UNITED METHODIST WOMEN
PROGRAM BOOK 2019-2020

LET YOUR LIGHT SHINE
IGNITED FOR JUSTICE
A CALL TO PRAYER AND SELF-DENIAL 2020

WE RISE: MEETING GOD’S CALL TO TRANSFORM COMMUNITIES

By Selby Ewing*

OBJECTIVE

That this program will shine a light on the many ways members of United Methodist Women have changed the lives of women, children and youth on the margins through their gifts to A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial. This giving also transforms members’ own lives as they grow in their love of God and neighbors.
Preparation

Take some time to read through the entire program before you begin planning for it.

MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

• United Methodist Women Bible (NRSV) or Common English Bible (CEB)
• The United Methodist Hymnal
• Photocopies of the Regional Missionary story cards (see Appendix E), one set per table
  • Items for the Worship Center (see below)
• Basket to receive offerings
• Computer/laptop, internet access, projector and screen

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Your church will receive a packet containing a Call to Prayer and Self-Denial poster, prayer card and offering envelope, which you can use to promote the observance and also during the program. You can order extras as needed at unitedmethodistwomen.org/call-to-prayer.

PARTICIPANTS

Ask individual women ahead of time to volunteer to read the scriptures.
Three readers will be needed.

WORSHIP CENTER

Set up a small table in the front of the room to serve as an altar, and invite women to bring items from different parts of the world to display on the table.
Place the offering basket on the altar.
A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial

WELCOME
Women, children and youth across the world have felt the love of God through A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial funds that have been given by countless women gathered in circles of care. As United Methodist Women members, we bow to meet God in prayer and meditation, then rise to give of ourselves sacrificially so that God’s vision of an abundant and beloved community for all can be realized. The kin-dom comes not only for those who receive financial gifts through A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial, the kin-dom comes to us as we live into the light of God’s vision for humanity, of mutuality and of seeing one’s self in the eyes of another.

MEDITATE
Let us pause in this holy space to quiet our minds and open our hearts to that still small voice of God, always here, always available to us if we would but pause. Now, bowing every head, resting and finding ourselves enveloped in the Spirit of God.

SING
Let us offer ourselves in service to God.

“Here I Am, Lord,” The United Methodist Hymnal, no. 593
Let the refrain linger as we prepare our hearts for the Word of God.

SCRIPTURE READING
Reader 1: 2 Corinthians 8:13–15

I do not mean that there should be relief for others and pressure on you, but it is a question of a fair balance between your present abundance and their need, so that their abundance may be for your need, in order that there may be a fair balance. As it is written,

“The one who had much did not have too much,
and the one who had little did not have too little.”

Reader 2: As we listen to the passage in 2 Corinthians 8, it is helpful to understand the context in which these lines were written. Paul is writing to the church in Corinth, counseling the new church body as they take those first baby steps as followers in the way of Jesus. He is encouraging them—he is inviting their hearts—to be bold and courageous. Bold in the love and knowledge of God.

In this chapter, Paul is working with concepts of generosity, charity and mutuality. Paul lifts up the church in Macedonia, noting that they were poor in everything except the absolute joy of abiding with God. They were excited to be included in the work of improving the lives of those without enough, and doing it alongside God. As a result of this pure joy, God used what they had freely given and all were blessed.
Reader 3: Paul notes earlier in verse 7 that by comparison, the people of the church in Corinth are rich in gifts “in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in utmost eagerness.” Out of a hopeful love for the Corinthians, Paul encourages them to be even more inside God’s plan through freely giving what has been given to them, expressing a kind of exuberant generosity.

Paul knows that the reward of that kind of courage is deep and abiding communion with others and with God.

Reader 1: When we come to the lines of our text today, Paul is trying to reassure the Corinthians that in their giving they will not become destitute while others benefit from their sacrificial giving. Paul notes that the point is not for one to be rich and one to be poor, but for all to have enough. Enough of the material things necessary to thrive and enough of the gifts of community, mutuality and spirit to understand that we truly are all of one light, one source.

By freely opening our hands and hearts to the will of God, our own lives are enriched beyond measure. It seems like a paradox that in giving we receive. We often need that experience to realize it is beyond our understanding, yet within our reach.

LEARN AND REFLECT

As members of United Methodist Women, we are not strangers to the cares of the world or the love of God that bathes all of us in the light of caring and compassion. It is the light of God’s love that calls us to rise like crocuses in early spring and to meet the calls of those who are living on the margins.

We rise to meet the needs of women, children and youth, not just down the street, but around the world in a special sacrificial way through our gifts to A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial. For what could be more life-giving than to live in the spaces between thought in communion with God and in that expansive place, hear the still small voice that directs our aching hearts to make some kind of difference in the world. A world so beset by tragedy, yet bathed in the light of God.

Reader 1: The offerings we give today will support the work of National Mission Institutions, International Partners and Regional Missionaries. These programs offer educational and economic development opportunities to underserved and marginalized women, children and youth. Projects will include child development and afterschool programs; GED and ESL programs; job readiness, life skills and livelihood training; scholarships and microenterprise projects.

Reader 2: Many of us are familiar with the work A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial supports in the United States—the 90-plus National Mission Institutions located in neighborhoods across the country.

Perhaps less familiar is the work that our sacrificial giving funds internationally, most especially through our Regional Missionaries.

We have eight Regional Missionaries whose work around the globe is funded by A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial. Our sacrificial gifts make this work possible for:
Reader 3:
- Catherine Akale serving in Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa and Angola, as well as ecumenically
- Emma Cantor serving in Asia and the Pacific
- Hikari Chang serving in Japan
- Grace Musuka serving in Central Africa
- Finda Quiwa serving in sub-Saharan Africa
- Serna Samuel serving in the Caribbean
- Elmira Sellu serving in East and West Africa
- Andrea Reily Rocha Soares serving in Latin America

**ACTIVITY: WHAT YOU DIDN'T KNOW, NOW YOU KNOW**

*Each table should have a set of the Regional Missionary story cards. If your group is large, you can assign one card to each small group of two or three women; if it’s small, you can assign the cards to individual women. (It’s okay if some of the groups or individuals review the same story.)*

Take a look at your card, representing the story one of our Regional Missionaries.

Take a moment to familiarize yourself with the work of these incredible women and then we’ll come back together to share highlights of their stories.

**FROM REFLECTION TO ACTION**

Let’s go around the group and share what we learned about the work we fund internationally through A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial.

Start with what you knew about the region and what life is like there for women, children and youth before reading your card. Then, share how learning about your assigned Regional Missionary project has given you new insights into daily life in the region. Also share any ties or applications you see to life here in the United States, such as how challenges we face and conditions we experience are similar or different in some way.

We can be about the business of bringing in God’s kin-dom by bringing our own light to the world. It is through this communion with God that we find our real life. We give ourselves the opportunity to share in the priceless treasure of belonging to one another and to God.

**Reader 1:** As followers in the way of Jesus, we know we belong to each other. Keeping and being kept by our brothers and sisters is the holy fabric of the Christian ecosystem, one in which we continually learn to give as we receive from one another in mutuality. We cannot benefit if one of us is suffering and our suffering calls out for familial healing.

**Reader 2:** United Methodist Women members answer the call for healing and hope around the world.
We rise to make possible the work of Catherine, Emma, Hikari, Grace, Finda, Serna, Elmira, and Andrea. We rise so that stories of healing and hope return to us as healing and hope in our own lives.

**Reader 3:** A Call to Prayer and Self Denial is our opportunity, each year, to go deeply with God and abide in God’s will for our lives. In the beautiful springtime light, we are born many times over to meet the needs of women, children and youth in communities across the world, springing God’s kin-dom to life again, again and again.

**OFFERING**
I invite each one of you to come forward to the altar with your offering for this year’s Call to Prayer and Self-Denial.

**SONG**
“We Are Marching,” *The Faith We Sing*, no. 2235b

**CLOSING LITANY**

**Leader:** Creator God, the source of light and love, we have come to you to linger in the stillness, to hear you speak to our hearts. We are encouraged.

**ALL:** We rise to meet you in the eyes of our brothers and sisters.

**Leader:** We have come to you in all of our frailty, knowing that you will bless us and all that we joyfully give for the work of your kin-dom. We are encouraged.

**ALL:** We rise to meet you in the places that need healing and we are healed.

**Leader:** We have come to you trusting in your goodness and will continue to work to bring about the beloved kin-dom that we see possible through your grace. We are encouraged.

**ALL:** We rise with open hearts and open hands to give and receive the blessings that are ours to share with our sisters and brothers.

**Leader:** We now go out into the world knowing our gifts through A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial will touch people near and far. Knowing we will be blessed as we are a blessing through the web of your love. We are encouraged.

**ALL:** We rise, knowing you are always with us, always available to us and present in these gifts we give. May our abundance touch lives across the world. Amen.

*Selby Ewing is a communications professional who has worked with United Methodist Women, the General Commission on Religion and Race, United Methodist Publishing House and United Methodist Communications as well as corporations and nonprofits outside The United Methodist Church.*
Appendix E

Regional Missionary Story Cards

Photocopy pages 127–130 and cut out the cards along the dotted lines. You will need one set of cards for each table. If the group is large, you can assign one card to each small group of two or three women; if it’s small you can assign the cards to individual women. (It’s okay if some of the groups or individuals review the same story.)
Emma Cantor
Emma Cantor is a United Methodist Women’s Regional Missionary with women, children and youth, assigned to the East Asia/Pacific region to facilitate gender training and leadership development.

HEALING THROUGH UNDERSTANDING SELF WORTH
Emma Cantor serves many regions of Asia, helping women realize their own worth in cultures that traditionally diminish the role and value of women and girls.

Through Bible Women workshops, Cantor lifts up women in the biblical text who grew into understandings of their own value. In troubled Myanmar, Cantor believes women can play a role in the healing of that society.

Cantor said: “Healing among women in Asia is important. Women are victims of so many kinds of violence, poverty and trafficking. My work as a missionary for United Methodist Women involves finding women from the grassroots who are struggling for empowerment, and accompanying them as they advocate for life and healing in their communities.”

(Excerpted from Paul Jeffrey’s article for response magazine: unitedmethodistwomen.org/news/helping-women-find-power.)

Elmira I. Sellu
Elmira I. Sellu is a United Methodist Women’s Regional Missionary with women, children and youth based in Sierra Leone.

EDUCATION AND THE GIRL CHILD
Elmira Sellu serves as coordinator for the United Methodist Women’s Leadership Development for Women’s Programs in the West Africa Central Conference and the East Africa Annual Conference.

A refugee herself, Sellu works to make sure refugee children stay in school. She also mobilizes women to start small businesses. She continues to develop workshops and seminars addressing the issues affecting women and children, with a certain emphasis on “the girl child in Africa,” Sellu said.

The importance of Sellu’s work cannot be overstated. According to the United Nations, an educated girl is much more able to plan when she will start to have children and how many children she will have. Such power gives her the ability to better look after her own health and the health of her children. Educated girls are also more likely to be able to ensure their children’s health against disease and undernutrition. According to the United Nations, about 12 million children would be saved from undernutrition if their mothers had received a secondary education.

(Excerpted from: unitedmethodistwomen.org/news/day-of-the-girl-promoting-gender-equality.)
Catherine Mudime Akale

Dr. Catherine Mudime Akale is a United Methodist Women’s Regional Missionary assigned to work with women in select African countries, including Mozambique, Nigeria, South Africa and Angola, as well as ecumenically.

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SELF-DETERMINATION FOR WOMEN

Catherine Akale works closely with United Methodist Women partners to address the social and economic effects of HIV/AIDS and poverty. She is also a fundamental link in many partnerships to improve the outcome for women and girls in the areas where she serves.

Akale’s efforts are extremely valuable in Mozambique, where women are still considered to be men’s private property, whereby many decisions about their lives are in the hands of men—their husbands, sons, fathers, and brothers.

In 2017 the United Methodist Women in North Mozambique, in partnership with the United Methodist Women National Office, worked out a project on early marriages in order to bring awareness of the negative impacts of this practice in the lives of young girls and women in general, as well as in the development of a country.

(Excerpted from a report by: The Rev. Alzira Sebastiano Isaac Machauene, executive secretary for The United Methodist Church Annual Conference in Mozambique.)

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Hikari Kokai Chang

The Rev. Hikari Kokai Chang is a United Methodist Women’s Regional Missionary serving as administrative and program director of the Wesley Foundation in Tokyo, Japan.

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BRIDGING CULTURES THROUGH EDUCATION AND INTERACTION

Hikari Kokai Chang was appointed in 2012 to lead the foundation toward official recognition as a public benefit entity under Japanese law.

The Wesley Center develops and hosts many programs and seminars, especially for young women and girls, which attract participants both in Japan and around the world. The foundation has a building with facilities for promoting educational and social activities in partnership with churches and other nongovernmental organizations.

Recent offerings include an Asian young woman’s leadership development seminar in Hong Kong, a global seminar for youth entitled “To Create a Colorful World Together,” and an upcoming peace seminar for young Korean and Japanese women that will examine topics including violence against women, women and war, and peace building as a lens to global issues.

(Excerpted from: wesley.or.jp/english/program/index.php.)
Grace Musuka
Grace Musuka is a United Methodist Women’s Regional Missionary serving the work and leadership of United Methodist Women organizations in Central Africa.

PRACTICAL LIFE SKILLS ARE LIFE GIVING
Grace Musuka develops leadership training around peace building, and economic development for women in Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Namibia, Tanzania and Zimbabwe, where she is based in the city of Harare.

The programs and trainings Musuka develops are practical how-to’s designed to improve the lives of women in the areas she serves. A team of women from Zambia attended a recent workshop in Zimbabwe on sewing, baking and health issues.

The absence of jobs, even for college graduates, is a major cause of migration in Central Africa, and the hope of peace and a growing economy would help many families stay together, especially in Zimbabwe, a country that has suffered decades of military tyranny.

(Excerpted from Kathy Gilbert’s story in: umnews.org/en/news/prayers-for-peace-lifting-zimbabwe.)

Finda Quiwa
Finda Quiwa is a United Methodist Women’s Regional Missionary serving United Methodist youth and young women throughout sub-Saharan Africa.

BUILDING AWARENESS AND CAPACITY FOR THRIVING
Finda Quiwa is based in Freetown, Sierra Leone, her home country. The trauma she has seen in the name of survival cast Quiwa’s commitment to help build brighter futures for women and children in sub-Saharan Africa.

Quiwa’s work has touched many lives. She supported the Youth Emergency Anti-Ebola Campaign project in 2014, and has worked with women’s prison ministry in Sierra Leone, declaring that there is life after prison. She has also been a part of United Methodist Women’s efforts to close the digital divide for young women and girls in Africa, tying training directly to better outcomes for women in terms of economic equality, and maternal and child health.

**Serna E. Samuel**

The Rev. Serna E. Samuel is a United Methodist Women’s Regional Missionary, working with women and youth in English- and French-speaking areas of the Caribbean.

**LIFE-GIVING NETWORKS CHANGING LIVES**

Serna Samuel is working to upgrade organizational development and the infrastructure of the Methodist Church in the Caribbean and the Americas relating to ministries with women and youth. The work is collaborative and ecumenical, and Samuel deals with specific issues such as HIV/AIDS, violence against women, and youth opportunities.

Samuel also conducts gender-awareness trainings and workshops on HIV/AIDS and domestic violence with the goal of transforming relationships between women and men in church and society.

Inherent in all of her work is Samuel’s understanding of herself as a child of God and a sister to others. She states, “My view is that my service to God lies in my service to my brothers and sisters.”

(Excerpted from: unitedmethodistwomen.org/missionaries/samuel.)

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**Andrea Reily Rocha Soares**

Andrea Reily Rocha Soares is United Methodist Women’s Regional Missionary for leadership development with women in Latin America.

**UNCOVERING AND TRAINING FOR EXPONENTIAL VITALITY**

Andrea Reily Rocha Soares addresses health, empowerment and gender issues throughout Latin America.

Her work includes 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.

During an interview published in response magazine Soares stated: “Latin America carries a lot of scars as a result of many, many years of social, political and economic instability. Some of the scars are still very fresh and open. On a daily basis, many families struggle to maintain a job, buy the necessary amount of food, keep safe in the midst of gunshots, provide education for their children and have a place to sleep. Despite all that, Latin American people are very determined and creative!”

(Excerpted from response magazine article: unitedmethodistwomen.org/news/called-and-commissioned.)