

SHORT TAKES

Developing Leaders in the UMC

Study Finds Pay Incentives for Pastors

A new study finds strong evidence that pastoral compensation conforms to standard business models. The authors, Jay

Hartzell of the University of Texas at Austin, Christopher Parsons of the University of North Carolina, and David Yermack of New York University use data from 727 churches and 2,201 ministers who served in the Oklahoma Annual



A UMNS photo by Renny Perry

The Rev. Joan Carter-Rimbach, pastor of First United Methodist Church in Hyattsville, Md., addresses fellow clergywomen attending the Lead Women Pastors Project in Nashville, Tenn. (UMNS story #415)

Women Still Pioneers as Senior Pastors, Survey Shows

Women who lead large United Methodist churches are still pioneers, a new survey has found. Nine out of 10 lead women pastors at churches with more than 1,000 members are the first woman to lead those churches. The study, part of the Lead Women Pastors Project of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, also found that women have to work harder for acceptance and appear less likely than men to pursue appointments at large churches. About 10,000 of the approximately 45,000 United Methodist clergy are women and only 94 women serve as lead pastor of a church with more than 1,000 members.

“Clergywomen are still on trial in the large membership churches,” said Susan Willhauck, associate professor of Pastoral Theology at Atlantic School of Theology in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Willhauck noted that male lead pastors got to larger churches quicker—within 3.75 appointments, compared to four appointments for women. She also found a slightly different career trajectory, with more women coming out of appointments beyond the local church, such as district superintendent. One-fourth of women were second-career elders, compared to one-third of men, and 69 percent of women were married, compared to 99 percent of men. □

— Vicki Brown, Office of Interpretation, GBHEM

Conference between 1961 and 2003 in their report, “Is Higher Calling Enough? Incentive Compensation in the Church.”

The study found that although the overall level of ministerial pay is modest, it responds significantly to increases and decreases in parish membership, and that the annual conference uses ministerial assignment as a way to reward productive clergy “with plum appointments that bring higher total compensation.”

“Our results suggest an interesting overall pattern for rewarding pay for performance,” the study says. “While a minister is in place at a local church, his or her pay changes depend on changes in membership, especially members that come from or leave to other United Methodist churches.” □

— Linda Bloom (UMNS)

Young Clergy Numbers Rise, Bucking Trend

For the first time this century, the number of United Methodist clergy under age 35 has surpassed 5 percent, a sign of the emergence of new ways of engaging young adults in church leadership. The increase is “modest good news” for the church, said the Rev. Lovett Weems, coauthor of an updated study, “Clergy Age Trends in The United Methodist Church from 1985-2008.”

The need to invite, train and retain young adult clergy leaders is one of the most important issues in the church today, said Meg Lassiatt, of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. The denomination as a whole is looking for the balance between credentialing strong leaders and creating new avenues for candidates to enter and move through the candidacy process, Lassiatt said. While the length of the process is one factor that can be cumbersome to new candidates, what’s more critical is how annual conferences implement the candidacy process.

Young elders at one time represented 15 percent of elders in the church, but the overall number of elders continues to decline each year. In 1985, the number of elders in the church was 21,378, and the number decreased to 17,480 in 2008. During that time, the average age of clergy increased from 46.8 to 52.1. The greatest growth continues to occur in the 55-70 age group. □

—Linda Green (UMNS)