

SUPPLEMENT TO THE
LATIN AMERICA STUDY

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Supplement To The Latin America Study
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United Methodist Women

PURPOSE

The organized unit of United Methodist Women shall be a community of women whose purpose is to know God and to experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ; to develop a creative, supportive fellowship; and to expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church.

The Vision

Turning faith, hope and love into action on behalf of women, children and youth around the world.

Living the Vision

We provide opportunities and resources to grow spiritually, become more deeply rooted in Christ and put faith into action.

We are organized for growth, with flexible structures leading to effective witness and action.

We equip women and girls around the world to be leaders in communities, agencies, workplaces, governments and churches.

We work for justice through compassionate service and advocacy to change unfair policies and systems.

We provide educational experiences that lead to personal change in order to transform the world.

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Introduction

This is a supplement to the recent United Methodist Women publication and study *Latin America: People and Faith* by Sonia Maria Barbosa Dias. This supplement provides updated information on some relevant issues that are affecting the Latin American region as a whole: indigenous movement, Haiti, immigration, impact of Pope Francis' visits, U.S.-Cuba relations, climate justice, women missionaries and schools in the early twentieth century in Brazil and Peru, as well as other topics.

It is my hope that this material will help readers and study participants increase their understanding of the complex realities and the interconnectedness of the issues women in Latin America and the United States face, along with the work of The United Methodist Church and its mission.

Doctrine of Discovery and Consequences for Indigenous Peoples in Latin America

It was in the fifteenth century that two papal bulls created the legal framework for the European dominion over the “new world” and Africa. In 1452, Pope Nicholas V granted the king of Portugal, Alphonse V, by the *Romanus Pontifex*, to declare war against anyone in the world who was not a Christian; and the authorization to conquer, colonize, and exploit non-Christian nations and their territories. In 1493, Pope Alexander VI granted authorization to the king and queen of Spain, by *Inter Caetera*, to subjugate all of the natives and their territories and all of the land that was discovered then or in the future. By that time Christopher Columbus had landed in America. The newly discovered lands were divided in two by the treaty of *Tordesillas* (1494): the eastern part under the dominion of Portugal, and the western part under Spain. These papal bulls were never revoked, despite continuous requests from indigenous organizations.

This “doctrine of discovery” is the foundation for the “rights of people” and what we know as “international law.” In many parts of the world, these concepts have been used to neglect the rights of indigenous peoples, original nations, or hold them under the tutelage of the state.¹

This is the case in Latin America and the Caribbean where approximately 40,000,000 indigenous people live, representing about 600 people groups in the region, with the majority living in Ecuador, Bolivia, Peru, Mexico, and Guatemala.² Even though indigenous movements have gained a lot of recognition in terms of their human rights, there is an ongoing struggle concerning their resources and territories in the region against the extractive industries and corporations. The areas where many indigenous people live are rich in oil, silver, gold, cooper, timber, etc. When indigenous land is exploited for its resources, it threatens the people themselves who are deeply related to their land.

New Developments in U.S.–Cuba Relations

After a half-century of no relations between the two countries, Cuban President Raúl Castro and U.S. President Barack Obama simultaneously announced in December 2014 the opening of negotiations to restore diplomatic relations that have been broken since 1961.

The Seventh Summit of the Americas that took place in Panama on April 10–11, 2015, was the setting where both presidents appeared shaking hands for the first time after their December announcement. The central theme for the summit was “Prosperity with Equity: the challenge of cooperation in the Americas.”³ Approximately thirty-five heads of state addressed the assembly

regarding the issue. Although there was no final document, there were relevant agreements around the issues of education, migration, environment, public health, and Internet coverage. But the real theme that attracted the attention of every delegate was the reconciliation between the United States and Cuba; this was applauded and supported by all the representatives.

