Knitted Together for God’s Good Work

United Methodist Women Program Book 2020–2021
Knitted Together
for God’s Good Work

United Methodist Women
Program Book 2020–2021
# Table of Contents

**Introduction** / VI

**About the Author** / XI

**Monthly Programs** / 1

SEPTEMBER 2020  
Caring for Each Other in Community / 3

OCTOBER 2020  
Righteousness Flows Like a Stream / 11

NOVEMBER 2020  
World Thank Offering:  
The Give and Take of Gratitude / 19

DECEMBER 2020  
The Gift of Mentoring / 25

JANUARY 2021  
The Dignity of Work / 31

FEBRUARY 2021  
Knit Together Against Violence / 39

MARCH 2021  
Persistence in Mission / 47

APRIL 2021  
Unbound to Share Good News / 55

MAY 2021  
Bold Steps in Defiance of Injustice / 63

JUNE 2021  
Learning in Community / 71

JULY 2021  
Knit Together with the Earth / 79

AUGUST 2021  
Generous Hearts and Strong Threads / 87

**Special Programs**

PLEDGE TO MISSION SERVICE 2021  
Knitted Together and  
Reaching Out / 97

A CALL TO PRAYER AND  
SELF-DENIAL 2021  
She Leads: Empowering Women  
to Make a Difference / 109

APPENDIX / 117

EVALUATION FORM / 127
Introduction

The people of God are a work in progress! In the letter to the Ephesians, Paul describes the people of God as growing together in Christ, knit together by ligaments, each part working properly and promoting the growth of the whole body of Christ. Each person is a beloved child of God and we are being knit together as the whole body of Christ. If you’ve ever had a broken bone, you know that when the body is knit back together it can sometimes be a painful process. But the resulting bones are stronger, and so it can be when the people of God seek to be knit together as disciples.

In spite of things that may try to separate us such as a health crisis, political differences, worship styles, theological differences or even simple misunderstandings, Jesus calls us to be knit together as disciples. How can we work to be the body of Christ working for justice? Where do we see God at work in the world, calling us to join in the work of resisting evil? What practices of faith draw us closer to our companions in Christ?

Through these 12 monthly programs, we will explore biblical passages, some of which highlight the role of unnamed women and others that highlight named women. These passages were chosen because they emphasize the role of a woman or a group of women, in carrying out God’s will. We will take encouragement from their witness and work and be challenged to join in the courageous, bold witness of faithful women. We will seek ways to join with our sisters in Christ to resist evil and injustice. We will proclaim our hope in the grace of Christ and seek ways to be part of God’s handiwork in making us part of the body of Christ to transform the world.

Knit Together for Your Community Project

Each month as your group is knit together through study, you are encouraged to knit with other women, youth and children in your community. You will work on a project that will show others how being knit together in Christ is a blessing. Each month you will work as a group to create a knitted item to donate to an organization of your choice. This can be hung in your gathering space or in the church foyer between programs so others can see your progress. The project can also be an invitation to people who may not normally attend your gatherings to join you in the study and the work. Invite youth and children to contribute to your project as well.

Your Knit Together for Your Community project can take many forms, whether you knit individually at home, come together through a videoconferencing platform, or are able to knit together in person. For example, you could knit a blanket to donate to a homeless shelter, a transitional living center, or a hospice care facility, or assemble an emergency response kit for first responders to use with children. Your group could knit a prayer scarf or shawl. When your project is complete, share it in a worship service so that the congregation can join in a prayer of blessing.

Invite someone to your group to share their gift of knitting, leading a class for those who don’t know how to knit or leading your group in your project.
Monthly Program Features

Month/Title:
Each month’s program has a title that offers you a glimpse into the theme of the Bible study for the month. Many of the studies are focused on the unnamed women in scripture, allowing you to consider their roles and what their stories say to the women of today.

Objective:
The objective will give you the goals for participants and the direction of the program.

Preparation:
This section will help leaders prepare for the program. Resources and materials should be reviewed in advance, and readers and helpers should be contacted so they may prepare for the program.

Prayer to Gather Us In and Song Suggestion:
These devotional aids are offered at the beginning of each program so that you and your group can experience a mini-retreat atmosphere. They set the program in the context of worship and intentional quiet time.

