Church Leaders Share Gratitude and Commit to Gender Equality

Women Bishops Stand with United Methodist Women at Assembly 2018

by Yvette Moore

Nine women bishops joined United Methodist Women for the closing service of The Power of Bold quadrennial Assembly in a show of mutual support, celebration of progress and a joint commitment to the ongoing struggle for gender justice in church and society. The event’s host, area Bishop Gregory V. Palmer, also joined the closing Communion service with the bishops as celebrants.

Joining the closing ceremony were Bishop Cynthia Fierro-Harvey of the Louisiana Episcopal Area, South Central Jurisdiction; Bishop Peggy Johnson of the Philadelphia Episcopal Area, Northeastern Jurisdiction; Bishop Sharma Lewis of the Richmond Episcopal Area, Southeastern Jurisdiction; Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi, Pittsburgh Episcopal Area, Northeastern Jurisdiction; Bishop Joaquina Nhlanala, Mozambique Episcopal Area, Africa; Bishop Karen Oliveto, Mountain Sky Episcopal Area, Western Jurisdiction; Bishop Tracy S. Malone, Ohio East Episcopal Area, North Central Jurisdiction; Bishop Sandra Steiner Ball, West Virginia Episcopal Area, Northeastern Jurisdiction; Bishop Mary Virginia Taylor, Holston Episcopal Area, Southeastern Jurisdiction; and Bishop Gregory Palmer, Ohio West Episcopal Area, North Central Jurisdiction. Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett of the Birmingham Episcopal Area in the Southeastern Jurisdiction joined the event earlier in the weekend.

During the service, the bishops shared how the support of local United Methodist Women members and national programs like Mission u, formerly Schools of Christian Mission, had helped shape and prepare them for ministry.

“Thank you for allowing us to be a part of this great celebration,” said Fierro-Harvey, speaking on behalf of the gathered bishops in the pre-service press briefing.

“We know that when you gather this many women together amazing things happen. United Methodist Women has always been incredible in providing the foundation and support for what we do as pastors in our local churches and now as bishops.”

Olson and the bishops lamented the church’s recent failure to ratify proposed amendments that would have added gender inclusion in The United Methodist Church’s constitution and a recommittal to work together for gender equality.

“Women bishops gathered after we got the news of the amendments not getting the necessary two-thirds of votes in the annual conferences, and we made a statement to The United Methodist Church that provided a glimpse into the need for equity and gender equality for women and girls in our churches and across the world,” Fierro-Harvey said. “Yes, we’ve made some headway, but we have a lot of work to do. And now, along with United Methodist Women and others across the connection, we hope to go back to our annual conferences with this amendment and make a decision that’s better informed.”

Yvette Moore is United Methodist Women Communications Specialist.
Beni Women Unite for Justice and Oppose Stigma

By Philippe Kituka Lolonga

On April 27, 2018, thousands of women marched in Beni, East Congo, calling for an end to insecurity and massacres of civilians, while new cases of rape were reported by witnesses on the spot. The most recent case is that of April 20, 2018, in which four women were kidnapped and raped by Rebels ADF. Among the victims were two United Methodist women, according to Mother Justine Kavira, the president of Beni United Methodist Women.

Barefoot, with many dressed in black robes and wearing white scarves on their heads, the women waved calicoes on which were drawn drums containing blood and crosses. One read, “Who will pay for the blood of the innocents in Eastern DRC?” and another, “We say no to sexual violence!” Marching side by side with others, United Methodist women were calling for peace.

Ms. Catherine Furaha, President of the Women Lawyers Association for the Defense of Women’s and Children’s Rights (FJDF), a local organization in Beni, said that their organization has recorded 343 new cases of sexual and gender-based violence in the far north (Beni, Butembo and Lubero) since January 2017. Rape, most prevalent, represented approximately 85 percent of the reported crimes.

To counter this suffering, the United Methodist Church of East Congo has launched Women Arise, a televised awareness campaign to give hope to survivors of rape, and to call on the public to denounce these brutal acts.

This year, Bishop Gabriel Unda began sending text messages to religious leaders in the most affected areas with the support of Harper Hill Global, and United Methodist Women.

Gracious Acts

Baby Hats for Assembly

by Marie Rivera

Dorothy Humphrey joined Arlington Methodist Church in Jacksonville, Florida, in 1961 with her husband and three boys. They had moved to Florida from Ohio. Humphrey taught Sunday school and worked in the children’s division. She joined the Women’s Society of Christian Service and sang in the choir.

