

# The Woman's Pulpit

April-June 2023

NEWS ABOUT ORDAINED AND LAY WOMEN IN MINISTRY THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

## First Woman Ordained in Holy Land

### Sally Azar becomes the first Palestinian woman from Jerusalem to be ordained.

The Rev. Sally Ibrahim Azar was ordained to the Christian ministry in Lutheran Redeemer Church in Jerusalem's Old City on January 22, 2023.

Azar is only the fifth woman pastor in the Middle East. The others are in Lebanon, Egypt and Syria, according to Religion News Service (RNS).

She said she never expected to be the first Palestinian woman ordained, or to break a glass ceiling for other Arab women in Jordan and Palestine.

RNS reporter Daoub Kuttab quoted Azar as saying, "I grew up in this church and I witnessed my Dad as pastor, but the decision to study theology was my own." Her father, the Rev. Sani Ibrahim Azar, is the bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land.

Azar, 26, said she regretted that her teachers from Lebanon, where she studied theology before finishing up in Germany, could not be present.

Her assignment will be to lead services and Bible studies in Jerusalem and in Beit Sahour, in the occupied West Bank, for English speaking congregations, school and youth ministries..

Azar is a council member of the Lutheran World Federation. Her colleague, the Rev. Dr. Munther Isaac, pastor of the

Lutheran church in Bethlehem, says this step is important for the church in the Middle East, and long overdue. He says he looks forward to introducing Azar as a role model at local Lutheran schools, which teach children of all traditions, and Muslims.

"Everywhere you have a patriarchal society and culture, this (ordaining women) is a major step," said the recently retired Archbishop of the Church of Sweden, Antje Jackelen. "Since

I've been ordained for over 40 years, I've met many people who didn't think it was possible. But now they've seen women actually serving as pastors, as bishops, as archbishops, we know it works and we know that it's actually in accord with the Bible."

*From RNS article by Daoub Kuttab and BBC news report on line, 22 January 2023.*

**New! On-line IAWM meet-ups for fun and connection, and mutual encouragement.**

**Easter tide : May 1, 2023  
9 a.m. to 11 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time**

**Email Marian for the Zoom link: [uccrev77@gmail.com](mailto:uccrev77@gmail.com)**



Remembering Roswitha Golder, 1938-2023. Here she is with IAWM member (now vice president) Ella Sonawane at our centennial assembly in Pittsburgh, 2019. See page 3.



# The Woman's Pulpit

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(1877-1967)

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# Updates for Prayer Calendar

## Prayer Calendar additions:

### May 20-26

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REF PRESBY AFRICA

Barbara Namuddu Luwafu Makindye  
division Kampala 0412 Uganda  
[namuddubarbra93@gmail.com](mailto:namuddubarbra93@gmail.com) REF  
PRESBY

### June 24-30

Maurine Redenbach 93 Warrah  
Street, Peak Hill NSW  
2869 Australia UC A

### Sept. 24-30

Kim Worthington 19 Avon Circle,  
Unit D Rye Brook, NY 10573  
[Bible.matters.eternally@gmail.com](mailto:Bible.matters.eternally@gmail.com)  
CHRISTIAN

### October 1-7

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[akelloharriet37@gmail.com](mailto:akelloharriet37@gmail.com)  
REFORMED

### October 29-Nov 4

Sanya Beharry 52 Tateco Ave,  
Harmony Hall SanFernando Trinidad  
&Tobago [sanyabeharry@gmail.com](mailto:sanyabeharry@gmail.com)  
PRESBY

### December 24-31

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13 Göttingen37075 Germany  
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0412 Uganda  
[kalajjamercey@gmail.com](mailto:kalajjamercey@gmail.com) REFORMED

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## Can you help find new emails for these members?

Beverly Bingle  
Sheril Davidson  
Brenda Moten  
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## Remembering: Beverly June Faulk

The Rev. Beverly Faulk, 82, died June 27 in Hudson, Michigan after a month-long stay in the hospital. She was a past president of IAWM.

She was born to Ruby “Pat” Hayre and Elmer Morris Faulk on May 29, 1940.

She graduated from Bowling Green University in Kentucky, and taught school in Flint, Michigan, and Asheville, North Carolina. She felt called to ministry, attended Boston University School of Theology, and was ordained an Elder in the United Methodist Church on Jan. 3, 1972, by Bishop Francis Gerald Ensley. After serving United Methodist parishes in Commercial Point and Pleasantville, Ohio, Beverly entered chaplaincy and served 25 years at Methodist Hospital in Indianapolis, Indiana, focusing mostly on neonatal care.

