

Chapter 22 | Clergywomen in Ministry

For more information, contact GBHEM's Director of Clergy Lifelong Learning at clergy lifelonglearning@gbhem.org or 615-340-7409.

“The United Methodist Church affirms women and men to be equal in every aspect of their common life. We therefore urge that every effort be made to eliminate sex-role stereotypes in activity and portrayal of family life and in all aspects of voluntary and compensatory participation in the church and society. We affirm the right of women to equal treatment in employment, responsibility, promotion and compensation. We affirm the importance of women in decision-making positions at all levels of church life and urge such bodies to guarantee their presence through policies of employment and recruitment.” (§162.F)

“We support the basic rights of all persons to have equal access to housing, education, communication, employment, medical care, legal redress for grievances and physical protection.” (§162)

Statistics

- In 1956, women in the Methodist tradition received full clergy rights. In The United Methodist Church, 22 percent (fewer than 10,000) of the approximately 41,000 clergy in the United States are women. (General Council of Finance and Administration)
- There are two active female bishops in the central conferences and 16 active female bishops in the jurisdictional conferences as of Sept. 1, 2016. Twenty-seven percent of active bishops are women.
- Thirty-four percent of all District Superintendents are women.
- Of the 32,603 churches in the United States, clergywomen serve in 26.4 percent of the appointments.
- About 10 percent of the 1,360 United States churches with more than 1,000 members are served by lead female pastors.
- Unfortunately, the church does not have accurate data from the central conferences.

Role of Board of Ordained Ministry

ENLISTS

- Features the presence, images and preaching of clergywomen to reach out to younger generations
- Highlights female leadership in each district and annual conference
- Implements strategies to recruit racial-ethnic women for licensed and ordained ministry
- Visits female students during BOM seminary visits

EQUIPS

- Provides resources or training for Pastor/Staff-Parish Relations Committees about gender inclusiveness in the church
- Ensures that BOM members know the denomination's and Annual Conference's policy regarding sexual ethics (See BOM Handbook Chapter 24.)

NURTURES

- Assigns mentors who have demonstrated openness to women in ministry to female candidates
- Establishes a system to provide role models for women in ministry
- Develops a support system to address specific needs for female provisional members or local pastors in their first appointments

ADVOCATES

- Ensures substantial female representation on the BOM, including racial-ethnic women
- Provides educational opportunities for the Cabinet and local churches regarding the support of women in ministry

EXAMINES

- Periodically designates funding in order to research issues related to women in ministry
- Monitors issues including retention rate, salary, benefits and appointment patterns compared to male colleagues

ENSURES

- Confirms that less than full-time service and leaves of absence options are not used by the Cabinet to avoid appointing clergywomen and clergy couples
- Assures that maternity/paternity and/or family leave are available for women, men and clergy couples

ASSESSES

- Communicates to Ministerial Assessment Specialists, mentors, District Superintendents and district Committees on Ordained Ministry that psychological assessments are to be free of potential bias toward female candidates
- Ensures that all candidates are treated fairly throughout the entire ordination process (For example, some conferences have contracted with female psychological testing personnel; which has helped women to discern their gifts and call to ministry.).
- Verifies that interview questions are the same for female and male candidates. The BOM cannot assess women and men using a different set of questions.
- Ensures interview teams, BOM committees and the Conference Relations Committee include both women and men

Additional Resources and Publications

- www.gbhem.org/clergywomen – UMC Clergywomen web site provided by GBHEM
- www.pinterest.com/hirhopark – Pinterest page for UMC clergywomen provided by the Clergy Lifelong Learning office at GBHEM
- www.wellspringsjournal.com – *WellSprings Journal*. *WellSprings* is for UM clergywomen, by UM clergywomen, and of UM clergywomen provided by the Clergy Lifelong Learning office at GBHEM.
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