



THIS MONTH



WOMEN BY THE NUMBERS:SNAPSHOT
United Methodist clergy, 2008 vs. 2003

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Mozambican UMC celebrates 30 years of ordaining women; Praise women for growth, leadership, strength of church

*By M. Garlinda Burton**



COMMISSION NAMED
Mozambique launches first CSRW in Africa

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A membership explosion and Christian-based programs supporting the poorest of the poor are hallmarks of the United Methodist Church in Mozambique—and laywomen and clergywomen are central to the vibrant witness for Christ happening there.



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As evidence, more than 700 people gathered in mid-December at the denomination's Cambine mission in Inhambane province to celebrate the 30th anniversary of ordaining women in the United Methodist Church in Mozambique. And, just days before, the North Mozambique Annual Conference created what may be the first Commission on the Status and Role of Women in any annual conference in Africa.

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

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

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Mozambican UMC celebrates 30 years of ordaining women; praise women for growth, leadership, strength of church



The anniversary celebration opened with a procession of more than 60 United Methodist women pastors and seminary students, singing original songs “2009 is a year of our hope and strength!” and “Where would we be without women?” in Xitswa (a language indigenous to Southern Mozambique).

Young women ushered to the stage the honorees, now-retired clergywomen, the Revs. Amina Isaias and Lea Jatamo, who in 1979 became the first women ordained by any mainstream Christian church in Mozambique. Most clergymen and clergywomen wore white special anniversary T-shirts and golf shirts bearing the image of the two pastors.

The five-hour celebration included singing, dancing, tributes by grateful pastors and laypersons who credited the two pioneering clergywomen with mentoring young pastors, battling institutional sexism as “firsts” in their churches, starting still-existing cutting-edge mission projects, and planting at least five thriving congregations between them.

Amina Isaias, now 65, accompanied her husband to the United Methodist seminary at Cambine mission when he came to study evangelism. “I had never heard of a woman pastor, yet God started calling me,” she recalls. She began doing pastoral work in the church in Cambine alongside her husband until she entered seminary in the 1970s. She was ordained in 1979, and continued evangelizing, building churches and offering pastoral care during the brutal civil war of the 1980s, “even in places that didn’t want me.” After her husband was killed in an accident, she continued her ministry until she retired in 2002.

Mozambican United Methodists honored the Rev. Amina Isaias, left, and the Rev. Lea Jatamo Dec. 12 as the first women ever ordained in Mozambique. More than 700 people attended the celebration, held during the Mozambique South Annual Conference session at Cambine.

When Lea Jatamo was a child, it wasn’t typical for girls in her community to attend school. Nonetheless, she studied with an uncle, who soon recognized the intellect and leadership potential in his niece. She became a Sunday school teacher as a teenager and started a study group for young women in the early 1960s. She met a United Methodist mission, whom everyone called “Auntie Margena,” and began working with her as a Christian educator in Vilanculos and attended seminary. She married Esau, a United Methodist choirmaster in 1978 and was ordained in 1978.



Mozambican Bishop Joaquina Nhanala, the first UM woman bishop in Africa, sports a golf shirt bearing the images of the Revs. Lea Jatamo and Amina Isaias.

Jatamo, who in 1990 became Mozambique’s first woman district superintendent, also served as chaplain at the United Methodist hospital in Chicucue, and showed a special affinity for caring for dying people and their families. A gifted evangelist, she planted at least three congregations in what is now the Maputo West District and is credited with making that district “one of the strongest, most vibrant districts in southern Africa,” according to area Bishop Joaquina Nhanala, who in 2008 became the first woman ever elected a United Methodist bishop in Africa.

During the exuberant celebration on Dec. 12, well-wishers from across the region honored Jatamo and Isaias with gifts, tributes, and song. M. Garlinda Burton, general secretary of the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women, presented them with GCSRW pins, calling them “standard bearers” for women in ministry. Dean of the theological school at UM-related Africa University in Zimbabwe, the Rev. Beauty Maenzanise, hailed the two Mozambican women as, “strong mothers of a movement in Africa,” and presented them and Bishop Nhanala with a soapstone sculpture.

Speaking one behalf of the Mozambique National Council of Churches, the Rev. Dinis Matsolo said the ministries of Jatamo and Isaias have set a standard not just for the Mozambican United Methodist Church, but for all of Africa.



A choir of dancing United Methodist clergywomen in Mozambique celebrate 30 years of women's ordination.

“You are not just the first women pastors in the United Methodist Church here, but you were the first in any Christian denomination,” said Matsolo, who is ending his term as the council’s general secretary and will become principal of the Seminario Unido de Ricatla in Maputo this month. “You have opened a door for women in leadership that will never again close. And that is a gift from God,” he added.

Most of the 2009 session of the Mozambique South Annual Conference, held Dec. 9-13, was a celebration of the ministry of women in Mozambique.

The ministry of Nhanala and other churchwomen across Mozambique are evidence that—Western stereotypes to the contrary—African women are increasingly willing and able to assert strong voice and power to better their church and society, even if it means flouting so-called cultural expectations.

And again, contrary to cultural stereotypes by some in the West, many men affirm the emerging strength, voice and participation of women in church and society. In honor of the 30th anniversary celebration, a group of 35 men married to United Methodist clergywomen presented a resolution affirming their wives and challenging the Mozambican church to “continue the path of empowering women.” And a choir of young clergymen celebrated Jatomo, Isaias, Bishop Nhanala and other churchwomen in leadership as “sent by God to save our people.”

The annual conference also celebrated mission projects operated and/or supported largely by United Methodist Women and clergywomen, including the orphanage at Cambine for children and youth ages 3 months through 24, many who lost parents to HIV/AIDS, and a group home for older widows abandoned by their families in Massinga.

-- *M. Garlinda Burton is general secretary of GCSRW.*

-- *All photos by M. Garlinda Burton.*



Zimbabwean clergywomen the Rev. Saphirina Sigh, left, and the Rev. Beauty Maenzanise sing their tribute to Mozambique's Bishop Joaquina Nhanala and retired pastors Lea Jatamo and Amina Isaias.

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WOMEN BY THE NUMBERS: SNAPSHOT

UMC clergy in 2008 vs. UMC clergy in 2003

Although women have made progress since 2003, women only comprise 24% of clergy members. Women are 57% of lay membership and over 50% of the students at theological schools. We need to ask where these women are since they are not going into ordination. And we need to ask why these women are not going into ordination.

Our society is comprised of 50% women in the workforce, and many of the secular businesses have altered policies and procedures to be female and family friendly. We don't live in a community or time where the norm is just one person working outside the home.

The United Methodist Church is actively seeking younger clergy persons. Are we, the United Methodist Church, ready for them? Are our structures and policies supportive of young people (men and women)?

-- Elaine Moy, assistant general secretary of finance and administration for GCSRW.

Deacon in full connection

Women and men held the same percentage from 2003, and the total number of increased by 19%.

Elder in full connection

Women increased by 4%, and total number dropped by .5%.

Classification of Probationary Deacon and Elder started in the 1996 General Conference. Probationary Elder is comparable to Probationary Member (only elder). Women and men held the same percentages from 2003, total number dropped by 7%.

Associate member

Women increased by 2%, and the total number dropped by almost 10%.

Full-time local pastors

Women increased by 2%, the total number increased by 2%.

Part-time local pastors

Women increased by 2%, the total number increased by 17%.

The total number of clergy has increased by 2% from 2003-2008. The total number of women clergy has increased by 4% (24% women clergy and 76% men clergy.)

*Source of data – GCFA

** Detail of data by annual conferences, see Table 1 and Table 2 here: www.gcsr.org.

Mozambique launches first CSRW in Africa

By M. Garlinda Burton*



"The church of Jesus Christ must be a place of gender equality," says the Rev. Salvador Catine of Maputo, Mozambique. Catine was one of more than 30 church leaders who gathered in December as the first conference CSRW in southern Africa.

More than 35 United Methodist women and men gathered Dec. 8-9 in Cambine, Mozambique, for training and planning to create what may be the denomination's first conference Commission on the Status and Role of Women on the African continent.

Called together by Mozambique's Bishop Joaquina Nhanala, the group of clergy and lay, younger and older from across southern Mozambique, spent much their time telling their own stories of battling institutional and personal sexism and praising women who are preaching, teaching, and leading against the odds. The training was lead by M. Garlinda Burton, general secretary of the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women.

The creation of the commission in Mozambique South comes at a time when more women than ever are leading the work of the church, which includes about 300 congregations in 16 districts. Of the more than 190 pastors serving the conferences, nearly one-third—about 56— are women, including three

women district superintendents.

Much of the December commission training and orientation was spent telling and hearing one another's stories, a practice all too rare for the usually stoic, busy Mozambican women, said the Rev. Victoria Chifene, executive director for Women's Work for the Mozambique South Conference, and convener of the training.

"We have pain that we don't talk about. The first thing to do in starting this ministry of advocacy and change is to listen to one another."

Stories like Albertina's weren't unusual. "I have been a leader in the church since I was a child. It was the place that respected women in leadership when nowhere else would," recalled Albertina, president of United Methodist Women at Cambine UMC. Still, she said, her husband disapproved of her leadership and left her for another woman because she was a church leader.



Joaquina Nhanala, a GCSRW voting member, named the commission Dec. 9 during the 2009 session of the Mozambique South Annual Conference.

The Rev. Cardade Igropi, recalled the first day of her first clergy appointment to a local church. "It seems as though the people did not accept me just because I was a woman, young, and single. "They told me I could not be their pastor."

But then, Igropi said, the local United Methodist Women began praying with her and including her. She stuck to her plan to be a caring pastor and well-prepared preacher. "By word-of-mouth, people learned I was a good pastor and came to me. Men and women started treating me as a pastor," she said.

Most participants agreed that long-standing sexism in their homes and communities had made it tough for women to assert themselves as leaders, but all agreed that sexism can and must be overcome in the name of Christ. "Talking about gender issues in our context is difficult because women don't know their rights," said the Rev. Salvador Catine, secretary for the annual conference who is married to clergywoman Chifene.

"But if we are going to be the church of Jesus Christ then we must preach and teach gender equality, and say that to be a Christian is to support women," Catine added.

The Rev. Luisa Maloisana, agreed. "As the only woman pastor in my district, my parishioners wouldn't respect me or listen to me at first. They would even go to male colleagues to complain about me. But I just made myself stronger. God had called me there and that is stronger than the sexism we



The Rev. Medi Jeremias, left, and the Rev. Aida Inguane are two of three women district superintendents serving in the Mozambique South Annual Conference, which comprises 16 districts in all. They lead the Massinga South and Maputo West districts, respectively.



GCSRW General Secretary, M. Garlinda Burton, trained more than 35 United Methodist women and men Dec. 8-9 in Cambine, Mozambique, to create what may be the denomination's first CSRW in Africa.

were born into."

Members of the fledging commission agreed that more training and support for women pastors is needed to help them succeed in local congregations, especially where they are the "first." Eliana Benedito Pereira, who teaches New Testament at the UM seminary at Cambine observes that pastors—especially women—with a strong Biblical foundation and preaching skills can lead congregations beyond the cultural sexism into a new understanding of "women and men working together to do God's work."

Lidia Ussene, conference president of United Methodist Women's work, added that laypeople also need a strong teaching ministry to help counter sexism. "There are stories of women in the Bible who were part of God's work all along. Laypeople need to be taught that women leading the church is nothing new. In fact, it is central to who we are."



The Rev. Victoria Chifene, left, executive director of women's work for the Mozambique South Annual Conference; Lidia Ussene, president of women's work for the South conference, and the Rev. Telma Arminda Eduardo, executive director of women's work for the Mozambique North Annual Conference.

In addition to people in the Mozambique South Conference, two pastors and four laywomen from the South Africa Provisional Conference (also under Bishop Nhanala's supervision) attended the commission training, and made plans to start work in their conference.

Members of the new Mozambican commission agreed they wanted to tackle monitoring for inclusion, advocacy for clergywomen, and developing policies on sexual ethics during the next two years. Several members practiced monitoring the annual conferences proceedings, tracking the number of times women and men made reports or addressed the conference. After finding that clergymen "outspoke" others 10 to 1, the Rev. Anna Maloisana of Mangaung, South Africa, noted, "We're going to get women to speak up more by next year."

-- M. Garlinda Burton is general secretary of GCSRW.

-- Photos of the Rev. Salvador Catine, the Rev. Medi Jeremias and the Rev. Aida Inguane, and the Rev. Victoria Chifene, Lidia Ussene and the Rev. Telma Arminda Eduardo by M. Garlinda Burton. Photo of Bishop Joaquina Nhanala courtesy of United Methodist News Service.

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Church-run home for Mozambican widows is saving women’s lives

Story and photos by M. Garlinda Burton*



Residents of the United Methodist-run home for widows in Massinga, Mozambique, greet visitors with song. The home provides food, clothing, shelter and community for 26 women abandoned by their families after their husbands died.

Some of them were run out of town as they’re neighbors threw stones.

Others were considered too great a financial burden and dropped along the roadside to die.

Still others were branded “witches” and deserted by their own children.

These are the stories of 26 women who are rebuilding their lives, thanks to United Methodist women in Mozambique.

The widows’ home in Massinga has become home for widows abandoned by their families and threatened by the neighbors as being “bad luck” or costing too much to support, says the Rev. Victoria Chifene, executive director of women’s work in the Mozambique South Annual Conference.

The ministry started when two or three women were discovered living in fields around a United Methodist church. The district superintendent brought the women to his home and his wife, Irminda Xavier, rallied support from neighbors, friends and the United Methodist women’s office.

Today, the women live together in makeshift homes on the church’s district property, fed and clothed via a line-item budget in the conference office. The widows grow much of their own food, harvesting cassava root on the day our visitors’ van pulled into the compound. Neighborhood children grind grain with the women, and local workers shape bricks that will go to build permanent homes for the widows. Clearly, the community has embraced them as surrogate mothers and grandmothers.

As the women see Chifene and friends unloading 50-lb. bags of rice and beans, the older women break into song and dance, and hug each visitor as we leave the van. “Nzibongile!” (“Thank you” in Xitswa), they shout as each parcel of tea, soap and food is unloaded.

Juaneta, a quiet, 70-year-old, has been elected leader among the widows. “If not for the church, we would be dead,” she explains to visitors and friends. “They (United Methodist women) fed us and cared for us when we were abandoned, and now the church is giving us a way to support ourselves and live on our own. Bless you,” she says, grasping Victoria Chifene’s hand.



Juaneta, left, is the elected leader of the community of widows supported by the Mozambique South Annual Conference office of women’s work.

Later, Chifene and Bishop Nhanala reflect on the importance of the church’s investment in women. “When we help women, we help our nation,” Nhanala recalls. For example, through the women’s mission offices in the Mozambique South and North Conferences, United Methodists have made small loans to help women start their own home-based businesses. Although some in leadership were skeptical about lending money, “We have been repaid 99.9 percent; the only woman who didn’t pay the loan lost her husband that year. She is paying it back now, and she is feeding her family and giving to the church.”

To support the widows' home, send a check to the WIDOWS' HOME PROJECT #14507J payable to: The Advance/GCFA, P.O. Box 9068, New York, NY 10087-9068

-- M. Garlinda Burton is general secretary of GCSRW.

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