



WELCOMED BY GOD
Welcoming All



PLEDGE TO MISSION SERVICE 2015

Welcoming Through Giving

By Lynne Gilbert

OBJECTIVE

That United Methodist Women members will ponder, celebrate and commit to extending the radical welcome of Jesus Christ through Mission Giving.

PREPARATION

Prayerfully prepare for the program, thinking of ways to make this time together meaningful for everyone attending the gathering.

Materials

Gather the following items to use during this program:

- Copies of the program for readers.
- Materials to prepare a worship center:
 - Colorful cloth.
 - Cross.
 - Candle.
 - Bible.
 - Basket or offering plate to receive pledges.
 - Other symbols or images of United Methodist Women in mission from **response** magazine, Prayer Calendar, annual report, and United Methodist Women website and social media (Facebook, Pinterest, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and Flickr).
- Pledge to Mission cards downloaded and printed from www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/donate/resources/pledgecards.pdf.

Resources

Make the following available for the program:

- *The United Methodist Hymnal.*
- United Methodist Women Bible (NRSV).

Participants

Before the meeting, ask individual women to help in the following roles:

- Welcome people as they walk through the door.
- Read 2 Corinthians 8:7 and Romans 15:7.
- Read the prayer (included in the program under Devotions).
- Read and lead the meditation (included in the program under Devotions).
- Facilitate the Exploration and Challenge for Mission sections (one to two women for each section).
- Lead the Closing Song.

Room Setup

Set up the room with sufficient space for everyone to sit and move around as needed for the business meeting and the program.

- Conduct the meeting around a table, if appropriate, or it can be held in a circle or semicircle so that it is conducive to conversation.
- Set up a table large enough to allow everyone to participate in activities for the program portion. If you are gathering in a home, move to the dining table or other similar surface.
- Enjoy snacks and beverages!

NOTES

DEVOTIONS

Read and meditate on scripture and respond in faith.



READ: 2 Corinthians 8:7, Romans 15:7

Pray

Gracious and loving God, we thank you for the organization of United Methodist Women, for each person gathered here and for the opportunity that we have to share together in your mission. Help us to hear with new ears your call of radical welcome for all of your children, and lead us to give joyfully and generously of our resources to make a difference in the lives of women, children and youth around the world. In the name of your son, our Savior, Jesus Christ, **Amen.**

Meditate

What do you think about when you hear the word *welcome*? Do some of these words come to mind: *loved, included, accepted, invited, wanted, worthy, needed*? What other words or feelings express the meaning of welcome for you?

Think of a time when you were genuinely welcomed in a new place, in someone's home, by a friend or even by a stranger. Do you remember how that made you feel? Receiving the gift of welcome can be a powerful experience, where love, joy, warmth and acceptance are very real, almost tangible. Isn't that the kind of extravagant welcome and love that God gave each of us through Jesus Christ? And isn't that the kind of welcome that God calls us to share with all of God's children?

In her book, *Radical Welcome: Embracing God, The Other, and the Spirit of Transformation* (2013 United Methodist Women Reading Program), Stephanie Spellers describes it this way: “When we are welcomed like this, we can experience the state of freedom and love I believe God wills for all people. It is a joy to receive this welcome. It is also a joy to offer this welcome.”¹

As we share in our Pledge Service today, we want to celebrate some of the many ways that our Mission Giving is extending the welcome of Jesus Christ, in our own communities, across the country, and around the world. Through Mission Giving, we continue to reach out and bring hope to people who are hurting, marginalized and oppressed.

EXPLORATION

Discover the impact of the Pledge to Mission and renew your pledge.

When you make your Pledge to Mission, you make a commitment to support mission locally, nationally and globally. Have you ever thought about how your Pledge to Mission giving might be a means of sharing welcome?

Seeking justice and advocacy: Throughout our history, United Methodist Women members have been advocates for justice for the marginalized and oppressed. We grow and share welcome through our advocacy and awareness efforts on human trafficking, domestic violence, women’s rights, the environment, public education, immigration, health care and more.

