Deaconess
Nazgul William 1968-2013
by Myka Kennedy Stephens

She was known for her smile and vivacious love of life. Her laughter was infectious, and when she danced you couldn’t help but join her. Deaconess Nazgul William, “Naz” to her friends, dedicated her life to ministries of care and compassion and was looking forward to sharing what she had learned about women’s issues and gender inequality in Asia having just completed a two-month course in the Philippines.

Her life abruptly ended July 17, 2013, in Beijing, China. While out for an afternoon walk near a shopping center, she was one of two people stabbed by a young man in what was reported as a random act of violence due to mental illness. She was visiting Beijing after attending the World Diakonia conference in Berlin, Germany.

Born in Lahore, Pakistan, Ms. William became the first Pakistani deaconess of The United Methodist Church at her commissioning in 2005. From a young age she felt God’s call to dedicate her life to love, justice and service. Her call was affirmed through encounters she had with American missionaries to Pakistan and later in the relationships she built with deaconesses in the United States. Quoted in a 2006 issue of response magazine, Ms. William said of her call, “I wanted to do something until the day I die. In Pakistan, if you say to someone, ‘You are my brother or sister,’ then it’s for your lifetime.”

Her deaconess ministries included working at the Brooks-Howell Home in Asheville, N.C., and translating materials from the United Methodist Women’s Bible Women Program into Urdu, the native language of Pakistan.

Most recently, she was on a leave of absence from active service while she sought additional educational and professional development opportunities. She graduated from a two-month intercultural course on women and society at St. Scholastica College’s Institute of Women’s Studies in Manila, Philippines, in early June 2013. As a participant in this course, Ms. William learned about issues facing women in Asia and the Pacific and developed practical skills to address gender concerns on personal and organizational levels.

She was looking forward to sharing her new skills and knowledge through workshops and volunteering with Chosen Ministry in the Pacific and developed practical skills to address gender concerns on personal and organizational levels.

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From the General Secretary

Helping create a vital church
by Harriett Jane Olson

Lately The United Methodist Church has been talking about “vitality.” As I’ve mentioned in this space before, a study prior to the 2012 General Conference found that vital congregations have strong lay leadership.

In congregations characterized by growth, outreach and enthusiasm, more than 25 percent of members have held a leadership role in the past five years. United Methodist Women encourages leadership. How can we better ensure a place for all at the table?

The study also found that vital congregations are characterized by small groups and by specialized ministry to children and youth. With our flexible configurations, circles and mission studies for children and youth, United Methodist Women already looks like this in many places. What can we do to deepen and broaden this part of our work?

Worship in many styles exists among vital congregations, but most “specialize” and do one style particularly well. Our circles and local events could be distinguished by different spiritual practices as well as different gathering times and demographics. One circle may accompany a mission study with Taizé worship and another with contemporary Christian music. Worship for general meetings can offer different styles in different years. What new styles can you try?

In vital congregations laypersons tell their stories of how their faith has shaped them. I know that United Methodist Women members have stories to share—many of you have shared your stories with me. Do you also share these stories with your circles, units, districts and conferences? Why are you a member of United Methodist Women?

Vital congregations include and value United Methodist Women. Vital United Methodist Women units support vital congregations. There is no need to be afraid of change and grow. Let’s experiment! That’s what vital congregations do!

Harriett Jane Olson is general secretary and CEO of United Methodist Women.
The Roma
Overcoming a legacy of suffering

Last October German leaders dedicated a memorial in Berlin to the hundreds of thousands of Roma who were killed by Germany and its allies between 1933 and 1945. The act came almost seven decades after the end of World War II and years after the dedication of memorials to Jews and homosexuals murdered by the Nazis. Nonetheless, the monument finally acknowledges the suffering of the Roma and underlines the urgent challenges faced by today’s Roma as they struggle with exclusion, separation and assimilation throughout Europe.

As many as half a million Roma were shot, gassed or starved to death under Nazi regimes, yet after the war Germany remained in denial about what happened. West German officials ruled measures taken against the Roma before 1943 were legitimate actions against persons committing crimes, not the result of policies driven by racial prejudice. Only in 1979 did the West German Federal Parliament identify the Nazi persecution of Roma as being racially motivated.

