UNITED METHODIST WOMEN
SISTERHOOD OF GRACE
PROGRAM BOOK 2018–2019
Celebrating 150 Years in Mission
United Methodist Women
Purpose

The organized unit of United Methodist Women shall be a community of women whose purpose is to know God and to experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ; to develop a creative, supportive fellowship; and to expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church.

The Vision

Turning faith, hope and love into action on behalf of women, children and youth around the world.

Living the Vision

We provide opportunities and resources to grow spiritually, become more deeply rooted in Christ and put faith into action.

We are organized for growth, with flexible structures leading to effective witness and action.

We equip women and girls around the world to be leaders in communities, agencies, workplaces, governments and churches.

We work for justice through compassionate service and advocacy to change unfair policies and systems.

We provide educational experiences that lead to personal change in order to transform the world.
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INTRODUCTION

Ellen Blue, author of United Methodist Women’s legacy book, notes, “When women discover their history and learn their connectedness to their past and to the human social enterprise, their consciousness is inevitably and dramatically transformed. This experience is for them transcendent, in that it enables them to perceive what they share and always have shared with other women.”

In 2019, United Methodist Women will celebrate 150 years of women organized for mission. It is a long and detailed history, involving millions of committed women and their stories. Most of them are unknown. Though we cannot tell all the stories, this Program Book touches on pieces of our shared history, connects that history to today, then looks into the future as we continue Christ’s mission and ministry.

There are threads that connect us to the women of our history. The first thread is discernment. We try to be present to God’s presence, knowing that God is in the midst of us, in the least of these, in the silence, in the noise, and in the lessons we continually learn. Discernment leads to response. Second, all of these women, whether it’s those who came before us or those today, are part of Christ’s mission and ministry with women, children and youth. The commitment is both personal, as individuals, and collective, as an organization. Third, this work evolved as history and needs changed. Our own theological growth and education has undergirded all mission, and it continues to be dynamic (as the different missional priorities each quadrennium indicate). Parts of our history are shameful, but we are a resurrection people, so we acknowledge the sin, seek forgiveness and learn as we move forward in faith.

Finally, by adding your own stories and historical memories of United Methodist Women to these programs, history becomes more inclusive and diverse; this is essential as we all come together as God’s daughters, committed to mission. Unfortunately, just like our history books, stories are edited and exclusive. Together we can make additions and become more inclusive and expansive in
our narrative, ready to greet all women into the sisterhood of grace as we seek to live out our faith with love and justice.

The programs each feature a Bible study that relates to the sisterhood of grace theme. A variety of methods are used to make the programs interactive and exciting: food, art, historical vignettes, etc. The programs can be used individually, but if you use all the programs over the course of the year, your unit/circle will get a broader picture of our 150-year history and the diversity of our mission. They are formatted in different ways, but all will require preparation and communication with participants. Adjust them to meet the needs of the group.

Features
Below is an overview of how the monthly programs are formatted. Read through the programs well in advance and be sure to prepare the necessary resources and materials to make each gathering a valuable experience for all.

Month/Title
Each month’s program has a title that offers you a quick reference to the theme of the Bible study, which always centers on women in the Bible and relates to the topic of the program.

Objective
The objective summarizes what is inside the program and the goals for participants. What will they learn? Come away with? Do?

Preparation
This section helps the leader prepare for the program. Refer to this section for the resources and materials you will need to collect ahead of time, and a list of the volunteer leaders and readers you will need to call on. The programs are creative and flexible: You will have the opportunity to shape them to meet the needs of your own unit/circle. See the Build Your Program section below.

Bible Study and Reflection
Each program includes a Bible study that looks at the stories of women who were led by God’s spirit in their time and place. We will discover 12 women, or pairs or a sisterhood of women, from the Bible who opened themselves to God
and participated in God’s work in the world. Time for reflection and discussion are provided.

Historical Work: Building Our Identity/Position
This section offers an opportunity to learn about the historic work of United Methodist Women and its predecessor organizations through the ages. It highlights specific missional focus areas that have shaped the organization’s identity over the years and continue to position us for mission with women, children and youth.

