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## GENERAL CONFERENCE 2012 SUMMARY

# Delegates' actions and their impact on women

During the April 24-May 4 gathering in Tampa, 988 lay and clergy delegates from 60 countries, took the following actions on behalf of the worldwide United Methodist Church.

» **Eliminated “guaranteed appointments” for elders.**

This means that even elders in good standing are not assured clergy assignments. (The conference then asked the Judicial Council—the denomination’s supreme court—to determine if the action is in line with the church’s Constitution. A decision may come as early as fall 2012.) GCSRW will be monitoring to assure that women and people of color are not disproportionately singled out.

» **Made United Methodist Women autonomous.**

This action makes United Methodist Women (UMW) an independent organization rather a division of the church’s mission agency. This makes UMW one of the largest freestanding mission agencies in the world.

» **No change in language on homosexuality.** The conference retained the church’s position regarding homosexuality, deciding not to adopt language that would have said United Methodists are not of one mind on this issue. (Current language on homosexuality from the 2008 *Book of Discipline* acknowledges homosexuals as “persons of sacred worth” but denounces the practice of homosexuality as “incompatible with Christian teaching.”)

» **Adopted a \$603.1 million budget for 2013-2016.** This represents a 6.03 percent reduction for seven general church funds over the 2009-12 funding period. That sounds like a whopping amount, but local churches should not count on huge savings, since only 2 cents out of every dollar in a collection plate goes to support general church ministries.

» **Created a \$5 million fund for theological education in central conferences** – church regions in Africa, Europe and the Philippines. The number of women entering ordained ministry has grown exponentially in those regions, so this fund will assist in boosting their formal education.



GCSRW General Secretary M. Garlinda Burton reflects on what she learned at General Conference 2012 and suggests needed changes to make GCSRW more relevant and effective into the future.

[Read her blog to learn more.](#)



*Bishop Rosemarie Wenner of Germany tells dozens of demonstrators for full inclusion of gays and lesbians that the denomination’s bishops feel their pain. Wenner is the new president of the Council of Bishops.*

A UMNS photo by Paul Jeffrey



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- » **Allocated \$7 million to recruit and train young clergy in the United States.**
- » **Voted “no” on divestment.** Delegates decided not to divest from three companies whose products are used by the Israeli military in the occupied Palestinian territories.
- » **Engaged in an “Act of Repentance.”** The special service recalled the church’s complicity in atrocities committed against Native Americans and other indigenous people around the world. United Methodist bishops pledged to lead the church in combating racism and violence against indigenous people.

The delegates, from more than 60 nations, referred until 2016 a proposal from the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women to include “gender” as a protected category in the Constitution, and formally added oversight of sexual misconduct prevention and intervention ministries to the Commission’s official mandates.

General Conference meets every four years and is the only body that speaks for the 13 million-member United Methodist Church. Full summary available at [www.umc.org](http://www.umc.org).

*\*Compiled from United Methodist News Service and the Daily Christian Advocate.*



*Judi Kenaston of West Va., is elected chair of Commission on General Conference. She is the mother of GCSRW board member the Rev. Diane Kenaston of West Va.*

A UMNS photo



*Betty Kiboko, a GCSRW board member, and her husband Jacob Kiboko translate the proceedings of the 2012 General Conference from English into Swahili and back.*

A UMNS photo by Paul Jeffrey

## GENERAL CONFERENCE

# Women make their mark at the 2012 General Conference

**'Firsts' inspire, inform lawmaking body**



*Amory Peck of Bellingham, Wash., encourages delegates during the Laity Address. In a later press conference, Peck "came out," making her the first out lesbian to deliver the Laity Address in General Conference history.*

A UMNS photo by Mike DuBose



*Betty Spiwe Katiyo of Zimbabwe delivers part of the Laity Address. Katiyo is the first African woman (and the first woman from a central conference) to deliver the laity address to General Conference. She was later elected vice-chair of the General Administration legislative committee.*

A UMNS photo by Paul Jeffrey



*Bishop Joaquina Nhanala of Mozambique, who was elected bishop in 2008, is the first African woman ever to preside over a session at a United Methodist General Conference.*

