

# Anna Howard Shaw Center

NEWSLETTER

Volume 29 • Issue 2 • Spring 2013

## Special Edition on “Economic Justice for Ministry”

### From the Director: Women in the World Conference 2013

By Rev. Dr. Choi Hee An

When Boston Marathon Bombing occurred, many people showed different reactions about this terrible incident. Many of us were unable to process what had happened it was so surreal. Feelings that we knew we should feel while watching the news and reading constant updates online simply did not come. This numbness kept us from deeply engaging our own troubled emotions. Others among us reacted in the opposite extreme; we felt the kind of pure terror that negates every comfort and does away with every sense of security. Many mourned that the bombing would forever change, and even taint our peaceful and beautiful memories of the Boston Marathon. Numbness, terror, and grief; some of us alternated between these states, unable to exercise our usual control over our emotional state which in its own strange and horrible way brings us fear and anxiety. So many of us were angry; we wanted to know who was responsible and why. However, amongst all of these turbulent emotions, many of us immediately responded to helped others who were in need. We tried to find a way to help injured victims, stranded runners, and even random



passersbys as much as we could. In the process of dealing with this ordeal and all of the emotions, all of us, Bostonians as well as people around the country and around the world wanted to find a way to seek justice and find hope to heal ourselves.

When any of us encounters suffering, we have different ways of responding to that suffering and pain. However, in the process of dealing with suffering, all demonstrate a beautiful commonality; we yearn to seek justice and strive for hope. From its founding, the Anna Howard Shaw Center has worked very hard to be in solidarity with women and minority communities who experience deep suffering and pain. Seeking justice and striving for hope, the Shaw Center has continuously worked to address the issues of injustice and find ways to challenge the world. This year particular we

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*“Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?” So the last will be first, and the first will be last.*

— Matthew 20:15-16

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# Occupy the Church: Economic Justice for Ministry in the 21st Century

By Hyebin Hong and Samantha Ball

Women in the World Conference 2013 was themed around raising critical awareness of the economic injustice suffered by women particularly in the context of the church. It was the conference's hope to inspire the church to be clear on the meaning of God's justice and to embody that justice in the world.

The conference opened with a presentation by Rev. Jacqueline Blue, an assistant minister at Peoples Baptist Church, discussing the Occupy movement in relation to women in ministry. Rev. Blue noted that the Occupy movement democratically awakened a demand for the transformation of those who involved, raised the national consciousness of injustice, and encouraged a plurality of voices. These "unwanted voices" raised highlighted the unequal position of women in the church. Even though women are "the economic engine of the church," they remain disproportionately under represented, as the UMC Clergywomen Retention Study II revealed. Her description of the *Kairos* moment where God's presence breaks into the world to upset hierarchies and order led to a stimulating conversation that engaged all of participants in the conference.

Dr. Darryl Stephens, assistant general secretary for advocacy and sexual ethics for the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women in the United Methodist Church, gave the second presentation titled "Embodying God's Justice." He criticized the church's naïve mentality that "we've arrived at equality," and pointed out an integral link between economic injustice and sexual violence. Violence reinforces the disproportional distribution of resources.



This is also true in the church where women suffer low compensation, patriarchal attempts at control over women's bodies, and sexual violence. Dr. Stephens concluded by highlighting the necessity of women in ministry. Their bodily presence can speak to the truth of violence, and help women to heal from economic and sexual violence.

After a worship service by Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar of the UMC New England Conference in Marsh Chapel, the conference continued with a conversation titled "Ceilings and Cliffs: Navigating Appointments, Compensation, and Call for Clergywomen in the United Methodist Church" by Dr. Felicia LaBoy, an assistant professor of Evangelization in the Heisel Chair at United Theological Seminary. She argued that many women often choose not to seek senior leadership positions because of the perceived sacrifices needed to successfully fulfill the profession. Therefore they tend to seek peripheral positions depending on their church contexts rather than full leadership positions. To overcome this situation the church must reframe self-worth and feminism for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, identify and criticize injustice publically, develop specific programs for women and minorities, and teach people flexible methods of being rather than hard formulas. This may make people uncomfortable, she said, but

that discomfort will transform church and society by extension.