Reflect Together on Scripture and Experience Together:
Each program has a scripture selection and a Bible study that explores the role of women. Consider asking participants to read a section during the program so that a variety of voices contribute to the study. Give your facilitators a copy of the Bible study in advance. At the end of the study, participants will have an opportunity to experience and absorb the scripture together in community.

Act Together:
Here, your group has the opportunity to pick up the work of faithful women and take action and advocacy through United Methodist Women. You are encouraged to use the opportunities offered here and to develop relationships for furthering the work in your community.

Closing Litany:
These responsive readings offer a prayerful benediction to send your group back into the world, providing a blessing as your program comes to a close.

Beyond the Program:
Here, you will find other options for action and advocacy for your group.

Appendix:
Additional worksheets and resources are available in this section.
Build Your Program / Notes
Each month, you are encouraged to do the complete program to learn and gain a full understanding of the topic. The full program will take 45 minutes to an hour. The approximate time allotted for key segments is indicated after the titles. However, if you have less than an hour, use the Build Your Own Program feature in the Preparation section of each program to note the segments you want to use, those that would be most helpful for your group. You may also use this space to plan for segments that can be done virtually.

Special Programs
A Pledge to Mission and A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial programs are included in the Program Book. They are also available for download from the United Methodist Women website: unitedmethodistwomen.org.

Come as you are united by God’s love to transform the world!

New Features
Datebook
This year, the Datebook has been rolled into the Program Book. You can keep abreast of advocacy days and important holidays simply by flipping to the opening page of each monthly program. There, you’ll find a calendar grid that indicates key dates, along with space to fill in details about United Methodist Women meetings/programs and district/conference events taking place that month, including a place to record pledges paid at these events.

If Meeting Together Is Not Possible
Even when it’s not possible to meet together in person for these monthly programs, we can still come together in community to explore them, knitted together through the magic of technology. This tool is designed to offer facilitators a helping hand as they adapt to using videoconferencing platforms as a way to bring the group together virtually. It includes tips on familiarizing participants with this technology and using these platforms effectively plus general ideas on how to adapt the programs, as needed, for virtual meetings.

Knitted Together Virtually: Look for this icon within the programs for ideas on how to adjust specific activities during videoconferencing sessions for both ease and impact.
There are several videoconferencing platforms available. Two of the more popular options are described below. An Internet connection and a working camera and microphone on your device are necessary to fully participate. These platforms allow you to share your screen, making it possible for everyone to view documents and PowerPoint slides and additional videos together.

**Zoom**

Zoom (zoom.us) allows anyone with an Internet connection (smartphone, computer, tablet) to join in a videoconference. Zoom has free as well as paid options depending on your meeting needs.

This video is a quick overview from Zoom on how to get started:
youtu.be/qsy2Ph6kSf8

And here is a video from United Methodist Communications on getting started with Zoom for worship and small groups:
youtube.com/watch?v=a2FZD1d_yFQ

**Google Meet**

Google Meet (apps.google.com/meet) is free videoconference software similar to Zoom. All participants need a Google account to participate; a Google account is free and once you’ve signed up, you use the same login and password to access all of Google’s services.

This video provides a brief guide to the Google Meet platform:
youtu.be/J_ywOjB1c4Q

**Considerations**

- Allow time for individuals to sign on and become familiar with the platform. Before your first program, you might want to have a test meeting to allow everyone to sign on for a casual chat.
- Welcome people as they join the call. It takes a few seconds from the time they join to the time their audio begins to work.
- Ask multiple people to be involved in the program so that all feel included and engaged.
- Be available via text, phone or other form of communication for those who are struggling to access the meeting—especially before your first few meetings on the platform.
- Recording your meeting is an option so that those who cannot attend can watch the material at a later time. You can upload the recording to YouTube and share the link for easy access, if participants agree to be recorded.
- When just one facilitator needs to be heard, meeting facilitators can mute all participants during portions of the meeting to eliminate background noise.
- Give time for people to socialize even though you are online. It is different in that only one person can speak at a time, so it will take some getting used to.
How to Adapt Programs

It will take some creativity to adapt the monthly programs to online meetings, but it can be done! The following are some ideas:

• Allow extra time at the beginning of the meeting for everyone to get online and greet one another.

• Invite participants to show and share items from their home for the worship table or altar to create a collective virtual altar.

