

The Woman's Pulpit

October-
December 2023

NEWS ABOUT ORDAINED AND LAY WOMEN IN MINISTRY THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

Denominations Elect, Re-Elect Women Presidents: United Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ, Swiss

Karen Georgia Thompson elected in UCC; Teresa Hord Owens, Disciples, and Rita Famos, Switzerland

The Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson is the first woman General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ, (USA), the **Rev. Teresa Hord Owens** was re-elected General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ,) and the **Rev. Rita Famos** is the new head of the Protestant Church in Switzerland.

They are the latest in the somewhat modest but growing record of women bishops and heads of denominations worldwide. Several Episcopal and Lutheran churches in the US and Europe have elected women as presiding bishops in recent years, but it remains a notable phenomenon because so many church bodies still do not grant ordination or leadership roles to women.

Karen Georgia Thompson was elected July 3 at the United Church of Christ's General Synod in Indianapolis. She is the first woman, and third person of African descent, to serve as General Minister and President.

Thompson has been Associate General Minister for Wider Church Ministries and Co-Executive for Global Ministries since 2019. Previously she served as minister for racial justice and minister for ecumenical and interfaith relations. She is also a member of the World Council of Churches Central Committee.

She holds a doctorate in ministry from Seattle University, an M.Div. from Union Theological Seminary, and a master of public administration from North Carolina Central University.

Two other women have been nominated as president, Yvonne Delk in 1989 and (longtime IAWM member) Barbara Brown Zikmund in 1999, but neither were elected.

In her nomination speech, Thompson said, "Here is the place where we have seen the Spirit of God poured forth among us in many ways. . . Here is where we honor the resilience of those who came before

us, took risk and oftentimes did more with less than we currently have."

See page 4 for Owens and Famos news.

(Some material from the United Church of Christ article by Tiffany Vail published on July 3.)

Second IAWM Online Gathering for fun and connection, Nov. 1

**Next International Assembly,
June 4-8, 2024
Vieques, Puerto Rico
See Page 7 for info on both**

IAWM Officers visit with editor emerita LaVonne Althouse at her residence in Lititz, Pennsylvania USA. From left, Cynthia Walton-Leavitt, Marian Shearer, Carol Brown





The Woman's Pulpit

ISSN NO. 0433-4297

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

Vol. 101 October-December 2023 No. 4

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Pulpit, 1921 Palm Street, Reading, PA 19604.

Published quarterly.

Updates for Prayer Calendar

Can you help find new emails for these members?

Mercy Kalajja
Tega Swann
Karen Teague

Deceased Members

Mildred Skerret Keeyes

Address and Email Changes

Marlis Stoner 1221 Victoria St.
#902 Honolulu, HI USA 96814

Donna Giver Johnston
d giverjohnston@pts.edu

Lydia Mwaniki Waiyaki Way
P.O. Box 14205-00800 Westlands,
Nairobi, Kenya

Janine Carambot Old Bridge, NJ 08857
USA (Not NY)

LaVonne Althouse 300 St. Mark Ave
#513, Lititz, PA USA 17543

New Members

Ivy Gauvin PO Box 43 Bemus Point, NY
14712 USA
pastorivy@gmail.com ELCA

Angelique Walker-Smith 425 Third St
SW Suite 1200 Washington, DC USA
20024 awalker-smith@bread.org

Would you like to become a Prayer Calendar Communicator?

We are looking for a few folks to write to our IAWM members (mostly email) during the week they are on the prayer calendar.

Carol Brown has instructions and assignments; connect with her at csbrown550@hotmail.com.

And see pages 6 and 8 for some of the responses we receive!

Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation Dated 9/6/2023 for The Woman's Pulpit published quarterly at 1921 Palm Street, Reading, Berks County, PA 19604. Publisher/Owner: International Association of Women Ministers (IAWM) at 1921 Palm St Reading, PA 19604. Editor/Managing Editor: Marian Shearer 305 Pomander Avenue Reading, PA 19606. Tax status has not changed in preceding 12 months. Average number of copies each issue during preceding 12 months (Net Press Run) 186. Paid circulation: Mail subscriptions: outside county: 157; paid subscriptions by other classes of mail through USPS 11. Total paid circulation: 168. Free distribution: 1. Total distribution: 169. Copies not distributed: 17. (99.41 % paid). Total number of copies of single issue printed nearest filing date (July-Sept 2023): Net press Run 175; Paid Circulation: Mail subscriptions outside county 153; paid subscriptions by other classes of mail through USPS 11; Total paid circulation: 164. Free distribution: 1. Total distribution: 165. Copies not distributed: 10. (99.39% paid). Electronic Copy Circulation: Average number of paid electronic copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 99; total paid print and electronic: 267.; Total print distribution and paid electronic copies: 268 (99.63% paid). Number of paid electronic copies of single issue nearest filing date: 102; total paid print and electronic: 266. Total print distribution and paid electronic copies: 267 (99.63 % paid)

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Remembering: Mildred Keays

The Rev. Mildred Skerrett Keays was 104 when she died in May at Tylers Mill Senior Living Center, Deptford, New Jersey USA.

She was 83 when she became an elder and associate pastor at St. Matthew AME church, after a lifetime of learning and service in social work.

Though she spent much of her childhood in foster homes, she graduated from Pottstown (Pennsylvania) High School in 1936. When a scholarship to Penn State could not cover all her expenses, she went to work at the Philadelphia Bureau for Child Care until 1961.

At the same time she attended night classes for years, and earned degrees in business, secondary education and social work in the 1950s and 60s. Then she attended Philadelphia College of Bible, graduating in 1979.

Her obituary in the Philadelphia Inquirer, by Gary Miles, named her as “Social worker, pastor, counselor and teacher.” It also mentioned that she was certified as a teacher in New Jersey, took classes in gerontology at Stockton University, and was active with the North American Alliance of Christians in Social Work, the International Association of Women Ministers, and other service organizations.

She married and divorced three times, and volunteered at a hospice, adult care center and Red Cross. She wrote and gave lectures to church groups and others about religion, social justice and patriotism. Mildred was widely traveled, and could often be found at her favorite seaside spot, Costa del Sol in Spain.

She outlived all three husbands and two brothers; she is survived by nieces and other relatives.

A service was held June 3 at Gloucester County Community Church in New Jersey.

New IAWM Archivist Reviews History, Requests Material

The Rev. Ann Rogers Brigham, elected as archivist at our assembly in Karlsruhe, Germany, last year, writes these words:

Dear IAWM members and friends, as the new archivist for IAWM,

I am always glad to hear about the beginning time for our collections. We have some treasured words to share from our first archivist, Rev. Betty Sykes. She wrote:

I thought it might be helpful to share some background information. I served as IAWM archivist for more years than I can count. When I started our materials were all over the place in garages and attics and cupboards. We couldn't find a place to put them. For a while the things we had were at Pittsburgh Seminary but they eventually decided they wanted the shelf space back. By this time, a number of years had gone by since the 70s. Women had made gains. And we had to get serious about our stuff. A committee was formed, naturally, and began a search. I think it was Ruth Becker who contacted a librarian at Vassar and we discovered to our great surprise that now everybody wanted our stuff: Duke, Harvard, etc. The committee finally settled on Union Seminary (NY USA). Burke Library there had gotten some kind of Woman's History grant, and the committee felt New York City was an accessible location for people from all over the world.

I boxed up everything I had, and in due course we set a date for presenting our materials to Burke. LaVonne Althouse had graduated from Union so she pretty much took charge. There was a luncheon. LaVonne preached. It was quite an occasion. I continued on as Archivist until the beginnings of the shift from paper to digital. In this time of transition even librarians didn't know what they would accept—tapes, videos? So I figured it was time for a younger person to take over and I bowed out.

With this background in mind, and appreciative of those who have served as archivists for IAWM, I invite you to send what you have that may be archive material. Since I live close to New York City (I serve Old Steeple Community Church, United Church of Christ, in Aquebogue, NY, on Long Island) I am able to go into the city periodically to submit materials. Send to:

The Rev. Ann Rogers Brigham
P.O. Box 345, Aquebogue, NY USA
11931
amrogersbrigham@gmail.com
508-221-8787.