Dean Mary-Elizabeth Moore moderated the first panel discussion with the four panelists. Rev. We Hyun Chang of the Belmont-Watertown United Methodist Church responded to the speakers with a reflection on the close relationship between patriarchy and capitalism as the root of female oppression that innately demands unjust economic hierarchy. He criticizes the church's addiction to market capitalism, particularly capitalism's obsession with "effectiveness," and argued that the biblical image of proportional wealth should be the criterion for the church's finance and compensation system. Ms. Harriett Olson, deputy general secretary of the Women's division of the General Board of Global Ministries of the UMC, mentioned that women in the church have haunted and responded to a call of sacrificial living. Mrs. Olson said that the church should encourage all people, not only women, to be sacrificial so long as women are not the only ones and that they should be given equal opportunities. Rev. Laurel Scott, the president of the National Association of Commissions on Equitable Compensation of the UMC, problematized the UMC's salary structure where some pastors are not making a living wage, and argued that to resolve this problem the church needs a creative, imaginative compensation structure based on biblical economic views (e.g. the Parable of the Workers in the Vineyard) to



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# Occupy the Church: Economic Justice for Ministry in the 21st Century



achieve a livable wage for all clergy regardless of their sex, gender, and race. Bishop Sudarshana Devadhar was our final panelist in the first discussion session. He spoke about how women are not being allowed to share their God given talents when the church does not fully support women. He emphasized the importance of education in the church, “not for tokenism, but for inclusivity with excellence.” Many constructive and critical responses from the conference participants followed the first panel discussion. The question of how we form our moral sense of self and community through liturgy and hymnals as put forth by Tallessyn Grenfell-Lee was discussed with particular enthusiasm.

Dean Pamela Lightsey moderated the second panel discussion with four panelists who were invited to

respond to the presentation from their official roles in the UMC church. Rev. Rene Perez, the Superintendent of the Central Massachusetts District, shared his experiences as an El Salvadorian immigrant from his particular cultural background. He described his culture as dominated by males, but shared how he was deeply influenced and shaped by women’s leadership. He emphasized that we need to first occupy ourselves to occupy the church, because we are the church. In this sense, he said that the Occupy movement is a spiritual rather than a material endeavor. Dr. Irving Cotto, the Superintendent of the Northeastern District of the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference also described many strong female leaders who shaped and formed his faith and worldview. He stressed that we have to listen to the prophetic voices from the margin including, women, children, and people of color because “those are the voices that God speaks through.” Ms. Sandra Ferguson, the Conference Director of Connectional Ministries for the Baltimore Washington Conference, focused on the difficulty of speaking the truth within the church, especially regarding violence, injustice, and anger. Justice demands that the church be a place where people can

express their pain with the expectation that leadership will deeply listen. The final panelist, Rev. LaTrelle Easterling, the Superintendent of the Metro Boston Hope District, called everyone to repent for refusing transformative change and doing nothing even after learning of situations of injustice and inequality. She said that anger is necessary to change the system and to motivate people to action. The second panel led to many thought-provoking discussions, including the question by Jenna Wood of how to apply the fruits of this discussion to youth ministry in real settings.

This year’s conference was more than a mere event. It was profound, powerful, educational, inspirational, deeply moving, and very meaningful. The Anna Howard Shaw Center sincerely thanks those who made this wonderful event possible with their great support, generous donations, and heart-filled hard work.



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# The UMC Clergywomen Retention Study II, Part 2

By Rev. Dr. Choi Hee An and Rev.  
Jacqueline B. Blue

*The UMC Clergywomen Retention Study II,  
Part I appeared in the last issue of the Anna  
Howard Shaw Center's Newsletter.*

In this concluding part of the two-part series on the results of the UMC Clergywomen Retention Study II, this article focuses on the remaining two areas of the study, In and Out - sought to obtain the number of clergywomen either "in" and "out" of local church ministry, and Responding to why - sought to obtain insight into reasons why clergywomen departed ministry either permanently or temporarily. The article concludes with recommendations and findings based upon the research.

**In and Out.** The second area of the study, In and Out, sought to obtain the number of clergywomen who were either "in" or "out" of local church ministry. The survey reached out to clergywomen in all five jurisdictions to determine how many were in and out of local church ministry. Understanding how many and who (as much as possible) has the potential to assist the UMC in its care and support of clergywomen across the denomination. At the time of this survey, there were 96% (previously 73%) of clergywomen in local church ministry in the North Central region, 97% (previously 69%) in the Northeastern, 96% (previously 75%) in the Western, 95% (previously 64%) in the South Central, and 98% (previously 67%) in the Southeastern. In general, all regions show about 20% to 30% growth for clergywomen's participation in local church ministry. Therefore, we conclude that the percentages of "In Local Church" are significantly higher compared to the previous research.

In contrast, there were 4% (previously 27%) of clergywomen "out of local church ministry" in the

North Central region, 3% (previously 31%) in the Northeastern, 4% (previously 25%) in the Western, 5% (previously 36%) in the South Central and 2% (previously 23%) in the Southeastern. This is quite a dramatic change. While the survey populations were a factor, it appeared that the percentages of "Out of Local Church Ministry" were significantly lower than the percentages in the previous survey while the percentages of "In Local Church Ministry" are drastically higher.

The same pattern applies when the numbers are broken down across ethnicities, marital status, clergy partner, previous denomination, and ordination; the number of clergywomen out of local church ministry is significantly lower than the previous survey. In case of Asian clergywomen, the current research showed 100% "In Local Church Ministry" whereas the previous research found only 65%. There is 35% of increase over the past twenty years. The increase was also reflected in the numbers of Asian clergywomen participants from 13 clergywomen to 22 clergywomen. In case of African American/African clergywomen, the change of "In Local Church Ministry" is more significant from 59% in the previous research to 98% in the current research. The numbers of African American/African clergywomen also increased from 36 clergywomen to 100 clergywomen participants. For Hispanic/Latina, the previous study noted, 6 clergywomen stayed in local church ministry; however, the current study reflects 14 clergywomen participants. No Native American clergywomen participated in the previous research, but now 8 Native American clergywomen gave a voice to this research. In the case of white clergywomen "In Local Church Ministry", the percentage increase is 21%, from 71% (890 clergywomen) previously research to 96% (1605 clergywomen) in the current research. However, multiracial group of clergywomen

have not shown any significant changes: 18 clergywomen participated in the current study, (previously 21 in total) although their percentage reflected significant changes from 71% to 100%. Consequently, the numbers of clergywomen "Out of Local Church" have significantly decreased. These remarkable numbers imply that more and more clergywomen are actively engaged in local church ministry over the past twenty years regardless of race.

When marital status of participants was considered, it revealed a similar pattern; a higher percentages of "In Local Church Ministry." Clergywomen who "never married" showed an increase of 28.5 percentage points from the previous research (97.5%, previously 69%), while those "separated/divorced/widowed" showed an increase of 22 percentage points (95%, previously 73%), "currently married" showed an increase of 25 percentage points (96%, previously 71%), and the "committed relationship" had an increase of 49 percentage points (89%, previously 40%). Participants with a clergy partner (96%, previously 73%) and without a clergy partner (95%, previously 69%) also presented a similar pattern. In the case of the denominational background of participants, both groups (which included those reared Methodist and reared non-Methodist) presented the exact same percentages (both groups, 96%, previously 70%).

For a more detailed view of clergywomen who were out of local church ministry, we asked questions pertaining to temporary and permanent exits. Temporary exit applies to those who have left for a brief time and returned to the local church. The current research indicated that racial ethnic clergywomen and white clergywomen left and returned at similar rates, 17.8% and 17.4% respectively. However, in the case of racial ethnic clergywomen, the current research discovered a higher percentage with temporary

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## The UMC Clergywomen Retention Study II, Part 2 *continued from page 4*

exits (17.8%, previously 12%), while white clergywomen percentages remained consistent (17.4%, previously 17%). When marital status was considered, clergywomen who were separated/divorced/widowed and those currently married, left and returned at the same rate of 18%. These numbers are comparable to those from the previous survey. The percentage rates for clergy partner, denominational background, and ordination are also similar. Shifting to permanent exit, we defined it as a clergywoman who left the ministry and in some cases surrendered their credentials. Reviewing the responses, we see no significant increases between the numbers of this survey and the last. Probing further, we asked the clergywomen who left either temporarily or permanently their reasons for leaving. The number one response was to follow a call to another kind of ministry at 20% (previously 25%). The second responses were family responsibilities and other, both at 18% (previously other at 20%). Additional responses, such as lack of support from the hierarchical system, lack of opportunity to use gifts, too much rejection by churches, cannot maintain integrity in this system, etc. remained in the similar rates compared to our previous research. When given the opportunity to provide comments, clergywomen provided the following statements about their reasons for being either “in” or “out” of local church ministry: 1) Hit the glass ceiling; no opportunities to move up; 2) Unsupportive process of ordination, 2) Don’t like church politics, 3) Burn-out, 4) To pursue a doctoral degree, 5) Moved to conference then national staff, 6) Sabbatical leave to fine tune my ministry, 7) Appointed to D.S, and 8) Left for four months and returned.

**Responding to Why.** The previous section reviewed the number of clergywomen “In and

Out” of local church ministry. In this section, we will undertake the task of determining more specifically the reasons for such decisions. When ethnic minorities were surveyed their primary reasons for leaving local church ministry were “lack of support from the hierarchical system” (44%, white clergywomen 16%), “lack of opportunity to use gifts” (44%, white clergywomen 8%), “too much rejection by churches” (28%, white clergywomen 8%), and “cannot maintain integrity in this system” (22%, white clergywomen 5%). In comparison, white clergywomen who’s top responses were “to follow a call to another kind of ministry (22%)”, “family responsibility” (19%) and “other” (19%), racial ethnic clergywomen chose The primary reason racial ethnic clergywomen left ministry (either temporarily or permanently is the same as the primary reason clergywomen left ordained ministry permanently. Actually, in both cases, the rate for “lack of support from the hierarchical system” has increased. For racial ethnic clergywomen, the percentage increased from 27% in the previous research to 44% in the current research. For clergywomen who left ordained ministry, it was increased from 22% in the previous research to 35% in the current research. In the previous research, 48 racial ethnic clergywomen participated in this question and confirmed the same reason. In the current research, 18 racial ethnic clergywomen answered this question with the same reason. Overall, the answers provided by racial ethnic clergywomen showed increased participation in local church ministry. However, questions remain as to why racial ethnic clergywomen experience more difficulties.

When other areas such as clergy partner, previous denomination, and ordination were considered, the pri-

mary responses were either lack of support from the hierarchical system, family responsibilities, or to follow a call to another kind of ministry. Comments from participants are as follows: 1) Abuse from parishioners with no accountability for their actions, 2) Unethical behavior of Senior pastor, 3) Retirement, 4) Was discontinued in the ordination process, 5) Crisis in child’s life, 6) Wasn’t doing good self-care, 6) The moving (etc.) destroyed my health and self-esteem, 7) When I was married to a UM clergy and I had to follow his appointments, there was not always something suitable for me, and 8) Inability of UMC hierarchy to allow the congregations to be what they need to be to truly interface with the world as it exists in the twenty first century, rather than the nineteenth century.

Over the twenty-year period, dramatic changes related to clergywomen’s participation in local church ministry regardless of their race, marital status, clergy partners, or denominational backgrounds has occurred. Our current research shows that the retention rates in local church ministry of clergywomen have increased, and that many clergywomen are actively participating in local church ministry. However, the primary reason for leaving the local church ministry for clergywomen has not changed over the past two decades. Because of this and the limitations of this research, we would like to suggest several recommendations for further research.

