

Go and Tell

Women were the news deliverers of the Resurrection, the foundational message of Christianity. What news do women deliver today?

by **GLORY E. DHARMARAJ**

After the sabbath, as the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. ... Suddenly Jesus met them and said, "Greetings!" And they came to him, took hold of his feet, and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to

them, "Do not be afraid; go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me."

—Matthew 28:1, 9-10

The stories of the Resurrection of Jesus offer snapshots of a foundational spiritual event in Christianity. The collective story of the risen Christ

comes to us frame by frame, complete with eyewitness reports and gathered memories. A question posed, then and now, is: can women be fairly represented as news deliverers?

Faith records of Resurrection

The story of the Resurrection of Jesus is narrated in all four Gospels: to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary by the empty tomb in Matthew 28; to Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome in Mark 16; to Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary, the mother of James, and the other women in Luke 24; and to Mary Magdalene, Peter and John in John 20.

In small groups, read some more faith records of the Resurrection story: 1 Corinthians 15:5-7, Luke 24:13-31, Luke 24:34, Luke 24:36-49, John 20:19-23, John 20:24-29; Matthew 28:16-20, Acts 1:6-9.

Questions for reflection

- Where does the story take place?
- Identify key personalities in the story.
- How many women and how many men appear in the story?
- Who delivers the Resurrection story to others?

Reading the Resurrection women

The spotlight of resurrection morning is on the empty tomb. The keywords are given to Mary Magdalene: "I have



Women make up only 38 percent of those reporting news stories on television worldwide according to the 2015 Global Media Monitoring Project. Men report 62 percent of television news stories.

seen the Lord!” (John 20:18). Theologian Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza sees some difference in women’s experience of Jesus’ resurrection versus men’s experience. Women experience Jesus’ resurrection primarily by the empty tomb (Matthew 28:1-10, Mark 16:1-8, Luke 24:1-13, John 20:1-18). The male disciples experience it through “visionary appearances.” Some of these are on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35), behind the closed doors of a house—to 10 disciples without Thomas (John 20:19-23) and to the 11 disciples, including Thomas (John 20:24-29), and then to the disciples by the shores of Tiberias (John 21:1-25).

Women are seen mostly as the carriers of the foundational faith story of Easter as well as primary connectors of God’s message with the church and the world. In God’s economy, women are considered able deliverers of the good news—though some of the receivers of the information may not think so. When the women tell the story of resurrection to the male disciples, they treat this piece of information as “an idle tale” (Luke 24:11). But the women keep on telling the story against odds. As women of resurrection, we, too, count on Easter experience and its ability to break through the dead ends in our lives and in our world today.

Counting men and women in the news

In 2015 United Methodist Women members participated in monitoring news media. Members have participated in the Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), a global social movement for gender equity in media, since its inception in 1995.

The results of the 2015 GMMP show that in the media-constructed world,



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Of those reporting and presenting news and stories in newspapers worldwide in 2015, 35 percent were women and 65 percent were men according to the Global Media Monitoring Project.



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Women as news reporters are most present on radio, at 41 percent, and least in print news, at 35 percent.

the overall presence of women as subjects in print, radio and television is 24 percent globally. The North American region shows the narrowest gender gap at 39 percent. However, North America shows only 9 percent increase in the presence of women in the traditional media for the past 20 years, only 2 percent increase above the global average. In Canada, women as news subjects constitute 27 percent of print, radio and television and 30 percent of digital media (Internet and Twitter). In the United States, women's overall presence in print, radio and television news is 38 percent, and in digital news it is 40 percent. Women as news subjects in the United States completely disappear after the age of 65.

Imbalance in representation

Inequality is more evident in the gender of reporters globally. Though the decade 1995-2005 has shown some slow increase, from 2005-2015 there has been stagnation. Since 2005, the percentage of stories reported by women has stayed the same at 37 percent. Female presenters slightly outnumber men in Asia (58 percent), the Middle East (57 percent) and the Pacific regions (52 percent), while in the rest of the regions the numbers are at or just below parity, apart from North America. In the United States overall, the gender of reporters in print, radio and television is 39 percent female and 61 percent male.

The media landscape shows that women get into the media sphere but still tend to play by patriarchal rules. As a sisterhood of grace, united for creating a world of equity, peace, justice and harmony, our task is to bring this number to a more proportional level by doc-



Though half the population, in 2015, women make up only 24 percent of the persons heard, read about or seen in newspaper, television and radio news, exactly as they did in 2010.

umenting media coverage systematically and methodically, locating similar patterns locally, nationally, regionally and globally.

When we read, hear and see news, we have to resist being just consumers and persist in being agents of change. Media offer us a world of constructs. We are more than receivers. We are called to read the news with eyes wide open, since news is mediated, and call media for accountability.

Kin-dom values

The GMMP is a social movement that imagines an alternative world with values of equity, peace and human flourishing. Gender equity is the main goal of GMMP. Its key objective is to address the complexity of power in gender construction. GMMP serves as a tool that provides data and a big picture of the patterns that shape gender constructs. Men and women committed to this project dare to imagine that an alternative world is possible, if media, one of the key forces that shape reality, are

held accountable. Being monitors is to engage in a transformative act of shaping media for human flourishing, for the messages of media are internalized, and often media set the agenda and shape our consciousness.

So, can women be fairly represented as news deliverers? Such a question is not to pit women against men but to locate the forces of patriarchy, a system in which both men and women participate, a system that privileges men over women. Take a look at the fuller national report on United Methodist Women's website at www.unitedmethodistwomen.org. See also the global highlights and full reports at the World Association for Christian Communication at www.whomakesthenews.org.

The ABCs of monitoring

United Methodist Women members have taken part in GMMP since 1995. Monitoring and documenting for the sake of justice is not something new to United Methodist Women. United Methodist Women and foremothers documented

urban conditions at the turn of the 20th century, race laws and customs in the middle of the 20th century, black church burnings, prevalence of poverty, and peace coverage in recent decades. Monitoring and documenting how gender, race, class and peace are covered in news is a faithful, methodical act undertaken as an act of advocacy.

Even if you have not joined the monitoring so far, it is good to pick up today's newspaper and ask some basic questions. The same can be done with any news coverage in radio, television, Internet or social media. Take some time to monitor your news media today:

- Who tells the story?
- What is this story about?
- Whose voices and viewpoints are heard in the story? Are women and men portrayed differently? Are they active or passive? Whose viewpoint predominates?
- Do the images illustrate the content of the story fairly or do they convey stereotypes?
- Is this story a missed opportunity or not?
- In what ways is this story a missed opportunity or not?

These are some of the questions the monitors used for the GMMP in March 2015.

Practitioners of Resurrection

Today the face of poverty is female. At the same time, the face of world Christianity is also female, as Dana Robert showed in the 2010 United Methodist Women mission study *Joy to the World!* We are in the right moment to use our influence and resources to develop leaders to address the feminization of key needs in various places.

SEX OF REPORTERS ON MAJOR TOPICS	FEMALE	MALE
Politics and government	30%	70%
Economy	43%	57%
Science and health	54%	46%
Social and legal	43%	57%
Crime and violence	33%	67%
Celebrity, arts and media, sports	36%	64%
Other	0%	100%

SEX OF REPORTERS, ANNOUNCERS AND PRESENTERS	FEMALE	MALE
Print	40%	60%
Radio	26%	74%
TV	32%	68%


Source: Global Media Monitoring Project, national report, United States of America. www.whomakesthenews.org.

Resurrection women in the gospel narrations share eye witness stories. They live and breathe the story of resurrection that Jesus is not dead. He is alive. The Holy Spirit breathes life and courage into people and communities to deliver this great news.

The meaning of the word “conspiring” comes from the original Latin word *conspirare*. The verb *spirare* means breathing. The meaning of con + spirare, then, is breathing together. We are conspirators, breathers together with the risen Christ, engaged in the task of building God’s shalom, God’s kin-dom on earth. To practice resurrection is breathing together with God, as deliverers of the good news in Jesus Christ that death and death-dealing forces will not have the final word. The empty tomb is still a mystery. So is the rolled-away stone. But women derived extraordinary strength from these facts. With the power of resurrection, women engaged in mission have rolled away many stones.

Called by name to be news deliverers

The Risen Savior calls Mary Magdalen by name (John 20:16). How more local can this local news of resurrection be? In God’s grace, may we also attune our ears to hear our names being called and added to the ever expanding list of Resurrection women!

Mary Magdalene and the other women and disciples started to walk and live a new way, the way of resurrection that triumphs over all that distorts the image of God. Easter is God empowering women especially to be deliverers of the breaking news that Christ is alive. May we walk with our eyes wide open to the present realities and be co-workers with God, not voice-over, in order to bring about life in its fullness! 

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