• Ask different individuals to read the prayer, scripture and litanies (when an individual voice is indicated in a litany).

• Use YouTube recordings of songs to help lead singing and worship. You can share your screen to show the video. (Practice this ahead of time with a small group to see how it works.)

• You can share all suggested videos on your screen as well. Search terms are provided to help you locate them.

• E-mail a list of needed materials and instructions for activities ahead of time (or mail them), so that each member can do them individually and perhaps ahead of the meeting and be ready for discussion.

• Explore Zoom breakout rooms as a way to have small group discussions during your session.

• Set up PowerPoint slides for reading materials and discussion questions during the meeting. You can share your screen and show the slides from your computer.

Recorded Meetings

If you are recording the meeting, be sure to let participants know, as it may change what they choose to share (and wear!) during the session. Recordings are large files, and you may wish to upload them to YouTube to more easily share them with those not present. If you upload them as unlisted videos, anyone who has the link can easily view and share it with someone else, but it would not be searchable. To limit circulation, you can also mark the video as private. When a video is private, it can only be seen by an approved list of people and the link may not be shared.

Carefully consider if the information shared in the meeting should be shared with an audience outside of those present and discuss the issue with the group. Also, you and the participants may choose only to record a portion of your gatherings.
About the Author

The Rev. Lisa Beth White is the founder of Sister of Hope Ministries, a pastor and scholar. Sister of Hope Ministries provides consultations, training and retreats for volunteers in short-term mission work. Her doctoral research is focused on contemporary practices of mission in The United Methodist Church. Other research interests include the work of nongovernmental organizations and faith-based organizations.

White has more than 18 years of experience teaching and leading short-term mission projects with people of all ages—from elementary school students to retirees. Having been raised in The United Methodist Church, her understanding of mission is grounded in the grace of Christ (John 1:16) and his commission to the disciples to be witnesses to God’s grace (Acts 1:8). She believes people are called to live out this gift of grace in humility with respect for all people and creation.
MEETING/PROGRAM
Date ___________________ Time ___________________ Place ___________________
Program focus ________________________________________________________________

Leaders _________________________________________________________________

Host _________________________________________________________________

Amount of pledge paid __________________________________________________________

DISTRICT/CONFERENCE EVENT
Date ___________________ Time ___________________ Place ___________________
Program focus ________________________________________________________________

Leaders _________________________________________________________________

Amount of pledge paid __________________________________________________________

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**September 2020**

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- Labor Day
- International Day of Peace

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September 2020

Caring for Each Other in Community

Objective

To encourage women to find ways to work across differences to build community and care for those on the margins, drawing inspiration from United Methodist Women’s predecessors who worked together for unified studies and mission work.

BUILD YOUR PROGRAM Whether you’re meeting in person or virtually, use this space to list the segments with their times that you want to utilize.
Preparation

Use the following lists to prepare for the program. Prior to the program, ask readers and helpers to assist with the readings and activities in this program. Arrange the room so that all participants can see each other. Familiarize yourself with the virtual options available for the program: See “If Meeting Together Is Not Possible” in the Introduction and “Knitted Together Virtually” suggestions throughout the program.

Resources

• United Methodist Women Bible (NRSV)
• The United Methodist Hymnal
• Computer and projector; download the video or check the Internet connection in your meeting space.

Materials

• Samples of knitting that have been joined together
• Knitting needles and yarn for table decorations
• Ask participants to each bring a dish that represents their family or their culture to share (See “Experience Together” for ideas on how to adapt this activity for a virtual meeting.)
• Plates, napkins and utensils
• Ask participants to bring knit squares or pieces that they have prepared in advance for the Knit Together project, or yarn and needles to create squares during the session, or other supplies if your group is doing an alternative project.
• Note: If you choose to do individual projects during each program, before this session, the group can consider knitting squares as potholders to share with the other women who brought food today.

Prayer to Gather Us In (2 minutes)

God of Compassion, you anointed Jesus to bind up the brokenhearted and to proclaim liberty to the captives. Open our eyes to see the brokenhearted among us and to hear your call to action. As we gather together, send your Spirit among us. Help us to close out those things that may distract us and focus on learning to be your disciples. Amen.