A UMNS photo by Mike DuBose



*The Judicial Council for the 2012-2016 quadrennium pose for a group photo. Kabamba Kiboko (seated second from left) is the first African (and the first woman from outside the United States) to serve on Judicial Council.*

A UMNS photo by Kathleen Barry



# GCSRW 40th anniversary celebrated in special worship service



*Erica Granados de la Rosa, laywoman from Fort Worth, Texas, uses drums and spoken word to describe her journey as a young Latina woman of faith.*

Photo by M. Garlinda Burton



*The Rev. Carmen Scheuerman, elder in the Pampango (Philippines) Conference was one of five "witnesses" who preached a the GCSRW 40th anniversary worship on Sunday, April 29, during General Conference.*

Photo by M. Garlinda Burton



*Liturgical dancers from Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary lend their gifts to GCSRW's 40th anniversary worship service.*

Photo by M. Garlinda Burton



*A Filipina woman opens the GCSRW worship with a dururu, a prayer chant rooted in the tradition of the Aetas, an indigenous people of the Philippines.*

Photo by M. Garlinda Burton

*Mele Maka, a delegate from California, serves as liturgist during the GCSRW worship celebration at General Conference 2012.*

Photo by M. Garlinda Burton





# Work of GCSRW recognized at General Conference



*Bishop Mary Virginia "Dindy" Taylor speaks for the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women at General Conference.*

A UMNS photo



*M. Garlinda Burton, General Commission on the Status and Role of Women staff executive, highlights the commission's accomplishments.*

A UMNS photo



*The Rev. Liz Lopez, a superintendent in the Minnesota Conference, celebrates women who "led the way" for her during GCSRW's 40th anniversary celebration at the 2012 General Conference.*

A UMNS photo by Mike DuBose

*The Rev. Anna Guillozet (left), a pastor in the West Ohio Conference, and Betty Kiboko, an Iowa laywoman, were among the women celebrating GCSRW's 40th anniversary. Both are current voting members of the commission.*

A UMNS photo by Mike DuBose





## Women delegates share in hospitality, orientation



*GCSRW and United Methodist Women sponsors a hospitality lunch for women delegates from Africa, Europe and the Philippines.*

Photo by M. Garlinda Burton



*GCSRW board member the Rev. Diane Kenaston of West Virginia speaks during a joint orientation for women, young people and people of color who were delegates to the 2012 General Conferences.*

Photo by M. Garlinda Burton



*Faculty member DeLyn Celec and students from Shenandoah University, Winchester, Va., sing during the orientation for women delegates, sponsored jointly by GCSRW and United Methodist Women.*

Photo by M. Garlinda Burton



## Highlights of women at legislative gathering



*Marcia McFee, General Conference worship and music director, leads singing during the “Act of Repentance toward Healing Relationships with Indigenous Peoples.”*

A UMNS photo by Paul Jeffrey



*Beatrice Gbanga of Sierra Leone holds an insecticide-treated mosquito net during a celebration of the work of the Imagine No Malaria campaign during the 2012 United Methodist General Conference in Tampa, Fla.*

A UMNS photo by Mike DuBose



# Do the demographics of delegates matter?

**Delegates to the 2012 General Conference are older, come from larger churches and have higher incomes than the denomination's average**

*By Elaine Moy*

The General Council on Finance and Administration, Office of Analysis and Research, conducted a study of the delegates at General Conference 2012. (In 2008 they conducted a similar study. And prior to that study, the General Council on Ministries conducted surveys of the delegates to General Conference.)

Survey responses were provided by 484 jurisdictional delegates and 120 central conference delegates (604 delegates out of 988 total delegates, 61%).

Highlights of the survey include:

- » **The most important issues facing General Conference:** Restructuring is the most important, then guaranteed appointments, homosexuality/human sexuality, the global church and church's budget/finance.
- » **51% of respondents were from churches that are greater than 500 members,** while 10% of United Methodist churches are greater than 500 members.
- » **25% of respondents were from churches that are smaller than 200 members,** while 70% of United Methodist churches are smaller than 200 members.
- » **72% of the respondents are 50 years of age or older** and 4% of the respondents are 30 years of age or younger.
- » **For U.S. delegates, 48% of laity and 60% of clergy has a household income of more than \$100,000;** while only 20% of the U.S. population has a household income of more than \$100,000. Fourteen percent of lay and 3% of clergy has a household income below \$50,000, while 50% of the U.S. population has a household income of less than \$50,000.