Call to Action: Engage and Mobilize
This section invites you to engage in action and advocacy with United Methodist Women. You can use the opportunities and strategies suggested here, or develop your own strategies for ongoing work.

Sisterhood of Grace Shalom Wheel
The Sisterhood of Grace Shalom Wheel activity is incorporated at the end of each program to help us connect United Methodist Women’s history with our present work. You will find a description of the activity following this Introduction, along with the Sisterhood of Grace covenant, ground rules that undergird all our work in these sessions. The Shalom Wheel template and stick figures of mission women, past and present, may be found in Appendix A and B, respectively.

The following words appear on different spokes of the wheel:
1. Persistence
2. Inclusion
3. Community
4. Salvation
5. Human Flourishing
6. Investing
7. Generosity
8. New Life
9. Service
10. Belongingness
11. Human Dignity
12. Truth Leading to Action

The completed circle will represent these 12 specific traits of the female biblical characters in the Program Book that contribute to shalom or fullness of life (John 10:10). They also represent the characteristics of women in your unit/circle and United Methodist Women.
Prayers, Hymns and Closing Litanies
The programs include prayers to encourage us to be open to encounters with God and our sisters. The hymns are related to the current month’s Bible study topic and offer an opportunity for centering. The closing of each program is either a communal prayer or a litany.

Appendix
Templates for the Shalom Wheel and stick figures of missionary people for the monthly Sisterhood of Grace Shalom Wheel activity are found here, along with the Pledge to Mission Service litany.

Build Your Program
You are encouraged to do the full program so your group learns and gains a good understanding of each topic. The full program will take 45 minutes to an hour: The approximate time allotted for key segments is indicated after the titles. However, if you have less than an hour, use the Build Your Own Program feature underneath the Objective in each program to note the segments you want to utilize, those that would be most helpful for your group.

Special Programs
A Pledge to Mission and A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial programs are included in the Program Book. They are also available for download from the United Methodist Women website: unitedmethodistwomen.org.

We pray that you are impacted by the Bible studies and moved by the programs. We hope you learn new and exciting pieces of United Methodist Women’s history that move you to action in Christ’s mission with women, children and youth. You are part of a great cloud of witnesses—and though we may know only a smattering of stories about the mission and ministry of the women who came before us, our narrative is just as important to fulfilling God’s call. God has worked through each woman in our history and will work through us personally and as an organization so God’s will “will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” Peace and blessings as you continue in this journey with Christ.

Endnote
We are a sisterhood of grace. As a community of women organized for mission it is important that we be the creative, supportive fellowship espoused in our Purpose. In that spirit, we offer this covenant as a guideline for interactions in our programs. These ground rules provide us with a framework to ensure that dialogue and participation is open, respectful and brave as we share, pray, learn and listen together.

Sisterhood of Grace Covenant

- Listen actively—with head and heart.
- Speak from your own experience.
- Be aware of body language.
- Respect confidentiality.
- Respect personal space.
- Own your intentions and your impact.
- Practice sustainability.
- Expect unfinished business—both discomfort and joy.

For a special program on the covenant, check the United Methodist Women website: unitedmethodistwomen.org.

Sisterhood of Grace Shalom Wheel

As we live into this sisterhood during the program year we will also be connecting our present to our past through the monthly Shalom Wheel activity as we continuously work towards God’s shalom.

Let us bring to our minds the image from Luke 4:16–21 of Jesus standing and reading a passage aloud—Isaiah 61:1–4—in his congregation in Nazareth. This event in Jesus’ hometown is the inaugural message of his ministry. He announces that his mission is with the marginalized: the “poor,” “captives,” “blind,” and “oppressed.” Jesus says in John 10:10 that he has come to offer fullness of life. The Bible abounds in these shalom passages. Isaiah 61:1–4 and John 10:10 are two key examples.
When he [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, “Is not this Joseph’s son?” He said to them, “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, ‘Doctor, cure yourself!’ And you will say, ‘Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.’” And he said, “Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet’s hometown.”

