



THIS MONTH



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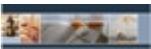
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Women of Color scholars find support and knowledge
*By Kristin Knudson**

Currently, about a third of North American theological schools of all denominations have no people of color on their teaching faculties. In fact, people of color represent only 10 percent of faculty among all graduate religion and theology programs, according to a survey by the American Academy of Religion.

These statistics, while surprising, are actually better than they have been, thanks in part to the Women of Color Scholars program administered by the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM).

“This unique program and first of its kind is producing a pool of United Methodist scholars and theologians that will and are training clergypersons of various denominations to pastor congregations in a multicultural society; and they bring new and dynamic perspectives to the academy and religion,” says Angella Current-Felder, who has been executive director of GBHEM’s Office of Loans and Scholarships for 24 years.

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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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Women of Color scholars find support and knowledge (continued from page 1)



Women of Color scholars and mentors (from left,) Angella Current-Felder, Rosetta Ross, Jung Ha Kim, Daisy Machado, Karen Collier, Rita Brock, Anne Joh, and Linda Thomas.

The Women of Color Scholars program began after women at United Methodist seminaries and churches raised concerns about the lack of women of color faculty in theological education. The United Methodist initiative provides scholarship funds based on need to United Methodist women of color who are Ph.D. or Th.D. students.

The goals are to place women of color in faculty positions at all United Methodist-related seminaries, increase the number of women at the Ph.D. level in all seminaries, and sponsor events

that support of women of color pursuing graduate degrees.

“As of June 2009, we have graduated 26 scholars in 20 years,” Current-Felder says. “There are 21 current scholars and nine former scholars. We have graduates in key positions in seminaries; heading major global theological associations, producing books and research that is recognized in academic arenas and other entities.”



From left, Kimberly Russaw, scholar; Anne Joh, graduate and mentor; Cynthia Wilson, scholar; and Tamara Lewis, scholar.

While funding for scholars' education is a major component, the program's unique and central emphasis is connecting scholars with a group of female mentors who have been through the rigors of earning their doctorates.

“When we first began, we invited women of color theologians to serve as mentors; then, as our scholars graduated, we invited them to be mentors,” says Current-Felder. “Scholars usually connect with one or two mentors, based on discipline for help with specific papers or questions, or they may ask a mentor

to serve on their dissertation committee.”



Women of Color recent graduates (from left) Elenora Cushenberry, Leah Gunning Francis, and Jae Haeng Choi.

“The mentors really tell it like it is,” says GBHEM staffer Avis Littleton, who has worked for the Women of Color scholarship program for four years. “They may even help to determine that this isn't the place for you.”

Littleton says she is enthusiastic about the fact that the program helps provide theologians of different cultures and develops diverse leadership for the church. “[Women of color] have always been there but this program allows us to hear the voice of a woman and not the voices we've heard the most. These women provide other ways of looking at things and experiencing the Gospel,” she said. “It's not new. It's really the church.”

—Kristin Knudson is a freelance journalist for GCSRW. Heather Peck Stahl, editor of The Flyer, contributed to this article.

Two Women of Color scholarship graduates tell their stories

Anne Joh, associate professor of systematic theology at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, can't remember a time when she wasn't deeply involved in her local United Methodist Church and wider connection. She had already been a leader in church youth programs when she received her call to ordained ministry.



Anne Joh

In planning to attend college and seminary, she turned to the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry Office of Loans and Scholarships for assistance. She became a United Methodist HANA scholar (HANA scholarships are awarded to students of Hispanic, Asian, Native American, or Pacific Island heritage).

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“The Women of Color scholar program has been the key to my acceptance of my calling to the theological academic leadership,” says **Felicia Howell LaBoy**, who became a Women of Color scholar in 2002.



Felicia Howell LaBoy

LaBoy is completing her Ph.D. at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Ill., and is the senior pastor at 240-member Maple Park United Methodist Church, in Chicago. Before she answered the call to ministry and academia, she had a lucrative career in business and marketing with a Fortune 500 company, and she had her own consulting firm.

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WOMEN BY THE NUMBERS: SNAPSHOT

U.S. UMC clergy in 2008 vs. 2004

The total number of clergy between 2004 and 2008 has decrease by 1.02%. The percentage of White clergy has decreased by 1% (from 90% to 89%). Since 2004, the General Council of Finance and Administration has added a new category (Multiracial). The racial ethnic categories percentages have not changed much since 2004.

