

The Woman's Pulpit

October-
December
2021

NEWS ABOUT ORDAINED AND LAY WOMEN IN MINISTRY THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

Estonian Woman Pastor Named LWF General Secretary

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) has elected Estonian theologian Rev. Anne Burghardt as its new General Secretary. She will take over its leadership on November 1, succeeding the Rev. Martin Junge who has led the 148-member communion for eleven years.

The first woman and first Central European to head the LWF, the 45-year-old Burghardt was Head of Development for the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church's (EELC) Institute of Theology and advisor to that church for international and ecumenical relations at the time of her call.

Following the announcement of her election Burghardt said:

"I am humbled by this great honor and deeply grateful for the confidence



The Rev. Anne Burghardt

me as I accept this very special responsibility in the communion. I pray for the guidance of God's Spirit. I rejoice in having the possibility to work with the Council, with member churches, and with different partners, as the LWF continues to participate in God's holistic mission. May God bless our communion so that it may be a blessing to the wider church and to the world."

Congratulating Burghardt on her election LWF President Archbishop Dr. Panti Filibus Musa said:

"She will be taking up a vital role in the leadership of our global communion of churches, helping to shape its ongoing journey and witness to the gospel, working for peace, justice and reconciliation. Rev. Burghardt brings her valuable experience and gifts into the position and I look forward to working with her."

At the EELC Institute of Theology Burghardt has worked on strengthening Lutheran theological education as an integral part of the sustainability of the church. She brings deep experience on ecumenical relations, having also served as Study Secretary for Ecumenical Rela-

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Embracing Racial Justice in Ministry: One Form of Holy Solidarity

In a first-ever on-line assembly held on Zoom July 30-31 the International Association of Women Ministers sought to empower one another by sharing stories about ways they face racism in their ministry contexts and confront it with the claims of the gospel. More than 60 IAWM members registered in advance; others joined that day and together with the speakers, about 75 persons participated. Each of the three sessions, morning, afternoon and evening, included between 30 and 40 women.

"Can You See Me?"

Our task is de-colonization which is not anti-white discrimination but undoing the harm others have done, said the Rev. Dr. Phyllis Byrd, for 30 years a mission partner in Kenya on behalf of the United Church of Christ and Disciples of Christ Global Ministries. When the African-American first encountered fellow missionaries preparing to go overseas, the others in the room assumed she was not one of them, but part of the "help." She noted that "Racial Justice is possible if we learn to see, and be transformed by what we see." She recommended taking on a new title, "cartographer," helping communities not to get lost but guiding them into Holy Solidarity.

Naming Spiritual Violence

Dr. Lori Ransom, former director of KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives, described how her parents, grandparents and she had often had to hide their First Nations lineage to survive the open policy of "removing indigenous culture, language and spirituality" in the so-called Indian schools. Recent outrage over finding remains of 215 children in the former school in Kamloops, she said, has led to more respect, but "the effects of spiritual violence have been profound and are not over with."

Matters of Life and Death

Palestine/Israel international peace-

maker Nora Arsenian Carmi said women's leadership in the Palensinian community has not always been official. However 30 years of World Day of Prayer liturgies demonstrated that women can create worship.

"In our area "the crucial issues are life and death," she said. After 74 years of occupation, the longest in history, she feels she can no longer go to public protests because she would herself be in danger of imprisonment or violence. "Of course Israel has a right to exist," she said, "but not to be a supreme power above the law."

Walk Toward Justice

Women in Brazil, reported the Rev. Eliad Dias Dos Santos, a Methodist pastor and theologian, have higher unemployment numbers than men, especially during the pandemic. Add domestic violence that happens to women who are mothers, Black and poor, and the higher mortality rate of COVID among the Black population of Brazil and see why they think the church is the only solution to their problems, and the Bible

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Official Publication of
 The International Association
 Of Women Ministers
 Rev. M. Madeline Southward, Founder
 (1877-1967)

Vol. 99 October-December 2021 No. 4

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Published quarterly.

Heinrich, 25, Named President Of Germany's Evangelical Church

On May 8 Ms. Anna-Nicole Heinrich was elected the new president of the Synod of the Evangelical Church in Germany. A 25-year-old student from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria, she is the youngest person elected to this office in the history of the EKD.

