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October–December 2008

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# Jurisdictional, African elections yield three new UM women bishops

## International, U.S. women of color still rare in UM episcopacy

While United Methodists in the United States were finishing up electing and assigning bishops on this side of the ocean, a quiet revolution was happening this summer among our sisters and brothers in Mozambique.



Mainline Christianity in Africa got one of its first woman bishops, Joaquina Filipe Nhanala, who now administers the mission and ministry in Mozambique, which is among the fastest-growing segments of The United Methodist Church. In fact, the denomination's membership in that nation has more than tripled in size in the last 13 years, to 150,000 members in 170 congregations.

Just a few days before, in the United States, two women were among the eight new bishops elected and assigned. Peggy Johnson, former pastor of Christ Church of the Deaf in Baltimore, is now bishop of the denomination's Philadelphia Area. Elaine Stanovsky, a former district superintendent in Seattle, is assigned as bishop of the Denver Area.

With these recent elections, the Council of Bishops now includes 12 active women bishops of the 69 active United Methodist bishops worldwide and 10 retired female bishops of the 85 retired bishops.

The number of women bishops has steadily increased in the 28 years since the first female bishop, the late Bishop Majorie Swank Matthews of Wisconsin, was elected in 1980. In fact, The United Methodist Church has given to the worldwide mainline Christian community its first woman and its first African-American and Latina women bishops.

Now, Nhanala joins those barrier-busters as the first African woman and only the second woman bishop serving in



*Bishop Peggy Johnson blesses the communion elements during her consecration service at the Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference. She is assigned to lead the Philadelphia Area.*

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# Revived by the breath of God



Earlier this year, *The Flyer* reported on the number of women and men delegates to the 2008 General Conference. While we celebrated gains in some areas (more young women, more international and more people of color visible at the conference), we also raised concerns about the relative lack of visibility of African and Filipino women. Specifically, we noted that Africa and the Philippines were the only areas of our church that had not named a woman bishop.

What a difference a summer made! In July, The United Methodist Church elected three new women bishops, including Joaquina Filipe Nhanala, who recently took over episcopal leadership in Mozambique. According to one report, when Nhanala's election was announced, the women in the assembly swept her into the air and danced in praise to God. It was and is a new thing, a reminder that the breath of God continues to blow down walls of bias in order that we may be a more faith-filled, just and welcoming body of Christ.

Nhanala's election again signals another barrier broken in our denomination and our world, and it marks a milestone for the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women. For the first time in our history, we will be honored to have Nhanala and two other women bishops (newly elected Bishop Peggy Johnson of the Philadelphia Area, and second-term Bishop Mary Virginia Taylor of South Carolina) serving on our 2009-2012 board of directors.

The work is not finished though. Yes, the denomination now has an African woman and a European woman (Bishop Rosemarie Wenner of Germany) on the international Council of Bishops table, and this summer we added two outstanding new U.S. women (Johnson and Bishop Elaine Stanovsky of Denver) to the table. Still, not one U.S. woman of color was elected this session and there are some indications that gender-based political maneuvering kept at least one favorite daughter from being elected. One region of our church has never elected a woman of color bishop, although it is one of the most populous regions in terms of racial/ethnic membership.

In the coming quadrennium, the commission will continue our work on challenging sexism and calling it out, and we plan to push harder to bring more women of color and international women into top leadership. We recognize that it is our work—combined with advocacy by United Methodists at all levels of church life—that has led to the gains we have made. We will continue to dance in the swirling breath of God, who is leading us to change, grow and re-imagine a more vibrant, colorful and truly inclusive church. There's a new wind blowing, God's new thing. Believe and receive it!

We're getting there!

M. Garlinda Burton, General Secretary

## The Flyer

October–December 2008

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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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## Jurisdictional *continued from page 1*

the church beyond the United States. (Rosemarie Wenner, United Methodist bishop in Germany, was elected in 2005.)

Bishops are the top clergy leaders in the denomination, administering the work and mission of 7.9 million United Methodists in the United States and nearly 4 million members in Africa, the Philippines and Europe.

### What these elections mean

For more than 200 years, women were virtually shut out of upper levels of leadership in The United Methodist Church, its predecessor denominations and our “cousins” in mainstream Protestant churches. However, since 1956, when the former Methodist Church extended full clergy rights for women, the number of women in clergy leadership—and the number of laywomen in church leadership—has increased exponentially.

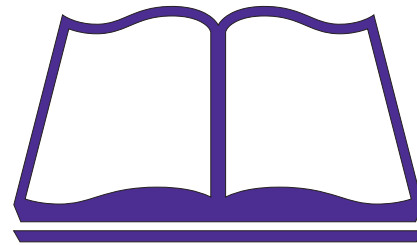
In 1972, the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women came into being, first as a standing—then as a permanent—commission in the denomination. Its expressed mandate was to address institutional sexism, challenge the church to confront it, and open the doors for women at all levels of church life. One of the commission’s objectives was to tear down barriers and bring women to the bishops’ table.

