

# Ministry Is *Home* for Bishop Minerva G. Carcaño

Almost fifty years ago in a hot, dusty town in southwest Texas, a little girl sat in the back seat of the family car outside a Methodist church. Her father wouldn't let her go to Sunday school and she didn't understand why. As they drove away, the little Hispanic girl looked out the back window at the white people streaming into church, wondering why she wasn't welcome in the house of God.

In 2004 that little girl became the first Hispanic woman elected a bishop in The United Methodist Church. The road from southwest Texas to an episcopal appointment in Phoenix, Arizona, was long and challenging for Bishop Minerva G. Carcaño.

She did her undergraduate work at the University of Texas at Pan American, then earned her Masters of Theology at Perkins School of Theology. From 1979 to 1982 Carcaño served churches in Texas and California. In 1986, she became district superintendent in the Rio Grande Conference. Bishop Carcaño served as the lead pastor of the South Albuquerque Cooperative Parish Ministry from 1992 to 1996. From 1996 to 2001, she served as the Director of the Mexican American program at Perkins School of Theology.<sup>1</sup>

Elected by the Western Jurisdiction in July 2004, she was then assigned to the Phoenix Episcopal Area (Desert Southwest Conference) where she now serves.



Commenting on the opportunities for women of color in ministry, Bishop Carcaño has noted that her "experience as a woman of color in ministry is that unfortunately one faces the discrimination of white racism as well as the sexism of both white people as well as that of people of color. What I have always found curious is that so often the very persons who have most touched our lives through their faith witness are the same persons who most oppose and are troubled by our call and desire to be faithful. There is great irony in this. Racism and sexism are so embedded in the world that even in their present subtle and sophisticated forms they are viewed as the normal state of life.

"Such sins—for racism and sexism are sins in that they counter God's creative work of making us diverse in color and culture and gender—need to be constantly named for what they are and overcome."<sup>2</sup>

Bishop Carcaño knew her calling at the age of five, although some family members and other clergy expressed doubts about women in ordained ministry. "The road of ministry has not always been easy, but it has always been an incredible blessing, and it has always been home."<sup>3</sup> □

This article is based on articles by: 1. Linda Sullivan in the Oregon-Idaho United Methodist (Sept/Oct 2004); 2. Denise Johnson Stovall, United Methodist News Service (February 2006); and 3. Hispanic Magazine.com (November 2004).