"As president of the EKD Synod, I stand for a hopeful, integrating and pragmatic church that is always reviving itself," Heinrich said in her introductory speech.

Heinrich represented the EKD at the synod and was previously a youth delegate.

She studied philosophy at the University of Regensburg and has also pursued master's degrees in digital humanities as well as human image and values. She is vice-chair of the Protestant Youth in Germany.

"I look a bit humbly at the next days, weeks, and six years at the helm of the Synod. It is a great task. My church has shown courage in electing me to this office," she told the news agency, epd, after the election.

She succeeds 79-year-old former president Irmgard Schwaetzer at the head of the church parliament. "Yes, I have less than a third of Irmgard Schwaetzer's life experience," Heinrich said, "but I hope I won't be reduced to being young. My job is to bring the concerns of the synod to our church. But of course I differ significantly from my predecessor in language and experience. We are children of two different generations, and yet we get along well."

Heinrich cites the EKD's future processes as a prominent theme of the new synod period. "We must now take up the package that the last synod packed and set ourselves the goals required," the new president said. These processes had to be linked to the churches' experiences of the last few months. "We need to reflect on the pandemic, preserve good things and focus on the spiritual and theological changes."

The chairperson of the EKD Council, Heinrich Bedford-Strohm, described the election as "historic." The leading bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bavaria said it was "a very strong sign for our church" and underlined the importance of young people in shaping the future. Bedford-Strohm has continuously advocated for greater participation of young people in the Protestant church. LWF has long promoted youth participation and leadership at all levels. (Lutheran World Information)

that the Council members have shown Burghardt—

(Continued from page 1)

tions at the LWF's Geneva Communion Office from 2013 to 2018. Burghardt was content coordinator for the LWF Twelfth Assembly, held in Wind Hoek, Namibia, in 2017 and for the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. She also serves as a governing board member of the Conference of European Churches.

Burghardt studied theology at the University of Tartu in Estonia, at the Friedrich-Alexander Universitat Erlangen-Nurnberg in Germany and at the Humboldt University in Berlin. She has a Master of Theology and is currently finishing PhD studies in the field of Orthodox liturgics.

She is married to the Rev. Arnd Matthias Burghardt, also an ordained pastor of the Estonian Evangelical Lutheran Church; they have two children.

Burghardt and Zimbabwean pastor Rev. Dr. Kenneth Mtaka were short-listed for the post by a search committee appointed by the LWF Council which elected her on June 19, receiving 28 votes to his 20 votes. There were no abstentions.

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Rohrer Elected Bishop of ELCA Sierra Pacific Synod

The Rev. Dr. Megan Rohrer of San Francisco, California, on May 8 was elected to serve a six year term as bishop of the Sierra Pacific Synod of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). She is the first transgender bishop of the ELCA and, so far as is known, of any other Christian communion. The election took place during an online synod assembly.

Rohrer was elected on the fifth ballot with 209 votes. The Rev. Jeff R. Johnson, pastor of University Lutheran Chapel at Berkeley in Berkeley, California, received 207 votes.

Her installation took place on September 11 at St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Walnut Creek, California.

The bishop served as pastor of Grace Lutheran Church in San Francisco from 2014 and as community chaplain coordinator for the San Francisco Police Department beginning in 2018, Rohrer served as executive director of the Welcome Ministry in San Francisco from 2002 to 2014, assistant night minister for the San Francisco Night Ministry from 2013 to 2018 and community garden coordinator at Project Homeless Connect from 2010 to 2012. Rohrer also served as pastor of a multi-parish call serving the homeless and hungry at Welcome Ministry from 2006 to 2014.

The bishop earned a B.A. degree from Augustana University in Sioux

Falls, South Dakota, in 2001, an M.Div. from Pacific School of Religion at Berkeley in 2005 and a D.Min. in 2017 and is currently a doctoral candidate in transformative studies at the California Institute of Integral Studies in San Francisco. (Augustana is one of the 26 ELCA colleges and universities.)