Song Suggestion (3 minutes)

“One Bread, One Body,” The United Methodist Hymnal, no. 620
Reflect Together on Scripture (20 minutes)

Read: Acts 6:1–7

Community Marked by Unity
An unusual community, marked by generosity, unselfishness and care for everyone, grows beyond the leadership's expectations. The disciples try to keep up with all the responsibilities, they try to make sure that they put first things first, but it's all a bit too much. One of their principles is that the community holds all things in common, so that everyone is fed, but now it seems some are going hungry. The weakest members of the community who can't make it to the common meals or the distribution points are the ones missing out, and the leadership doesn't even know this is happening. The very essence of the community is at risk.

The early Christian community was marked by God's grace, as seen in the sign that there was not a needy person among them. But the rapid growth of the community resulted in some who were going without food—weren't their needs within the community of grace? Unthinkable! Devoted to the idea of community as a witness to grace, shown in how they made sure no one was needy, someone realized that they needed to speak up. The leaders listened and recognized that they needed to delegate, to share responsibility. They did not question their presumption of solidarity. They did not question the need to care for everyone. They chose new leaders to help continue this commitment.

When we first read this text, it may appear to be a conflict between the Hellenists (those who were of Greek heritage) and the Hebrews (those who were originally Jewish). But the reality is that “the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul” (Acts 4:32). This conflict is one of working out what it means to be actually knit together as the body of Christ and figuring out how the whole group of those who believe they belong to Christ can live together with one heart and soul.

Choosing to Build Trust
Even today, there are many times that we are pressured from all sides to choose. When there are fractures in society, conflicts between friends or families and distressingly in our church, we are told we have to choose a side, that we must be on one side or another, that we cannot allow ourselves to be knit together.

Yet, the Christians in this scripture did not permit differences to separate them. Rather, they acknowledged the differences and yet allowed themselves to be knit together in the body of Christ. They empowered others to be leaders. They continued their commitment to care for those on the margins.
Historian Dr. Dana Robert writes that the secret to success of the early women’s mission movement was “unity among married and single women, prominent and ordinary women, missionary and homeside women, and women of different Protestant traditions.” That unity took place over time, through friendships built on trust and on being knit together in the body of Christ despite differences in doctrine or worship style.

She points out that one of the important aspects of the early women’s mission society movement was the united study of mission. Robert notes that the woman’s meeting at the London Missionary Conference in 1888 resulted in the creation of “a committee for the united study of missions” in 1900. Women organized for mission and asked for “reliable material about missions” and so “women created a committee composed of Congregationalist, Methodist, Presbyterian, Baptist, and Episcopal representatives” to publish an annual textbook to be used by mission study groups in local churches. Soon, study books were written for children, and studies were written for summer schools of mission. Women organized for mission and mission study across denominational differences. At the time that this interdenominational cooperative study began, the Methodists were not a united church; they were still living out the divisions wrought by disagreements over slavery and the Civil War. Yet, through the study of mission, women sought to be knitted together in Christ.

What does it mean to be knit together? When two sections of knitted work are joined together, the crafter must pay careful attention to detail. The two sections are not blended into something different, but rather joined so that each one’s beauty complements the other. Share a few minutes of a video that demonstrates how to join two sections of knitted work by entering the following search term online: “knitting tips no. 2 video.” Or have a volunteer bring an example of their knitting to show to the group.

Being knit together creates something beautiful, and if it is done with careful attention, something strong. Joining together for the early Christians meant that they needed to listen to the people who didn’t have power, develop leaders and share responsibilities. Joining together means being grounded in prayer and worship, being led by the Spirit so that no one is left out of the community of grace.

**Experience Together**

Welcome everyone to the table to share in the food that has been brought and bless the food. Ask participants to tell what the dish they contributed means to them. Was it a recipe shared by a relative or friend? Does the dish represent a family tradition? Is the food representative of their cultural heritage? Ask the group to consider how God knits us together around the table as we share our food and our hearts. Continue the discussion as you enjoy the food.

Who might have been the first to notice that the widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food? Women’s friendships are important in helping people to see needs. What friendships do you have that help you to see needs in your community?
In the scripture passage, not only were widows being neglected in the distribution of food, but the roles of women have been neglected. Seven men are named as leaders and have hands laid on them for ministry. What roles would women have played in the community that are not written here? What roles do women have in building the community of grace today that might go unnamed?

