Speaking Out for Compassion
United Methodist Women Program Advisory Group meets for its first annual meeting

By Tara Barnes

Members heard reports from General Secretary Harriett Jane Olson and National President Shannon Pridy as well as on the Legacy Fund, Mission Giving, deaconess and home missioner community and the upcoming Assembly in May 2018 in Columbus, Ohio. The meeting started with a viewing and discussion of parts of the documentary “13th,” a look at the U.S. prison system and how it reveals the country’s history of racial injustice.

In line with United Methodist Women’s historical work for racial justice, the program advisory group also spent time working on eliminating institutional racism. The panel focused on the topics of the school to prison pipeline, the criminalization of dissent, the criminalization of migrants and the criminalization of Arab, Muslim and South Asian communities.

“As examples of criminalization are stop and frisk, zero tolerance policies in schools, quality of life policing, suspicionless surveillance of Muslims and mosques, mass detention and deportation of migrants and targeting of whistleblowers, journalists and protesters,” said Janis Rosheuvel, United Methodist Women’s executive for racial justice. Criminalization is the process of using the legal, social, political, media, economic, criminal justice and other systems to make the actions of an individual or an entire community illegal.

“Immigration policies are shaped more by fear and stereotypes than by evidence,” said Clara Ester, national vice president, who spoke on the criminalizing of immigrants. “Two simple but powerful truths are that immigrants are less likely to commit crimes than are native born U.S. citizens, and high rates of immigration are associated with lower rates of violent and property crimes.” But these are not the messages we receive.

“Contact your legislators and hold the legislative system accountable. Use United Methodist Women resources,” Ester said. “Speak out on ending family detention. We must visit migrants in detention. Remember the Good Samaritan: If I do not stop to help this man, what will happen to him? That’s the question for us today.”

Policies of The United Methodist Church in line with this welcoming theology are the Charter for Racial Justice, Resolution 3379: “Stop Criminalization of Communities of Color in the U.S.,” Resolution 3422: “Speaking Out for Compassion: Transforming the Context of Hate in the U.S.,” Resolution 3126: “Prejudice Against Muslims and Arabs in the USA” and Resolution 6006: “Our Muslim Neighbors.”

“As Methodists, as women, there should be no equivocating,” said Rosheuvel. “Our mandates are extremely clear.”

“The Program Advisory Group consists of the 25 members of the board of directors, the five United Methodist Women jurisdiction presidents, a representative from each conference not already represented on the board of directors, representatives from United Methodist agencies and the deaconess and home missioner community and, with voice but no vote, United Methodist Women regional

(Continued on Page 2)
United Methodist Women is Part of the Global Conversation at Commission on the Status of Women

by Tatiana Dwyer

A delegation of 22 women including United Methodist Women board and program advisory group members gathered in New York last March to attend the 61st session of Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). This year’s theme, “Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work,” consisted of panels, workshops and dialogues on an array of topics affecting women globally, from labor rights and migration to health care and survival in war regions.

During the 10-day conference, United Methodist Women delegates joined activists, researchers, policy makers and advocates for the opportunity to review progress, identify challenges, set global standards and formulate policies to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment throughout the world.

United Methodist Women’s global justice team works hard to develop an intensive and fruitful agenda for delegates with the goal of developing and nurturing leadership skills of women working on the grass-roots level by providing them with tools, information and exposure to global issues and solutions. From the positive feedback that the team has received from past delegates, the goal is being met. They return to their regions and communities and continue their efforts in creating a sustainable and peaceful world.

As delegates get to know each other, the most surprising and comforting thing they learn of is their commonality. According to Carol Burnett, “CSW introduced me to women in communities around the world working to do the same thing [I am] doing in East Biloxi, Miss.—expanding opportunities for low-income women who are struggling to meet their needs and the needs of their children.” Moreover, they realize that they are not alone. “During my participation at CSW I came to realize that it’s not only me or particularly Zambia where there’s poverty and injustice,” recalls Judith Daka.

