



**THIS MONTH**



**WOMEN BY THE NUMBERS:  
A SNAPSHOT**  
District superintendents  
2005 vs. 2010  
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Where have all the young  
clergywomen gone?

By *Melissa Lauber\**

*The Flyer* is published monthly by the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women in The United Methodist Church.

The General Commission on the Status and Role of Women, an agency of the Worldwide United Methodist Church acts as advocate, catalyst and monitor to ensure the full participation and equality of women in the church.



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In 1985, adults ages 35 and under made up 15.05 percent of ordained elders in the United Methodist Church in the United States. In 2009, that number has dropped to 5.25 percent.



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Today, only 906 U.S. United Methodist elders are under age 35; 326 are women, according to a study by the Lewis Center for Church Leadership. The center, based at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., found that while young women enter ministry at only slightly lower rates than men, their attrition rates are higher.

The study further indicates the difficulty our denomination has in attracting and shepherding women through the cumbersome three-year probation process. Less than ideal first and second clergy assignment also affect retention of young women.

**Advocacy for Women**

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

In addition, many young adults say they do not feel that a seemingly bureaucratic church with a declining membership is the best place for them to live out their vocations.

"I am called by God to work in ministry," said Kristen Dart, a Washington, D.C. seminarian. "I've come to learn that does not necessarily mean ordination

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## Where have all the young clergywomen gone?

(continued from page 1)



**Susan Reed**

of ministry.

in The United Methodist Church.”

Dart is also no longer seeking ordination, but she is “still doing ministry as all Christians are called to do. ... I think that it is important,” she says, “that we understand that a lack of ordination does not mean lack

For some young women, like Susan Reed, the ordination process in the California-Pacific Annual Conference feels convoluted, deeming some people unworthy.

It’s a hazing process, she says. You feel like “you’re fighting a huge uphill battle.”

As other seminarians, Reed is left with a large student loan after completing her theological education. The average loan accumulated by female seminary graduates is \$37,280, 31 percent higher than men.

Although she remains in love with God and still feels called to be in ministry, Reed says she has abandoned efforts to be ordained, although for years she will be “paying off debt my sojourn in the professional ministry cost me.”



**Myka Kennedy Stephens**

of single, young elders.

Myka Kennedy Stephens says she left the North Texas Annual Conference ordination process “because of a direct conflict between what I felt God was calling me to do and what my annual conference was demanding of me.”

Circumstances with her family and the birth of a child threw Stephens into a “bureaucratic mess,” and after eight years of frustration and growth, she left the process, which “is not kind to those wishing to make families,” she says.

Statistics bear out the belief it is more difficult for a married female than a married male to become an ordained United Methodist pastor. The Wesley survey found 85 percent of young male clergy are married, compared to only 64 percent of females. Women account for two-thirds

Stephens, now a deaconess, has made peace with a lot of the hurt and anger the ordination process created. “I believe that God has called me to dedicate my life and gifts to Christian service, and this will look different in each stage of my life,” she says.



**Lovett H. Weems**

For other young adult women considering ordained ministry, the expectation that they will be saviors to a declining church can be daunting. While young pastors are pressured to serve and minister in traditional ways to aging, existing congregations they’re also often expected to attract and bring in vast numbers of other young adults.

In *The Crisis of Younger Clergy*, authors Lovett H. Weems, Jr. and Ann A. Michel label this phenomenon “the lifesaver mentality.” The book quotes a young clergywoman from the Midwest who said, “We are expected to save the church with our energy and new ideas, but they give us very little rope.”

Dart agrees. When young clergywomen fail to live up to expectations, it’s easy to become frustrated, she says. “Also, it becomes cumbersome when many of your peers cannot begin to understand why you would want to be a part of leading the institutional church.”

Weems, director of the Lewis Center, says the issue of enlisting younger clergy “must be seen side by side with the quality and vitality of the church itself. It is more likely God’s call will be heard and accepted by more young people if the church is one where they are active and where God’s mission to make disciples and transform the world is alive.”



**Ann A. Michel**

For more information on “Clergy Age Trends in the United Methodist Church 1985-2009,” visit the Lewis Center at [www.churchleadership.com](http://www.churchleadership.com).

—Melissa Lauber is editor in the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference.

## How to answer the call to ministry



While both Susan Reed and Myka Kennedy Stephens have left the ordained ministry process, they have wisdom to share with other women considering where and what God is calling them to be.

