

Champions of Clergy Equality

My name is Mindy Johnson-Hicks. I am here to introduce the Champions for Clergy Equality Award. I hold a Doctorate in Leadership and Biblical Preaching and a Master's in Divinity. I used to be an Elder in Full Connection in the United Methodist Church. I transferred my ordination to the Church Within a Church Movement after I married my lovely wife Amy 10 years ago. The statistics I present today will not be about gay clergy, because gay clergy do not officially exist in the UMC. Maybe a day will come when gay clergy members will be fighting for equality in your church, but today is not that day. The information I bring about Clergy Equality today was collected by the United Methodist Church and can be found in the document called Salaries for United Methodist Clergy in the U.S. Context by Eric B. Johnson, Ph.D. This document is published by the Division of Ordained Ministry of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. At the highest levels of the United Methodist system, clergy inequality is an accepted and studied reality. Here are the raw truths about clergy equality in the United Methodist Church. 74% of pastors are male, 26% of pastors are female. 88% are white, 12% are non-white. These figures have not changed significantly over the past 10 years, even though female and minority population numbers are considerably higher in the United States overall. Most nonwhite pastors are black (7%), followed by Asian (3%), and Hispanic/Latino (1%). There are so few Native American clergy members, the UMC doesn't even have a category to describe the percentage...suffice to say, less than 1%.

It may surprise some of us to know, in every category, women make less, in money and in benefits, than their male counterparts. Black women make less than Black men, Hispanic women make less than Hispanic men, and white women on average make \$8000 per year less than white men with the same amount of time in service, with a similar appointment and parsonage

assignment. On average, combining all ethnicities together, GBHEM reports that white male clergy members earn 15% more than Hispanic and Latino clergy, 13% more than female clergy, 9% more than black clergy, and 5% more than Asian clergy members.

Since 1956, women have served as clergy in the Methodist and United Methodist Church. Since 1816, Black Americans have served as clergy in the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the all-Black, segregated Central Jurisdiction of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and now in the United Methodist Church. Since 1873, Hispanic persons have had their Ordination to the Order of Elders recognized and blessed by Methodist Bishops in the USA. Clergy inequality after so many generations seems inexcusable.

There is good news, though. There are Champions for Clergy Equality in every District of the Rio TX Conference. Each year, for as long as one person's clergy service is worth less than another person's, we at MFSA will bring you a report. In coalition with the Church Within a Church Movement, we will also present an award to a Champion of Clergy Equality, someone who has actively fought for those clergy members who have been treated as less than's. It is time for equality; I pray it begins with us.