What the archives collect:

~professional papers related to your scholarship, teaching, ministry or work

~Original audio/visual recordings related to your career and work

~Photographs related to your career or work. You must label them with names of people, place date on the back of the photograph

~Unique materials of historical significance that document your professional life and roles.

What the archives do NOT collect:

~Published material including books, journals, periodicals and offprints (e.g. articles)

~Commercially produced materials

~Objects (statues, art, plaques, clothing)

~Duplicative materials (i.e. many copies of the same thing.)

~Sensitive or personal materials relating to students, such as grades or sensitive correspondence

~Medical, financial or otherwise sensitive personal materials

Thank you, colleagues in ministry, I'm grateful for the ways we may preserve what are truly gifts to us from the past. Grace and Peace,
Ann

Disciples re-elect Teresa Hord Owens

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of the USA and Canada, general assembly elected the Rev. Teresa “Terri” Hord Owens to a second term as General Minister and President. She is the first African American and second woman to lead denomination, and is reportedly, when elected in 2017, the first African American woman to lead a mainline Christian denomination.

In keeping with the Disciples’ historic commitment to Christian unity, she serves in leadership at the National Council of Churches (USA) and as a member of the World Council of Churches Central Committee.

Owens served as dean of students for 12 years at the University of Chicago Divinity School, and as pastor of First Christian Church in Downers Grove, Illinois, after 20 years in corporate America leading diverse teams in data management.

(From CC(DC) web site, disciples.org)

Rita Famos Heads Swiss Protestant Body

“Advancing ecumenism has always been a priority for the Protestant Church in Switzerland, and its 25 member churches,” said **The Rev. Rita Famos, its president.**

Ordained in 1992, she served parishes in Uster and Zurich-Enge for eight years. As president, she continues to advocate for a clear and challenging discussion with the Russian Orthodox church to stop justifying the war in Ukraine. She said she is gravely concerned for Orthodox pastors who have dared to oppose the official position of their employer.

Now a member of the World Council of Churches central committee, she promotes the ongoing dialogue. “There is no theological argument for this brutal war and we must continue to profoundly condemn it.”

From WCC weekly update July 6

Lutherans Issue Interim Report on Women in Ministry’s Joys and Challenges

The Lutheran World Federation has issued its preliminary report of LWF Study Process on experiences of women in the ordained ministry, in concert with the LWF international assembly in Poland in September.

The editor, Dr. Marcia Blasi, said that the study was a response to decisions made at previous assemblies to work harder to support women in ministry among Lutherans worldwide.

More than 160 women responded to the surveys and interviews conducted by the committee, and they represented all seven LWF regions. Blasi said that the numbers from each region were not proportional, but the witness of women from Nordic, European, Asian, Latin American/Caribbean, Africa, and North America regions were valuable just the same.

The 44-page report listed the methodology of the study, and analyzed the statistics of participation. But of more interest to this journal are the remarks from women in ministry.

Experiences of Empowerment or Affirmation

Being a pastor is my vocation. I never doubted it. (Latin America/Caribbean)

I have so many experiences of that kind—I do not know where to start. (Nordic)

I am thankful to God because He strengthens me always and I have proved many people wrong in my context who thought women cannot make it in the ordained ministry. But here I am as a living testimony. (Africa)

I have felt empowered around female pastors who are older than me. Many of them have been so encouraging and helped me to gain self-confidence as a theologian who has her own voice and ability to speak out. (Nordic)

Struggles or Challenges Faced in the Ordained Ministry

Only one? (Latin America/Caribbean)

We will not listen to a woman! (Latin America/Caribbean)

I can’t believe (x church) is thinking of calling a woman! (North America)

Can you do that as a woman? (Central/Western Europe)

Sometimes I wonder whether the expectations toward women is like “be grateful that we, men, granted you this grace, that you have the possibility to be ordained. In your ministry be like a man. Don’t be like a woman. And for heaven’s sake, leave theology to men.” (Nordic)