The growing number of women in the episcopacy is also making way for more women in other positions of church leadership. As women break through glass ceilings, other women follow in increasing numbers.

Whereas lay and clergy women comprised less than 1 percent of the church’s clergy delegates to the 1972 General Conference, women—clergy and lay—accounted for nearly half (46 percent) of the 1,000 delegates to the 2008 General Conference. Women make up half of all seminary students currently seeking ordination in the denomination.



*Bishop Violet Fisher preaches at the Holy Communion and memorial worship service at the United Methodist Northeastern Jurisdictional Conference in Harrisburg, Pa., last July.*



**Women make up half of all U.S. seminary students currently seeking ordination in the denomination.**

And after a generation of nurturing women who went on to become bishops, GCSRW will for the first time have three women bishops on our 2009-2012 board of directors. They are newly elected bishops Nhanala and Johnson, and Mary Virginia Taylor of South Carolina, who was one of six women elected in 2006, the largest class of women bishops ever named in one election season. (A majority of the women bishops, active and retired, previously served as members of GCSRW.)

*continued on page 4*

### Voices of more women of color needed

But even as women are making strides in United Methodist leadership, women of color are still shut out in many areas. Despite the dramatic increase in General Conference delegates from Africa, a relatively low number of African laywoman and clergywoman were seen and heard in the 2008 legislative sessions.

The election of Mozambique's Nhanala is encouraging and it challenges the international church community to seek more diverse voices—including the voices of laywomen and clergywomen—to help define and address concerns and needs.

Meanwhile, in the United States, not one racial-ethnic woman was among the eight persons elected bishop this term. At least three women of color were endorsed and supported

for the episcopacy in their respective areas, but none received the required number of votes on the conference floors. Two African-American women bishops—Beverly Shamana of the Sacramento Area and Violet Fisher of the New York West Area—were among the retirees. This leaves only two U.S. women of color—Linda Lee of the Wisconsin Area (African-American) and Minerva Carcaño of the Phoenix Area (Latina) as active bishops.

As with our sisters and brothers in other parts of the world, the U.S. church must continue to challenge itself to ask where women are—and are not—and ask why. And while we celebrate the election of three women bishops in 2008, we will continue to push for doors, walls and ceilings to come down, so that we can get on with the work of being God's radically-different-than-the-status-quo church. ✨

## Women bishops and where they serve

- **Rosemarie Wenner** (2005), Germany Area (Germany North, South, East and West Conferences)
- **Hope Morgan Ward** (2004), Mississippi Area (Mississippi Conference)
- **Mary Virginia Taylor** (2004) Columbia Area (South Carolina Conference)
- **Mary Ann Swenson** (1992), Los Angeles Area (California-Pacific Conference)
- **Elaine J.W. Stanovsky** (2008), Denver Area (Rocky Mountain and Yellowstone conferences)
- **Ann B. Sherer** (1992), Nebraska Area (Nebraska Conference)
- **Joaquina Filipe Nhanala** (2008), Mozambique Area (Mozambique North and Mozambique South conferences)
- **Jane Allen Middleton** (2004), Harrisburg Area (Central Pennsylvania Conference)
- **Linda Lee** (2000), Wisconsin Area (Wisconsin Conference)
- **Deborah Lieder Kiesey** (2004), Dakota Area (Dakotas Conference)
- **Charlene Payne Kammerer** (1996), Richmond Area (Virginia Conference)
- **Peggy Johnson** (2008), Philadelphia Area (Eastern Pennsylvania and Peninsula-Delaware conferences)

- **Janice Riggle Huie** (1996), Houston Area (Texas Conference)
- **Sally Dyck** (2004), Minnesota Area (Minnesota Conference)
- **Minerva Carcaño** (2004), Phoenix Area (Desert Southwest Conference)

### Retired women bishops (election to retirement dates)\*

- **Leontine T.C. Kelly** (1984-88)
- **Judith Craig** (1984-1996)
- **Susan Murch Morrison** (1988-2007)
- **Sharon Brown Christopher** (1988-2008)
- **Sharon Zimmerman Rader** (1992-2004)
- **Susan Wolfe Hassinger** (1996-2004)
- **Beverly J. Shamana** (2000-08)
- **Violet Fisher** (2000-08)

\* *The first United Methodist woman bishop, Marjorie Swank Matthews, was elected in 1980 and retired in 1984; she died in 1986.*

# On bungee jumping and change: Reflections of retired Bishop Violet L. Fisher

Age 69, New York West Area, 2000-2008

■ **Fondest memories as bishop:** The gift of being asked to serve in the New York West Area. The area was experiencing economic distress and declining membership in local churches, and I was given enthusiastic support to implement change.

Other memories are the gift of being the first African-American woman elected in the Northeastern Jurisdiction and the gift of tremendous support and affirmation for my ministry from the general church, the World Methodist Council and the Pan Methodist Commission. I am so grateful that after years of racism, the Pan Methodist Commission embraced the United African Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Union Methodist Protestant Church.

