THE INFLUENCE OF METHODISM ON HISPANIC WOMEN THROUGH WOMEN'S SOCIETIES

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"Hearken to me, you who pursue deliverance, you who seek the Lord; look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were digged" (Isaiah 51:1).

As an introduction to this article it is indispensable to consider the Hispanic community in order to have a more vital perspective, and a deeper understanding of this large, diverse group of people of many origins. Each group has its singular culture and ideals. Therefore, one needs to research further into their history, roots, background and heritage.

The Hispanic community is a diverse group of people from Mexico, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Central America, South America and the Caribbean Islands. Among those born in the United States, some are second, third, and even fourth generation Americans.

The diversity among Hispanics is reflected in the variety of names by which they have been known at various times and places. Women are known as: Latinas, Mexicanas, Hispanas, Mexico Americanas and Chicanas.

Hispanic women are the second largest group of minority women in the country. Only black women are more numerous. They share a multitude of histories, differences in lifestyles and experiences. The Hispanic woman may be rural, urban, poor, middle class, upper class, educated, illiterate, a teacher, or a migrant. She may belong to a family where Spanish is spoken in the home or a family where it is not.

Each group has its particular culture, roots, ideals, background and heritage at all levels: social, economic, cultural, educational, and religious.

The role of the Hispanic mother and wife was supposed to be completely devoted to her husband and children. Her role was to serve the needs of her husband, clean the house and care for the children. She was encouraged to stay home to be a housewife and in general to be concerned about little else except the home, church, and family. Her trademark characteristics were passivity, submission, resignation, delicacy, lady-like behavior, affection, and dependence.

I

A prominent layman of the Methodist Episcopal Church sent an appeal sharing his concern for the spiritual welfare of the people. It was written to the New York Christian Advocate and Journal, August 17, 1835.
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In part his request said, "I regret that the Methodist Church, with its excellent itinerant system, has not sent the pioneers of the Gospel to every portion of the globe, should have neglected too long this country. I wish you will call [this to] the attention of the Reverend Bishops, the different conferences and the Board of Missions." This was signed, William Barrett Travis. No doubt his request reached the four corners of the country.

The beginning of missionary work by our church among the Hispanics is connected with the names of Bishop C. Keener, Dr. and Mrs. Thomas Howard, (Mrs. Howard is the Isabel Thouburn of New Mexico), Alejandro Sutherland, Alejo Hernandez (the first Mexican Methodist preacher), and Frank Onderdonk. These men considered the Hispanic work "white unto the harvest."

In February 1826, having made a visit to Puebla and Mexico City, Dr. Brigham, an agent of the American Bible Society, distributed 500 Bibles and 100 New Testaments. This appears to have been the very first seed-sowing of the Kingdom of God in Mexico by Protestant forces. The Bible was an unknown book.

During the war between Mexico and the United States in 1849, the American Tract Society took advantage of the invasion and throughout a vast territory distributed books, tracts and Bibles. With great eagerness they seized the literature in their search for something that could satisfy their souls. Among them was Alejo Hernandez whose wealthy father had designated him for the priesthood. To avoid becoming a priest, he enlisted in the army against Maximiliano. He was taken prisoner, but finally found himself along the Rio Grande. *Evening with the Romanists*, a book sent out with the American Army, fell into his hands. The quotations from the Bible awakened within him a desire to know the Holy Scripture.

Hernandez visited Brownsville, Texas. He attended a service in English and was deeply impressed by the fervor of the people. He said, "I felt that God's Spirit was there, and though I could not understand a word that was said, I felt my heart strangely warmed. Never did I hear an organ play so sweetly, never did human voices sound so lovely, never did people look so beautiful as on that occasion. I went away weeping filled with joy." He became the first Mexican Methodist minister. The Gospel touched Spanish-speaking homes.

Who were there to greet the missionaries as they began their ministry among the Mexican people? Women! They were taking care of the household duties while men were out working.

It happened in my mother's home. One day a Methodist minister visited us. My mother welcomed him. During their conversation the pastor asked, pointing to a picture on the wall, "Who is he?" My mother very proudly answered, "He is my son who is studying to be a doctor." Before leaving the minister said, "May I have a word of prayer that your son become a Christian doctor?" My brother Alfredo Náñez did not become a doctor, instead he became a minister of the Gospel.
When the missionaries knocked at the Hispanic doors, women were there to receive them. They were used by God to bring the whole family to Christ. "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, you and your household."

