



# UM Renew Action BRIEFING

A network for Christian Women

September 2002

A newsletter for United Methodists working for Scripture-based reform in our denomination. Circulation: 315,000

## REFORMING THE UM WOMEN'S DIVISION

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### Introduction

What United Methodist agency is the most influential and powerful, and is most harmfully undermining the Christian faith and the beliefs of The United Methodist Church?

The answer is increasingly clear – it is the Women's Division of the General Board of Global Ministries. The Women's Division oversees the programs, policies, and spending of United Methodist Women (UMW).

That's not the answer you might expect if you observe the typical gathering of United Methodist Women – studying Scripture in a small group, planning a reception for a bereaved family, or collecting clothing

for the local homeless shelter while maintaining a heart for worldwide missions.

But the truth is that these good-hearted, committed Christian women bankroll a massive bureaucracy that pours millions of dollars annually into theologically liberal and politically extremist organizations, propaganda, and lobbying. Most of these women are unaware of how their gifts are used.

The misuse of sacrificial offerings is a scandal. More and more, United Methodist women are recognizing a betrayal of a sacred trust.

In this special newsletter, two United Methodist reform organizations are joining forces to assist this growing movement of concerned UM

women. The two sponsors are:

- **RENEW Network**, an evangelical United Methodist women's coalition. RENEW is affiliated with Good News, a UM renewal and reform movement.
- **UMAction**, the United Methodist committee of the Institute on Religion and Democracy (IRD), an ecumenical Christian organization.

We invite you to read this newsletter carefully and prayerfully, share it with your friends, and ask the Lord how you can be a part of reclaiming the Godly heritage of women's mission, ministry, and service in The United Methodist Church.

Faye Short,  
RENEW  
President



Photo by Imagecontrolplus.com

Mark Tooley,  
UMAction  
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Executive  
Director



## Call For Reform

The Call for Reform of the Women's Division of the General Board of Global Ministries was issued in November 2001 by RENEW and Good News. This Call for Reform is supported by UMAction and many more United Methodists.

From its New York City and Washington offices, the Women's Division is the official voice for over 800,000 members of United Methodist Women.

UMW has done tremendous good through works of Christian love and service around the world. However, growing numbers of United Methodist women have observed that many Women's Division policies are focused on secular left-leaning political action rather than Christ-focused ministry. These policies often conflict with the theological, political, and social views of most UMW members.

RENEW believes, along with many other United Methodist women, that the Women's Division ought to be accountable to women at the local church level. But too often, the Women's Division reflects the agenda of its paid staff – ignoring and violating the faith and beliefs of most women in the local UMW units.

For example, the Women's Division in its October 2001 Board meeting:

- Passed a "Resolution on Terrorist Attacks" which demanded a halt to U.S. bombing of Afghanistan – a few weeks after the September 11 attacks.
- Devised plans to mobilize against the "Anti-Terrorism Act" which Congress adopted with overwhelming bipartisan support.
- Voted to continue official UMW status for a California-based "Sophia Circle" that relies on the resources of the "Re-Imagining Community," which promotes radical feminist theology and attacks the traditional Christian faith.
- Announced an invitation to "Re-Imagining" and homosexuality advocate Barbara Lundblad to lead Bible study at the April 2002 UMW Assembly.

These specific actions are a few more examples of long-standing, increasingly disturbing Women's Division positions over many years.



UMNS photo by Paul Jeffrey.

The UMW Tri-annual assembly met April 2002 in Philadelphia.

*UM Action Briefing is the quarterly newsletter of the United Methodist committee of the ecumenical **Institute on Religion and Democracy**. Mark Tooley, Editor. IRD was founded in 1981 to promote reform of America's mainline churches, with a special focus on their political activities. For more information call, write, or e-mail us. We are a 501 (c) (3) organization. Contributions to IRD and UMAction are tax-deductible.*

## Why Is Reform Needed?

There are at least six reasons why the Women's Division must be reformed – to change and correct six ways it is unfaithful, unrepresentative, extremist, and unaccountable. The Women's Division:

1. Sometimes reflects radical feminist theology more than basic Christian beliefs.
2. Supports an extreme abortion-on-demand position that ignores the UMC's stand.
3. Often ignores United Methodist disapproval of homosexual behavior.
4. Opposes the war on terrorism.
5. Promotes big government and left-leaning political causes.
6. Is not accountable to local United Methodist Women and to the UMC.