- The data of United Methodist Clergywomen Retention Study I in the U.S. Context was collected in 1994 prior to establishment of the Order of Deacon in 1996. For an ex-

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## The UMC Clergywomen Retention Study II, Part 2 *continued from page 5*

act comparison, United Methodist Clergywomen Retention Study II in the U.S. Context followed the same format of the previous study. Because of this reason, our study did not investigate how the Order of Deacon affected discerning the call, their primary reason for seeking ordination, or why elders sought to work in the local churches. Research into the gender composition of that order and the reasons for choosing the permanent deacon order over the elder's order for both women and men could be very illuminating, and possibly could help to explain the higher percentage of women in local church ministry found in the current study. Therefore, it will be interesting to do a further research on this issue and distinguish clergywomen's vocational intention between elders and

deacons.

- A lack of support from hierarchical system was a consistent answer to many of the questions. Further research is needed on the meaning of support from the hierarchical system in a reciprocal approach. How does the UMC define it? What does the UMC view as its responsibility? How do UMC clergywomen serving in congregations define it? What do they view as the UMC responsibility? In conjunction with this inquiry, it is also important to do further study for offices of Bishop, district superintendent, general agency, and other UMC denominational offices that sustain and help clergy maintain their ministry in local churches.

- Along those same lines, with the increasing number of women serv-

ing in that same hierarchical system (district superintendents and bishops), research on their experiences would be fruitful. What support might they be attempting to provide to clergywomen under their supervision? How has it been received? What supports do they need, and how might those supports be different from when those clergywomen were in local congregations as pastors?

- While we observed actively increasing participation from racial ethnic clergywomen, we found that they still experienced racial discrimination from the hierarchical system and congregations. It will be necessary to investigate how racial ethnic clergywomen experience their struggles in the hierarchical system and local congregations.

## From the Director: Women in the World Conference 2013 *continued from page 1*

decided to address the issue of economic justice in ministry.

On April 10<sup>th</sup> 2013 the Shaw Center held its annual conference, Women in the World, with the theme "Occupy the Church: Economic Justice for Ministry in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." During the conference we shared experiences of economic injustice and suffering as it pertained to women in ministry. Although we knew economic injustice for women and ethnic minorities was widespread, we confessed as a collective that we had a hard time determining how to best address the current situations and how to respond. Our three presenters shared their particular insights on the issue. They suggested a variety of ways that participants could address the issues in their ministries. They warned us not to turn a blind eye to suffering and economic injustice; rather they implored us to deeply and sincerely engage current unjust systems and situations. They urged us to understand and embrace the reality of our



individual ministries and occurrences of injustice. This was indeed a sad moment of recognition. They challenged us to be aware of our suffering and pain, and led us to think of ways to overcome and heal. Our eight panelists shared how they understood the issues from their own positions and perspectives. They envisioned a community moving from injustice and pain to justice and hope. Even though many of them witnessed and experienced economic injustice and suffering themselves, they shared their stories of perseverance through sadness and grief. Drawing on their unique experiences they helped us to diagnose problems

and displayed how they had dedicated themselves to the work of locating ways to challenge injustice. They shared a common hope. Additionally, they shared wisdom on how best to help others who were in suffering and pain. They conveyed the message that women are not alone in this pain, in this fight, or in this suffering. Our conference taught us how to respond to suffering and how to dream, to hope, and how to heal. While it is an enormous task to overcome suffering, the stories and insights shared at the conference led us to believe that it was possible.

