

The Woman's Pulpit

April-
June
2022

NEWS ABOUT ORDAINED AND LAY WOMEN IN MINISTRY THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

'Holy Solidarity' Is IAWM Assembly Theme

"Holy Solidarity: Emerging from the Pandemic" will be the theme of the IAWM Assembly held at the Bethany Retreat Center in Karlsruhe, Germany, August 26 to 28. President Dorcas Gordon notes that "unless another outbreak (of Covid 19) prevents, the IAWM assembly will be followed by the Just Community of Women and Men workshops before the World Council of Churches, and then by the WCC in Karlsruhe where IAWM is working to arrange an exhibit."

The schedule for the IAWM Assembly includes opportunities for worship and conversation, new ideas and friendships as well as the election of officers and an Executive Board. The guest presenter is the Rev. Professor Andrea Bieler, Professor of Practical Theology at the University of Basel. Her topic will be Vulnerability as a Threat and as a Resource in Light of the Pandemic. She will lead a follow-up question and answer forum.

Andrea Bieler received her doctoral degree from the University of Kassel. Since January 1, 2017 she holds the chair for Practical Theology at the University of Basel, Switzerland. From 2012 to 2016 she held the chair for Practical Theology at the Kirchliche Hochschule Wuppertal/Bethel, Germany. Prior to that she taught for 12 years at the U. S. Pacific School of Religion and the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California in the MA, MDiv and PhD programs.

Her book on vulnerability views it as a basic category for a practical theological anthropology. Further research interests include memory and religion and the transformation of violence. In cooperation with filmmaker Raif Bieler she has begun to work on different film genres in which she explores topics in the area of culture and religion. In March 2015 their film, Remembering Violence, Risky Pedagogies and Contested Aesthetics was nominated for the Hans-Lilje Award.

The Bethany Retreat Center, where we will meet, in Karlsruhe is located about 20 kilometers outside the city of Karlsruhe. It is surrounded by woods and walking trails and close to a railway station for easy access from the international airport in Frankfurt and from the events of the WCC Assembly.

Insofar as possible the Assembly will work in hybrid format—including participants present at the Assembly and those remaining at home—to facilitate participation of the greatest number of IAWM members.

We are working to livestream or Zoom Prof. Bieler's presentation and the discussion hour on Saturday, August 28. Links will be published later.

INTERNATIONAL ASSEMBLY REGISTRATION DEADLINE APPROACHES

We apologize for the lateness of this issue, and the fast-approaching deadline for "early" registering for our assembly. The transition to me, the editor succeeding LaVonne Alt-house, was more delayed than we anticipated, and the World Council of Churches decisions about holding their events kept getting delayed as well. But here we are!

Marian Shearer

First deadline is May 10. After that you may register, and find rooms at the retreat center if they are not filled.

Email your intentions to:

Carol Brown,

csbrown550@hotmail.com

as soon as possible, even if you haven't made flight arrangements yet, so we can include you in the housing list.

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First Female Bishop Elected By Anglican Church in Japan

Rev. Maria Grace Tazu Sasamori, priest of the Diocese of Tokyo in the Nippon Sei Ko Kei (the Anglican Church in Japan), has been elected as the first female bishop in Japan. She was elected as the bishop of Hokkaido at the 80th electoral synod of the Diocese of Hokkaido.

The election took place on the tenth ballot with two-thirds of the votes of the houses of clergy and laity on November 3. She accepted the result on November 26 and became bishop-elect of the Diocese of Hokkaido on the same day.

Thorne Named 1st ECS-NJ Exec Director

The Rt. Rev. William "Chip" Stokes, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of New Jersey, has named the Rev. Deacon Trisha Thorne as the first executive director of the Episcopal Community Services of the Diocese of New Jersey (ECS-NJ).

"I am thrilled that Deacon Trisha Thorne has agreed to serve as the first Director of Episcopal Community Services of the Diocese of New Jersey," said Bishop Stokes. "Trisha's faithfulness and commitment to the servant ministry of Jesus Christ is evidenced in how she has lived into her orders as a deacon since 2015. Her qualifications and extensive background in community-based outreach and research make her the ideal first director for ECS-NJ Services."

