

Dry Bones or Live Bones?

A Report of the Spring Women's Division Board of Director's Meeting

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Stamford, Connecticut

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Introduction

Dry bones or live bones?

This was the question posed by committee chair, Judith Siaba, during her opening reflections to the Section of Christian Social Responsibility held at the 2007 spring Board of Directors meeting of the Women's Division. Taking her message from Ezekiel 37:1-14 when the prophet comes across a valley of dry bones, Ms. Siaba asked the committee members to think about the following questions: "When you are at home with your local unit (of United Methodist Women) or at your district meetings, does it sometimes feel like you are in the valley, or plain, of dry bones? Has life been taken out of the unit? Is there no vitality or encouragement among the members?"

Ms. Siaba asked the group if they have felt like the dried bones in the passage saying, "Our hope is gone, there's nothing left of us." Or like Ezekiel saying to God's Spirit, "O Master, can these bones live?"¹ Ms. Siaba stated that news from current Women's Division reports tell us, "Yes, these bones can live! God has the power to breathe new life in us and the local units." She continued, "We need to listen to God and, like Ezekiel, prophesy over these dry bones, or in some cases young new bones, that don't yet have all their muscles attached to their bones." As God tells the dry bones in the passage, "I'll attach sinews to you, put meat on your bones, cover you with skin, and breathe life into you." Ms. Siaba told the group that she sees the Women's Division as the sinews God is talking about—the muscle and skin that help the bones move and have life.

Other "dry bones" of our society identified by Ms. Siaba include marginalized people who are our neighbors—immigrant communities, racial and ethnic communities and people of the global South who lack the basic necessities of life.² How does God bring life to these "dry bones"? According to the speaker, He does it through annual Schools of Christian Mission studies, Call to Action Alerts, speaking out against the government's "unjust immigration agenda," standing up for injustices against the Palestinian people, providing resources on public education reform, bringing resolutions to General Conference, participating in Ubuntu journeys and other travels, providing information to "make our lives less comfortable" and continuing the work of the Women's Division.

Reporter Response

This report will examine the work of the Division including: financial updates; section reports and featured speakers; personnel searches and changes; national and international mission news; worship experiences; and executive reports.

As I observed this meeting over the course of several days, I could not help but ponder the same questions about the “dry bones” within the organization of United Methodist Women. It seems legitimate to ask other important questions. Does the social justice gospel and the political activism of the Women’s Division contribute toward the decreasing “life and vitality” of UMW? Are the lack of Christ-centered resources and the failure of the Women’s Division to focus on evangelism fostering the “loss of hope” and the discouragement among the membership of UMW? God will only “breathe life” into dry bones when His purpose and calling are obediently carried out. Proclaiming the Good News of salvation through His Son Jesus Christ to a lost and hurting world is integral to God’s purpose—a purpose that continually seems to be absent from the programs and policies of the Women’s Division.

Treasurer’s Report

Andrea Bryant Hatcher, treasurer of the Women’s Division, gave the 2006 Financial Report along with tactical and strategic responses to the report.³ Highlights of this report included:

- While operating revenues increased 5.1% or \$1.4 million in 2006, Mission Giving (the new term for Undesignated Giving) continued to decline—1.3% to \$16.62 million. Mission giving in 2004 was \$18.23 million.
- The total for Mission Giving in 2006 (\$16.62 million) came from 63 conferences. Only 26 conferences met their total pledge. This represents a 41% pledge fulfillment rate.
- Revenues were up because of increases in three areas: designated giving—26.5% or \$320,000 (due largely to the Assembly offering); bequests, gifts and contributions—41.1% or \$230,000; and publications, rental income and other revenues—16% or \$960,000.
- Operating expenses were up 7.3% or \$2.6 million. This increase was attributed to: inventory-reduction costs, severance and unemployment benefits incurred from the closing of the Service Center (\$1.55 million); pension and post-retirement benefits (\$700,000); and administration and fundraising costs (\$540,000).
- New graphics and charts were developed to enable directors to better explain financial information to conference and district officers. The new operating expenditures chart was drawn to show that in 2006: 19% was used for deaconess and missionary retiree benefits; 19% for support of the Service Center, the Church Center for the United Nations and *Response* magazine; 10% for administration and fundraising; and 52% for mission programs. (NOTE: RENEW recently did a financial analysis of the Women’s Division which identified many administrative, salary and travel costs included in the “mission program” areas. This report is available at www.renewnetwork.org .)
- Since operating expenses were greater than the operating income, an operating deficit of \$8.9 million occurred. (NOTE: This follows a continual operating deficit within the Division—\$7.72 million in 2005 and \$6.49 million in 2004.)

- Overspending by the Division caused a decrease in the total net assets of 1.4% or \$910,000. (NOTE: This decrease is \$5.1 million dollars, lower than 2005, due to appreciation of investments, the establishment of an endowment and income from the sale of properties.)

