force reflects the increased demand for culturally relevant resources for United Methodist congregations outside the United States.



The Rev. Kabamba Kiboko, who conducted sexual ethics training for 300 United Methodist pastors in the Congo in April.

More information about the task force and the sexual ethics work of The United Methodist Church is available at umsexualethics.org.

M. Garlinda Burton is general secretary of GCSRW.

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With women making up more than half of the church’s total membership, it’s clear that the Advocacy for Women Fund—which provides research, scholarships, skill development, theological studies, and salary support for pastors outside the United States—is vital.

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WOMEN BY THE NUMBERS

Women, clergypersons of color earn less

Less seniority, lower-paying pulpits lend to pay gaps

by Kristin Knudson

U.S. clergywomen in The United Methodist Church on average earn 13% less than their male counterparts, and clergypersons of color—Black, Hispanic/Latina, Native American, Asian- and Pacific Island-Americans—earn 9% to 15% less than white clergy.

These were the finding of a recent study of U.S. clergy salaries, led by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM), with support from the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (GCSRW), the General Commission on Religion and Race (GCORR), the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA), the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits (GBPHB) and United Methodist Communications (UMCom).

The study found that race and gender do play a role in clergy salaries. However, researchers Eric B. Johnson of the Princeton Center for the Study of Religion and the Rev. Hee An Choi of the Anna Howard Shaw Center at Boston University School of Theology explain that the gender and race gaps also stem from different causes:

- » The gender gap is due largely to differences in seniority between male and female pastors, and can be expected to decrease over time as female pastors gain seniority.
- » The race gap results from the assignment of non-white pastors to congregations that pay lower salaries.

People of color and women earn less because bishops and cabinets consistently appoint them to lower-paying appointments.

This study, which tracks salary of clergy serving the church between 1997 and 2008, is the first-ever attempt to research United Methodist clergy pay and any impact according to race/ethnicity and gender, according to the Rev. HiRho Park, GBHEM's director of continuing formation for ministry.

Among the study's other findings

- » Associate pastors and part-time pastors earn about 30% less than elders who are lead or sole pastors.
- » There is only a moderate gap (approximately 10%) between salaries for full-time local pastors versus elders.
- » Average pastor salaries differ substantially among U.S. annual conferences. Even after adjusting for variation in average salaries due to congregational, appointment and personal characteristics, more than \$14,000 separates the conference with the highest average salary from the lowest.

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» The gender gap also differs among annual conferences and is generally greater in the Southeastern and South Central jurisdictions.

Johnson of the Princeton Center is a specialist in the dynamic interaction between large-scale institutions and concrete social processes. Choi, who is also a lecturer at Boston University School of Theology, is a specialist in women’s studies and theology in multicultural and post-colonial contexts.

Combining their specialties, Choi and Johnson give The United Methodist Church a look into how the denomination fares with regard to salaries of male, female, and racial-ethnic clergy within the religious community and in comparison to secular salaries.

U.S. SALARIES ON RISE

According to Johnson’s summary, U.S. clergy salaries overall have increased substantially over the study period (1997-2008), exceeding the general rate of inflation by approximately 2% per year, resulting in a 20% total increase over the past decade. (It is important to remember that this study examines salaries among clergy only in the United States.)

And while race/ethnicity and gender differences are evident, it is the size of congregations served that is the largest differentiating factor for pastor salaries, reflecting the importance of appointment status as a mark of “upward mobility” for pastors.

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Working toward equity in clergy compensation

With regard to clergy salaries, career paths, and effectiveness, GCSRW challenges:

Annual conferences

- ✓ Research and track clergy salaries, with an eye toward gender, race/ethnicity, age and seniority, to determine if unintentional biases are present.
- ✓ Make deliberate plans to plant new congregations in high-growth areas where people of color, single adults, young adults and women-headed households are present.
- ✓ Educate and orient laity (particularly staff-parish relations committees) about United Methodist practices of open-itinerancy and of ordaining women. Plan special Bible studies and orientations for congregations who will receive their first woman pastor or first pastor from a racial group other than their own.

Boards of Ordained Ministry

- ✓ Shore up mentoring plans for candidates, and assign mentors to women and people of color who have particular interest, knowledge and sensitivity to the unique issues they face in a predominantly white, largely male-led clergy system.
- ✓ Emphasize cultural competency as a requirement for ordination and licensing of all clergy, and provide continuing education for veteran clergy on confronting sexism and racism and engaging in ministry with all people.
- ✓ Bring women and people of color with skills in human resources and counseling onto your board, to help all members better understand, track and support candidates and clergy who are women and/or people of color.
- ✓ Meet with women pastors and pastors of color for insights and reflections on how to improve your support systems for female and racial/ethnic candidates and clergy.