A much-demanded presenter, Thorne has been widely published in national and international scholarly journals. She has served and continues to serve on many social services boards in a leadership role, including the Millennium Development Goals Task Force and chair of the Sustainable Development Goals Task Force.

She holds a bachelor's degree from Yale University and a master's from Cornell University. She was a Fellow in the People Climate and Environment Program at the University of Wisconsin.

Thorne will assume her new post in June. Bishop Stokes concluded, "Deacon Trisha has the experience, wisdom and skill to help us all face and meet challenges. Episcopal Community Services-New Jersey and the Diocese of New Jersey are

Mandy Marshall, director for gender justice at the Anglican Communion Office, said: "I'm excited and pleased to hear the news of the first female bishop. This is a real breakthrough for Japan and will be an encouragement to ordained women everywhere but especially in Japan. Bishop-elect Tazu will need our prayers as she steps into a very male space and has the pressure and holds the hopes of Anglican women in Japan."

She succeeds Bishop Nathaniel Mokoto Uematsu, former primate of the Nippon Sei Ko Kei.

THORNE, Continued

richly blessed that this enormously capable person has been named."

Thorne has been director of the Program for Community-Engaged Scholarship/Community-Based Learning Initiative at Princeton University since 2000. It has facilitated academic-community collaborations in hundreds of courses and on a variety of issues. A colleague said, "In her work with Princeton, she is passionate about service, bridge-building, and using knowledge for social change. Trisha brings professional experience in grant-making, capability-building, and facilitation and team building."

Development Fund Honors Life Of Madagascar Theologian Ralivao

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) sees theological education as a way to promote systemic change for greater gender justice in the church and in society. That principle was at the heart of the launch in October of the Resource Coordination hub of the Helene Ralivao Fund dedicated to women's empowerment in Africa and beyond.

The Fund, set up in memory of the pioneering Madagascan theologian who was murdered in February 2020, has "two wings," explained the Rev. Chad Rimmer, LWF's Program Executive for Identity, Communion and Formation. The first is a scholarship program launched early in 2021 that has already provided study grants for ten women pursuing doctoral or masters' studies in theology and in leadership development in various African countries.

The second is the Research and Resource Coordination hub, Rimmer continued,

which is designed "to serve women and men in Africa and beyond" through courses, seminars and the publication of materials on developing gender justice work within different local contexts. This wing will be coordinated by the Tumaini University Makumira, the university of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT).

Speaking at the online launch the coordinator and dean of the university's theology faculty, Rev. Dr. Angela Obutu, explained that the initial phase of the program will run for three years starting in 2022. It will offer twice yearly seminars for some 30 participants, consisting of two weeks of tuition followed by three months of research, culminating in the publication of material to be shared with the wider LWF communion of churches.

In a country where the majority of church leaders in Africa are men, Obutu said, "it is our hope that the program will promote structural change, building capacity to advance women's rights" on the continent and beyond. Seminars will be targeted essentially at women aspiring to different levels of church leadership and are designed to train women and men to become trainers themselves in the practical application of gender justice principles.

Also speaking at the launch was Rev. Patricia Jabedu from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe, a recipient of one of the first scholarships offered by the Helene Ralivao Fund. She noted that she grew up in a rural area and endured similar challenges to those faced by the Madagascan theologian, who dedicated her life to the empowerment of women in Africa and around the global communion of churches.

global communion of churches.

Jabedu spoke about the many barriers facing girls and women in her region, from child marriage and a lack of educational opportunities to unjust inheritance laws and a lack of leadership positions in church and in society. Studying for a course on project management, monitoring and evaluation in the context of gender justice, she said, "is opening my eyes and my mind to evaluate my own church and also my own household, how we bring up our own children."

Eva Christina Nilsson, director of LWF's Department for Theology, Mission and Justice, emphasized the vital work of the Helene Ralivao Fund in "embracing and confirming the gifts and calling of all people in the church." As we remember many of our forefathers in the faith, she said, "it is so important that she (Ralivao) can now serve as a foremother who inspires women and men in our churches" to continue the work that she began. The new fund, she added, has been made possible by LWF's member churches "who heard the cry for greater gender justice and the need to support women in theology and leadership."