**Knitted Together Virtualy:** Instead of sharing a meal, organize a cookie recipe swap. Everyone bakes a batch of their favorite cookies, then shows an example of their cookie to the group and describes why it’s special to them. Then it’s time to enjoy your cookies together with coffee or tea. After the program, the facilitator can gather and collate all the recipes and e-mail them to the group.

**Act Together (15 minutes)**

Today the needs of women, children and youth still need to be lifted up so the church can respond. What needs do you see in your community? In your state?

United Methodist Women is an instrument to transform the role of women in society, committed to bridging gaps among women such as:

- Church women and the women’s movement in society
- Women of various races and ethnic identities
- Older women and younger women
- Poor women and all other women
- Single women and married women
- Women employed outside the home and women working exclusively in the home
- LGBTQ+ and heterosexual women
- Women in the United States and women in other countries

United Methodist Women continually seeks new ways to adapt and focus on the needs of women, children and youth. One of the ways that United Methodist Women is acting to build these bridges and transform the role of women is to advocate for girls’ access to education. College and university students in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean receive scholarship awards to pursue higher education. These proven leaders become clergy, community developers, medical professionals, teachers, computer technicians, economists, lawyers and more.

Your Mission Giving makes it possible to offer scholarships to young women across the world. Use the impact stories available online (unitedmethodistwomen.org/scholarship-stories) to provide background to how your Mission Giving supports others.

Have a participant share this information with your group. Make a plan for your group to support girls’ access to education through your giving.
Knit Together for Your Community Project
(5 minutes, or as long as you want to stay!)

Though small at first, your group will add to this project each month, resulting in a larger piece. Use this time to discuss what shape you want your finished project to take. Link the pieces that the group has knit today and display them in the church so that other knitters (or aspiring knitters!) can see the project and be invited to join your group.

Closing Litany (3 minutes)

One voice: Let us ask the Lord to make us vulnerable enough to hear the cry of the needy.
Many voices: Lord, make our hearts tender. Give us courage to listen.

One voice: Let us ask the Lord to knit us together in one heart and soul.
Many voices: Lord, send your Spirit to make us one. Give us strength to reach out in compassion to those in need.

One voice: Let us ask the Lord to show us how to live in community.
Many voices: Lord, teach us to overcome division for the sake of Christ. Teach us how to be one body through your grace, for the work which you have given us, so that all may see your grace through our united witness of love. Amen

Beyond the Program

Make a networking plan to learn more about the needs in your area:
• Research food insecurity statistics in your area and where people can find help.
• Make a list of ways faith-based organizations and churches are fighting hunger and how your group can participate in that work.
• Invite women from a church that does not have an active United Methodist Women group to join your group next month, or meet at their church so they can join in the program and the action.

Knitted Together Virtually: African-Americans and people of color have been disproportionately impacted by the coronavirus, exposing the deep inequalities in our society. Research the ways that organizations in your community are addressing this.

Endnotes

2. Ibid., 257–258.
3. Ibid., 260.
4. Ibid., 260–261.
Evaluation

Please complete and mail this evaluation form to help us continue to create effective and meaningful programs.

Which sections of the Program Book worked best for you? __________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________

Which sections did not work well? ________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________

What special actions or projects grew out of these programs? ______________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________

What are the important issues in your community? _________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________

Your Name: __________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________

E-mail Address: _______________________________________________________________________
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Group Name: _________________________________________________________________________
_______________________________________________________________________________

Mail to:
Communications, Attention: Program Book Editor
United Methodist Women National Office
475 Riverside Drive, 15th Floor
New York, NY 10115
Knitted Together for God’s Good Work explores how we as children of God are joined and linked together into the whole body of Christ. Even at times when social distancing or other obstacles may keep us physically apart, we are knit together in community to transform the world.

In twelve monthly programs, participants will be encouraged and challenged as they explore biblical passages that emphasize the courageous, bold witness and work of a woman or a group of women who faithfully seek to be a part of God’s handiwork.

Each program includes time for an ongoing Knit Together for Your Community project in which participants will create individual knitted pieces that the group will ultimately join together to create a knitted blanket, prayer shawl, scarf, or other item to donate to an organization of their choice.

New This Year: To ensure that everyone can join together virtually for monthly study and bonding, instructions on how to use videoconferencing platforms are provided, along with suggestions on how to adjust program activities for these forums.