These six concerns are summarized in this UMAction Briefing.

For more information and documentation, use the enclosed form to request the Call for Reform packet from RENEW or find it at RENEW's website: [www.renewnetwork.org](http://www.renewnetwork.org).

## Choosing Radical Feminism Over Christian Faith

At the 1982 UMW Assembly, Dr. Hazel Henderson invoked Gaia, the Greek goddess who "managed the biosphere very well by herself" before human beings came along.

The 1992-93 UMW mission study *We Belong Together: Churches in Solidarity with Women* lifted up Rosemary Radford Ruether's book *Women Church*, as a favorable guide for women. Ruether advocates veneration of the earth goddess Gaia.

The Women's Division encouraged its staff and Directors, plus selected Annual Conference UMW officers, to attend, at Division expense, the 1993 "Re-Imagining Conference." That conference was an attack on the classical Christian faith that is affirmed by The United Methodist Church in the *Book of Discipline*. Basic Christian beliefs were repeatedly assailed. Eroticized milk-and-honey rituals were performed. Lesbianism was affirmed. Various Conference speakers said (direct quotes):

"...three goddesses...are my new Trinity--Kali, Quani, and Enna."

"We cannot have one savior."

"I don't think we need a theory of atonement at all."

"Imagine sex among friends as the norm."

"Sophia," a supposed feminine personification of God, was a central focus of the 1993 "Re-Imagining Conference." The Women's Division has never apologized for its promotional and financial support of the "Re-Imagining Conference."

The Women's Division has not openly funded or directly encouraged participation in "Re-Imagining Conferences" since the 1993 event. But the Division has never criticized "Re-Imagining" theology or discouraged participation in the "Re-Imagining Community" by staff, Directors, or United Methodist Women.

Women's Division connections with the "Re-Imagining Community" have been maintained through several channels. Some Directors and staff have maintained a personal connection with "Re-Imagining." One Women's Division leader has served on the "Re-Imagining" Coordinating Council.

Church Women United, heavily funded by the Women's Division with annual grants of over \$30,000, has shown strong support for the "Re-Imagining Community." The CWU Executive Director affirmed the "Re-Imagining Community" at the 1998 UMW Assembly.

The Women's Division has featured radical feminist authors through the UMW reading program and mission studies and in the Division's *Response* magazine over the years. A recent example: In the 2002 UMW Program Book *Seeking Shalom*, the author cites material from *Sensuous Spirituality: Out From Fundamentalism* by radical feminist Virginia Ramey Mollenkott. In her book, Mollenkott writes of her lesbianism, "It is simply a good gift, as all sexuality is a good gift. It is intended to be used responsibly, as one way of glorifying God and enjoying Her forever."

In 2001 the Women's Division sanctioned the official status of "Sophia Circle" for a UMW district unit in the California-Nevada Conference, even though the group has clearly affirmed "Re-Imagining" materials. The Division also



Re-Imagining Advocate Barbara Lundblad

invited Barbara Lundblad, a two-time "Re-Imagining" speaker, to be a Bible study leader at the 2002 UMW Assembly.

When the Women's Division is charged in the *Book of Discipline* to "engage in activities that foster growth in the Christian faith," why does it support radical feminist theologies that flirt with goddess worship?

## Defending Abortion on Demand

The Women's Division openly supported abortion on demand as early as 1972 when the Division filed a Friend of the Court brief in the *Roe v. Wade* case. The Division was a plaintiff in the 1977 case of *McRae v. Califano*, which challenged federal law restricting the use of federal funds for abortion.