Former LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr. Martin Junge also praised the cooperation of all those involved in launching the new fund, which will build on existing scholarships already provided by the LWF. "We have high expectations," he said, that the research and resource development work at Tumaini University Makumira "will become a hub where strong theology is developed and women are equipped for leadership in church and society."

Malawi Church Ordains 1st Woman

The Rev. Bertha Godfrey Munkhondya became the first woman ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacrament in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malawi (ELCM) on September 26, 2021.

In a congratulatory letter to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Malawi and Rev. Munkhondya on behalf of the communion, LWF General Secretary Rev. Dr. Martin Junge expressed gratitude for Munkhondya's willingness to serve the church as an ordained minister and for the ELCM's commitment to gender justice.

"May Rev. Munkhondya's ordination inspire girls and women to pursue theological education and respond to the call to ministry. Gender justice in the church and society is our shared commitment and our witness to the world," Junge wrote.

"The LWF communion congratulates the church for the commitment and support to both women and men in theological studies, and we pray that many women will receive support and be called to the ordained ministry," LWF leadership continued.

Originally from Chisenga, Chitipa, Malawi, Munkhondya studied theology at the Tumaini University Makumira in Arusha, Tanzania, and will serve as associate pastor of the ELCM Cathedral in Lilongwe.

Bishop Dr. Joseph P. Bvumbwe presided at the event and delegations from the Lutheran Communion in Southern Africa (LUCSA) Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (representing the LWF communion), women's groups from the dioceses of ELCM, and state representatives participated in the ordination.

"The ELCM took time before it ordained a female pastor, but there is full acceptance of Rev. Munkhondya," Bvumbwe said. "We ask for your prayers for our church and encourage churches that are still meditating or discerning the process of ordaining female pastors."

The ordination closed three days of the ELCM's Women's Conference held in Lilongwe, Malawi last September.

Feminist Theology for a Just And Inclusive Church: Brazil

When **Wanda Deifelt** was riding the bus to school from her country village in southern Brazil, she never dreamed that she would go on to become a role model in the struggle for gender justice in her church and beyond. From her post as holder of the first chair in feminist theology at the Faculdades EST, one of Brazil's education and research centers, to her international work with the Lutheran World Federation, to her current job as professor at Luther College in the U.S. state of Iowa, she has inspired generations of students to work toward inclusion and equal participation of women in the church..

The immigrant family lived close to the town of Estrela in the heartland of Lutheranism in Brazil. At 14 she was sent to a church-run boarding school for people expected to become pastors, catechists or religious teachers. Rev. Dr. Deifelt was raised in a traditional German family. But growing up in South America, she says, "made me keenly aware that women had fewer opportunities to advance in society and were burdened with many more social and cultural expectations." She adds, "I also realized that many of the arguments used to justify women's inferiority were based on biblical or theological claims."

After high school, she went straight into the seminary in Sao Paulo before doing graduate studies in the United States. At that time, Deifelt notes, there were increasing numbers of women studying theology in Brazil, but no female professors teaching the subject at the seminary. She helped establish a commission of students, set up to advocate for the inclusion of topics such as "the rich history of women in the Bible." or "the importance of our foremothers in the faith."

After a five-year process, the leadership of the Evangelical Church of the Lutheran Confession in Brazil (IELCB) approved the foundation of a chair in feminist theology in 1990 and asked her to be the first appointee the following year. "The opportunity enabled me to give more visibility to women, but also to address themes like domestic violence

that were not part of the curriculum at that point," Deifelt says. "In addition, by using gender as a category of analysis, it was possible to reflect on the harsh effects that machismo has on men, too, preventing them from being attuned to their own failings."