II

Women's main activity was the work of the church. Their whole life was centered around the church including their social life. They took care of the parsonage, prepared the missionary offering barrels, and gave generously of their time, talents, prayers, and money. When men saw their ability to raise money they said, "Well you raise the money and we will administer it."

Although described as the backbone of the church, the life of the church, and the pastor's right hand, women were not allowed to be members of boards and committees where decisions were made. The administration of the church was controlled by men.

How well I remember the church where I went in my childhood. Men sat on one side and women on the other. As a young girl, I wanted to teach a children's Sunday School class. The pastor gave me the written lesson and told me this was what I was supposed to teach. I resented it. Once complaining to my mother, I said, "But mother, I want to teach what I know and not what the pastor writes for me."

The pastors took pride in saying that the Board of Stewards was made up of men. Only the president of the Missionary Society belongs and this is because the Discipline indicates it; otherwise, I wouldn't permit it. The young people seldom named a woman as their president.

It is a known fact that before a church was organized, women were there in the vanguard. While the men were trying to make up their minds as to what to do, going from one committee to another and making special studies, women went forward and did the job.

Church history has been essentially men's history, yet women have been the life of the church and the majority of the membership. Their motto goes as follows: "Each Area a Mission Field, Each Church a Mission, and Each Christian a Missionary." No wonder the work of the Kingdom advanced so rapidly.

Once the Board of Stewards (all men) for a particular church decided to resign. Perhaps the devil got hold of them. Quien sabe. The pastor found himself without a board. After consulting with the Presiding Elder, he called a group of women and named an official Board of Stewardesses.

What happened with such a drastic move? What resulted were increases in membership, increases in salaries, all conference benevolences were paid before the end of the year, and repair jobs were completed on the church properties.

It was the best year for that church. Never underestimate the power of women! Bishop William Taylor wrote, "When I find a field too hard for a man I put it in a woman."
III

Although unknown to them, women were working as a Missionary Society although not officially organized. By 1914–1930, the Texas Mexican Conference had 19 societies with 394 members. The same can be said of other areas. Groups could be found in Texas, New Mexico, California, the Mexican border, Puerto Rico, and Cuba.

In 1919 several groups met as a confederation from Los Angeles, California and the southern United States. In 1928 when the women of the United States celebrated their jubilee, this confederation joined in the celebration. The relationship was maintained for years. When women in the United States met as a Women’s Council, these isolated groups were so enthusiastic that they sent representatives.

Women’s organization at the Annual Conference level occurred during the Depression. There were serious economic problems. It was difficult for them to attend meetings. The problem was resolved by having their meetings when the pastors met for the Annual Conference or Pastor’s School. Later they met separately.

In October 1930, the Missionary Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South headquartered in Nashville, Tennessee sent Mrs. B. W. Lipscomb, Secretary of Education and Promotion, to organize the societies of two Hispanic conferences at the conference level.

From October 16–19, 1930, she visited the Texas Mexican Conference that was meeting in Brownsville, Texas. A very good group of women were present, but they decided to wait until a later date to organize.

In October 31, 1930 the Women’s Missionary Society of the Western Mexican Conference was organized in El Paso, Texas under the leadership of Mrs. Lipscomb and Mrs. L. B. Parker. Mrs. Esther B. Hernández was the first president.

In November 2–3, 1933 the Women’s Missionary Society of the Texas Mexican Conference was organized in San Antonio, Texas under the leadership of Mrs. Frank Onderdonk. Mrs. Carmen J. Lujan was elected president.

With the union of the three Methodisms in 1939, the two conferences came together as the Southwestern Mexican Conference. Mrs. Elodia Sada was president. In 1940 the name of the organization was changed to the Women’s Society of Christian Service, Southwest Mexican Conference.

The Latin American Provisional Conference that included California and Arizona had women’s work until they integrated with the English-speaking conference. Their first conference president was Celia F. Domínguez.

The women in Puerto Rico organized as a conference in 1940. Sra. Antonia R. Pereles was the first president. In Cuba, conference women’s work was organized in 1941. Sra. Luisa García Acosta González was the first president.
In areas where there were no Hispanic conferences, the women participated very actively with the English-speaking conference, Jurisdiction and at the national level. Many of them served as officers.

Among the women of the church is the minister's wife who supports church work. Unfortunately, she is an unknown heroine. I always introduce the minister's wife as princess of Israel. It has been said that if a woman is not able to become a missionary or a deaconess, she should choose to be a minister's wife.