Being a female pastor has no challenge, however the challenge is how you are always perceived as incompetent. It is difficult for leaders and members to elect you or entrust you with top decision-making bodies. (Africa)

Gender-based violence was and still is a challenge in my ministry because we (the church) are not vocal in fighting against the ill-treatment being committed to or by our people. (Africa)

We need more feminist theology which supports gender equality and encourages women to participate in ministry and leadership positions. (Asia)

Conclusions and Recommendations

There are many more voices of witness in the study, which can be found at Lutheran World Federation, www.lwf.org. The concluding pages list recommendations for Lutheran bodies to encourage ongoing support and accompaniment for women in ministry. “Ordination is an important step, but equal emphasis must be placed on supporting the lived experiences of those called to serve.” *(Excerpted with permission from LWF Office for Communication)*

IAWM to become a World Council of Churches International Ecumenical Organization

By J. Dorcas Gordon, Past President

In January 2021, the International Association of Women Ministers Executive Board authorized the officers to begin the process of requesting the World Council of Churches (WCC) to accept IAWM as an International Ecumenical Organization, an IEO.

The possibility of becoming an official entity within the WCC emerged from conversations with staff about our participation in the WCC General Assembly in Karlsruhe in 2022. We were told we fitted well with WCC criteria for an IEO, which is open to ecumenical groups that are “international in nature whose objectives are consistent with the functions and purposes of the Council.”

Once so recognized, IAWM would be invited to send a delegated representative to WCC assemblies, and what is more critical, we would receive communication sent to all WCC member churches.

Other organizations with the IEO designation include the International Committee for the Least Coin, World Day of Prayer—International Committee, World Young Women’s Christian Association, World Federation of Diaconal Associations, and the United Bible Societies.

The process for inclusion involved the approval of our application by three WCC committees as well as the General Secretary. In our case approval took longer than expected, due to the COVID pandemic and the intense planning for their General Assembly in 2022. Throughout the process we were assured of our admissibility, but it was January 2023 until the WCC Executive Committee recommended that the Central Committee, at its meeting in June 2023, accept IAWM as an IEO. The official letter was received in September.

However, the benefits have already been evident in the ways we have expanded our reach internationally. Nicole Ashwood of the Just Community of Women and Men programme of the WCC invited us to join the JCWM planning for the Karlsruhe assembly, and our president, the Rev. Margarethe Galbraith-Cordes, attended as a delegated representative to that assembly.

Our exposure to women worldwide has resulted in an increase in the international nature of our membership and leadership. Our Executive Board now includes not only women from the United States and Canada, but women from Barbados, South Korea, Kenya and India, allowing us to live much more fully our claim as an international organization.

In Karlsruhe our past president gave leadership at the JCWM “WE Will” consultation, the first in a series, which invited African women church leaders to express the challenges and opportunities of their leadership roles. Two of our IAWM leadership team will travel to Geneva in November to attend an anti-racism workshop that frames racism from a world-wide perspective.

The IAWM officers believe that our recognition as an IEO is fully aligned with our mission, “IAWM promotes, encourages and celebrates women in ministry,” and our mission is to:

- Support and develop relationships with our sisters in ministry around the world.
- Provide a forum in which women ministers from all races, nations and cultures can come together.
- Advocate for ordination of women.
- Encourage women who are preparing for Christian ministry
- Preserve and honor the heritage of women in ministry.

What About That Scripture Forbidding Women to Preach?

Responding to the Southern Baptist (USA) Convention’s actions to explicitly bar female pastoral leadership, Biblical scholar Frances Taylor Gench reflected in *Presbyterian Outlook* on how the Presbyterian Church(USA) engages scriptures like that of I Timothy 2, which instruct women to be subservient.

“We, too, take Biblical authority seriously, but after extended discernment of what obedience to Jesus Christ, under the authority of scripture requires of us with respect to women in ministry, we reached a different conclusion,” she said.

So when the Presbyterians, along with other mainline denominations, finally decided to lift prohibitions on the ordination of women, did they do so in violation of scripture? Were they throwing scripture out?

The answer, Gench said, is a resounding no. It was precisely because of scripture’s witness that a new collective judgement emerged: the Holy Spirit calls both women and men to all ministries of the church. The church had erred in restricting women’s leadership.