Violence against the Roma is escalating across Europe today. In that context, the memorial’s dedication was better late than never. “Opening the memorial sends an important message to society that anti-Roma sentiment is as unacceptable as anti-Semitism,” said Romani Rose, a leading Roma rights activist in Germany.

Who are the Roma?

A December article in the British journal Nature presented the results of an extensive genetic sequencing study that indicates the Roma originated from the Dalits, the so-called “untouchables” caste in India.
There are some 12 million Roma in Europe today, making them the region's largest ethnic minority.

As sex workers in other countries, Roma have been systematically denied health care, and Roma women have suffered from coercive sterilization at the hands of government health workers.

Right-wing political parties in Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Hungary, at least 40 attacks in the Czech Republic and at least 13 attacks in Slovakia, resulting in a combined total of at least 11 fatalities.

The attacks involved Molotov cocktails, hand grenades and guns, police violence, arson attacks, mob violence and demonstrations. Yet the ERRC's monitoring of 44 of these cases found no perpetrator was punished in a vast majority of the cases. Indeed, the police suspended investigations without identifying any suspects in nearly one-third of the cases.

**Mission study on the Roma**

United Methodist Women and others will come together to study the Roma this year and next at hundreds of Mission u gatherings, the next generation of United Methodist Women's Schools of Christian Mission. As a resource for participants in the study, and as a window onto the complex reality of the Roma in today's Europe, the May 2013 issue of *response* looks at the daily life and challenges of the Roma.

The July/August issue includes an article on the Roma in Berlin, where the Roma genocide monument dedicated last year bears these words from the poem “Auschwitz,” by Italian Roma poet Santino Spinelli:

- Sunken Face
- Extinct Eyes
- Cold Lips
- Silence
- One Torn Heart
- Without Breath
- No Words
- No Tears.

The May 2013 and July/August 2013 issues of *response* are available at www.umwmissionresources.com and complement the United Methodist Women mission study *The Roma*, also available from United Methodist Women Mission Resources.

Paul Jeffrey is a United Methodist missionary and senior correspondent for *response* magazine. This article first appeared in the May 2012 issue of *response*. Mr. Jeffrey blogs at kairosphotos.com.
Honoring United Methodist Women Presidents

United Methodist Women in Redding, Calif., honor past presidents with an annual luncheon and tribute booklet.

by Pamela McCurdy

This past April the United Methodist Women of First United Methodist Church in Redding, Calif., honored our past presidents at a luncheon, as we do each year. This year, I penned a tribute, and we published it in a gift booklet that we gave to each attending past president. We also honored past presidents from United Methodist Women at Mt. Shasta United Methodist Church as well.

We are so grateful for the gifts these ladies have given to United Methodist Women and to each of us personally, and it was a privilege to honor them.

Honoring Our Past Presidents: A Tribute

Today we take a little time to say thank you to all those ladies who so selflessly and humbly became our United Methodist Women presidents.

Did they know what they were in for when we asked them to serve? They were flattened to be chosen, but then reality descended and strong prayers for guidance and wisdom, stamina and patience were sent forth “Help me not to be chosen, but then unhappy to serve? They were flat­tened to be chosen, but then need to spend Christmas with their families? Did she know about that? Could she tell us about this? Did she know about that? Oh, didn’t I mention those? But when Susie was president … Well, we always do it that way.

Of course, we still expected them to attend circle meetings and show up to work at the thrift shop and be there at the bazaar after which executive board would prepare the lunch, and in between time she would counsel the nominating committee and talk with the Special Mission Recognition folks and prepare for budget discussions and then excess funds distribution meeting, and did she really need to spend Christmas with her family?

There was laughter to sus­tain them from United Method­ist Women members who do that so well, and, yes, some unhappiness and tears to smooth over from hurt feelings and misunderstandings. But they shoulder the problems and concerns, the bad news, the losses, the celebrations of life as we all had to, but they did it from just a bit closer—it was just a bit more personal, for the truth is, we are all more personal to them, each and every one of us.