Well-known for advocating for LGBTQ rights in street activism, preaching and writing, Rohrer, 41, who uses the pronouns they and them, is also recognized for their work with the homeless. They have also attained minor celebrity status stemming from appearances on the television series, “Queer Eye”, and in profiles in Time magazine and Cosmopolitan, where they recounted their struggles as a young LGBTQ Christian and as a person coming to terms physically and spiritually with their gender.

Rohrer and their wife parent two children. (ELCA News)

Racial Justice Organizer Joins Minnesota UM Conference Staff

The Rev. Dana Neuhauser last May joined the United Methodist Minnesota Conference as its racial justice organizer. An ordained deacon, she also serves as minister of public witness at New City Church in Minneapolis.

Her part-time job has three main components:

Teaching on anti-racism: She designs and facilitates anti-racism learning modules for Minnesota clergy. During her first year all Minnesota clergy will go through her four-session training.

Training and resources: These she provides for cross-racial and cross cultural appointments. For example, she would work with the Staff Parish Relations Committee of a predominantly white congregation if a Black or Asian pastor were appointed there, providing training in cross-cultural communications and cultural expectations.

Support for clergy of color: She explained that sometimes it can feel isolating for clergy of color to navigate a white cultural situation. At such times

she seeks to notice and support their specific social, cultural and spiritual needs. She works to create and grow the systems that nurture and support the particular needs of clergy of color.

The Rev. Cindy Gregson, director of connectional ministries, explained that investing in this staff position aligns with “our call to heal a broken world” and the conference’s vision to “engage in the work of peace and reconciliation.”

“We have learned that our initiatives around diversity, inclusion and equality need to keep a consistent focus and make a long-term impact.”

(United Methodist News)

Woman Bishop for S. Africa Lutherans

On May 23 Bishop Nalenzani Josephine Sikhwari was consecrated the first woman bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa’s Northern Diocese.

A graduate of the University of Venda, she worked as a teacher from 1989 to 1991 and in 1997 completed theological studies at the University of Kwazulu Natal-Pietemanutzburg. She was ordered in the same year and served the Carluhe and Kgapane Parishes. In 2006 she became the first woman to hold the office of Dean in the Northern Diocesan Synod, where she served two terms.

LWF Congratulates

At her consecration the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) congratulated her, offering encouragement to “trust in God who is with you in the journey of the ministry in your diocese and beyond.” The greeting was presented at the consecration by the Rev. Dr. Elitha Moyo, a member of the LWF Council.

“The gifts you bring as the first woman in this position give witness to the Gospel, enrich the church, and inspire women and girls to answer to the call they received in their baptism,” wrote LWF regional Secretary for Africa Rev. Dr. Elieshi Mungure and LWF Program Executive for Gender Justice and Women Empowerment Rev. Dr. Marcia Blasi on behalf of the LWF leadership. “To build Gender Justice in the church and society is our shared commitment,” Blasi and Mungure wrote.

“The LWF is aware of your leadership capacities within the ELCSA and in the ecumenical settings, hence the wealth of experience, knowledge and relationships that you bring will enrich the entire church in fulfilling its mission of just and inclusive leadership.”

Ecumenical Participation

The Evangelical Church in Zimbabwe Presiding Bishop Kenneth Sibanda joined local bishops of the ELCSA in the consecration service. ELCSA Interim Presiding Bishop AM Mnisi presided and church leaders and guests from South Africa and other churches participated.

(Lutheran World Information)

Tiktok Meant for 7 Reached 1.7 Million

When the coronavirus pandemic struck in Wesham, Lancashire, England, the first lockdown brought with it a need for the Rev. Anne Beverley of Christ Church to stay in touch with the teenagers in her congregation. So she filmed on the social media platform, Tiktok, she did not expect what to unfold next.

In three days her film on the Tiktok account @ChristChurchWesham was seen, not just by seven local teenagers, but by 1.7 million people around the world.

“We just sat at home watching the numbers go up every time we refreshed our phones,” she said. By last May five or six videos were being posted each week; they ranged from dance and singing to short sermons while walking the dog. The church had amassed more than 6,000 followers and was receiving 1,000 comments each week, including questions about the Bible and where God is in the pandemic.

Every commenter was prayed for and replied to by a team at the church.