Gench concluded, “It was scripture itself that reformed the Presbyterian church, projecting a vision of male and female as created equally in God’s image, and claiming that in Christ ‘there is no longer male and female’ (Galatians 3:28). Thus, in obedience to what they discerned as a deeper, broader, more fundamental witness of scripture, many Presbyterians changed their opinion on the question of women’s ordination.”

Gifts Still Needed

Your executive committee has set up a task force to plan for the assembly to be held June 4-8, 2024, in Puerto Rico. To ensure a meaningful and hope-filled assembly, we are asking each of you, as you are able, to consider contributing either to IAWM's **Assistance Fund for non-North Americans** or to **general Assembly costs**.

Through such donations IAWM will be able to expand the number of scholarships available for our international members, and possibly reduce the overall costs for everyone, so more women with limited means can attend in person. Email Carol Brown at csbrown550@hotmail.com for PayPal access.

IAWM Member Plays the Harp for A Pig—and People

We received this reply from the Rev. Wendy Snook in Australia when she received Carol Brown's email in the week she was in the prayer calendar:

Hi all,

Thank you for your email. I retired officially to Cranbourne North, Victoria last year. But like us all, ministry does not stop. I chose to enroll in the International Harp Therapy course with Christina Tourin to use harp music to bring health in all its forms to other people and myself. I am about halfway through now. I have learnt to play for sick and traumatized animals and birds and now am allowed to play for humans! I have been called the "goat whisperer" after some successes, and playing harp for a violent pig in 'solitary' to calm him down so staff could help him was a new experience to say the least!

Suspended UMC Latina Bishop Found Not Guilty on All Charges

The Rev. Minerva G. Carcano, the United Methodist Church's first Latina bishop in the USA, was found not guilty Sept. 22 on four charges brought against her of harassment, fiscal malfeasance and a general charge of disobedience.

Bishop Carcano was suspended from her role as bishop of the California-Nevada Conference more than 18 months ago. She will return to her duties, though she will be required to retire at the end of August 2024.

Although the bishop's subordinates gave four days of testimony that Carcano had exceeded her authority on financial matters and retaliated against anyone who questioned her decisions, the 13-member mixed-race jury found her not guilty. The trial had been moved to Illinois to allow a more uninvolved public and jury. Her supporters accused the denomination of discrimination, saying that a non-Hispanic bishop would not have been suspended for 18 months, but only the more usual 90 days.

The Rev. Lyssette Perez, head of a group of Hispanic United Methodists, who monitored the trial, said the whole process was painful.

"This should not be the way we solve problems in the church," she said, referring to the public trial, which was livestreamed. "We cannot continue to hurt each other. We need to find ways to work together and try to collaborate with each other."

(From the Religion News Service article by Yonat Shimron, on line Sept. 22, and from United Methodist News)

More Information about Assembly:

Holy Solidarity:

Embracing Hope

Here are a few more things we know about the next International Assembly for IAWM, in Vieques, Puerto Rico, June 4-8.

"Solidarity in the Caribbean Context" will be addressed by scholars Anna Perkins from Jamaica and IAWM board member Sonia Hinds from Barbados. Dora Arce, who spoke to our assembly in Cuba in 2017, will bring the Cuban perspective.

It is suggested that attendees arrange to fly to San Juan (SJU), and add the connecting flight to Vieques (VQS) for an additional \$80-100. There may be ground transportation from San Juan airport if someone rents a car or van, but that has not been determined; in that case, the driver will need to reserve a place on the ferry over to Vieques well in advance.

Our schedule will include the usual worship, meals, program and discussion, and business meeting—and our traditional International Night, when attendees sign up to share a story or music or talent or craft from their homeland. There will also be an option of an afternoon at the beach, and opportunity to stroll the shops and boardwalk of Esperanza.

The Executive Board will meet June 3, and the main meeting will begin June 4. You may stay an extra night if arranged in advance, and worship with our Methodist hosts.