While working at Methodist Hospital, Bev finished her Ph.D. In counseling. After retirement she relocated to Hudson, Michigan, where she became the co-owner of the local newspaper, the Hudson Post-Gazette, in 2018.

She met Barbara Ireland, the love of her life, in 1997 and they married in 2013.

Bev was a member of the board of directors for the International Association of Women Ministers from 1974-81, and president of IAWM from 1977-79.

She is survived by her wife Barbara Ireland, children Kish Conway and Rayna Defoor, grandchildren Aaylah Conway and Dante Defoor Jr., and great-grandson Ellis Keeling. Services were in Hudson, Michigan July 5.

**IAWM’s Renewed Website Is Live!**  
[www.womenministers.org](http://www.womenministers.org)

**Check out photos, history, back issues of the Pulpit, and more.**

## Remembering: Roswitha Golder

IAWM received word of the death Feb. 26 of the Rev. Dr. Roswitha Golder, of Geneva, Switzerland, longtime member, board member and European regional representative.

She is remembered as an ecumenist, feminist, and pastor to Latin American ministries in Geneva. Her family wrote that it was sudden and unexpected. Roswitha was 84.

The Rev. Nicole Ashwood of the World Council of Churches (WCC) said of her, “Roswitha was diminutive in stature, but a giant in defending the rights of the marginalized, particularly immigrants.”

Former director of Witnessing Together, a Swiss-based ministry to migrants, Roswitha was a minister of the Swiss Protestant Church, ordained in 1991.

Her colleagues in the IG Feministische Theologinnen wrote that they wanted to remember her as active, engaged. “Up until the end Roswitha enjoyed her life actively and made choices for herself,” they wrote. “Thank you for the adventures and trips, valleys and mountain tops; for all our conversations, quick responses and discussions. Thank you for listening, and for loving us just as we are, which made us into the persons we are.”

Ashwood of the WCC said, “Roswitha was always offering a smile, and words of encouragement to those within her sphere of influence, and supported the work of the

Just Community of Women and Men.”

When a swollen foot prevented her from attending the IAWM and WCC assemblies last August, Roswitha offered her place and meals to someone who needed them; so Xin Shue, a young theological student from China, was able to attend in her place. All who remember Roswitha have similar stories of her generosity.

Fluent in German, Spanish and English, Roswitha navigated the ecumenical world with panache. She wrote feminist and liberation theology, World Day of Prayer reflections, reports on IAWM assemblies, devotionals, and was the primary writer for the 2022 European Christian Women’s support for Ukraine.

The Rev. Dr. Ofelia Ortega, former rector of the ecumenical seminary in Cuba, wrote that “for our people in Latin America and especially in Cuba, Roswitha was our dear sister, always giving good news that sustained us.” She followed the example of Jesus Christ, Ortega said, always protecting the most vulnerable and excluded people. “Her liturgy and preaching in the Latin American community in Geneva was an inspiration for us.”

She was Swiss Protestant, Ortega said, but “with a ministry that was an example for women from the North, South, West and East. Hasta Luego Roswitha!”

Services were held March 12 in Geneva. Roswitha is survived by her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Granddaughter Kira Ebner wrote. “Thank you for your kind words and condolences. Roswitha will be missed so sorely by so many.”

IAWM members who join the Zoom conversation on May 1 may also share remembrances..

*(From correspondence and WCC news updates, with thanks to Margarethe Galbraith-Cordes for translation help.)*



April-June 2023/3

## US Southern Baptist Churches dismiss congregations with women pastors

The Southern Baptist Convention, the largest Protestant denomination in the United States, has removed five churches from its fellowship because they have women serving as pastors.

The five include Saddleback Church, a California congregation which was one of the largest in the denomination. **Stacie Wood**, teaching pastor at Saddleback and wife of lead pastor Andy Wood, said that despite her Southern Baptist roots, “I’m serving Jesus under the authority and in alignment with my spiritual leaders. We believe women can be gifted and empowered as teachers and pastors.”

The other four that were expelled are New Faith Mission Ministry in Griffin, Georgia; St. Timothy’s Christian Baptist Church in Baltimore, Maryland; Calvary Baptist Church in Jackson, Mississippi; and Fern Creek Baptist Church near Louisville, Kentucky.

**The Rev. Linda Barnes Popham** of Fern Creek Church has been serving as her church’s pastor for 30 years. She reported to National Public Radio (NPR) that the Southern Baptist Convention investigated her role as pastor three years ago, and her church was not punished.

**Pastor Minnie R. Washington** of St. Timothy’s told NPR that the church had no relationship with the Southern Baptist Convention and is not under their authority. “Perhaps those individuals will remember that their first preacher/teacher was their mother,” she said. “And in Timothy’s life it was his mother and his grandmother. St. Timothy’s. . . follows Jesus Christ and not the SBC.”

At least one of the churches plans to appeal the decision to disfellowship them, which means the issue will be discussed at the denomination’s June assembly.

Congregations of the SBC cannot be told what to do, in the denomination’s loose polity; but they can be declared out of fellowship with the larger body.

*From Jaclyn Diaz’s report to National Public Radio, March 2, 2023, and Associated Press article March 1 by Deepa Bharath and Peter Smith*

## IAWM dates to remember

IAWM Board of Directors agreed at its February meeting to host two on-line gatherings a year, for connecting and celebrating together between in-person assemblies.

At the **Eastertide gathering May 1, 2023**, we will reserve some time to remember Roswitha Golder and celebrate her ministry. It will be at 9 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time on Zoom. Email Marian at: [ucce77@gmail.com](mailto:ucce77@gmail.com) for the link.

**Reformation-tide Zoom gathering will be Nov. 1.** We will vary the time in order to make it easier for people in various time zones.

The board anticipates the **next IAWM international assembly will be in Puerto Rico in summer 2024.** Dates will be published as soon as reservations have been made.

## French Elected Bishop of New Jersey

[Diocese of New Jersey] The Episcopal Diocese of New Jersey has elected the Rev. Sally French to serve as the 13th bishop of the diocese. Pending the required consents, she will be consecrated and installed as the bishop of New Jersey on June 24, succeeding Bishop William H. “Chip” Stokes, who is retiring.

French currently serves as canon for regional ministry and collaborative innovation in the Diocese of North Carolina. Prior to joining the diocesan staff, she spent 20 years in parish ministry, serving congregations of many sizes and types. Raised in Toronto, Canada, French earned a bachelor’s degree from Trinity College, University of Toronto, a Master of Divinity through the Toronto School of Theology, and a Doctor of Ministry degree from Virginia Theological Seminary. She was ordained a priest in 2001. She and her husband Clarke have two children living at home.

“I believe the Holy Spirit has led us to a remarkable leader who is deeply grounded in the faith and love of Jesus Christ,” Stokes said. “Canon French brings gifts and skills in ministry that are well aligned to address the needs and challenges facing the church and the Diocese of New Jersey at this moment in its life and history. I look forward to welcoming her and her family to the Diocese of New Jersey and serving with her in this exciting time of transition.”

*From Episcopal News Service*

## Kelly Brown Douglas to receive two teaching awards

**The Very Rev. Dr. Kelly Brown Douglas**, dean of Union Seminary’s Episcopal Divinity School in New York City, has been chosen for two major teaching awards.

In December she was named winner of the 2023 **Grawemeyer Award in Religion** for the ideas in her book “Resurrection Hope: A Future Where Black Lives Matter.”

The University of Louisville and Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary jointly give the religion prize, which carries a \$100,000 award.

In February the Seminary of the Southwest announced Douglas would receive the **McDonald Teaching Award**. It is given every year in recognition of exceptional teaching in the spirit of the award’s namesake, the Very Rev. Durstand R. McDonald.

The seminary’s dean said Douglas “teaches at the intersection of church and academy, classroom and public square, research and advocacy. She models for us what a public theological voice can look like, which is to say, she enacts teaching as a common good.”

Douglas has announced she will retire at the close of the academic year. She also serves as the Canon Theologian at the Washington National Cathedral and Theologian in Residence at Trinity Church Wall Street. *Episcopal News Service*

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But Mary stood weeping outside the tomb. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb. And she saw two angels in white, sitting where the body of Jesus had been lying, one at the head and the other at the feet. They said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?”

John 20:11-13, NRSV

## Agnes Abuom reflects on her time as World Council of Churches moderator

Dr. Agnes Abuom completed her time as moderator of the World Council of Churches when it met in international assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany, in 2022.

She now moves on to become a lay canon in the Episcopal Church of her native Kenya. “There were seven of us (whom the archbishop called),” she said. “I was the only lay woman, and I see this as a new chapter in my journey.”

Abuom told the World Council news that she is “A child of the ecumenical movement.” At age 25 she joined the fellowship and the movement, she said, at a time when issues of justice and peace were critical in Kenya and the region, and when the Cold War was quite high.

“But I’d like to focus on my last phase of the journey because it is a time when consensus decision-making really became a reality,” she said, “and, as I leave the movement, it lingers in my mind.”

She left the 11th assembly in September in Karlsruhe, Germany, with “this very important experience of consensus-building, consensus decision-making, and discerning the will of God.”

“But of course when you are in the business of reconciliation, mediation and peace-building, what else do you anchor your work on?”

Abuom was the first female moderator from the African continent, a layperson, and said she

thought people would question her ability. “But the structure is such that you have other people to support you, and to teach you and show you the ropes.”

When the COVID epidemic came along and changed how groups could meet, Abuom said, “This meant we had to deepen the spiritual life in terms of the structure of the ecumenical movement—deepen our spiritual life of sharing, of prayer.”

This was made manifest at the assembly in Karlsruhe, where various communions led the prayer times. “In this history of 70-plus years we finally got to see the Pentecostals lead in prayer!”

Moving forward, she said, the WCC must address the issue of young people. Second, it must engage with other religions with a lot of wisdom, “deepening our own faith so we engage confidently.”

*From World Council of Churches weekly update, Jan. 5, 2023*

## Presbyterian Seminary names Lapsley First Woman President

Dr. **Jacqueline E. Lapsley** has been named the eighth president of Union Presbyterian Seminary, Richmond, Virginia USA.

She was the first woman to serve as dean and vice president for academic affairs at Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey USA. She has served in that position since 2018.

Lapsley is a co-author of the Woman’s Bible Commentary and other works. She joined the Princeton faculty in 1998, with degrees from Smith College, North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Princeton, and Emory Universities. *Presbyterian Mission News Feb. 23, 2023*

# Helene Ralivao Fund graduates first students from Gender Justice Training

## Students at Tumaini University Makumira say they hope to bring positive change to church and society in Africa

(LWI) - The first graduates from a new Lutheran World Federation (LWF) gender justice training program hope to build on their research in order “to bring positive changes” in their churches across the African continent.

Students from Ethiopia, Namibia, South Africa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe took part in a graduation ceremony on 7 and 8 February at the Tumaini University Makumira in Arusha, Tanzania. The women and men made up the first cohort of students enrolled in the Theology, Gender Justice and Leadership Education program set up by the university in partnership with the LWF and the local Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania (ELCT).

The program was established as part of the H el ene Ralivao Fund to honor the legacy of one of Madagascar’s first female theologians and women’s rights campaigners in the Malagasy Lutheran Church who was murdered in 2020. (Ed. Note: The Woman’s Pulpit reported on the Ralivao fund in our Oct.-Dec. 2022 issue.)

The course includes two residential training sessions and an individual research project in which students explore issues of gender equality relevant to their own church and national contexts.

## Individual and institutional transformation

Amongst the topics that this first cohort of students have been researching were preventing and responding to gender-based violence, investing in child development to foster gender equality and promoting women’s participation in church leadership. Rev. Patricia Jbedu from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Zimbabwe said her research showed that “single women are not acceptable in church leadership.” She said: “The church should be taught through Bible studies and other platforms that to be single is not a sin” and women “should be equipped to take leadership positions.” Church leaders must be encouraged to “take appropriate action when cases of gender-based violence are reported to them,” she added.

Speaking at the graduation ceremony, Rev. Dr Chad Rimmer, LWF Program Executive for Lutheran Theology and Practice said the course aims to promote change and empowerment at individual level, as well as working towards institutional change and social transformation. Praising the students for the “depth of passion, deep knowing and yearning for truth, justice and transformation that motivated you, sometimes in very difficult situations,” he added: “We have seen your confidence and capacities, as leaders in your fields of ministry, grow in the course of this year.”

“The purpose of our research findings was for us to learn and to bring about positive changes in our own contexts” said the Rev. Gwakisa Mwaipopo, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania

Mwaipopo, a student from the ELCT, said he was happy to hear that the LWF has recommended the publication of the research papers to serve as a resource for other churches and institutions in Africa and beyond. “Our research findings were not designed for our supervisors to give us grades, but their purpose was for us to learn and to bring about positive changes in our own contexts,” he said.