“Tiktok isn’t the place for deep theological debate,” Beverley said, “But we can direct people to our YouTube account where we did a whole series on difficult questions.”

“We hope and pray that some of these seeds that we are scattering will produce fruit in the future,” she added.

Interest is already being piqued. One person told her that they had become a Christian after seeing her Tiktok posts, while another expressed starting to think about faith as restrictions began to be eased, the result of those posts.

As the lockdown team at Christ Church, Wesham, had no plans to ease their Tiktok involvement—they will keep posting and being present.

(The Church of England News)

Ordination

Roman Catholic Women Priests Springfield, Illinois

On September 4 in the Wyndham Springfield City Center the **Rev. Mary Keldermans** was elected bishop of the Great Waters area. Presiding bishops were Joan Houk, Andrea Johnson, Jane Krayzonowski, Nancy Meyer, Jane Marchant, Suzanne Thiel, Jane Via and Christine Mayr-L umetzberger.

Faith Groups Oppose Gender Violence

In a statement to the United Nations Human Rights Council the Lutheran World Federation has called for increased efforts to combat violence against women.

Presenting the statement on June 28, LWF’s Advocacy Officer for Gender Justice, Sikhonzile Ndolvu, underlined the role of religious communities and faith-based organizations that work to create awareness, engage in advocacy efforts and support survivors.

“Violence against women cuts across race, religion, ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, and social class,” said Ndolvu to Lutheran World Information. “As a faith-based Christian organization, the LWF stands ready to work with ecumenical partners and secular organizations to step up efforts to end this scourge.”

Statement on Violence Against Women

The Lutheran World Federation is deeply concerned by the alarming rate of violence against women globally.

One in three women experiences physical or sexual violence in her lifetime. Adolescent girls are at a higher risk worldwide, with one in ten, or around 120 million girls, having experienced “forced intercourse or other forced sexual acts” at some point in their lives. Of these, at least 15 million alone have been raped.

Rights-holders across the globe are grappling with long-term effects of VAW, including physical and emotional pain, trauma, unwanted pregnancies and even loss of lives.

To combat violence against women

and promote human rights for all, religious communities and faith-based organizations must play a central role. They offer a vital contribution to creating awareness, forming and implementing collective advocacy efforts and supporting survivors.

We therefore call upon the council to:

- Redouble its efforts to combat violence against women.
- Include religious actors in efforts to end violence against women given their capacity and outreach to survivors.
- Ensure that member states hold perpetrators accountable and implement policies and legislation to end violence against women.

And we call upon member states to:

- Fully cooperate with United Nations human rights bodies and mandates to promote the protection of women’s human rights and end violence against women.
- Adopt survivor-centered approaches, including appropriate health services and psychosocial and economic support for survivors. (Lutheran World Information)

Additions to Prayer Calendar

Address and email changes:

Dora Arce-Valentin (she is in Cuba, not Switzerland) doritarce@gmail.com

Beverly Banyay bjbanyay@juno.com

Lola J. Turnbull 4174 Meadowview Blvd Ext New Castle, PA

16105 pastorljt@yahoo.com UM

Rachel Cole Turner 700 N Highland Ave Apt 112 Pittsburgh, PA 15206-25

October 22-28 (New Member)

Liz Greville 33b Cambridge St. Masterton 5810, New Zealand

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December 24-31 (New Members)

Shari Burgoyne 49 Roberts Rd. Masterton 5810 New Zealand

shariburgoyne@gmail.com Interfaith

Brenda Moten 9061 Paddington Pkwy Verona, WI

nserviv4life@outlook.com Presbyterian

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African Rural Pastor Meets Challenges

Every Sunday the Rev. Annamore Kahlari awakens before sunrise to pack a bag for her long walk. She is the pastor in charge of Zimbabwe's Chikore Circuit, Makoni Buhera District. She journeys about 15 miles each way, carrying a satchel containing a Bible, hymnbook and bottle of water. Her destination is not just one local church, but five.

Chikore Circuit includes Chikore, where the parsonage is located, Nemanje, Chitslwa, Manyere, and Nyamazira United Methodist churches. "I feel renewed each day," Kahlari said, "as I walk from local church to local church, conducting my door-to-door visitation to the elderly members and their grandchildren.