And so they are to us: Beloved Ladies. They were always there for us, smiling and hugging and welcoming us every day, leading by example in all those ways we have trouble putting into words. That example we need so much of—a Christian woman with purpose, and resolve, with commitment and faith in a God who is always and forever goodness and Love.

So, thank you, with all our love and gratitude for making a difference in our lives and in the world and showing us the United Methodist Women way. We love you!

Pamela McCurdy is secretary of United Methodist Women at First United Methodist Church in Redding, Calif.

From the other side

Missionary Joy Prim experiences what it’s like to be a teacher at United Methodist Women’s Mission u.

by Joy Prim

I recently returned from my first ever Mission u with the California-Pacific Conference United Methodist Women. I’ve been to a number of Schools of Christian Missions since I was young, but this was my first school under the new name Mission u. This was my first one on the West Coast—all the others I had attended were on the East Coast. This was also the first one for which I was a study leader instead of just a student. I got to see the other side of the classroom.

The Mission u was held at Biola University in La Mirada, Calif., a pretty campus with many brick buildings in southern California. The diversity of the people at Mission u reminded me of what a truly diverse world we live in and how beautiful it can be, a world in which first languages differ but the love of Christ does not.

This other side has been an eye-opening experience. I facilitated a class of mainly young adults, and through conversations and sharing of experiences we were able to learn from one another.

The ladies really pushed me to think about what it means for me to live sacramentally while walking justly in my daily life. The book I taught was The Call: Living Sacramentally, Walking Justly, a United Methodist Women mission study I suggest to anyone, especially anyone trying to discern what God’s call in her or his life may be.

Through our conversa­tions on the topic we expanded our knowledge, struggled with hard questions and realized that while we have different viewpoints, it’s OK. As we recapped at the end of the class, we tried to put into continued on page 5
I recently contributed an article to New World Outlook magazine about finding my voice through dance during my mission experience. I realized that the process of finding my voice started much earlier than my mission in Hong Kong; it started with a young deaconess and a reminder to “just keep trying, and always smile.”

My heart still aches in many ways, but I feel the loving arms of God surrounding me and holding me close. I know the death of Ms. William may never make sense, but as she has left earth, I know there are many dancing angels in heaven.

My Mission u weekend helped me see life from many angles. It left me tired, but a good tired. It was a weekend I won’t soon forget, and a weekend I am thankful for.

Joy Prim is a mission intern with the General Board of Global Ministries of The United Methodist Church serving in Lang Beach, Calif. This reflection originally appeared July 22, 2013, on Ms. Prim’s blog: joyprim.wordpress.com. Reprinted with permission.

Leaving a legacy, giving back
Longtime United Methodist Women member makes a gift from her will to support future generations of United Methodist Women.

by Sandy Wilder

United Methodist Women has opened my eyes to so much, from personal spiritual growth to awareness of community needs and worldwide needs. And not just worldwide needs but also opportunities to get to know people through all those programs that bring us to information that is made available to us: workshops, Mission u, the Assembly. … I'm not sure that I got any of the information—not even a fourth of the information that I know—through any other source than United Methodist Women.” Ilda Vásquez says this with certainty. And she has decades of involvement in United Methodist Women to back up her conviction.

Ms. Vásquez, one of six children, grew up in Edcouch, deep in south Texas, about 10 miles north of the border with Mexico. She attended Texas Women's University, and she met her husband on a blind date over a Christmas break. They have been married for 40 years and have a son and a daughter.

A military family, the Vásquez's lived in Korea, Panama and all over the United States. After Mr. Vásquez retired from the army, the family settled in Weslaco, Texas, not far from where Mr. and Ms. Vásquez had both grown up.

Ms. Vásquez was strongly influenced by her grandmother and her mother. “My grandmother couldn’t read or write, but she was treasurer of the women’s group. She tied the offerings into the four corners of a handkerchief, one corner for World Thank Offering, another for gifts, and so on. She always gave accurate treasurer’s reports according to what was in each corner.” Ms. Vásquez’s mother, Elida Gonzalez, had a sixth grade education and was a migrant worker, but “she was active in the Women’s Society of Christian Service at the church in Elsa,” Ms. Vásquez said. “I saw Mother going to meetings, and then going for a day or two somewhere with the women. … My love for Mujeres Metodistas Unidas (United Methodist Women) came through Mother.”