Fund Development

The Women's Division is currently searching for a Director of Fund Development. The formation of this new salaried position reflects the Division's desire to explore alternative fundraising avenues due to the continuing decrease in Mission Giving. Several fundraising initiatives were developed in 2006:

- Planned giving workshops and materials to encourage women to include the Women's Division in their financial planning.
- An e-mail blast sent to friends of the Division who have been supportive of the ongoing work of the Women's Division. (This initiative resulted in contributions of \$14,825 in 2006.)
- A demonstration of the financial commitment on the part of Women's Division staff and directors was stressed. (Twenty-five percent of directors and forty-three percent of staff responded to this initiative, raising \$13,209 in 2006.)
- Establishment of the Legacy Fund as a new endowment fund of the Division as an ongoing support stream for the administrative needs of the organization. This was established with a principal balance of \$170,200 from the sale of a property donated to the Division by Barbara Campbell and Betty Letzig.

Financial Interpretation

Upon analysis of giving patterns and questions coming into their offices, the Women's Division will be emphasizing financial interpretation skills and techniques through the following initiatives:

- **Recasting the budget document**— This will be done to emphasize mission areas rather than structure of the organization. The 2007 categories will include: Administration; UMW Member Programs and Services; and Ministries with National and International Partners.
- **Forming regional financial-support systems**— This is designed to bolster finances within each conference. Areas to be addressed include: determining pledge amounts; strategies for increasing giving; and responding to questions about where the money goes.
- **Focusing regional school Officer Update on financial interpretation**— This year's regional schools will combine the treasurers and mission coordinators for education and interpretation to engage participants in Bible study and critical-thinking experiences about financial giving.

Section of Christian Social Responsibility

Several recommendations and actions were passed by the Directors of the Women's Division during this spring meeting, many of which reflect the political partisanship of the leadership of United Methodist Women.

1. The adoption of “Steps Toward a Just Peace in the Middle East” calls for actions in three areas of the world: Iraq; Iran; Israeli Occupation.

Iraq (The following proposed actions were taken directly from Reports and Recommendations from the Section of Christian Social Responsibility.)

- Oppose war escalation and urge withdrawal of all U.S. troops and U.S. funded mercenaries in Iraq;
- Support legislation to end the funding of the war in Iraq;
- Support increases in funding for veterans' benefits;
- Call on the U.S. to provide humanitarian aid and reparations for Iraq, to close all U.S. bases in Iraq, and to annul Iraqi laws and contracts made under U.S. troop occupation that undermine Iraqi sovereignty;
- Call on the U.S. to end the practice of torture, including the systematic rape of Iraqi women by Iraqi police;
- Call on the U.S. to close Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq, Guantanamo Bay in Cuba, and other prisons of torture and release all prisoners in the Middle East being held without charges or trials.⁴

NOTE: Several radical speakers and resource materials were used for the justification of these recommendations. These included speakers Phylis Bennis, a fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies, who gave a vitriolic anti-U.S. presentation before the CSR committee and Jinan Nakshabandi, an Iraqi international guest with the International Center for Tolerance Education, who gave a presentation on how much better life was for women living under the regime of Sadaam Hussein. Please see a report entitled “*Radical Speakers Featured at Women's Division Spring Board Meeting*” at www.renewnetwork.org.

A booklet entitled “*Promising Democracy, Imposing Theocracy—Gender-Based Violence and the U.S. War on Iraq*” was also given as supplemental information to the Directors. Published by Madre, a left-wing, human rights organization supported financially by the Women's Division, it is a 30-page assault on the United States government and military and accuses the U.S. of training Iraqi soldiers to systematically torture and rape Iraqi women. It is an appalling and slanderous piece of political propaganda that many United Methodist Women would find offensive. Madre also has a posting on their website condemning the Supreme Court's recent ruling which upheld the partial-birth abortion ban entitled “*It's Not Just an Abortion Ban: The Christian Right's Global Agenda.*” President Bush and

other mainstream Christian groups are characterized as “religious fundamentalists” who want to impose their agenda on a global scale. (www.madre.org)

Iran (Taken from CSR Report and Recommendations)

- Oppose any U.S. intervention or military action in Iran and oppose any new U.S. intervention in the name of the “war on terror”;
- Support any legislation that bars funding for any military action against Iran;
- Support United Methodist participation in peace delegations to Iran such as those organized by the Fellowship of Reconciliation (www.forusa.org).⁵

NOTE: Jim Winkler, top executive of the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society (GBCS), recently traveled to Iran with a 13-member U.S. religious delegation where they met with Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to discuss peace and reconciliation. Winkler also had a meeting with the tyrannical leader of Iran when he came to New York to address the United Nations in September 2006. Mr. Winkler, speaking for the United Methodist Church, said he wanted Ahmadinejad to know how many people in the U.S. are working to end the war in Iraq and to change U.S. foreign policy from one based on “confrontation, domination and intimidation to one of peace, cooperation and diplomacy.”⁶ Political advocacy on a global scale is a dangerous endeavor and one the GBCS engages in frequently. Meeting with leaders of repressive regimes not only undermines the foreign policy of the current President of the United States, but also sends a global message that the U.S. is weakened by internal discord.

