

WOMEN BY THE NUMBERS

Does the church allow balance between work and home?

By Elaine Moy

According to *Working Mother* magazine (October 2011) all of their Working Mother 100 Best Companies offer:

- » professional development opportunities,
- » employee assistance programs,
- » medical flexible spending accounts,
- » flextime,
- » telecommuting,
- » on-site lactation room,
- » and paid maternity leave.

According to *MORE* magazine (November 2011):

- » 65% of women say it's more important to have personal time than to make more money at their jobs
- » 92% consider flexibility to be important in a job (up from 73% percent in 2009)
- » 40% of women would take a pay cut for more flexibility
- » 43% say they are less ambitious now than they were 10 years ago; only 15% say they are more ambitious.

How do these two surveys impact the life of The United Methodist Church?

First, let's consider women who work for the church — local churches, annual conferences, seminaries, camp sites or general agencies. Does the church help their employees balance their work and private life? In the past, middle class and upper class men worked outside the home and women took care of

the home and kids. Now that men and women work outside the home, who is taking care of the home and kids? Many surveys find that men are doing more inside the home and with kids (but not as much as women). The issue of flexibility is not just a women's issue but an issue for all people.

Specifically regarding clergy, does the local church assist clergy in balancing work and private life? How much time do the clergy have off each week? Are clergy on call 24/7? Are there evening meetings every night of the week? Are the expectations of clergy realistic? How can the local church support clergy to be at his or her best?

Let's look at women who sit in the pew. Most women work these days, and they are busy trying to balance work and home. How can the church assist women who are looking for more flexibility in their lives? Are we asking the women to do many things that take a lot of time (program-related ministry)? Do we ask the men to do those ministries as well? Are meetings or activities held at times that are convenient to women? Is the church supporting women who work outside the home?

Secular work places are changing and trying to accommodate the needs of their employees because they want to retain their employees. We at the church also want to retain our employees and our members. We need to be active in looking at ways to support and encourage our employees (clergy and lay) and congregations.

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