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## WOMEN BY THE NUMBERS: SNAPSHOT

### U.S. district superintendents, 2005 vs. 2010

by Elaine Moy\*

Of the 467 United Methodist district superintendents appointed in the United States, 346 (74%) are men and 121 (26%) are women.

For more details on U.S. district superintendents stats by gender, racial-ethnic, jurisdiction and annual conference visit [www.gcsrw.org](http://www.gcsrw.org).

Those percentages are nearly equal to total the number of active United Methodist clergy in the nation; of the approximately 37,000 total U.S. clergy, clergywomen are 24% and clergymen are 76%. (See the January 2010 issue of *The Flyer*.) When compared with 2005 statistics, as reported in the October-December issue of *The Flyer*, the total number of U.S. women district superintendents increased by 3% over the last five years, from 23% to 26%. Therefore, women superintendents have increased in the past five years overall in the jurisdictional conferences, their numbers slightly higher than parity with clergy.



#### Jurisdictional breakdown

In 2005, the Western Jurisdiction led with 36% of women district superintendents. Today, the Western Jurisdiction continues to have the largest percentage, with 44%. Northeastern Jurisdiction had 32% women in 2005 and now has 33%. The number of women district superintendents in the North Central Jurisdiction decreased from 30% in 2005 to 28% currently. The South Central Jurisdiction had the lowest number of women of any U.S. region in 2005 (13%); as of 2010, it has increased the number of women superintendents to 23%. In 2010, the Southeastern Jurisdiction has the lowest percentage of women district superintendents (17%), compared with 16% in 2005.



Clara Reed is district superintendent in the North Texas Conference

Myrtle Hatcher is district superintendent in the Virginia Conference

#### By annual conference

In 2005, women comprised 23% of superintendents in 32 annual conferences (1/2 of all the U.S. conferences at that time). In 2010, 31 conferences (slightly more than half of all the conferences today) have 26% or more women serving as district superintendents, which is the national average. In 2005, nine annual conferences had 50% of women district superintendents (Alaska Missionary, Dakotas, Desert Southwest, New England, Northern Illinois, Peninsula-Delaware, Rocky Mountain, Western New York and Wyoming). Currently, there are eight conferences with 50% women serving as district superintendents (California-Nevada, Desert Southwest, Oklahoma Missionary, Oregon-Idaho, Rocky Mountain, Troy, Western New York, and Wyoming).

In 2005, three annual conferences had no women district superintendents: Memphis, Red Bird Missionary and Rio Grande. That has increased to five annual conference currently with no women superintendents: Arkansas, New Mexico, Kentucky, North Alabama, and Red Bird Missionary. (Note: Red Bird Missionary only has one district superintendent.)



Linda Harker is district superintendent in the Oklahoma Conference

#### Racial-ethnic figures

In 2010, 89% of all U.S. United Methodist clergy are White (February 2010 *Flyer*), and 81% of all U.S. district superintendents are White. (The superintendency is slightly more racially diverse than the denomination's U.S. membership, which is 91% White and 9% racial-ethnic persons. However, the denominational numbers are greatly lagging behind the increasing racial-ethnic diversity of the United States, which is 35% people of color and multiracial and 65% White.

White men comprise 82% of the male district superintendents and White women account for 79% of the women district superintendents. Currently, no multiracial or Pacific Islanders are district superintendents. (Multi-racial is a relatively new designation being used by the General Council on Finance and Administration to describe people of with more mixed racial ethnicity.)

There are three Hispanic women, five Asian women, one Native American woman, five Native American men and eight Hispanic men currently serving as United Methodist superintendents in the United States. Among Black/African Americans there are 16 women superintendents nationally and 37 men currently serving the denomination. District superintendents are among the clergy leaders in the annual conferences. When looking at the bishops' office (72% men, 66% white) and the district superintendents (74% men, 81% white), we still have predominately white male clergy leadership.

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## Is your pastor at risk of misconduct?

by Darryl W. Stephens\*

The United Methodist Church is concerned about the health of its clergy—for good reason. Poor physical, mental, and emotional health can contribute to spiritual malaise and vocational burnout for a pastor. An unhealthy lifestyle can also be a contributing factor in clergy misconduct of a sexual nature.

Healthy living is considered a discipline, and unhealthy habits indicate a lack of self-care. When a pastor is not meeting her or his personal needs outside the congregation, there is much greater temptation to cross interpersonal boundaries with parishioners. Inappropriate intimacy with a congregant can be detrimental to the spiritual health of both pastor and parishioner. When the professional relationship becomes sexual, the pastor has violated the sacred trust of ministry—to attend to the best interests of the parishioner as she/he grows as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

The UMC defines this behavior as sexual abuse, a chargeable offense with no statute of limitations.