Shalom allows all people to thrive; it is living abundantly and free from oppression. Shalom is wholeness and well-being; living at peace with ourselves, with each other and with the entire creation. There can be no shalom in the world unless all people experience this fullness of life.

**Monthly Shalom Wheel Activity**

To represent the concept of shalom visually, and to help us grow in our understanding of how United Methodist Women is working towards shalom, we have developed a Sisterhood of Grace Shalom Wheel. The template for the wheel is found in Appendix A. Every program will include the Shalom Wheel. This is a visual reminder that our history connects us as we move forward. There is no beginning or end to our timeline. This is God’s time and we
respond as God calls us. We learn from history, adjust and persevere, like the biblical women and our foremothers have done.

Prior to the September program, please photocopy the template, enlarging it by four to eight times so it is poster size. Also photocopy and cut out the stick figures representing mission women found in Appendix B. You will need two per program. Alternatively, instead of using poster-size paper, you may want to create a 12-piece Shalom Wheel quilt made by the members of your group. You could also construct the stick figures out of pipe cleaners and felt, if you choose. We invite you to get creative!

Each spoke on the wheel features a theme that is pulled from that month’s Bible study. The themes include persistence, generosity and community, among others, all of which represent attributes that are helpful in bringing about shalom. Which of these attributes do you see in yourself? You may see yourself in all or some of these traits. All spokes lead to a circle in the middle of the wheel where your unit/circle will be invited to write your names during the first program.

In the Bring It All Together portion of each program the group will attach two of the stick figures representing mission women, past and present, to the Shalom Wheel above the slice representing the appropriate monthly theme. Then the group will brainstorm examples of the following and write their answers in the current month’s slice of the Shalom Wheel: 1) the history of women, programs or projects that are important to remember and 2) the women, programs or projects today that have evolved from that history. These form the connection between past and present.

Next, the group will consider the program’s Call to Action and ask themselves: What is our commitment to action this month? How will we respond to Christ’s call to embody the attribute represented by this month’s theme? Within the slice of the appropriate spoke, you will write the unit’s commitment to continue the legacy of mission with women, children and youth through United Methodist Women.

At the end of the 2018–2019 program year, you will be able to not only celebrate the historic and present mission of United Methodist Women, but you also will see how you and your unit/circle have met your commitments through God’s grace and your sisterhood to bring God’s kin-dom to earth so all can thrive!
About the Authors

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Dr. Glory Dharmaraj is retired director of spiritual formation and mission theology for United Methodist Women. Prior to that, she served as the administrator of the United Methodist Seminar Program on National and International Affairs at the Church Center for the United Nations in New York. She also has served as United Methodist Women program resource secretary in the former Central Illinois Conference. She is an author and co-author of several books. The most recent book she co-authored with Jacob Dharmaraj is *A Theology of Mutuality: A Paradigm for Mission in the Twenty-First Century* (2014), published by United Methodist Women.

Kelly Martini
Kelly Martini is a freelance writer and former communications director of the Women’s Division. She has authored plenaries, programs, video scripts and articles for multiple nonprofits, along with three youth studies for United Methodist Women, including *Food, Faith and Me; Who Is That Kid Next Door?* and *In Mission Together*.

Michelle Okabayashi
Michelle Okabayashi is a freelance writer and former communications director of the United Methodist Committee on Relief. She has assisted with United Methodist Women’s mission studies for the last eight years as well as many other resources of United Methodist Women and the General Board of Global Ministries.
MONTHLY PROGRAMS
**OBJECTIVE:** To encourage women to persist in Christ’s call for justice as they reflect on Jesus’ affirmation of the persistent widow and the 150 years of “home missions” work of United Methodist Women and its predecessor organizations. Participants will affirm their calling to continue this historic mission.