When her boys got older, Humphrey worked as a financial secretary at the church for 15 years. When her husband became ill she decided to retire. But she never retired from her church involvement. She taught adult Sunday school classes and held several leadership positions for United Methodist Women at the local and district levels.

Humphrey still does beautiful handiwork and led the church project to provide needlepoint kneeling pillows for the church’s altar rail.

Recently Humphrey, 94, crocheted 166 baby caps for the Assembly 2018 baby hat collection. Her love and dedication is such a blessing. I consider Dorothy Humphrey an awesome, talented, dedicated, spiritual and loving woman. Our Sunshine Circle is so pleased to call her a friend.

Marie Rivera is a member of United Methodist Women at Arlington United Methodist Church in Jacksonville, Florida.

Have an interesting story for Gracious Acts? Please contact United Methodist Women News editor Praveena Balasundaram at pbalasundaram@unitedmethodistwomen.org
Study for Action at Mission u

By Julia Chance

Each year United Methodist Women members, their family members and friends head to conferences across the country for Mission u to study current issues affecting society based on current mission study topics. We spoke to its organizer Mary Cheng, United Methodist Women’s director of transformative education, about this much-anticipated event and what she expected for this year’s sessions.

Mary Cheng: Mission u is a unique learning experience. We call it learning in a sacred space. People come together who are from diverse backgrounds, talk about topics that are important and sometimes controversial. Mission u provides a space where people can gather and talk about these topics, study and try to understand and discern what God may be saying to them through these studies. We live in a very polarized society and we don’t find a whole lot of spaces like this in our world right now.

Julia Chance: What topics are explored this year?

MC: We have some interesting topics. One of which we all deal with is money, and we’re using the study book What About Our Money, which discusses connecting faith with money. It’s a very timely book because all of us, I’m sure, wonder not only about sufficiency, but also about what God says about money.

What does the Bible have to say and what are our responsibilities as persons who live in a society organized by a certain type of economy? Money Matters and Is It Just Money? are our study books for children and youth, so the whole family can come and learn about faith and money.

Our spiritual growth study is about embracing wholeness and looking at covenantal living from an earth perspective. It’s a very interesting book in that it offers a perspective that we normally don’t think of in the way that we’ve traditionally understood covenantal living. Wholeness does not only mean being psychologically or spiritually whole, but wholeness for all of God’s creation.

We also do the geographic study, Missionary Conferences of the U.M.C. It’s an opportunity for attendees to learn more about these conferences— their history, how they came about, the challenges that people in their regions face and recognizing the resiliencies of the people and the cultures that are representative in these conferences.

JC: Is there anything different that people can expect at Mission u this year?

MC: There are some things we emphasized at the trainings that we’d like the conferences to carry out. Since our theme is on embracing wholeness, we took that to heart by giving attendees a little more time to exhale between classes. We had morning yoga sessions and evening activities including visualization, meditation and relaxation. Little steps like these highlight what we’re trying to get at in terms of embracing wholeness. We’re encouraging practices focusing on new words “God says to share,” and another to the tune “Jesus Loves Me,” with new words.

We learned that in our generosity and the sharing of our own talents, we can be a blessing and truly be blessed! The Marketplace is designed to inspire people to take care of their bodies.

We’d also like the conferences to really encourage people to take the next step. Mission u is not meant to be a shot in the arm where you get a spiritual high when you come together, have this great time, then it fizzes out. There should be a connection between study and action. It could be as simple as taking a study back to your church or your local community and offering that as a resource or helping to lead it. We asked our study leaders to encourage participants to come up with an action plan, to consider what it is that they need to do with this new understanding.

God is active in the world, inviting us to a new way of living. Mission u is part of that invitation. We believe that as we become changed, we become change agents in the world.

Julia Chance is former coeditor for UMW News.

Marketplace for Missions

By Pamela Davis

The 2018 Children’s Mission u study was Money Matters, led by Pamela Davis from the Florida Conference. There were approximately 25 study leaders who attended the training in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and will lead the Children’s Study in their conference Mission u events this summer. The leaders were from across the nation: from Florida to the Dakotas, Arizona to New York. We learned a myriad of ways that “Money Matters.” One of the key topics of the workshop was individual generosity and how God intends for us to use our talents and gifts as an expression of love for others.