Lutheran women were studying theology in Brazil as early as the 1950s, Deifelt continues, with the first women working in parishes in the 1970s, but they were not allowed to go forward for ordination until 1982. She herself began pastoral work in 1985 but was not ordained until 1994. This year, she adds, the IELCB will be celebrating "the 40th anniversary of women's ordination which is now widely accepted among Protestant denominations throughout the world." Last year she was among five Lutheran, Catholic and Methodist women receiving honorary degrees from Faculdades EST for their contributions to theological studies, in particular feminist theology, promoting women's empowerment in church and society.

Alongside her teaching in Brazil and the U.S. Deifelt has worked intensively at the international level, serving as theological adviser to the LWF's standing committee on ecumenical affairs and helping to draft documents, from the outcomes of the Hong Kong and Winnipeg Assemblies to the ground-breaking Lutheran-Catholic Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. Her wide ecumenical experience includes a stint as vice-chair of the advisory

Board for the World Council of Churches' Ecumenical Institute in Bossey, Switzerland, and she is currently a member of the board for LWF's Ecumenical Institute in Strasbourg, France.

Over recent years, Deifelt says, there has been growing global awareness of gender inequalities "and the detrimental effect that gender stereotyping has on all human beings." But she is deeply concerned about "the proliferation of right-wing politicians, aided by the rhetoric of Christian fundamentalism, that attempts to weaponize the Bible and Christianity to serve their political agendas." Education, she says, "is the best tool we have—both in church and society—to promote an understanding of a compassionate God who frees us to flourish and to extend God's love to each other in community."

Young people in particular, Deifelt concludes, are challenging the church to be more relevant and to create communities that better address their needs and interests. "Congregations need to find ways of being church that is no longer just Sunday morning activities, but that speaks to the things that they are passionate or worried about, like human rights and climate change," she insists. For young women, especially, the church can be an ally in their struggles, a place where the doors are open for them to come and use their gifts and talents to transform themselves and society as well."

Vilhjalmsdottir, Pioneer Woman Pastor, Reflects on Iceland's Women's Church

Women from around the Lutheran World Federation communion of churches often mention Rev. **Audur Eir Vilhjalmsdottir**, the first woman ordained in the the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland, as their inspiration and role model of female leadership in the church.

Earning her theology degree in 1962 and ordained in 1974, Rev Audur Eir began her ministry at a small fishing congregation and eventually joined other women to establish Kvennakirkjan (Women's Church) to address the challenges all women faced

in their faith communities and to rethink how the church talked about God, gender and equality.

In this Voices from the Communion interview, Rev. Ardur Eir offers a glimpse of the joys she experienced, the advancements of the church and and the future of the Women's Church and gender justice.

Tell us about your religious training as a child. What was your home like?

My home was a fun place to be and was always full of people. My dad said that we were not raised as such, but rather we just took part in the things that were happening in the family and community. I worked at KFUK (the Icelandic YWCA) from an early age and it impacted me deeply.

My theology studies were a natural continuation of my participation in the Christian community. I felt that it was a natural progression that I become a minister after my work in KFUK. It never occurred to me that others would not see that becoming a minister would be the "most likely" next step for me as a woman.

Did you have a supportive family?

I enrolled in the Department of Theology at the University of Iceland soon after my matriculation exams. At that time I was also a newlywed. Some people advised me to enroll instead in the homemaker school. But everyone in my household felt that theology was a better fit for me. I remember my grandmother said, "'Don't go to homemaker school, study theology.'" My husband and my little daughter were also always very supportive of my studies.

I remember when I came to meet the congregation that finally called me. Pastors are chosen through a general election by the congregation. I had sought to be ordained many times before at different congrega **What is the most memorable moment of your ministry?**

All of the moments I have had with the people in my congregations are memorable. I loved these people but was not elected. Then I went to this little remote village congregation of fishermen and I was received with warmth and was finally ordained. I became the first woman ordained in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Iceland when that congregation called me.

Is the National Church still attracting young women to ordained ministry?

Yes, many young women study theology and are ordained to serve as ministers today. In fact, there are so many motivated women who are making lasting changes in the church. I am confident that these women will continue positive change and influence the direction and daily activities of the church.