In the early years of the Hispanic ministry our princesses of Israel didn't work outside the home. The 1914 conference journal of the Texas Mexican Mission refers to them as "Angeles del Hogar" (Home Angels). Although never recognized, these angels played a very important part in the life of the church.

In order to be well accepted by a church, the minister's wife had to play the piano, sing in the choir, teach Sunday school, help in the kitchen, attend Missionary Society meetings, attend women's sewing class, be present at all women's meetings and church services. In essence, the church would get both the services of the minister and his wife for the price of one. As we say in Spanish, "Dos por Uno." Times have changed and the role is different now.

Ministers' wives have made and continue to make great contributions in the life of women's work. They were the key leaders in organizing what we now know as United Methodist Women at all levels of the organization. Many of the first presidents were ministers' wives. They also organized in their respective conferences what is known as the Association of Ministers' wives.

**Clergy Women**

The matter of women in the ministry is not something new. Since the year 614 AD, there have been women who wanted to enter the ministry. Women have preached the word of God whether they were licensed, ordained, or not. It was often remarked that women were better preachers.

Clergy women have felt the pressures of prejudice. Some popular arguments against women's participation are that the church doesn't need women and a woman is not supposed to be in the pulpit. The ministry is one of the last professions to be open to women. However, women still face the challenges of marriage and family. These objections have denied them the chance to use their God-given gifts. Despite all this, women have been persistent and obedient to their call.

Their reward came in a historical move on Friday, May 4, 1956. This date marks a General Conference of The Methodist Church meeting in Minneapolis, Minnesota which granted female ministers the full clergy rights of the church.

Numerous Hispanic women pioneered in the ministry from 1920-1995: Elodia Guerra (Evangelist), Carolina Farias, Maria Luisa Chagoyan,

Deaconesses include Velia Cantu, Dolores Diaz, Faustina Ramirez, Anita Reil, and Beatriz Fernandez. Felicidad M. McDaniel was the first deaconess sent by the Women’s Division to work with the local societies of the Rio Grande Conference.

IV

The Rev. Minerva Carcño was the first Hispanic woman to become a District Superintendent in the Continental United States in 1985. She was assigned to the Western District of the Rio Grande Conference. Rev. Myriam Visot serves as a District Superintendent in Puerto Rico.

The Rev. Julia Torres Fernandez was one of the first women ordained minister in 1956 when the General Conference voted for the ordination of women. Rev. Mary Lou Baert was the first missionary from the Rio Grande Conference sent to Mexico.
But there are other more recent achievements. In 1991, Delia Estrada was consecrated the first Diaconal Minister of the Rio Grande Conference. Other Diaconal Ministers are: Rosa Angelica Acevedo and Catalina M. Borbon. In 1994 a laywoman, Beatriz Ferrari De Arias was elected President of the Methodist Church in Uruguay. The same year the Methodist Church in Mexico elected their first woman bishop, the Rev. Graciela Alvarez. It's time for the Jurisdictions of the United Methodist Church to consider Hispanic women for bishops. Why not? These distinctions are acquired, not merely because they are women, or because they are Hispanic, or to give them an opportunity, but because of their training and experience.

The umbrella under which the Hispanic women of all denominations can come together is the Women's Department of the Council of Hispanic American Ministries in the United States. Their work is on the local, state, and national level. Methodist women who have served as directors include: Maria G. Tirre, Amable Alpizar, Rev. Magdalena Pino, and Minerva N. Garza. The Rev. Magdaleno O. Pino has the distinction of being the first woman named president of the Council.

The Women's Department also works with Church Women United. Some Hispanic women who participated as members of the Executive Council or Common Council are: Rose Delia Rios, Minerva Garza, and Ruth Rodriguez. At the state level, Gladys Fuentes and Minerva N. Garza have served.

The years 1960-1975 were known as the years of the Liberation Movement. Women voiced their dissatisfaction with their position within society. They joined activist organizations to present their demands. Historical data indicates that long before the Liberation Movement, many Hispanic Methodist women were active in liberation movements and took action demanding changes in the spirit of support for their husbands and children. They sought to correct educational, economical and social injustices.

What was the reaction of Hispanic women during the Liberation Movement? During the revolution in Mexico, Mexican citizens came to the United States because of the unrest that existed in that country, political problems, and their families' livelihood. Among them was journalist Jovita Idar Juarez. She helped organize La Liga Femenil Mexicanista (Mexican Women's League). The purpose was to educate Mexican children in America and to preserve the culture. Her motto was, "Educate a woman and you educate a family."

