

**Clergywomen Standing up to Fight Marginalization, Sexual Abuse, and Harassment;
Report on the Status of Clergywomen in the North Katanga-Tanganyika-Tanzania Episcopal Area**

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“As the Holy Scripture reveals, both men and women are made in the image of God and, therefore, men and women are of equal value in the eyes of God. The United Methodist Church acknowledges the long history of discrimination against women and girls. The United Methodist Church shall confront and seek to eliminate discrimination against women and girls, whether in organizations or in individuals, in every facet of its life and in society at large. The United Methodist Church shall work collaboratively with others to address concerns that threaten women's and girl's equality and well-being.”
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Words of Gratitude

We give thanks and pray to God that, as we celebrate the fifty-year-anniversary of Methodism in our episcopal area, a new age has dawned in our church, and we hope for the culture around us as well. We have faith that this year will be memorable for women in our region.

First, we give thanks that the amendment recognizing women's equality in the image of God and the need to fight injustices passed at North Katanga's Annual Conference. Suggestions that the amendment conflicted with Congolese law were refuted by having a Congolese official remind delegates that Congolese law encourages us to view women as equal to men. We appreciate Bishop Mande's clear explanations as well as the many men who value women and voted for this amendment. .

We are also grateful for the scholarships provided by GBHEM for eight of our clergywomen to attend the African clergywomen's conference at Africa University in Zimbabwe this past July. Rev. Lana Robyne (Indiana Conference, Friendly Planet Missiology board), who was with us for the Annual Conference, travelled with us and joined our delegation. We learned much from other clergywomen at the conference and were greatly inspired by the speakers and worship.

Finally, we thank God for the presence of a COSROW representatives at Africa University and North Katanga's pastoral school where the minds of women (pastor's wives and female pastors) were opened by the conversations about women's value in the Bible and the problem of abuse against women in the church.

The COSROW facilitators in both our pastors' school and the clergywomen's conference reminded us that all over the world, including here, women's leadership is growing exponentially. They encouraged women to not wait for men to appreciate and accept them. Instead, clergywomen should focus on their ministries, which are already strong and fruitful. Clergywomen should affirm themselves as good role models for girls and women. Clergywomen have business and leadership skills from taking care of their families. They have good ethics, knowing to say yes or no. Our communities and conferences in Africa need the spiritual gifts of clergywomen as well as clergymen.

Gender discrimination and sexual misconduct is a real concern across Africa as well as in North Katanga. We have a long history of discrimination and marginalization, including toward women clergy.

A Brief Historical Analysis of Girls, Women, and Women Clergy in North Katanga-Tanganyika-Tanzania

While people claim that our episcopal area has long affirmed the value of both female and male, it has not been effectively practiced. Whether as a vestige of our traditional patriarchal culture, sexist colonialism in the past, gender biases of past missionaries, or all of these together, women and girls have long been devalued, marginalized, and abused in our area. The girl and woman has traditionally been subordinated to the man both publicly and privately. She has not had voice or any authority to make decisions. Church members are verbally and physically abusing their wives and daughters, as if this is acceptable to God and condoned by the Bible. Some clergymen also abuse and subordinate their wives and daughters, putting down and oppressing women and girls in their congregations and communities as well.

Thus it is **no** surprise that women called to ordained ministry in this context have faced persistent persecution from male pastors, district superintendents, and bishops. In the not-so-distant past, female pastors were only given appointments in the smallest, poorest, and most dangerous and most congregations, while the big churches and responsibilities were reserved for men. Women in ministry faced relentless resistance and resentment from church members. Many women in the congregation and communities themselves condescendingly disparaged females who sought to do ministry in the church, telling them how only men are supposed to have power and authority over churches.

In spite of so much resistance and discrimination against girls and women, we are fortunate to have a very long list of females who courageously followed God's call to seek education and become pastors. When our Conference was started (1968) under Bishop Newell Booth, the United Methodist Church was already ordaining women. However, we did not have women clergy and *were not even aware that women could become pastors*.

We are especially indebted to women who paved the way for the rest of us. We celebrate three of the first in our conference today.