These demographics give a glimpse to the people who are making the choices for The United Methodist Church. Do we have delegates who represent the complexities of those in the United Methodist denomination? For example, most delegates come from large churches. Do these delegates have the experience or knowledge of smaller churches? Most delegates are over age 50. Do they have the experience or knowledge of what younger people may be experiencing or what challenges they may be encountering in the church?

Most of the U.S. delegates' household income is higher than the average population and the average clergy salary. When making decisions, especially regarding pension plans, do these delegates understand the life of a clergy person who is making \$40,000?

When making decisions, we need to look at who is making the decisions and if those people making the decisions have the information and knowledge to represent the needs of most of the people they are affecting – not just the needs of those similar to themselves.

For more information, please go to the [gcf.org](http://gcf.org) website.

*—Elaine Moy is assistant general secretary of GCSRW.*



## SEXUAL ETHICS

# Use the Golden Rule in church employment practices

Though exempt from certain employment laws, churches should be committed to justice and non-discrimination

*By Melanie Lockwood Herman*

A respected colleague of mine hails the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church & School v. EEOC* as a **“unanimous endorsement of the First Amendment rights of religious institutions”** to select and retain staff with the qualities a church believes are essential for ministry.

The ruling clarifies the principle that a religious employer’s right to religious freedom may trump an employee’s right to work in an environment free from gender, race, sex and other forms of discrimination.

In *Hosanna-Tabor* a teacher at a religious school was fired after threatening to file a complaint with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC). The teacher alleged that her employer had engaged in illegal discrimination by refusing to reinstate her after she took disability leave.

As most human resources managers and nonprofit leaders are well aware, taking adverse action against an employee who has exercised a legal right—such as the right to take disability leave or file a workers’ compensation claim—is prohibited, illegal retaliation.

**‘A church may be exempt from certain laws, but we’re still obligated to a higher law.’**

Retaliation claims are the fastest growing category of claims filed with the EEOC. The school in *Hosanna-Tabor* argued that the teacher’s threat to pursue a claim with the EEOC was a violation of a religious commitment to “peaceful conciliation” with its ministerial staff.

The *Hosanna-Tabor* ruling re-affirms the freedom that churches in the United States enjoy with respect to selecting or removing the “ministers” hired to teach, preach, proselytize or otherwise advance the tenets of the faith. The ruling seems consistent with the freedom to worship that United Methodist members, like those of other faiths, deeply cherish.

The legal principle that gives churches the right to engage in action that would be prohibited in secular employment relationships is called the “ministerial exception.” It essentially provides that the First Amendment right to freedom of religion necessitates an exception to secular anti-discrimination laws.

It is important to remember, however, that the fact that a church may be exempt from a certain law doesn’t mean that it is not obligated or should not be guided by a higher law.

The compelling mission of the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women is to “challenge The United Methodist Church at all levels to work for full and equal participation of women in the total life of the

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denomination, including ordination of women, equal access to policy-making and recognition that Jesus Christ calls men and women alike to salvation, liberation, discipleship and service in church and society.” This is an idea that has gained force, not from civil law but because it reflects the values of the denomination.

The most fundamental tenet of sound human resource management is the Golden Rule to treat others as you would wish to be treated.

In choosing to be guided by the life and actions of Christ, we embrace the value of non-discrimination.