■ **Surviving breast cancer:** After the shock and fear of discovering I had cancer, I moved into a very positive attitude. With much support from others, I remained optimistic. I was able to go into treatment—and beyond—because of the prayers and words of strength and support locally and from across the church.

Following treatment, I am more willing to take risks. At age 68, I went bungee jumping! Not something I would've done before the diagnosis of cancer. However, my attitude and my gratefulness for life

literally pushed me into doing something new and different and challenging. It was a completely freeing experience!

And yet, there is the “big C” hanging over me all the time. I would recommend to all women: the key is self-care. Take care of yourself and find time for yourself. I acknowledge that I have not done this well. We need to keep a positive attitude.

■ **Plans for the future:** My experience with cancer has brought a sense of urgency for me to minister to women with breast cancer and children with cancer. Also, I am excited about just being able to spend a year with my son during his last year of high school. While the past eight years we've been living apart, I look forward to taking a more active role in his life. I am also looking forward to spending more time with my aging mother who has been struggling with Alzheimer's for the past 17 years. In my retirement, I will continue to serve ecumenically and preach and lead in other ways. ✨



*In 2007, to celebrate her triumph over cancer, Bishop Fisher went bungee jumping.*

## 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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# Meet our new bishops

In July, United Methodist jurisdictional conferences elected three women bishops.

To get to know them better, *The Flyer* asked each of them: Who are your role models? What are the gifts you bring to the episcopacy? What particular challenges do clergywomen face in the UMC today? If you hadn't become a pastor, what might you have been? And in 50 years, how do you wish to be remembered?

## Mozambique

### Joaquina Filipe Nhanala

Age 51, assigned to the Mozambique Area (the first female bishop in Africa)



#### Role models:

Matilde Rosta Tufula Chauque, my mom, who passed away. She was a hard-working woman who made me what I am today. She was a woman with vision, a persistent counselor, a woman who feared God.

**Gifts:** I have an experience of living and working with people of different cultures, races and backgrounds. I've lived in Liberia, Ghana, Kenya and Mozambique. I work with World Relief, an international Christian organization that includes members with high and low education and who are wealthy and poor. I like to work as a team; and I'm leading a large HIV/AIDS program. I am a good listener and patient and like to give my contribution to the welfare of others. I have experience working with different denominations as well as other organizations and government authorities. I am accountable.

**Challenges:** I think clergywomen fail to communicate well among ourselves. Sharing ideas at a personal level could strengthen what is discussed at clergywomen's consultations—specifically at the central conference and continent levels. Unequal education opportunities for girls (compared to boys) contribute to a reduced number of academically prepared clergywomen. I think there should be continuous intentional work of educating as many clergywomen as possible.

**Alternate path:** I might have been a social worker.

**Remember me as:** Someone who contributed to the development of women leadership in Africa.

**You are the first woman to be elected bishop in Africa. Is the role of women different in Mozambique than in other African nations?** No. However, I think Mozambicans are an open society and are an accepting and sharing community.

#### What factors are involved in the church growth in Mozambique?

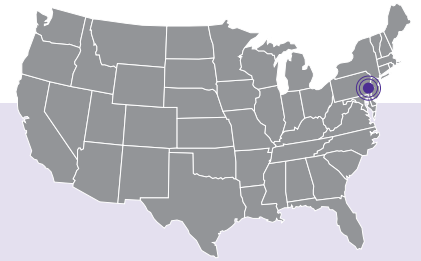
The church preaches not only by words, but also by deeds (preaching to the hungry, the thirsty, the sick and the poor). The clergy and laity are committed to the cause of the gospel and go to the world making disciples in very difficult conditions.

**How well do you think you, as a woman, will be accepted as bishop?** Mozambique has had women pastors and superintendents, and they have done very well. I believe this contributed to the trust they are now depositing into a woman bishop. I am aware that I will have to work harder and that some will be skeptical of me—the first woman to hold this position. But we are here because we answered God's appointment to serve Him. His voice is constantly saying to me, "I am with you."

**Do you expect other African women to follow you into the episcopacy?** Yes, very soon. ✨



# Philadelphia



## Bishop Peggy A. Johnson

Age 54, assigned to the Philadelphia Area



**Role models:** Mother Teresa, whose selfless humanitarian work showed how one person can make a big difference. Bishop Susan Morrison who was the first woman district superintendent, council

director and bishop I ever knew. She did all of those hard “firsts” and paved the way for the ones to follow.

**Gifts:** I bring compassion, communication, organization, a passion for ministry with people with disabilities and a sense of humor.

**Challenges:** Clergywomen continue to face glass ceilings in the United States, but in the global church it is even more difficult for clergywomen to be seen as equals in ministry with their male counterparts. Clergywomen need to continue to work together to call attention to inequities and celebrate their accomplishments.

**Alternate path:** A social worker specializing in case management with deaf and deaf blind clientele.

**Remember me as:** One who helped to widen the circle of the church to include people with disabilities and do so with great generosity. ✨

## Bishop Elaine J.W. Stanovsky

Age 55, assigned to the Denver Area



**Role models:** Frances Willard, who championed the ordination of women and their equal participation with men in church governance. Barbara Troxell, a district superintendent in California, who

“unpacked the appointment system to me as a seminary student.” Jeanne Audrey Powers, one of the church’s ecumenical officers, who opened the doors of opportunity to me.