After graduating from Holding Institute in Laredo, Texas, Juarez joined her family in issuing a call to Mexican Americans. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss problems of education, criminal justice, and
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labor. This meeting is known as the First Mexican Congress. It was the first of its kind in Texas for citizens of Mexican ancestry.

Jovita Idar Juarez wanted women to attend because she knew they were concerned about the issues, yet afraid to speak out in public. She insisted and they came. Many Mexican American women entered the public political arena for the first time.

Sra. Idar Juarez continued her work in San Antonio, Texas, and set up a free kindergarten for Mexican American children, worked in the Democratic Party, and served as an interpreter for patients at the county hospital. For many years she was the editor of The Women's Page for El Heraldo Cristiano, a Rio Grande Conference publication. She has the distinction of being in The Hall Of Fame, Institute of Texas Cultures, San Antonio, Texas.

Another noteworthy woman was Esther Maldonado. Sra. Maldonado was a young widow with four small children who leased a house and rented rooms to ministerial students at a low rate. She was able to provide for her family and help students who later became prominent ministers. One became a bishop. This woman came to the United States and opened doors that were closed for her family. She raised a proud family of professionals. Her family's achievements are the fruits of her perseverance.

Rosaura Rodriguez, a teacher, superintendent of schools, and a gifted orator, organized teachers' rallies demanding improvements in the school system and better salaries for the teachers. Sra. Rodriguez was speaker in presidential and governors' election campaigns. She supported candidates that had a platform for the welfare of the people. Another woman, Rosaura Martinez Garza was representative to the United Nations. She and Sra. Esther Vasquez were among the founders of the Mexican library in San Antonio, Texas. These women and many others made the difference. They were at the right place at the right time.

Sra. Luisa Garcia Acosta Gonzalez devoted her life to education. With her husband Justo Gonzalez and Eulalia Cook, she founded "Alfalit," a literacy program active in twelve Latin American countries which teaches over a million persons how to read and write. A prolific author, she wrote the series of Alfalit books designed to help adults attain a sixth-grade competence level.

Finally, Sra. Maria Moreno worked for the Board of Missions in Dallas, Texas. A woman of great influence, she worked on behalf of the community. The city of Dallas honored her for her valuable services.

VI

"We are inheritors of the past, guardians of the present, and architects of the future."

Women's dedication, creativeness, and vision made possible many achievements. With the organization of conference women's work, the women faced problems that hindered the progress of the work. There was
a need for fellowship, ways to promote the goals and program of the organization, and methods to keep the members informed. They gave us the district and sub-district organization.

The lack of Spanish resources was a severe problem. In response, local societies asked members who were bilingual to translate materials. The first translators were May J. Alvirez, Elodia Sada, L. H. Robinson, Sarda Hernandez, Evangelina Cruzaedo, and Adelina Escobosa. Motivated by faith and the need that existed, women began to move in all directions towards this goal. The Women's Society of Christian Service of the Southwest Mexican Conference sent a petition to the Women's Division of Christian Service. Felicidad M. McDaniel, deaconess of the Women's Division, presented the petition. It was granted. Mrs. Elida G. Falcon was named translator of the program books and her daughter, Clotilde F. Náñez, became her assistant. The first book was published in 1944, *The Lord's Song in a Strange Land*. They continued the work until 1970.

In 1970, the Society's concern about using programs translated from English was presented to the national organization by leaders of the Women's Society of Christian Service from the United States and Puerto Rico. The first meeting to plan the Spanish Program Book met in New York City in 1973. Members of the Women's Division and the Education and Cultivation Division of the General Board of Global Ministries were present. Others present were representatives of diverse Spanish language groups from the United States and Puerto Rico. Guidelines were established. The Spanish program book was not simply a translation of the English program. The writers were Hispanic. Members of the first Spanish Resource Committee were Aurora Garcia, Clarice Dockhorn, Mrs. Humbert Floyd, Elizabeth Gutierrez, Mrs. Gildo Sanchez, the Rev. Julia Torres, Mary Lou Alvarez, Amable Alpizar, the Rev. Noemi Diaz, Fanny Pantelis, and Minerva N. Garza. The first editors of the program book in Spanish were Ana Maria Diaz, Ana Martinez, Milca C. Alvarez-Plaud, and Nilda Ferrari.