Since 1973 the Women's Division has been a founding member of a pro-abortion-rights group formerly called Religious Coalition for Abortion Rights (RCAR) and now called Religious Coalition for Reproductive Choice (RCRC). In 1992 the Division paid the expenses of Anne Thompson Cook, then Executive Director of RCAR, to attend the 1992 UMW General Conference to lobby for maintaining the United Methodist connection with RCAR.



The January, February, and March 1990 issues of *Response* magazine, published by the Women's Division, carried extensive pro-abortion-rights articles with no reference to more moderate views.

The pro-abortion-rights position was strongly endorsed at a 1992 Women's Division meeting when postcards (printed by RCAR) were provided at each table for Directors to mail to their Senators in support of the proposed "Freedom of Choice Act," which went far beyond *Roe v. Wade* in defending unrestricted abortion on demand.

In 1996 the United Methodist Board of Church and Society and the Women's Division endorsed a letter, sent to the U.S. Congress by RCRC, affirming President Clinton's veto of the "Partial-Birth Abortion Ban" and urging Congress not to override the veto.

Not even most "pro-choice" United Methodists would defend partial-birth abortion. Many United Methodist women wonder why they should fund a church agency so out-of-step with their beliefs on the dignity of human life.

The United Methodist Church position on abortion is a mixture of pro-choice and pro-life language, but the UMC firmly opposes partial-birth abortion and abortions for birth control and gender selection (*The Book of Discipline*, par. 161J). The Women's Division ignores that language. It promotes an unlimited abortion-on-demand policy that violates the UMC position.

## Ignoring UMC Stand on Homosexuality

The UMC General Conference has repeatedly reaffirmed our church's stand that all persons, including homosexuals, have sacred worth but the practice of homosexuality is "incompatible with Christian teaching." This is the Biblical and traditional Christian stand. Yet the Women's Division and its policies, speakers, and program materials continue to promote the acceptance of homosexual behavior, violating the UMC position.

As early as the 1988 General Conference, the UMW's then President, Sally Ernst, signed a minority report requesting a change in the *Book of Discipline* to weaken our church's stand on homosexuality.

A book on the 1991 UMW reading list, *Revolutionary Forgiveness*, is the travel diary of thirteen persons who traveled to Nicaragua with an agenda that included: "Our commitment to the liberation of lesbians and gay men requires that we confront those people and policies which proclaim sexual relationships between men and women, heterosexual marriage, and nuclear family constellations as normative for the health of society."

In Deputy General Secretary Joyce Sohl's report to the Women's Division's Directors on April

12, 1991, she referred to a "multicultural community" as defined at a workshop at the Scarritt-Bennett Center. "Let me remind you of the definition of multiculturalism that was used," Sohl said. "The process of recognizing, understanding, and appreciating cultures other than one's own. It stresses an appreciation for the impact of differences -- race, class, age, sex, physical, sexual/affectual orientation, and religious.' ...I have a vision of the Women's Division being a multicultural community where the contributions of each is valued," Sohl said. She clearly was calling for a Women's Division "multicultural community" including "appreciation for" "sexual/affectual orientation."

The Policy Statement of the Women's Division (March 1993) called for bridging the gap between "lesbian women and heterosexual women."

Many UMW reading materials, and program speakers continue to promote the acceptance of homosexual behavior, violating the UMC position.

In the 2002 UMW Program Book, *Seeking Shalom*, author Inelle Cox Bagwell, a former Women's Division Director, asserted that it is time to "let go of some of our most cherished certainties about families in order to affirm the complexities of the diversity of God's creation." Bagwell said unborn children are "born ... heterosexual or homosexual or bisexual...."

Alice Knotts, the former lesbian partner of the Rev. Jeanne Knepfer, Director of Shalom Ministries in the Oregon-Idaho Conference, was a speaker at the Spring 1999 Women's Division Directors meeting. The Rev. Barbara Lundblad, an open proponent for acceptance of homosexual behavior, was a Bible study leader at the Spring 2002 UMW Assembly, as mentioned above.