Being part of our delegation is a great learning opportunity. “It was such a privilege to serve with women from across the world who are impacting their communities and our world by bringing attention to the women, and sometimes children, who are left out of decision-making,” says Kim Jenkins, a CSW60 delegate from the United States. “These women offered me new insight and understanding into the plight of impoverished women across the globe and the difference they can make when they stand up together for their voices to be heard.”

As delegates, women also connect and develop their ideas while witnessing global governance firsthand, as Jessie Cunningham, a fellow CSW60 delegate from the United States, attests. “The CSW experience has raised my awareness of women’s issues on a global scale.”

Many of our delegates have gone on to lead powerful and effective projects and initiatives, oftentimes informed or inspired by their experiences and knowing radical hospitality. Let’s invite women back to the basics. Let’s get started.”

In 2016, members increased their giving from 2015 by $79,000, for a total of $13,845,521.18. Money designated for Mission Giving was $12,098,221.72, with designated and supplemental giving totaling $1,747,299.46.

“We are at an amazing time in United Methodist Women history and present,” said Priddy. “We have the opportunity to do more, to be more. We have this time to make United Methodist Women our United Methodist Women.”

“If your dreams for United Methodist Women don’t scare you, they aren’t big enough.”

Tara Barnes is editor of response.
connections made during CSW. Keiko Saito became a champion for ending human trafficking in Japan and helped crowd fund a human trafficking prevention manga (Japanese comic book) that’s been widely distributed.

Justine Ngum Kwachu Kumche from Cameroon has partnered with her country’s government to address the issue of child brides, while Yuleida Patricia Alvarez Espejo is using her delegate experience to address women’s health, maternal and child health and sexual and reproductive health in Colombia.

Many delegates have gone on to address wide audiences and take on leadership positions at renowned international organizations on issues about which they are passionate. Paola Cyment, from Argentina, helped organize the 2016 Association for Women’s Rights in Development Forum and was invited by UN Women to represent migrant women at the 65th Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women session in Geneva.

These are just a few examples of the impact the United Methodist Women-CSW delegation experience has had on women all over the world, who leave CSW and take all their new and advanced skills and knowledge home to spread to their communities. Supporting these women and impacting their lives by giving them the opportunity to learn and grow and have their own platform goes a long way towards women’s empowerment; it builds peace and sustainability and ensures issues across borders are given the attention they need and the tools needed to overcome any challenges and obstacles.

Tatiana Dwyer is the executive for global justice at United Methodist Women.

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**Anesu Mhlanga Becomes Empower Women Global Champion**

**by Tatiana Dwyer**

Anesu Mhlanga, a 2016 United Methodist Women Commission on the Status of Women delegate from South Africa, was recently chosen as an Empower Women Global Champion. Out of 4,000 applicants from all over the world, Mhlanga was one of 170 to be selected for the prestigious UN Women program.

Mhlanga came to CSW60 hoping to gain insight into global best practices to further the empowerment of women in her community. She had already launched The Family Earner Program, a successful initiative focused on violence prevention for women and girls who are victims of salary monitoring. As a woman entrepreneur and social justice advocate from Sub-Saharan Africa, it was clear that Mhlanga was in touch with the women of her community and strived to give them a voice. While at CSW60, she delivered a speech on the topic of private equity and its link to women and sustainable development.

Since her time as a United Methodist Women CSW60 delegate, Mhlanga has not stopped working towards women’s empowerment and sustainable development. She is the founder and executive chairwoman of Elah Capital, a South Africa-based private equity and advisory firm committed to investing in women in Sub-Saharan Africa. She also launched the tech startup GatherUP Fragments, geared towards helping women entrepreneurs develop products with lower production costs.