Build Your Program
*Use this space to list the segments that you want to utilize in your program this month.*
PREPARATION

Use the following lists to prepare for the program. Be sure to read the description and directions for the Sisterhood of Grace Shalom Wheel activity prior to the program (see the front of book).

Resources
✱ response magazines, particularly the March 2018 issue
✱ UMW News
✱ The United Methodist Hymnal
✱ United Methodist Women Bible (NRSV)

Materials
✱ Copy of each historical vignette and facts
✱ Copy of stick figures from Appendix B; cut out two for this program
✱ Markers
✱ Scissors
✱ Sisterhood of Grace Shalom Wheel template from Appendix A, enlarged four to eight times
✱ Sisterhood of Grace covenant written on poster board and posted on the wall
✱ Tape or glue

Participants

Ask women ahead of time to volunteer for the following roles:
• Welcome people as they walk through the door.
• Lead the Bible study, prayers and closing litany.
• Read historical vignettes and facts.
• Lead the Shalom Wheel activities.
Bible Study: Persistence and Prayer
(15 minutes)

Introduce the Sisterhood of Grace Shalom Wheel to participants:
• Read the description of the Shalom Wheel provided in the front of the book, or summarize the activity in your own words.
• Place the Shalom Wheel template on the wall or on a large table.
• Ask participants to write their names inside the center of the wheel.

Sing
“Spirit Song,” The United Methodist Hymnal, no. 347

Read
Luke 18:1–8

Reflect: Call to Mission Within
Let us enter the world of this parable. A nameless widow, known only by her marital status, is faced with an opponent who robs her of her rights.

Having no male relatives and no support system, she takes a bold countercultural stance: self-advocacy. She takes action by petitioning her judge: “Grant me justice against my opponent.” The method she adopts is to wear down the judge, who neither fears God nor respects any person. She goes down in history for her tireless persistence.

Being a widow and a self-advocate are oppositional in character in her culture and time. Jesus praises her while posing a rhetorical question to his listeners, then and now: “And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night?”

Persistent prayer is akin to a fierce fight. Self-advocacy for justice is good, but it needs to be undergirded by the power of prayer—personal and corporate. God knows that our struggle is often against systems of evil. Hence Jesus taught us to pray “Deliver us from evil.” As it says in Ephesians 6:12: “For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers,
against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”

Jesus affirms the widow’s persistence and lifts up the agency of those at the margins, while urging us to undergird all our advocacy efforts with the spiritual force of prayer. Practice a spirituality of resistance.

Discuss
Ask participants to name some women from their church, community or the world who represent justice to them.

Pray
Psalm 68:11 says, “The Lord gives the command; the women who proclaim the good tidings are a great host” (NASB). Grant us grace and courage, merciful God, to bond with each other in amplifying the voices of those who struggle against injustice. Amen.

Historic Work: Building a Tradition of Persistent Women
(10 minutes)

Like the persistent widow, United Methodist Women has been cultivating Christ’s mission for years, decades, a century and a half, and continues to do so today. That’s the sort of persistence that will enable God’s love to thrive until there is shalom across this earth.

Today, we listen to a couple stories about home missions created by women who saw their own backyards as a mission field. (Note: Remember that United Methodist Women didn’t officially form until 1972 when denominations merged to form The United Methodist Church, so the women’s organizations you’ll hear from were predecessors of United Methodist Women.)

*Individual volunteers will read the following historical vignettes and facts to the group.*
Hester Williams

Aunt Hester. Ya see, that’s what they called me. Aunt Hester. My name was actually Hester Williams but I guess “aunt” is often associated with someone you love or care for. I definitely did that. I didn’t learn my ABCs until I was 50, but I knew the importance of education. So I wanted girls to have the opportunities to read the scripture and learn skills they could use in society.

If you think of it, I guess I was lucky my name was recorded at all. The women I worked among were “freedwomen,” but I believed it took more than papers and a government statement to be free. I was a slave until the Civil War ended, then I heard God’s calling to the Woman’s Home Missionary Society. I started schools for women and girls throughout Louisiana, but I had to challenge my brothers and sisters to support this work.

You see, I have a chicken, a “missionary hen” named Dorcas, and a row of sugar cane. One year I marched to the front of the Louisiana Annual Conference and challenged them. I raised $8 from my missionary hen’s eggs, and another $6 from my sugar cane. If a freed slave could do it, why couldn’t they? God bless ‘em. They were shocked by the challenge of a freed slave in the southern church. God works in mysterious ways and we kept building schools so black and white children could be educated.¹

The Facts

Interracial relations started expanding in the early 1900s, though at times they took steps backward. Individually and together, women saw injustices and used prayer and persistence to challenge the evils of society.

• The Women’s Missionary Council of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, launched programs for women at black colleges and started Bethlehem Centers in African-American neighborhoods around the nation.
• In 1955, the Evangelical United Brethren women voted on resolutions deploring segregation, committing assistance to political refugees and increasing leadership in areas with racial tensions.²
• Methodist woman May C. Chun was the first woman to be assistant superintendent of the State Department of Education in Hawaii and

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• Methodist woman May C. Chun was the first woman to be assistant superintendent of the State Department of Education in Hawaii and
the first ethnic minority president of the Pacific and Southwest Conference.³

- Theresa Hoover was the first African-American chief executive officer of the Women’s Division of the United Methodist Board of Global Ministries, leading the organization for 22 years, from 1968–90.⁴

- United Methodist Women continues to work towards racial justice. To learn more visit unitedmethodistwomen.org/racialjustice.

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**Lily Hammond**

I’m sure that many people hear my name and shudder. I ruffled some feathers as the daughter of a slave owner from Georgia, but I kept my cool and pushed women to begin friendships across racial lines. My audacity got my husband fired as the president of Paine College. I kept repeating that the only way we could be in mission with African-American women was to develop partnerships with women of color. I had to remind my white sisters that the terror of lynchings and brutality and fear made it hard for African Americans to trust us. But, we had a duty to God. We were all made in God’s image, so we had to insist on peace and justice for all.⁵

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**The Facts**

- Just as the Charter of Racial Policies was presented for ratification at the quadrennial Assembly of Methodist Women in 1954, the Supreme Court issued the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision to desegregate public schools. Methodist Women were the first in the church to make a public statement affirming the court’s decision: “We must make our objectives so inclusive that they permit all groups to advance toward fuller realization of Christian ideals. Leaders of several races and nationalities . . . must work out steps of progress in terms of local conditions.”⁶

Carrie Davis

I wonder if Jin Ho, who tried to commit suicide on that fretful night in the 1850s, realizes that she began a mission that saved thousands of other women and children?

She was just 12 years old. Traffickers brought her to the United States to be married or sold into prostitution or slavery and she saw no way out. When she jumped off a bridge into the cold river, an African-American man and the hand of God rescued her. The man brought her to Dr. and Mrs. Gibson who appealed to fellow Methodist women to help Chinese women like Jin Ho, but only 11 women appeared for the inaugural meeting.

Eleven women working with God could do big things. They formed the Women’s Missionary Society of the Pacific Coast and built a home to help mostly Chinese women and children escape oppressive conditions. They came to us, escaping beatings, starvation, sexual assault and more. Then the need emerged for an orphanage, so we began educating girls who had no other home.

1906 could’ve been the end. The great earthquake and fire ravished our city [San Francisco]. As bricks were falling around us, almost 50 of us—women, children and I as their director—escaped. We watched the fire spread rapidly; with no food and children clinging to our hands, we tread through the streets for hours until we reached the ferry for evacuation. Not a child complained or cried out.7

The Facts

- Today, Gum Moon Women’s Residence, which translated literally means “Golden Door,” still ministers to women and children in San Francisco’s Chinatown. It gives women a place to lay their heads, while offering educational and social services.
- Nearly 100 National Mission Institutions, including Gum Moon, minister to women, children and youth. For maps and stories of National Mission Institutions, visit: unitedmethodistwomen.org/nmi.
Call to Action: Engage and Mobilize

(15 minutes)

Refer to the Sisterhood of Grace covenant (on the wall and in the front of book) as you participate in this discussion.

• Discuss how you are involved in mission, as part of a unit and individually.
• Plan ways to regularly communicate the vignettes about mission history shared in this program and discuss ways to connect them to our work today and throughout the year. Be intentional about showing the persistence of mission and encouraging others to get involved.
• Plan other “persistent” actions at this meeting, including Mission Giving, reaching out to new members and advocacy for justice.

Bring It All Together: The Sisterhood of Grace Shalom Wheel

Take the two stick figures representing mission women that you prepared ahead of time and tape or glue them above the theme of persistence on the Shalom Wheel. Write about 1) the history of women, programs or projects that are important to remember and 2) the women, programs or projects today that have evolved from that history. These form the connection between past and present.

Next, consider the group’s discussion about this program’s Call to Action and ask yourselves: What is our commitment to action this month? How will we respond to Christ’s call with persistence? On the slice of the wheel marked “persistence,” write your group’s commitment to continue the legacy of mission with women, children and youth through United Methodist Women.
Closing Litany
(5 minutes)

One: Grant us the ability, dear God, to look upon the beauty of your world.

All: Help us remember that there have been weeds and thickets in our history, but tender care can bring out the beauty.

One: Open our hearts so we can learn about the past and connect it to our present realities.

All: Draw us into the midst of your kin-dom, so we can cultivate what is right and just and acceptable to you.

One: Give our hearts hope despite overwhelming feelings of desperation and too much work.

All: And leave us with the understanding that when each of us persistently works in your world, your love and will prevail. Amen.
Endnotes


8. Please note the use of “kin-dom” in place of the traditional “kingdom.” This term was first coined by Ada Maria Isasi-Diaz. It emphasizes relationality, community and equity as the basis of God’s reign.
APPENDIX
Appendix A: Shalom Wheel Template

INCLUSION
COMMUNITY
SALVATION
GENEROSITY
NEW LIFE
BELONGINGNESS
SERVICE
HUMAN DIGNITY
HUMAN FLOURISHING
TRUTH LEADING TO ACTION
INVESTING
PERSISTENCE
Appendix B: Stick Figures of Mission Women
Pledge to Mission Service Litany

Opening Worship
Call to Worship
Leader: We come as women who have received a rich heritage from our foremothers.
ALL: We give thanks for those who were faithful to their call.
Leader: We come as women who use our combined weaknesses and strengths to serve women, children and youth.
ALL: We are thankful for those with whom we serve.
Leader: We come as women who look to a bright future of boldness and leadership.
ALL: We give thanks for those who are being prepared to lead us into this future.

Closing Worship
Pledging Your Commitment
Pray in unison

God of the past, present and future,
We are grateful for those who came before us and we seek to be faithful to their example.
We appreciate those who serve and commit themselves today; we strengthen each other.
We look forward to the generations of women you will raise up to continue the journey.
In Christ’s name we pray, amen.

Appendix C
Evaluation

Please complete and mail this evaluation form to help us continue to create effective and meaningful programs.

Which sections of the Program Book worked best for you? ______________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

Which sections did not work well? ______________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

What specific actions or projects grew out of these programs? ______________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

What are the important issues in your community? ______________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

Your Name: ______________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

E-mail Address: ______________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

Group Name: ______________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

Mail to:
Communications, Attention: Program Book Editor
United Methodist Women National Office
475 Riverside Drive, Room 1501
New York, NY 10115
This Program Book celebrates United Methodist Women’s 150 years of women organized for mission. Each of the monthly programs looks back to our legacy and connects it to where we are today.

We form a sisterhood of grace—a community of women organized for mission who foster the creative, supportive fellowship that is espoused in our Purpose.

Monthly Bible studies, reflections, program activities and a call to action will help your unit to not only connect with one another, but also to those who came before us, our worldwide mission and even extend to the next generation of leaders.