At the reopening of the Cuban embassy on July 20, 2015, in Washington, D.C., Bruno Rodriguez, Minister of Cuba Foreign Affairs, declared, “Only the removal of the economic, commercial and financial blockade that deprives and causes so much damage to our people, the return of the occupied territory in Guantanamo Bay, and respect for the sovereignty of Cuba will give meaning to the historical act that we are living today.”⁴ At the same time his U.S. counterpart, John Kerry, reopened the U.S. embassy in Havana on August 14 in a simple ceremony that began at dawn. Kerry is the first secretary of state to visit Cuba in seventy years. Richard Blanco, the Cuban-American poet, recited his poem, “Cosas del Mar” (Things of the Ocean), followed by John Kerry’s words, originally delivered in Spanish, “This is a time that we need to get closer to each other as two peoples, not as enemies or rivals but as neighbors. It is the moment to hoist our flags and to let the rest of the world know that we want the best for each other.”⁵

On October 27, 2015, the United Nations (U.N.) Assembly voted against the U.S. blockade to Cuba. The results: 191 votes in favor and two opposed (Israel and the United States). U.S. Ambassador Ronald Godard told the U.N., “We find it unfortunate that despite our bilateral progress, Cuba introduced a resolution nearly identical to those in years past.”⁶

“The blockade is a flagrant, massive and systematic violation of the human rights of all Cubans; it is contrary to International Law; it has been described as a crime of genocide,” Mr. Rodriguez indicated after the voting.⁷ Overall the Cuban economy has improved since the restoration of diplomatic relations. Visits of U.S. citizens to the island have increased 36 percent compared to 2014.

Papal Visit to Latin America and Apology to Indigenous Peoples

On July 5–11, 2015, Pope Francis visited Ecuador, Bolivia, and Paraguay — three Latin American countries with significant indigenous populations. The publication of his second encyclical, titled *Laudato Si’* (Praise Be To You), *On the Care of the Common House*, addressed to “every person on this planet,” preceded these visits.⁸

During his visit to Bolivia, Pope Francis addressed the meeting of the Reunión Mundial de Movimientos Populares (World Gathering of Popular Movements) in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, organized by the Vatican and the Bolivian government under the administration of President

Evo Morales. Facing more than a thousand indigenous and popular leaders from around the continent who represented more than forty organizations, the pope said, “I humbly ask for forgiveness, not only because of the offenses caused by the church itself, but for all the crimes against the original nations during the so called conquest of America.”⁹ President Morales, an indigenous person himself, was also in attendance.

Pope Francis was not the first pope to ask for forgiveness regarding the issue of the conquest and its cruel consequences among indigenous peoples, but he has been the most clear and firm about it. During his visit to the Dominican Republic in 1992, Pope John Paul II asked for forgiveness in the name of the church but in a very restrained way during the quincentennial commemoration of the Spanish discovery of America. The same pope asked for forgiveness to the indigenous peoples in Oceania for abuses that were committed by the missionaries.¹⁰

After Pope Francis’ public apologies there were different responses by the indigenous leaders attending the gathering, “We accept the apology,” indicated Adolfo Chavez, a *tacana* leader. “What could we expect from a man like Pope Francis?” asked Chavez. “It is time to turn over that page of history, to shake hands and to begin again.”¹¹ Amandina Quispe, a Peruvian peasant leader from Cusco, indicated that the church still holds land that belongs to the indigenous people of the Andean region, and those lands need to be returned. “The church stole our lands and destroyed our temples in Cusco and then they built up their churches. And now we need to pay to visit those places.”¹²

Pope Francis gave a copy of his latest encyclical to all the participants at the event saying, “In the name of God I ask you to defend mother earth because the future of humanity is not in the hands of the great leaders and of the elite, but in the hands of the people and in your capacity to organize.”¹³

The pontiff’s visit to South America ended with a mass at the National Sanctuary of Caacupé, Paraguay, where Pope Francis recognized the great courage of the women and mothers of Paraguay. “You have the heritage of those who reconstructed the life and dignity of their people”¹⁴ he said, concluding the mass by leading the Lord’s Prayer in Guaraní, a widely spoken indigenous language.

Current Migration Challenges in Latin America

Puerto Rico

On July 29, 2015, Alejandro Garcia Padilla, governor of Puerto Rico, declared the debt owed to creditors as “unpayable.” Puerto Rico lacks the means to pay its debt that has risen to US\$73 million and represents 70 percent of its gross domestic product. The unemployment rate grew to 12.4 percent and migration to the continental United States has accelerated. With an estimated population of 3.7 million, around 140,000 residents left the island in 2014 alone.

