Theme: Esther—Personal and Collective Power

Gathering Music—Choose from list of recommended songs

Call to Worship

Leader: God of the morning and evening and all the day long, we come recognizing that you have been with us throughout the night and you have awakened us to a new day full of promise and your presence.

All: Awaken our minds to the new learning today can bring. Awaken our hearts to the joy of being your beloved. Awaken our souls to the happiness of hungering and thirsting after your righteousness—for You promise we will be filled. Help us hear your calling today, for such a time as this. Amen.

Sing

“Be Thou My Vision,” The United Methodist Hymnal, 451

Community Prayer

Leader: At your table (or with people sitting near you), see if there are prayer requests to share together. Offer one-word sharing that represents the concern(s) you have – perhaps the name of someone or you may just say you have a silent request. God knows and your sisters (and brothers) gathered at the table can lift up the request whether they name it or not. Take a few moments for these prayer requests and then pray together. I will end our prayer time by saying “Lord in your mercy, hear our prayers.”

(Give 3-5 minutes for this then close with “Lord in your mercy, hear our prayers.”)

Sing

“Lord, Listen to Your Children Praying,” The Faith We Sing, 2193
Scripture Reading

Participatory Scripture Reading Note

Divide the audience by characters to respond as noted whenever their name is read during the scripture reading. Give instructions for this at the beginning. Invite a leader to help direct the audience responses, at least initially until they get used to it. Be sure the reader pauses or slows their reading to allow time for responses.

Responses:

Mordecai—“Great uncle!”
King or King Ahasuerus—“All hail the king!”
Hathach, slaves, servants, maids, eunuchs—“Still resisting slavery!”
Esther/Queen—“For such a time as this!”
Haman—“Wicked man!”

Esther 3:1-15 New Revised Standard Version (NRSV)

Scripture Reader: (remember to pause for the character responses)

3 1 After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, and advanced him and set his seat above all the officials who were with him. 2 And all the king’s servants who were at the king’s gate bowed down and did obeisance to Haman; for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai did not bow down or do obeisance. 3 Then the king’s servants who were at the king’s gate said to Mordecai, “Why do you disobey the king’s command?” 4 When they spoke to him day after day and he would not listen to them, they told Haman, in order to see whether Mordecai’s words would avail; for he had told them that he was a Jew. 5 When Haman saw that Mordecai did not bow down or do obeisance to him, Haman was infuriated. 6 But he thought it beneath him to lay hands on Mordecai alone. So, having been told who Mordecai’s people were, Haman plotted to destroy all the Jews, the people of Mordecai, throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus.

7 In the first month, which is the month of Nisan, in the twelfth year of King Ahasuerus, they cast Pur—which means “the lot”—before Haman for the day and for the month, and the lot fell on the thirteenth day[a] of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar. 8 Then Haman said to King Ahasuerus, “There is a certain people scattered and separated among the peoples in all the provinces of your kingdom; their laws are different from those of every other people, and they do not keep the king’s laws, so that it is not appropriate for the king to tolerate them. 9 If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued for their destruction,
and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver into the hands of those who have charge of the
king’s business, so that they may put it into the king’s treasuries.” 10 So the king took his
signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman son of Hammedatha the Agagite, the enemy
of the Jews. 11 The king said to Haman, “The money is given to you, and the people as well,
to do with them as it seems good to you.” 12 Then the king’s secretaries were summoned on
the thirteenth day of the first month, and an edict, according to all that Haman commanded,
was written to the king’s satraps and to the governors over all the provinces and to the
officials of all the peoples, to every province in its own script and every people in its own
language; it was written in the name of King Ahasuerus and sealed with the king’s ring. 13
Letters were sent by couriers to all the king’s provinces, giving orders to destroy, to kill, and
to annihilate all Jews, young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth day of
the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods. 14 A copy of the
document was to be issued as a decree in every province by proclamation, calling on all the
peoples to be ready for that day. 15 The couriers went quickly by order of the king, and the
decree was issued in the citadel of Susa. The king and Haman sat down to drink; but the
city of Susa was thrown into confusion.

Silent Reflection

(Have worship leader invite everyone to pause
for a moment of silence to reflect on the words just heard.)

Sing

“I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me,” The Faith We Sing, 2153

Leader: We just heard from Esther’s story about Esther, Mordecai, King Ahasuerus and
Haman. Each of these persons had their own power and used it differently. Who has power?
How did they get it? How did they use it? What kind of power did they have? Divide tables
or participants into groups to look at Esther and Mordecai, Esther and Haman, Esther and
King Ahasuerus, Esther and the slaves. Spend 5 minutes in your assignment answering the
questions about power of the characters in this story on the worksheet titled “Who Has the
Power?” (Expect the following responses, as well as others: personal, family, religious/faith,
prayer/fasting, community, work, status/privilege, government power, etc.). How do you see
power operating in the story we just heard? Try to move this quickly – in large group sharing.
Ask for one-word answers. Thank the responders.

Leader: Now think about your own power. Take a few moments to analyze the power you
have by answering the questions on the back of this worksheet.

(On screen: What is my own personal power? Community power?)
Give about 3 minutes for this. Then ask them to think of this
in light of economic, racial and political power.

(On screen: What is my economic power? Racial power? Political power?)
Give about 3 minutes for this. Then ask them to think of this
in light of economic, racial and political power.

Leader: Invite large group sharing about personal power. Offer thanks for the sharing and introduce the person asked to define power. (Name of person) will take a few moments to define power and the kinds of power—relationship, position, economic, civic. Power uses: good, abusive, ignore, and how power relates to how we tell and hear history.

Defining Power—assignee presents slides defining power, the kinds of power and its use and misuse.

(Follow PPT slideshow for this plenary)

Our Power as United Methodist Women

Leader: As we hear these definitions of power and think about it in relation to the ways power is demonstrated around us, it naturally pushes us to recognize how our organization represents Collective Power—UMW members have power in numbers and in money, we bring a collective block of support for things. Here are some examples:


Invite large group sharing about this. Celebrate what people list from their experiences/ involvements.

Leader: Let’s watch this short video to see how our foremothers used their collective power to start what we now know as United Methodist Women.

Show: “The League of Extraordinary Methodist Women” on YouTube on the UMW website: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UL-iXCJuaYU

(Make sure the video is cued before beginning the plenary.
It is approximately four minutes long.)

Leader: The scriptures have opened us to thinking about power, its uses and abuses, and our role in what happens. As we see the different motivations of Haman and Mordecai, help us to discern our own impulses to act. Let your Holy Spirit of conviction continue to stir our
hearts to examine ourselves and our reactions.  
**All:** Do not let us be “thrown into confusion” by actions that may come from selfish motives. Guide us to ask, “Who suffers? Who benefits?” and to act.

**Leader:** Remind us, God of Esther and Mordecai and God of the Jews, that we have both individual power as well as collective power to be used for the good of all.

**All:** Give us conviction to look for the truth, to pray for guidance and to always hunger and thirst after Your righteousness. We trust Your promise to fill us.

**Leader:** Go with us into this day (afternoon, evening, night).

**All:** Amen.

**Hymn**

“Be Thou My Vision,” *The United Methodist Hymnal*, 451