The following worship/ plenaries were created for United Methodist Women’s Leadership Development Days 2016-2017. They have been edited adapted for members’ use. Each session builds on the previous session.

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**Plenary I | 60 minutes**
Gathering Music – Choose form list of recommended songs
Welcome & Opening Prayer
Opening Movement & Song
The lights are dim. A long large blue cloth is carried in and around the room. The fabric carriers carry the fabric above their heads and more it side-to-side so that it looks like a flowing river. The song “Down to the River to Pray”, Worship & Song (p. 3164), Abingdon Press, Nashville Southern USA folk song is song. The blue cloth is draped over the altar and around the front and sides of room.

**Scripture Reading**
Luke 3:1-20

**READER 1**
We will be reading from Luke 3:1-20. Name and I will read the text and you are invited to join us in reading the text in bold.

In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius (ta-BIHR-ih-uhs), when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea (ih-TSHOOR-ree-uh) and Trachonitis (trak-o-NAI-this), and Lysanias (lai-SAY-nih-uhs) ruler of Abilene (ab-uh-LEE-neh), 2 during the high priesthood of Annas (AN-uhs) and Caiaphas (KAY-uh-fuhs), the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. 3 He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, 4 as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, “The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

**READER 2**
ʻPrepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.
5 Every valley shall be filled,
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,
and the crooked shall be made straight,
and the rough ways made smooth;
6 and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.”

**READER 1**
7 John said to the crowds that came out to be baptized by him,
“You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 9 Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

And the crowds asked him, “What then should we do?”

In reply he said to them, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.” 12 Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, “Teacher, what should we do?”

He said to them, “Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.” 14 Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what should we do?”

He said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.”

As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, 16 John answered all of them by saying,

“I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. 17 His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

So, with many other exhortations, he proclaimed the good news to the people. 19 But Herod the ruler, who had been rebuked by him because of Herodias (hehr-O-dee-uhs), his brother’s wife, and because of all the evil things that Herod had done, 20 added to them all by shutting up John in prison.

LEADER
Here we are at the river. Like the crowd in chapter 3 of Luke’s Gospel, we’ve been called out from our homes, from our cities, from our hometowns to meet at this river. Like the prophet, John the Baptist, we’re being summoned to this river. But this isn’t an invitation to look at its waters or to admire it from afar. This isn’t an invitation to stand on its banks. The invitation is a little disruptive. The invitation might cause us some discomfort. Because unlike the familiar spaces we worship in – we are being called to step into the wilderness. Step into the unknown. And it’s not all that comforting because of all the people to call us out, God sends this rabble rouser – John the Baptist!

I wonder if the crowd questioned his credibility. Where’s John’s robe? Where’s his collar? He’s not even dressed professionally. Who does he think he is to call us out like that?

I’m not so sure what they were thinking, but it is clear his presence disrupted the status quo.

Did you hear in the first few verses of chapter 3, how the mere mention of John seems to disrupt this sort of roll call of Roman rulers?
Verse 1
It was the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of this region and that region Lysania ruler of another region during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas,

And the word of God came. But it didn't come to them. First disruption.

No. The word of God came to John, ruler of... wait. Right, he's not a ruler. Disruption again.

The Word of God came, but it didn't come the way we expected it to. It didn't come to those we often admire. Not those in office or those ordained.

No, the word of God came to John. He was an agitator. You might even call him a social misfit.

And it came to him in the wilderness, outside the halls of Jerusalem. Outside the city brokers, the imperial palaces and outside normal procedure.

So what does John do?

He turned to the crowd and called them to step outside with him. Step outside into the wilderness.

But I'm curious why call them out to the river? Why didn't John baptize them in the usual places? We know from historians that first century Jewish homes had ritual baths, called miqvas. It would be like each home had its own baptismal fount. Any one from Jerusalem would have had access to a ritual cleanse in the comforts of their own home. Why not there? But John doesn't baptize the crowd one by one in their homes. He calls them out to the river.

All of them.

And this crowd of people actually left their homes, their families, and work to step out and join him.

And here is where the story gets awkward. John gives no formal greeting. No, “Welcome, thanks for meeting me out here at the Jordan River.” Nothing.