Puerto Rico as a U.S. commonwealth does not receive the same benefits as U.S. states, which receive legal protection from their creditors and are allowed to restructure their debts when they declare bankruptcy. Investment funds have recommended the firing of teachers, cuts in health services, and a reduction of subsidies to higher education in Puerto Rico.¹⁵

The Ecumenical and Inter-Religious Coalition of Puerto Rico, an organization in which the Methodist Church of Puerto Rico is a founding member and plays a key role, released a statement August 31, 2015, expressing its concern:

As leaders of the faith community, we are concerned about the debt, with the consequences of defaulting on it and above all with the proposals that would reduce wages, lay off workers, reduce employee benefits, and cause a reduction in health services. As a society, we cannot allow more austerity measures that adversely affect the poor and needy in Puerto Rico.¹⁶

Elections in Guatemala and Haiti

In Central America and the Caribbean, Guatemala and Haiti held democratic elections that were shrouded in conflict. In Guatemala, Jimmy Morales, a comedian, won the elections with 67 percent of the votes after former president Otto Perez stepped down in the face of corruption allegations. Morales is a deeply religious conservative with no political experience. His surprise election has been interpreted as a protest against the generalized corruption of the country. During his campaign, Morales denied the genocide of indigenous people and gave support to the death penalty.

In Haiti, elections occurred amid violence and the ongoing humanitarian crisis there. Haiti held a first round of legislative elections in August 2015 after a four-year delay. The Haitian parliament was dissolved in January 2015 because they were not able to hold elections in the required time-frame. The first round of presidential elections and second round of legislative elections followed in October. Before these democratic political processes, President Michel Martelly and ten senators were the only constitutional authorities in the country. Martelly was barred from running in this election due to accusations of abusing his power. There was violence on the streets with some people killed, voting centers looted, and more than a hundred arrested around the first parliamentary elections. The atmosphere during the presidential elections was not as violent. The number of candidates for this later election reached 54. Because no single candidate received the majority of votes, a second round of elections occurred at the end of December between Jovenel Moïses and Jude Célestin.¹⁷

Haiti and the Dominican Republic Crisis

The humanitarian crisis in Haiti deepened and was internationally visible after the 2010 earthquake that killed 200,000 people and left 1.3 million homeless, thousands of them still living in camps more than five years later. A recent law in the Dominican Republic causing the deportation of tens of thousands of people of Haitian descent has made the humanitarian crisis in Haiti even more severe. June 2015 marked a registration deadline in the Dominican Republic, which required people of foreign descent in the Dominican Republic to register to prove their citizenship. Prior to the 2014 ruling, anyone born in the Dominican Republic was considered a citizen (exceptions included those considered “in transit” such as diplomats). In 2014 the law was changed to require at least one parent to have formal legal status in the Dominican Republic. This new law is retroactive to 1929, leaving thousands of people of Haitian descent scrambling to prove their right to Dominican citizenship.¹⁸

It is estimated that 200,000 people of Haitian descent will be affected by this legislation. The ones who are not citizens then will be deported.¹⁹ “This is a blatant violation of the basic human right of citizenship. Now we have thousands of stateless people,” says Prof. Milagros Ricourt, sociologist, a Dominican herself, who teaches Puerto Rican and Dominican studies at Lehman College in New York.²⁰ Another aspect of the immigration of Haitians into the Dominican Republic is a human trafficking issue. Haiti was the first country in Latin America to abolish slavery, but now is the first country of modern slavery with 2.3% (237,700) of its population living under these conditions, mainly women and children who are smuggled into the Dominican Republic.²¹

At the same time the Dominican Republic is also considered the hub for drug trafficking in the Caribbean. The drug partnership cooperation program between the European Union and Latin America (COPOLAD) indicated in a 2013 report the lack of control and technological resources of the Dominican ports that place a high threat for national security interests of the United States and European countries. “The current system in place to control the shipments through the Dominican Republic is inadequate and makes easy the increased violence and the corruption in the country. . . . Players in the battle for control of inspections include a group of influential businessmen, both importers and exporters, as well as those representing the narcotraffickers’ interests.”²²

Central American Migration

The migration of people from Central America to the United States is an ongoing critical situation. Thousands of Central American migrants, including children and women, continue to flee violence and make the dangerous way north. In fact, though immigration to the United States has fallen since 2014, it is still on track to surpass any prior year.²³ The current difference is that while Central American migrants are leaving in record numbers, they are not making it to the U.S. southern

border. Instead, they are stopped in Mexico. During the past year, Mexico deported 107,814 Central American immigrants, of which 752 were children and adolescents travelling alone, according to a September report of the Migration Policy Institute, a nonprofit organization.²⁴ A news release of the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) showed that from October 2013–April 2014, 49,893 Central Americans were apprehended by Mexican authorities, while 162,751 “other than Mexicans” were apprehended by U.S. authorities. During the same period of the following year (between October 2014–April 2015), 92,889 Central Americans were deported from Mexico and 70,448 non-Mexicans were stopped by U.S. immigration authorities.²⁵