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# A Reflection on Vocations and Currents of Change in the Catholic Church

By Basil Considine

It has been an exciting two months in the Catholic Church. Pope Benedict XVI's announcement on February 11<sup>th</sup> of his plan to resign Catholicism's highest clerical office sent a wave of excitement through not only the Catholic Church, but the world at large as well. During Pope John Paul II's long reign, the idea of a pope resigning had been occasionally discussed – but not seriously expected. Benedict XVI's surprise announcement, therefore, caught the world by surprise and opened the floodgates of thought and speculation about new directions in the Catholic world. After all, if the head of the Church could break with almost six hundred years of tradition to resign, what other new directions and movements might be possible?

The still-recent election of Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Argentina as Pope Francis I has continued this introspection. Commentators dissect the Pope's actions and their symbolic significance – desired, intended, and otherwise – in miniscule detail, from his choice of garments and regalia to his personal tradition of foot washing on Holy Thursday to his choice of words and topics in prayers and homilies. The portrait that has emerged of a pontiff who expressly foregrounds serving the poor and needy has given great energy and inspiration to many and shaken others to whom this Christological calling has become comfortably distant. What else, many asked, might the future bring?

The question “Where is the Catholic Church now and where is it going?” hung in the air on the night of

Thursday, March 21<sup>st</sup>, during the symposium and panel discussion *Catholic Vocations in a Time of Change*. This event, co-sponsored by the Anna Howard Shaw Center and the Office of Community Life and Lifelong Learning, brought together a mix of BU faculty, students, and alums along with the Director of Vocations for the Archdiocese of Boston for a spirited set of presentations, testimonies, and discussions. On the agenda were issues in the recent past, present, and future of the Catholic Church; issues that were examined alongside personal anecdotes of the path to vocations and explorations of vocation as an intrinsic part of individual Catholic identities.

The time was especially ripe for a discussion of vocations. The election of Pope Francis I had been announced in St. Peter's Square in Rome just one week prior and Catholics around the world were still processing – as they continue to do so today – its impact. The election was in many senses historic: this was the first pope of non-European birth in modern times, the first pope *ever* from the Americas or the Southern Hemisphere, and the first time a Jesuit attained the highest office in the Catholic Church. Even the choice of papal name was an innovation, creating a new association with one of the most beloved and respected of saints: Saint Francis of Assisi (c.1181-1226). This decision, of seemingly so little broad importance before it was announced, immediately signaled to many that the new pope's mission would not be “business as usual,” but instead a vibrant and energetic return to apostolic service.

One could scarcely ask for a better example than Francis of Assisi when considering a personal call to vocations. Francis's call led him away from the trappings of his prosperous upbringing to serve the poor and sick, including victims of leprosy – perhaps the most reviled and excluded members of medieval society. He endured in his personal mission despite the mockery of his peers, violent objections – including beatings – and ostracization by his father, and even institutional opposition from the local Church authorities who would not recognize his operating outside the prescribed system of licensed preachers, existing religious orders, and tradition. Although he later founded three religious orders and took the monastic tonsure, Saint Francis was never ordained a priest. In retrospect, it is amazing – even shocking – that so much of what he did was accomplished outside of the existing Church structures.

The model of Saint Francis shows us that personal initiative, prayer, and perseverance can accomplish great things. It also shows us that these things can and often should be accomplished outside of the institutional structures of the Catholic Church, which as a globe-spanning entity will always be slower to change and react. True change *always* begins with an individual decision to act on a need; the call to vocations may be broadly issued and echoed, but is individually accepted. May we be more like Saint Francis in our conviction to do what is needed, what is right, and what we are called to do – regardless of how it fits within what has come before.





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## From the Director 2013: Women in the World Conference 2013 *continued from page 6*

When one suffers, we all suffer. When we suffer, sometimes we feel numb. We want to detach ourselves from our deeply painful emotions. Often times, we are in fear. We are sad. The reality is that these feelings are not only legitimate, they are necessary for healing. Sometimes we must sit with grief and loss. Suffering of any kind is painful. It is excruciatingly hurtful. However, suffering is not the end. As long as we help each other, we have the possibility for change. As long as we love each other, we have hope. We have hope for living. We have hope for healing together.

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## **ANNA HOWARD SHAW CENTER NEWSLETTER**

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