

Leadership in the Church: Making United Methodist Women Presence Known From Annual Conference to General Conference

Sometimes the work of United Methodist Women is the best-kept secret. We are called on locally to provide food and care, but not perceived as movers and shakers in the global mission of the United Methodist Church. We need to make efforts to be more visible and be recognized as leaders within the UMC conferences. We will need to strategically consider our visibility and presence within the conference—on committees, teams and at annual conference, with an eye toward greater presence and impact.

A Workshop to inform steps toward United Methodist Women leadership in the UMC

120 minutes

Note to facilitator: While we also want a strong presence of United Methodist Women members on national and global boards and agencies and as General Conference delegates, this workshop focuses on leadership presence at the District and Conference levels. Because we have both District and Conference United Methodist Women leaders, be sure to focus on both of these levels throughout the workshop.

I. Introduction

Why is our presence as United Methodist Women in larger church important?
Biblical call to leadership (Jeremiah 1:4-9) – Leader (10 min)

Supplies: Bible

Process: Share the following with the group. Feel free to speak in your own words.

For much of church history, women have been relegated to roles of service and rarely been allowed to engage in leadership unless it involved leading children. For many women, our predecessor organizations were the first and only place a woman might learn to exercise any leadership skills. As these women followed their faith, it became clear that if they were to work on behalf of women and children in the world, they would have to become leaders in the church and in the public square. In the church, they were instrumental in gaining the right to be seated as delegates and general conference and later in the fight for women's ordination. In society they were on the forefront of the fight against child labor and were the leaders of the temperance movement. It was clear from our earliest beginnings that one thing we as an organization must be

committed to is the development of women leaders as a means to accomplish our purpose and vision.

Today, many of us are finding avenues for leadership in the church that were closed to our foremothers. One of the things that we can do to honor their legacy of smashing stained glass ceilings is to show up as United Methodist Women continuing to advocate for women, children, and youth in all of our leadership endeavors.

Ask the group to share with a partner (two minutes each) what their church leadership experience has been outside of United Methodist Women and what if any challenges they faced.

Say the following:

When we are called to leadership, we will often face challenges...some from others and some we create due to our own fear or reluctance. God does not promise that the road will be easy or without hurdles. What God does promise, through multiple stories of reluctant prophets and servants who thought themselves unworthy, is that God is with us and God will equip us. I'm sure you think of several...Esther and Moses are both examples of this. Jeremiah is also an example. When called by God, Jeremiah argued back that he was just a child and didn't know how to speak. However, these verses have become an affirmation that when God calls us, God equips us, and God never leaves us.

Close with Jeremiah 1:4-9:

The Lord's word came to me: "Before I created you in the womb, I knew you; before you were born, I set you apart; I made you a prophet to the nations." "Ah, Lord God" I said, "I don't know how to speak because I am only a child." The Lord responded, "Don't say 'I'm only a child.' Where I send you, you must go; what I tell you, you must say. Don't be afraid of them, because I am with you to rescue you," declares the Lord. Then the Lord stretched out his hand, touched my mouth, and said to me, "I'm putting my words in your mouth."

II. Where are the places we need to be in the church? Who are our allies?
Mapping process (20 min)

Supplies: Several sheets of flip chart paper together, or one large piece of mural paper. Colored markers (wide tip), painter's tape. Post it notes

Process: Facilitator introduces process. United Methodist Women wants to have a greater presence in the wider church at the district and conference levels. We want to map the places that we should consider important and strategic for United Methodist Women presence. Hand out several post-it notes per person. Have them jot down all of the structures at the district level (label D) or conference level (label C) where United Methodist Women should be present. Also mark P if United Methodist Women is

already present in this space in your conference. Note that conference structures vary. You may suggest a few:

- Delegate to Annual conference
- Bishop's special teams
- Global Ministries conference team
- Church and Society committee
- Religion and race committee
- Hispanic ministries
- Racial/ ethnic caucuses
- Independent caucuses

Draw three concentric circles on the mural paper. Invite women to come up and post their post-its, with the MOST strategic spots in the inner circle, somewhat strategic in the next circle, less strategic in the third circle. Then return to their seats.

