

# *Courageous Past* **BOLD FUTURE**

## **ROSEMARIE WENNER**

Rosemarie Wenner grew up in Eppingen, nurtured by a small UMC congregation in southern Germany. Like many girls around the world attending small UMC churches, she never thought she'd become a pastor. As a girl, she only knew male pastors.



She experienced lots of love and care from her parents, who, she recalls, “practiced their faith more than they spoke of it.” They provided her with a good education, and that insured her ability to follow God’s call. Little did the Wenners realize that they were grooming their daughter to become the first woman bishop of the United Methodist Church in Germany.

Wenner studied at the United Methodist Theological Seminary in Reutlingen and served as pastor of congregations in Karlsruhe-Durlach, Hockenheim, Darmstadt-Sprendlingen before her appointment as superintendent of the Frankfurt District in 1996. In February 2005, she was elected bishop at the Germany Central Conference in Wuppertal—the first woman elected to the United Methodist episcopacy outside of the United States.

As Rosemarie Wenner celebrates her 50th year and this 50th anniversary for clergywomen, she says she is also understanding what it means to be bishop. She says taking the responsibility for “church life and remembering that Jesus is the one who leads all of us: bishops, pastors, laypeople, everybody who is listening to his voice” is an awesome thing. Her desire for the UMC is that it is truly a church with open doors, open hearts, and open minds. As she approaches the end of her first episcopal year, she hopes “that God will fill my heart with joy and hope every new day.”

With the power behind the meaning of this year’s 50th anniversary of full clergy rights for women, the thought of only men being pastors will possibly never occur in the minds of today’s girls. Youth in Germany, Japan, the United States, Africa and Austria, see women like Bishop Rosemarie Wenner and know what’s possible for them. What a blessing!

---

## Quiz

1. What are United Methodist central conferences?
2. What is the process for electing United Methodist bishops outside the United States?
3. How large is the United Methodist church in Germany?

**Answers:**

1. In Europe, Africa, and the Philippines, the United Methodist Church is organized into "central conferences," comparable to U.S. jurisdictional (regional) units. For more information, visit [www.gcfa.org/AnnConfsched2005.pdf](http://www.gcfa.org/AnnConfsched2005.pdf).
2. United Methodist bishops outside the United States are elected for four-year terms, rather than for life as in the USA. They may be reelected.
3. The United Methodist Church in Germany has a membership of 65,000 and a constituency of twice that number, organized into three annual conferences with some 500 congregations. Its central conference meets every four years. Its central conference meets every four years.

---

## *Courageous Past.* **BOLD FUTURE** 50th Anniversary of Full Clergy Rights for Women in the Methodist Tradition

The United Methodist Church has declared 2006 a year-long celebration of full clergy rights for women. Throughout the Church's long history, the cause of Christ and the mission of the Church have been strengthened and blessed by the contributions of clergywomen. The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) is overseeing this celebration, assisting United Methodists around the world who are marking this anniversary with special worship services, activities, and remembrances of women who, by accepting their courageous path, gave the church a bold future. For more information, visit [www.gbhem.org/clergywomen](http://www.gbhem.org/clergywomen).



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.w.org](http://www.gcsr.w.org), or call (312) 346-4900.