Rev. Mutombo Ilunga Esperance is the first woman to become a pastor in North Katanga. She graduated in 1979 at Mulungwishi Theological School. She then did her master's studies in the USA. When she returned home, she faced a lot of frustrations because she was not accepted as a woman pastor. How could she have the power to lead the church where some members were men? It was considered taboo for woman to have authority over a man. She was supposed to be quiet among men. However, she was supported by Bishop Ngoy Kimba Mwenze Wakadilo who was the resident Bishop at that moment. He appointed her as an assistant pastor in a local church in Kamina. She received her second appointment as a director of Christian Education for the entire Episcopal Area. Many men protested how Bishop Ngoy could do something like that since women could not have authority over men. Many women also did not understand why she chose to be a pastor when she ought to know that that ministry was for men. Rev. Mutombo Ilunga Esperance transferred and is now serving in the South Congo Episcopal Area.

The second female pastor is Rev. Ngoy Mwayuma Jacqueline. She graduated from Likasi Pastor's School in 1984. She faced the same problems as Rev. Mutombo. Many Christians were not happy to have a woman as a spiritual mother. Many pastors, even some district superintendents, were not on her side. She was kept at a distance, living almost alone, but was welcomed by her Bishop Ngoy who appointed her as an assistant pastor in a Kaminaville local church. Bishop Ngoy also appointed her as a coordinator of the women's department.

The third woman pastor is Rev. Numbi Ilunga Veronique who also graduated from Likasi pastoral school. She was among the first pastors who were appointed to go and to serve in Tanzania to open the church

there. The same discriminations faced her as the two first female pastors, so Rev. Numbi went to serve in the South Congo Episcopal Area. They faced many kinds of exclusion, subordination, and discrimination underlining their ministries and calls. Of these three, only Rev. Ngoy Mwayuma Jacqueline is still serving in North Katanga-Tanganyika-Tanzania Episcopal Area in Tanganyika Conference. (Bishop Ntambo appointed her as a District Superintendent, but she was forced out within two years.) From there she was sent to a struggling church in Kalemie, which could not pay her salary. Many of her hopes and dreams were thwarted by male clergy and superintendents.

Many of our female pastors in our conference today have suffered similar abuse, discrimination and marginalization as these first three women. They have often been sent to isolated, poor parishes. They have been denied adequate transportation which male pastors in similar positions were given or could afford to buy. They have had to deal with greater deprivations for their families and struggled to send their children to school because of inadequate salaries. Women clergy have had to work many times harder than men with less support and resources to do their jobs and prove their worth. Some have not been supported by their husbands or families.

Today's Reality

While women clergy do still face significant discrimination in some churches and areas today, **they have gradually grown in quantity, quality, and visibility** in recent years. Today we have **21 women** under appointment in North Katanga, 3 from Tanganyika and 3 from Tanzania. Two have doctorates and four have master's degrees. In addition, Rev. Taylor Walters Denyer is under appointment in our Episcopal Area, and Rev. Lana Robyne serves as a board member of Friendly Planet Missiology in Indiana. Both are working on their doctorates concerning missions and the church in the Congo.

Conditions started to improve in our conference under Bishop Ntambo's influence. Many more girls and women were encouraged to attend theological schools and go through the ordination process. Their status and opportunities continue to flourish and progress under Bishop Mande. Several male district superintendents have also defended, affirmed, and promoted women clergy in recent years. More men and women members have started to accept and embrace women as their spiritual leaders. Some are part of clergy couples with husbands who are very proud of them. One is the District Superintendent of her clergy husband! In fact, today we have in our episcopal area **five female district superintendents**: Rev. Velian Samson Seth and Rev. Yunisi

LIST OF CLERGYWOMEN

A. North Katanga

1. Ilunga Kumwimba Mamie: Kabongo Faculty of Theology;
2. Ilunga Monga Ortance: Africa University;
3. Ilunga Ngoy Vivianne: Kamina Faculty of Theology;
4. Ilunga Ntekele Denise: Lodja pastoral school;
5. Kabamba Ilunga Annie: Kamina Faculty of Theology;
6. Kazadi Musau Betty: Africa University & Saint Paul in the USA;
7. Kalenga Nday Chantal: Mulungwishi Faculty of Theology;
8. Makonga Kyakuta Odette: Africa University;
9. Mbuyu wa Mbayo Cécile: Kamina Faculty of Theology;
10. Mbuyu wa Kasongo Marie: Kamina Faculty of Theology;
11. Mukalay Mwadi Gertrude: Mulungwishi Faculty of Theology & Africa University;
12. Nday Lenge Angèle: Kamina Faculty of Theology;
13. Ngoy Dyese Buntu Jephania: Likasi Pastoral School;
14. Ngoy Wakuwambala Théodorine: Lodja Pastoral School;
15. Ngoy wa Ngoy Umba Rhode: Kamina Faculty of Theology;
16. Taylor Walters Denyer: USA;
17. Kazadi wa Kamwanya Lidine: Kabongo Faculty of Theology;
18. Ngoy wa Kasongo Marceline: Kabongo Faculty of Theology;
19. Umba Kankete Emérance: Kamina Faculty of Theology;
20. Umba Ndolo Kebele Virginie: Mulungwishi Faculty of Theology & Africa University;
21. Numbi Mwenze Doudou: Kabongo Faculty of Theology;
22. Robyne Lana: USA

