

The Quadrennium Ends: Have We Been Transformed?

A Report of the Spring 2008 Women's Division Board Meeting

March 7-10, 2008, Stamford, Connecticut

By Liza Kittle and Katy Kiser

On the final evening of the final meeting of the 2004-2008 quadrennium, Women's Division President Kyung Za Yim gave a heartfelt speech on her years of service to this governing body of United Methodist Women. She was especially grateful for the newly established Kyung Za Yim Internship for Immigrant and Civil Rights in the amount of \$60,000, which will support the work of two United Methodist Women working with conferences, districts, and local units on the Women's Division Priority Initiative on Immigrant and Civil Rights. These priorities include "leadership development, racial justice, community organizing, critical analysis for action, and involvement of young women and immigrant women".ⁱ Ms. Yim recalled the struggles she faced coming into such a prominent leadership role, especially communicating in English, and how the staff helped her gain confidence in speech writing and presiding over meetings.

She reflected on her United Methodist Women foremother's mission history in Korea which began 120 years ago as the "predecessors of UMW sent missionaries to Korea...to share God's mission...by making disciples of Jesus Christ and advocating for women's right to education and gender equality".ⁱⁱ President Yim called herself the "fruit" of that mission legacy. She encouraged the director's continue to be an agent for transforming lives around the world and to be "be a messenger of hope by listening to our members and telling their stories" so mission will come alive for them at the local level.ⁱⁱⁱ

Has mission "come alive" at the local unit over this quadrennium? Has United Methodist Women been an agent of transformation for women at the local level of UMW? Have "the stories" and concerns of the local women been listened to? Current 2006 numbers from the General Council on Finance and Administration don't reveal that the work of the Women's Division has "born fruit" for the kingdom of Jesus Christ.

In just one year, membership in UMW has fallen to 666,983 members, the lowest level in the organization's history.^{iv} (A 6.7% decrease from 2005 or 47,831 total members lost.) Over the last five years (2001-2006), UMW membership has fallen 17.8% (or by 144,361 members). These decreases have been consistent over several decades and represent a 51% decrease in membership since 1974 when there were 1,361,025 United Methodist Women.

One could argue that membership has fallen across the board in the United Methodist Church and is just consistent with denominational trends, but the decreases in United Methodist Women membership are substantially greater. From 1974, UMC membership has fallen 19.9% (versus

51% for UMW). During the last five years, membership in the church has decreased by 4.4% (versus 17.8% for UMW).

NOTE: GCFA began tracking gender membership in 2001. According to Scott Brewer, Director of Analysis and Research, it usually takes 4-8 years to obtain fully reliable reporting when a new data category is introduced. By their best estimates, women make up 57% of membership in the UMC and decreased 3.25% from 2001-2006.^v

While the number of United Methodist Churches has fallen 12.3% since 1974 (from 38,942 to 34,136 churches), the number of United Methodist Women units has fallen by 29.8% (from 28,760 units to 20,195 units). In 2006, only 16.1% of women in the United Methodist Church were reported as members of UMW.

Why is almost 85% of the female membership not participating in United Methodist Women? What is the United Methodist Church offering these women for spiritual nurture and mission outreach?

The remainder of President Yim's speech and other actions taken at the Women's Division spring board meeting will provide insight into the myriad of reasons the RENEW Network has followed for many years. The absence of evangelistic components in mission, partisan political activism, feminist theological perspective in resources and Bible studies, anti-American and secularist worldviews, radical emphases on racism and gender empowerment, alliances with questionable organizations and mission partners, and continued allegiance to all policies and mandates of the United Nations are examples of legitimate concerns of mainstream Christian women in the United Methodist Church. This report will highlight many of these issues.

In her closing remarks to the Women's Division directors, Ms. Zim took the opportunity to not only lambast the RENEW Network (or "unofficial groups"), but also to dismiss the "many letters I wish I hadn't received" and the concerns in local units that she faced. Ms. Zim told the group that she was sincerely challenged to "rethink our work" through much contemplation and prayer. She concluded that she believes that "God will stop us from doing the work and let us know" if we are not in His will. She encouraged the directors to "not fear General Conference because God is on our side". Does the present state of this historic, once fruitful organization of United Methodist Women reflect the blessings of God? Is the Women's Division the "letter of Christ" to the world that Ms. Zim claims?

The women who make up the RENEW Network all across this country do not question the sincerity or devotion of the Women's Division in the many causes and mission projects which the organization undertakes. Nor do we question the passion or commitment of women at the local level of United Methodist Women to easing the suffering in the world through mission outreach. We do however question a social justice gospel that sees no relevance to the personal transformation of individual lives through a relationship with Jesus Christ. We do question partisan political activism that operates in the name of and against the values of many women

within the church. And we do question why the Women's Division, which seems to advocate diversity so passionately, would oppose so vigorously the desire and need of the growing majority of women within the UMC to participate in other women's ministries.

Immigration and Civil Rights Work

The Women's Division continues to place a high priority on immigration and civil rights issues, but from a politically partisan position. The focus of all advocacy work done by the Division on these issues is seen through the lens of systemic racism inherent within our church and society. Work will begin on the *Campaign for a United America* (www.campaignforaunitedamerica.org) led by the **Center for New Community** (www.newcomm.org) "to promote a national dialogue on immigration, civil rights, and citizenship free of the intolerance and xenophobia that dominate current debates". The Division, a founding endorser of the Campaign, will be a public voice "to undercover racist underpinnings of many anti-immigration organizations".^{vi}

Groups such as the **Minutemen**, a grassroots advocacy group formed to aid the protection of U.S. borders, and **FAIR (the Federation for American Immigration Reform)**, another mainstream coalition on immigration reform, are labeled as "hate groups". Advocating open borders, referring to illegal immigration as "global migration", endorsing unlimited social services support for illegal persons, and promoting sanctuary cities and churches are some of the policies supported by the Women's Division and its mission partners.

In her speech, President Zim refers to immigrant populations as "just about everybody including ourselves". In hearing the stories of women and youth within our communities, Ms. Zim states, "we will uncover the fact that organized bigotry and racism are at the core of anti-immigrant organizing" and it is up to the faith community to "keep raising our voice with the moral clarity that is needed".^{vii}

Several resolutions which will come before General Conference reflect the liberal bias and radical worldview of the Women's Division. A new resolution entitled "**Resisting Hate, Fear, and Scapegoating and Transforming the Context of Hate in the United States**" is full of inflammatory language and unsubstantiated allegations. According to the Women's Division, the history, policies, and economy of the United States encourages hate crimes. The "criminalizing of immigrants", "racial profiling in response to the 'war on terror'", and school officials "who ostracize gay and lesbian students" encouraging homophobia are three examples given of intolerance and racism in America (no supportive documentation is given, however). The church is called to provide educational resources "to build understanding of the systemic, institutionalized culture of racism, sexism, homophobia and other forms of marginalization" and for annual conferences "to develop data bases of information of local and state hate groups and explore connections between anti-immigrant/refugee groups and white supremacist organizations".^{viii} United Nations resources and partisan ecumenical partnerships are endorsed and advocated.

Another resolution for GC2008 is a revision of **Resolution #164—Annual Conference Responsibility to Eradicate Racism**, by broadening it to include district and local congregation responsibility as well. The wording of this resolution is so disturbing in that it emphatically declares that racism is inherent and systemic within the United Methodist Church's ministry, structures, and mission and has been since its inception. **The Charter for Racial Justice in an Interdependent Global Community** (Women's Division initiative introduced in 1980) is uplifted as the vehicle for the "*articulation of United Methodist understanding*" regarding this goal and as a guide for action.

The Charter contains language such as "*the racist system in the United States today perpetuates the power and control of those of European ancestry*", hardly words conducive to racial reconciliation. It also implies that since the system is racist, the structure must be changed instead of a focus on individual actions as modes of healing and unity.

The Women's Division and the General Commission on Religion and Race are called to provide resources on the Charter to be available across all levels of the church for the 2008-12 quadrennium and to design and implement a review process of the activities undertaken with regards to this resolution.

A comprehensive analysis of all proposed legislation by the Women's Division for General Conference 2008 is available at www.renewnetwork.org .

Racism was also the predominate theme of guest speaker **Bishop Frank Griswold**, the former Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, who led and actively supported the consecration of the first openly gay bishop in a mainline Christian denomination, Bishop Gene Robinson. This act has caused a severe schism within the Episcopal Church in America. Bishop Griswold told the directors that a "*climate of unawareness*" exists in our society regarding racism. This unawareness is the "*root of all evil*" and an "*enemy spirit*" keeps people fixed in a cyclic pattern of prejudice and bigotry. It is not only individual sinfulness, but the "*collective sinful behavior of a dominant culture*". Other speakers of the morning talked of raising awareness of the "*white privilege*" present in our society and the monitoring of church plenary sessions to document instances of this "*systemic, structural and institutional*" reality.^{ix}

The Immigration Task Force will host a noon rally at General Conference 2008 to raise awareness of immigration, and particularly to support churches that are providing sanctuary to illegal persons, a position clearly in violation of United States immigration laws.

Financial Matters

Interim Treasurer Roland Fernandes gave the treasurer's report to the Women's Division. The Total Operating Revenue for 2007 was \$28,824,498 and declined from 2006 revenue by almost 4%. Mission Giving for 2007 was \$16,370,902 and declined from 2006 by 1.5%. Designated

Giving for 2007 was \$1,314,551 and decreased by \$18%, primarily due to the Assembly Offering received in 2006. All other channels of designated giving were down as well.

United Methodist Giving by conference and jurisdiction was reported. The order of giving in 2007 by jurisdiction was: Southeastern (\$6,178,628); North Central (\$5,060,871); South Central (\$3,854,930); Northeastern (\$2,478,255); and Western (\$1,632,070).

Operating Expenses for 2007 were \$35,770,464, 2% higher than 2006. (NOTE: Only 40.2% of this total goes for Mission Programs and Programs administered by GBGM—the rest goes for pension and post-retirement costs; Brooks Howell Home expenses; property maintenance and insurance; the Service Center, Response magazine, and the Church Center for the United Nations; Scarritt-Bennett Center; and administration and fundraising.)

Overall operating expenses exceeded the operating income which created an operating deficit of \$6.9 million. This deficit was offset by an increase in the value of the Division's investment portfolio and the sale of some properties, resulting in a decrease in Net Assets of \$934,040. The total net assets of the Women's Division in 2007 was \$74,256,115.^x

The Women's Division directors elected Martha Sherman Knight as the division treasurer and associate treasurer for the General Board of Global Ministries, effective April 3, 2008. She has served on the staff of the Baltimore-Washington Annual Conference since 1997, most recently as its chief financial officer.

President Bush Bashing

Of course there was the usual anti-Bush, anti-military, anti-government propaganda presented—views that RENEW has documented in many past reports of Women Division board meet. Disdain for President Bush's budget proposals, tax cuts, military spending and education policies were a usual part of the rhetoric at the spring board meeting.

Section of Christian Social Responsibility

There were a total of six recommendations brought to the floor at the board meeting for approval by Women Division directors.

- **Five Years of War in Iraq**

In recognition of the March anniversary of the War in Iraq, the Women's Division invited UMW members to hold prayer services/vigils to continue the call for peace in Iraq and an immediate end to the war. In 2007, the WD voted to "oppose escalation of the war and

urge the withdrawal of all U.S. troops and U.S. funded mercenaries from Iraq; to support legislative efforts to end funding for war in Iraq while providing sufficient resources for safe withdrawal; increase funding for veteran's benefits; and to provide humanitarian aid and reparations for Iraq without continued U.S. bases".^{xi} Members were also encouraged to work with ecumenical services peace organizations and to read the Division's policy statement "Steps Towards Peace in the Middle East" (www.umwmission.org).

- **Race, Gender and Religion in the 2008 Elections**

"The Women's Division calls on the UMW to affirm their commitment to the Charter for Racial Justice Priorities by confronting the use of race, gender and religion by candidates, media and the public during the 2008 election process to distort the discussion and threaten the potential for a fair and just election process."^{xii}

The Division has developed a questionnaire for evaluating candidate positions by UMW members on the issues of importance to their partisan political viewpoints. Education, healthcare, immigration reform, economic issues, criminal justice, the environment, and global concerns are topics included in the document.

Opposition to funding for **No Child Left Behind**; support for universal health care and expansion of public health resources such as **SCHIP** (This is a federal program aimed at providing health care for poor children that was recently rejected by the Bush administration because income levels for eligibility were raised to family incomes of \$80,000 annually and persons up to age 24.); support for a pathway to citizenship for undocumented immigrants; support for government action in mortgage crisis, redirecting tax revenue for social services, increasing disaster relief funding, farm subsidies, and international trade policies; opposition to the privatization of prisons in the U.S. and the death penalty, and support for restoring voting rights for ex-offenders are documented positions of the Women's Division that are basis for the wording of questions on the survey.

Other WD positions included in the survey are support for international global warming policies, although leading scientists are not in consensus over its causes and effects; development of alternative energy sources, which don't include new coal-fired or nuclear power plants; personal reduction in the consumption of the world's resources, which all Christians can surely embrace; and support for U.S. foreign aid to reach the recommended U.N. target of 0.7% of Gross National Income by 2015, in compliance with their **Millennium Development Goals-MDGs**. This figure would be at least \$30 billion dollars over and above what U.S. taxpayers give overseas. Recent reports that only 30%

of foreign aid actually reaches the poor due to corruption and mismanagement are issues never addressed by the Women's Division.

Support for international law and the **International Criminal Court** are positions routinely uplifted by the Women's Division and are included in the questionnaire. The United States, under both democratic and republican administrations, is not the only country to reject the notion that their laws and sovereignty should be accountable to the United Nations or the International Court. The United Nations has escalated its demands to impose international taxes through their Millennium Development Goals.

The rationale for the survey is "to confront untruths" is described as an outgrowth of "the experiences of minority voters during the 2000 electoral process".^{xiii} Unsubstantiated claims of voter fraud and disenfranchisement of minority voters are cited as reasons for the questionnaire.

- **World Social Forum—January 2009**

\$12,000 will be allocated to send a U.S. delegation to the 2009 World Social Forum, to be held in Belem, Brazil. The team will include two Division directors, with one being a "young" director; one woman from the College Women's Consultative Group; and two staff, one of which is a seminar designer from the Church Center for the United Nations.

This recommendation seeks to continue to integrate the goals of the World Social Forum with the justice priorities of the Women's Division. Indeed, their support for the Forum says much about how they interpret the concept of mission and the ideologies that support this concept. The initiative makes it clear that the Division will continue to offer leadership development for "UMW women, including young women" which will include linking mission projects and training with the goals of the World Social Forum.

The Women's Division and the General Board of Global Ministries have participated in this international forum for the last four years. The World Social Forum is an event that was organized to counter the World Economic Forum and its main purpose is to counter capitalism around the world. The forum promotes social justice through its commitment to socialist/communist principles including the redistribution of global wealth.

Shirley Hawa Nibi of **GROOTS Africa** (a partner organization of the WD) describes the event:

"It is an all comers forum; there were the Gay and Lesbian Lobby in Africa, the Maoists, anarchists, peasant movements, trade unionists, radical scholars, grassroots movements, non-governmental organizations.....among others. The forum was an open

meeting where groups and movements of civil society opposed to neo-liberalism and a world dominated by capital or by any form of imperialism, but engaged in building a planetary society centered on the human person, came together to pursue their thinking, to debate ideas democratically, formulate proposals, share their experiences freely and network for effective action....^{cxiv}

- **UMW Response to Kenyan Women’s Leadership**

The Women’s Division voted to respond to the current political crisis in Kenya that began in late December 2007 because of a dispute over the presidential election. A political power-sharing agreement was reached on February 28. The Division will send a letter of solidarity to the women of the Methodist Church of Kenya and the East Africa Annual Conference; will provide monetary support through Mission Giving to programs for immediate humanitarian aid to women, youth, and children and for long-term efforts towards healing and reconciliation; will send a letter of support to the **Women’s Coalition for Sustainable Peace**, a group formed by women’s organizations in Kenya during the crisis; and will encourage UMW to ask their congressional leaders to monitor U.S. economic and military aid to Kenya and to keep abreast of the news and explore messages about gender and race so they can challenge racist assumptions about Africa.^{xv}

The Division is partnering with **GROOTS-Kenya** and the **Daughters of Mumbi**, two feminist groups which work towards personal, economic, social, and political empowerment through grassroots organizing.

The **United Methodist Committee on Relief** has been providing emergency support to displaced women and children. The **Women’s Program of the Methodist Church of Kenya** has been assisting pregnant women and children in camps vastly unequipped to handle their needs. Other humanitarian relief has been provided by the Presbyterian Church of East Africa and the Anglican Church of Kenya.

This resolution represents a worthy attempt to alleviate the suffering of Kenyan women, youth, and children during this time of uncertainty. What are unfortunate however, are the background statements which address the causes of this political situation. These statements bemoan U.S. media coverage of the unrest which the Women’s Division claims affirms “Western ‘perceptions’ rooted in racism”^{xvi}, that Africa is a nation mired in corruption and unable to govern itself, because reports have named tribal animosity as the cause of the crisis. The Division feels the root cause is revealed in World Council of Churches statement of Feb. 2008, that “a negative colonial legacy grew into a post-colonial problem....external factors continued in new ways and old....driving key sectors of the national economy”^{xvii}.

The economic development model that has been used by a succession of Kenyan governments is promoted by the **World Bank** and the **International Monetary Fund**.

According to the Division, this model is the reason “millions of Kenyans have been unable to access basic resources and services, like health care, clean water, education, and decent housing”.^{xviii} The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund grew out of the United Nation’s effort to address the rebuilding of Europe after World War II.

It is true that the World Bank has been a large contributor to Kenya’s problems according to several reports, but not for the reasons given by the Women’s Division. It is reported that the World Bank has given Kenya some \$1 Billion spread over 16 projects.

Documented corruption by the Kenyan government and the World Bank can be read at www.online.wsj.com . The **Kenya Bribery Index 2006** issued by Transparency International states that Kenya is ranked the 150th most corrupt country (report can be read at www.tikenya.org).

When legitimate countries, through corrupt leadership, misuse funds from the World Bank and other international organizations for personal and political gain, the citizens are the ones that suffer when these monies are misappropriated. This corruption and disingenuous behavior involves not only the governments of underdeveloped countries, but also the institutions charged with the distribution of needed funds and resources. This misrepresentation of the causes of the Kenyan crisis—ignoring fraud and corruption while blaming colonialism and racism—is an example of the unbalanced analysis given by the Women’s Division regarding international conflicts.

In the years that RENEW has been reporting on the programs and policies of the Women’s Division, not once have we seen the work of the United Nations or any of its partnering organization scrutinized or questioned, even when scandals and corruption have been undeniable. Instead, the Division continues to push forward legislation at General Conference that ties the mission of the church to the mission of the United Nations time and time again.

- **2011-2012 Spiritual Growth Study Theme: “Coming Out on the Side Of Grace: Reconciliation”**

The Directors of the Spiritual & Theological Development Committee recommended that this study be adopted and the study “**Living Sacramentally and Walking Justly**” be postponed until 2012-2013. The rationale for the change was that the theme of reconciliation would be more relevant for the General Conference year 2012.^{xix}

The committee discussed the upcoming spiritual growth themes and their willingness to “monkey with the manuscript” and instead of “being polite—we were more bold”. They explained there was more collaboration between the authors and Dr. Glory Dharmaraj (Director of Spiritual Formation and Mission Theology of the Women’s Division) and contemplated if the result will work in local units.^{xx}

The 2009-2010 study will be “Food and Faith” and the 2010-2011 study will be “For the Love of God: John’s Letters”. The current study for 2008-2009, entitled “I Believe in Jesus”, was written by Bishop Minerva G. Carcano, the first Hispanic woman to be elected to the episcopacy of the United Methodist Church. She tells her autobiographical faith journey including her call to ministry and her desire “to challenge other Christians, as well as the church, in their concept of faith”.^{xxi} The study also “helps to examine Christian responses to belief in Jesus through the lens of a variety of faith community contexts”.^{xxii}

- **Reading Program List for 2009**

It was recommended that the Women’s Division directors receive the Reading List for 2009, which is embargoed until August 2008. The purpose for the program is to “inform, educate and raise the consciousness of women to our social, economic, and political realities, including the inter-connectedness of race, class and gender in women’s lives”.^{xxiii} Linda Schramm reported that sales reported from the **Mission Resource Center** were positive, especially sales of youth and children’s titles for 2008.

One title from the present Reading Program list entitled “*What’s Wrong with the Christian Right?*” by Jan G. Linn is appallingly insulting to conservative, evangelical Christians who are placed in the same category as white supremacist groups and radical Islamic terrorists. Does the Women’s Division continue to dismiss the fact that many United Methodist Women would find this book offensive. Brenda Thompson proudly shared that there will be an online chat with the author this spring.

Other reports from the **Justice Priorities Committee** were presented which clearly reveal the partisan and feminist political agenda of the Women’s Division. They include:

1. In Jan. 2008, Lois Dauway and Susie Johnson participated in the **Mississippi Conference Ecumenical Advocacy Event**. The event focused on education, childcare, SCHIP, and the “cradle to prison pipeline”. Ms. Johnson met with members of the **Miss. Legislative Black Caucus**.^{xxiv}
2. Esmeralda Brown reported on the recent event for Mission Coordinators for Social Action at the **United Methodist Office for the United Nations**, in conjunction with the **U.N. Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)**. Twenty women participated in the event that was coordinated by Global Justice staff with the Washington D.C. Policy Office, the Seminar Program, the Chaplain, Hospitality, Spiritual Growth, Community Action, and Racial Justice staff. The theme of the CSW was “*Financing for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment*”. The UMW organized an ecumenical worship service held at the Women’s Division owned-**Church Center for the UN** and attended official meetings and parallel events.^{xxv} Dr. Glory Dharmaraj lifted up resources she

provided for the training such as a mission paper on *“Investing in Women and Girls for Human Flourishing”*.

3. Rev. Kathleen Stone, Chaplain at the Tillman Chapel at the Church Center, reported on collaborative work at the United Nation CSW through the **Ecumenical Women Coalition**. This coalition is made up of churches and ecumenical groups who focus on religion and human rights from a gender perspective.^{xxvi} 160 delegates from 10 denominations came to the meeting as part of this coalition. The delegation was “engaged in the challenge of working for the Kingdom of God in the midst of the powers of the kingdoms of the world”.^{xxvii}
4. Chris Spencer and Maggie Jackson reported on UMW participation at the **National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights** meeting in Houston, Texas in Jan. 2008. Fifteen UMW attended the event of 600 and co-sponsored an event with the **Black Alliance for Just Immigration** to address cross-cultural partnerships and concerns of the **African Diaspora**; co-hosted a caucus with where Flor Crisostomo spoke before entering sanctuary at the Adalberto UMC in Chicago; marched with **Justice for Janitors**; and attended workshops on white supremacist groups in the anti-immigrant movement and strategies to welcome immigrants.^{xxviii}

The Women’s Division clearly supports the harboring of illegal immigrants in United Methodist Churches and their partisan activism clearly demonstrates their views on immigration reform. The absence of balance in the activism of the Women’s Division continues to be troubling to mainstream Christian women within the denomination.

5. Elmira Nazombe and Esmeralda Brown attended an agricultural mission study session in North Carolina on *“Black/Brown Solidarity: Countering the Divide”*. The session looked at “the struggle of Latino and African American workers at Smithfield and RJ Reynolds”, companies the Division claims are “using race as an organizing principle for controlling workers”. (No supporting evidence to back up this claim is given.) Ms. Nazombe reported the Racial Justice office is: working to engage UMW in immigration dialogue; working with **Black Americans for Just Immigration**, the **Center for New Community**, and the **Southern Regional Economic Justice Network** to host dialogues, but first among African American UMW and then within “other UMW identity-based groups as a first step toward cross identity dialogue”.^{xxix} (NOTE: It seems the Division is not showing much diversity in the selection of the participants in this dialogue.)
6. **Resource and Hospitality**: Betty Gittens reported that since October 2007, the following events were organized by the Chaplain’s Office as the United Nations, in collaboration with ecumenical and interreligious partners: **World Council of Churches United Nations Advocacy Week**; **Remembrance Day Observance**; **International Day in Solidarity with the Palestinian People**; *“Talk is not Enough”* service and discussion

held during the Bali **Conference on Climate Change**; Ash Wednesday Service; and services of ecumenical worship and discussions during the UN 52nd Commission on the Status of Women.^{xxx}

And please let us not forget, the hosting of the despot **President of Iran Mahmoud Ahmadinejad** at the Tillman Chapel at the Church Center for the UN for an “interfaith dialogue”. Although the Women’s Division did not organize the event, the Deputy General Secretary Janet Olsen gave the opening welcoming remarks. This tragic event of political propaganda, reported widely around the world, was a low point for many United Methodist Women, who support the Church Center with their mission giving.

6. **Seminar Program:** Jay Godfrey and other staff persons from the program gave a presentation on the successes of the past year. They welcomed 50 groups and over 1100 participants—a record year for the program. Jennifer McCallum joined the Seminar Program as a designer to help with the expanding program. 628 Adults, 491 Youth, 223 Ethnic, and 235 UMW came from UMW groups, conferences, churches, and college campuses. Different topics were covered including Cross Cultural Orientation, Sustainable Development, Child Poverty, The UMC and the UN, Racism, Economic Justice, Human Rights, Immigration, Global Church, Israel/Palestine, Ending Violence, Africa, Arts and Social Change, Peacemaking, Hunger & Poverty, Society’s Safety Nets, Globalization & Labor, New Perspectives Development, Faith & Society, Mission in the 21st Century, Modern Day Slavery, Climate Change, Human Trafficking, and International Law.

The increasing popularity of the Seminar Program could have been influenced by greater exposure from an ad shown on YOU TUBE, a medium particularly attractive to young people. The Program no longer posts the speakers and session topics for the individual seminars on the UMW website. In the past, the seminars rarely offered two perspectives on the issues. Most were presented from a partisan political position and featured extremely radical speakers.

Membership & Organizational Development

The committee recommended that each conference provide or establish a position for a coordinator(s) for teen and college women and young women (under 40). This recommendation is in line with the Women’s Division’s push to recruit younger women to the organization.

For information:

The committee reviewed and affirmed the current quadrennial plan for regional school organizational development workshop focus:

1. Year 1: Leadership Development
2. Year 2: Christian Social Responsibility
3. Year 3: United Methodist Women and General Conference
4. Year 4: Financial Interpretation

Handouts were given out with suggestions for Nurturing Your UMW Unit and a Guide to Planning Events for Teen/College Women.

National and International Ministries

The National Ministries Committee recommended that the Women's Division terminate their relationship with the Columbia Bethlehem Community Center in Columbia, S.C. and withhold the yearly appropriation beginning Jan. 2008 due to mismanagement and lack of stable leadership.

The International Ministries Committee recommended several grants to the Division directors.

1. \$15,445 to the Caribbean Region World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women to provide program support. To be held in July 2008 in Panama City, Panama, this will be a gathering of Methodist women to study scriptures, fellowship, and discuss the 8 Millennium Goals of the United Nations. The theme of the seminar is "Women Making a Difference".
2. **\$10,000 to the Madreselva Foundation** in Cochabamba, Bolivia. This organization was established to complement existing grassroots political and social action groups. They will be a clearing-house for information and research in advocacy for groups such as household workers and indigenous immigrants/emigrants.
3. **\$40,000 to Bengali Girls Day School** for renovation of the main school building. The school, located in Asansol, a 4 hr. drive from Calcutta, was started in 1909 and the property is owned by the Methodist Church of India.
4. **\$20,000 to the Methodist Mission Co-Ed School** for renovations of the school buildings. Located in a remote village in the State of Madhya Pradesh, it is a 10 hr. drive from the nearest airport on treacherous roads. The school was built to honor an English missionary and sits on 40 acres. The region is populated by tribal people, and the school has 400 kids. The medium of education is Hindi.

Conclusion

On the last day of the Women's Division Board Meeting, many of the directors formed a long "ticker tape" that listed the accomplishments of the Division over the past quadrennium. It just kept coming and coming from outside the meeting room and the directors were then asked to shout out the words of the issues, programs, and initiatives of the Division. Racism, Action Alerts, Ubuntu Journey, Immigration, Reading Program, United Nations, etc., etc.

As I listened to this symphony of voices raised to glorify the programs and issues at the heart of the work of the Women's Division, I kept hearing a still, small voice saying to me---I wondered if throughout all this sincere, heartfelt, and committed work---how many souls were saved for the kingdom of Jesus Christ. How many individual hearts were transformed along this journey? How many lost sheep found their way home to their blessed Savior? How many of the billions of people in the world who have never heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ been offered the Bread of Life and the Living Water? I shudder to think how truly transformed the world could be if the focus of the Division was restored to evangelism and Christ-centered ministry. We pray that one day it will be so.

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- ⁱ Handout from the Policy Committee Report to the Women's Division, March 9, 2008.
- ⁱⁱ Women's Division President's Report, given at the spring 2008 Board Meeting, March 9, 2008.
- ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.
- ^{iv} Data received from 2006 Statistics Division of General Council on Finance and Administration, March 2008.
- ^v Correspondence with Director of Analysis and Research, General Council on Finance and Administration, April 2008.
- ^{vi} Minutes from the Fall 2007 WD Board Meeting, pg. 6. Website www.campaignforaunitedamerica.org
- ^{vii} Women's Division President's Report, given at the Spring 2008 Board Meeting, March 9, 2008.
- ^{viii} New Resolution by the Women's Division for General Conference 2008.
- ^{ix} Notes from Spring 2008 WD Board Meeting., March 8, 2008.
- ^x Treasurer's Report, March 7, 2008.
- ^{xi} Report and Recommendations of the Section of Christian Social Responsibility to the WD Spring Board Meeting, March 8, 2008., pg. 1.
- ^{xii} Ibid, pg. 2.
- ^{xiii} Ibid, pg. 3.
- ^{xiv}
- ^{xv} Report and Recommendations of the Section of Christian Social Responsibility, page 6.
- ^{xvi} Ibid, pg. 7.
- ^{xvii} Ibid.
- ^{xviii} Ibid.
- ^{xix} Ibid., pg. 9.
- ^{xx} Notes from Education for Involvement in Mission Committee Meeting, March 8, 2008.
- ^{xxi} News for United Methodist Women: Vol.1, No. 1, Jan.-March 2008.
- ^{xxii} Ibid.
- ^{xxiii} Report and Recommendations of the Section of Christian Social Responsibility, page 10.
- ^{xxiv} Ibid., pg. 10.
- ^{xxv} Ibid., pg. 11.
- ^{xxvi} Ecumenical Women at the United Nations, www.ecumenicalwomen.org
- ^{xxvii} Report and Recommendations of the Section of Christian Social Responsibility, pg. 14.
- ^{xxviii} Ibid., pg. 12.
- ^{xxix} Ibid.
- ^{xxx} Ibid., pg. 14.