Justice for Women:

Overcoming Cultural, Structural and Policy Barriers
What Does an Annual Conference COSROW DO?

• Turn to a neighbor, you have 6 minutes to answer at least two of these questions:
  – What have you been told?
  – What needs do you see?
  – What do you envision?

• Share your vision with the entire table in two sentences
What are the Responsibilities of an Annual Conference COSROW?

• Collect data about women’s leadership in the conference
• Advocate for women’s participation in decision making, in cooperation with UMW
• Educate district and conference leaders about women’s issues

UM Book of Discipline ¶644
What are the Responsibilities of an Annual Conference COSROW?

UM Book of Discipline ¶644

- Advocate for women’s issues, including preventing harassment or discrimination
- Communicate with GCSRW about the progress, effectiveness to achieved full participation of women
- Participate, utilize and distribute information about GCSRW programs and resources
What are the Responsibilities of an Annual Conference COSROW?

- Advocate
- Educate
- Collaborate

UM Book of Discipline ¶644

- Collect data
- Communicate
- Participate
Purpose:

“a continuing commitment to the full and equal responsibility and participation of women in the total life and mission of the Church, sharing fully in the power and in the policy-making at all levels of church life.”
“Women’s Issues”

• Employment & participation
• Ethics
• Sexism
• Intersectionality of Oppressions
• Integrated resistance / liberation
• Language (we cannot be that which we cannot image)
Assess Current Situation

Envision what we hope to see

Design a bridge from here to there

STRATEGY
Employment and Leadership

ASSESSMENT: WHAT IS OUR CURRENT STATUS?
Why examine the problem?

• Understanding where to focus our efforts
  – Identifies specific areas (or groups) of struggle
  – Recognizes opportunities for growth
  – Names exactly what we need from others

• Helpful for gathering supporters
  – Inspires a desire to help and sense of urgency
  – Information can inspire constructive action
How Many Women Are Succeeding?

Within the US labor Force:

- Men: 53.1%
- Women: 46.9%

How Many Women Are Succeeding?

Professional, Management and Related Professions:

- Men: 48.6%
- Women: 51.4%

How Many Women Are Succeeding?

Directors and Board Members:

- Men: 83%
- Women: 16.6%

How Many Women Are Succeeding?

Executive Officers: (COO, CFO, CIO)

- Men: 85.7%
- Women: 14.3%

How Many Women Are Succeeding?

Top Earners:

Men 91.9%

Women 8.1%

How Many Women Are Succeeding?

Chief Executive Officers: (COO, CIO, CFO)

Women’s Status Within the Church?
Women’s Leadership in The United Methodist Church 1972:

1972

- Executives of general agencies: 0%
- Board members at general agencies: 22%
- GC delegates: 13%
- Active clergy: 0.07%
- Active bishops: 0%
- Lead pastors at large churches: 0%

General Commission on the Status and Role of Women in The United Methodist Church
40 Years of Progress:

- Executives of general agencies: 45% (1972), 45% (2012)
- Board members at general agencies: 43% (1972), 43% (2012)
- GC delegates: 40% (1972), 40% (2012)
- Active clergy: 27% (1972), 27% (2012)
- Active bishops: 17% (1972), 17% (2012)
- Lead pastors at large churches: 6% (1972), 6% (2012)

2013
The Goal?

“full and equal”
“sharing fully”
Purpose:

“a continuing commitment to the full and equal responsibility and participation of women in the total life and mission of the Church, sharing fully in the power and in the policy-making at all levels of church life.”
SEXISM: GENDER IN CULTURE AND RELATIONSHIPS
Who Believes in Traditional Gender Roles?

- 1977: 74%
- 2008: 39%

it's better for everyone "if the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and children."
What does sexism look like?
Vicar of Dibley - Part 1&2
Subtle Cultural Sexism

- Social stereotypes and expectations
- Which gender is the basic or normal one?
- Freedom to identify by other characteristics
- Income disparity
- Success is interpreted as likeability
- Women can aspire to be like men, but what happens when men aspire to be feminine?
But men don’t have it all that easy, how can we say it’s harder for women?

It’s not that women have more power than men, it’s that patriarchy is an inherently flawed system that sets standards that are harmful to everyone.

Roy @ No Cookies For Me
Now What?
Vicar of Dibley - Part 3
“Egalitarian Etiquette”

• A.k.a. New Manners
• Not just about sexism
  – Racism, Immigration, Age, Class ...
• I will not call anyone something they do not wish to be named
• Why would I put up a barrier between anyone and God?
How to: Speak Up

Why not?
• Afraid of looking ...
• Awkward
• Can be difficult to find the right words
• Disrespectful or rude
• Don’t make waves
• It was just a joke!
• “Political correctness”

How to:
• Be ready
• Appeal to shared values
• Don’t laugh
• Ask questions
• “Ouch”
• Assertive ≠ impolite
• Direct ≠ disrespectful
Harassment still a challenge: Men call for accountability

By Joey Butler

A recent survey of United Methodist attitudes and practices found that 67.5 percent of all respondents—men and women—have observed or been subject to gender-bias or sexual harassment in their local church or in other church settings.

Jesus’ commandment, “Love one another as I have loved you” is also the inspiration for the “equal worth in the eyes of God” (Par. 161, p. 101, Discipline). Further, church law defines sexual harassment as “any unwanted sexual comment, advance or demand that is reasonably perceived by the recipient as demeaning, intimidating or coercive” (Par. 161). Under church law it is a chargeable offense to harass or abuse someone because of their gender or to undermine the ministry of an ordained man or woman because of their gender or race.

Despite laws on the books in church and in the secular world, sexual harassment happens in church and is often perpetrated by church people. But it’s not just women who are offended by the notion that such a mindset still exists.

“I am embarrassed and angered when I hear of men sexually harassing women or other men,” says Matt Johnson, a member of First United Methodist Church in Evanston, Ill. “These acts of harassment are fundamentally an abuse of power and lack of respect toward another human being.”

“So many men just don’t get it,” says Marvin Shackelford, a layman at St. Paul United Methodist Church in Birmingham, Ala. Shackelford says the problem perpetuates itself through lack of education.
Additional Areas of Focus:

• Sexual Ethics
  – (preventing and responding to harassment, discrimination and abuse)

• Inclusive Language
  – When referring to individuals or groups of people
  – Learning the plethora of Biblical images for God

• Role and Status of Women in Central Conferences

• Race, Class, Age ...
WHAT IS THE GOAL?
What is your vision?

• 2 minutes to answer these questions:
  – What would the church look like if we were truly egalitarian about gender?
  – What would general conference look like?
  – Who would your annual conference look like?
  – How might your local congregation change?
  – What might our worship look like?

• 2 minutes to share your vision with your table
Table visioning: 5 minutes

• As a table, choose 2-4 characteristics of your vision of a gender-egalitarian church

• Draw or write them down

• Pick a representative to share your table’s vision in 3 sentences or less