UMNS photo by Paul Jeffrey

Pro-homosexuality demonstrators oppose UM beliefs at 2000 General Conference

The United Methodist Church, the Bible, and Christian tradition say plainly that homosexual behavior is sinful – but through Jesus Christ all sinners (all of us, guilty of all kinds of sin) can be healed. The Women’s Division undermines this stand and misuses part of UMW members’ undesignated giving to promote acceptance of homosexual behavior.

## Opposing U.S. War on Terrorism

**T**he Women’s Division has been critical of the U.S. war against terrorism.

In October 2001, only a few weeks after the September 11 terrorist attacks, the Women’s Division Directors heard speakers denounce U.S. military action, and then adopted a resolution opposing U.S. military action in Afghanistan.

One speaker to the Women’s Division Directors was Peter Sederberg of the University of South Carolina, who chose to blame America for September 11. “The way we live (Americans) and what we do threatens people around the world as September 11th threatened us,” he declared.

The Directors also heard from Parvina Najibulla, who passionately compared the Sept. 11 violence to allegations of U.S. bombing of innocent civilians in Afghanistan and accused the U.S. of making military might a “god.” She also denounced the “so-called humanitarian aid” for Afghanistan from the U.S., which she complained was being used for political purposes.

The Women’s Division then adopted “A Resolution on Terrorist Attacks.” It asked United Methodist Women to “Urge the President to use diplomatic means to



*The September 11, 2001 strikes against the World Trade Center and Pentagon ignited U.S. war against terrorism.*

bring the perpetrators of terrorist acts to justice and to end the bombing of Afghanistan.”

Women’s Division opposition to the U.S. military in general and the U.S. war against terrorism in particular was also revealed during a focus group sponsored by the UMW General Assembly in April 2002. Called “Defense or Destruction,” the session focused on the U.S. “military-industrial complex.”

Bruce Gagnon of the Global Network Against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space alleged that the U.S. placed troops in Afghanistan and Pakistan not because of the war on terrorism but so as to control gold mines and oil reserves in Central Asia.

The next speaker, Gillian R. Gilhool of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), sounded a similar theme against U.S. policies. The WILPF is a far-left group that receives funding from the Women’s Division. Gilhool urged UMW members to demonstrate and to lobby

members of Congress against U.S. military spending.

One of Gilhool’s resources was a song sheet of anti-war lyrics. UMW members sang “We March to Stamp Out War” to the tune of “The Battle Hymn of the Republic” and “Beneath the Nuclear Umbrella” to the tune of “What a Friend We Have in Jesus.” As the group stood to sing, Gilhool said, “I hope you don’t think this is sacrilegious.” No one said she did.

Christians can and do disagree on how to protect against terrorism, seek peace, and reduce the danger of war. But we believe the great majority of United Methodist Women, like the great majority of U.S. citizens, recognize that a military response to terrorism is necessary. Again the Women’s Division uses their money to work against their beliefs. UMW members may ask how many more terror attacks might already have been suffered if the President had followed the Women’s Division’s advice.

## Promoting Big Government

**T**he Women’s Division has a strong preference for an enlarged federal welfare state, big government programs (excluding military programs, which it opposes), and high taxes. The Women’s Division has opposed tax cuts, resisted welfare reform, pushed for socialized medicine, opposed a Balanced Budget Amendment to the Constitution, and recently criticized any potential privatization of Social Security.

Christians have a wide variety of opinions on these issues, but the Women’s Division stridently asserts one political viewpoint: big government and high taxes

are good; limited government and lower taxes are bad.

The Women's Division makes many grants to secular and left-leaning political causes. See the Financial File (order form enclosed) or go to [www.ird-renew.org](http://www.ird-renew.org).

The featured speaker at the United Methodist Women's General Assembly in April 2000 was Marian Wright Edelman of the liberal Children's Defense Fund. Edelman demands larger federal government entitlement programs. When skeptics question the effectiveness of these programs, Edelman and her supporters question their commitment to children.

Edelman's speech to United Methodist Women was no exception. She denounced the across-the-board tax cuts approved by Congress and the President and opposed repeal of the "death tax." Class warfare was a central theme for her. "We do not have a money problem," she insisted. "We have a values problem."