Adam Isacson, WOLA senior associate for regional security, commented on what these statistics mean:

These numbers are striking. They show that the so-called “surge” of 2014 hasn’t really ended. Enormous numbers of Central Americans are still fleeing, but most of them are now getting caught in Mexico instead of the United States. This means it’s just as urgent as it was last year to address the violence and poverty driving Central American migration. But Mexico’s aggressive efforts against migrants have masked the sense of urgency that we should be feeling here in the United States about Central America’s humanitarian crisis.²⁶

In the last couple of years we have seen a wave of unaccompanied children reaching and crossing the U.S. southern border, an unprecedented situation in the in the United States. “More than 102,000 unaccompanied children from Central America and Mexico were apprehended by U.S. Customs and Border Protection at the U.S.–Mexico border between October 1, 2013 and August 31, 2015,” notes Sarah Pierce in a Migration Policy Institute (MPI) policy brief.²⁷ “While most of the Mexican children are quickly returned to Mexico, under U.S. law children from noncontiguous countries are transferred to the Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to be processed and simultaneously placed in removal proceedings. The vast majority of these are released by ORR into the custody of a parent, relative, or friend in the United States while they wait for their cases to progress through the immigration court system,” she continues.²⁸ The research in this brief also points out in detail where children that are allowed to stay in the United States are sent.

Several local churches within the United Methodist connection and United Methodist Women local groups are reaching out to assist these children. They have collected health kits and other essentials to deliver to churches and ministries at the border that offer assistance to these children. Many United Methodist Women members have participated in vigils and demonstrations outside detention centers run by private companies, where these children are sent during their long legal immigration process. Others have been present in Washington, D.C., to witness to this unjust reality, speaking with congressional representatives and political leaders about the urgency to adopt comprehensive immigration reform.

Liberation Theology and the Beatification of Archbishop Romero

Liberation Theology, which was born out of a time of military repression in the 1960s and 1970s, brings to the whole church the strong tradition of remembering the presence of the poor in the whole biblical message, and the faces of the poor in our contemporary world. They mysteriously resemble the presence of Christ as when Jesus says to the faithful who cared for the sick, hungry, and imprisoned in their midst, “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (Matthew 25:40). Latin America is a Christianized region and is an area with extreme inequality between poor and rich. This situation should challenge our faith and identity as Christians.

Fifty years later, we find a diversity of “actors” that are part of the new social scenario. These include human rights, indigenous, women, youth, peasants, Afro-descendants, lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgender-queer (LGBTQ) and civil rights groups, ecological movement organizations, etc. Today, there is a new generation of theologians, Roman Catholic and Protestant, who maybe do not resemble the previous ones, but are a part of the dialogue with these new political actors.

I also need to mention the importance of the leadership of Pope Francis and the agenda that he has created from the Vatican. Coming from Argentina, “the end of the world” as he described it after his election to the papacy, has inspired his pastoral leadership. The actions and gestures of Pope Francis regarding the homeless, elderly and children, immigrants and refugees, and environmental issues that have been carried out with an ecumenical and inter-religious spirit, and a humble attitude, are signs of hope not only for Latin America but for the world. One action that reflected Pope Francis’ unique understanding for Latin American Christians and their struggle was the beatification of Archbishop Óscar Romero of El Salvador.

March 24, 2015, marked a special date for all Latin American Christians. On that day, the Latin American church remembered thirty-five years of the martyrdom of Romero of El Salvador. Romero was assassinated by a death squad in 1980 while he was celebrating mass at the chapel of the Divine Providence Hospital in San Salvador, the capital city. He was aware that he could be killed at any moment; he had received many death threats. In his notebook on spiritual retreats he wrote the following just a few days before his martyrdom:

My willingness should be to give up my life for God. Whatever will be the end of my life, the unknown circumstances will be lived with the grace of God. God assisted the martyrs, and, if necessary, I will feel him so close to me when I give him my last sigh. But the most valuable thing during the moment of death is giving all my life for him.²⁹