Well, our bishop is a woman and there are also many female deans. The chairperson of the Association of Ministers is a woman and three women are on the faculty of the Department of Theology at the University of Iceland. That would have been unthinkable forty years ago. Many of these remarkable women, including the bishop are members of the Women's Church.

Has the Women's Church expanded in focus to address the unique concerns of female clergy from diverse ethnicities?

It has only been the last two decades that Iceland has become a multi-cultural society. Although the church has recently approved a comprehensive immigration and refugee policy that vows to improve the church's services to people of foreign backgrounds, there is still no a systematic collaboration of clergy from diverse ethnicities.

Historically, there have been women of diverse national backgrounds within the Women's Church, and all the women have always sought to inform themselves on issues of diversity by inviting men and women from various fields to broaden its horizons.

Kvennakirkjan (Women's Church) is still operating. In what direction would it like to go?

The Women's Church proposes a theology that we believe is necessary precisely now, and to continue to offer women a community. At the urging of The Women's Church, the National Church of Iceland released the latest version of the New Testament using inclusive gender language.

Remembering—

M. Agnes Peebles

(1920-2022)

IAWM member Margaret Agnes Peebles, age 102, died on January 24, 2022.

Agnes was born January 1, 1920 to Robert P. and May (McCune) Peebles in Scott Township, Lawrence County, Pennsylvania. She was a graduate of Harlansburg High School, Scott Township, Pennsylvania, and the Pennsylvania State University.

After graduating from college she taught at Wesley High School, Venango County and at North Beaver Township High School, Lawrence County.

She was director of Christian Education at First Presbyterian Church, Geneva, New York and at Covenant Central Presbyterian Church, Williamsport, Pennsylvania.

She served on the Board of Christian Education of the United Presbyterian Church, USA and as Educational Consultant for Carlisle and Donegal Presbyteries in the Synod of Trinity.

She was an author of resources for Friendship Press and the Kerygma Program.

Peebles was named Educator of the Year by the Association of Presbyterian

Educators in 1986.

In 1987 she officially retired from the staff of Synod of the Trinity. Following retirement she resided at Sherwood Oaks, Cranberry Township. She was a member of Calvin Presbyterian Church, Zelienople, where she had served as an elder and church school teacher.

As all who knew Agnes will attest, she was one that had an impact on everyone she met as a result of her kindness, her friendship and her ability to influence others through her actions to

grow in their relationship with God.

Surviving her are nephews Robert Brady, Indianapolis, Indiana; George Brady, Slippery Rock, Pennsylvania; Dan (Karen) Kugel and Bill (Vicki) Kugel, both of Dayton, Ohio; Richard (Sharon) Johnson, Aliquippa; Andrew Johnson, Lawrence; Dale (Carol) Johnson, Burgettstown, all in Pennsylvania; and niece Rev. Agnes Brady, Nitro, West Virginian as well as great- and great great-grand nieces and nephews. She was preceded in death by her sisters Ida (Harvey) Brady; Luella (Harold) Johnson and Hannah (Howard) Kugel.

Funeral services will be held later in the spring. Memorials may be given to the Alexandra Noelle Johnson Supplemental Needs Trust Fund to help provide for her great-niece (mail to 2008 Bandek Lane, Lawrence, Pennsylvania 15055) or to a charity of your choice.

Rosie's Final Letter

Before her death, Rosie asked her cousin/minister/friend to send this to her IAWM Sisters:

Dear Sisters,

I want you to know what is happening to me, as you have heard that I have been in the hospital. My condition is quite serious, terminal and uncomfortable.

I have struggled with illness for the past months. This is not what I would have chosen but is OK. I thank you for the cards and notes that you have sent to lighten my time.

Now to move on to our friendship, which is more important than my passing physical condition. We have glorious memories, deep and sweet, that have sustained me and brought me joy. I have been delighted to share with you and have you share with me the lives and struggles and challenges and victories of service in our churches. The sharing of stories with women at the beginning, middle and end of their ministry lives has helped me with perspective. I am so glad to have been part of this sisterhood. It is my hope that IAWM will continue to be a source of encouragement now and in the future.

May God's Spirit and blessing be with each of you.