All this information and more will be updated in the January-March issue of the Woman's

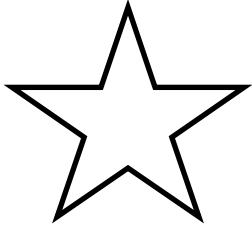
**Second semi-annual Zoom gathering for IAWM members
Wednesday, Nov. 1**

8 a. m. Eastern Daylight Time

**All Saints Day: who are the saints who shaped
you and who sustain you now?**

Join the fun and conversation!

Email Marian for the Zoom link: *uccrev77@gmail.com*



+++++

2024 International Assembly

June 4-8, 2024

Vieques, Puerto Rico USA

Holy Solidarity: Embracing Hope

**If you wish to get your registration in early, use this form or email the information
to Carol Brown, *csbrown550@hotmail.com*; pay by check or PayPal, see below**

___ 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 _____

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

Housing (June 3-8) at The United Methodist retreat center in L'Esperanza, Vieques, Puerto Rico:
4 people per room (single beds) \$20/night. Which nights? June 3 4 5 6 7 amount enclosed _____

Requested room-mates: _____

OR

_____ I will find my own housing – suggested: Casa de Tortuga, Lazy Guest House, Esperanza Inn, The Blok, Blue Horizon
(These establishments may not begin taking June reservations until December or January.)

Meals per day—to be determined, payable later

Transportation from airport to Esperanza or ferry to Vieques: more details in January issue.

Send check or money order for registration, and housing if at the retreat center, made payable to IAWM, with this form to:
Carol Brown, 1921 Palm St. Reading, PA 19604 USA

Or *email this info* to *csbrown550@hotmail.com* and *pay with Paypal.com* using the same email address.

Any questions, contact Carol at *csbrown550@hotmail.com* or 484-926-2429.

Registration deadline is April 30, 2024. Late registrations may be accepted if space is still available.

Get on line Nov. 1!
We're looking for
you!

sec-
con-
and

It's our
ond online
versation for fun
connection:

Wed. Nov. 1

8 a.m. Eastern DT

Email Marian for the Zoom
code: uccrev77@gmail.com

In the News

The number of women pastors in the **Maluku Protestant Church** is greater than that of their male counterparts, for the first time in history. There are 1,444 pastors in the Maluku Protestant Church, and about 55 per cent of them are women, reported their moderator, Rev. Elifas Tomix Maspaitello. But it's not just about percentages, he said; it's about feminist theology. The island communities face challenges as a disaster-prone area, with earthquakes, fires, floods, and even tsunamis. So far, 35 women pastors have participated in the Women Mentoring Theology program, examining the practical theology of their situations through a feminist lens.

The **Rev. Juliana Buikiak Temparaja** from East Timor reports that she is General Secretary of the Protestant Church there. She is the first woman in charge as general secretary of the denomination, with 76 congregations in 13 municipalities. "I am married,

husband died 9 years ago,. This situation not easy for me. I am still doing my ministry. Please pray for me, next year I plan to continue my studies for Ph.D. program. I need also looking for scholarship for that, still in my prayer. Let's encourage and pray for one another."

IAWM secretary and its archivist, the Rev. Cynthia Walton-Leavitt and the Rev. Ann Rogers Brigham, are traveling to Geneva in October for the Women's Human Rights Advocacy Training, sponsored by the Just Community of Women and Men programme of the World Council of Churches.

The Rev. Adrienne Thorne was installed Sept. 17 as senior minister of The Riverside Church in New York City. She is the 8th senior minister of Riverside, and the first African American woman to serve in the role. She began her ministry last October.

The Rev. Romella Robinson of the Presbyterian Church of Pakistan, in which she is the first ordained woman, attended the GEM school in late August. Participants from more than 20 countries gathered in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, for 11 days, for the 6th edition of the Ecumenical School on Governance, Economics and Management (GEM) for an Economy of Life. Proposals from the symposium focused on climate and economic justice, tax justice and reparations. GEM school was hosted by the Council of Churches of Malaysia and convened by the World Council of Churches, World Communion of Reformed Churches, Lutheran World Federation, World Methodist Council and Council for World Mission.

(From denominational newsletters and correspondence)