"The weather is very hot, especially in summertime, and very cold in winter season; moreover, we do not have electricity," she continued.

Only one of the churches, Chikore, has an actual sanctuary. At the other four churches, the congregation gathers outdoors for worship.

"Rev. Kahlari is such a strong woman of God," said Sekulu Edward Haparimwe of Nemanje United Methodist Church. Along with visiting members she conducts funerals and provides counseling. "This pastor is always there for us," he added, "despite the distance she walks alone or is sometimes accompanied by her lay leaders or a pastor-parish committee member."

Mbuya Loveness Chikotara, 82, described Kahlari as a visionary, loving pastor.

"Since the Covid-19 lockdown, Rev. Kahlari has been there for us," Chikotara said. "She schedules quality time to be with us, the old-aged members in the circuit, teaching, counseling and praying with us."

Transportation is an ongoing challenge, Kahlari said, noting that travel can take five to six hours each way.

"I have a motorbike in my circuit," she said, "but I cannot use it because of the terrain of the road, and I have a leg problem." District Superintendent the Rev. Diana Matikiti said, "Geographically this is the biggest circuit in Zimbabwe East Annual Conference, which is composed of 29 circuits that are very rural." (United Methodist News)

1st Scholarships from Ralivao Fund Support African Women Scholars

The legacy of Malagasy Lutheran Church (MLC) pioneer woman theologian Helene Ralivao will live on through a new program dedicated to women's theological education and leadership development in Africa.

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) introduced the Helene Ralivao Fund during an online meeting on June 24 which was attended by the first 10 women to receive the study grants. The students come from LWF churches in Cameroon, Ethiopia, Mada-

gascar and Zimbabwe. They pursue doctoral and masters' studies in theology and in leadership development. All of them study at church-run seminaries and universities in their respective countries or within the African region.

During the meeting, several of the candidates and LWF representatives paid tribute to Ralivao for her inspiration and commitment to theological education, gender justice and women's empowerment. The Malagasy Lutheran Church theologian was murdered in February 2020 in Madagascar.

"As the pioneer group of this scholarship program, we hope that you will be inspired to bring to light the barriers that prevent women from participating in God's church where all—male and female—are called to serve together and exercise leadership with dignity and power," said Rev. Dr. Elieshi Mungure, LWF regional secretary for Africa.

Promote Systemic Change

The fund will provide scholarships for women studying theology in the LWF African region and coordinate research and resource development on issues related to the intersection between theology, gender and leadership.

Explaining the fund's purpose, Rev. Chad Rimmer, LWF program executive for Identity, Communion and Formation, said "The LWF sees theological education as a way to promote systemic change toward the full, meaningful participation of women" in the leadership of member churches. "The goal is to empower women in the church, build their theological, biblical, conceptual skills, mobilize them to share knowledge, and through that contribute to processes of liberation and structural change within society and the church," he said.

Within the LWF Ralivao was secretary for the Women in Church and Society network in Madagascar and in the regional Lutheran Communion in Cen-

tral and Eastern Africa and a member of the Advisory Committee for Theological Education in Africa. She represented her church as a delegate to the LWF Assemblies in Hong Kong in 1997 and in Winnipeg, Canada, in 2003.

A Charismatic Leader

In her tribute, MLC Deputy General Secretary Ms. Toromare Mananato remembered Ralivao as an outstanding woman of "faith and hope." She spoke of "a charismatic and hardworking leader who was dedicated to women's theological education and who never gave up on her dream that women's ordination in the Malagasy Lutheran Church will come some day."

Ralivao was among the first women students at the Lutheran Theological Seminary in Fianarantosa in 1974. She went on to graduate with a Master of Sacred Theology degree from Wartburg Theological Seminary in Dubuque, Iowa, U.S.A., in 1989.

Between 1971 and 1987 she served her church in different roles in the central region of Fianarantosa. She started as regional secretary and treasurer for Sunday school, youth work and church workers' associations with also teaching at the theological seminary. From 1990 to 2009 she was national general secretary of the MLC women's association. She was also general secretary of the Protestant women's federation in Madagascar and founder of a women's cooperative, among other roles.