**Gifts:** I love to be in a group of people and find a way to articulate the gospel that touches people’s hunger with hope. I’m deeply steeped in the judicial processes in the church and bring a disciplined approach to it that’s healing and helpful. I have a passion for the public face of the church. I delight in ecumenical

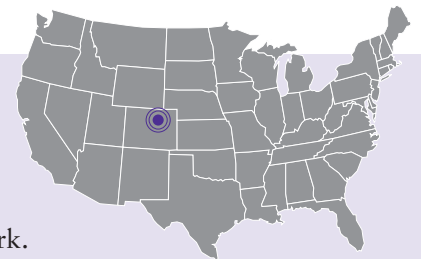
work and collaborative work.

**Challenges:** It’s difficult for some churches to grant authority to their first appointed clergywoman. Churches sometimes expect more from a clergywoman than a clergyman. Clergywomen—especially single clergywomen—who serve in isolated settings struggle to have a social life outside of the church.

**Alternate path:** A “non-limelight” role in politics. I care about the transformation of the world, and politics would be another arena in which to do that. I also might have been a journalist.

**Remember me as:** A wonderful grandmother and an honest person who told the truth and wasn’t afraid to apologize. ✨

*NOTE: Marta W. Aldrich, news editor of United Methodist News Service, assisted with the interview of Bishop Elaine J.W. Stanovsky.*



Denver



# The Rev. Gwen Felder: Campaigning for workers' rights



**“America is one of the richest nations in the world; how is it that a CEO can be paid \$4 or \$5 million a year while workers get paid \$4 or \$5 an hour?”**

That’s a question asked by the Rev. Gwen Brown-Felder, pastor of Ernest Newman Church in Nashville, Tenn.

“I am extremely perplexed by the mammoth gap between those who do the work and those who lead the ones working.”

Since 2007, the Nashville pastor has addressed those inequities by participating in national and local campaigns for workers’ rights.

She participated in a national campaign against exploitation and abuse of workers at the Smithfield Packing House in Tar Heel, N.C., and she traveled to Williamsburg, Va., to speak at a protest rally and march at the Smithfield board meeting.

She also helped promote the living-wage movement at Vanderbilt University in Nashville and participated in an interfaith service supporting the movement. (Living wage advocates calculate the minimum hourly wage required for a full-time worker’s family to live above the poverty level and challenge organizations to agree to pay every worker at least that amount. In Nashville, advocates estimate the current living wage to be \$10.35 per hour for a family of four.)

Last spring, Felder also attended a rally for Nashville taxi drivers and was later

featured on a local radio program about an interfaith committee that supports Jobs with Justice, a movement to improve work environments, conditions and pay.

“Many of the workers’ voices are not being heard and we stand in the gap with the workers so that a voice can be heard,” she says. “If one part of the body is weak, then the entire body is weakened and will never be able to reach its fullest potential.”

**Q What is your favorite hymn, and why?** “My Tribute (To God Be the Glory)” (UMH No. 99)

**Q When you were young, what did you want to be when you grew up?** When I was young, I wanted to be a fashion designer for women’s and men’s clothing.

**Q If money were no object, what would you like to do?** I would continue to work in ministry and establish an organization with a mission to eradicate illiteracy, racism and greed with an educational process of different levels for ages 3 to 93 years old.

**Q Do you have any words of advice for our sisters in the UMC?** Love others as Christ loves us.



*This regular feature in The Flyer highlights women who are making a positive impact on our society or our world. If you would like to nominate someone to be considered for Women Worth Watching, please email Heather Peck Stahl at [hstahl@gcsr.org](mailto:hstahl@gcsr.org).*



# Reflections on my first quadrennium as bishop

By Bishop Mary Virginia “Dindy” Taylor

**Standing on the edge of completing my first quadrennium as a bishop in The United Methodist Church, I must acknowledge that it is only by the grace of God that I am still standing. Ministry today produces a mixture of emotions, surprises, struggles and joys.**

I did not anticipate that there is a certain celebrity status to being a bishop. It seems that people take notice when a bishop speaks or even enters a room. Striving to live the pure, gentle and holy life of service carries with it some unexpected responsibilities.

There is joy in being a bishop of the church. The rich diversity of people, cultures and geography in South Carolina is a treasure. With 48,000 African-American members, this conference has the greatest racially diverse membership in the denomination.

South Carolina is a state steeped in history. On April 24, 1737, John Wesley preached at Pon Pon Chapel of Ease while traveling from Charleston to Savannah. I retraced his steps last April when I preached for the 250th anniversary of Mr. Wesley’s visit.

Of course, a strong sense of history is often accompanied by a parallel awareness of tradition. When that tradition gets expressed as “That is not how we have always done it,” there is clearly resistance to any changes. The very presence of a woman bishop—especially a *first* woman bishop—challenges some of the old ways of leading church. And although we all talk about the value of change, not many of us embrace it willingly.