Many United Methodists are shocked when they see leaders within our denomination making public policy statements and lobbying for partisan political legislation in the name of Methodism. They ask what gives these individuals the right to speak for the United Methodist Church. Well, the *Book of Resolutions* does. Every four years when the General Conference meets, political resolutions are submitted by boards within our denomination (particularly GBCS and the Women’s Division) which support their partisan agenda. These are lengthy resolutions, citing research from questionable and sometimes discredited sources, which many delegates fail to examine carefully, or have the time to research their implications. A report on this legislative process and the effect on our church is being prepared and will be posted to the RENEW website. Analyses of resolutions for 2008 are also being prepared for informational purposes.

Israeli Occupation (Taken from CSR Report and Recommendations.)

- Demand the U.S. end its uncritical use of military, economic, diplomatic and corporate power to support Israeli occupation of the Palestinian West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights;
- Calls on the U.S. and Israel to support the clean-up of unexploded cluster bombs in southern Lebanon.⁷

NOTE: The Women's Division has long been an advocate for the Palestinian people and is vehemently one-sided in its viewpoints regarding Israeli/Palestinian conflicts. Its anti-Israel bias can be seen throughout the programs and policies of the Division. With total disregard for the long-standing alliance between Israel and the United States, the Women's Division rarely denounces the violent attacks by Palestinian terrorists on the Israeli people. In resource materials produced by the Division, Israeli soldiers are shown in aggressive poses toward Palestinian citizens, with no context provided or Israeli perspective given. The sovereignty of the country of Israel is ignored by the Division's continuous referral to the "Israeli occupation." Israel's many attempts at peace with the Palestinian people through both diplomacy and land concessions have born little fruit as extremist leaders throughout the Middle East have called for the complete annihilation of Israel.

The Women's Division leadership (staff and Directors) took to the streets during the spring board meeting to call for three initiatives: stop the war in Iraq; no war in Iran; and, end to Israeli occupation. Noontime peace vigils were held outside the hotel in downtown Stamford.⁸

- 1. The Women's Division Directors endorsed a Call to Action in Washington, D.C. on June 10-11, 2007, "The World Says NO to Israeli Occupation" and will send four Directors to represent them at this mobilization. (Money for Director participation will come from Mission Giving dollars donated by United Methodist Women.) The Division also encourages United Methodist Women to actively participate in this call for just peace in Palestine/Israel.⁹**

NOTE: The Women's Division is a founding member, active participant and financial supporter of the U.S. Campaign to End the Occupation, the organization sponsoring this event.

(www.endtheoccupation.org) This group is anti-U.S. government and military and seeks international law and the involvement of the United Nations in resolving all world conflicts. The General Board of Global Ministries (GBGM), the Council of Bishops and many General Conference resolutions support involvement in this partisan political campaign. One of the 2007-2008 mission studies produced by the Women's Division will be on Israel and Palestine and will be studied and promoted at the Schools of Christian Mission this year.

The March/April 2007 issue of *New World Outlook*, the mission magazine published by the General Board of Global Ministries, devotes the entire issue to the Mission Study on Israel and Palestine. Astonishingly, the editor of *New World Outlook* magazine, Christie R. House, writes about the absence of balance within the magazine. She states, "*New World Outlook* is not attempting to provide balanced views about the conflict in this issue. *New World Outlook* is attempting to *be* the balance. Readers can find the Israeli viewpoint in the mainstream media, on the internet, and in many books on the issue. To supplement the study material, the magazine gives a number of Palestinian viewpoints, generally from Christian Palestinians, our partners in the region."¹⁰

United Methodists need to take note of this confession of a lack of balance and discern carefully whether or not this same bias is within the mission study material itself.

Support of this march and this organization are additional examples of the Women's Division's political bias with regard to Israel/Palestine issues, funded by monies provided by faithful United Methodist

Women at the local level. UMW members should exercise discernment when attending Schools of Mission or using Mission Study resources.

- 2. The Women's Division endorsed the Liberty & Justice for All Campaign, sponsored by the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (NNIRR), to expand the civil liberties of all immigrants. United Methodist Women will be asked to sign a pledge to act in defense of immigrants regardless of their immigration or citizenship status.¹¹**

NOTE: The Women's Division has been in staunch opposition to the U.S. Patriot Act ever since September 11, 2001. At a board meeting, after that devastating attack on America, the RENEW press representative was appalled at comments made by Division leaders and speakers blaming the United States for this catastrophic event. Participants seemed more concerned about the racial profiling and discrimination against Arabs and Muslims than with the protection of U.S. citizens.

The Division supports free and open borders, amnesty for undocumented workers and providing sanctuary for illegal aliens who defy the enforcement of U.S. immigration laws. The General Board of Church and Society, the Women's Division and the General Board of Global Ministries have been successful in the passage of resolutions at General Conference favorable to these leftist, partisan policies. A new resolution will be submitted at the 2008 GC on Immigration and Global Migration which will "reframe the theological interpretation of immigration as a racial justice issue."¹²

Currently, the Women's Division is building a comprehensive emphasis on Immigrant Rights/Civil Rights which will include Bible study, workshops, advocacy, building an on-line community, partnerships with Justice for Our Neighbors (JFON), participation in demonstrations, strengthening ties with immigrant women within UMW and the community and forming alliances with coalition groups like NNIRR.¹³ (JFON is a network in mission initiated by the GBGM in 1999 in response to immigration regulations imposed by law in 1996. They provide legal services and welcoming ministries to immigrants and encourage advocacy in response to U.S. immigration policies.)¹⁴ (NNIRR is a national organization that: advocates for the rights of all immigrants regardless of legal status, provides resources to prepare for immigration raids and publishes reports that frame immigration as a racism and global migration issue.)¹⁵

All of these actions and support for these coalitions will be financed through the Mission Giving dollars of UMW regardless of a lack of support from its membership.