Facilitator names the groups that are in the inner circle. Are there any missing? Why do you feel that these are strategic? Invite people to share with the group the reason they are considered strategic. Very briefly do the same for the other two circles. Thank the group for this mapping work. Invite them to take a picture of the map for future planning, and facilitator should do the same to share with United Methodist Women national office.

III. How do United Methodist Women leaders get appointed or elected to these positions? (15 min)

Supplies: Flip chart paper and markers, Handout 1: Avenues for lay leadership in the church: How do we get there?

Facilitator shares the hand-out on how to get appointed or elected and reviews it with the group. Invite input. What has been your experience? What has worked in your conference? Record these on the flip chart.

IV. Wearing our United Methodist Women hat. How do we effectively represent United Methodist Women in larger church spaces? (20 min)

Supplies: about 5 hats—beautiful, practical, silly...; flip chart paper and markers; Handout 2: United Methodist Women Identity and current issue priorities.

Facilitator: You have been named to serve on X conference committee. We want to explore what it means to “wear the United Methodist Women hat” in that setting. This goes beyond simply introducing yourself as a United Methodist Women leader, though that is important. I invite you to come up, put on one of these beautiful hats, and share

a specific way that you understand “wearing the United Methodist Women hat” in larger church settings. Please be brief and specific.

Allow several to come forward and share, for about 10 minutes. Hopefully at least 10 people can share. Facilitator records their comments.

Pulling it together: Pick up some of their points to reaffirm ways that they represent United Methodist Women in other spaces. Acknowledge that this does not always occur, and that we need to know how to represent United Methodist Women, train other United Methodist Women leaders to do so consistently, and agree to hold each other accountable to this goal. Share handout with them. These are the core values and ongoing priorities of United Methodist Women and the current quadrennial issue priorities. How can we make these visible as United Methodist Women’s identity in every place we go? How can alliances include United Methodist Women’s mission agenda, not only allying with others’ important agendas? How can we prepare other United Methodist Women leaders to carry this identity with them? Open up for discussion if time allows.

V. Bringing United Methodist Women priorities to the larger church. (20 min)

Supplies: Hand out 3: Examples of United Methodist Women collaboration at district or conference level. Flip chart paper, markers, index cards.

In small groups read the examples. Come up with at least one example from your own conference(s)— past or present. Facilitator invites some to share their examples and records these. If there is not time, please submit other examples on index cards. Facilitator notes that we will use these examples in the planning part of our workshop.

VI. Strategy planning – Steps to take in next 6 months in lead up to Annual Conference (30 min)

Supplies: Handout 4: planning grid; flip chart paper and markers

Facilitator: Now, we want to gather all that we’ve covered to make real plans for action over the next six months. While we know you are not all from the same conference, plan as if you were in a particular conference. This is not just an exercise. We hope you will take this back to your local unit, your district president and mission team, and your conference president and mission team for broader input. Please plan and implement together. In the time we have, please come up with:

- at least two groups that you will reach out to at district or conference level (when? How? Why?);
- a strategy for at least 2 United Methodist Women leaders (not only elected leaders) to serve on district or conference committees;

- one joint action you might take with other groups at Annual Conference 2017;
- a way to train United Methodist Women leaders at district level on why and how to get involved as United Methodist Women in other church spaces.

VII. Wrap up (5 min)

Facilitator: Briefly invite each group to share **one** exciting idea from their planning and what got them most excited about this workshop. Record on flip chart. Encourage them to keep their planning chart and use it back home. Ask that they take a photo of the chart and send to United Methodist Women national office (see below).

Facilitator says: This is just the beginning of our work to have a bigger, bolder presence in the UMC as United Methodist Women, organized for mission with women, youth and children around the world. We challenge you to take it to heart. Don't bury your papers from LDD when you get home—use this to take next steps. Lift up the leadership of other United Methodist Women, including many who have never been officers. Help to train them to fully represent the identity and priorities of United Methodist Women everywhere they go. Thank you for your participation and your leadership.