Romero's process of beatification was delayed under the Vatican's Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith during Pope Benedict XVI's papacy. Under Pope Francis, who personally knew Romero and was aware of the reality of El Salvador at the time, the process was taken over by the Congregation for the Saints. Almost five months after this, at the beginning of 2015, the theologians of this congregation recognized that Romero was killed in *odium fidei* (hatred of the faith/Christian martyrdom). Bishop Urioste, a close and faithful friend of Romero, knew that his faith and message was rooted in a deep prayerful life, "I need to confess that prayer is the root, the source of all what his life was. He chose to be led by the Holy Spirit."³⁰

Romero ministered and regarded God's Word with great care. His sermons, preached at the cathedral, were heard throughout El Salvador and beyond. His homilies were intimately related with the biblical narrative and human history, the interpretation with the lenses of the reality of his country. His words touched every Salvadoran heart. He lifted up a prophetic voice in the wilderness and because of this his voice was silenced, but his memory was not. "If I die, I will resurrect in the Salvadoran people. I tell you this without any boasting, but with great humility. . . . A bishop will die, but the church of God, that is the people, will never perish," he said in a homily on March 23, 1980, a day before his sacrifice.³¹

During the beatification ceremony in San Salvador that took place around the monument of the Divine Savior of the World, Cardinal Angelo Amato, the prefect of the Congregation for the Cause of the Saints, sent by Pope Francis, declared Bishop Romero "blessed," a step in the process of sainthood within the Roman Catholic Church. "His option for the poor was not an ideological one, but one inspired by the gospel" he added.³² After the declaration of beatification, Cardinal Amato read a letter sent by the pope that was originally read in Latin and then in Spanish:

The beatification of Archbishop Óscar Arnulfo Romero Galdámez, who was Pastor of that dear Archdiocese is a cause for great joy for the Salvadoran people and for those who rejoice by the example of the best children of the Church. Archbishop Romero, who built peace with the strength of love, gave witness to the faith with his life, given to the extreme. . . . the Lord granted his Church a zealous Bishop who, loving God and serving the brothers and sisters, converted into an image of Christ the Good Shepherd. In times of difficult coexistence, Archbishop Romero knew how to lead, defend and protect his flock, remaining faithful to the Gospel and in communion with the whole Church. His ministry was distinguished by a particular attention to the most poor and marginalized. And in the moment of his death, while he celebrated the Holy Sacrifice of love and reconciliation, he received the grace to identify himself fully with He who gave his life for his sheep.³³

Climate Justice Work in Latin America

Climate Justice is a relatively new concern for Latin Americans, but a longtime issue for indigenous people groups who are most affected. Over many decades, outside developers have worked in the region, taking advantage of our natural resources. The result has been exploitation and devastation of our resources and land as well as forcing even more people into poverty. In recent years more and more people, especially Christians, have begun to question these practices and how theology has been used to support such exploitation.

Cristianos Comprometidos con el Cuidado de la Creación (Christians Committed for the Care of Creation) is the result of a Methodist working group on Climate Justice that took place June 2015 organized by Bishop Samuel Aguilar, the Methodist Bishop of Peru. This group, along with other religious communities, had a great impact during the COP 20 event that happened in Lima, the capital city of Peru, in December 2014. “It was the first time in the history of the COP gatherings that churches and people of faith had a meaningful presence in this kind of event,” said Lidia Diaz, a Methodist representative at the Peru Inter-Religious Council that was also part of the steering committee of this event.³⁴

“The main purpose of organizing this committee is for the whole church to be committed in the care of creation,” said Bishop Aguilar, when asked about the goal of the working group.³⁵ “The reality of climate change and ecological crises have been ignored by the churches and other communities of faith in Peru. This was a time to take action about it and we need to think about the kind of global house that our children and grandchildren are receiving from us. And we need to do it now. It will be too late if we do it by tomorrow. We, as the Methodist Church, need to implement several pastoral actions; it is urgent,” continued Aguilar.³⁶

On November 13, 2015, Christians Committed for the Care of Creation organized a roundtable dialogue between some Christian denominations, nonprofit organizations, and a representative from the Peruvian Ministry of Environment to plan some strategic actions in view of COP 21 that would take place in Paris, France, the following month. Having the second encyclical of Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’, On Care for Our Common Home*, as a foundational document, the participants made several recommendations. Among those, they agreed upon challenging the environmental practices of the churches, communities of faith, and institutions; the organization of a march and vigil that took place November 29 in different Peruvian cities and “that will take place all around the world to welcome the international gathering of COP 21,” said Rocío Valdeavellano Roca Rey, from Movimiento Ciudadano por el Cambio Climático (MOCICC) (Citizens Movement for Climate Change).³⁷ The participants also agreed on keeping the ten-year moratorium in Peru regarding the presence of genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and agroindustrial businesses in the territory.

Peru is one of the few countries in Latin America that bans the importation, production, and use of GMO products in the country. This moratorium will end in 2017 and it will need to be reviewed again.

The whole assembly affirmed that working around the ecological crisis goes hand in hand with working to address poverty and inequality. “We all need to change our lifestyle as well as the present paradigm of development; we all need to address the environmental crisis as well as the living conditions of the poor in our country. It is what the gospel demands from us. We need to remember that Latin America is the most unequal region in the world,” said Christian Ipanaqué, a young leader who represented La Oveja Verde (The Green Sheep), a nonprofit that educates young Catholic people and relates with other faith communities.³⁸

José Alvarez Alonso, general director of biological diversity at the Ministry of Environment, addressed the assembly, indicating that under his administration several projects around conservation of species and care for the poor have been successful even with a strong opposition from powerful economic sectors in Peru and abroad. One of these efforts is the brand-new Sierra del Divisor National Park Project between Loreto and Ucayali in the Peruvian Amazon area. The park has been called the “Yellowstone of the Amazon” because of its conservation significance and spectacular geological features. This is one of the most biodiverse areas in the region. It covers a 3.3 million-acre area that is home to indigenous tribes, endangered wildlife, and one of South America’s wildest landscapes. Sierra del Divisor forests are estimated to hold 165 million tons of carbon, making it an important contribution to Peru’s climate commitments during the talks in Paris in December 2015.³⁹

Women Missionaries in Latin America

The role of women in mission has been very important throughout the centuries, and this has been the case of the mission of The United Methodist Church in Latin America as well. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, women missionaries from the northern and southern expressions of Methodism from the United States went to serve God and neighbors in Latin America, mainly through educational ministries. They were teachers and mentors of many children and role models for other women. Several schools were founded and supported by mission organizations in the United States that have made extraordinary contributions to Latin American countries. Most of our school buildings have been built with offerings from United Methodist Women and have provided ongoing support for scholarships and for the presence of missionaries.

The Methodist Episcopal Church was regarded as a pioneer in women’s education at the Panama Congress in 1916. By that time, the Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, North, was sponsoring several educational institutions in Latin America:

Mexico; Montevideo (Uruguay); Rosario and Buenos Aires (Argentina); Iquique, Santiago and Concepción (Chile); Callao and Lima (Peru). At the same time, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, had developed educational mission work, especially in Brazil.

At the end of the nineteenth century, when the first mission attempts in Latin America began, the missionaries observed that what the native populations of Latin America needed most were teachers. In many countries, the building and founding of schools went hand in hand with the construction of churches. In general, education has been one of the more relevant contributions of the mission work in this part of the Americas. This is one of the reasons why women were among the first missionaries. At the time, teaching was mainly a female profession. This was the case in Peru, for example, where four schools were established: Callao High School, now Colegio America del Callao (1891); Lima HS, now Maria Alvarado (1906); North American School, now Colegio Andino in Huancayo in the central Andes (1913); and Anglo-American School, La Victoria, Lima, now Colegio América de la Victoria (1915).

Bishop Wenceslao Bahamonde, the first Peruvian bishop in the Methodist Church of Peru when the church first became autonomous in 1970, describes the educational work in these terms, “The educational work of the Methodist mission is another important aspect of the evangelical work in those first years. The schools that Ms. Wood and her father organized were well received by the population in general and with the approval of the authorities.”⁴⁰

Callao High School was established in 1891 when the Rev. Thomas Wood from Lafayette, Indiana, sent by the Episcopal Methodist Church as a missionary, saw that there were no appropriate educational options for his three daughters. Callao High School was the first co-educational school. This was groundbreaking in the late 1800s. By that time there were schools for boys in Peru, but just a few for girls; many of those were run by the Roman Catholic Church. It is also important to remember at the time there was no civil rights, no civil marriage, or freedom of religion other than Roman Catholicism.

Lima High School was founded by Elsie Wood, daughter of Rev. Wood, in 1906. She became the principal, followed by missionaries Gertrude Hanks (1921) and Opal Meier (1948). It was just in 1960 that the school had its first Peruvian principal, Olga de Vanderghem. This school was for girls only and they had the presence of several women missionaries that used to live on the premises of the school. This school functioned under the sponsorship of the Methodist Woman’s Foreign Missionary Society.

From the beginning, missionaries realized the need to train local people to provide staff for the schools. In 1917, an evaluative appraisal reads, “But the imperious need is to create a department that might produce especially skilled teachers who sympathize with our ideas and efforts.”⁴¹

Usually, missionaries formed the core of the staff, but there were national teachers as well. Most of these teachers were themselves Methodist alumni from the same schools. Some of them were sent to the United States to be trained as teachers.

Rosa del Carmen Bruno-Jofré in her book, *Methodist Education in Peru*, notes that, “Women missionaries working in education were close to the Peruvian leaders in women’s education from the very beginning. Elsie Wood taught at the Fanning School and shared ideals with Teresa Gonzalez de Fanning. Gertrude Hanks, principal of the Lima HS for twenty-five years was very close to the recognized Peruvian educator Elvira García y García. The school was also very well-accepted by Evolución Femenina, a women’s society organized in 1914 which [sic] goal was to establish public high schools for women.”⁴²

In the case of Brazil and the mission educational work and presence of women, Annie Newman (1856–1880) and Martha Watts (1845–1910) are two women highlighted in the history of Methodism there. Newman was originally from Livingston, Alabama, and Watts from Louisville, Kentucky. At the age of eleven, Newman was brought to Brazil by her father, Rev. Junius Newman, a missionary himself. She learned Portuguese at the International School, founded by the Presbyterians. Watts followed Newman many years later. She was inspired to go to Brazil after listening to the dramatic and powerful testimony from the Rev. John Ramson, husband of Annie Newman, who died from yellow fever a month after she was married in 1880.⁴³

Annie Newman “opened the school in Piracicaba with the help of her sister, Mary Newman, three regular assistants, and a temporary art teacher.”⁴⁴ The school was founded in 1879 as the Newman School but was also known as the Piracicabano. After Annie Newman’s death in 1880, the school was closed temporarily until the arrival of Watts. Watt’s mission was to restart the school, which she did with the financial support of the Woman’s Missionary Society of the Episcopal Methodist Church, South, and local people who helped sponsor the work.

Watts’ descriptions of Rio just a couple months after her March 1881 arrival were included in the *Woman’s Missionary Advocate*, “In this big city of Rio de Janeiro with more than 400,000 inhabitants, there is a class of human beings, whose condition appeals to our most deep feelings, crying out for our Christian charity. They are a type of small children without anything to eat, they don’t have a place to sleep and die on the streets; ignorant of everything but the knowledge of marginality and misery, without anyone caring for their souls.”⁴⁵

The presence and missionary efforts from the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries, and especially the heritage of women missionaries of this time, set the framework and the tone for the continuing presence of women witnessing in the region.

Women Missionaries Through the General Board of Global Ministries

Dafne Plou, a social communicator and recognized leader in the Methodist Church in Argentina, evaluates the presence of women missionaries sponsored by Global Ministries: “I found that the participation of women missionaries from The United Methodist Church was pretty positive and inspirational, in my experience, both in the pastoral ministry and in the life of the church as well.”⁴⁶ Married and unmarried women missionaries serve in Argentina. They mainly work in the southern area of Greater Buenos Aires and Lomas de Zamora. Plou highlights the ministry of Ada Anderson, who works “with much dedication in the Christian education of children and teenagers.” She also notes Valine Long, “who works arduously in the northern part of my country and accompanied her husband and our church in difficult times, during the military dictatorship and the Malvinas war.”⁴⁷

The missionaries that Plou mentions served in Argentina, and in other countries in the region as well, during the decades of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Plou also recalls the work of other women missionaries including Margaret Stockwell, also a missionary in Argentina, as “a woman with a great dedication and a great spirit, who made a great contribution to the Methodist women, working toward an integral spirituality that nourished us, women, in our commitments inside and outside the church.”⁴⁸ Plou also highlights the work of Patricia Richardson who was elected by the majority of votes in the General Assembly of the Argentinian Methodist Church as one of the first district superintendents: “I remember her input and insights on target in the debates concerning the life of the church, also her sermons and her willingness to serve the vulnerable ones wherever she was serving.”⁴⁹

In the last five years there has been a shift in the missional approach of Global Ministries as perceived in the region. The agency is working to decentralize the way mission is planned and carried out. This is why Global Ministries is establishing a regional mission office for Latin America *in* Latin America. “Regional mission is planned and conceived from the realities that surround us. The big strategic goals of mission of The United Methodist Church “are to make disciples of Jesus Christ, strengthen churches and communities, alleviate human suffering, and foster justice, peace and freedom that will be adapted accordingly to the national needs,” says Dr. Dora Canales, a missionary from Chile, working in Peru.⁵⁰ Her presence and work is the result of the south-to-south missionary initiative at Global Ministries. One of the program’s goals is to involve young Methodists in a global exchange as we establish a new paradigm for mission.

Rev. Juan Gattinoni, executive secretary of Missions Relations of the General Board of Global Ministries, also noted, “In all and each round table gathering that we hold in the different Methodist churches in Latin America the importance of the work with women in each congregation and their

large presence in the churches is addressed. I understand that in the majority of the churches women are organized in federations. Also in several churches they are working around models of ministry with women to address gender issues with more strength and the role and the needs of women in the society and the churches.”

United Methodist Women’s Regional Missionary Initiative in Latin America

In January 2014 a conference of Methodist Women in Latin America occurred for the first time in many years in Kawai, Peru. For many of the participants it was their first international gathering. The event was supported by the General Board of Higher Education, the Upper Room, General Board of Discipleship, United Methodist Women, and the Methodist Church of Peru.

Hosted by a local committee, approximately eighty women from several Latin American countries gathered to learn about each other, share their dreams and hopes for their lives and for their national units, and to evaluate where women are and how far they have come within the Methodist churches and the society. Latina Methodist women representing the Association of Latina Methodist Clergy Women (ACLAMEN), lay and pastors, were part of the U.S. delegation for the first time. Harriet Jane Olson, CEO of United Methodist Women, was part of the U.S. delegation. The event’s theme was “Reaffirming Our Dignity.” The keynote speakers were Dr. Dora Canales, Rector of the Wesleyan Seminary in Lima; Dr. Cristian de la Rosa, co-chair of ACLAMEN and Professor at Boston University School of Theology; and Rev. Rosanna Panizo, member of ACLAMEN and a representative of Methodists Representing the Cause of Hispanic-Americans (MARCHA), the Hispanic-Latino caucus in The United Methodist Church.

In August 2015, United Methodist Women’s International Ministries announced the presence of a new Regional Missionary in the region, Andrea Rocha Riley Soares. Soares’ work in leadership development in Latin America will expand United Methodist Women’s Regional Missionary Initiative, which already has seven regional missionaries serving in different parts of the world.⁵¹ The work of a Regional Missionary in Latin America “comprises support and promotion of leadership for all Methodist women, identifying issues and concerns of gender and gender equity within Latin America, fostering abundant life, women’s empowerment in church and community leadership, as well as security in income and education for the uprooted and marginalized.”⁵²

Gattinoni, looks forward to Soares’ collaboration with the Regional Office of the Board of Global Ministries in Buenos Aires, Argentina, and her participation in the round tables that are organized by the autonomous churches.

Conclusion

The history of Latin America and the Caribbean is deeply related to the history of the United States, not only politically and economically, but especially to the issue of the missional relationships of The United Methodist Church in which women have played and continue to play key roles with our counterparts in the south. There is still much research to be done regarding the impact of the work of mission on the lives of women and communities. This will inform us of how our energies and passion to put together resources for our missional work are contributing to the preservation and transformation of lives, and the realization that “love in action” fueled with “faith” and “hope” have more power than anything else. At the same time this will help us to improve our missional approaches within a framework of mutuality not only in the region, but also around the world.

About the Author

The **Rev. Rosanna Panizo-Valladares** is a United Methodist clergy member of the North Carolina Conference. A native of Peru, she grew up in the Methodist Church of Peru and completed her foundational theological and pastoral studies in the Methodist Seminary and what is now the Latin American Biblical University in Costa Rica. She was ordained in March 1986. After ten years of service in parish ministry and theological formation as Rector of the Comunidad Biblica Teologica in Peru, Panizo-Valladares came to the United States to study at Duke Divinity School and graduated in 1998 with a Master of Theology degree (ThM). She has served as a pastor in English-speaking congregations and worked as a missionary with first generation Spanish-speaking immigrants for more than fourteen years in Durham and Burlington. After eighteen years in North Carolina, Panizo-Valladares is now serving as the Academic Dean of the “Seminario Teologico Wesleyano” in Lima, Peru.

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