Ms. Vásquez joined the local United Methodist Women after moving to Weslaco. “The ladies embraced me and invited me to the meetings—and I’m still there!” she said. “I didn’t just go to the meetings, I had a burning desire to know more than what I saw locally. I went to district events and started going to conference events and the School of Christian Mission. And then they asked me to be a district officer and president of the district and finally a conference officer.”

After attending some district events, Ms. Vásquez was impressed. “I knew that the organization was a whole lot more than I had thought,” she said. “I started subscribing to response and New World Outlook and learning more, reading more. Then I became active at the conference level.” She told her husband, “This is what I’m going to pour myself into.”

Ms. Vásquez has served at the local, district, conference and national levels of United Methodist Women. She was president of South-West Texas Conference for four years and president of the South Central Jurisdiction for four years, which also means she served as a director of Women’s Division that quadrennium. “I just embraced United Methodist Women and have done everything that I can to help other women to know about United Methodist Women and encourage them,” she said. “This organization is for all women—not just the educated or uneducated or wealthy or poor. Every woman is offered the same opportunity. … United Methodist Women is a total, inclusive group. Everyone is welcome.”

Ms. Vásquez knows every woman has something to contribute to the betterment of the world, even if she doesn’t yet know it. United Methodist Women helps women discover their gifts. “The benefits that you receive from their investment in you are tremendous. United Methodist Women invested a lot in me. How could I not think that they would be in my will?” Ms. Vásquez said. She decided to support the organization that she loves through a gift from her will.

“In regard to her decision, Ms. Vásquez stated, “God has been in our every decision we’ve made as a family.” She knows God helped direct her to United Methodist Women and on into the future to ministry with women, children and youth around the world.

Sandy Wilder (SWilder@unitedmethodistwomen.org) is a major and planned giving consultant with United Methodist Women.
One child at a time

Youth at the Florida Conference Mission learn how Cornerstone Family Ministries helps end the cycle of poverty.

by Cathy Capo Stone

In the middle of the stage at Florida Southern College stood a 16-year-old girl wearing a nametag that said “Poor Young Mom.” She was overwhelmed. She was trying to juggle too many balls and nothing was working for her. Seventy-eight other 6-12th graders watched. Some laughed. Some shouted their suggestions on how to keep the balls in the air. Others felt sorry for her. Some got bored and talked to one another, completely uninterested in her predicament. The girl became frustrated and almost gave up. And this was only a game.

But for real poor young moms raising a child in poverty it is not a game; for them, juggling life is hard and breaking the cycle of poverty even harder. These youth attending the Florida Conference United Methodist Women Mission u were participating in a presentation by Cornerstone Family Ministries, one of United Methodist Women’s National Mission Institutions.

The presentation depicted why and how Cornerstone Family Ministries serves more than 28,000 young children living at or below the poverty level through direct service and through a sponsoring and mentoring program to more than 130 early childhood centers throughout five counties in the Tampa Bay, Fla., area. Throughout the presentation students learned statistics about poverty and had a chance to see how Cornerstone nurtures bodies, develops minds and fosters hope one child at a time.

The 16-year-old playing Poor Young Mom was given a ball with “Poverty” written on it and another with “Child” written on it. She was asked to juggle both of the balls without stopping. Then she was given another ball with “Needs” written on it. Struggling to keep the three balls in the air, she was offered a fourth ball with “Opportunity” written across it—the one thing that would help her get out of poverty, a chance to go to college and/or get a good job—and she had no capacity to take the ball because none of the other balls could be set aside.

Three other volunteers were recruited. One represented Cornerstone’s Children’s Nutrition Connection, one represented Cornerstone’s Children’s Early Education Connection (also known as the Rosa Valdez Center) and the third represented Cornerstone’s Children’s Faith Connection. Early Education Connection took the Child ball and handled it with great care, making sure Poor Young Mom’s child would have a safe place and the best early childhood education while she went to school and/or work, and Children’s Nutrition Connection took the Needs ball for her, making sure that her child would have nutritious food every day. Now Poor Young Mom could see the possibility of taking advantage of the Opportunity, a key to helping break the cycle of poverty and eventually allowing her to take back the Needs ball. More important, her child would be equipped to do well in school and break the cycle of poverty for his children.