Instead, John’s opening line is this - “You brood of vipers. Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”

Here is where I have to pause and say, “Whoah, John. Ok. Hold on. Don't you know that kind of language loses people? You have to be a little more strategic than that.”

But... John keeps going.

[You had better] Bear fruits worthy of repentance. Do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor.’ For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. 9 Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.”

Don’t think just because you’re Christian. Or an American. Or just because you’re Methodist. Or you’re a United Methodist Women member that we've arrived and hold the keys to salvation. We must all bear fruits worthy of repentance. Probably not what the crowd wanted to hear on the first plenary of the first day of EVENT NAME!

Talk about agitation! John looked them square in the face and called them out! He called them names and even questioned their salvation! While the privileged might have preferred a more gentle approach, I think the afflicted heard John differently. I wonder if the disruption from business as usual was just what the crowd needed.

Are we any different from the crowd?
Are there times when we need to be inconvenienced? Are there times when we need to step outside what we know or what we’ve always known to see things with new eyes? Sometimes it’s that retreat to the wilderness that gives us the clarity we need to return renewed, right? Maybe we’d see the establishment differently? Maybe when we’ve been on the “inside” for so long, stepping out isn’t an option. In fact, it’s a need. Maybe stepping out isn’t an option, it is a need.

The Word of God came to John in the wilderness, a space outside the halls of Roman rule. It was a space that God’s word could not be silenced or domesticated.

**STEPPING OUT TO THE RIVER**

**TAKE OFF OUR SHOES**

Take a moment to look down at your shoes. We may need to shift a little so we can take a good look. What shoes are you wearing? Look at the design and the make of your shoe. Think of the places these shoes have traveled. What sidewalks, driveways or paths have these shoes touched? Have they graced the sanctuary of your church? Or the floors of your fellowship hall? See any dirt or mud from your street corner, backyard or farm? Our shoes have taken us to places we know well. They might be places we have known our entire lives. If there is something about them that reflects who we are and the places we’ve come from, what would it mean for you to step outside of them?

If you would allow me, I want to inconvenience you just a little bit by asking you to remove your shoes. If you are able, would you remove your shoes? I understand this may not be possible for all of us, then would you join me in taking a good look the shoes you have? Look at the threading. The soles. The design. The wear of your shoe. What sort of comfort do my shoes give me? Or what comfort do my shoes symbolize? And how have I been called to step outside of them recently?

*Cue musician to play reflective instrumental.

Take a couple minutes while the music plays to reflect on your own. What comfort do your shoes symbolize? How are you being called to step outside of them?

**STEP OUT**

Thank you. Before us is this beautiful blue river. It spans from here to here (motion). As you are able in body and spirit, will you step out from your tables and join me at the outer edge of this river? Any edge closest to you is good. If anyone needs any help getting there can we lend a hand?

*cue background music

*[Note to Plenary leader - Give a few minutes for women to stand and move. Notice how people are moving. Is there energy? Anticipation? Confusion? Do your best to name it. Example: I saw this… Did you? Or I felt this… Was it the same for you?]*

Will you share with 1-2 people, what comfort the shoes back at your table symbolize and how you’re being challenged to step outside of them? Let me begin by sharing with you what my shoes symbolize…

(*Model how the sharing will go.)*

Example: “My shoes symbolize my American consumer way of life and I need to step out of them to become a better steward of the Earth.”

[*Allow 1-2 min for sharing.]*

So United Methodist Women, you’ve been called out to this river. Join us on this journey we call **EVENT NAME**. This weekend is all about awakening and becoming a new creation.

(Leader is joined by 4 other readers- each person reads 1 stanza.)
[*Wade in the Water instrumental begins.]*

Where ever you find yourself, this is a call for you to step out.
Outside of your comfort zones.
Outside of yourself.
Outside of what we know and think we know.
This is a call to step outside and take a journey to the river Jordan.
The call isn’t a gentle one, because it is an urgent one.
Stepping out isn’t an option. It is a need.
There’s a prophet waiting out there by the river… Wait, I take that back. There’s a prophet waiting in here, right? (Points to herself.)
Right.
She’s calling us to “Prepare the way of the Lord.”
But we have to make a decision to step out in faith.
Like Peter stepping out onto the water.
Like Paul blind on the road to Damascus.
Like Mary Magdalene out at the empty tomb.
Like Thomas reaching out to the risen Christ.
Like the crowds stepping out to be baptized.
We are being called to step out into the wilderness and to wade in the waters of the Jordan.
To be troubled by her waters.
To be immersed in her waters.
To be reborn.
A new creation.

**LEADER**
You may now return to your seats.

**Song:** Wade in the Water
PLENARY II | 50 minutes
Altar Set- candle, prayer calendar, Bible, blue-river cloth, bowl of water
Bowls of water on silver chargers at each table
Gathering Music – Choose from list of selected songs
Opening Prayer
Opening Hymn: “As the Deer,” The Faith We Sing, #2025

CALL TO WORSHIP & CONFESSION (Music of hymn continues softly.)
Good morning. My name is NAME and I will be leading this morning’s call to worship and confession in English and OTHER LANGUAGE. You will respond “so my soul longs after you” in OTHER LANGUAGE. It is said like this….. Let us begin.

ONE:
This morning we gather on the banks of this river. We arrived this morning as we are. For we are loved as we are. And we also come seeking God at the water’s edge. Let us take this sacred moment to look into her waters. What image reflects back at us? Can we see ourselves as we are? Like the deer that pants for the water…

ALL:
So my soul longs after you (in other language)

ONE:
We are yearning to know ourselves and to be known by others. As we are. As women of faith. As sisters. As leaders. As United Methodist Women. As co-laborers in God’s work on earth. We are yearning to see ourselves, as you see us, O God.

Like the deer that pants for the water…

ALL:
So my soul longs after you (in other language)

ONE:
You alone are our heart’s desire. It is you Jesus. Your story. Your way. Your gospel that compels us to journey here. We want to be made new, in your likeness and in your image. Change us that we may be more faithful. Renew our minds that we may know you better and follow you ever closer.

Like the deer that pants for the water…

ALL:
So my soul longs after you (in other language)

ONE:
We know that sometimes we choose to see what we want and refuse to see things as they are. We have turned our eyes away from suffering. We have chosen to look the other way. We have not seen ourselves the way you see us. Maybe we think too highly of ourselves. Maybe we think too lowly of ourselves. We confess that we don’t always see ourselves as we are. We confess that in our distortion of self, we have failed to see others as they are. Help us at the river’s edge to see what you see. Help us at this river’s edge to see what you see. Like the deer that pants for the water…

ALL:
So my soul longs after you (in other language)

CONCLUDE WITH HYMN: “As the Deer,” The Faith We Sing, #2025
Scripture Reading

READER 1
In the fifteenth year of the reign of Emperor Tiberius (tai-BIHR-ih-uhs), when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and Herod was ruler of Galilee, and his brother Philip ruler of the region of Ituraea (ih-TSHOOR-ree-uh) and Trachonitis (trak-o-NAI-this), and Lysanias (lai-SAY-nih-uhs) ruler of Abilene (ab-uh-LEE-neh), 2 during the high priesthood of Annas (AN-uhs) and Caiaphas (KAY-uh-fuhs), the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. 3 He went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins...

READER 2
10 And the crowds asked him, “What then should we do?”

READER 1
11 In reply he said to them, “Whoever has two coats must share with anyone who has none; and whoever has food must do likewise.” 12 Even tax collectors came to be baptized, and they asked him, “Teacher, what should we do?”
13 He said to them, “Collect no more than the amount prescribed for you.” 14 Soldiers also asked him, “And we, what should we do?”

READER 2
He said to them, “Do not extort money from anyone by threats or false accusation, and be satisfied with your wages.”
This is the Word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

LEADER
This morning we will be taking a closer look at Luke’s gospel and do some reflecting together. This morning’s text returns us to the opening scene of Luke chapter 3. I am glad to hear the opening verses again. Because if you’re like me, when ancient names appear in the Bible, and I can’t quite pronounce them, I tend to gloss over and move on. This sounds like the boring introduction to the main event! Enough who begot who. Let’s just get on with it. Anyone else do the same?

But if we stopped and took a closer look, out of all four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, it is Luke who seems to think naming the powers of his day was important for his audience. And you have to imagine that writing their names in the text was the same as a public pronouncement. After all, the first century audience wouldn’t have read from their own personal bibles. In fact, they would have heard this text announced in a large gathering, much like this one. So it is interesting that Luke chose to name both the Roman authorities from Emperor, governor, all the way down to their regional rulers. Luke also includes the high priests, Annas and Caiaphas. Naming the high priests is also telling. Because unlike local temple priests, these high priests were appointed by the Roman government when Judah became a territory of Rome. This was a political move to unite both crown and temple. So, compared to the other gospel writers, Luke seems to think this announcement is important.

For an example, in Luke’s first chapter, the birth of John the Baptist is foretold in verse 5 with this historical backdrop – “In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah.” Political and religious authorities were named. In chapter 2 of Luke, Jesus’ birth is couched in verses 1-2 - “In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria.” Quirinius was the Roman governor who appointed Annas and Caiaphas.
Then again in chapter 3, as we heard in the reading of our passage – both political and religious powers are named, which really means announced. They were announced publicly.

So we’re here at Luke chapter 3 with John the Baptist at the river Jordan. Imagine with me a mass of people gathered at the banks of the river Jordan. They have left Jerusalem. They have left their surrounding towns and villages, which were now under Roman rule. And they are called out to hear John, son of Zechariah preach. And he’s not only calling them a “brood of vipers,” or hissing snakes, he’s preaching a baptism of repentance - in the context of this long list of Roman rulers and high priests.

So, I’m curious as to why? What do you think?

Does the meaning of “repent and be baptized” change for you when it is placed within the context of Roman political and religious rule? If so, how?

SHARE-OUT (2-3min)
I would love to hear your thoughts. Are there 3-4 willing to share your thoughts? If you raise your hand, there are 3 volunteers with microphones who will come to you. Do your best to limit your sharing to a few sentences to allow for more thoughts to be shared.

LEADER
Thank you for your thoughts, because it has me thinking Luke is up to something too.

I wonder. Can John’s call to repent and be baptized be understood outside the harsh realities of Roman rule? Let me pose the question in our American context. Think about Rev. Martin Luther King’s famous speech in 1963. Thousands of protesters had rallied in Washington DC to march around Lincoln’s memorial. Lincoln, who exactly 100 years prior in 1863 issued the Emancipation Proclamation. Can we understand King’s “I Have a Dream” speech without the enduring history of slavery, Jim Crow segregation and the Civil Rights Movement? In the same way, it would be difficult to understand the kind of repentance John was calling for outside his Roman context. After all, Rome was a conquering empire. So the region of Judah where John was preaching was occupied Roman territory. The Hebrew people were de facto conquered.

John’s baptism of repentance was staged in a colonized context and his audience were a colonized people. Had the people forgotten their first allegiance was not to country or flag, but to God? Was John addressing the sin of a people who had for so long lived in Empire, they could no longer see their faith outside imperial control?

What happens when we live so long inside the halls of power and privilege? Are we any different than the crowd? Could our version of Christianity have us worshipping the status quo?

Like the crowds who ask what should “we” do? There is hope!

First, to the crowds John says to share your food and clothing with those who have none. But to the tax collectors, John said something like this, “Don’t take more than the rate you’re supposed to charge.”

Did you hear how the directives differed?

And to the soldiers, who were of a class of Roman elites, he said something like this - “Don’t steal from the vulnerable.” You remember later in Luke chapter 6, when Jesus says to love your enemies and do good to those who hate you? If anyone strikes you on one cheek, offer the other and if he takes your coat, don’t withhold your under-garment? Some commentators say Jesus was referring to the culture of Roman soldiers who would often take people’s belongings. In the ancient near east, since women and children were also property, we assume they suffered the most militant forms of violence. At the river, John didn’t ask one or two bad apples to repent. He addressed all of them.
Here is where John the Baptist makes an important connection for us and the work we have ahead. John gave a different set of directives to the crowd, to the tax collectors, and the soldiers. Why? Because they carried different degrees of power within the Empire.

John didn’t condemn or guilt trip each group because of their position in society. He critiqued the ways in which they assumed and exercised values that often contradicted their faith. To the crowds, probably working class peasants, he said share your things. If you have more than you need, share. In other words, this drive toward materialism? Let go of it. That’s a value of the Empire, not of God’s kin-dom.

To the tax-collectors, don’t overcharge at the expense of poor people. Let go of this practice of profit over people. That’s a value of the Empire, not of God’s kin-dom. And to the soldiers, stop exploiting the vulnerable as if their lives don’t matter. That’s a value of the Empire, not of God’s kin-dom. Each group had internalized the values of the Empire, which is why John speaks to them differently.

In today’s political and religious context, it is all the more crucial that we are bold enough to name the ruling powers of our day. But more than bold, we need to be brave. It takes a lot of courage to face our own power and privilege. In the center of your tables are various mirrors and a container of water symbolizing the reflecting waters of the river Jordan. Every now and then, we must step outside of what we know to gather at rivers like this one and to look deeply into her waters. I invite you to a moment of silent self-reflection. What image is reflecting back at us? Can we see our power? Our beauty? Our courage? What about our shadow sides? Are we aware of our prejudices? Materialism? Racism? Militarism? What about the idol of American exceptionalism? [Allow reflection time]

The task to reflect deeply is why we are asking you to gather into caucuses based on how you identify racially. This will cause discomfort for some of us. We understand. And we have been prayerful about this. Some of us may feel like this act will cause separation among our sisterhood. But this is not at the heart of why we caucus. In order for us to truly ask the question, “What must we do?” we have to be willing to acknowledge that any action towards racial justice begins with the individual, but must move beyond the “me” into the “we” of institutions, organizations, and culture.

Whether we acknowledge it or not, we are part of a society that has assigned us value and worth based on race. Racism runs deep in our veins. It has for centuries. But what also runs in our veins as United Methodist Women is resistance. John the Baptist shows us, we are all called to bear fruits worthy of repentance, but the way we do this will be different. What we do as white women will inherently be different then what we do as women of color. And if you’re wondering, well, what happens after we caucus? We have also been prayerful about that too. During tonight’s plenary we will debrief some of our caucusing experience together. Ultimately, the ways in which we work out our salvation in fear and trembling may look different, but the end is still the same. It is the vision that all flesh will see the salvation of God.

Let us close by saying the prophet Isaiah and John the Baptist’s prophetic vision together.

‘Prepare the way of the Lord,  
make his paths straight.
5 Every valley shall be filled,  
and every mountain and hill shall be made low,  
and the crooked shall be made straight,  
and the rough ways made smooth;  
6 and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.’”

Amen.

Closing Hymn: “Todas la Tierra,” The United Methodist Hymnal, #210
PLENARY III | 45 minutes
Altar set: candle, prayer calendar, Bible, blue-river cloth, bowl of water
On Tables: 2 index cards/person, UMW buttons, Legacy fund envelopes
Baskets on high-top tables by doors
Gathering Music – choose from recommended list
Prayer (prayer calendar)
Opening Hymn Spirit of the Living God, The United Methodist Hymnal, #393

LEADER
Good morning. Here we are on Sunday morning, sisters. So much has happened this weekend. We began on Friday night with John the Baptist’s call to step outside into the wilderness and to the river Jordan. Stepping out was an act of faith and something urgent in these times. Then on Saturday morning, we drew closer to the water’s edge to take a look at our own reflection. I think of the water’s edge as our learning or growing edges. (Uplift events over the weekend- guest speaker, workshops, etc.) Or maybe our water’s edge was a workshop. Maybe we have yet to reconcile the complexities of human sexuality and that is coming up for us. But what is at stake? Whose lives are at stake if we don’t?

Our hope is that at the water’s edge maybe we saw our own images differently. Maybe we saw our own communities with new eyes. Are there spaces and places back home that need to be called to reflection and repentance?

Well, we don’t want to leave you here at the water’s edge forever. Especially not in endless reflection! Eventually the people in Luke chapter 3 just had to get in! They had to take the plunge! Even with unfinished business. Even with unresolved questions of who was the real Messiah. Or how their liberation was going to happen, if at all in their lifetime. There were real mysteries and tensions lingering in that river.

There were working peasants standing alongside the same tax-collectors who probably overcharged them and the soldiers who probably robbed them of their dignity at some point. In the context of a militarized occupation, Roman soldiers were willing to risk losing their position. At the loss of their profit margins, tax-collectors were willing to do business with equity. No one probably knew what “bearing fruits worthy of repentance” would mean or what it might cost them, but they all stood in the same river.

And took the plunge, anyway.

Oscar Romero in a collection of writings and sermons called The Violence of Love says this about the word of God, which makes me think of the word that came to John the Baptist and the word that comes to us today.

He says “We cannot separate God’s word from the historical reality in which it is proclaimed. It is God’s word because it enlightens, contrasts, repudiates, and praises what is going on in society today. A commitment to the word requires a commitment to history. Such a commitment challenges us to recognize, criticize and change the unjust structures of a society that causes suffering. Such a commitment leads to conflicts and persecutions. Such a commitment can even ask of us that we give everything, even our life for the cause of justice and peace.”

MAKING COMMITMENTS
I want to invite you now to take the plunge by making a commitment to the word of God proclaimed this weekend. What commitment will you make to bear fruits worthy of repentance?

In the center of your table are UMW buttons and index cards.
Instructions:
Choose 1 UMW button that captures the commitment you want to make.

Then take 2 cards and write two prayers. Address one prayer card to yourself and the other to another sister here. The prayer you write to yourself you will keep as a reminder that there are places back home that need us to bear fruits worthy of repentance. And the second prayer card, please attach it to the button that you chose.

Drop you’re your prayer card with the button in one of the baskets at the doors. When you return for closing worship, please pick up a prayer that another sister wrote for you. May it be a sign wherever you go that in our community of women the prayers of the righteous availeth much as it written in James 5.

When everyone at your table has finished writing prayers, please pray over your commitments together.

Song “Pues Si Vivimos,” The United Methodist Hymnal, #356
*Sung while women are reflecting.

PRAYER
Let us pray. For all the commitments made today, we give you thanks, O God. And we ask as instruments of your peace and justice that you give us the courage and the boldness to carry out the commitments we have made today. Amen.

TRANSITION
You know UMW have a legacy that began with 8 women and their vision for mission. Their vision and mission and our PURPOSE has been lived out by women for almost 150 years. We have inherited a great legacy from our bold, courageous foremothers and now it’s our turn to insure the UMW legacy for the next 150 years, Please welcome our NAME to tell us about the Legacy Fund.

LEGACY FUND
Good morning! I am Your Name, Conference and share your involvement with the Legacy Fund.

Clap your hands and send up a glorious “Hallelujah!” if you know that 150 years of being a part of God’s mission is something to celebrate!

You’ve probably heard of the 150th anniversary celebration, but what exactly is the Legacy Fund?

To answer that question, let’s review United Methodist Women’s rich legacy of mission to see the impact of women organized for mission. A few United Methodist Women leaders shared this legacy with the church at General Conference 2016.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a3Kp9nW_1HM

Sisters, that’s our story! That’s the mission legacy passed on to us by our foremothers. Interest from the foremothers’ financial gifts is still helping women, children and youth today!

We can do no less for the women who will follow us in answering God’s call to mission with women, children and youth.

That’s what the Legacy Fund is all about.

The Legacy Fund is a forward-looking permanent endowment that will undergird the work of future generations of United Methodist Women as they engage in mission with the women, children, and youth of their day, allowing us to stand beside them long after we’ve gone, just as our foremothers now stand beside us.
The Legacy Fund will ensure a regular source of support for the core expenses of being in mission. Core expenses like membership nurture, leadership development, and technological updates of data and communications operating systems.

You can make this happen: Give to The Legacy Fund.

Give by phone! Call 800-278-7771.

Give by Smartphone! Text Legacy150 to 41444.

Give online at: [www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/legacyfund](http://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/legacyfund)

Give by check! Send your gift to Office of the Treasurer, United Methodist Women, 475 Riverside Drive 15th floor, New York, NY 10115. Write “The Legacy Fund” in the memo section.

And finally, share our mission story! Resources like the video you just watched are available online at [www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/video](http://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/video) or [www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/150](http://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/150)

We must pass on this great mission legacy, because in the 21st century, women still need to organize for mission!

Thank you

Song “Take Me to the Water,” *Worship & Song*, #3165

**RITUAL OF SURRENDER**

**LEADER**

We will be taking a break now and regathering for closing worship beginning at *TIME*. We need to make some room set up adjustments for closing worship. It will be *really helpful* if everyone will leave the space and begin returning at *TIME* that we might begin worship promptly at *TIME*. You can leave everything at your table.

As a sign of surrendering in faith, again please place your prayer card with the button in the basket as you walk out of the doors. As a sign of our community, when you return, volunteers will be at each door with baskets so that you can pick up another sister’s button and receive her prayer for you.

Pray that we be bold and true to the commitments we make today.

Reminder that the offering for mission giving will be collected during worship.

See you back at *TIME* ready to begin worship.
Closing Worship | 60 Minutes

Alter set- candle, prayer calendar, Bible, Blue-river cloth, bowl of water, large offering basket

High top tables with baskets- prayers and buttons

Each Table: Water pitchers, 10 glasses, baskets with a cloth napkin for crackers, legacy fund envelopes

7 high top tables with bowls of water- Blessing stations

Gathering Music - Choose form list of recommended songs

LEADER

The table is set, sisters. We have been invited through song to come and feast. Come, taste and see that God is good. The Agape Love-Feast is about being nourished by hope. It is a humble meal full of hope. When the work to undo racism or discriminatory bills like HB2 seem too big and the issues we face seem insurmountable, I see hope in this basket.

God sends manna from heaven. Some of us might need more, some of us less but God gives us what we need to press on. To keep on keeping on. In this water poured out, I also see hope. Like our Samaritan sister at the well, we need to drink from a well that never runs dry. “Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water Jesus gives them will never thirst. Indeed, the water Jesus gives will become in us a spring of water welling up to eternal life.” Jesus is our living water.

The invitation is to taste and see God’s goodness, now, in the land of living. And this goodness is not just for us, but this goodness is for all the world to taste and see.

INVITATION TO THE TABLE

Leader

Please join me in the Invitation to the Table. You will join in the bold print.

And the table will be wide.
And the welcome will be wide.
And the arms will open wide to gather us in.
And our hearts will open wide to receive.

And we will come as children who trust there is enough.
And we will come unhindered and free.

And our aching will be met with bread.
And our sorrow will be met with wine.
And we will open our hands
to the feast
without shame.
**And we will turn toward each other without fear.**

And we will give up
our appetite
for despair.
**And we will taste and know of delight.**

And we will become bread
for a hungering world.
**And we will become drink for those who thirst.**

And the blessed
will become the blessing.
**And everywhere will be the feast.**

**LOVE FEAST**
At your tables, please pour out the water and share in the basket of crackers (they are gluten free). I want to invite you to share with your sisters the ways in which you have tasted and seen God’s goodness this weekend? How does God’s goodness nourish the hope we need to bear good fruit?

*If there is time, it would be nice for women to share with larger group how they have experienced God’s goodness and been nourished by hope.

**OFFERTORY** “Give Thanks,” *The Faith We Sing*, #2036

**OFFERTORY PRAYER**

**FINAL CHARGE** – Message

**BAPTISMAL BLESSING**
The ushers will be at stations for you to offer a water blessing. You can receive the blessing on your forehead or hand.

**Instruction for blessing:** Dip your finger in and place the sign of the cross on your sister’s forehead or hand. And say these words – *<SLIDE>* “May you be immersed in living waters to bear fruit worthy of repentance. And may you emerge in the hope that God is making all things new, even you.”

When you are finished please remain standing around the parameter of the room for our closing hymn and benediction.

**CLOSING HYMN** “We Are Called,” *The Faith We Sing*, #2172

**Benediction**