



**ABUNDANT LIFE
FOR ALL**
A LIVING WAGE SERIES

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PAID TIME TO CARE

Paid family and medical leave offers stability to families and supports a living wage for all

By Ellen Bravo and Wendy Chun-Hoon

Time to Care

Anne in Minneapolis had a good-paying factory job, except she didn't have sick time to care for her kids. As a mother of seven, she missed work to care for sick children just six times over the course of a year, but it was enough for her to be fired. Anne and her children had to move in with her mother to survive. For years she had to settle for lower-paying jobs without paid time to care. In her 50s, Anne finally decided to start over as a personal care attendant, working six days a week to try to get back on her feet.

Having access to paid sick days and paid family and medical leave is a matter of job security and family stability. Paid time to care can make the difference—not just for the short haul but for long-term success. It can help provide the foundation for families to avoid debt, retain assets and build wealth.

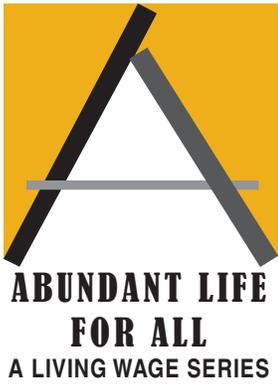
Our Current Situation

The United States remains an outlier in the world when it comes to time to care. Only the United States and Papua New Guinea fail to guarantee any paid leave. Most working people will need to care for themselves or for loved ones at some point, but only 17 percent of the private sector workforce has access to paid family leave through an employer, and less than 40 percent have employer-provided temporary disability benefits, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Not surprisingly, low-wage workers are the least likely to have any such time with pay, but even workers earning a living wage can see their income drop well below what they need to live.

Being a good parent or following doctor's orders doesn't just cost people their pay—for many, it means loss of a job. Overall, 1 in 7 workers has lost a job to recover from illness or care for a family member, according to a 2013 Oxfam report. Because women still bear major responsibility for caregiving, working mothers take an even harder hit. Almost 1 in 5 has lost a job due to sickness or caring for a sick child.

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Caring for Others as a Biblical Mandate

The Bible has much to say about honoring the family and God's community through just relationships. Jeremiah 29:5-7 calls on families to nurture and support each other while also "seeking the welfare of the city." It is a dual mandate to care for family and to care for the larger community. "⁵*Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce.* ⁶*Take wives and have sons and daughters...* ⁷*But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile... for in its welfare you will find your welfare.*" Having time to heal and care for others is an important biblical value grounded in faith in God's power to heal.

Solutions

We engage in this campaign as women of faith building on a biblical mandate. There are policies that can make a significant difference. One critical piece of legislation is the FAMILY Act, which would provide paid family and medical leave for all. Thanks to the work of broad and diverse coalitions in the [Family Values @ Work](#) network, eight states and the District of Columbia have already passed bills that will bring paid family leave and medical leave to millions of people. Driving these campaigns are people who have lived the harsh reality of zero weeks of paid leave—individuals who became activists when they realized that what they could not change on their own they could change if they worked together.

How United Methodist Women Members Can Take Action

Visit United Methodist Women's [Paid Family Leave](#): web page unitedmethodistwomen.org/paid-family-leave. [This page has links for the following activities and more:]

- Host a screening of *Zero Weeks: Putting Families First* with your unit or church group.
- Sign up to be connected to the Living Wage for All Campaign at unitedmethodistwomen.org/action, and visit the Family Values @ Work website at familyvaluesatwork.org. If you live in a state with an ongoing campaign, we will connect you.
- Contact your congressional representative through email or postcard. Say what the presence or absence of paid leave has meant in your life and why they should champion it. As members of United Methodist Women, share how your faith also calls you to demand paid leave for all.

About the Authors

Ellen Bravo and Wendy Chun-Hoon are co-directors of Family Values @ Work, a national network of coalitions in 27 states fighting for, and winning, paid leave for all.



unitedmethodistwomen.org/living-wages

Abundant Life for All is a series addressing aspects of the United Methodist Women Living Wage for All Campaign for use by members in programs for education and action. Edited by E.N. West.