For many women, including myself, GCSRW has been there to offer strength for the journey. [Bishop Taylor has served as president of the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women since 2005.]

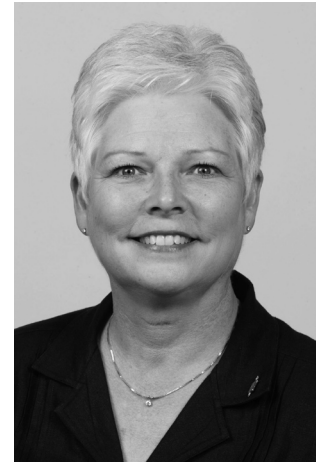
As the church has called me to take authority, GCSRW has made me aware of the conscious and unconscious dynamics of that power in relating to one another.

GCSRW has also encouraged me to seek consensus. I understand the intent of parliamentary procedure is to protect the voices of the minority. Yet frequently when the majority have ruled, persons have left the debate as either winners or losers. Making decisions more quickly by voting by motions doesn’t always accomplish the holy conferencing we seek.

Without doubt, the most difficult part of being a bishop is when I receive a complaint alleging sexual misconduct by a clergy member of the conference. I am indebted to GCSRW for the ways it is helping the church to address these sexual ethics concerns through prevention training, support for victims and the organization of trained response teams for congregations. Yet even with these helpful resources, there is nothing that prepares you to sit face to face with someone who has been victimized by the church and pastor they have trusted.

As a bishop, some decisions end with me. At those times, when I am feeling most alone in this responsibility, I am aware and thankful for the wonderful circle of love and support that extends from the women bishops.

Finally, to all those clergywomen who will someday be asked to become a candidate for the episcopacy, I encourage you to say, “yes.” At times it may be a bit bumpy, but I know from experience that God will be with you all the way. ✠



# How GCSRW helped me find my voice

By Raquel Mull

**The first time I heard the acronym for the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (GCSRW, usually pronounced “COZ-roh”), I wondered if it would ever just roll off my tongue as it seemed to for others. When I walked into the room for the organizational meeting for the 2001-2004 quadrennium, I wondered, “Will I ever be accepted by this group?” “Will I ever learn all these names?” and “Why do all these people—men and women—seem so confident, and loud?”**

Just getting to Chicago alone, first on an airplane and then to the hotel by taxi (it was my first taxi ride) was a great feat. I was sure that the meeting would be anticlimactic. Wrong!

From the beginning, I witnessed strong people, especially women, were speaking in front of other people. The only place I had really heard women speak was at a United Methodist Women meeting where very few men ever showed up.

I marveled that these women not only spoke up, they spoke often and made no apologies. I was accustomed to women speaking timidly in an apologetic tone. I even spoke that first day, at the end of the last session; I didn't want to eat alone and said so. After that, I no longer wondered if I would fit in, for the staff and other members opened their arms and their lives to me. My new question was: “How much could I learn from them?”

I was surrounded by great teachers. I learned to listen, watch and think before I speak. GCSRW taught me to observe who has the authority and power in a room. Throughout the eight years I served, I saw across the church the growing power of laywomen and clergywomen. During the 2004 and 2008 General Conferences,

I attended the Orientation for Women Delegates (co-sponsored by GCSRW and the Women's Division of the General Board of Global Ministries) where women caucused to get support for the election of women officers of legislative committees. In 2008, I heard passion as the women of color delegates spoke on behalf of the church and for their own people. And I was there when the president of Liberia, a black United Methodist woman, addressed the General Conference.

I have served on the commission for eight years, and my original questions and feelings have been almost forgotten. I can say “COZ-roh” easily with the best of them. I have made many friends, and most importantly, I am confident when it comes to monitoring for inclusivity in church gatherings. I speak up about the work we have yet to do, even among people who do not want to hear my message.

I am Diné, a Navajo Indian. We have a principle called *hozho*, which means harmony with one's self, Yahweh, others and with our environment. One cannot have *hozho* in the true sense of the word when women, racial-ethnic people and others are denied a voice and leadership positions in our great church. I am grateful for the opportunity to be part of GCSRW for a season, to learn about myself, justice and our Lord, and to grow. ✨

*Raquel Mull is pastor of St. Paul's Church in Socorro, N.M. She was a voting member of GCSRW from 2001-2008 and served as a member of the monitoring team at the 2004 and 2008 session of General Conference and the South Central Jurisdictional Conference.*



Go to [www.gcsr.org](http://www.gcsr.org) to read The Flyer's Leadership Corner article, “Four Career Risks Worth Trying.” This article explores going back to school, changing careers, saying “no” to added responsibility and starting a business.



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# COSROW, Religion and Race monitor jointly

**Chairperson for Religion and Race for the Minnesota Annual Conference the Rev. Dennis Oglesby says that for the past six or more years, Religion and Race has joined with COSROW to monitor for racial and gender inclusiveness at their annual conference sessions.**

“Our conference is about 97 percent white; and while we have more women than men in the conference, males still dominate our annual conference sessions,” says Oglesby, senior pastor of Park Avenue Church, Minneapolis.

