

# RENEW NETWORK Press Release

## ***Women's Division Votes to Structurally Separate from GBGM***

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By Liza Kittle (phone: 706-306-2851; email: [lkittle@renewnetwork.org](mailto:lkittle@renewnetwork.org))

In a historic vote, the Women's Division Board of Directors today voted unanimously to structurally separate from the General Board of Global Ministries and become an independent agency within the United Methodist Church.

At their spring semi-annual meeting taking place April 7-11 in Stamford, CT, the Board was presented with two options regarding their continued relationship with GBGM, one maintaining their current affiliation and the other calling for structural separation. The directors agreed with the recommendation of the Policy Committee, which was the separation option.

While structurally separate, the plan states that the Women's Division will be "missionally connected to GBGM, and would intentionally release seats at the GBGM Board of Directors.....to make it possible for GBGM to add additional representation from Central Conferences within a smaller board. (The plan calls for adding a Disciplinary requirement that 50% of directors elected to GBGM by Central Conferences be women.)

Key components of the new GBGM relationship plan include:

- The Women's Division would have 5 seats on a 30 member GBGM Board of Directors, with one of these serving on the GBGM Executive Committee. A reduction in the GBGM board size to 30 members will be recommended and voted on later this week at the GBGM semi-annual meeting April 11-13 in Stamford. (Currently, the Women's Division makes up 30-40% of the GBGM Board of Directors as mandated by the Discipline.)
- Staff structures would separate and the Women's Division would not be represented at GBGM Program Cabinet, unless invited.
- The WD chief executive would have a seat on the General Secretaries' Table, which she currently does not.
- The WD and GBGM would develop appropriate settings for staff to share updates and plan work together, such as broad cross-functional teams and special purpose teams.
- GBGM staff persons would continue to collaborate on mission education resources, the Prayer Calendar, and Schools of Christian Mission.
- WD staff would continue to operate the UM Office at the United Nations on behalf of both GBGM and WD at the Church Center for the UN, which is owned by the WD.

The structural separation plan will now go before the GBGM Board of Directors and if approved, will be presented to the 2012 General Conference in legislative form.

Other major organizational changes concerning United Methodist Women were also approved today by the Women's Division Board of Directors:

- The name "Women's Division" will be replaced with "United Methodist Women, Inc.," and the organization will not be classified as a board or commission, but as an agency of the United Methodist Church.

- The term "unit" will be replaced with "local organization of UMW" and each local organization would organize as they see fit. The number of required "officer" titles will be reduced. (Guidance and model structures will be provided by the national leadership.)
- A new pattern of regional meetings and training will be established.
- A new Board of Directors of UMW, Inc. will be created with 25 members (20 elected from jurisdictional organizations of UMW and 5 nominated by a special committee to ensure diversity). The current board size is 50 members. The Board would meet at least twice annually and be responsible for managing the organization (investments, budgets, property, finance, operating and financial policies, staff administration, grant determinations over a certain limit).
- A UMW Program Advisory Group would be created, made up of 70-80 members, which would meet annually and be responsible for recommending to the Board of Directors major program directions, strategic plans, and plans for Schools of Christian Mission, leadership training, social policies, Reading Program, and Assembly.

The rationale and impetus behind these major structural changes being proposed by the Women's Division reflect a pro-active position toward impending structural reorganizations across the general church. The likely reduction in the size of the GBGM board and its effect on Women's Division representation, the Call to Action study implementations, the Global Nature of the Church strategies being discussed, feedback from the General Secretaries' Table, and the need for UMW to have more flexible structures were all determining factors that prompted the resulting plan.

Perhaps these historic changes reflect a willingness by the Women's Division to adapt to the realities facing the United Methodist Church as a whole, and the organization of United Methodist Women in particular. These realities for UMW include continued dramatic membership loss and revenue decline. (See [www.renewnetwork.org](http://www.renewnetwork.org) for current report on UMW membership and financial structure.)

Hopefully, in the midst of promoting flexibility in structure and reaching more women within the UMC, the Women's Division will understand the need to embrace other women's ministry models within the church in addition to United Methodist Women. Building vital congregations means building vital women's ministry programs across the UMC.