- 3. The Women's Division endorses the Healthy Child Campaign: Covering All Children in 2007, an initiative sponsored by the Children's Defense Fund, which will provide universal health care for all children in the U.S.**

NOTE: This campaign mandates a government-run health care system similar to Medicare. Universal Health Care is another name for socialized medicine. Other countries which have adopted universal health care have experienced abysmal failures and these realities should be studied before advocating this public policy. The Children's Defense Fund is an organization with a left-leaning agenda, supported financially by the Women's Division. (www.childrensdefense.org)

- 4. The Division will send a Director and staff person to attend the 50th anniversary of the Faith and Order Commission of the National Council of Churches USA in Ohio on July 19-23, 2007, where the theme of the conference will be "On Being Christians Together: The**

Faith and Order Experience in the United States.” The celebration will “explore the ecumenical significance of issues of ecumenism, dialogue and unity without separating these from ethical issues such as poverty and racism.”¹⁶

- 5. Approval was given for the 2011 Spiritual Growth mission study theme which will be “Living Sacramentally and Walking Justly.” It will include a study and workbook on spiritual formation and address the culture of calling in light of John Wesley’s two-fold thrust on “personal holiness” and “social holiness.” The study will call for a “deepening of one’s spirituality while engaging in social action.”¹⁷**

NOTE: Dr. Glory Dharmaraj, the Director of Spiritual Formation and Mission Theology for the Women’s Division, oversees the creation and development of the annual adult and youth Spiritual Growth mission study for United Methodist Women. She is also the author of the denominational 2005-2006 geographic mission study on India and Pakistan and a contributor to the recent Division study *Creating Interfaith Community*, whose primary author was her husband, United Methodist pastor and author Dr. Jacob Dharmaraj.

Dr. Glory Dharmaraj is also the Administrator of the United Methodist Seminar Program on National and International Affairs at the Church Center for the United Nations in New York. In addition, she is the curriculum specialist for the Bible Women Program, the only “evangelism” mission initiative of the Women’s Division. Dr. Dharmaraj is currently completing her Doctor of Ministry through a joint program at San Francisco Theological Seminary in California and Ecumenical Theological Education at the World Council of Churches in Geneva.¹⁸ This biographical information is included to point out that Dr. Glory Dharmaraj has a leading role in the theological content of the studies, program and resources provided to United Methodist Women.

Church Center for the United Nations

The Church Center, directly across the street from the United Nations, is called a “faith-based witness for peace.” The Methodist Church built the 12-story facility in 1963, and the Women’s Division assumed ownership in 1984. This building’s pivotal location provides access to the United Nations for faith groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). Women’s Division operations at the center include:¹⁹

- **The United Methodist Office for the United Nations**—a joint ministry of the Women’s Division and the General Board of Church and Society offering a “ministry of presence and education.” Both groups are registered as NGOs with consultative status within the U.N. Economic and Social Council. Mia Adjali, who recently retired from the Women’s Division, served 46 years in the U.N. Office and was considered “a vibrant link between the Christian community and the United Nations.”²⁰ She has had a tremendous impact on the global, political and social advocacy of the Division. Ms. Adjali has played a vital role in the writing of many of the resolutions currently in our *Book of Resolutions*. She has been asked by the Division to write a history of the Church Center and to assist in preparing resolutions for the 2008 General Conference.²¹

New resolutions being written for General Conference 2008 include: Mercury and Vaccines; Hate Crimes; Detainees and Torture; Welfare Rights; War Crimes; Immigration and Global Migration; and, Responsibility to Protect. (Ms. Adjali described this last resolution as potentially controversial. This listing appears controversial in and of itself to RENEW.) Ms. Adjali will still have a visible presence and influence at the U.N. as Vice-President of the World Federation of Methodist and United Church Women.

- **The Seminar Program on National and International Affairs**—offers educational workshops that cover a wide range of issues related to the work of the Women’s Division. The administrator of the program is Dr. Glory Dharmaraj. Youth groups, conference groups, college students and UMW groups attend the seminars covering topics such as: Cross-Cultural Engagement; Global Security; New Perspectives on Development; Women and Children; the UMC and the United Nations; Seeking Racial Justice; Interfaith Dialogue; Economic Justice; Human Rights, Peace, and Justice; Immigration and Refugees; State of the Church Around the World; Youth Empowerment; Arts and Social Change; Faithful Action During Global Conflict; Nationalism/Extremism; Poverty and Natural Disaster; Sustainable Development; The United Nations in Our Lives; and Turning the World Upside Down.