But Edelman and the Women's Division measure "values" only by the federal government's spending more money on welfare programs, without carefully exam-

ining whether those programs work. The Women's Division often ignores Christian teachings about human sin, restraint, hard work, thrift, and strong families. Women's Division ideology assumes all poor people are victims and all skeptics of welfarism are motivated by greed.

The Women's Division, like Edelman, has an extremist political agenda that sees the federal government as the guarantor of all health and well being for the American people. UMW leaders often rely on Edelman's organization for study materials. In 1996 the Women's Division endorsed Edelman's "March For Children" demonstration in Washington, D.C.

Since 1995 the Women's Division has had a Human Welfare Crisis Task Force to lobby Congress against "cuts" in federal welfare programs, although these "cuts" are usually reductions in proposed increases. It opposed the 1996 Welfare Reform Act endorsed by Congress and President Clinton.

The Women's Division, speaking for nearly one million United Methodist Women, portrays these issues starkly as black and white, with the forces of light on the side of big government, and forces of darkness resisting an ever-larger welfare state only because of greed and indifference.

## Accountability

The UM Women's Division wields its money and power with little accountability to its own members or to The United Methodist Church.

The Women's Division has its own Board of Directors and over 100 paid staff. When it merged with our church's missions board nearly 40 years ago, its independence was preserved. This was

meant to safeguard the Women's Division as a ministry governed by women. But the result is an agency largely unaccountable to the rest of United Methodism.

With over 800,000 members of United Methodist Women, the Women's Division is one of the biggest membership organizations for women in the U.S. It routinely acts on behalf of these women, the vast majority of whom are not aware of the real agenda of the mostly New York-based Women's Division staff and hierarchy.

Growing numbers of United Methodist Women report that their requests for reform and accountability are rejected or evaded by Women's Division officials, who continue working against the beliefs of most United Methodists.

RENEW and UMAction want to change that. We believe most United Methodist Women want a Women's Division accountable to them and accountable to The United Methodist Church.

## What About

### Designated Giving?

The Women's Division has failed to reform in response to many anguished complaints by UMW members and units. The Women's Division continues to pressure UMW members for undesignated giving, which means the Division hierarchy decide how to spend the money.

Some participants in the Call for Reform have, on their own, chosen to designate their funds until genuine reform is achieved. RENEW and UMAction now encourage United Methodist Women to join this necessary action of Christian stewardship and protest.

In 1989 RENEW prepared a Financial File that exposed the



UMNS photo by Paul Jeffrey

*Welfare Advocate Marian Wright Edelman*



Women's Division's funding of radical and inappropriate causes with UMW money. But the Women's Division has refused to change its policies.

UMAction and RENEW have completed a new financial study of the Women's Division's grants to non-church groups. You can see it at [www.ird-renew.org](http://www.ird-renew.org) or contact us for a paper copy. It shows that hundreds of thousands of UMW dollars still go to secular political organizations, many of which are very radical.

There are many Christian ministries--both within and outside The United Methodist Church--to which UMW offerings can be given with confidence and enthusiasm. But those gifts should be designated for specific worthy projects within the framework of United Methodist Women.

These are judgments for which each woman and each UMW local unit are responsible to God. Not everyone will agree with the decision to designate UMW funds. Differing judgments should not break the bond of fellowship among women in The United Methodist Church. Those who choose to designate and those who continue undesignated giving should be mutually respectful of the Christian conscience of the other.

Designating funds is a challenge. We need a broad focus so that giving encompasses local, state, national, and world mission and ministry. Designating means studying our potential choices and making wise selections. Designating probably means not receiving all the public recognition that undesignated giving often brings. But designated giving is a form of responsible Christian stewardship that is integral to the Call for Reform.

RENEW has updated its Financial File yet again. This file

includes "Our Basis for Concern," which provides grounds for designated giving. It includes the new research on many Women's Division grants and projects. It also includes helpful information on how to designate funds, how

to research ministries you want to consider funding, whom to notify of your decision to designate, and what to expect as you take this bold but important step. Use the enclosed order form to get Financial File III.

