



The
JOY of
BECOMING:

GUIDELINES
for Organizing Units of
United Methodist Women



United
Methodist
Women
FAITH • HOPE • LOVE IN ACTION

G U I D E L I N E S

for Organizing Units of United Methodist Women

WHAT IS UNITED METHODIST WOMEN?

Organizationally, United Methodist Women is the successor to the home and foreign missionary societies, the ladies' aid societies, parsonage societies and guilds of the seven predecessor denominations now comprising The United Methodist Church. United Methodist Women is the group of women in each congregation organized for mission. Each local and district unit relates directly to district and conference organizations of United Methodist Women and to the United Methodist Women national organization.

OUR PURPOSE

The organized unit of United Methodist Women shall be a community of women whose purpose is to know God and to experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ; to develop a creative, supportive fellowship; and to expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A MEMBER?

A member of United Methodist Women is any woman who commits herself to the PURPOSE and chooses to participate in prayer, giving, study, action and/or service. The organization celebrates a diverse and inclusive membership and welcomes all women who want to be members. We are a community of women who nurture and encourage one another in our spiritual growth and personal development. Over 800,000 women count themselves as members of United Methodist Women.

HOW DOES ONE BECOME A MEMBER?

One becomes a member by committing to be a part of this supportive community of women and by accepting the challenge to grow in mission and to participate in life-changing experiences. Membership in United Methodist Women is recognized in the following ways. Some examples are:

- Attendance at meetings, intercessory prayer and meaningful community development.
- Leadership responsibility and/or participation in the variety of events, projects, issues and concerns of United Methodist Women.
- Giving for mission.
- Attending Mission u.
- Participating in the Reading Program.
- Reading **response** magazine.

THE RIGHTS OF MEMBERSHIP

Through membership in United Methodist Women, a woman has the right to expect:

- Education, training and experience in understanding the organization and fulfilling the PURPOSE.
- Resources that nurture growth, inform and stimulate.
- Information that relates to world issues and leads to increased identification with women around the world.
- Recognition of her contribution as a member of the organization.
- Ways to communicate her concerns to United Methodist Women National Office.
- Opportunities for a variety of ways to serve or volunteer.
- Membership in Church Women United and the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women. As members of these two organizations, we strive for an ecumenical and international community through unity of spirit and purpose, understanding the meaning of justice and freedom and our commitment to the gospel.

MAIN FUNCTIONS OF A UNIT

No matter what its size or shape, each unit is to:

- Learn about and support the program of United Methodist Women.
- Set goals to fulfill our PURPOSE.
- Plan programs that incorporate the mission emphases: spiritual growth, service and advocacy, mission education, leadership development and membership nurture and outreach.
- Build a budget that reflects our PURPOSE.
- Interpret the need for and use of funds for mission.
- Develop and train leaders.

ORGANIZING A LOCAL UNIT OF UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

“In every local church, there shall be an organized unit of United Methodist Women.”

The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church, 2012, ¶256.5

A local unit of United Methodist Women should be organized as soon as possible after the formation of a new United Methodist congregation. Special effort should also be made to organize or reorganize units in older churches that do not have one. The district executive committee (and especially the mission coordinator for membership nurture and outreach) of United Methodist Women take responsibility for organizing new units and for their continuing nurture and development. To ensure that there is a unit in every local church, the mission coordinator for membership nurture and outreach or the leadership team should discover where new units are needed, make contacts in a particular church/charge and enlist the help of other interested persons.

WHERE SHALL WE ORGANIZE?

- In newly organized urban, suburban or rural churches.
- In relocated congregations.
- In two or three small churches in a charge and/or fairly close together.
- In churches where there has never been an organization of United Methodist Women.

WHO MAY BE THE ORGANIZERS?

The mission coordinator for membership nurture and outreach or the local leadership team working with the district executive committee or leadership team has the responsibility to work with women in planning for the organization of new units. The president of the district, as a member of the committee, works closely in the overall planning process. The interested women can also begin the process themselves; however, we encourage communication with the district organization to foster closer ties and sisterhood with the entire organization.

STEPS TO BE TAKEN IN THE ORGANIZING PROCESS

1. Set meetings to determine interest

Determine who is interested in organizing a unit of United Methodist Women. There should be two meetings. One of these two meetings is the informational meeting and the other is the organizational meeting. The district mission coordinator for membership nurture and outreach and/or district president can work together with those interested to organize these meetings. To find out who these people are in your district, you can ask any United Methodist pastor or any officer of a local unit of United Methodist Women. You may also call the executive secretary for membership for Women's Division at 212-870-3725.

2. Informational meeting

The purpose of the interest and informational meeting with potential United Methodist Women and the pastor is to explain the PURPOSE of United Methodist Women. The interested women or pastor in the church should issue the invitation and build support for the meeting. All women of the church should be invited to attend the interest meeting. A good resource to use is Frequently Asked Questions on United Methodist Women website. The district mission coordinator for membership nurture and outreach and/or district president may seek to create supportive relationships with nearby existing and active units of United Methodist Women by inviting them. When potential members are ready to organize a new unit of United Methodist Women, they should then

contact the Office of Membership Opportunities and get a new unit packet, which includes the “United Methodist Women unit organization form.” The person who is to preside at the organizational meeting (the district mission coordinator for membership nurture and outreach and/or district president or the contact person for the new unit) should send in the form two weeks before the determined organizational meeting date.

Send to: Office of Membership Opportunities, Executive Secretary for Membership, United Methodist Women, Room 1501, 475 Riverside Drive, New York, NY 10115.

Once we receive this information then the office of membership opportunities will send a **Certificate of Organization** and **Service of Celebration**.

3. Organizational meeting

Suggested agenda for the organizational meeting:

- Greetings and meditation.
- Sharing the purpose and expectations of meeting.
- Election and installation of officers.
- Presentation of Certificate of Organization.
- Comments by the district mission coordinator for membership nurture and outreach and/or district president.
- Time for questions and comments from the group.
- Service of Celebration.

Ask the district executive committee of United Methodist Women as well as other United Methodist Women members to attend if possible. The organizational meeting is a celebratory event, a time of rejoicing and thanksgiving.

4. Schedule future meetings

Most units schedule a regular time and place for meetings (for instance, once a month, or once a quarter), but be flexible to meet the needs of your members! It will take some creativity and intentionality, but remember your primary goal in meeting: to build community, grow spiritually, expand concepts of mission and support United Methodist Women’s programs.

5. Develop goals

Goals challenge us to reach further than we have before and deeper within ourselves. Evaluate the programmatic needs and interests of the members and listen to their suggestions. Goals are for emphasis. All the work of the unit does not have to be defined in terms of specific goals. Some examples are:

- Spiritual development goal.
- Connectional goal.
- Study goal.
- Financial goal.
- Membership goal.

6. Plan and conduct programs and be in mission!

Sources: *United Methodist Women Bylaws for 2013-2016* and additional United Methodist Women resources.