Jay Godfrey, Seminar Designer, gave a report on the Program to the directors. In 2006, thirty-eight seminars were held at the Church Center, with 1,028 participants. Of this total, 546 were adults, 479 were youth, 296 were ethnic persons and 269 were United Methodist Women. Mr. Godfrey said that 38 groups are already on the calendar for 2007. For the first time a number of Wesley Foundations will be attending from 3 colleges.²²

NOTE: The RENEW Network has done a report on the content of several of the seminars presented at the Church Center. Extreme speakers are showcased with very radical political and social agendas. Alternative, more conservative, viewpoints are never included. For more information on the content of these seminars, please request a copy of Financial File IV available from the RENEW Network. (www.renewnetwork.org)

- **A Ministry of Hospitality**—is provided through the Chaplaincy at the Church Center. Office space, research services, luncheons, meeting space and ecumenical/interfaith worship services are provided for NGOs working on many issues along with “disenfranchised peoples trying to make their voices heard at the UN.”²³

NOTE: A recent meeting held at the Church Center was the annual Commission on the Status of Women, a two-week-long gathering of feminist groups from around the world. Monies from Mission Giving of UMW go for supporting this ministry of hospitality.

The Women’s Division Board of Directors also adopted a resolution allowing Verizon to install and operate wireless communications facilities on the roof of the Church Center for a term of five years, with an option for renewal. This license will generate an annual income for the Division of \$40,000.

World Social Forum

A United Methodist Women delegation attended the World Social Forum in Nairobi, Kenya, in January of 2007. The delegation of eleven (six from the U.S., five from Africa) included two Women's Division staff persons, two General Board of Global Ministries staff persons (regional missionaries in Africa), two Women's Division Directors, one member of the Teen and College Women Consultative group, one United Methodist law student from Congo, two African UMW Presidents and one person from the Highlander Center (a Women's Division partner organization).²⁴

The trip was financed with \$15,000 in Mission Giving funds. Specifically, monies were taken from the international travel budget, International Ministries budget, the racial justice program and global concerns program of the Section of Christian Social Responsibility budgets, and from the 2007 Emerging Programs budget.²⁵

The World Social Forum was first held in 2001 as a response to the World Economic Forum held in Davos, Switzerland, which gathered corporate leaders from around the world. Over the last seven years the forum has been held in various places, including Brazil, India and Venezuela. According to Anthony Barnett, editor-in-chief of openDemocracy, while the Forum organizers boasted that 150,000 would attend...and when it opened claimed 50,000 present...it appeared around 20,000 were actually present, including Kenyans.²⁶

According to research done by RENEW press representative Katy Kiser, "Like other organizations funded by the Women's Division, its purpose is to counter capitalism around the world. The Forum promotes anti-business and anti-trade policies for underdeveloped countries. Noam Chomsky, noted libertarian socialist who embraces certain forms of Marxism and communism, was a featured speaker at the WSF's 2006 gathering, as were Hugo Chavez (Venezuelan President) and Cindy Sheehan (far left anti-Bush, anti-war on terror activist).²⁷

The slogan for the World Social Forum is "Another World is Possible." The structure of the WSF has been described by Immanuel Wallerstein of Agence Global as "an open space without officers, spokespeople or resolutions...it has been against neo-liberal globalization and the term alterglobalists has been coined to define the stance of its proponents—another kind of global structure."²⁸ He continues, "The WSF is presenting a real alternative, and gradually creating a web of networks whose political clout will emerge in the next five to ten years.... There is now an effective network of feminists, a network of labor struggles...a network of activist intellectuals...a network of rural/peasant movements...a budding network of those defending alternative sexualities...an anti-war network...and other functional networks dealing with specific issues such as water rights, HIV/AIDS and human rights."²⁹ The WSF is also beginning to be more pro-active by issuing manifestos such as the Bamako Appeal, which is a whole campaign against capitalism and a feminist manifesto that is now evolving.

The UMW delegation witnessed how their international mission dollars are supporting women's leadership and organizing with regional missionaries and global partners like GROOTS—Kenya and the International Grail. GROOTS (Grassroots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood) is a feminist human rights group working for social justice and women's rights around the world. (The Women's Division approved a donation of \$10,000 to be given to GROOTS International to support 60 women from Africa to participate in a Women's Summit in Kenya in July 2007.)³⁰ The International

Grail is a movement committed to “spiritual search, social transformation, global solidarity, ecological sustainability and the release of women’s creative energy throughout the world.”³¹

Leadership was provided for the delegation by Tufara Waller Muhammad of the Highlander Center in Tennessee, a social justice organization. Ms. Muhammad is considered a “community organizer who uses the arts to educate and empower Southern people” regarding social justice.³² Raised by activist parents, Ms. Muhammad was a founding member of the Islamic Student Association at Philander Smith College; a radio show producer and DJ; a musician/vocalist; a visual artist; author; camp counselor; and HIV/AIDS peer counselor. She continues her work with the Arkansas Equality Network, a regional lesbian/gay/bisexual/trans-gendered organization.