Ralivao's work included support to national, regional and global campaigns to end violence against women, and assisting orphans and homeless children. At the time of her death at the age of 67, she was a mentor and director of the ILOFAV women's vocational training center, which she helped to establish in 1997.

LWF member churches and partners provide funds for this scholarship.

(Lutheran World Information)

Reflective Supervision: New Way To Support Clergy

The United Methodist Church's Minnesota Conference is conducting a pilot program of reflective supervision, a leadership formation practice that provides support and accountability for a clergyperson's development and well-being.

The program is being launched in partnership with the United Methodist General Board of Higher Education and Ministry in the United States and the Wesley House in Cambridge, England. The initial group of clergy benefiting from it will be the third-

year participants of the Minnesota Conference's Clergy Leadership Academy.

Judy Thone, Minnesota Conference's director of leadership development, who is coordinating the pilot, says it's exciting to be one of the first annual conferences to adopt this innovative way to care for and build up clergy leaders. (Only a few others are launching similar reflective supervision pilot programs: Iowa, Tennessee and Great Plains.)

Aside from Thone, the other trained and certified reflective supervisors for the Minnesota pilot are Revs. Cindy Gregorson (director of connectional ministries), Elizabeth Macauley, Susan Nienaber (superintendent for congregational vitality and Big Waters district superintendent) and Cynthia Williams (River Valley district superintendent).

Reflective supervision gives clergy a safe place to explore in some depth specific challenges they are facing within their ministry and/or personal life. Participating Minnesota clergy will meet with one of the trained supervisors for about 90 minutes every six to eight weeks to reflect on an issue of their choosing. The supervisors will provide processes that will help the clergyperson come away with deepened insights on the issue and next steps to take.

How It Began

Jane Leach, who serves the Methodist Church of Great Britain, developed the reflective supervision process. In her book, "A Charge to Keep: Reflective Supervision and the Renewal of Christian Leadership," she explains: "The role of the reflective supervisor is not to give missional direction or coercive instruction to the supervisee, but to create intentional space for the exploration of the significant ministry issues that arise for them within the framework of the expectations, beliefs and priorities that shape their context and work. Reflective supervision can support those in the early stages in ministry and those who

are struggling in ministry. However, the need for reflective supervision is conceived as being ministry-long, for those with all levels of experience, and who are serving at all levels of the Church's life."

How it works

Clergy may bring three big categories of topics to reflective supervision sessions:

Restorative topics include issues of total well-being and increasing clergy resilience;

Formative topics include talking through what the clergy person doesn't know or is learning, with an objective of increasing the clergy's capabilities.

Normative topics, including boundaries and ethics checks, identifying burn-out, mental health, or emotional well-being risks, and recognizing risks to the congregation, community, or clergy person's ministry.

Helping Clergy Do Their Best

"How can we resource and coach clergy to help them be the best leaders and do the best ministry work?" asked Thone. "We don't have a system in the UMC for this."

Currently, within annual conferences a small number of superintendents supervise a large number of clergy in a geographic area assigned to them. Superintendents have limited time to devote to each of the dozens of clergy and churches in their districts. By comparison, in corporate or non-profit settings it is more common for supervisors to have oversight of eight or ten people and to give more personalized management and focus to each person's development.

One thing Thone learned from Leach, whom she traveled to England to learn from firsthand pre-pandemic, is that the effective supervision process is intended to be a means of grace. "It isn't just

about management," said Thone. "It's really this unique combination of bringing God's grace and perspective—like you might see in spiritual direction work, but giving that kind of process to all clergy."

In the Methodist Church of Great Britain all clergy go through six reflective supervision sessions each year. A five-year study of those clergy revealed significant benefits:

- Increased clergy well-being;
- Reduced clergy anxiety;
- Increased trust within the life of the church;
- Strengthened boundaries and role clarity in ministry and oversight;
- Increased clergy toolkits for dealing with conflict, change, and complex dynamics; and
- Emboldened clergy who take appropriate risks in mission and intervene in an early state to challenge practices that cause them.

Thone hopes to see similar results in the Minnesota Conference.

Reflective supervision, which is dedicated to wholistic development rather than coaching, is unlike any other process which has been previously available to Minnesota clergy. In the coming years, after the pilot program, it will become available to all pastors in the conference.

