

# A Legacy of Giving: Bible Reflection

by Carol Van Gorp

I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned for me, but had no opportunity to show it. Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me. In any case, it was kind of you to share my distress.

You Philippians indeed know that in the early days of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you alone. For even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me help for my needs more than once. Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the profit that accumulates to your account. I have been paid in full and have more than enough; I am fully satisfied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. And my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

—Philippians 4:10–20

## The 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.**

The very first part of the United Methodist Women Purpose is not often seen as a key component for who we are and why we are organized for mission, yet the statement that we are “a community of women” is very much a part of our identity in The United Methodist Church. Perhaps we take it for granted or maybe assume it is a given that there is a community of women called United Methodist Women. To be a United Methodist Women member is to not be alone but part of wider community of women. The most important part of our community is the local unit, the place where we securely know that we have sisters in Christ in all circumstances. United Methodist Women members need each other to be in community and in mission, just as The United Methodist Church needs United Methodist Women to be in community and in mission today and tomorrow.

Paul commended the Philippians for reviving their concern for him, letting them know he noticed and how grateful he was. While that is not always our experience in the church today, this passage affirms that caring for one another in the church is still noticeable. When we show concern for United Methodist Women members in our units, districts, and conferences—as well as in the wider sisterhood of Methodist and United Methodist Women around the world, it is noticeable and cause for rejoicing. Leaders emerge when we work together, not only for United Methodist Women but also for The United Methodist Church and society at large. Spiritual growth occurs when United Methodist Women engages in mission that is balanced in service and advocacy, and the church continues to be engaged in mission education. This happens when we work together in our community of women called United Methodist Women.

Paul also acknowledged to the Philippians he knew they not only always cared for him, but that they gave when no one else gave.

Is that not the truest description of United Methodist Women that can be given?

In times of plenty and in times of need, United Methodist Women continues to care and to give. Did United Methodist Women foremothers take a break during the Great Depression? No! Women took the opportunity to educate everyone in the church—especially youth and children—on human need and responding in

mission through Jesus Christ. Did the United Methodist Women take a hiatus during the great wars of the twentieth century when coupons were needed just to obtain food and fuel? No! Did United Methodist Women take a break when tensions were high in the church over issues that threatened to break us apart? No!

United Methodist Women continues to care and to give in times of plenty and in times of need. This is our legacy.

Paul is not just speaking to the Philippians but also to United Methodist Women. Let us continue to care and to give so that this legacy of mission goes on and on for women today and women tomorrow. If you agree, say "Amen!"

"To our God and Father be the glory forever and ever."

### Questions for reflection:

1. In what ways do United Methodist Women members express concern for each other, their unit, district, conference, and the elected leaders of United Methodist Women?
2. How does United Methodist Women empower every member to be active in times of plenty and in times of need? How do we encircle the community of women in these times of need and plenty?
3. In what ways does United Methodist Women continue to lead The United Methodist Church in awareness of women's needs and in giving full voice for every woman, child, and youth to speak for themselves?
4. In what manner does United Methodist Women listen to The United Methodist Church? Where do the leadership skills take United Methodist Women members in the wider church?
5. In what ways do United Methodist Women members live the Gospel and believe in the promises of God for those who serve fully?
6. How can the United Methodist Women of today keep the legacy of United Methodist Women alive for the United Methodist Women of tomorrow?

Reinforce all that has been shared by speaking in unison the United Methodist Women Purpose at the end of the Bible reflection and before a closing prayer.

### Closing Prayer:

Loving and giving God, we give thanks and glory to you. For the care given freely to each of us, fill us our spirits with care for one another and each neighbor in our community. For the gifts showered upon us, fill our hearts with a need to share so that all might know your greatness and love. For the mission, fill our whole selves with the strength to continue honoring Christ through United Methodist Women's faith, hope, and love in action on behalf of women, children, and youth around the world. Fill us anew with your Holy Spirit to empower us for the mission you've call us to. To God be the glory forever and ever! Amen.



United  
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