As an Empower Women Global Champion, Mhlanga advocates for women’s economic empowerment throughout Africa. She hopes to change the rhetoric surrounding agribusiness “from merely talking about agriculture to moving towards enterprise development, finance solutions and business and financial skills development,” she says, as well as “bring all decision makers and captains of industry to the table, both men and women, and develop tangible solutions towards women’s economic empowerment.” Mhlanga also seeks to promote sustainable development throughout Africa to end poverty and hunger and ensure gender parity.

Mhlanga has proven that she makes the most out of any opportunity that she is given. In the spirit of a true businesswoman, she says, “Whatever platform I don’t get offered, I create through my businesses.” United Methodist Women is proud to have given Mhlanga the opportunity to attend CSW60 and wishes her continued success in all her future endeavors.

Tatiana Dwyer is the executive for global justice at United Methodist Women.
Women Find Their Voices at the Asian Young Women’s Leadership Development Seminar

Thirty-four women ages 18 to 35 from 10 Asian countries met in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, from February 6–10, 2017, to pray, advocate and encourage one another on their ways to becoming peacemakers.

The women, along with Emma Cantor, regional missionary, Dr. Quynh Nguyen, global ministries missionary, the Rev. Dr. Heasun Kim, director of the Scranton Center in Seoul, and Susie Johnson, United Methodist Women policy executive, visited local historical sites, joined workshops on women’s leadership and shared Bible studies in an event called “Be a Peacemaker: Social Issues in Viet Nam.”

The aim of the annual gathering is to lift one another up. “Empowering young women and all women in churches and communities has been a challenge in Asia, where women are taught to be submissive and quiet. However, women have a practical, powerful and important role in the family, community and church, even without the titles. Asian women need to find and raise their voices and learn what they can do,” says the Rev. Hikari Kokai Chang, chief executive director of Wesley Foundation in Japan, who co-organized the event with United Methodist Women.

This is the 10th Asian Young Leadership Development Seminar and Chang says that the region’s burgeoning economic and political power continues to make this seminar’s goal of social justice relevant and essential. Micaela Cronin, CEO of Hagar International, an anti-trafficking organization in Afghanistan, Cambodia and Vietnam, led the keynote address on the long-term commitment to women and children who are on a journey of recovery from abuse.

The gathering of women was truly diverse. “Diversity is a true blessing to celebrate. Asian young ones are influenced by Western culture so that they don’t know or appreciate the blessings of Asian cultures.” The beauty of Asia’s diversity inspires the young women to learn the stories of their sisters and neighbors and share their own.

The history of the region, in this case Vietnam, is shared at this annual event. For many, the history is a painful but hope-filled odyssey. Through sharing truths, new friendships prevail. According to Chang, many of the young women begin the gathering feeling shy, but soon are laughing, struggling to speak and understand a common language. Despite barriers of language and culture, they discover more in common than is different.

Unlike in the U.S., the women continue to connect with one another daily, cheering each other on as they make and keep personal and social justice goals. “Young ones’ leadership style is not from the top down, but each one can raise her voice and lead anytime from anywhere and those who agree can be connected easily beyond languages, national boundaries and cultural differences. They see or sense that boundaries if it happened, it would be a very powerful experience for all the participants.”

One gift from the women in attendance was their social media savvy.

Chang says, at the event “there is no assumption of majority and minority groups.” The yearly change in venue in Asia expands the outreach to young women who would not ordinarily be able to attend such a seminar. For U.S. groups to emulate this diverse gathering, the key, says Chang, would be “an equal representation in number and power dynamics. It might not be easy in the U.S., but if it happened, it would be a very powerful experience for all the participants.”

Mary Beth Coudal is a contributing writer to United Methodist Women News.
Women Trained for Peace in the Democratic Republic of Congo

For two decades, the mineral-rich eastern region of the Democratic Republic of Congo endured fighting and plunder by outside rebels that left over 5 million dead between 1998 and 2003 alone. More recently, however, an inter-ethnic conflict between Bantu and Pygmy groups in the area has led to a humanitarian crisis described as “catastrophic” by the United Nations.