"We are excited to bring this opportunity to Minnesota and we strongly believe that the reflective supervision process is key to our Journey toward Vitality and our commitment toward developing missional leaders here in Minnesota," said Thone.

Report by Karla Hoved
To United Methodist News

**Assembly XI
Of the World Council
Of Churches
Will meet in Karlsruhe, Germany
August 29-September 8, 2022.**

**IAWM will meet in Assembly
At Bethany Retreat Center
Outside Karlsruhe
Preceding the WCC Assembly.**

Details in the next two issues.

Holy Solidarity—

(Continued from page 1)

why they think the church is the only solution to their problems, and the Bible is only in their favor, so they need not organize for justice. It is hard to counteract those who tell indigenous people that they do not need COVID vaccine because their survival is up to the will of God, not science. The people saying that, she said, do so with an eye on the land the indigenous folks live on, not with any care for their welfare.

“It is a constant challenge to walk toward justice, but we persist because we want our sisters to be free,” she said.

Race Is A Social Construction

In Cuba, said the **Rev. Dora Arce-Valentin**, Presbyterian pastor and seminary professor, the word that means cultural identity—“jiago”—identifies the mix of realities that surround people because of the color of their skin. Race is not scientific or biological, she said, but a social construction with its roots in the 15th century attitudes that Europeans thought justified them to convert the “cursed” natives or slave Black Africans. And it is not only social, she reminded listeners, but economic. A class struggle which expresses the subjugation and segregation of racism. Cuba’s efforts at social equality under Communism, she said, have improved many things, including the number of people in higher education. But European hegemony is still located in how Cubans do arts, the economy and the like, and racism is still supported by a patriarchy that assumes male superiority.

The first challenge, she said, is to reverse all those old colonial attitudes. It is a long process to decolonize the Bible, putting aside how it has been used to support colonialism, “but we do not tire,” she said.

Second, we are called to deconstruct “Binarism,” the assumption that things must be one way or the other. It is a

necessary countercultural exercise, she said, to celebrate diversity; to claim “Black” as African and not suppress those roots; to challenge a too-narrow definition of marriage, rewriting the Cuban family code.

Turn Toward Racism

She was called names as a child, the **Rev. Dr. Monica Melanchthon** told the assembly, things like “blackie,” but her parents had mostly shielded her from the discriminations of caste as she grew up in India, and now her main identification is Christian. So she had to learn to turn toward racism and sexism, instead of the learned behavior of turning away or ignoring them; now as a professor of Hebrew Bible in Melbourne, she has theological language to describe race and caste. And in Australia where she now lives, Melanchthon said, she has ceased seeing discrimination against Aboriginals as unique, and sees many convergences between the experience of Dalits in the Indian caste system, and that of Aboriginals in Australia. “Any feminist work in India,” she said, “must see the interlinking of gender, caste and class discrimination.” So she developed a critical, contextual and liberating approach to scripture, reading the texts and traditions primarily from the perspective of marginalized people. Racism, and how to combat it, has “influenced my pedagogy and my preaching.” Feminist contextual Bible study is not just a Western thing, “but we in the global south are also critical interlocutors of interpretive strategies.”

Also important is Biblical work in an interfaith context; it is essential to describe a women-friendly image of God in a Hindu land, she said. “We live in a religiously pluralistic society, so we need a relational hermeneutic and collaborative readings with women of other faiths.” The project of justice, feminism and liberation must be “a wholistic ministry that has no borders; a patchwork

quilt of all kinds.”

Overlapping Oppressions

Author and seminary professor **Dr. Linda E. Thomas** described an incident from her fourth grade year, when the Baltimore girl was bussed to an integrated school, and called names by her classmate Debbie. “You are nobody, you are nothing,” Debbie said. So Thomas experienced and expected racism from an early age; “I knew the problem was Debbie’s, not mine, but I made it the focus of my work.”