Firstly, Davis contacted national mission institutions in the Pennsylvania area to learn about their programs to share with the participants. Next, she asked each participant to bring a craft to Pittsburgh to share, along with materials to inspire others.

Amazingly, the 25 adult participants brought a myriad of beautiful crafts which could be used for a Marketplace for Missions. The class was buzzing with the sharing of crafts and the excitement and fun in creativity. We had handmade cards, candles made from rocks, “thank you” bags with a poem and goodies, needlepoint crosses, fabric books, drums made from recycled materials, magnets, water bottle holders, jeweled frames, paintings, bookmarks, decorated recycled candy containers and even a beautiful handmade quilt.

Once the crafts were assembled, it was time to use our talents and invite the over 200 study leaders to come and visit our Marketplace for Missions! To publicize the Marketplace, we had a Flash Mob at dinner, singing songs from the mission study text to the tune “God is So Good,” and make donations for missions. All the children’s leaders signed up for specific times to be at the table to meet and share their crafts. The participant “shoppers” were delighted to talk with the craft-makers and many chose beautiful, handmade crafts to take home, as well as make a donation.

Overall, we raised $415 for missions. The conference Mission u’s may choose to do a similar event with the children’s crafts. Together, we can make a significant impact and difference for our mission institutions. Upon reflection, we discovered that when we are in community and engaged in giving to others, even small contributions can do great things for God!

Pamela Davis, an advocate for children in public education, has been an educator for over 30 years. She has served in many capacities at the national, conference and district levels of United Methodist Women. Ms. Davis currently serves as president at First Boca United Methodist Church in Florida.
Bold Women of Every Age Gathered at Assembly

From May 18-20, more than 6,000 United Methodist Women members and friends gathered in Columbus, Ohio, for the 2018 United Methodist Women Assembly, “The Power of Bold.” A day earlier, hundreds participated in an Ubuntu Day of Service, volunteering in the Columbus community. Many more, partnering with 14 local Columbus-area organizations, rallied at the Ohio

On the eve of the 2018 Assembly of United Methodist Women, hundreds of women made a public witness on the doorstep of the state capitol in Columbus, Ohio, to urge the state legislature to pass a bill requiring a fair living wage.

Participants stand with annual conference banners during the opening session processional of the United Methodist Women Assembly 2018.

On May 18, 2018, liturgical dancers celebrate the opening worship of the United Methodist Women Assembly in Columbus, Ohio.

Elizabeth Ross Fraley, a performer for Quixotic, hangs from a trapeze during a gathering at United Methodist Women Assembly.

Women break into dance and laughter, celebrating “The Power of Bold” in a May 19th session at Assembly 2018 in Columbus, Ohio.
Statehouse calling for a living wage for all. The three-day Assembly started with the consecration of deaconesses, laywomen who vowed to serve the church and community with love and justice.

Ninety diverse workshops focused on leadership, service, advocacy, spiritual growth and transformative education, and over 50 exhibitors filled the Assembly Experience Hall. Throughout the gathering, the four United Methodist Women’s social justice focuses of climate justice, economic inequality, maternal and child health and criminalization of communities of color remained front and center and sparked prayers and actions for systemic change.

Assembly 2018 featured a teen track for United Methodist Women’s Limitless young women and mentors and this Assembly saw an uptick in young women participants in United Methodist Women, an energetic 150-year old organization.

Is it too bold to plan for the next United Methodist Women’s Assembly, which will be held from May 20-22, 2022, in Orlando, Florida? Join your local circle and be inspired by the power of bold.

Alisha Gordon, the executive for spiritual growth of United Methodist Women, speaks during a session of the United Methodist Women Assembly 2018 in Columbus, Ohio.

Mother and daughter, Cara Lambert and Kathleen Adams, try out the rockers in the Experience Hall at United Methodist Women Assembly. One conference raised $12,000 for the Legacy Fund during a rock-a-thon.

Gloria Dubose, left, is among the women making hand motions as they sing during a session of the United Methodist Women Assembly 2018 in Columbus, Ohio.