LWF Program Executive for Leadership and Capacity Development Rev. Katariina Kiilunen noted that gender injustice and exclusion, as well as domestic and gender-based violence are rooted in a variety of social and theological factors. “From the perspective of the global communion of churches,” she said, “we stand in solidarity with women and gender minorities around the world who face challenges that restrict access to theological education, leadership roles and decision-making processes in our society, our churches and our theological institutions.”

*From The Lutheran World Federation News, Feb. 14, 2023, LWF/P. Hitchen*

**May 1, 2023**, we will reserve some time to remember Roswitha Golder and celebrate her ministry. It will be at 11 a.m. Eastern Daylight Time on Zoom. Email Marian at: [uccrev77@gmail.com](mailto:uccrev77@gmail.com) for the link.

Reformation-tide Zoom gathering will be Nov. 1. We will vary the time in order to make it easier for people in various time zones.

## Poetry Page

(The editor would like to continue to publish poetry from our readers. Please send your submissions to Marian at [uccrev77@gmail.com](mailto:uccrev77@gmail.com). They must be works not already published in other copyright materials.)

### Maren Tirabassi's Beatitudes for Small Saints

Blessed are the riders of bicycles.  
They spin from here to there,  
Mud-spattered, smelling conifers and grass.

Blessed are the borrowers in libraries.  
They share page and media  
Book group, teen hangout and mahjong club.

Blessed, too, are the librarians.  
They teach themselves new tricks each year,  
And treat kindly the lonely and lost.

Blessed are the takers of pictures.  
They help us see beauty  
In saguaro, stars and age spots on old hands.

Blessed are those who rise early  
To work in bakeries,  
Those who drive home at night  
With flashing red lights,  
Those who call the afternoon bingo  
In the assisted living facility—

For they take another person's hour  
And treat it with reverence.

And blessed are you when you recognize  
The holiness—not just in the most likely,  
Not just in the least likely—

But every day in a handful of ordinary people.

The Rev. Maren Tirabassi is a poet, author and retired minister in the United Church of Christ, USA. With other partners she has published books of worship resources from around the world, such as *Gifts in Open Hands: More Worship Resources for the Global Community*, with Kathy Wonson Eddy, Pilgrim Press, 2011. She blogs and invites comments at <https://giftsinopenhands.wordpress.com>. Used by permission.

## In the News

**Rev. Merlyn Hyde-Riley** has been appointed **General Secretary of the Jamaica Baptist Union**. She is the first woman to hold the post. Hyde-Riley is one of two vice-moderators for the World Council of Churches Central Committee.

Hyde-Riley said she reaffirms the work and worth of the women of the Jamaica Baptist Union “whose model of Christian service opened the eyes of many to the reality that God has gifted both women and men to do the work of the Lord.” She will lead the development of a strategic plan for the next five years for the nearly 40,000 members in 340 churches *(from the World Council of Churches news on line, March 2)*

Another member of the **World Council of Churches Central Committee** is **The Rev. Karen**

**Georgia Thompson**, associate general minister of the United Church of Christ (USA). She has been nominated for the office of **General Minister and President** of that denomination; an election will take place at the UCC’s General Synod in Indianapolis in July. She would be the first woman of color to hold that office. *(UCC News)*

**IAWM member The Rev. Sue Ellis** will conclude her term as moderator of the **South Australian Synod** of the Uniting Church this summer, and will retire May 31. She will continue as volunteer president of the Uniting Church Fellowship and Mission Support Group, which will welcome the Rev. James Bhagwan from the Fijian Methodist Church to speak in

October about the effects of pollution and climate change in the Pacific Islands, and partner visits from the Iksan Presbytery of the Presbyterian church of Korea. *(From Correspondence)*

**The Rev. Pauli Murray**, the **first** African American woman to be ordained an Episcopal priest and a pioneer in the struggles for racial and gender equality, will be **featured on U.S. quarters** (25-cent coins) in 2024, the U.S. Mint announced. She and four other women are being honored next year as part of the Mint’s American Women Quarters series, celebrating the contributions of women to American history.

IAWM member **Nancy Krody** sent the news. “Glad to see Pauli Murray getting this recognition,” Krody said. Murray was also a lawyer, writer, and co-founder of the National Organization for Women. *(Episcopal News Service)*