Bishop and Cabinets

- ✓ Encourage women and people of color publically to participate in affinity groups for support and network; count it as continuing education and renewal time.
- ✓ Ask the conference commissions on Religion and Race and the Status and and Role of Women to assist with tracking your clergy roles for progress in ordaining/licensing people of color and women.
- ✓ Break the mold with regard to appointments. Be intentional about grooming and appointing women and people of color to new church starts and to formerly “closed” pulpits. Appoint white men and women as associates in large congregations of color. By your actions, let your conference know that each congregation is called to be a diverse, vigorous reflection of God’s love, mission and justice.

–Kristin Knudson

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The study finds that women and racial/ethnic pastors receive lower compensation, not because of education or seniority, but mainly because cabinets consistently appoint women and racial/ethnic pastors to congregations and multi-church charges that pay lower salaries.

The differences in how appointments are made within annual conferences as well as the various formal and informal practices regarding salary setting made the statistical analysis challenging, however, Johnson started with a baseline of five possible predictors of pastor's salaries:

- 1 Gender and race
- 2 Congregation attributes
- 3 Seniority of the pastor
- 4 Other appointment characteristics (urban, rural, yoked)
- 5 Other characteristics (ethnicity and/or gender)

The data was collected from GBPHB and the GCFA. Retired pastors serving congregations and supply pastors were excluded because their data is generally excluded from the Board of Pension data. Part-time and other local pastors serving local congregations have been included as their numbers are greater.

The salary figures used for the analysis include the salary and any housing allowance (if any) paid to the pastor and reported to GCFA. It does NOT include other forms of compensation, such as benefits and contributions to pension funds.

More than 80% of the pastors in the study held full-time appointments, even though both the number of part-time appointments and the proportion of pastors being paid for half- or quarter-time have increased over the past 10 years. During the study years, the percentage of full-time pastors in the data decreased from 89% in 1997 to 79% in 2008; also, the percentage of pastors earning half- or quarter-time increased from 3% to 17%.

The differences in salaries? Hour for hour, three-quarters-time pastors earn 73% of what their full-time colleagues earn, half-time pastors earn 64% and one-quarter time pastors earn 41% of what full-time pastors earn.

LITTLE GAIN IN CLERGY OF COLOR

While the number of women pastors steadily increases, the majority of United Methodist pastors serving U.S. appointments are men. When the study began in 1998, 20% of U.S. pastors were female. In 2008, that percentage had increased to 29%. (Remember, women make up 57% percent of the U.S. population and at least 57% of United Methodist membership.)

The number of pastors of color lags even farther behind, with racial/ethnic clergy comprising only 12% of United Methodists serving clergy appointments. (The U.S. population is 35% non-white; membership in The United Methodist Church in the United States is about 5% racial/ethnic, according to the GCORR.)

According to Johnson, the number of racial/ethnic clergy has not changed dramatically over the past 10 years. The majority of non-white pastors are Black (7%), followed by Asian (3%), and Hispanic/Latino (1%). Racial/ethnic groups that fall within the "other" category also account for about 1% of United Methodist pastors. These

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include Native Americans, Pacific Islanders and pastors who self-identifying in multiple categories.

Within these groupings, women earn 13% less than their male counterparts while black women and men earn 9% less. Asians overall earn 5% less, Hispanics/Latinos 15% less and those falling within the “other” categories are paid 14% less than white pastors.

The largest discrepancy in compensation is that between men and women. According to Johnson, there is a larger difference between white males and females than there is between any other race/ethnic group. Yet, when congregational attributes, seniority and other position attributes are figured into the equation, Johnson notes that Asian pastors earn 5% more than their white counterparts.

FEWER FULL-TIME CLERGY?

Choi notes that those who answer God’s call to professional ministry are not motivated primarily by salary. Still, clergy must pay bills, eat and—in many cases—provide for their families, so that consideration of earning a living must accompany the sense of call.

The United Methodist Church has tried to set basic standards of living for pastors by setting minimum salaries in each annual conference and establishing a plan of equity. Yet Choi challenges the church to investigate why the percentage of full-time pastors has decreased, while the number of part-time pastors has increased.

Can the various annual conferences continue to support that standard of living with fewer full-time appointments available? Which clergy should be giving priority to receive full-time appointments? Should appointments be made solely on seniority? How can bishops and cabinets provide leadership to local congregations by appointing clergy who will focus on Christian discipleship, missions, witness and justice?

Choi also points out that clergywomen tend to leave their full-time ministry because of lack of support, family issues, and other reasons. Because they leave the appointment system earlier, women have difficulty in gaining seniority that leads to higher pay. These women are more likely to switch their denominational affiliation.