Rosalyn Kummer
March 3, 2022

Remembering—

Rosalyn Sammons Kummer

(1935-2022)

IAWM member Rosalyn Sammons Kummer, 87, died on March 6 at her home in Evans City, Pennsylvania, U.S.A.

Born in Union City, she was the daughter of Dana and Jean Watson Sammons. She earned degrees from the Pennsylvania State University and Purdue University in home economics and a master of divinity degree from Pittsburgh Theological Seminary.

After teaching high school and college home economics, she became a Presbyterian minister in 1976. A trailblazer, she was the first woman to be ordained in the Beaver-Butler Presbytery.

In her career she served five congregations: Crestview Presbyterian Church for nearly 24 years and St. John's United Church of Christ, Harlansburg and East Brook and Camp Run Presbyterian churches. Even after her retirement she continued performing weddings, baptisms and funerals.

It was said of her that her greatest gift was her love and compassion for others. She had a knack for making each person feel as though he or she were the most important.

She loved learning and sharing her knowledge, and was proud of her Scottish heritage. In the 1950s she hitchhiked across Europe. All her life she enjoyed working in her garden and sharing produce with friends and neighbors.

Rosalyn deeply cherished her home at Kummer Farm and said she felt blessed that she was able to remain there.

She is survived by her brother Fred (Barbara) Sammons; her sisters Elaine (Robert Woller) and Linda (Alan) Geiger and her son, Scott (Anne) Kummer, her daughter, Jean Kummer, her grandchildren, Lane Kaye and Nolan Lee Kummer and her many beloved nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her parents, her brothers George, James and Calvin Sammons, and her husband of 55 years, Lee Kummer.

Her funeral service took place at Crestview Community Church on March 11.

Memorials may be made to Crestview Community Church, P.O. Box AA, Callery, PA 16024, U.S.A.

**Registration Form IAWM Assembly, August 26-28, 2022 Karlsbad, Germany
Early arrivals and extended stay for WCC**

___ Rev. ___ Ms. ___ Dr. Last Name _____ First _____ Middle _____

and Street _____ City _____

State/Prov. _____ Zip/PC _____

Country _____ Office Phone _____ Home Phone _____

Cell Phone _____ Email _____

Special Needs or diet concerns _____

Extra charges for Lactose-free/Gluten-free meals - \$5/day _____

Registration fee: Full time, US \$175 _____ Single day registration, US \$100 _____ which day? _____

Commuter meals \$38/day _____

Housing options: (Aug 26-28 with 3 meals)

Single room w/sink - \$65/night _____

Single room w/sink and toilet -\$78/night _____

Single room w/sink, toilet and shower - \$90/night _____

Double room w/sink, toilet and shower -\$78/night/person _____

Roommate preference _____

Single room at side building w/sink - \$63/night _____

Housing option for early arrivals (August 24-26 with 3 meals)

Single room w/sink - \$60/night _____

Single room w/sink and toilet - \$72/night _____

Single room w/sink, toilet and shower - \$83/night _____

Housing option for extended stay for WCC meeting, August 28-September 8 (breakfast only)

(Registration for WCC Assembly needs to be made through WCC) date of departure _____

Single room w/sink - \$40/night _____

Single room w/sink, toilet and shower - \$63/night _____

Double room w/sink, toilet and shower -\$55/night/person _____

Roommate name _____

Send check or money order for **registration, housing and meals**, made payable to **IAWM**, with this form to:

Carol Brown, 1921 Palm St. Reading, PA 19604 USA

Or send this information **via email**, and ask Carol for her link to **PayPal**., csbrown550@hotmail.com or 484-926-2429.

First registration deadline is May 10, 2022. After this deadline housing and meals cannot be fully refunded.

More detailed train information will be sent when you register.

We recommend a refundable plane ticket in case COVID conditions change and the meeting is postponed or canceled.

In The News

USA: Rev. Dr. Edith Winters Kimbrough, Nashville, TN, was honored by her congregation, putting her on the Wall of Faith. At age 83 her life is busier than ever, she says. She thanks God for the continued strength provided each and every day.

CHANGES TO THE PRAYER CALENDAR

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