According to the 2008 U.S. Census Bureau, 65% of the population is White, 15% is Hispanic, 13% is Black, 4% is Asian, 2% is Multi-Racial, 1% is Native American and .2% is Pacific Islanders. If the United Methodist Church in the United States wants to grow, the church leadership and membership needs to change with the changes in the population.

** GCFA supplied the statistical information.

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

Deacon in full connection

The percentage of Asians increased by 3%, Blacks decreased by 4%, Hispanics decreased by 1%, Native Americans decreased by .03%, Pacific Islanders increased by 3% and Whites increased by .76%. The total number of deacons increased by 145.

Elder in full connection

The percentage of Asians increased by .44%, Blacks increased by .32%, Hispanics increased by .10%, Native Americans increased by .02%, Pacific Islanders increased by .05% and Whites decreased by 1%. The total number of elders decreased by 1015.

Classification of Probationary Deacon and Elder started in the 1996 General Conference. Probationary Elder is comparable to Probationary Member (only elder). The percentage of Asians increased by .37%, Blacks increased by .82 percent, Hispanics decreased by .48%, Native Americans decreased by .37%, Pacific Islanders decreased by .37%, Whites decreased by 3.74%. The total number decreased by 202.

Associate member

The percentage of Asians increased by .42%, Blacks increased by .57%, Hispanics increased by .63%, Native Americans decreased by .35%, Pacific Islanders decreased by .07%, Whites decreased by 1.4%. Total number of associate members decreased by 195.

Full-time local pastors

The percentage of Asians increased by .02%, Blacks decreased by .08%, Hispanics increased by .26%, Native Americans and Pacific Islanders both decreased by .08%, Whites decreased by .37%. Total number of full-time local pastors decreased by 246.

Part-time local pastors

The percentage of Asians increased by .22%, Blacks increased by .22%, Hispanics increased by .76%, Native Americans decreased by .04%, Pacific Islanders decreased by .14%, Whites decreased by 1.21%. Total number of part-time local pastors increased by 344.

The total number of clergy has decreased by 862 from 2004-2008. The total number of Asians has increased by 137, Blacks have increased by 105, Hispanics have increased by 58, Native Americans have decreased by 12, Pacific Islanders have decreased by 1, Whites have decreased by 1,283.

*Source of data – GCFA

** Detail of data, see Table 1 and Table 2 at: www.gcsrw.org.



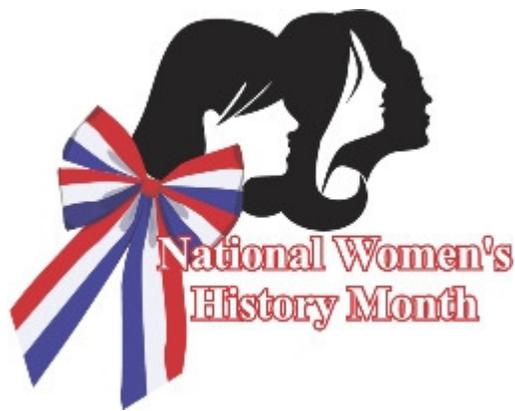


Beginning in the next issue of *The Flyer*, we will inaugurate an ongoing series of articles on sexual ethics. This department of *The Flyer* will include contributions by members of the Inter-Agency Sexual Ethics Task Force, which is convened by the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women. Encourage your annual conference leaders in sexual ethics to sign up for the eFlyer.

Mark your calendars for "Do No Harm 2011"

Annual conference Response Team, Safe Sanctuary, and other ministry coordinators for sexual ethics, save the dates: Jan 26-29, 2011. Let your bishop know that you are interested in attending "Do No Harm 2011," which is a sexual ethics summit addressing the prevention of and response to abuse, misconduct, and harassment of a sexual nature, particularly by persons in ministerial roles (both lay and clergy) within The United Methodist Church. Online registration will begin in April 2010. More information is available at <http://umsexualethics.org>, or contact Darryl W. Stephens, assistant general secretary of sexual ethics and advocacy, at (312) 346-4900 or dstephens@gcsr.org.





March Is Women's History Month

Free Bulletin Inserts and Worship Aids Highlight Women's History

The year 2010 is the 30th anniversary of Women's History Month. Celebrated in March, the national theme for this year's celebration is ***Writing Women Back into History***. It often seems that the history of women is written in invisible ink. Even when recognized in their own times, women are frequently left out of the history books. Inspired by the 2010 theme, the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women is offering a series of bulletin inserts and worship litanies that take women out of the footnotes of our history and place them in the main story line. These women played significant roles in our church and in the world as champions for Jesus Christ.

The six inserts feature women from United Methodism's past and present who have played a significant role in history – not just women's history but everyone's history. Women highlighted include bishops, pastors and lay community workers who have made a significant impact on the church and our nation. Congregations are invited to select inserts to include in bulletins or newsletters to celebrate women throughout the month.

In addition to the bulletin inserts, two bulletin covers are also offered. These covers will feature litanies for use in worship services written by women from throughout the connection.

Beginning February 5, you may access these resources at www.gcsrw.org by following the links to the Women's History Month resources.

February is U.S. Black History Month

Excellence Exemplified: The Black College Fund

By Cynthia A. Bond Hopson*



Micaela Scott says her stories of excellence and success are only possible at Rust College, a first-rate school that gave her a second chance. Rust is one of the 11 United Methodist-related historically Black colleges and universities supported by the Black College Fund.

She may be right. The Rev. William Montgomery, 37, said the same thing recently during his orientation to become one of the Fund’s 2010 Lina H. McCord interns. Scott, a 2009 graduate and former Miss Rust College, and Montgomery, a graduating senior, father, husband and clergy member of the Mississippi Conference, say their Rust family took them in when they needed it most and embraced, nurtured and inspired them to give their best and to make a difference.

“I love Rust College,” Montgomery said and launched into the 144-year old school’s alma mater. “Rust is mine, mine, mine!”

Talk to students, faculty, staff or alums from any one of these institutions and the refrain is the same. The support United Methodists in the United States offer through this apportionment helps keep tuition affordable, provides community outreach, funds groundbreaking research in HIV/AIDS, prostate and other cancers, health disparities, environmental justice and leadership development. Small class sizes and low teacher-pupil ratios give students an opportunity to know and be known by their professors and form lifelong mentors and role models.

The students, many are the first in their families to attend college, come from around the world and down the street. While the majority of the student body is still African American, increasingly the hues, voices and cultures weave a rich tapestry that offers promise and solutions for many of the world’s most pressing challenges.

The Black College Fund was established by the 1972 General Conference and supports Bennett College for women in Greensboro, N.C., Bethune-Cookman University in Daytona Beach, Fla., Claflin University, Orangeburg, S.C., Clark-Atlanta University, Atlanta, Ga., Dillard University, New Orleans, La., Huston-Tillotson University, Austin, Texas, Meharry Medical College, Nashville, Tenn., Paine College, Augusta, Ga., Philander Smith College, Little Rock, Ark., Rust College, Holly Springs, Miss., and Wiley College, Marshall, Texas.

These institutions have provided the denomination and the world with many of its brightest and most effective leaders. Rust and Claflin are served by alums David L. Beckley and Henry N. Tisdale. Larry L. Earvin, a Clark graduate, is Huston-Tillotson’s president.

Call (615) 340-7378 and ask for *Instruments of Change*, an inspiring DVD about the schools and their rich legacy of excellence. E-mail: gbhem.org/bcf for additional information.

—Cynthia A. Bond Hopson is assistant general secretary of the Black College Fund and Ethnic Concerns.

Mollie Stewart advocates for Gulfside Assembly

By Pamela J. Crosby*



About Gulfside Assembly

Gulfside Assembly was founded in 1923 as Gulfside Chautauqua and Camp Meeting Ground. Its founder, Robert E. Jones, was the first Black Methodist bishop. At the time it was the only resort in the region open to Black Methodists.

Although Gulfside was once the only resort area on beachfront property where black people could assemble for retreats and relaxation, it has always been a place where all are welcome. For more than 80 years, groups of all cultures have found respite there.

Located on 64 acres next to Buccaneer Park, the site was all but wiped clean by Hurricane Katrina in 2005. The storm caused Gulfside Association board members to consider the site's future. Through "divine intervention," Stewart says, "the answer eventually came: Convert the land to a retirement campus and ministry center with state-of-the-art amenities."

"We're all about ministry. We have struggled through the years to have a financial stream to keep the mission and ministry going. In its new form, the assembly will feature villa-style homes and assisted living space, called Sea Song at Gulfside.

Along with recreational and worship facilities, Gulfside will also include ministry centers that offer spiritual activities, lodging for retreats and accommodations for meetings and local events. Once developed, Gulfside is expected to provide 50 jobs to local residents. For more information on Gulfside Assembly, visit [here](#). For more information on purchasing Gulfside property and for updates on the progress of this great ministry, visit [here](#).

In addition, Mollie Stewart and the Gulfside board of directors have partnered with Move the Mountain Leadership Center in an innovative campaign to end poverty. The Circles™ campaign is a transformational approach that partners volunteers and community leaders with families in need. For more information visit [here](#).



In many ways, Mollie M. Stewart's spiritual journey parallels that of The United Methodist Church. As the Church has matured and changed because of the demands and blessings of justice and civil rights, so Stewart has evolved and developed.

The year she was born, 1939, is the year the Methodist Church created the Central

Jurisdiction, a system meant not to unify the church, but to segregate its Black members into one unit. When that separation happened most of the African Americans protested; some left the Methodist Church. But there were those who stayed in the United Methodist Church and tried to work within this constricted unfair process, still seeking to live as God would have them, despite a church that would not.

Stewart grew up in Morgan County Alabama, raised by grandparents who were among the Black Methodists who chose to make good out of what others meant for evil (Genesis 50:20). Although they were low on academics, they were superior in spirituality and faith in God.

Despite the unfair advantage of growing up in the segregated South and a segregated church, Stewart received love and nurture from a church and community that were unafraid to do what was right and necessary—even when the results did not bring fairness or complete satisfaction.

Her frugal grandmother groomed her to serve others and to use resources wisely. Aside from regular church attendance, she was active in Methodist Youth Fellowship.

"I learned my leadership abilities with the Central Alabama youth conference. They accepted me as a youth and I developed. In that day, everybody was your mama and your papa," she says.



For major activities, the three annual conferences—Alabama/West Florida, North Alabama, and Central Alabama—banded together so youth could get to know each other.

A special time for 13-year-old Stewart was going to Gulfside Assembly* for summer camp. "[Because of segregation] we didn't have any place to go in that day," she explains. "It was a new experience to go away from home, without my grandmother. She was very tough and wouldn't let me go with just anybody."

Going to Gulfside proved to be an important step in Stewart's growth and maturity: "You got a chance to leave home and there was the beach! You could go out on the pier and enjoy the water. I had my independence for a little while."

Since those days, servant leader Stewart has been an integral growth thread among many entities of United Methodism. Constantly active with United Methodist Women, she was the first Black woman in Huntsville (Ala.) District to become lay leader and the first Black ever to lead the delegation to General Conference. She has also been a leader in Black Methodists for Church Renewal, the denomination's oldest racial-ethnic caucus.

Later she served as coordinator of local church ministries at Hinton Rural Life Center, a retreat center in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Western North Carolina, where she became an advocate for small membership churches. She trained local church laity and clergy in leadership development, establishing spiritual growth models to help small membership churches become healthy and effective.

All along Stewart remained connected to Gulfside, as recipient, workshop leader, a member of the board of directors and later, president of Gulfside's board. After the devastation of Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the Gulfside office moved to Atlanta and board members met to determine the future of this ministry.

Mollie Stewart, executive director of Gulfside Association, gives the 2008 General Conference delegates an overview of the history of the retreat center and explains plans for rebuilding the ministry and enhancing its focus and scope. (Photo: Dwayne Lowthar)

Marian Martin, then executive director who had managed the facility with exceptional business acumen and spiritual direction, was experiencing failing health and in 2006, graciously handed Stewart the reigns to continue the ministry into the 21st century.

Gulfside has received exceptional support from the Mississippi Conference Commission on Religion and Race, from Bishops Roy Sano and Mary Ann Swenson, who came to Gulfside after Katrina to clean up the Gulfside campus, and from groups such as the Nomads and even the Amish. Still, the general United Methodist Church has not responded to Gulfside. At the 2008 General Conference, Executive Director Stewart made a presentation to make people aware of Gulfside's future plans.

Today her ministry is focused on that 24-hour quest. Stewart travels extensively, speaking to conferences, diverse groups throughout the connectional church and business world. She has partnered with local groups in the Waveland, Miss., area to enhance Gulfside's ministries and reach.

"I am so excited about what we're doing as a staff. We're doing a lot with a little," she explains. "Take a look at the history of The United Methodist church and the history of Gulfside. Lay them alongside each other and you'll see a growth stream that includes education, nurturing women and youth, and developing leadership in The United Methodist Church."

The Gulfside Board of Directors is led by Bishop Earl Bledsoe (North Texas) and a 20+-member board, and supported by godly partners, some who are contractors, architects, builders and business consultants.

The nurturing development Stewart received as a young person in Alabama in the 50s and 60s continues to enrich men, women and young people. "Someone has to know that of all the places we go for nurturing, Gulfside nurtured us before others would open doors. Gulfside has always been there—meager yes and sometimes insufficient, but the doors were always open."

—*Pamela J. Crosby is executive director of Black Methodists for Church Renewal, Inc.*

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Two Women of Color scholars share their stories

Anne Joh (continued from page 2)

It was while completing her master's degree that she decided to connect her call to professional ministry and her scholarly pursuits. "I don't recall having women of color as professors when I went to seminary," Joh said.

"Ph.D. programs are geared toward men, who usually have [formal and informal] support systems behind them as they complete their studies," said Joh, who earned her Ph.D. from UM-related Drew University. "Women—especially women of color—really do triple duty with cultural expectations, family demands, and the academic work that's required of us. If it wasn't for the Women of Color program, I wouldn't have made it through my PhD program," she recalled.

The Women of Colors Program provides mentors for each scholar, who advocate for, nurture and encourage them. "Work done by women—especially women of color is often viewed as peripheral to the [traditional, academic] canon," Joh said. "The mentors were already 'out there' and could talk about the terrain of the academy."

Last July, Joh was appointed to her current position at Garrett–Evangelical, a United Methodist-related seminary in Evanston, Ill. She is excited about her new position, not only because of the school and the courses she will be teaching, but because two other United Methodist Women of Color scholars—Cheryl Anderson and Pamela Lightsey—are also on the faculty.

Joh, herself now a Women of Color mentor, acknowledges that there are a lot of demands on a new associate professor and especially on women of color. Yet, she says she is honored to be a mentor this year and considers it a top priority in her professional life.

"[The Women of Color Scholars is] the most significant program of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry," Joh said. "This program produces intellectuals that are changing theological discourse. It's really the site of the production of theological knowledge."

—Kristin Knudson is a freelance writer for GCSRW.

Felicia Howell LaBoy (continued from page 2)

Her first days at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary were scary ones. "After my first class, I thought, 'I am too practical to be a philosopher, much less a theologian.'"

LaBoy says the Women of Color mentors reassured her that her insecure feelings were common among scholars. She says, "They believed in me." The mentors gave her practical wisdom on how to complete her program, from recommending books for her dissertation to calling her to accountability as she juggled full-time ministry and her academic pursuits.

Because of her scholarship, LaBoy says several doors have opened for her. She has been invited to speak at several colleges and churches. She is also working as a contract researcher for the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women and the General Commission on Religion and Race as part of a denominationwide team that reviews United Methodist theological schools.

LaBoy says the Women of Color scholarship program offers needed role models for young women — especially young women of color — in pastoral ministry and academic careers. "Sometimes, it's just knowing that another woman who looks like you and who had similar challenges to overcome has broken past barriers and done things you've only dreamed about," she says.

Knowing firsthand the power of mentorship, LaBoy says she is currently mentoring five candidates for ministry, four of whom are women. She is also helping several other women to explore their calls to pastoral and theological academic ministry.

She says the advice she gives to women wishing to follow her lead is that "there is a divine purpose in how you are gifted and where your dreams and passions lie. Don't allow who you are – your race, gender, sexual orientation or socio-economic status – stop you from pursuing the call that God has placed on your life."

—Heather Peck Stahl is editor of The Flyer.