Gaining seniority is the most important factor for determining clergy salaries, but for female and racial/ethnic clergy, gaining seniority requires more than just staying in the ministry. Many have determined that it requires personal and communal support from family, friends and their communities. Many female pastors and people of color do not receive any support and have had to sustain their ministry by themselves. As more women enter the ministry, however, it only goes to support the idea that the salary gap will narrow over time.

Kristin Knudson, Baltimore, Md., is a freelance journalist.

MARCHA

Latina clergywoman and editor reflects on a caucus' legacy

*By the Rev. Carmen M. Gaud**

If you go to the annual gathering of MARCHA (Methodists Associated Representing the Cause of Hispanic Americans), you will see people from Mexico, Puerto Rico and Cuba. A growing number have been in the United States more than in their country of origin. Most of the young people were born in the United States. Spanish as well as English and Portuguese are spoken.

Every year, there is a luncheon for women where we introduce ourselves and say a few words about where we come from and what we are doing. Bishop Minerva Carcaño usually attends along with several other clergywomen. But, as one of the laywomen said during our luncheon meeting this year: *¡Cuidado conmigo!* (Watch out). Lay or clergy, we are a force to contend with.

During the Aug. 11-14, 2011 assembly in El Paso, Bishop Joel Martínez told us the history of MARCHA. And we heard stories about Bishop Elías Galván, one of the key leaders throughout the history of this organization. We recognized or remembered those who have served as presidents and executive directors, including the Rev. Awilda Nolla, Mary Silva and Ana Haydée Urda.

LOOK TO THE FUTURE

While a celebration of the past was important, participants wanted time to prepare for the future. Bishop Carcaño pointed out the challenges ahead.

We had presentations on the legislative process and the work of the caucuses during General Conference. We also had small group discussions on the issues with which we want MARCHA to work in the years ahead. All United Methodist organizations are challenged to dream about the future as we get ready for major structural changes.

When MARCHA was created, the population of the United States was not



Phoenix Area Bishop Minerva Carcaño gives the sermon during morning worship at the 2011 MARCHA meeting.

All photos in this article by Mike DuBose, UMINS



Retired bishop Joel Martínez blesses the elements of Holy Communion.

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as diverse as it is now. There is diversity in race, cultures and religious alliances.

A significant change for our organization has been in women’s leadership. Men formed the organization, but now half the leadership in the Consejo Directivo (Executive Council) are women. Women have served as presidents and executive directors of MARCHA, and they have been involved in the legislative process of General Conference.

Women have contributed at all the levels in preparation of the quadrennial assembly. And we can say again: *¡Cuidado conmigo!!!*



The Rev. Carmen M. Gaud is editor of El Aposento Alto, the Spanish version of the Upper Room, and a board member of MARCHA.



Jackeline Vives (right) and the Rev. Eunice Vega-Pérez celebrate during morning worship.

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KUDOS AND OVATIONS:

GCSRW top executive featured in Advent devotional

M. Garlinda Burton, general secretary of the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (GCSRW), is one of the writers featured in the new daily devotional study for Advent, *Expecting the Word*, a Words Matter book.



Words Matter is an expansive language project of the National Council of Churches, USA, Justice for Women Working Group. S. Kim Coffing, associate general secretary of GCSRW, has been a part of the Words Matter initiative.

Expecting the Word offers daily reflections around the Sunday texts for Advent B in the Revised Common Lectionary, written by a wide variety of contributors from a range of communions, racial/ethnic heritages, professional backgrounds, ages and experiences. Including art and questions for reflection, the devotional guide examines how we make choices about the stories we tell and the words we use to tell them.

Liberian president receives Nobel Peace Prize

United Methodist laywoman Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, president of Liberia since 2006, Liberian peace activist Leymah Gbowee and Tawakkul Karman of Yemen were **awarded the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize** for their work on women's rights.

Johnson Sirleaf, a member of First UMC, Monrovia, Liberia, was the first woman to be elected a head of state in modern Africa. She is up for re-election in November 2011.



PASSING LEGENDS:



The Rev. Renita H. Thomas, **died Oct. 20 of cancer**. Thomas was senior pastor of Wesley Chapel UMC, in McDonough, Ga., a particularly special assignment because she grew up in that church. She was ordained an elder in The United Methodist Church in 1986 and served as an associate minister at Cascade UMC, Atlanta. Thomas has served on the conference level of the North Georgia Conference, most recently as the associate director of connectional ministries. An alumna of Gammon Theological Seminary in Atlanta, and an active member of Black Methodists for Church Renewal, Thomas had earned her doctor of ministry degree last May from United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio.