

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN HANDBOOK

2021–2024

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE ORGANIZATION

OF UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

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ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES IN THE ORGANIZATION

BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

Tabitha was a disciple in the city of Joppa. “She was devoted to good works and acts of charity” (Acts 9:36b). Widows wept and Peter traveled to mourn the death of this woman mentioned in Acts. She was not only a believer but also a do-er as the mourning widows attested when they showed Peter what she had done for them. We do not know what moved him to do what he did next, but God saw fit to use Peter to raise Tabitha from the dead so that more would believe.

Our belief is shown through what we do. Tabitha is an example of this as are Esther, Rahab and the Samaritan woman. The widowed women showed Peter evidence of Tabitha’s faithfulness through what she did for them. As members of United Methodist Women, we are called to not only believe but also to do. Just as Tamar took what could be considered drastic action to stand up against injustice (Genesis 38), we are also called to boldly speak out against injustice in our society.

OVERVIEW

United Methodist Women depends on laywomen who use their God-given gifts to engage in God’s mission in the world. United Methodist Women is committed to developing strong leaders through education and training that equip women with leadership skills.

We offer women opportunities to develop a deeper understanding of mission, grow spiritually and have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of women, children and youth.

While any woman can join United Methodist Women as a member, United Methodist Women elected leaders must be laywomen who are willing to commit their talents, time, energy and effort to serve God’s mission. A member of the local church must be named president, except for local units that are not organized in United Methodist churches (Bylaws, Article 1.3).

As a member of United Methodist Women, you have the opportunity to serve at the local, district, conference, jurisdiction and national levels. Learn more about that leadership in this handbook.

LEADING WITH THE PURPOSE IN MIND

The Purpose of United Methodist Women

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.

Our work is inspired by our Purpose and turning faith, hope and love into action. Making this statement a living reality is our goal. Commitment to God's calling, sensitivity to others, openness to new ideas and a heart for mission are all needed to foster the values that are at the core of the Purpose.

LOCAL UNITED METHODIST WOMEN ORGANIZATION

United Methodist Women is organized according to the group's need and size. Most United Methodist Women groups normally relate to a local church but this is not a requirement. Each local organization of United Methodist Women should have a leadership team that at minimum consists of a president, vice president, treasurer, secretary and chair of the committee on nominations. (*The Book of Discipline*, 2016, cf. 256.5) Additional leaders are chosen and committees or task groups are formed as needed.

ORGANIZATIONAL OPTIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Subgroups and Circles

Forming subgroups or circles allows members an opportunity to focus on special mission interests in smaller groups. They provide greater flexibility and freedom for participation, nurture and leadership development. Some women find that their circle is their primary connection for prayer, study and spiritual growth.

Subgroups and circles may relate to the local organization by selecting representatives to be members or connect with the leadership team and/or other committees, as appropriate.

Cluster or Charge Groups

Smaller groups in a local church may be strengthened by joining with United Methodist Women members in other churches to form a charge, or cluster or other regional group.

Virtual Groups

Also known as an online unit, a virtual unit is a geographically dispersed group of women who work together from different geographic locations and rely on communication technology and web resources such as email, social media and video or voice conferencing services to collaborate in fulfilling the Purpose.

Online Connections

Social networking through **umwonline.org** provides yet another way to organize and connect with others with a passion for mission. The primary purpose of the UMWOnline is to enhance the ways in which we connect and communicate with one another.

Leadership

Accepting a leadership role requires a commitment of time, energy and effort. But in return, you develop a deeper understanding of mission, grow spiritually and are sustained by the knowledge that you are making a difference in the lives of women, children and youth and unjust systems.

Leadership Team or Executive Committee

The local organization should be structured so that the work of administration, finance, program planning, planning for mission, record keeping and nominations can be carried out. A member must be named president, and she or someone named by the team must serve as the contact person for the district organization and serve on the local church council.

The leadership team assigns responsibilities for all basic functions. It includes the following persons:

- President
- Vice president
- Treasurer
- Secretary
- Chair, committee on nominations
- Member at large
- Pastor (ex-officio)

Other persons may also be recruited to plan programs of spiritual growth, mission education and advocacy work according to the needs of your group and community. Others might organize programs for individual study and hands-on mission. Other persons may be recruited to ensure members are being properly recruited, nurtured and led to loyalty. Each organization should recruit leaders needed to make sure that opportunities for spiritual growth, mission education, leadership development, service and advocacy are available to members throughout the year.

ELECTED LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

The president, treasurer, chair of the committee on nominations, and secretary of the local organization each have a counterpart in the district and conference organizations of United Methodist Women. Your district counterpart will be available to give you practical advice about how to carry out your duties and will be a source of support as you learn more about being a leader of United Methodist Women. She will provide training and give advice.

Term and Tenure of Elected Leaders

Leaders are elected for terms that are determined by their local or district unit. It is advisable to fill a vacancy within a period of three months. Tenure, or the maximum amount of time a woman may serve, is described in the bylaws of United Methodist Women.

TASKS OF MISSION: LIVING THE VISION

Mission is and has been at the heart of the organization for nearly 150 years. Our mission tasks grow out of the vision and outcomes as described in “Living the Vision” (see the “Know Your Mission Organization” section) and offer a way for United Methodist Women groups to organize themselves. In this section of the Handbook you will learn more about ways of being in mission. Look for more information in the “Take on the Tasks” section.

Every United Methodist Women’s group works in a unique setting. Study the scripture insight and guidelines below to help determine how your group can engage in mission as you seek to live out the Purpose.

Task: Scripture Insight	What You Can Do: Guidelines
Valuing Our Mission Acts 14:27	Take time to celebrate your accomplishments. Review and evaluate your strengths and needs. Reflect on how God has been at work.
Organizing for Mission Acts 14:23	Prepare for mission by evaluating how you are organized. Consider how you welcome newcomers from different ethnicities, age groups and economic backgrounds. Discuss how you make mission possible through your group activities such as prayer, learning, serving, giving, advocacy and community building.

<p>Planning for Mission Acts 13:2–3</p>	<p>Discuss with your local United Methodist Women group about what it means to plan for mission and what God might be calling you to. Network with other United Methodist Women leaders to learn how they plan for mission.</p>
<p>Building Community Acts 15:35–36</p>	<p>Build community through your relationships in your local United Methodist Women’s group and the community at large. Welcome new people to the group. Attend United Methodist Women events at all levels of the organization. Network and collaborate for events and other activities.</p>
<p>Living the Vision: Growing Spiritually Acts 18:8–11</p>	<p>Become aware of opportunities and resources to foster spiritual growth within your local United Methodist Women’s group. Opportunities arise out of programs, meetings, functions, events and members’ commitment to women, children and youth around the world. In addition to the Bible, mission studies, response magazine, the Program Book and Prayer Calendar are all resources to help members grow spiritually.</p>
<p>Living the Vision: Serving and Advocating Acts 16:16–18</p>	<p>Respond to the biblical call and denominational mandate to be in mission through advocacy and compassionate service to do justice as God would see it. Identify local opportunities to work with others.</p>
<p>Living the Vision: Educating for Change Acts 17:19–34</p>	<p>Participate in educational opportunities such as Mission U, the Seminar Program and the Reading Program. Read response magazine and other publications and utilize electronic resources to learn about current mission concerns and topics.</p>
<p>Living the Vision: Developing Leaders Acts 18:24–28</p>	<p>Grow as a leader through the opportunities to serve and learn. The district, conference and national organizations regularly provide a variety of training, educational and experiential opportunities.</p>
<p>Living the Vision: Supporting Ministries with Women, Children and Youth Acts 11:19–30</p>	<p>Promote support for the mission of United Methodist Women through pledges, special gifts to mission and long-term gifts such as endowments. United Methodist Women’s gifts are transforming lives of women, children and youth around the world.</p>

In the “Take on the Tasks” section, you’ll find practical suggestions for implementing the tasks of mission.

DISTRICT UNITED METHODIST WOMEN ORGANIZATION

The district United Methodist Women organization works with the local organizations in their district to live out the Purpose. It provides support through training and other educational events and encourages Mission Giving, spiritual growth, membership outreach, mission education and social action and promotes the plans and work of the conference and United Methodist Women's national office. Ministries and opportunities for learning and advocacy for this quadrennium include mass incarceration/criminalization of communities of color, with a particular focus on the Interrupting the School-to-Prison Pipeline campaign, and climate justice, with a particular focus on the Just Energy for All campaign.

The district organization supports women as they participate in the work of the church and as they assume positions of responsibility and leadership. Each district is unique, with its own opportunities and challenges.

MEMBERSHIP

All United Methodist Women members within the district are members of the district organization. They may be asked to serve on various boards, councils, commissions and committees of the district and/or annual conference as needed.

Districts may provide additional membership options: District groups may be formed when women from different churches meet in locations other than a local church, such as a college campus, retirement community, online community or workplace.

LEADERSHIP TEAM

United Methodist Women members from within the district are elected to leadership roles to serve at the district level. Each leadership team should include a president, treasurer, secretary and chair of the committee on nominations. Additional persons may be named at large or for specific functions as they help the district organization fulfill the Purpose. Additional teams or committees may be formed as needed to fulfill the PURPOSE and to meet the needs of the district.

WORK/MISSION OPPORTUNITIES

The district organization helps local organizations by providing program assistance, leadership development, mission interpretation, resources and encouragement.

Members of the leadership team have specific responsibilities as well as some that are common to all. These common responsibilities include:

- Understanding and upholding the Purpose and the constitution and bylaws of United Methodist Women.
- Developing personal spiritual practices.

- Preparing through reading, studying and participating in district and conference meetings, leadership training and educational opportunities such as Mission u.
- Ensuring each and every active member is signed up via myUMW.
- Using and promoting **response** magazine.
- Understanding, interpreting and engaging the membership in the current United Methodist Women emphases on mass incarceration/criminalization of communities of color and climate justice.
- Strengthening relationships with other district leaders for effective teamwork and collaboration. Example: District lay leader, United Methodist Women president and district superintendent.
- Offering training for local leaders.
- Regularly engaging in planning, goal setting and evaluation with the leadership team.
- Promoting Mission Giving.
- Ensuring membership lists are used appropriately and safeguarding them from distribution outside of the organization.
- Promoting United Methodist Women’s mission among all women in the church.
- Working to ensure the participation of a diverse, inclusive group of women in all parts of United Methodist Women, including strategies to start or reorganize local organizations so that all women members connect to a local or district group. District leaders plan and coordinate regular visits to congregations and local groups to offer support, discuss local needs, share information and provide an open channel for communication.

Annual Meeting

District leaders plan and lead an annual meeting to conduct the business of the district organization. The meeting may also include worship and other programming. (See the tips in the “Take on the Tasks” section for further information about annual meetings and program planning.)

CONFERENCE UNITED METHODIST WOMEN ORGANIZATION

The conference United Methodist Women leadership team works with the district and local organizations to fulfill the Purpose. The organization develops programs to meet the needs and interests of women and the concerns and responsibilities of the global church and promotes Mission Giving, spiritual growth opportunities, member outreach, leadership development, mission education and opportunities for hands-on service and social action. The conference encourages opportunities for learning and ministry that connect our current priority issues: mass incarceration/criminalization of communities of color, with a particular focus on the Interrupting the School-to-Prison Pipeline campaign, and climate justice, with a particular focus on the Just Energy for All campaign.

The conference leadership team works to help local and district organizations connect with what is happening at the conference and national level.

MEMBERSHIP

All members belonging to local United Methodist Women within the conference boundaries are members of the conference organization. Members of the conference organization may be asked to serve on various boards, councils, commissions and committees of the conference, jurisdictional and/or national organizations as needed.

LEADERSHIP TEAM

United Methodist Women members from within the conference are elected at the annual meeting to leadership roles that help the organization fulfill the purpose. The leadership team should include at least a president, treasurer, secretary and the chair of the committee on nominations. Additional persons may be named either at-large or in the designated roles approved by the conference. Additional teams or committees may be formed as needed to fulfill the Purpose.

WORK/MISSION OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to fulfilling the Purpose by living out the tasks of mission, the conference organization provides program assistance, leadership development, mission interpretation, resources and encouragement.

Members of the leadership team have specific responsibilities as well as some that are common to all. These common responsibilities include:

- Understanding and upholding the Purpose and constitution and bylaws of United Methodist Women.
- Developing personal spiritual practices.
- Preparing through reading, studying and participating in district and conference meetings and leadership training and educational opportunities such as Mission u.
- Using and promoting **response** magazine.
- Understanding, interpreting and engaging the membership and district organizations in the current United Methodist Women emphases on mass incarceration/criminalization of communities of color and climate justice.
- Strengthening relationships with other leaders for effective teamwork and collaboration such as conference lay leader, Volunteers in Mission coordinator, conference secretary of Global Mission, chair of Commission on the Status and Role of Women, chair of Commission on Religion and Race, Board of Church and Society, Justice for Our Neighbors board representative, bishop and cabinet.
- Offering training events for district counterparts and other leaders.
- Encouraging leaders and district organizations to participate in the work of the conference United Methodist Women organizations and in the work of the annual conference.
- Regularly engaging in planning, goal setting and evaluation with the leadership team.
- Establishing a relationship with district counterparts.
- Promoting United Methodist Women's mission among all women in the church.

- Working to ensure the participation of a diverse, inclusive group of women in all parts of United Methodist Women.
- Ensuring that each district is aware of the importance of having all members sign up on myUMW and promoting Census participation and accurate reporting.

Conference and district organization leadership can:

1. Connect with groups located in the vicinity of where each local leader or elected officer lives.
2. Plan to attend local gatherings and events. It is always encouraging when elected leaders take an interest in local groups.
3. Affirm and acknowledge the mission work local groups are doing in their communities.
4. Be a source of information, knowledge and resources for local groups.
5. Share what is going on at different levels of the organization, giving emphasis to how the local organization can participate and contribute to the larger work.
6. Listen to local group concerns and experiences and share them with the conference or district mission team.
7. Track which groups are visited and keep note of their needs. Follow up on providing relevant resources, mailings and information to them.
8. Follow your visit with thank-you notes to the group and to the pastor.
9. Pay special attention to groups in remote or rural areas so they feel connected to the larger community.
10. Keep in touch with those groups you are not able to visit by making personal phone calls on a regular basis.
11. Highlight the work being done in different parts of the conference by including articles in your newsletter and website.
12. Visit and be in contact with the pastors at local churches.

You may want to set up a system and schedule to make sure that all groups receive some attention from the district and conference organizations.

When you are visiting a group in which another language is spoken, try to find someone who can help translate for you. Do not expect to understand everything. The main thing is that the group understands that you care.

Legacy Fund

As a permanently invested endowment, the Legacy Fund will forever be a source of income for United Methodist Women. As such, we will continue to fundraise, promote and grow the fund to reach and surpass our \$60 million goal by securing major gifts, 1869 Society Planned Gifts, monthly Legacy Builder pledges and gifts to the Every Member Campaign. Each conference is asked to continue their participation and assign a Legacy liaison in their conference to serve in a four-year nontenured position in ongoing promotion of the Legacy Fund Endowment.

The conference Legacy liaison will:

- Serve as the go-to person in the conference for Legacy Fund–related information and promotional items for conference, district, local events and groups.
- Serve on the conference team as a connection to Legacy Fund–related programs, information and giving reports.
- Serve as the chair of the Legacy Fund team within your conference.
- Share information with the Legacy Fund team, conference leadership team and wider conference executive committee.
- Build relationships within the conference.
- Secure time on the agenda for the conference executive meetings, annual meetings and other events to talk about the Legacy Fund.
- Participate in Legacy Fund presentations and workshops, and attend national training events.
- Work with conference communications coordinator to ensure Legacy Fund information is included in conference and district newsletters, websites, social media and other communication vehicles.
- Present the planned giving workshops at least twice a year in your conference.
- Utilize Legacy Fund team members to assist in writing thank-you notes to donors from your conference listed on quarterly giving reports provided to you by the national office.
- Submit quarterly reports to the national office (assigned development officer/staff) on Legacy Fund activities within their conferences.
- Participate in fundraising/development web-based trainings as scheduled.
- Communicate with assigned development officers/staff for additional Legacy Fund resources/support when needed.
- Work with Legacy Steering Team members (consisting of board and PAG members) from your jurisdiction who will be calling you periodically to provide support and assist in setting your conference’s Legacy Fund goal.
- Invest in the future of United Methodist Women with a leadership gift to the permanently invested Legacy Fund Endowment.

Conferences with long relationships with National Mission Institutions and other United Methodist Women projects promote knowledge of work of these organizations and hands-on service as may be appropriate and support Mission Giving.

Conference leaders offer support, assess local and district needs and provide an open channel for communication. They share stories on how mission dollars are used to address specific needs in the world and transform lives.

Annual Meeting

Conference leaders plan an annual meeting to conduct the business of the conference organization. The meeting may also include worship and other programs. (See the tips in the “Take on the Tasks” section for further information about annual meetings and program planning.)

JURISDICTION UNITED METHODIST WOMEN ORGANIZATION

The organization of United Methodist Women within the bounds of a jurisdiction of The United Methodist Church implements the election process for the United Methodist Women's national board of directors and is responsible for special programs.

UNITED METHODIST WOMEN NATIONAL ORGANIZATION

The United Methodist Women National Office provides support and structure for the mission of United Methodist Women at all levels of the organization. At the national level, the organization of United Methodist Women is led by a board of directors with advisory input from the program advisory group. The work is guided by the Purpose and implemented by the staff. The board of directors sets the policy, secures funds from the members and determines the budget that provides opportunities for women to connect within the United States and around the world.

The board of directors consists of 25 directors, 20 of whom are elected by their jurisdiction, and five are nominated and elected by the national organization. From these directors a team of leaders are nominated and elected.

WORK

The work of the national United Methodist Women Board of Directors can be broken down into the areas listed below.

Policy: Committee on Governance

The board of directors determines the official policies of the organization and how it will operate and conduct its work. It also handles nominations between organizational meetings and board self-evaluation.

Strategic Plan: Committee on Planning and Assessment

The board is responsible for directing the staff on development of a strategic plan for the organization and setting measurements to assess the organization's work. This committee is responsible for working with the staff to bring recommendations to the full board for consideration. See "Living the Vision" in the "Know Your Mission Organization" section.

Budget: Committee on Finance

The national organization secures funds through the channels of giving to provide critical program funding to ministries with women, children and youth. The board of directors approves the budget based on United Methodist Women's mission priorities.

Care of Retirees

The United Methodist Women National Office has a commitment to care for retired deaconesses, missionaries and home missionaries who were directly employed by United Methodist Women. The Brooks-Howell home in Ashville, NC, is part of the obligation of this care.

Property

The board of directors authorizes use of funds for upkeep of United Methodist Women properties.

Job Description: United Methodist Women Director

The board of directors oversee both the United Methodist Women National Organization and the United Methodist Women Corporation. The director is also a member of the National Organization Program Advisory Group. Her duties include but are not limited to:

- Elect officers for the corporation.
- Protect the assets and monitor the finance and financial structures of the corporation.
- Ensure the corporation complies with the state of New York applicable law for a not-for-profit organization.
- Rely, when necessary, on information/opinion provided by a member of the corporation, a committee of the board, or counsel to make sound decisions for the corporation or the organization.
- Set policies for the organization and monitor the implementation of those policies.
- Approve the total budgets for the organization.
- Establish and review major objectives and strategies of the organization.
- Hire, supervise and provide support to the general secretary/CEO.
- Evaluate the work of the general secretary/CEO to ensure it is both addressing the needs of the membership and in line with *The Book of Discipline*.
- Elect annually the assistant general secretaries.
- Be available to represent United Methodist Women on boards of United Methodist Women related institutions and other ancillary groups as assigned.
- Be available to represent United Methodist Women on other agency boards as assigned.
- Be able to travel to semi-annual board meetings.
- Be able to travel to other occasional events as may be required.
- Be available to meet by conference calls for committee meetings as well as occasional board meetings.
- Be prompt in responding to electronic communications and provide feedback as necessary.
- Be a connected/participating presence in district and conference organizations.
- Serve as a representative of the membership both on the program advisory and board levels.
- Serve as liaison between her local, district, conference, jurisdiction membership and the national organization as well as the national staff.

Further details about the board of directors can be found in the “Constitution and Bylaws” section.

The United Methodist Women Program Advisory Group (PAG) brings program recommendations to the board of directors. The 70 to 80 members of the PAG are from a variety of positions within United Methodist Women and the church. They meet at least once a year to study issues and prepare recommendations to the national board regarding mission priorities, mission education work and program guidance for United Methodist Women.

The program advisory group includes:

- United Methodist Women's 25-member board of directors.
- The five United Methodist Women jurisdiction presidents.
- Representatives from United Methodist agencies, the deaconess and home missionary community, and, with voice but no vote, United Methodist Women regional missionaries and representatives of the World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women.
- Five members selected by the board of directors for diversity.

Job Description: Program Advisory Group Member

- Serve in a critically important role as a visible and available liaison between her local, district, conference and jurisdiction member, as well as the national organization. In that role, she is a listener—learning all that she can while also sharing and interpreting information as an encourager to all membership at all levels.
- Serve as a regular communicator of the needs of the membership to the board of directors and the national staff as well as sharing the Purpose, Vision and full scope of work of the organization and our history with all.
- Serve as a representative of the membership, capable of making recommendations to the board of directors regarding a broad range of programmatic issues including, but not limited to: leadership development opportunities, membership growth, spiritual growth practice, education and interpretation activities; advocacy and fund-raising development.
- Interpret and promote the Legacy Fund at all levels of the organization specifically working with the conference Legacy Fund teams and liaisons, and personally giving an individual traceable gift to the Legacy Fund.
- Be available to represent United Methodist Women on boards of United Methodist Women-related institutions and other ancillary groups as assigned.
- Be able to travel to annual Program Advisory Group meetings as well as other occasional events as may be required.

Legacy Fund Steering Committee Members

The Legacy Fund is a permanently invested endowment. Proceeds from the invested funds will endow future core expenses so that even more money can be directed to support and grow vital mission work throughout our country and the world.

Legacy Fund Steering Committee members will:

- Strengthen and increase financial support to United Methodist Women through support and promotion of The Legacy Fund Endowment; including 1869 Society planned giving, major gifts, Legacy Builders and the Every Member Campaign.
- Assist the development staff in the national office with relationship building and fundraising to increase major and planned gifts and conference giving revenue for the Legacy Fund Endowment.
- Attend periodic web-based fundraising/development trainings to build knowledge and comfort level with cultivating and nurturing potential giving relationships.
- Attend scheduled web-based and in-person meetings to discuss and provide updates on their engagement with United Methodist Women in generating revenue for the Legacy Fund Endowment and building giving relationships.
- Establish and sustain relationships with conference Legacy liaisons and conference leadership teams to assist them in the continued fundraising and promotion of the Legacy Fund Endowment within their conferences.
- Promote awareness of the Legacy Fund as a permanently invested endowment by sharing its interest performance and how it is money that is working for us.
- Build recognition that spiritual growth, leadership development, service and advocacy, and transformative education are expressions and tangible examples of the mission and work of United Methodist Women.
- Help United Methodist Women claim their identity and enhance appreciation of the work within the membership.
- Invest in the future of United Methodist Women with a leadership gift to the permanently invested Legacy Fund Endowment.

OPPORTUNITIES TO CONNECT

The national office offers opportunities for members to connect globally through the United Methodist Women's Assembly, seminars and other events to learn about mission, deepen their faith, connect with one another and be inspired to action. Other ways members connect nationally and worldwide can be found in the "Know Your Mission Organization" section under "Connection Worldwide."

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

The national organization provides educational opportunities for members by sponsoring and conducting training events and providing scholarships. Programs such as Mission u, the Seminar Program, the Reading Program and National Seminar are examples of such programs. Educational opportunities center around the current emphases on mass incarceration/criminalization of communities of color, with a particular focus on the Interrupting the School-to-Prison Pipeline campaign, and climate justice, with a particular focus on the Just Energy for All campaign.

LEADERSHIP FOR MISSION

Since its founding, United Methodist Women has prepared leaders to be in mission. Programs like Mission u (Schools of Christian Mission), justice education and leadership development help equip the church's leaders to be involved in mission in their daily lives.