



a gcsrW original

nancy grissom self



"We've seen extraordinary gains for women in the church, and in the culture but the work is not done. Constant vigilance and imaginative and innovative programming will continue to challenge GCSRW."

— Nancy Grissom Self

Constant vigilance has been Nancy Grissom Self's theme. As a 16-year-old, when she and her mother were baptized together, she probably had no idea that she would become an integral part of the lives of United Methodist women worldwide.

Immediately after college, she served as a short term missionary in California and made plans to go to seminary. She attended both Vanderbilt Divinity School (1955-57) and Claremont School of Theology (1960-1966). At both schools, she was one of only four women students; and, then, there were no faculty women. That disparity may have set her course for working for women's rights in the church. At Claremont, her master's thesis was titled, "The New Image of Woman and its Meaning for the Church."

In the early 1970s, she served on the Committee of 24, which framed the purpose and organization for local church units of United Methodist Women. This work led Self to apply for a position at the newly formed General Commission on the Status and Role of Women. In 1973, she and Judith Leaming-Elmer were elected as a two-person Executive Secretariat. That time, she says, was "exhilarating"; she enjoyed the opportunity "to work with an intergenerational, multicultural group of women and men who were deeply committed to empowering women in leadership in the church."

Today Nan Self is proud of GCSRW's role in organizing annual conferences and local churches, opening doors that helped women expand their own involvement in mission and ministry.

She explains, "Through the 18 years I was on the GCSRW staff, my

admiration and respect for the work of the church at every level stretched my mind and my faith.”

This year, the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women celebrates its 30th anniversary, and the spirit, imagination, and constant vigilance of Nancy Grissom Self.

DID YOU KNOW. . . ?

- ❖ For 30 years, the GCSRW, also known as COSROW, has been an advocate for lay and clergy women, a catalyst to help the church undo institutional sexism and employ the gifts and graces of women in all its programming and decision-making.
- ❖ Women who have served as the commission’s General Secretariat are the Rev. Nancy Grissom Self (1973-91), Judith Leaming-Elmer (1973-76), Kiyoko Kasai Fujiu (1977-91), Trudie Kibbe Preciphs (1977-84), Geneva Harton Dalton (1985-89), Cecilia M. Long (1989-2001), the Rev. Stephanie Anna Hixon (1991-2002), the Rev. Raponzil Drake and the Rev. Soomee Kim (2002-03). For the first time in its history, the commission has one chief executive, M. Garlinda Burton (2004 to present).
- ❖ The commission’s presidents: Barbara Ricks Thompson (1972-78), Carolyn Henniger Oehler (1978-84), H. Sharon Howell (1985-88), Linda Thomas (1989-90), Joetta Rinehart (1990-92), Ann B. Sherer (1992-96), Joyce Walden-Bright (1996-2000), Gail Murphy-Geiss (2000-04), and Bishop Mary Virginia “Dindy” Taylor (2004 to present).

Learn more about GCSRW’s work and leaders by visiting www.gcsr.org.

For more information on GCSRW’s history, order *The Journey Is Our Home: A History of the General Commission on the Status and Role of Women* by Carolyn Henniger Oehler.



Produced by The General Commission on the Status and Role of Women (GCSRW), established by The United Methodist Church in 1976 to advocate the full inclusion of women in the life of the denomination and to monitor the Church at all levels for gender bias. The Commission offers training at district, annual conference and churchwide events on organizing and empowering women to find their voices and ministries in the Church; works with bishops, superintendents and other church leaders to understand and eradicate institutional sexism; and educates church laity and clergy on dealing with professional sexual misconduct. For more information and resources, visit www.gcsr.org, or call (312) 346-4900.