“As Religion and Race was monitoring the same legislative sessions as COSROW, it made sense for us to combine our efforts and resources to offer a complete reflection of how our conference balances race and gender,” he says.

Oglesby explains that two months prior to annual conference, the Religion and Race chairperson meets with the COSROW chairperson to review the monitoring form and update it where needed. After it is finalized, the monitoring form is used by both groups. The two leaders also look at the annual conference agenda and identify key sessions where monitoring is needed.

Some sessions are monitored separately and some jointly. For example, Oglesby says Religion and Race chose worship to



Photo by Jill Shirley

*The Rev. Dennis Oglesby and the Rev. Joyce Slostad give a joint monitoring report in 2005. Slostad was a member of the Minnesota Conference COSROW.*

monitor participation of people of color, while COSROW chose plenary sessions to track women’s and men’s participation. Both groups jointly monitored legislative sessions.

“Last year we jointly monitored everything at annual conference and compared our data at the end of each day,” Oglesby says. “The beginning of the next day, the bishop allowed us to make a joint presentation to the general body. This collaboration of efforts was very helpful because it interpreted how we valued race and gender; the two are often intertwined, and language reflects these values.”

## Worth Repeating

“ We discover who we are not by wrestling with our circumstances, but by listening for God’s guidance. Work clarifies and enhances our purpose. It does not define it. Prayer defines our purpose.”

> *Iyanla Vanzant in Essence magazine, September 2008*



◀ Seven-year-old **Katherine Commale** of Hopewell Church, Downingtown, Pa., helped raise \$50,000 for The United Methodist Church's contributions to the Nothing But Nets anti-malaria campaign.

★ Mayor Byron Brown proclaimed June 14 as **Bishop Violet L. Fisher Day** in Buffalo, N.Y. The first ever African-American female bishop in the Northeastern Jurisdiction, Fisher recently retired as bishop of the New York West Area.

★ The **Rev. Kirsten Oh** was hired as the new associate dean of student life at Claremont School of Theology, beginning July 1.

★ **Pat Callbeck Harper** of Helena, Mont., has been named project manager for The United Methodist Council of Bishops' new "In Defense of Creation" document. Harper has worked as a consultant for GCSRW.

★ **Mary Elizabeth Moore** was appointed dean of the school of theology at Boston University, effective Jan. 1, 2009.

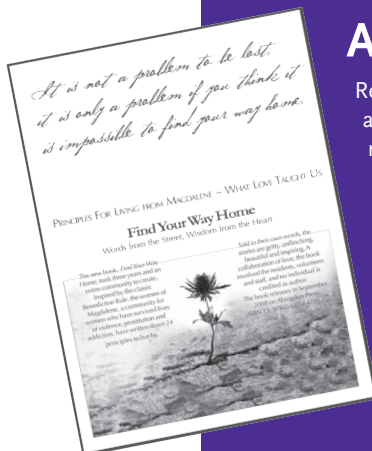
★ **Teresa Fry Brown**, associate professor of homiletics, has been appointed director of the Black Church Studies Program at Candler School of Theology in Atlanta, beginning this fall.



## *passing legends*

† **Josephine Beckwith**, who served 32 years as a United Methodist missionary, died May 26 at age 100. She was the first African-American executive director of the Bethlehem Center in Fort Worth, Texas, and is believed to be the first black student to graduate from any college in Missouri.

† **Bishop Ralph Edward Dodge**, an outspoken advocate for justice during that country's colonial era, died Aug. 8 at age 101. Dodge's 1956 election to lead central and southern Africa marked the only time that an American Methodist missionary was elected bishop by the denomination in the colonial territories of Angola, Mozambique, Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and Zaire (now the Democratic Republic of Congo).



## A book of wisdom from triumphant women

Recently, United Methodist leaders have asked the whole denomination to focus on four mission and ministry areas, one of which is addressing poverty and finding community with the poor and marginalized. A good first step is reading a new book written by women who have survived poverty, prostitution, addiction and abuse.

**Find Your Way Home: Words from the Street, Wisdom from the Heart**, just released by Abingdon Press, offers street-honed gospel stories of triumph over adversity, as told by the women of the Magdalene community. Magdalene, a two-year residential community for women leaving addiction and prostitution, was founded 11 years ago by the Rev. Becca Stevens, an Episcopal priest based in Nashville, Tenn.

To read the full book review by GCSRW General Secretary M. Garlinda Burton, please go to [www.gcsr.org](http://www.gcsr.org).



**MORE ON THE WEB**  
[WWW.GCSRW.ORG](http://WWW.GCSRW.ORG)

# Monitoring experience changes seminary students' perspectives

By Margaret Ann Crain

Last April, 16 students from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Ill., traveled to General Conference to represent the seminary at the church's largest legislative assembly, learn about the global nature of The United Methodist Church and network with the delegates from their home conferences.

Part of a class led by retired Bishop Sharon Rader, Jack Seymour (a professor of religious education at Garrett) and me, the students were excited.