The UMW delegation intends to work on the following initiatives after participating in the World Social Forum: 1) establish on-line communications initiatives to share WSF information, reports, pictures and links to Women’s Division partner organizations; 2) continue ongoing community-building with the international organization; 3) explore collaboration between international missions and the Women’s Division; 4) prepare work for UMW traveling internationally through the Seminary Program; 5) explore future delegation participation at the World Social Forum 2009; and, 6) participation of members of the Teen and Consultative group and possible local UMW presence at the U.S. Social Forum on June 27-July 1, 2007, in Atlanta, Georgia.³³ A report on the U.S. Social Forum is being prepared and will be available on the RENEW Network website. (www.renewnetwork.org)

Information and Actions from Other Reports

- The Search Committee reported that they are on target with their work plan in finding a new Deputy General Secretary of the Women’s Division and that recommendations for action would be brought to the Division at a called meeting at the Scarritt-Bennett Center in Nashville, Tenn. in August 2007. Interviews will be conducted in May and June 2007.³⁴
- The Women’s Division will co-sponsor with the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women a 2008 Pre-Conference Orientation for Women Delegates and will allocate \$10,000 to share in the cost of planning and implementation. This orientation is “an opportunity to apprise women delegates about issues of particular concern, to develop strategies and to train new delegates on how to participate effectively in this essential decision-making forum in the life of the church.”³⁵
- The Women’s Division will send sixteen United Methodist Women participants to the North America World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women (WFMUCW) in October 2007 at a cost of \$6000 (including the WD President, Vice-President, two Directors, two staff, five jurisdictional conference VPs and five jurisdictional district VPs). This money will come from Ecumenical Relations and the Contingency Fund³⁶—both sources paid for with Mission Giving of UMW.
- The quadrennial National Seminar will take place this summer at Scarritt-Bennett Center in Nashville, Tenn. The event, paid through Mission Giving, has a budget of \$250,000. Participants are carefully selected from each jurisdiction and conference to reflect ethnic and age diversity. Workshops will cover social and political advocacy issues and be led by invited speakers (many

associated with the Seminar Program at the Church Center for the United Nations) and staff persons of the General Board of Global Ministries.

- The Membership and Organizational Development Report included the passage of the following recommendations: 1) \$50,000 allotment to cover the UMW Online Community 2007-2008 user fees of \$58,128 and 2007 consultant fees of \$21,067 (NOTE: In 2005, the Division approved \$150,000 for start-up funds for the online community. In 2006 \$94,084 was used for site configuration and one year of hosting fee. Calculations show a \$23,000 over-budget therefore the need to allot additional funds.); 2) inclusion of all language coordinators to participate in the Leadership Training Event with an expense of \$35,000 for two years anticipating 25 participants per year.³⁷ (NOTE: The Leadership Training Event budget for 2007 is \$210,000)

Projects, Emerging Programs and Scholarships for 2007 from Committee of International Ministries for action or information:³⁸

- **\$15,000 Grant to Partners in Prayer Meet Face to Face**—this project enables twelve women from Africa, Europe, the Pacific and Middle East who have been marginalized because of war, social/political conditions, Christian church divisions or geographic isolation to attend the 12th Quadrennial meeting of the World Day of Prayer (WDP) International committee. This network of 170 countries encourages leadership development, ecumenical partnerships and gender inclusive Bible studies at this global meeting of 68 WDP delegates.
- **\$15,000 Grant to Rwanda YWCA**—for program support in preparation and participation in the 2007 World YWCA Summit to share a child-headed methodology first established in Rwanda with other NGOs in Uganda, Tanzania and Kenya.
- **\$15,000 Grant to United Methodist Women in Mozambique**—in partnership with the Missouri Conference to complete construction of a UMW Primary School/Women’s Center at Gondola, Mozambique.
- **\$10,000 Grant to GROOTS International**—to support sixty grassroots women from different parts of Africa to participate in the World YWCA’s International Women’s Summit to be held in July 2007 in Nairobi, Kenya.
- **\$9,000 Grant for a Youth Gender Training Event/Empowerment Training**—at the Institute of Women’s Studies (IWP) of St. Scholastica Women’s College. The IWP has been in partnership with the Women’s Division since the 1990s in providing “leadership and gender capacity methodologies.”
- **\$6,000 Grant to the Asuncion A. Perez Memorial Center, Inc. (AAPMCI)**—for program support. The AAPMCI, started in 1969, envisions a “sustainable and peaceful society that is spiritually enriched with empowered people...to pursue God’s plan of transformation.” The monies from this grant will be used to hire a Person-in-Mission as executive director to resolve financial constraints the center is facing.

- **\$5,000 Grant to the Near East School of Theology**—in Beirut, Lebanon to support women students from the Middle East and Africa. The school will celebrate 75 years of ecumenical theological education.
- **\$5,000 Grant to the Union of Palestinian Women’s Committees (UPWC)**—to run pre-school programs in several Palestinian towns where children are “surrounded by walls of separation,” and suffer “severe distress and isolation” by the Israeli military. The education stresses gender equality, human rights and democratic principles.
- **\$4,000 Scholarship to Luzmila Sasilda Quezada Barreto**—to enable her to complete her Doctoral Degree in Theology and History. She presently teaches Gender Issues and Feminine Theology at the Latin American Biblical Seminary extension campus in Peru.

The President’s Report

Kyung Za Yim, President of the Women’s Division, encouraged the Directors to reflect on their time of service during this quadrennium and to ask themselves if they have learned to think critically. Have they been listening to the guidance of the Holy Spirit? Ms. Za Yim emphasized that it is only through this power that we can accomplish what we need to or forge ahead in mission.

Ms. Za Yim spoke of all the challenges of being a Director—the meetings, reading, traveling, speaking, decision-making, conference calls, coalition work and public actions. She emphasized how the Directors have learned to look at world problems like immigration, the environment, poverty and education through critical analysis. Ms. Yim stressed how social, political, economic, race, class and gender roles are important in affecting outcomes in society.

The President said, “The Spirit-led critical thinker LISTENS, then raises vital questions; she gathers a wide range of insights and information to interpret effectively a set of solutions. The mind is open to alternative ways of looking at solutions.”³⁹

The importance of being an effective communicator was also stressed. In handling disagreements among each other, calling upon the Holy Spirit to sharpen critical thinking is important. But ultimately, Ms. Za Yim stated, “we are one in the Spirit.” She encouraged the Directors to be a supportive community into the future of the organization of United Methodist Women.

The President was confident the Division would forge ahead on “solid ground, well grounded on our theological and spiritual foundation of Jesus’ core message of advocating for the ‘least of these’ and developing leaders within the organization.”⁴⁰ (Where is the “core message” of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ?) By listening and thinking critically we, along with the Holy Spirit, will be able to do “big things for God, even ‘turning the world upside down.’”⁴¹

The Deputy General Secretary’s Report

Using a twist on the children’s story of the Three Little Pigs, Lois M. Dauway, Interim Deputy General Secretary of the Women’s Division, encouraged UMW members to look at organizational, national and world problems from new perspectives and find new solutions.⁴²

The book that was read was “The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig,” by Eugene Trivizas. This story looks at the original tale from a different perspective by making the wolves the victims of a pig’s aggression. Ms. Dauway told the Directors that the three little wolves represent our history—both positive and negative—and the big bad pig represents the current needs of women, children and youth; financial constraints of the organization; and the changing context of church and community.

Ms. Dauway reflected on how the houses of the Women’s Division have had to change over the history of the organization just as the houses of the three little wolves had to change over the course of the story. Resources have been strained, reserves have been used, structures have been streamlined and walls have been shaken—but the organization “still stands.” She stated that this new house needs to be flexible so we can respond to whatever comes “knocking at our door,” be it children without health insurance, our government “tap dancing towards war in Iran like we did in Iraq,” or the needs of local United Methodist Women.

We must always remember, Ms. Dauway said, that our house should not only be oriented towards serving others, but also be welcoming and responsive to the needs of our members.⁴³

Worship

Throughout the board meetings of the Women’s Division, there are times of worship. However, the worship experience is often confusing. The altars set up never seem to have a cross on them, but always some other symbol as its focal point. At this meeting it was a picture of a butterfly drawn by an “8-year-old angry butterfly artist.”⁴⁴ We were told to meditate before the Sunday morning service on the words of Archbishop Desmond Tutu at the World Council of Churches Assembly in Brazil that “your enemies are not God’s enemies.” To hear these six words, he said, is to be “invited graciously from the shadow into the light. Called from the shadow where we are tempted like political leadership to believe that our enemies very probably are God’s enemies. Invited into the light where such judgment is for God and where God has much work for us to do.”⁴⁵

The Sunday evening worship service began with a reading of the story “The Three Little Wolves and the Big Bad Pig” (previously described) as an announcement of the time of peace. After the story was read, we all sang the hymn “What Gift Can We Bring.”

Instructions were given for someone to bring forward the flowers that were placed on each table as our gift to God. “These flowers are an outward symbol of the desire and challenge each of us hold to surround the angry butterfly with beauty and the gentle, converting, challenging grace of God.”⁴⁶ The prayer that followed said that God’s desire for us was “a humble spirit, aware of our own tendencies towards violence and/or self-protectionism, which then dare to construct a new world from kinder and gentler building materials.”⁴⁷

Never was there a mention of Jesus. Nothing was said of the blood of the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world; the necessity for atonement to be right with God; laying our burdens at the foot of the cross in humble repentance; acceptance and reconciliation with God; and going forth as forgiven sinners ready to serve Him and take the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost and hurting world.

Conclusion

Dry bones or live bones? Can these bones live? The passage about the valley of dry bones from the book of Ezekiel was used by a Director to illustrate the dry bones in our local units, in our organization, in our country and in our world.

The prophet Ezekiel, living among the exiles in Babylon, wanted the people to know that God is everywhere. He reminded his hearers that worshipping false gods had brought about catastrophe; he emphasized the need for a new personal relationship with God; and he assured the people that God wanted a new covenant of peace with them.