Last November, United Methodist Women sponsored a women’s empowerment initiative in Katanga province that brought Bantu and Pygmy women together for peace dialogue training in their communities to help ease frictions between the two groups. When participants expressed a desire for vocational training to develop skills and become more self-reliant, it was added to the initiative the following month.

Bantu and Pygmy strife has a long history in the region. Pygmies, who are considered bush people, have been marginalized and denied basic human services, with thousands being displaced from their homes. Tensions escalated when they began to demand equal rights. Confrontations between the two groups have led to a vicious cycle of violence leaving women and children most vulnerable.

The aim of the peace dialogue and vocational training initiative is to help women from both groups become visible in their work. It also fosters capacity building and community leadership for self-determination, particularly for Pygmy groups who have lived in the margins. According to Manda Tubyangaliye Prisca, one of the program’s trainers, the women come together in sisterhood to build community and work for the future of their families.

Through educational and vocational programs like these, women who once felt powerless in the face of discord, are finding their voices and initiating positive change in their region.

The Rev. Betty Kazadi Musau is secretary of the Central Congo Conference of The United Methodist Church and health board chair of the North Katanga Conference in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Julia Chance is co-editor of United Methodist Women News.

A United Methodist Women initiative in a conflict region of the Democratic Republic of Congo is teaching local women to become peace builders.

Pygmy women learned to knit during vocational training and now sell their wares for income.
Gracious Acts

A Sewing Ministry that Honors Loss

by Joy Lynch

Magnolia Road United Methodist Church in Pemberton, N.J., is proud to have the United Methodist Women Sewing Ministries start a project with Virtua Hospital for an Angel Gown Ministry. This project is for “sleeping babies,” or, more specifically, babies born without a heartbeat.

Faith Parrott is the lead seamstress on this project. She lost her baby at 16 weeks over 26 years ago and still feels the pain of that loss. There is nothing more devastating than to lose your baby before it’s born. The United Methodist Women sewing team has joined efforts with Ann Coyle, Director of Palliative Care for Virtua Health. Ann had requested seamstresses that could sew baby gowns out of donated wedding dresses. The United Methodist Women sewing team saw the need and knew this was a calling for them. They immediately agreed to initiate this project. It was named From Wedding Dreams to Angel Wings.

Wedding gowns are donated, then carefully taken apart, and beautiful gowns are made for baby boys and baby girls that are born “sleeping.” This is such a tragic situation, so to make a beautiful outfit to help these parents is the least we can do. There is also a healing for many brides that have donated their gowns. Some have experienced a loss of pregnancy as well, and giving their gown is a way of helping their own pain. Often during sewing sessions we have women who come to share their story of loss. Each member of the sewing team has also experienced the pain of losing a pregnancy, and sewing these gowns is their way of mending their own hearts while making beautiful outfits for these sleeping angels.

We take photos of each gown and of the angel gown made from it so each bride can see the beauty from her dress. This sewing ministry has also made hand-sewn quilts. They have given these quilts to several cancer patients. Ten quilts were sent to a missionary in Africa for distribution to women and children. These seamstresses sew with much love and dedication to our Lord, sewing each stitch with love. We invite anyone to join us.

Joy Lynch is president for United Methodist Women Capital District and a member of Magnolia Road United Methodist Church United Methodist Women in Pemberton, N.J.

Have an interesting story for Gracious Acts? Contact United Methodist Women News co-editor Julia Chance @ Jchance@unitedmethodistwomen.org.
Our Living Timeline Records
Our Stories for Generations to Come

by Anissa New-Walker

We know the stories of United Methodist Women foremothers Isabella Thoburn, Clara Swain, Rose Catchings, Estelle Haskins, Sallie Sawyer and many others who laid the foundation for mission today. The work that we are engaged in now will be the stories that future members will draw from for information and inspiration as they move our organization forward. In the next few years leading up to our 150th anniversary celebration, we want to learn more about you, our members, and the many ways in which you are currently working to change and shape the lives of women, children and youth.