Harriett Olson, CEO, embraces former president Kyung Za Kim during the rally for a fair living wage on the steps of the Ohio Statehouse during Assembly 2018.
Nearly 600 United Methodist Women members began their Assembly experience volunteering at local organizations Thursday, May 17, part of a pre-Assembly Ubuntu Day of Service. Ubuntu is a Nguni Bantu term meaning “I am human because you are human,” and service day participants went out into the Columbus, Ohio community with a spirit of solidarity.

Volunteers loaded onto buses Thursday morning from the Greater Columbus Convention Center, site of the 2018 United Methodist Women Assembly and traveled to sites throughout Columbus, ranging from community gardens, thrift stores, soup kitchens and food pantries to city beautification projects.

Jane Bond, a longtime Assembly attendee from Oklahoma, took part in a city cleanup on Columbus’s southside.

“I’ve been coming to Assembly for years and years—since I was 35 and I’m now 70. It’s an inoculation for me. It’s like that shot that keeps you going, keeps you committed,” she said, holding her trash picker. “You have to have hope in this world. This is where I found hope, with United Methodist Women.”

Joining Bond was first-time Assembly attendee Cassidy Timmons, 22, from the California-Nevada Conference. She decided to attend Assembly thanks to a woman from her church who told her about the event.

“She was so excited about it so I said, ‘I want to go!’ I wanted to see what it was all about,” she said. “Every time I attend a United Methodist Women event I meet new people.”

The cleanup project was a partnership between Keep Grove City Beautiful and The United Methodist Church for All People, a United Methodist Women supported national mission institution. Church for All People also welcomed volunteers at their Free Store thrift shop and Fresh Market food pantry. The church even has a bike shop—Bikes for All People, which Global Ministries’ Church and Community Worker Margaret Madison, serving in Columbus, called a “third place,” where people from different socioeconomic backgrounds come together in a community in transition.

United Methodist Women General Secretary and CEO Harriett Jane Olson visited the Lincoln Park Elementary Freedom School, also a project of the Church for All People in partnership with the Children’s Defense Fund, where the youth were creating a community garden. United Methodist Women National President Shannon Priddy joined in the city cleanup, and both Olson and Priddy visited the Fresh Market, among other service projects in which they participated.

The Ubuntu Day of Service has been a part of United Methodist Women Assemblies. You too can host your own day of service by visiting ministrywith.org and downloading United Methodist Women’s Ubuntu Day of Service Toolkit.

Tara Barnes is response magazine editor.
Katharine Hayhoe Talks Faith and Climate Justice

by Praveena Balasundaram

Who we are, what God has created us to be, is the perfect person to care about a changing climate,” said climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe. Named to TIME magazine’s 100 Most Influential People in the World list for 2014, Hayhoe is an atmospheric scientist who studies climate change, one of the most pressing issues facing humanity today. Director of Texas Tech’s Climate Science Center, Hayhoe may be best known because of how she’s bridging the gap between scientists and Christians—work she does in part because she’s a Christian herself.

Her journey to becoming a climate scientist did not follow a straight path.

“I was studying astrophysics as an undergraduate student when I needed another course to finish my degree. I saw this course in climate science,” she said. “Growing up in Canada, I knew that the climate was changing and it was part of a whole host of environmental issues like deforestation and air pollution and biodiversity loss, and I thought, that’ll be an interesting course to take. And I took it! That was a life-changer for her, she said. And she’s never looked back.

“Because the more I learned about climate change, the more I realized that it was urgent and it profoundly affected real people today.”

For Hayhoe it is important to talk about climate change because it affects all the other things that we already care about.

“As far as we know, as long as there have been humans on this planet, we have faced droughts, floods, hurricanes and heat waves, floods and storms. That’s just a natural part of life on earth. But climate change is taking those naturally occurring events and amplifying them—it’s putting them on steroids,” she said. Insurance policies are going up across the country because of fires and floods. Internationally it is even worse.

“Billions of people don’t have insurance. They don’t have FEMA and they don’t have the National Guard. So when disaster strikes, it is orders of magnitude greater. This is why I care so passionately about this change in climate: it disproportionately affects the poorest and most vulnerable who have the least access to resources to prepare and adapt and contributed the least to the problem in the first place.”

“In Genesis we were told that we were given dominion—or stewardship and responsibility—over this planet. Some people interpret dominion as ‘I can extract every resource from the earth and leave it a smoking ruin.’ But we understand that dominion means stewardship. It means investing in, taking care of,” she said.

Hayhoe pointed out that throughout the Old Testament we read about God’s joy and pleasure in Creation. In the Gospels we learn about how God cares about the smallest and most insignificant aspects of Creation. And in the New Testament we are taught to consider our attitudes and actions toward other people and to love others as Christ loves us. Revelation 11 even gives a warning that says God will destroy those who destroy the earth.

“The reason we as Christians care about a changing climate is because of who we are, because God has given us a new heart to love others as God has loved us. God has given us this incredible planet as a gift that sustains our physical life,” she said.

Despite her busy speaking schedule, she made it to Assembly to be with United Methodist Women.

“This a group that I can speak to from my heart. I can share why I care so passionately and feel that people will understand.”

Deaconesses Consecrated at Assembly 2018

by Tara Barnes

Called to Be What for God’s World?” was the theme of the deaconess consecration service May 18 at the Greater Columbus Convention Center in Columbus, Ohio, part of Assembly 2018. Twenty-four women from 19 conferences were consecrated for a lifetime of lay servant ministry in relationship with The United Methodist Church.

Deaconesses are laywomen who have responded to the call of God to full-time ministries of love, justice and service. Their life-giving work provides support and dignity to those in need and helps individuals and communities reach their full potential.

“Deaconesses and home missionaries today, as throughout their history, serve in many areas of need, in places where the church has not been, was not aware it should be or was afraid or unwilling to be,” said Deaconess Megan Hale to open the service.

Their daily task of serving and empowering is a visible symbol of the link between the church and the world.” Hale is the executive for candidacy for United Methodist Women’s Office of Deaconess and Home Missioner.

Individuals consecrated and commissioned to the Office of Deaconess and Home Missioner in The United Methodist Church form a covenant community in service as a lay order. After discerning a call to lay ministry, deaconesses and home missionaries (laymen) finish a course of study to ensure biblical, theological and sociological grounding in their ministries. They are consecrated and commissioned for full-time mission-oriented service as part of the lay diaconate.

Deaconesses consecrated serve in such various vocations as parish nursing, social services, photojournalism and Christian education in various communities across the country.

“Once I learned more about the deaconess home missioner order, I knew I had found something special,” said Deaconess Sophia Agtarap, Director of Communications for Vanderbilt University in Brentwood, Tennessee. “I see deaconesses and home missionaries as this misfit group of committed laypeople who seek to serve God and neighbor through unique and mundane and extraordinary ministries of love, justice and service—and that gives me so much hope for the church and world in this very fractured and polarized time we’re living in.”

Bishops Gregory Palmer of the West Ohio Conference, in which Assembly 2018 took place, and retired Bishop Ann Sherer-Simpson took part in the consecration service.

“I am excited to shine God’s light into dark places of the world. It is a humbling opportunity to help ease pain, encourage others, educate communities and make the world a better place as a deaconess,” said Deaconess Corrina Sisk-Casson. “I am blown away that that is what God wants me to do.”

Tara Barnes is response magazine editor.
Mission Resources

Program Book 2018-2019: Sisterhood of Grace

The 2018–2019 Program Book celebrates United Methodist Women’s 150 years of women organized for mission. Each of the monthly programs looks back to our legacy and connects it to where we are today.  

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Program Date Book

This annual pocket-size calendar helps you keep track of relevant dates for United Methodist Women month by month. Program book and mission study titles are listed. Also included are charts for recording meetings, events and contact details.  

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2019 Annual Sampler

Please look out for the 2019 Annual Sampler available August 2018 through April 2019.

The Power of Bold
Assembly 2018 commemorative Items

- **Burlap Bag**: Commemorative Assembly handmade bag created by Global Goods Partners for United Methodist Women.  
  
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- **Assembly 2018 Scarf**: Commemorative 150th Legacy scarf created by Global Goods Partners for United Methodist Women.  
  
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2019 Prayer Calendar

Our beloved calendar helps put your faith, hope and love into action with a daily mission focus, birthdays of people in mission, holidays and space to plan your schedule. We celebrate 150 and 200 years in mission of United Methodist Women and General Board of Global Ministries, respectively—featuring children’s art provided by the national and international partners in mission with them.  

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Global Goods Partners (GGP), United Methodist Women’s exclusive fair trade partner, is a not-for-profit social enterprise that creates market access for products handcrafted by women artisans around the world. For more information, visit [https://globalgoodspartners.org](https://globalgoodspartners.org)