"I knew it would be the opportunity of a lifetime," said Krystal Bartlett, 24, a third-year student from Wisconsin and candidate for ordination. "I did not know what to expect, feel or prepare."

The students participated in the joint monitoring team, which also included representatives from GCSRW, the General Commission on Religion and Race, and students from Claremont (Calif.) School of Theology. The monitoring team was trained by Elaine Moy, assistant general secretary of GCSRW, and was asked to make reports to the legislative committees that they monitored.

As a result of this work, the Garrett-Evangelical students said their consciousness was heightened and disciplined. They saw the impact of white and male privilege on the decision-making and discussions at the conference. But they also learned first-hand how hard The United Methodist Church is working toward inclusiveness.

"It is so often the case that the men are the

ones arguing and the women are the ones who bring questions," said Carol Hill, 26, a third-year student from Northern Illinois and candidate for ordained ministry. "I'm sure that the female delegates have thoughts and opinions, but those are often not heard as they willingly or unwillingly surrender the floor to dominant male delegates."

Stephanie Escher, 38, a second-year student from Wisconsin and recipient of the Native American Seminary Award from the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, said she observed that delegates from the United States were unsure how to be genuinely

hospitable to delegates from central conferences. She said sometimes the attempts at hospitality included careful listening and respect but sometimes they seemed more patronizing.

"In the Young People's Address, one person said that we as young adults are asked to conform and perform but not to reform and transform," Bartlett recalled.

"Young adults are crying out for the

church to 'wake up' and to 'get up.' Stop acting like a dying church or one giving up and be a church with hope," she said.

This witness gives me great hope for the future of the denomination. All 16 Garrett-Evangelical students left inspired to help build a church that can transform the world! ✨

A deacon and member of the Northern Illinois Annual Conference, **Margaret Ann Crain** is associate professor of Christian education at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary.



*Students Krystal Bartlett, left, Stephanie Escher and Carol Hill were among those from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary who helped monitor General Conference 2008.*

## Number of U.S. women bishops down by 1

### U.S. racial-ethnic women bishops reduced by 2

By Craig This and Elaine Moy

**The 2008 U.S. Jurisdictional Conferences elected eight clergypersons (six men and two women) to replace the seven retiring (and one resigning) bishops (five men and three women). As a result, the total number of active U.S. women bishops dropped by one, from 15 in 2005-08 to 14 currently.**

There are 50 active U.S. bishops serving the United Methodist Church, all elected for life terms and assigned to specific episcopal areas. The U.S. bishops, plus 30 active bishops in the Philippines, Africa and Europe, and the 86 retired bishops constitute the international Council of Bishops.

Three women bishops retired as of this fall: Violet Fisher of the New York West Area and Beverly Shamana of the San Francisco Area (both African American), and Sharon Brown Christopher of the Springfield (Ill.) Area (who is white).

Delegates in this year's round of voting elected two white clergywomen as bishops: Elaine Stanovsky, assigned to the Denver Area (Western Jurisdiction), and Peggy Johnson, assigned to the Philadelphia Area (Northeastern Jurisdiction). No women of color were elected by U.S. jurisdictions.

As a result, only two U.S. women of color serve as active bishops on the council: Minerva Carcaño of the Phoenix Area, a Latina, and Linda Lee of the Wisconsin Area, who is African American. The denomination has yet to elect a woman bishop from the Asian-American, Native American, or Pacific Island community.

Overall UMC Rank, 2005	Annual Conference	Lay Membership, 2005	Bishop, 2009-2012	Gender	Race
<b>North Central</b>					
9	West Ohio	230,626	Ough	M	W
11	Iowa	193,637	Trimble	M	B
14	East Ohio	180,463	Hopkins	M	W
21	Illinois Great Rivers	149,003	Palmer	M	B
31	South Indiana	111,320	Coyner	M	W
32	Northern Illinois	107,161	Jung	M	A
35	Detroit	102,427	Keaton	M	B
36	North Indiana	98,292	Coyner	M	W
38	Wisconsin	93,736	Lee	F	B
45	Minnesota	81,890	Dyck	F	W
49	West Michigan	67,894	Keaton	M	B
56	Dakotas	42,133	Kiesey	F	W
<b>Northeastern</b>					
10	Baltimore-Washington	196,487	Schol	M	W
12	Western Pennsylvania	191,593	Bickerton	M	W
23	Central Pennsylvania	146,564	Middleton	F	W
27	Eastern Pennsylvania	126,739	Johnson	F	W
28	New York	124,527	Park	M	A
33	West Virginia	105,348	Lyght	M	B
34	Greater New Jersey	102,755	Devadhar	M	A
37	New England	95,742	Weaver	M	W
39	Peninsula-Delaware	92,281	Johnson	F	W
46	North Central New York	77,742	Matthews	M	B
51	Wyoming	63,683	Hassinger	F	W
53	Western New York	57,091	Matthews	M	B
54	Troy	51,636	Hassinger	F	W
<b>South Central</b>					
5	Texas	283,483	Huie	F	W
6	Oklahoma	244,880	Hayes	M	W
15	Missouri	173,794	Schnase	M	W
17	Central Texas	160,039	Lowry	M	W
18	North Texas	159,762	Bledsoe	M	B
24	Arkansas	138,309	Crutchfield	M	W
26	Louisiana	126,826	Hutchinson	M	W
29	Southwest Texas	119,657	Dorff	M	W
43	Kansas West	85,796	Jones	M	W
44	Nebraska	83,015	Sherer	F	W
47	Kansas East	74,966	Jones	M	W
50	Northwest Texas	65,772	Whitfield	M	W
57	New Mexico	39,218	Whitfield	M	W
60	Rio Grande	14,468	Dorff	M	W
61	Oklahoma Indian Missionary	6,237	Hayes	M	W