The first writers were Angelica Sanchez, Fanny Pantelis, the Rev. Julia Torres, Aurora Garcia, Justo L. González, and Minerva Garza. From 1974 to 1995 the following people served as writers: Raquel Martinez, Celsa Garrastegui, Zulema Z. Reinoso, Linda Luz S. Hernandez, Alicia Salinas, Marjorie S. Crossmun, Anna M. Andujar-Velez, Maria O. Gallardo, Nancy Rodriguez, the Rev. Mary Lou Baert, Elia M. C. Sanchez, Clotilde F. Náñez, Maria Ogalde, Rosita Santiago, Maria I. Rivera de Layas, Dora Gutierrez, Milca C. Plaud, Virginia A. Motch, Helga M. Seda, Maria J. R. Marquez, Bertina Sixto, Carmen G. Sindo de Santiago, Tammy Pantelis, Magda I. Neria Santiago, Gilda C. Reyes, Mary Silva, Teresa Fuentes, Carmelina S. Neria, Della Escareño, Lydia Esther L. Rivera, Yolanda E. Pupo-Ortiz, Nilda Hernandez, Rosita Santiago, Rosario Montez, Dalila Cruz, Melida M. Morales, Dora C. Ferrari, Sonia Garcia, Esther H. Haller, Delia L. Mazarirego, Benita R. Del Pozo, Lilia J. Remon,
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In 1994 United Methodist women celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the Spanish program book. The theme was "A Glorious Past—A Brilliant Future." It was included in the Spanish and English program books.

The Schools of Christian Mission came into the Women's Division through the Woman's Home Missionary Society during the first decade of the century. Hispanic women responded. Under the leadership of the Rev. Julia Torres, Puerto Rico started the School of Mission. They needed a place to meet. With the help of the Northeastern Jurisdiction, a building was built.

In 1958 the Rio Grande Conference organized their first Conference School of Mission. Minerva N. Garza was the first director. In 1983, the school’s 25th Anniversary was celebrated. Lucy Burciaga was the dean and Della Escareño was the president.

In 1939, when the Southwest Mexican Annual Conference passed a rule requiring two years of college work in order to become a member in full connection, women were the first to respond by establishing a Scholarship Loan Fund for ministerial students. For 29 years women supported the project. They were able to help 67 students during their college careers. Many of these young men continued advance studies. Elodia Sada was the president, while Clotilde F. Náñez served as secretary of organization and promotion, and Jovita Ramos worked as treasurer.

The preservation of the history of women's work has been important to the Rio Grande Conference. Several historical works have been published: History of the Woman's Society of Christian Service (1970), The 50th Anniversary of the United Methodist Women, and The 25th Anniversary of the Conference Christian School of Mission (1983).

In 1993, 60 Women in Mission—1933–1993, was published in observance of the 60th Anniversary of the Conference organization. Dolores Garcia was the president and Minerva N. Garza was in charge of publications.

In 1952 three celebrations were initiated by the Rio Grande Conference. These were Women's Day, the Mother and Daughter Banquet,
and White Christmas. They have been a part of the conference program since then. Minerva N. Garza was president.

National Seminars for Hispanic women have been held under the direction of Consuelo Urquiza Parker, executive secretary of the Women's Division. National Consultation of Hispanic Methodist Women, sponsored by the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women in 1985 met special needs, such as networking and discovering the many gifts of Hispanic women. It recognized that Hispanic women existed, and served as a force through which their concerns could be made known. Among the 180 participants, diversity was evident, yet unity prevailed.

VII

The time had come for Hispanic women to be part of the connectional structure. The Wesleyan Service Guild made an impact, bringing young, middle aged, and older employed women into the Women's Society of Christian Service. Many were part of the movement that was striving for improvements. The year 1969 was very meaningful. There was a breakthrough in 1963 when Mrs. Clotilde F. Náñez was named officer of the South Central Jurisdiction and the following year was made a member of the Women's Division.

Delegates to the General Conference were as follows: 1942, Hilda Fóster; 1964, May J. Alvarez; 1980, Noemi Janes; 1988, Martha Sanchez, Nora Quiroga, Faustina Lucero, and Olga Tafolla; 1992, Carmen Carrico, Della Escareño, and Jeannie Trevino Teddie; 1996, Barbara García, Jeannie Trevino Teddie, Mary Silva, and Minerva Garza Carcano.