When sex enters the ministerial relationship, the best interests of the congregant are no longer being honored, even if the congregant seems to offer consent. Because of the duty entrusted the pastor and the power imbalance inherent in the pastoral relationship, there can be no meaningful consent on the part of a layperson to sexual intimacy with a clergyperson.

The rules are simple: The pastor's sexual needs must not be satisfied through her or his congregants. Sex is not a service provided as part of professional ministry. It is always the clergyperson's responsibility to maintain appropriate interpersonal boundaries.

## UMC identifies 13 common traits of unhealthy clergy

Unhealthy clergy share some things in common, according to a recent study conducted jointly by the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits (GBPHB) and the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM). The results of a year-long research process identify thirteen factors that impact clergy health. To view these factors, click [HERE](#)

General Conference 2008 directed the denomination to study the effects Church systems have on the health of clergy—physical, emotional, spiritual, social and financial health, as they enter and progress in ministry—by reviewing the employment systems and structures of the Church and their impact on clergy health, and to bring its findings and possible recommendations to General Conference 2012.

### Sexual ethics summit "Do No Harm 2011" Early registration begins April 6

"Do No Harm 2011" is a sexual ethics summit addressing the prevention of and response to abuse, misconduct, and harassment of a sexual nature, particularly by persons in ministerial roles (both lay and clergy) within The United Methodist Church. It is open to conference Response/Crisis Team members, conference leaders considering creating a team, Safe Sanctuary Teams, bishops, superintendents, laity in leadership, and Board of Ordained Ministries' members. The event will be held in Houston, Texas, at First UMC downtown campus, Jan 26-29, 2011.

For more information, visit [HERE](#).

Maintaining appropriate boundaries in ministry requires a balance of intimacy and professionalism. According to the United Methodist Church's research, clergy who habitually *avoid* relationships with congregation members so as to avoid improprieties are not healthy, either. Pastors must develop meaningful relationships with persons in their congregations in order to be effective in ministry. Insuring that the best interests of the parishioners are always being served through these relationships is the disciplined work of a healthy pastor.

Healthy clergy are better able to maintain healthy boundaries and are less likely to wander across the line into misconduct. If your pastor is not attending to her or his own health, your congregation should be proactive in addressing the issue. If you are a pastor and recognize some of the warning signs of ill-health in your own life, talk to your district superintendent and develop a plan of action with your staff-parish relations committee.

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



## A female candidate for ordination in Poland shares her struggles, joys

by Heather Peck Stahl\*



**Monika Zuber**

Poland currently has only one ordained woman, according to Monika Zuber.

Last May, despite the odds against her becoming a second ordinand and perhaps the first ordinand in the United Methodist Church in Poland, Zuber decided to become a candidate for ordination.

She made the decision after attending a seminar organized by the World Federation of Methodist and United Church Women.

“Thanks to those wonderful women who encouraged me, I decided to listen to God’s calling,” she says.

Two months later, Zuber and her husband discovered that she was pregnant with their first child.

“Parenthood is a great gift from God that I was asking in my prayers for so many years,” she says. “I’m sure that my pregnancy changed me in many ways, but it didn’t change my decision to start the process for my candidacy.

“The biggest challenge in my process for candidacy has been the absence of other ordained women in Poland,” she says. “In traditional culture, everything that’s new is suspicious. My candidacy as a woman is new for the Polish church, so it’s controversial. Many women have the same problem when they apply for a traditionally men’s job. It’s very distressful because a person’s gender becomes more important than work experience, calling or the heart to minister.”

Zuber says that Polish culture is heavily influenced by the Roman Catholic Church and by other Protestant churches that oppose the ordination of women. She adds that few people in Poland encourage girls or women to study theology or get involved in church ministry “even though women are very active in church ministry.”

“Even through my sad feelings, I always try to remember my purpose is to serve God, not to struggle with anyone, so I don’t want to push anyone or speed up my process for candidacy. I never lose my heart for church ministry,” says Zuber.

Zuber says that despite her struggles, she has found “so many friendly people in the United Methodist Church in Poland and Europe who encourage me in my candidacy. The biggest support I have is from Methodist women, especially from the president of Women’s Ministry in Poland. This support has given me strength to not give up on my decision.”

She says she has a passion for mentoring, counseling and leading women’s ministry. She also hopes to popularize feminist theology in Poland, “where there is little to no feminist theology and where there is some hostility against it.”

“I realize how much church is missing when it doesn’t hear a woman’s voice,” she explains. “I see how hard it is in Poland to be a modern woman and a Christian woman at the same time in such a traditional and sexist culture. I want to help these women find their Christian identity in the modern world. I believe it’s possible, because the good news of the Gospel is for men and women.”

Zuber started her ministry in 1995 as a high school student. She led a weekly Bible study and organized youth camps and conferences. In 2000, she began volunteering at a Christian educational program for teens living in poor, alcoholic families. Two years later she served as project coordinator for Youth for Christ International to help church leaders in Poland work with teenagers. In 2004, she began working at the Evangelical School of Theology where she organized the discipleship program for girls. She continues working with women in her congregation and helps lead a ministry to Polish women.

—Heather Peck Stahl is communications coordinator for GCSRW.





## How to answer the call to ministry

(continued from page 2)



Myka Kennedy  
Stephens

Myka Kennedy Stephens advises, “Always remain steadfast and true to your call because you have nothing without it. There will be times of trial—it is unavoidable—but a strong commitment to your sense of call can see you through to the other side. It is also important to separate the sense of call from the desire to achieve a specific goal. One who cannot separate her sense of call from a desire to be ordained as an elder might easily lose that sense of call in the race to make it to ordination.

Do not rely on the church to tell you how to answer your calling. Only God and the one who is called can know the true meaning of the call and how best to answer it. You must talk to God, constantly and forever after.”

Susan Reed adds: “God calls you, God calls all of us, to be in ministry. However, the way in which you interpret and respond to God's call is your half of the conversation and is dependent entirely upon, and unique to, who *you* are as a person. Remember, before God ever called you to be in ministry, God called you to be a fully realized you in relationship with God's self. That is the most important call. You can't sacrifice who you are just to fit yourself into the boxed definition of how you should interpret God's call to ministry.

Be flexible and open and God will work through you just as you are. Don't let the experience of answering the call change you, but rather choose how you grow as an authentic person and in relationship with God from the experience.”

## UMC Identifies 13 Factors Correlated with Unhealthy Clergy

(Continued from page 4)



**1. Personal centeredness**—feeling a lack of control over one’s life; ruminating about the past; difficulty experiencing the presence of God

**2. Eating habits with work that often involves food**—struggling to maintain a healthy diet with food available at church meetings, social gatherings and house calls

**3. Work-life balance**—having difficulty balancing multiple roles; feeling guilty taking time to exercise; avoiding healthcare because of time demands; struggling to achieve overall work-life balance

**4. Job satisfaction**—feeling dissatisfied with one’s appointments; feeling isolated at work; feeling disappointed with ministry; wishing for a way to exit the system

**5. Personal finances**—high debt; low income; few assets; little to no personal savings

**6. Outside interests, social life and friends**—a lack of hobbies, outside interests and/or participation in group activities for personal renewal; having few friends or people with whom one can share personal issues; feeling detached from one’s community

**7. Relationship with congregation**—feeling judged rather than supported; feeling the congregation’s expectations are too high or do not match one’s own beliefs about the appropriate pastoral role; feeling the congregation desires a pastor with a different leadership style; avoiding relationships with congregation members so as to avoid improprieties; avoiding healthcare for fear that parishioners might find out

**8. Stressors of the appointment process**—feeling stressed by the appointment process; feeling reluctant to talk to one’s DS because of the power he or she holds over appointments; feeling resentful about being paid less than non-clergy in similar professions

**9. Marital and family satisfaction**—low marital satisfaction, among clergy with families; low appointment satisfaction among spouses and/or children

**10. Existential burdens of ministry**—feeling obligated to carry the weight of others’ emotional and spiritual burdens; being overwhelmed by the needs of others and the sheer importance of the issues to be addressed in ministry; feeling expected to solve unsolvable mysteries

**11. Living authentically**—feeling unable to be one’s “authentic self”; failing to live according to deeply-held personal values and beliefs

**12. Education and preparation for ministry**—feeling unprepared by seminary for the everyday responsibilities of ministry; feeling one lacks the skills and training necessary to excel at pastoral duties

**13. Appointment changes and relocation**—more frequent appointment changes; more frequent long-distance moves

Source: “Church Systems Task Force on Clergy Health Multi-Phase Research Update,” [HERE](#).