B. TANGANYIKA CONFERENCE

1. Ngoy Mwayuma Jacqueline: Likasi pastoral school;
2. Faila wa Kasongo Rachel: Mulungwishi Faculty of Theology;
3. Tumaleo Kibonge Bibine: Kamina Faculty of Theology;

C. TANZANIA CONFERENCE

1. Idda John Ngowi: Morogoro pastoral school;
2. Yunisi Lupiana Kulanga: Morogoro pastoral school;
3. Velian Samson Seth: Kafakumba pastoral school.

Lupiana Kulanga in Tanzania Conference, Rev. Tumaleo Kibonge Bibine in Tanganyika Conference, Rev. Kalenga Nday Chantal and Ngoy Dyese Buntu in North Katanga Conference. In addition, our bishop, Rev. Dr. Mande Muyombo, recently appointed Rev. Ngoy Mwayuma as his assistant bishop – and she served as a District Superintendent in the past. This gives much hope to clergywomen that now we really will have a place and full acceptance in the United Methodist Church as well as men.

Today there is great hope and support for girls and women, women clergy, clergy wives, and everyone in the church, male and female alike, because the sun of justice has shone in our episcopal area. We have seen clearly that sexual misconduct and gender discrimination is hurting our nation, destroying the Church, and turning people away from God and twisting interpretation of the Bible. It is certainly breaking God's heart.

In addition, our Book of Discipline condemns sexual misconduct and gender discrimination while calling the Church to stand up against this sin. We should all additionally be aware there is an entire set of rules in the Book of Discipline and a legal process in the global United Methodist Church for reporting and punishing any clergy at any level who have broken these rules. Our church cannot continue ignoring or hiding this injustice and keep reassigning repeat sexual abusers in ministry where they will have more opportunities to oppress women and ruin the lives and futures of other innocent victims.

It is time. Women and girls of North Katanga, Tanganyika and Tanzania Episcopal Area: Stand up! Speak out! Go Forward! Fight discrimination and sexual misconduct against our gender! Clergywomen and clergymen, you have the authority and responsibility together to look out for the safety and well-being of wives, mothers, grandmothers, widows, adolescent daughters, orphans and all children within our congregations and communities. You have the right in God's eyes to fight subordination, sexual abuse, harassment and rape of women and girls by men in our communities, including male clergy and powerful leaders. Clergywomen, do not keep silent! God gave us the call and authority to be pastors and prophets, teachers and preachers, evangelists and healers, community leaders and organizers! We are the Spirit's voice of women and for women and girls without voice, even beyond our congregations in our episcopal area. The worldwide United Methodist Church calls you and gives you authority equal to men's and a call to be pastors to all of God's children. Men and boys, you can learn much from women, respect them as role models, encourage their education, and respect female clergy and pastor's wives as well. We all need to remember and celebrate that the Bible says we were created in the same God's image, male and female, were loved and atoned for by the same Jesus Christ, and are filled with the same Holy Spirit. As Peter and John said, stand up and go fight and fight.

This is the Holy Spirit's time to open everyone's eyes in our communities, in our conference, in our nation, in Africa, and inspire us to grow together in a new life as Christians in the United Methodist tradition. This year will undoubtedly have long-lasting effects not only for Methodists in North Katanga but the culture as well. We thank God through Jesus-Christ our Savior who made and loves women as well as men.

On behalf of the clergywomen of the North Katanga-Tanganyika-Tanzania Episcopal Area,

Rev. Umba Ndolo Kebele Virginie.