At the national level of United Methodism, the following people have served: Sylvia Covarrubias, Evangelina Galvan; Julia Torres, Elizabeth Gutierrez, Minerva Carcán, Petra Acevedo, Adelaida B. Barnes, Amelia Flores, Nilda Hernandez, Irma Adame, Mary Lou Baert, Olga Tafolla, Raquel Martinez, Alice Peña, Martha Sanchez, Leonora Torres, Ana Andujar Velez, Gladys Fuentes, Elva Garza, Celsa Ganostegui, and Perla G. Lopez. Staff or members of general boards and agencies include: Esther Angel, Rose Arroyo, Maria Paz Artaza-Regan, Dalila Cruz, Socorro De Anda, Alice H. Emmanuel, Rosa Europa, Marisa Fernandez, Nilda Ferrari, Mildred Garcia, Odina González, Cathy González, Ada Sonia Guzman, Esther Delgado, Leticia La Fontaine, Edith Delgado, Kathleen L. Camera, Rosa Lopez, Faustina Lucero, Maria Francisca Castro, Grace Perez Martinez, Esther Madriz, Kathleen Martinez, Julieta R. Martinez, Shirley Montoya, Lysette Perez, Ruth Prudente, Diana Rodriguez, Evelyn Ruiz, Olivia Rompilla, Barbara J. Saba, Mary Silva, Gloria Soliz, Ana Soltero, Olga Suarez, Maria Torres, and Consuelo Urquiza.

Other women of achievement are Olga Tafolla, the first Hispanic president named to the West Michigan Conference, and Esther Hernandez, Dean of the Regional School of Missions and Vice-President for United Methodist Women, Southwest Texas Conference. These achievements were made during the 1980s.
The climax was what was called the "Year of the Hispanics," in 1992. Lucy Burciaga was named the first Hispanic president of the Central Planning Group, South Central Jurisdiction. Marisa Villareal became Dean of the Regional School of Christian Mission.

As part of the Centennial celebration of the United Methodist Women, a book entitled *They Went Out Not Knowing—100 Women in Mission*, was published. The five Hispanic women featured are: Elida G. Falcon, Luisa Garcia Acosta Gonzalez, Clotilde F. Náñez, Gladys Fuentes, and Minerva N. Garza. The North Texas Conference established the “Matthews, Garza, Falcon, Náñez Fund,” and the Rio Grande Conference United Methodist Women established the “Garza, Falcon, Náñez Mission Fund” in honor of these women to provide scholarships for young women to attend Schools of Christian Mission.

The Rio Grande Conference United Methodist Women celebrated their 60th Anniversary in 1993. As part of the celebration, 60 Women in Mission were honored. In 1994, women from Puerto Rico received recognition as Women in Mission. Those honored were Julia Belen Romero, Ana Martinez, Maria L. Llamas, Elba R. Laoz, Barabela Malave, Carmen V. Vicente, Gladys Garrion, Maria C. Nieves, Gloria Jaime, Palmira Mitchel, Monserrate S. Chacon, Gisela Ortiz, Diana Valle, Carmen Custodio, Ada Cintron, Aida Santiago, Julia M. Vasquez, Isabel C. Ramirez, Carmin Ortiz, Iris R. Varela, Carmen L. Munoz, and Diana Valle.

In the field of music, Raquel Achon, was part of the editorial board of *The United Methodist Hymnal* (1989) in English and is presently the editor of an ecumenical hymnal; Raquel Martinez, is editor of *Mil Voces para Celebrar Himnario Metodista*, and Diana Sanchez, served as Director of Church Music Resources of the General Board of Discipleship.

Our Hispanic bishops' wives include: Mrs. Elias Galvan, Mrs. Joel Martinez, and Mrs. Victor Boinilla.

The 1994 United Methodist Directory lists 2,036 names. Among them are 113 Hispanic persons. Of these, 73 are men and 40 are women. Although progress has been made, we cannot deny that there are few Hispanic women in positions of responsibility in the church structure. For the most part, Hispanic women as a group remain observers and supporters, rather than decision makers. The wide range of interests and abilities that Hispanic women have are still denied in the mainstream church. Our participation beyond the conference level is weak. We have made some progress in terms of church participation, but it is still up to us to hasten the process. We must be willing to commit ourselves to the task! Throughout the church we have been like sleeping giants who need to be challenged with opportunities for service. The time has come for us to take our place.