End with closing prayer.

Full list of supplies:

- Bible
- Several sheets of flip chart paper together, or one large piece of mural paper
- Flip chart
- Colored markers (wide tip)
- painter's tape
- Post it notes (several for each participant)
- 5 or more hats—beautiful, practical, silly

Handout 1:

Avenues for lay leadership in the church: How do we get there?

Every church, district, conference, jurisdiction, board, or agency has different processes for determining participation and leadership. Below are a few of the ways to get involved and these will vary from place to place so for more specific information, contact your pastor, district office, or conference office.

<p>Local Church</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform lay leadership (nominations) committee and your pastor of your desire to serve as well as skills and capabilities and willingness to attend annual conference. • Local church <i>lay members</i> are elected at the charge/church conference level. Lay leadership may include your name as part of a slate. Other churches take nominations from the floor. It is a quadrennial commitment. • Local churches may draft legislation or circulate legislation for approval. That legislation may be submitted to annual conferences or directly to general conference.
<p>District</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Let your pastor, district lay leader, AND district superintendent (DS) know that you are interested in leadership. There are various committees which will connect you with other local churches and give you valuable experience. • Let your DS know you are interested in becoming an “equalizing member” of annual conference. Each district usually has several spots to fill. • Attend workshops and events organized by your district and get to know people.
<p>Conference</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Become a lay member to annual conference (elected, equalizing, or Deaconess/home missionary) • Nominate yourself or ask others to nominate you to serve on conference committees (ie. Church and Society, Board of Ordained Ministry, COSROW, or Religion and Race. • If there is no self-nomination process, contact your Director of Connectional Ministry (DCM) at your conference office or your conference Lay Leader to let them know of your desire to serve. • Volunteer to help/host/work at your Annual Conference. • Attend any learning days/workshops offered at or by your Annual Conference • Get involved in caucus groups or boards/agencies that may be setting up displays at Annual Conference. It is a great way to meet people.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Submit legislation to your Annual Conference as United Methodist Women in collaboration with other groups. • Run for General Conference!!!! [Decided by vote at Annual Conference]
Jurisdiction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve as a delegate or alternate to Jurisdictional Conference (elected by Annual Conference). • Let your delegation know of your willingness/qualifications to serve on jurisdictional committees, general boards, and agencies.
General	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Serve as a delegate or alternate to General Conference (elected by Annual Conference) • Volunteer to work at GC as a page or host. You can also volunteer to work with other groups or causes you care about, including United Methodist Women. • Submit legislation to be considered by General Conference in conjunction with United Methodist Women.
Boards & Agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each board and agency may differ slightly in number and structure as defined by the discipline. Members are elected at the Jurisdictional conferences, usually out of a pool of delegates submitted by the annual conference. • Follow the work of boards and agencies and look for opportunities to attend events or conferences that they may host. • Share legislation when appropriate and use model legislation offered by boards and agencies in your Annual Conference.

Stepping into Leadership, Wearing United Methodist Women Hat:

Jacqueline Euper is an example of a UMW leader who also leads the church in other ways while maintaining her United Methodist Women connection. She has served in various local, district and conference offices of United Methodist Women over many years. Besides those duties, she has also given time and energy to positions within the annual conference, both in professional and volunteer areas (Volunteers in Mission, Christian education, youth ministries and conference camps). In 1988, she was elected as a lay delegate to the North Central Jurisdictional Conference. Since 1992, she has represented the Detroit Conference as a delegate to 7 General Conferences of the UMC. Says Jacqui, “the following words explain my elections and involvement: openness, willingness, availability, hard work, trust, commitment and faithfulness.” As a recent member of the United Methodist Women Board of Directors and Program Advisory Group, Jacqui also served on the boards of Global Ministries and UMCOR (2008 – 2012). Today she serves as Secretary of Global Ministries in the Detroit Conference and, on a national level, as a member of the Board of Directors for National Justice For Our

Neighbors (NJFON). Notes Jacqui, “the mission, values and concerns of United Methodist Women intertwine amid all of the work.”

Hand out 2:

United Methodist Women Identity and current issue priorities

United Methodist Women’s Identity: We integrate

- Spiritual Growth
- Service and Advocacy
- Transformative Education
- Leadership Development
- Giving for Mission and Telling our Story

Quadrennial Issue Priorities

- Climate Justice
- Criminalization of Communities of Color
- Economic Inequality
- Maternal and Child Health

Hand out 3:

United Methodist Women collaboration within the UMC at district or conference levels

Responding to an Environmental and Health Crisis:

Nichea Ver Veer Guy, an outgoing United Methodist Women national officer in the West Michigan conference, first heard of water concerns in Flint, Michigan some 18 months before the media got a hold of it. The two-year old crisis burst into the headlines in 2016. The world learned that elected city officials had been removed from office and a governor-selected overseer made the decision to reroute the source of drinking water, drawing from a polluted body of water. This corroded the city's pipes, releasing lead into the water. This meant no safe water for drinking or bathing, while destroying property values of the majority Black population. Nichea contacted Bishop Deborah Kiesey to see how the church was responding to the crisis. The Bishop had appointed a full-time person to deal with the many facets of relief needs, coordinating volunteers and managing UMCOR response. Nichea contacted another United Methodist Women Board member in the Detroit conference, Jackie Euper, as well as her United Methodist Women Detroit Conference President and Social Action Coordinator. Little of the local United Methodist Women response was being coordinated, so it was suggested that United Methodist Women collaborate with the Bishop's initiative. Soon, through the effort of many women on the ground, United Methodist Women and the Detroit Conference were securing volunteers, emergency facilities, donations of water and other needed items. They were also advocating for the Flint residents by contacting the Governor's office and legislators to step up their game! They contacted US legislators and President Obama on the need for federal financial support. United Methodist Women was a co-sponsor of the West Michigan Environmental Action Council's Women and the Environment Symposium where speakers addressed needs on the ground and how UMW could help. Comments Nichea, "Information.....strategy work... public policy action... grass roots support.... collaboration.... and we are not done yet!"

Collaboration on Economic Inequality

Bishop Robert Hoshibata is leading the Desert Southwest Conference (DSW) in study and action on Economic Inequality, which is also United Methodist Women priority for this quadrennium. A DSW Conference Church & Society sub-group on Economic Inequality has created a DVD-based curriculum which grounds its analysis in scripture and in the historic teachings of the Church, yet doesn't shrink from confronting current day economic and political realities associated with rapidly increasing economic inequality. A 2015 DSW Annual Conference resolution was passed encouraging all congregations in the conference to use these study materials. DSW also sent a resolution to General Conference encouraging all conferences to use General Board of Church and Society materials to "assess the nature, extent, and effects of economic inequality, and create strategies to address it." Their effort is to gain steam on addressing the issue throughout the new quadrennium. The Conference Church & Society reached out to Conference United Methodist Women leaders to explore collaboration. A first step is an effort led by Cleo Perry of Shepherd of the Hills UMC in Sun City West. Her local United Methodist Women unit weekend will be an exploration of economic inequality, with conference staff in leadership.

Public Witness on Climate Justice

The Oregon-Idaho conference hosted a beautiful night time vigil for climate justice during the 2016 General Conference in Portland, Oregon. They reached out to national and conference groups to co-sponsor the event, including support from United Methodist Women national office. Local churches decorated and sent Japanese paper lanterns that included prayers for the

climate. These were lit as the sun set on the plaza across from General Conference. The Puget Sound District United Methodist Women held a lantern-making event. United Methodist Women of the Oregon-Idaho conference provided many of the volunteers for the vigil (featured in the September 2016 Response magazine on General Conference). Oregon-Idaho's Mission U used some of the lanterns after the vigil as they explored the mission study *Climate Justice: A Call to Hope and Action*. So, the spirit, creativity and advocacy messages of the vigil continue.

Sharing Model Legislation for Annual Conferences:

Legislation at Annual Conference is an important way to build alliances, educate others in the conference about key areas of United Methodist Women concern, and move action forward in a collective way. It requires strong collaboration across multiple groups in the conference. A national United Methodist Immigration Task Force has provided a space for the Council of Bishops, United Methodist Agencies and Racial/Ethnic Caucuses to coordinate faith-filled action for immigrant rights. In 2013 several of these national groups came together to draft a template for legislation that could be adapted and submitted as proposed legislation for Annual Conferences. Deadlines vary but legislation must often be submitted early in the new year to be considered at Annual Conferences in June. In this case, a local Justice for Our Neighbors group in Tennessee and MARCHA, the Hispanic/Latino caucus of the United Methodist Church worked on draft, which the General Board of Church and Society and United Methodist Women national office helped to disseminate through their networks. Immigration Task Forces at the Conference level, many of them involving United Methodist Women, helped to spearhead this legislation, adapted to their own local concerns. See the 2013 sample legislation drafted by MARCHA as a model of what United Methodist Women leaders and conference partners might do:

<https://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&pid=sites&srcid=ZGVmYXVsdGRvbWFpbnxtYXJjaGF1bWVlN8Z3q6YTJkZGJjMGRmMzVjNWl1>

Collaboration on Immigrant Rights

Immigrant and Civil Rights has been a priority for United Methodist Women for the past 10 years, reflecting commitments dating back over a century! During that time the General Board of Church and Society, United Methodist Women national office and the United Methodist Immigration Task Force together encouraged conferences to create an Immigration Task Force. Collaboration in the New York Conference (NYAC) began with a chilly December vigil in 2008 outside of a privately-run Manhattan detention center to challenge federal detention policies. Organized by United Methodist Women national office, NYAC United Methodist Women, NYAC Church & Society, NYAC Commission on Religion and Race, Hispanic Council of the NY Conference, Korean Caucus of the NY Conference, and the Methodist Federation for Social Action-NY, the event invited then Bishop Jeremiah Park and Harriett Jane Olson, UMW General Secretary to address the gathering. In 2008-09, NYAC Church & Society initiated a conversation with representatives from the UMW, CCORR, MFSA, Justice for Our Neighbors, and Rural and Migrant Ministries to form a multi-agency "Immigration Organizing Committee," co-chaired by Jeff Wells, CBCS chair, and Barbara Becker, United Methodist Women Social Action coordinator. Together they organized a series of immigration seminars for conference leaders including one led by the United Methodist Women Seminar Program. This group, also including the Methodists in New Directions, formally became the *Immigration Task Force* through an Annual Conference resolution in 2009. Then UMW conference president Susan Kim and Barbara Becker supported this work throughout the process of developing the NYAC's advocacy for "welcoming the sojourner." The NYAC Immigration Task Force continues to keep this important justice message in the consciousness of its churches and the conference. In February 2016, United Methodist Women members participated in a conference Church &

Society and Immigration Task Force gathering, *“Immigrant Welcoming Communities: Building Teams for a Justice Journey.”*

United Methodist Women Leadership in the Larger Church – Planning Grid

Goal	Message	Who? /How?	By When?	Follow up
UMC committee or group to reach out to at District level as UMW				
UMC committee or group to reach out to at Conference level as UMW				
Appoint/elect UMW member to x district committee				
Appoint/elect UMW member to x conference committee				
Meeting with UMW conference president,				

<p>UMW leaders and the Bishop (may include conference staff) on UMW priorities. Explore appointments, collaboration</p>				
<p>Joint action with X group(s) at Annual Conference 2017</p>				
<p>Plan to train UMW local and district leaders (whether or not they are officers) on strategies for UMW involvement in other UMC spaces.</p>				
<p>Other ideas and strategies...</p>				