And in college and beyond, as her experience was corroborated by mentors and teachers, she came to understand that racism was an institutional, not personal, problem. But having been prepared to confront racism, she said, she was less prepared for the sexism she encountered. Thus she learned what is now called intersectionality—in this context, the overlapping of oppressions. Like the story of King Solomon and the two babies, or the story of Saul being converted to Paul, there are many ways to resist the overlapping oppressions. “As an African American woman,” she said, “who experiences both sexism and racism, I refuse to be cut in half.” Racism and colonialism are two other “isms” that intersect, leading to exploitation such as that of the Indian schools and women in the global south. “It complexifies everything when you add sexism to racism,” she said. “You must contextualize these things for you.”

Reflections and Rituals

At the end of an evening and day rich with insights and stories, the assembly was led in reflection and ritual by the **Rev. Kwame Pitts**, pastor and campus minister in Buffalo, NY. With candles, water, soil and stones, she invited participants to make our reflections both concrete and spiritual, and led the group in music and meditative prayer.

In Closing

This first virtual assembly had few glitches; many things were learned and dozens of women in ministry were enriched by invitations to holy solidarity from other women in ministry all over the world. As IAWM President Dorcas Gordon said in opening the assembly, “Women empower each other.”

Prayer Calendar Changes

December 24-31 (Continued)

Kathleen Gibbons Schuck 395 Kendel Place Blue Ball, PA 19422

kschuck55@gmail.com RCWP

Suzanne E Schwarz-Green 57 W. Fifth Ave. Collegeville, PA 19426

PastorSuzanneSG@gmail.com UCC

Jyoti S Singh Pillai St. James Church Delhi, India 110006

jyotisamuelsingh@gmail.com CNI

In the News

England

A vote on June 30 to change the definition of marriage in the British Methodist Conference passed overwhelmingly by 254 in favor and 46 against.

Freedom of conscience clauses mean ministers will not be forced to conduct such weddings if they oppose the move.

Same sex marriage is not allowed in the Church of England and the Roman Catholic Church. However it is welcomed in the Scottish Episcopal Church, the United Reformed Church and the Quakers in Britain.

The Methodist Church is the fourth largest Christian denomination with about 164,000 members across more than 4,000 churches.

During 16 days of Activism Against Gender-based Violence (Nov. 24 to Dec. 10) this year, Anglican Communion social media channels will feature video messages produced globally by young Anglicans.

France

On July 21, the eve of the, the feast day of St. Mary Magdalene, the French movement, *Toutes Apotres* (All Are Apostles), invited women of all faiths around the world who are excluded from

worshiping together with men or excluded from offices of leadership in their faith to see themselves as sisters of this movement.

One year ago leaders of this French Roman Catholic movement met to prepare for the demonstration they would make following worship the next day. They worshiped, then, to demonstrate their conviction they are called to be priests or fill other Roman Catholic leadership positions, presented themselves to officials of the church who could recommend them as priests or for other leadership roles. All were rejected because they are women.

This year each woman returned to the same official who interviewed her last year and rejected her. They experienced the same rejections. It is likely they will repeat this witness in the future.

Liberia

The Rev. Dr. Yar Donlah Gonway-Gono was named president of the United Methodist University of Liberia, effective June 2.

United States

United Methodist Bishop Minerva G. Careaño was elected chair of the

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California Endowment's governing board last May. She has served on the board since 2015.

The Rev. Dr. Dominique A. Robinson has been named assistant professor of preaching and **the Rev. Jee Hai Park**, assistant professor of New Testament at the Episcopal Seminary of the Southwest in Austin, Texas.

The Episcopal Diocese of Pittsburgh elected **the Rev. Ketlen A. Solok** its bishop; she will be consecrated and installed on November 13.

Effective July 1, Virginia Theological Seminary welcomed **Rev. Dr. A. Katherine Grieb** as director of its center for Anglican Communion Studies.

Womanist religious educator and play facilitator **Dr. Latisha R. Lockhart** was appointed Assistant Professor of Christian Education at Union Presbyterian Seminary, effective July 1.

The Rev. Dr. Teri McDowell, formerly a college chaplain, has succeeded **the Rev. Dr. Jill Duffield** as editor and publisher of *Presbyterian Outlook*.

With this issue, **the Rev. Dr. LaVonne Althouse** has completed 50 years of editing *The Woman's Pulpit*.

(From *Episcopal News Service*, *Bridget Mary's blog*; *United Methodist News*, *Presbyterian Mission News*)