For the people of Ezekiel's day, and for us, a new covenant of peace can be ours. However, it only comes through the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, who has come to give His people eternal life through a personal relationship with Himself. That covenant in the hearts and minds of each individual where Jesus is "the way, the truth, and the life" is God's exclusive way to world transformation. Evangelical women long for the Women's Division to make this covenant an integral part of their agenda and ministry.

¹ Dry Bones or Live Bones?, by E.Judith Siaba, Chairperson of Section of Christian Social Responsibility.

² Report and Recommendations of the Section of Christian Social Responsibility to the Women's Division, April 23,2007, pg. 11.

³ Women's Division, Report of the Treasurer, April 21, 2007.

⁴ Report and Recommendations of Section of CSR, pg. 2.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ "U.S. Religious Leaders Promote Peace Dialogue in Iran", Article by Kathy Gilbert, Feb. 14, 2007, United Methodist News Service. (www.umc.org.)

⁷ Report and Recommendations of Section of CSR, pg. 2.

⁸ "United Methodist Women Calls for a Just Peace in the Middle East", Article by Dana E. Jones, United Methodist Women website. (www.gb-gm-umc.org/umw/new.)

⁹ Ibid., pg. 6.

¹⁰ *New World Outlook* magazine, March/April 2007, "Providing the Balance," by Christie R. House, pg. 2

¹¹ Report and Recommendations of Section of CSR, pg. 5.

¹² From notes covering the Section of Christian Social Responsibility, presentation by Mia Adjali on Resolutions for 2008 General Conference, April 21, 2007.

¹³ Report and Recommendations of Section of CSR, pg. 5.

¹⁴ Website of Justice for Our Neighbors, www.gb-gm-umc.org/umcor/refugees .

¹⁵ Website of National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, www.nnirr.org .

¹⁶ Report and Recommendations of Section of CSR, pg. 5.

¹⁷ Ibid., pg. 9

¹⁸ Biographical information obtained from a flyer produced by The Center for Global Christianity and Mission at the Boston University School of Theology, where Drs. Glory and Jacob Dharmaraj gave public lectures March 28-29, 2007. (www.bu.edu/sth/cgcm)

¹⁹ Website for United Methodist Women, www.gb-gm-umc.org/umw/social-action/united-nations .

²⁰ "Over Long Career, Mia Adjali Remains U.N. Booster", Article by Linda Bloom, UMW Website. (www.gb-gm-umc.org/umw/news)

²¹ Ibid.

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- ²² Information from handout on Seminar Program, Section of CSR.
- ²³ Website for UMW, www.gbgm-umc.org/umw/social-action/united-nations .
- ²⁴ “United Methodist Women at World Social Forum in Kenya”, Article by Carol Barton, UMW Website. (www.gbgm-umc.org/umw/news)
- ²⁵ Taken from financial reports from Women’s Division and from handout on World Social Forum provided at fall 2006 and spring 2007 Women’ Division board meetings.
- ²⁶ “The Three Faces of the World Social Forum,” by Anthony Barnett, Global Policy Network, January 30, 2007, (www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/advocacy/comf/2007)
- ²⁷ Justice or Injustice?, Report and Analysis of the 2006 Fall Women’s Division Board Meeting, by Katy Kiser, Press Representative, RENEW Network. (www.renewnetwork.org)
- ²⁸ “The World Social Forum: From Defense to Offense,” Article by Immanuel Wallerstein, February 1, 2007, Global Policy Network. (www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/advocacy/comf/2007)
- ²⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁰ Mission Opportunities-Projects-Spring 2007, Committee on International Ministries with Women, Children and Youth, Recommendations for Action, pg. 4.
- ³¹ Website for The Grail. (www.grail-us.org)
- ³² Biographical information obtained from website. (www.voicesinthetreetops.org)
- ³³ “United Methodist Women’s Delegation to World Social Forum,” report given at 2007 Spring Women’s Division Board of Directors Meeting, pg. 4
- ³⁴ Report of the Search Committee for Deputy General Secretary to the Women’s Division, April 23, 2007.
- ³⁵ Report and Recommendations of the Policy Committee to the Women’s Division, April 22, 2007.
- ³⁶ Ibid.
- ³⁷ Report of the Section of Membership and Organizational Development to the Women’s Division, April 23, 2007.
- ³⁸ Report of the Committee on International Ministries with Women, Children, and Youth, Spring 2007.
- ³⁹ The President’s Report to the Women’s Division, April 20, 2007
- ⁴⁰ Ibid.
- ⁴¹ Ibid.
- ⁴² “Report of the Deputy General Secretary”, Article by Yvette Moore, UMW website. (www.gbgm-umc.org/umw/news)
- ⁴³ Ibid.
- ⁴⁴ Sunday Morning Worship, Women’s Division Board Meeting, April 22, 2007.
- ⁴⁵ From “Where Shall We Stand? A Reflection on the Iraq War”, by Jonathan Frerichs, program executive for international affairs, peace, and human security, World Council of Churches, March 20, 2006, Ecumenical Centre Chapel, Geneva.
- ⁴⁶ Sunday Evening Worship, Women’s Division Board Meeting, April 22, 2007.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid.