

VIDEO SCRIPT— *Rev. Grace Imathiu & Bishop Sharon Brown Christopher*

**Rev. Grace Imathiu:** So here we are in 2016 celebrating the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ordination of women and the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first clergy women delegates to General Conference. In 1956 at General Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota, the Methodist Episcopal Church allowed full clergy rights for women to 27 Methodist clergy women. Maude Pauline Keister and Grace E Huck were among those clergy women.

20 years later, at the 1976 General Conference in Portland, Oregon, clergy women were elected to be delegates for the first time. Bishop Sharon Brown Christopher was one of the 13 women making history as one of the first women to be a clergy delegate.

**Bishop Sharon Brown Christopher:** I also had a sense that knowing I was a first there, that I was carrying the lives of many other women with me on my shoulders into that gathering and I had a responsibility for engagement there in such a way that would continue to open doors for women to be leaders in the life of the church.

**Rev. Grace Imathiu:** While we are excited to celebrate these milestones made by the church, we also have to ask, “Why did it take the church 20 years for clergy women to be at the decision making table?”

**Bishop Sharon Brown Christopher:** And so I believe that one of the primary cultural norms that has been a detriment to the ordination of women and the election of women to General Conference is that of patriarchy. And patriarchy has something to do with the assumption that maleness is the norm. It’s the standard. And it breeds a sense of entitlement and superiority. So anything that is not male, or white male, is objectified and stereotyped. And when our hearts close, there is no room for God’s spirit to work within us. And so close-heartedness has been a part, I believe, of the context that has made it difficult for women to move through ministry in the life of the Church.

**Rev. Grace Imathiu:** In those 20 years, countries in Africa such as Kenya, Sierra Leone, and Cote d’Ivoire, gained their independence, the first man walked on the moon and Nelson Mandela was sentenced to life in prison. All these significant events happening in our world and still clergy women were not elected to be delegates at General Conference.

**Bishop Sharon Brown Christopher:** And if there’s anything I’ve learned it’s this. It’s wisdom from John Wesley who said, “Though we may not think alike, can we not love alike? And though we may have difference of opinion, can we not be of one heart?” To me, that is what I’ve learned over and over and over again through my formation throughout the whole church, and I give thanks for being a part of a church that gathers the whole people of God, all of God’s creation around the same table and feasts together.

**Rev. Grace Imathiu:** We as United Methodists applaud the great strides we have made towards full inclusion of women. However, that only highlights the amount of work that is yet to be done.

ON STAGE SCRIPT- *Rev. Dr. HiRho Park, Bishop Debbie Wallace Padgett & Bishop Minerva Carcano*

**Bishop Debbie Wallace-Padgett:** We as The United Methodist Church have made great strides in women's leadership.

**Rev. Dr. HiRho Park:** We are not there yet. Women's voices are still missing at some tables, especially women of color.

**Bishop Minerva Carcaño:** At this time, will lay and clergy women delegates please stand as you are able? As we look around the room at these women leaders, let us remember that our work for full inclusion of women in the life of the Church has improved but is not there yet.