United Methodist Women units, circles and members already share their work and successes in response magazine and here in United Methodist Women News, but there are so many more stories to be told.

We hear snippets of amazing feats and bold moves made by members in passing when we attend an annual conference, fall meeting, Mission u, Leadership Development Days or other events, but we don’t always record them. For instance, after a workshop at Assembly 2014, I was told about a unit that was so well versed and trained in recognizing human trafficking that the local police department asked them to train the officers in ways to identify and stop human trafficking in their community. It was a powerful story of women steadfast in faith, following Jesus’ call to lift up the least of us by training local police officers to do the same. It was amazing! And it is a prime example of the types of endeavors that we want to document as we move forward.

United Methodist Women members in my own life, like my aunt Bonnie and my good friends Inelle Bagwell and Patricia Clark, were instrumental in my educational and occupational development. Inelle and Pat asked me to sit on the board of directors at the Scarritt-Bennett Center, an experience that broadened my understanding of how nonprofits operate. Both women cheered me on in my professional life and in the benefits of going back to school for my master’s degree. My aunt and friends mentored by gently pushing a younger generation into leadership roles. These are stories that need to be told, too.

What stories do you feel need to be lifted up? Did a member in your local unit start a soup kitchen? Did another start a youth group or mentoring program for teenage girls in your community? Do you know members who work for immigration reform or environmental justice? We want to know about them.

One way to share our accomplishments as we celebrate our upcoming 150th anniversary is for members to become involved in Our Stories: A Living Timeline. It is the perfect do-it-yourself project for local units to do together. Why not dedicate a unit meeting or two toward the purpose of collecting stories and creating living timelines?

In the first meeting, divide the unit into groups of two or three members and interview each other using the sample questions provided in Our Stories: A Living Timeline DIY Guide found on the United Methodist Women website: www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/livingtimeline. In the second meeting, use the stories to make living timelines. Be creative! Use artwork and photos, write an essay, present your timeline as a scrapbook or include video or audio recordings.

After developing your living timelines, share them at church, or ask your conference communication coordinator to share them in your conference newsletter or website. Ask the organizers of your conference’s annual fall meeting to create a space where all living timelines throughout your conference can be shared. Then display your living timelines nationally by posting them on the project’s Facebook page found at www.facebook.com/ourstorieslivingtimeline or @ourstorieslivingtimeline, where thousands of followers can experience them. By doing this, you’re not only helping United Methodist Women to spread the word about the progress we make in our communities, down the street and around the world, you’re also continuing our legacy in a meaningful way for future generations.

Anissa New-Walker is an integrated marketing strategist consultant for United Methodist Women.
Mission Resources

2017 Spiritual Growth Study
Living as a Covenant Community

Evy McDonald; Participant’s Guide, elmira Nazombe

This study examines major covenants throughout the Bible and what they reveal about God’s character and eternal love for us. It will enhance your understanding of how God works with us, in us and through us.

$10.00 English (M3291) Standard Print Edition
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The United Methodist Women Racial Justice Timeline

Important Moments of Racial Justice History in the United States and United Methodist Women

From its beginnings, United Methodist Women has tried to build a community and social order without racial barriers, as this timeline shows. Racial justice is an ongoing focus of United Methodist Women mission as members work to promote racial justice in the United States and around the world.

United Methodist Women Program Book 2017–2018

Sacred Spaces: Encounters with God and Neighbor 2017–2018

J. Ann Craig; Special Contributor, Deborah Bass

This study gives the reader a foundational understanding of mission and ministries of the three U.S. missionary conferences of The United Methodist Church: Alaska United Methodist Conference, Red Bird Missionary Conference, and Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference.

$10.00 English (3301)
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This program book brings new elements to the topic of sacred spaces including Bible studies, times of reflection and experience, a call to action and ways to make the program your own!

Program Date Book 2018

$1.50 (3304)

This small calendar helps you to keep track of relevant dates, 24 pp.