Clip and mail to address on page eight

## Agents For Reform...Will You Join Us?

*RENEW Network and UMAAction work hard for reform and renewal of The United Methodist Church. We provide information and resources for equipping those who network with us. We seek to help our great church restore faithfulness to Scriptural Christianity, to United Methodist doctrinal standards, and to our Wesleyan heritage. We invite your new or renewed pledge of support for this reform effort.*

*Please make your check out to UMAAction and Renew. Gifts will be divided evenly by UMAAction and Renew for the purpose of reforming the Women's Division.*

*I appreciate this faithful reform effort and I want to be an active part of it.*

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip Code \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone # \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

BM0203B

Enclosed is my contribution to assist these reform and renewal ministries.

\$500     \$100     \$50    Other \_\_\_\_\_

*Please send me the items I have checked:*

Information about RENEW and UMAAction -- Free

Call for Reform packet, by RENEW and Good News -- \$10 enclosed

UMAAction Reform Packet -- Free

Financial File III -- \$5 enclosed

Don't Leave Our Church!  
Stay and Work for Reform!

† We tell you the painful truth about what has gone wrong with The United Methodist Church: unfaithfulness and far-left partisan politics by too many high church officials. We don't enjoy bringing you bad news, but we must tell the truth.

† The good news is the growing movement to restore Scriptural faithfulness in our church. More and more United Methodists are working together for reform and renewal.

† Don't leave! Our great Methodist heritage is too valuable to be abandoned. Join with us to help The United Methodist Church return to its Wesleyan roots as a growing, evangelical, Christian church living Christ's Great Commission: "Go and make disciples of all nations." (Matthew 28:19)

# UMAction

September 2002 BRIEFING

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## UMW DOLLARS FUND RADICAL POLITICAL GROUPS

**W**here do United Methodist Women contributions go? The UM Women's Division in New York funds many admirable projects. But they also fund dozens of controversial political organizations, without the knowledge of most United Methodist Women. Here are just a few examples from the UM Women's Division 2000 budget. A longer report can be found at [www.ird-renew.org](http://www.ird-renew.org) or at [www.renewnetwork.org](http://www.renewnetwork.org).

**Asia Pacific Center for Justice and Peace \$3,500:** Opposes U.S. military presence in Asia.

**Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) \$6,000:** Opposes U.S. military spending and welfare reform.

**California Council of Churches \$5,000:** Opposes organized voluntary prayer in public schools.

**Center for Constitutional Rights \$3,000:** Supports federal funding for obscene artists.

**Center for Women Policy Studies \$27,500:** Opposes government support for heterosexual marriage.

**Central America/Latin American Working Group \$2,000:** Opposes U.S. military in Latin America.

**Children's Defense Fund \$8,000:** Opposes U.S. military spending and welfare reform.

**Church Women United \$37,535:** Supports homosexual and abortion rights.

**Citizens Project \$11,000:** Opposes display of the Ten Commandments in public schools.

**Ecumenical Program on Central America and the Caribbean \$1,000:** Opposes U.S. war against terrorism.

**Friends Committee on National Legislation \$2,000:** Opposes U.S. defense spending.

**Jubilee 2000 \$4,000:** Wants the U.S. to cancel all Third World debts.

**Leadership Conference on Civil Rights \$2,000:** Opposes appointment of conservative judges.

**National Coalition Against the Death Penalty \$1,500:** Opposes all capital punishment 11 terrorist accomplice Zacarias Moussaoui.

**National Council of Churches \$61,000:** Ecumenical group that supports many liberal causes. Its leader is opposing any U.S. military action against Iraq.

**National Organization of Women Legal Defense Fund \$2,500:** Promotes abortion rights and homosexual rights, including adoptions by same-sex parents.

**Older Women's League \$6,000:** Advocates homosexual rights, socialized medicine, and abortion rights.

**Women's International League for Peace and Freedom \$1,500:** Opposes missile defense system for the U.S.