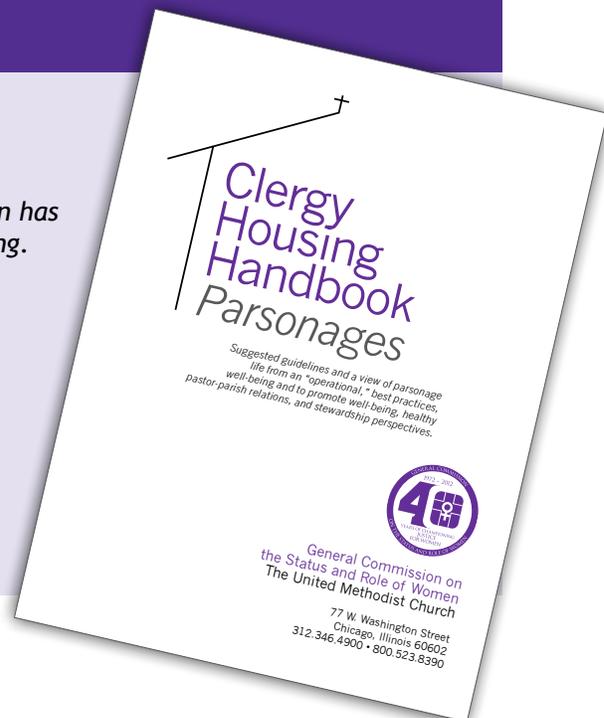
— **Melanie Lockwood Herman** is executive director of the Nonprofit Risk Management Center, a national resource center that advises leaders of religious and secular nonprofits on a wide range of risk-related matters. Melanie is also a certified lay speaker in The United Methodist Church.

## RESOURCES

### Housing tips for clergy, churches

The General Commission on the Status and Role of Women has compiled a handbook on best practices for parsonage living. The “Clergy Housing Handbook: Parsonages” is designed to help clergy families, local congregations and annual conferences maintain the best standards for parsonage living and parsonage maintenance. This resource is the result of a collaborative survey of clergy-spouse needs.

The handbook is available at [www.gcsrw.org](http://www.gcsrw.org). For more information or to post a comment, go to [www.umc.org](http://www.umc.org).





## WEBCAST

# Sexual misconduct cases are frequent and expensive

## Staggering stats surface during conference webcast

*By Mary Walker\**

The average settlement in a sexual misconduct case is \$250,000.

That's what Donna Rogers, human resources management specialist for the University of Illinois at Springfield, told viewers of an Illinois Great Rivers webcast.

In the same March 9 workshop, Judy Frymark, senior claims specialist of Church Mutual Insurance Company, said her company receives five to seven sexual misconduct claims per week. The Wisconsin-based company always has 250 to 300 open cases, one third are in litigation.

Sponsored by the Conference Commission on the Status and Role of Women, the webcast encouraged participants to establish clear policies on sexual ethics and require training for all staff and volunteers. Confidential investigation into charges of sexual misconduct is equally important.

Rogers described sexual harassment in the workplace as the unwelcome behavior that includes but is not limited to inappropriate comments, looks or contact. She also said sexual harassment can take the form of invitations for sexual activity in return for advancement or retention.

Frymark said 70 percent of Church Mutual cases involve adults molesting children, 13 percent involve adult with another adult and 17 percent are older children molesting younger children. She encouraged churches to establish safety protocols for all meetings and activities. Sexual misconduct is criminal behavior, she said, and policies must be constructed to support the victim not the perpetrator.

The Rev. Sara L. Isbell, directing pastor at Chatham (Ill.) UMC, opened the webcast. She encouraged everyone to follow the advice of John Wesley to "do no harm" to all who work and worship in our churches. She urged participants to provide a safe work and worship environment by establishing policies that ensure justice, protection, respect, empowerment, witness and authenticity.

This webcast workshop, "Many Gifts/One Spirit: Healthy Relationships for a Fully Inclusive Church," is available on the [IGRC website](#) to view. We encourage all who were unable to watch the March 9 to view the workshop online.

*— Mary Walker is chairwoman of the Illinois Great Rivers Annual Conference Commission on the Status and Role of Women.*

**"Developing a Local Church Policy on Sexual Misconduct: Guidelines" and annotated sample policy available online at [umsexualethics.org](http://umsexualethics.org) »**



## GCSRW AT 40

## A 1976 compilation of faith stories by women still inspire many today

By Kristin Knudson

As the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women continued to find its way through the early years, co-general secretary Nan Self had an idea. She believed that women needed to share their stories as women – and that these stories might help others with their own experiences and frustrations.

