

Bishop Minerva G. Carcaño, the Perkins School of Theology Distinguished Alumna Award Recipient for 2011, is one of 69 active bishops leading The United Methodist Church worldwide. In 2004, she became the first Hispanic woman to be elected to the episcopacy. She currently serves as Bishop of the Phoenix Episcopal Area, Desert Southwest Conference, and is the official spokesperson for the Council of Bishops on the issue of immigration. Bishop Carcaño is a 1975 graduate of the University of Texas Pan American in Edinburg, Texas, and received a Masters of Theology from Perkins in 1979.

Bishop Carcaño was ordained elder in the Rio Grande Annual Conference in 1979. Her appointments included Emmanuel UMC in Lubbock, Texas, and La Trinidad UMC in San Jose, California, in 1979. From there, she went on to serve United Methodist Churches in Crystal City, Carrizo Springs, Hebronville, and McAllen, Texas. In 1986 she became the first Hispanic woman to be appointed a United Methodist district superintendent, serving in that capacity until 1992 in West Texas and New Mexico. From 2001 to 2004 she served as a district superintendent in Portland, Oregon.

From 1992-1996, Carcaño was the organizing pastor of the South Albuquerque Cooperative Ministry, an ecumenical parish. She subsequently served from 1996-2001 as director of the Mexican American Program at Perkins, until her call to serve in the Oregon-Idaho Conference.

“When I started in ministry,” Bishop Carcaño recalls, “congregations protested my appointment to them because I was a woman, but we grew to love each other in spite of the initial resistance. I knew that I was there to be their pastor and not to prove to them that I was called to ordained ministry. It was not always easy, but the support of other women and men, both clergy and lay, and that of my family, strengthened me. Above all, God has been faithful, loving, and gracious.”

In 2008, Carcaño authored “I Believe in Jesus,” the annual Spiritual Growth Study for the United Methodist Women. It is published in both Spanish and English with a study guide by Glory Dharmaraj.

Bishop Carcaño has become a national figure in the effort to achieve humane, comprehensive immigration reform. Addressing the Interfaith Platform on Humane Immigration Reform in February 2009, Bishop Carcaño powerfully expressed her concern for the strangers and sojourners in our land: “As the suffering of immigrants and their families grows every day, we as people of faith long to bring healing to them and this land. As with people of all faiths, United Methodists stand with our immigrant brothers and sisters. Immigration reform that is just and humane is the only way to bring healing to our land.”

Bishop Carcaño once described some of her experiences in ministry this way: “I have received the gift of being able to preach and teach throughout the United Methodist connection at annual conference sessions, schools of Christian mission, and numerous general church events. God has been amazingly gracious in allowing me to serve as a clergyperson in Christ’s church.”

“The road of ministry has not always been easy,” she adds, “but it has always been an incredible blessing, and it has always been home.”

The Perkins School of Theology Distinguished Alumnus/a award recognizes one graduate of Perkins who has demonstrated effectiveness and integrity in service to the church, continuing support and involvement in the goals of Perkins School of Theology and SMU, distinguished service in the wider community, and exemplary character. The award is presented annually during Perkins' Ministers Week.