Supporting National Mission Institutions: Across the country, National Mission Institutions supported by United Methodist Women are located in neighborhoods with many needs and few advantages. Children, youth and adults experience the welcoming love of Jesus Christ in those places every single day, perhaps for the very first time. Lives are being transformed as staff and volunteers work to address basic needs to provide education, skills training and empowerment opportunities that build self-esteem, and to offer love, support, compassion, healing and welcome through long-term, faithful presence in the community.

Supporting Regional Missionaries: Your Mission Giving supports Regional Missionaries in sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, extending welcome through training, planning and developing networks to address needs specific to women, children and youth.

International Ministries: You help to support mission projects and programs in more than 100 countries around the world, including Bible study, literacy, leadership development, education, health and nutrition, poverty elimination and more.

Mission education resources, opportunities and leadership development:

Through mission education opportunities and resources, and leadership development, we can grow in our ability to tell the story of the work of United Methodist Women. Mission studies, Mission u and **response** magazine help us to learn about important issues, struggles that face our sisters and brothers in countries around the world, the saving love of Jesus Christ and how we can become involved to make a difference. And, every year, officers at every level of United Methodist Women participate in training to prepare them for leadership.

Work Together

Using recent issues of **response** magazine, a recent United Methodist Women annual report, the Prayer Calendar, the United Methodist Women website (www.unitedmethodistwomen.org) and United Methodist Women on social media, can you find examples of important ways that your Mission Giving is at work?

Look especially for examples that speak particularly to you about welcome.

Learn

- An individual member's Pledge to Mission is the amount a woman gives to her local unit to help fulfill the PURPOSE of United Methodist Women.
- The conference United Methodist Women pledges a specific amount to United Methodist Women's national organization for mission with women, children and youth, and retains a designated percent to be used for district and conference administration and membership development expenses.
- Every year, the United Methodist Women national office and the board of directors strive to be faithful stewards of your Mission Giving dollars. In many ways, the needs are greater than ever, so the decisions about how to do that are not easy. Every single dollar makes a difference, and every additional dollar offers new opportunities to share the love of Jesus Christ. By making a commitment to Mission Giving, you make mission possible and continue the broad base of mission support that helps to make the world a better place for women, children and youth around the world.

Act

Each of you has received a pledge card to make your personal Pledge to Mission for the coming year. Listen for God's call on your life to share the welcome of Jesus Christ through your gifts to Mission Giving, and plan to give generously. Take a few moments to complete your pledge card, and then bring it forward and place it in the basket on the worship center.

Pray

Dear God, we thank you for opportunity that we have to reach out in welcome, and touch the lives of your children. Bless these gifts, that they may be multiplied and put to use where they are needed the most. And shower your blessings on all of the lives touched by our mission dollars. May all that we do be to your praise and glory. In Christ's name we pray, **Amen.**

CHALLENGE FOR MISSION

Explore ways to give to mission.

- Challenge yourself and other members of your local unit or circle to plan to personally give in all five channels of Mission Giving (Pledge to Mission, Special Mission Recognition, Gift to Mission, Gift in Memory and World Thank Offering) in the coming year.
- Visit a National Mission Institution and ask how you can get involved. Check out the National Mission Institution map online at: www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/nmi.
- At your local unit meetings, participate in a hands-on project for a local mission that is making a difference for women, children and youth in your community; or prepare any of the UMCOR Relief Supply kits (www.umcor.org/UMCOR/Relief-Supplies).

CLOSING SONG

Suggested hymns from The United Methodist Hymnal:

- “Take My Life, and Let It Be,” no. 399
- “Here I Am, Lord,” no. 593

Lynne Gilbert is from the Western North Carolina Conference. She is the vice chair of the committee on finance of the United Methodist Women Board of Directors for 2013-2016.

NOTES

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1. Stephanie Spellers, *Radical Welcome: Embracing God, The Other and the Spirit of Transformation* (New York: Church Publishing, 2006), Kindle edition.