It was 1975 when Self contacted Janice Grana, then book editor for The Upper Room daily devotional guide and asked her if she would lead the project. Grana agreed and started advertising for submissions.

“We wanted Christian women to share their own stories,” says Grana, who served as book editor then world editor of The Upper Room until 1997. “We advertised through the media—not just United Methodist media, but beyond. In the end, we got material from more than 600 women across the country and a few beyond the United States.”

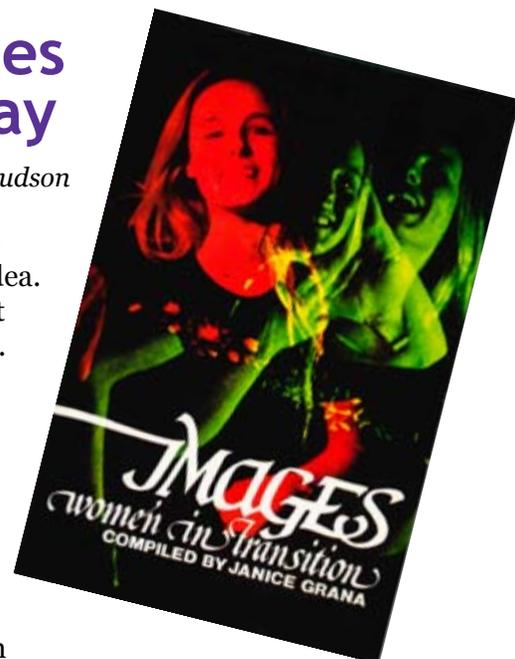
Grana couldn’t believe the volume of submissions she received. As she read through the mountains of original poetry and prose she realized just how much women needed to talk about their own spiritual journey.

The task of culling the “best” became so overwhelming that Self suggested she hire a friend of hers, a woman who was in graduate school in Nashville. Perry MacDonald joined the project and she and Grana set out to read all of the material and select the pieces that would have the widest impact.

“It was so difficult because there was such a wide variety,” Grana recalls. “We put what we considered to be ‘the best’ together for the book.”

Through it all, Self gave her encouragement and, from time to time, Perry and Grana would fax pieces to Self or call and read the most poignant piece over the phone.

As they neared the end of the selection process, a decision was made to include photos by and about women to give the book more depth. Instead of soliciting pictures, the pair combed through photo archives to find appropriate images. Once the content was finalized, Grana sent letters to those whose works had been selected. “I received so many phone calls,” she says, “The women were tremendously excited.”



### Have you planned your 40th anniversary celebration yet?

*The General Commission on the Status and Role of Women is challenging every annual conference to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the commission. To help you with your celebration plans, the commission is providing resources used at the 40th anniversary celebration at the 2012 General Conference. These resources are now available online at [www.gcsrw.org](http://www.gcsrw.org). Resources include:*

- » *Worship bulletin from GCSRW's 40th anniversary celebration held April 29, 2012*
- » *Annual conference worship planning resource*
- » *Sample annual conference worship bulletin (in booklet format)*
- » *GCSRW's worship language guidelines*

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In 1976, *Images: Women in Transition* was published and received with gratitude by churchwomen across the church.

“We were able to create a space for women to listen to each other,” Grana says. “The book had good circulation and a lot of letters about it were sent to *Response*, the publication of United Methodist Women.

“The timing was perfect,” Grana adds. “It was the right thing to do at the right time and it was a real change experience for me. *Images* was a powerful instrument to help women to grow together. I had participated in a number of events led by the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women and was aware of its goals, but when you’re interacting with this kind of personal level of material, I felt this change was unique. People still refer to the book and I’m proud of what it accomplished.”

After the book’s initial printing, St. Mary’s Press, a Roman Catholic publisher printed their own edition to reach a Roman Catholic audience. The two editions are still available from [amazon.com](http://amazon.com).

A retired laywoman, Grana lives in Blowing Rock, N.C., and attends Rumble Memorial Presbyterian Church.

—*Kristin Knudson is a freelance writer living in Linthicum Heights, MD.*