UNITED METHODIST WOMEN

PROGRAM BOOK 2016–2017

A CALL TO COMMUNITY
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United Methodist Women
FAITH • HOPE • LOVE IN ACTION
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OBJECTIVE
To understand the strength of community by studying how “two are better than one” and to learn how United Methodist Women works to empower women for economic justice locally and globally.

Abbreviated Program
If you have just 15–20 minutes for the program, you may shorten it by doing only the following portions:
• Bible Study and Reflection.
• Put It on Paper.
• Call to Action/Commitment.
Preparation

MATERIALS

Gather the following items to use during the program:

• Blue and yellow 4" by 6" index cards, enough for participants to have one of each.
• Card table (preferred) set up with china, silverware, cloth napkins, goblets; make the place setting as elegant as possible.
• Card table piled with kitchen items needed to prepare a meal: pot, skillet, wooden spoons, knives, cutting board, aprons, chef’s hats.
• Copy of the book *Behind the Kitchen Door*, by Saru Jayaramun (borrow from your library or purchase).
• Copy of the skit in this program, “A Tale of Two Women: Two Generations Making $2.13 an Hour.” (Use the skit if unable to show the video.)
• Internet connection, laptop and projector to show the book trailer for *Behind the Kitchen Door*: “Two Generations of $2.13/hour: Victoria and Chloe Bruton.”
• Pens and pencils.
• Sticky notes that are 4" by 6" or larger, one for each participant, placed on top of the blue index cards.

Participants

Before the meeting ask individual women to help with the following roles:

• Welcome people as they walk through the door.
• Lead the opening and closing prayers.
• Lead the Bible study, reflection and other activities.
• Two readers for “A Tale of Two Women” skit.

*United Methodist Women Vigil*
Rally in Nashville, Tenn.
*Photo credit: Kristina Krug*
Opening

PRAYER

God, you have provided food for us in so many ways. Help us to open our eyes and clearly see each and every person who makes that possible. Also, open our eyes and hearts to see those who are invisible in the provision of our daily bread. As United Methodist Women members, we have committed every fiber of our being to challenge the structures of economic injustice and to create and implement visions of a fair and just community. Strengthen our hearts and hands for this work. Amen.

Bible Study and Reflection

Read aloud or summarize the biblical reflection on the importance of relationships and working together. Reflect on the ways in which United Methodist Women members stand together and with others to improve the life circumstances of those suffering injustice. Encourage members to answer the questions aloud and continue to think about them during the week.

READ ECCLESIASTES 4:9–12

The Bible, history and life overflow with witnesses to the truth written in Ecclesiastes 4:9–12: “two are better than one . . . [and] a threefold cord is not quickly broken.” Moses and Aaron; Ruth and Naomi; Mary and Joseph; Jesus’ disciples; lawmakers and order-keepers; doctors and nurses; couples; siblings; and organizations are but a few of those witnesses.

When the New Year rolls around, we want to welcome it in with people who are a significant part of our lives. We pray and/or party with them; we call one or several of these significant others after the clock strikes midnight, or they call us; we text and Facebook our cyber friends. We want to stay connected to people, places and organizations that have fortified us through the years, and to people we know who will stand with us through thick and thin, as we acknowledge the presence and empowerment of the Holy Spirit through it all.

How did you spend your New Year’s Eve and why?

The preacher/teacher of Ecclesiastes devoted his life to making sense out of life and incorporating his findings into wisdom, only to find that life is vanity. According to him, “all is vanity” (1:2b). Vanity literally means “breath” or “vapor” and is used as a metaphor for the fleeting, incomprehensible and unreliable nature of life.¹ Despite the fatalistic tone of the teacher’s findings, he pinpoints a few things that make for the good life. According to the author of Ecclesiastes the good life means savoring joy and enjoying life (3:22–24; 8:15); pursuing, sustaining and treasuring...
relationships (4:9–12) and revering God, who has the final say and is the ultimate wisdom (12:13c–14). Our text today deals with the importance of relationships with others.

Often the “two are better than one” scripture is used at weddings, but for the writer’s intent, the text is more inclusive and can apply to any valuable relationship. We are created by God and given life abundantly for the simple purpose of living it and helping other people live and enjoy it. The preacher’s conclusion, that our time on earth is short-lived, is not as fatalistic as it might seem. It is more of a realistic, time-proven warning to do what we can while we can. The author and the reader both know that living life in the presence of others is at the core of our humanity. What affects others also affects us. Fear of others leads to trusting more in walls, jails, might, guns and weapons of mass destruction than in God. We can be part of the problem or part of the solution. As part of the solution—as limited and short-lived as the results of our efforts may be—there is an innate satisfaction in knowing we’re “brightening the corner where we are.”

**What was the most significant organization you joined, and why?**

God created us for one another and stays in community with us as we enjoy life and support others. Ecclesiastes 11:1–2 affirms diligence. It reads: “Send out your bread upon the waters, for after many days you will get it back. Divide your means seven ways, or even eight, for you do not know what disaster may happen on earth.” The New Interpreters Study Bible notes, “This passage admonished people on how to live in an uncertain world. . . . Striking parallels in Near Eastern wisdom literature suggest that the text is about spontaneous deeds of charity. An Egyptian version says, ‘Do a good deed and throw it in the water; when it dries you will find it.’ The second proverb [more accurately rendered as ‘Give a portion to seven and even eight’] also advises liberality, even in the face of an uncertain future.” Christ teaches that faith requires action for social and spiritual well-being, especially for the poor and the oppressed. The early church also understood that everyone was to share all that they had and especially care for the widows and orphans (Acts 2:44–45; 2 Corinthians 8:13–15). When we join together to balance service and advocacy and God is in our midst, societies are transformed, joy is diversified, multiplied and returns to us.

**What actions can you undertake in partnership with others and God to bring abundant life to all?**
A Story of Our Work

Advocating to raise the national minimum wage is one of the many ways United Methodist Women is working for economic justice.

SHARE AND RESPOND TO THE STORY

If possible, show the book trailer

If not, use the skit below.

A Tale of Two Women: Two Generations Making $2.13 an Hour (skit)


Two readers will be needed to perform this skit.

✦✦✦✦✦

Victoria: The worst moment, the absolute worst moment for me, was when I could not provide Christmas festivities for my two daughters back in 2003.

Chloe: (Hugging Victoria) We remember that, Mom. We went in our room and cried. We could not believe that we did not have any toys or a tree or anything. But, I don’t want to make you feel any worse. We know that you worked hard to provide for us. Thank you.

Victoria: Yes, I did, and I am proud of that. But really, how could I provide well for you only making $2.13 an hour as a waitress? If I didn’t make decent tips . . . (Her voice trails off as she shakes her head.)

Chloe: We didn’t understand how hard it was for you, Mom. We just wanted life like our other friends whose moms (and sometimes their dads) worked every day.

Victoria: I know, sweetie. You and your sister were great kids. It just hurt me that I could not give you a more secure life. Let me give you an example of what it means to make such LOW guaranteed wages. I could not plan. I could never be sure if I would have enough money to pay the rent. Savings? Virtually nonexistent.

Chloe: Now that I am a waitress, too, I know what you are talking about.

Victoria: And the horrible thing is that this $2.13 an hour wage—the federal minimum wage—is the same guaranteed pay that you (looking at her daughter Chloe) are making. How can that be? How can that be? (Victoria walks around in a circle, exhibiting frustration.)

Chloe: Everyone thinks that because we make tips, we are taking home EXTRA money. Unless you are working in one of those swanky
restaurants, our tips do not equal $4 an hour some nights. And we all have people who eat and run—they don’t leave a dime.

**Victoria:** All my life, I have worked mostly in restaurants where people are often just getting by themselves; they come out to eat to celebrate a birthday and they probably just have enough to buy a decent meal.

**Chloe:** Mom and I both heard about the organization Restaurant Opportunities Center. It is a group for restaurant workers (not just waitresses and waiters). A lot of people don’t know that so many people who work in restaurants are struggling.

**Victoria:** People come to work when they are sick (dangerous for our customers) because we do not get paid sick leave, holidays or vacation.

**Chloe:** I have had friends who have had their tips stolen from them. People paid by credit card and left a tip on the card but the owner says, “I didn’t see it.” It is heartbreaking.

**Victoria:** Another bad scene is when a guy comes in drunk—or sometimes he is just fresh. “Be nice to me baby and I’ll be nice to you” is said or implied while I am serving the meal. If he is with a woman (his wife, perhaps), she is usually looking upset with me. It’s a no-win situation. I know that I am not likely to get a tip from that meal.

**Chloe:** I had a time when my drunk customer actually left a generous tip and his wife, girlfriend or whomever just snatched it up. And I so needed that money.

**Victoria:** It is amazing to me that 22 years later my daughter and I are making the same pay as I did when I first started out. I hope that the people who make up Restaurant Opportunities Center and their allies, including United Methodist Women, can help improve our wages by eliminating tipped wages altogether!

**Chloe:** Me, too, Mom. Me, too.

**NOTE:** Saru Jayaraman is a founder of the Restaurant Opportunities Center (ROC) and author of the book *Behind the Kitchen Door*, which is on the United Methodist Women’s Reading Program. Saru was a featured speaker at Assembly 2014 in Louisville, Kentucky. Read this story for more information: www.umc.org/news-and-media/serving-up-fair-wages-should-be-number-one-tip.

**RESPOND TO THE STORY**

Download *The Diner’s Guide to Ethical Eating*, which can be downloaded as a PDF document or as an app for iPhones and Androids at www.dinersunited.com/dinersguide. It is an important tool for anyone who is serious about helping to change the food system and the welfare of workers employed by the food system. Find out if your favorite restaurants score well in the areas of fair wages, offering paid sick leave, and making promotion opportunities available. If they do not, this guide provides ideas for how to have a productive conversation with owners and managers. The video on this Web page provides information about how you can use your patronage and your voice to encourage change.
A Touching Moment: Connecting to the Kitchen

After watching the book trailer or the skit, pick up items from the “kitchen table” and begin to circulate them through the group without comment. Simply ask individuals to hold the item briefly then pass it on. Circulate at least five of the items from the table. Once the items have passed through the group return them to the kitchen table. Include (with caution) an unsheathed, sharp chef or butcher knife. Later explain that the sharp knife is a symbol of the dangers that workers face daily—accidents for which there is no health coverage, lack of paid sick leave causing them to work while ill, loss of housing if they cannot make enough in tips to supplement their guaranteed wages, and so forth.

Ask for volunteers to share how (or if) they connected with a particular item in some way. Did it bring back the memory of a personal experience as a restaurant worker? Did it remind someone of a person they love who works at a restaurant? Did it bring to mind a recent dining experience? Encourage and support participants to share from their hearts.

Put It on Paper: My Favorite Place to Eat

Make sure that everyone has a yellow and blue index card as well as a sticky note. Ask everyone to write on the sticky note the name of a favorite restaurant or the most recent place where she has eaten. On the yellow index card, write the name of at least one person (could be self) who works in a restaurant: their occupation (server, dishwasher, chef, hostess, etc.). Once complete, place the sticky notes around the table that is elegantly set up for a meal. Place the yellow cards on the table piled with kitchen items.

Call to Action/Commitment

Today’s Bible study introduced us to the concept of working together; that two is better than one and that more can be accomplished when working with each other. The story “Two Generations of $2.13/hour: Victoria and Chloe Bruton” tells the story of women workers who are tipped wage earners and the precariousness of their lives.

United Methodist Women is partnering with Restaurant Opportunities Center (ROC) to make visible the plight of tipped workers and to advocate for increasing their minimum wage and improving their working conditions, seeking what is normal in other industries (paid sick leave and vacation time, for example).
Ask women to take their blue cards and on one side, write down one painful or shocking thing that they learned. On the other side of the card, write one action that they will commit to doing on behalf of those who work in restaurants, such as leaving an appropriate tip of 15–20 percent and having frank conversations with restaurant owners and managers about working conditions for their employees.

**Above and Beyond**

We now have an opportunity to extend the love and support beyond our group. Here are some suggestions to extend both our learning and our commitment to advocacy.

- Take one hour this week or within the month and use it to visit the United Methodist Women website (search for “economic inequality”) to learn about various inequities that exist in the U.S. workforce. Watch (or re-watch) the book trailer about Victoria and Chloe Bruton and other videos about the lives of kitchen workers.

- Choose a day and set aside 3–6 hours to read *Behind the Kitchen Door*. You can order the book or borrow it from the library. Be sure to make note of the most painful thing you learn and identify something that you can do to support fair and equitable salaries and wages. Watch videos and read about related events, such as when United Methodist Women participated in a march for economic justice at Assembly 2014 (if any members of the unit were there ask them to share a brief reflection of the experience): www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/news/united-methodist-women-march-for-economic-justice.

Get updates on issues and action opportunities through the Facebook community, United Methodist Women Economic Inequality Initiative: www.facebook.com/UMWEconomicInequality.

Contact Carol Barton, United Methodist Women national office staff on economic inequality, to learn how you can take action to support restaurant workers and other economic justice concerns: cbarton@unitedmethodistwomen.org.

Also, commit to learning about public policy advocacy opportunities by subscribing to United Methodist Women Action Alerts at www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/actionalerts.

- Take a few days and use the workshop template to lead a community workshop for “Overworked and Undervalued: Women, Race and the Economy” available on the United Methodist Women website. Help others get a clear picture of the economic inequities that many low-paid workers face. Women are most affected: 70 percent of women who are restaurant and domestic workers earn the federal minimum wage.

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**GOOD TO KNOW:**

Economic justice is a priority area for United Methodist Women. Members are educating themselves and changing the conversation to promote justice for low-wage workers and those with student debts.
Closing Prayer

God, our hearts are aching as we think about how hard life is for many women who work in the food service industry. We all need food to live. We take pleasure in our restaurant meals and our joyful celebrations. Help us to take pleasure in working together to increase the well-being of all women and children. We stand together. Two are better than one. We stand ready and empowered to serve. Amen.

Fair food activists march for justice
Farmworker Lupe Gonzalo leads a chant during the Coalition of Immokalee Workers Parade and Concert For Fair Food in St. Petersburg, Fla., March 21, 2015. Photo credit: Julie Branaman

1 The New Interpreter’s Study Bible, New Revised Standard Version with Apocrypha (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2003), 929.

2 Ibid., 940, footnote 11:1–6.
EXPLORE THE TEACHINGS AND PEOPLE in communities in the Old and New Testaments every month through these one-hour programs, which can be adapted for shorter time spans as well. Through the course of the year, participants will see how God’s love serves as a model for us and how Christ’s incarnation serves as a reminder for crossing boundaries to be in community.

The programs challenge participants to community formation and faith-filled living. They call the community of United Methodist Women members to position themselves in the intersection of culture and faith, stirring each other up for good works.

This program book brings new elements to each topic, including Bible studies, stories of United Methodist Women’s work, sensory experiences, and a call to action and commitment.