Race: W=White, B=Black, A=Asian, H=Hispanic

Source: 2005 lay membership data provided by www.gcfa.org

# e numbers

## Women bishops by jurisdiction

Women bishops comprise 28% of all active U.S. bishops (14 of 50). The North Central Jurisdiction saw its total number of female bishops drop from 4 to 3, while the remaining jurisdictions retained the same number of female bishops.

In terms of total denomination-wide membership, women account for more than 50% of U.S. United Methodist members. Overall, then, U.S. women are underrepresented at the bishops' table. The one exception is the Western Jurisdiction, where half the current bishops are women and half are men.

In the North Central and Northeastern jurisdictions, male bishops outnumber female bishops 2 to 1. In the Southeastern Jurisdiction, male bishops outnumber female bishops 3 to 1, and in the South Central Jurisdiction male bishops outnumber female bishops 4 to 1. For the most part, these ratios remain unchanged from 2004.

## Where do women bishops serve?

Within the South Central and Western jurisdictions, women oversee the largest episcopal areas (Bishop Janice Riggle Huie, Houston Area, and Bishop Mary Ann Swenson, Los Angeles Area). In the Southeastern Jurisdiction, Bishop Charlene Kammerer leads the Richmond (Va.) Area, the second largest area in that region, and bishops Mary Virginia Taylor (South Carolina) and Hope Morgan Ward (Mississippi), each serve areas of 100,000-plus members.

In the Northeast Jurisdiction, Bishop Jane Allen Middleton (Harrisburg Area) also oversees a 100,000-member area (Central Pennsylvania). However, in the North Central Jurisdiction, the three women bishops (Bishop Deborah Lieder Kiesey, Dakotas Area; Bishop Sharon A. Brown Christopher, Illinois Great Rivers; and Bishop

Overall UMC Rank, 2005	Annual Conference	Lay Membership, 2005	Bishop, 2009-2012	Gender	Race
<b>Southeastern</b>					
1	North Georgia	341,813	Watson	M	W
2	Virginia	341,264	Kammerer	F	W
3	Florida	321,849	Whitaker	M	W
4	Western North Carolina	293,090	Goodpaster	M	W
7	South Carolina	241,664	Taylor	F	W
8	North Carolina	236,544	Gwinn	M	W
13	Mississippi	188,783	Ward	F	W
16	Holston	167,340	Swanson	M	B
19	North Alabama	153,703	Willimon	M	W
20	Kentucky	152,193	Davis	M	W
22	Alabama-West Florida	147,942	Leeland	M	W
25	South Georgia	137,831	King	M	B
30	Tennessee	117,358	Wills	M	W
41	Memphis	88,265	Wills	M	W
63	Red Bird Missionary	1,406	Davis	M	W
<b>Western</b>					
40	California-Pacific	88,665	Swenson	F	W
42	California-Nevada	85,925	Brown	M	B
48	Rocky Mountain	68,796	Stanovsky	F	W
52	Pacific Northwest	57,497	Hagiya	M	A
55	Desert Southwest	43,003	Carcaño	F	H
58	Oregon-Idaho	33,752	Hoshibata	M	A
59	Yellowstone	15,754	Stanovsky	F	W
62	Alaska Missionary	4,000	Hagiya	M	A

Race: W=White, B=Black, A=Asian, H=Hispanic

Source: 2005 lay membership data provided by [www.gcfa.org](http://www.gcfa.org)

Sally Dyck, Minnesota) administer three of the four smallest membership conferences. 🦋

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# www.gcsrw.org

## Check out our new website!

Our official website, [www.gcsrw.org](http://www.gcsrw.org), has a new look. Thanks to web editor Lindsey Graham and the tech titans at X9 Technologies of High Point, N.C., the website is bolder and easier to navigate and offers more of the resources and information you need from the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women. You can also learn more about our staff and board members there.

**We invite you to join us in building an online community** of women and men committed to uplifting and celebrating women and countering institutional sexism, sexual harassment and misconduct. If you would like to write a commentary (no more than 800 words), host a webinar, nominate a "Woman Worth Watching," or promote an upcoming event related to anti-sexism work, professional ethics for church professionals or leadership development for church women, contact Lindsey at [lgraham@gcsrw.org](mailto:lgraham@gcsrw.org).