Because Cornerstone serves so many children, more volunteers were recruited from the audience. They wore nametags that read: Volunteer, Donor, Church, Government Program, Youth Group.

They came up one by one and formed a circle around Poor Young Mom, and they all shared in caring for Needs and Child by passing those balls around the circle. What started out hard became easier with the body of Christ’s help.

The organizers of the Florida Conference’s Mission u wanted to incorporate a meaningful mission opportunity and understanding of the impact of one of Florida’s National Mission Institutions into Mission u. My visit as the executive director of Cornerstone was one way this was accomplished.

The students and members also collected baby products for the Rosa Valdez Early Childhood Learning Center. These interactions provided a great opportunity for the students to learn about the plight of children in poverty on a national and local level, and they had an opportunity to see how United Methodist Women is engaging in mission. To find out more about Cornerstone go to www.cornerstonefamilyministries.org or e-mail at cstone@cornerstonefm.org.

Cathy Capo Stone is the executive director of Cornerstone Family Ministries in Tampa, Fla.
Deaconess Nazgul William 1968-2013

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Haiti, where she promoted a women’s prison ministry and micro-commodities program.

Ms. William was a member of Christ Church United Methodist in New York, N.Y., where she held the office of president of United Methodist Women. She was also social action coordinator for the New York Conference United Methodist Women.

She is preceded in death by her mother and father and survived by a brother and seven sisters. She was close to the Prudente family of New York, N.Y., who are assisting Ms. William’s birth family with arrangements. Memorial services are being held in Pakistan, New York, and at the Brooks-Howell Home in Asheville, N.C.

Myka Kennedy Stephens is a United Methodist deaconess appointed as an independent information professional in the Northern Illinois Annual Conference.

Photos, clockwise from top:

“I have always loved to dance as it is one of the best ways I express myself,” Ms. William said. Her enthusiasm and love of Christ was always reflected through her dance.

Naz William wears her deaconess stole at the World Diakonia 2013 in Berlin, Germany.

Ms. William dances at Scarritt-Bennett Center in Nashville, Tenn., during the 2006 National Association of Deaconesses, Home Missioners and Home Missionaries Convocation.

Naz William leads dancers in Berlin, Germany, during the July 2013 World Diakonia assembly.

Thank You

United Methodist Women News is for United Methodist Women members, by United Methodist Women members. Your actions and your giving make every story featured in this issue possible.

Thank you for your work and generosity.

Leadership Development Days 2013-2014

- November 15-17, 2013 St. Louis, Mo., Renaissance Airport Hotel
- November 22-24, 2013 Tempe, Ariz., Fiesta Resort Conference Center
- January 10-12, 2014 Lake Junaluska Conference and Retreat Center, Lake Junaluska, N.C.

For registration information contact the Office of Membership and Leadership Development at 212-870-3769 or jtulloch@unitedmethodistwomen.org.
Mission Resources: Care Packages

Know college students returning to school or military personnel away from home? Send a United Methodist Women care package!

**Prayer Calendar 2014**

$11.00 | M3177

In the Prayer Calendar you will find daily lectionary readings, holidays and special days, daily lists to focus your prayers on mission, and projects, advocacy issues and birthdays of people in mission. Also included are prayers, photos, stories, meditations and celebrations of global projects and partnerships to inspire you. This calendar is a valuable resource for daily planning and supporting the mission work of The United Methodist Church. Make Prayer Calendar 2014 a part of your prayer life.

**Prayer Calendar 2013** on sale at www.umwmissionresources.org!

**Holy Bible**

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This special United Methodist Women edition of the Holy Bible (New Revised Standard Version) features leatherlike binding, a satin ribbon marker, a full-color presentation section for personalization, United Methodist Women members’ prayers and reflections on Scripture passages through the lens of mission, and practical study ideas and journaling suggestions.

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