



MARY AND MARTHA MAIL CIRCLE UMW

Christ United Methodist Church - Mobile, Alabama

APRIL 2014

About Death and Dying



On Sunday, April 6th, at Mobile District United Methodist Women's Spiritual Enrichment Day names will be read of those who died during the past year while members of United Methodist Women. I appreciate this annual memorial service and the time our leaders spend in preparation. Sometimes there are candles for each person who has gone to Glory, sometimes flowers are placed on the altar or made into a beautiful arrangement. Sometimes chimes or bells toll for each person. Sometimes a few words are spoken telling how the women served God through United Methodist Women. Always there is scripture. It is a touching service and tears are shed.

I'm thinking we should shed tears for ourselves because some who have served United Methodist Women are not remembered at these services. This is sadly pointed out when we receive word of a woman's death. We remember she was for many years faithful to her circle and to United Methodist Women but when we look in the current yearbook we do not find her name.

It has become tradition to drop or remove from membership women no longer active. This is done to reduce the amount of *askings* we collect for conference and district missions. The asking each year is now \$10.25 per member and used as follows: Dumas Wesley Community Center .75, Nellie Burge Community Center .75, Mobile Inner City Mission .75, Noah's Ark .75, Save Kids of Incarcerated Parents (SKIP) .75, Hispanic Ministries .75, Administrative & Membership Development Fund 2.00, Blue Lake 2.00, Mission u 1.00, Assembly/Jurisdiction Love Offering .25, Conference Love Offering .25, District Love Offering .25.

Dear friends of the Mail Circle and Christ United Methodist Women, don't drop me if I become inactive. I assure you it will be due to mental failure or complete coma. Please annually give at least \$10 or \$15 dollars each year to keep me in good standing with United Methodist Women so my name will be called at the memorial service and listed in the CUMW Yearbook.

This will also mean at my death \$50 will be given to Mission in my memory as it is now written in our Standing Rules: In the event of the death of a member of the United Methodist Women, the president at the direction of the Circle Chair shall send a "Gift in Memory" card to the family. The card shall state that a gift to mission has been sent through regular giving channels of United Methodist Women. The gift shall be \$50.00. Those of members who might otherwise send flowers or food please make a financial donation to CUMW to help reimburse the organization for this expense.

United Methodist Women has no lifetime membership.

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Scripture

1 Corinthians 15:54-57 When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:6-8 So we are always of good courage. We know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord.

John 14:1-4 Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God; believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way to where I am going.

Romans 8:16-17 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

John 11:23-26 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

Philippians 3:20-21 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Selections From the Prayer Calendar
+ *Mary and Martha Birthdays*

- Apr 1 Alex Awad (M)
Apr 2 Michelle Wood (MI)
Apr 3 Aloma F. Martin (S)
Apr 4 Jo Sheetz (D)
Apr 5 Su Lim (MI)
Apr 6 Gloria Marple (D)
Apr 7 Mariellyn Dunlap Grace (CCW)
Apr 8 Margaret Madison (CCW)
Apr 9 Christopher Steepe (US-2)
Apr 10 Raisa Tsalyuk (S)
Apr 11 Chin Cheak Yu (M)
Apr 12 Meghan Corneal (S)
Apr 13 Joanne Reich (D)
Apr 14 Mgoy Mulanga Kalangwa (M)
Apr 15 Zelle Hammond (D)
Apr 16 Cheryl Trent (S)
Apr 17 Stephanie Kimec (US-2)
Apr 18 Serna E. Samuel (RM)
Apr 19 Victor Doolakeh Taryor (M)
Apr 20 Vickie Sigmon (CCW)
Apr 21 Misty Hebert (S)
Apr 22 Dieudonne Karihano (M)
Apr 23 Tbilisi Youth House Foundation: Georgia
Apr 24 Isabella Thoburn College: India
Apr 25 Soraya Montano (CCW)
Apr 26 Yvette Diaz (D)
Apr 27 Kenneth Koome Nkando (M)
Apr 28 Geraldine Snyder (D)
Apr 29 Alexander Devoid (MI)

Myra Martin

- Apr 30 William J. Dudleson (HMR)

Dawn Massa

Sunday, April 6, 2014 - 2:30 pm

Mobile District United Methodist Women

Spiritual Enrichment Day

Toulminville-Warren Street United Methodist Church

The Reverend Jennifer Gregory

will lead us to new heights and
depths of understanding our
2014 Theme:

Vessels for the Master's Use



Response Moments
Selections by Vera Moore



Responsively Yours

by Harriett Jane Olson

How do you explain in a brief way what United Methodist Women is and does to someone who has never heard of us?

I have opportunities to describe the work and mission of United Methodist Women to a wide variety of people. Sometimes, I'll be attending a meeting and want to say something about our work, so that the other participants will understand something about the source of my perspective. Not long ago, a group of young women from my church quizzed me about United Methodist Women, and they listened as I shared some stories.

Recently, at the airport I met someone who lives in my building, and we shared a cab into the city. During the ride we talked about where we had been, and since we had both been traveling for work, we naturally talked about what we do. When we pulled up to the curb, my neighbor wouldn't let me pay my half of the fare because, as she said, "You're busy changing the world, and I'm on an expense account." (Thank you, Neighbor, for that uncounted Gift to Mission!)

When opportunities like these open to you, what do you say?

I've discovered that telling our story allows people to connect with our work as United Methodist Women and provides them with an opportunity to contribute an encouraging word, an expression of hope or a donation. Telling the story of United Methodist Women members becoming whole persons through Jesus Christ and working to put that faith to work in the world can be an invitation to join the mission experience.

Although I know the old story about the person who doesn't "toot her own horn" being consigned to going without fanfare, I find it difficult to assert that I am doing great things or even that our organization is doing great things—even though it's true. This may be gender-related socialization, or it may come out of a sense of uneasiness about church organizations saying how great they are (as opposed to secular nonprofits, which

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The Mail Circle received a thank you:

Your kind and thoughtful expression of sympathy is deeply appreciated and gratefully acknowledged with thanks for the gift to mission in my husband Mel's honor.

He was always very supportive of my UMW work and was proud of the work that UMW does around the world. He would have been very appreciative of this gift.

With thanks, Myra Martin

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Perhaps this should be reconsidered. At the present time a person remains a member as long as she contributes to the organization by financial giving or by personal participation (such as the Bake Sale). Of course, if a person requests to be removed, it is honored with regrets.

I have lived the majority of my life as a United Methodist Women and hopefully will go to Glory as a United Methodist Women.

Until lifetime memberships become a reality, lets not drop our faithful members. The least we can do is give for them as they have given much for others when they were able.

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seem to have no such problem). In any event, it is something I have been working to overcome. One method I use is to talk about our great predecessors. Strategic, bold, valiant in faith, open-hearted and effective. So when I tell stories about our history, I can tell about how remarkable it is because I don't point to myself.

Another approach that I use is to talk about you, the members. I talk about how faithful you are in your giving and your prayers. I talk about how focused you are on putting our commitments in to action. Study and consciousness-raising is all very well for United Methodist Women members, but before very long, we want to do something about the issues.

I have also learned to let my enthusiasm and commitment show, and to use examples rather than making a report. I shared some of our story recently with a new United Methodist who has her first leadership level job and she said, "It makes me so proud! I'm headed right out to join the unit in my church so I can be part of it."

Wow. Have you let your passion show recently? Don't be afraid to let your light shine. Someone needs to see it.

Harriett Jane Olson, a Harvard graduate and an attorney, has served as deputy general secretary of Women's Division of the General Board of Global Ministries of the United Methodist Church since September 4, 2007. As such, she is chief executive officer of the Women's Division, the national administrative and policy making arm of United Methodist Women. She has a long history of service in the United Methodist Church. She said United Methodist Women's work is rooted in the past and poised for the future, as needs of women, children, and youth around the world continue to demand the organization's attention.

Change the World by Circle

by Priscilla Pope-Levinson and Jack Levison

Methodism founder John Wesley knew the key to social change would be small-group gatherings, and so does United Methodist Women.

Just seven years after the Declaration of Independence and a mere three before the signing of the U.S. Constitution, something revolutionary took place in American Christianity. This revolution was quiet, subtle, ordinary even. It happened in 1784, when Francis Asbury and Thomas Coke brought the Methodist class meeting from John Wesley's England to American soil. The idea took off. By 1815, only three decades later, more than 7,000 Methodist class meetings were up and running.

Methodism was never intended to exist without class meetings; certainly it was never expected to thrive without them. Author John Wigger called these small-group gatherings the "sinews of Methodism." John Wesley created—invented, we might say—the weekly class meeting to be the indispensable building block of the Methodist movement. The heart of the class meeting is the title of United Methodist Women's 2014 spiritual growth study: *How Is It With Your Soul?*

The true state of our souls is not easy to uncover. Mr. Wesley grasped this, the hard time we have exploring our souls. So he developed three "searching questions" to prompt us:

- Have you carefully abstained from doing evil?
- Have you zealously maintained good works?
- Have you constantly attended on all the ordinances of God?

Bringing soul-work and self-discovery out into the open required weekly discipline in the company of other committed saints, so class meeting members rolled up their sleeves together to answer these questions methodically, like good Methodists, with uncanny honesty, and to encourage, challenge, pray over and accompany one another. In these small communities, Mr. Wesley believed, grace flowed freely.

Faced with these three questions, early Methodists experienced firsthand the power of spiritual authenticity and accountability. Thomas Morris, a Methodist circuit rider, wrote in 1816 about his involvement with class meetings: "Here where only pious friends are presumed to be present, where all would help and none would hinder us in the pursuit of spiritual life, we can freely talk over our hopes and fears, trials and deliverances, resolutions and prospects in the way to heaven."

Look again at John Wesley's probing questions, and you'll see that the word soul doesn't describe a private sphere of personal spirituality. Mr. Wesley hoped for a whole world made holy, from the dark depths of one's soul to the structures that perpetuate injustice in our world.

Transforming our souls and our world doesn't come easy. So Mr. Wesley enlisted the practices of Bible reading and prayer in the context of the class meeting to bring about transformation—sanctification of the soul and social structures alike.

First, Mr. Wesley made sure Bible study was done in community so that the Bible wouldn't be used to support personal opinions. The Bible, he said, should be used to cultivate "a spirit of openness to dialogue." How so? By

reading the Bible in community with people who interpret it differently. Mr. Wesley even invited disagreement over his own teaching. He encouraged, according to theologian Randy Maddox, any who “believed that he presented mistaken readings of the Bible in his sermons to be in touch, so that they could confer together over Scripture.” Imagine that! Imagine what this approach to Bible study might do for congregations—whole denominations, too—that today can barely speak civilly with one another because of division over a host of issues, including homosexuality, abortion, immigration and gun control.

Once you’ve imagined this, implement it. Create occasions when United Methodist Women circles that are most unlike one another meet for Bible study. Better yet, create United Methodist Women circles that are intentionally diverse in terms of age, ethnicity and interests. This strategy cultivates what Mr. Wesley championed: “a spirit of openness to dialogue” at the core of United Methodist Women. Second, Mr. Wesley urged Methodists to pray together—not a few moments of prayer at the beginning or end of a meeting or worship service but prayer with a trusted friend, a small group, a Sunday school class, a United Methodist Women unit. Such prayer digs deep into the questions of the class meeting, questions about doing evil, being enthusiastic for good works and attending constantly to God’s ordinances.

This kind of intimate and intense prayer may seem daunting. That’s why we have devoted the first chapter of the 2014 United Methodist Women spiritual growth study *How Is It With Your Soul?* to prayer. There we offer practical skills for developing and sustaining a robust prayer life for individuals and small groups.

Prayer isn’t just a private matter. Bible study isn’t just an individual effort. Soul-work isn’t just personal piety. Consider the impact of praying in community that launched the mid-19th century “Woman’s Crusade.” In the winter of 1873 in the small town of Hillsboro, Ohio, a group of women, mostly housewives, met to pray for a solution to the devastating impact liquor sales had on their town, especially on women and children, who bore the brunt of domestic abuse fueled by drunken rages.

Protest soon followed from prayer as these women began to march and sing hymns on their way to demonstrations in front of the saloons of Hillsboro. The women forced saloon owners to sign a pledge not to sell liquor. They held meetings and staged marches. They even occasionally smashed beer barrels or poured the contents of liquor bottles into the street. In town after town, prayer joined hands with religious protest as the “Woman’s Crusade” spread quickly across the country.

Prayer turned to protest, and protest turned political when a national temperance organization of women claimed their turf against the male-dominated liquor industry: “In the name of our Master [Jesus

Christ]—in behalf of the thousands of women who suffer from this terrible evil—we call upon all to unite in an earnest, continued effort to hold the ground already won, and move onward together to a complete victory over the foes we fight.” This statement was included in the circular released at the first national gathering of the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union. Within 25 years, the Woman’s Christian Temperance Union grew into the largest women’s organization in the United States at the time, with nearly 200,000 members.

With prayer, protest and political clout came power. Under the presidency of Methodist lay leader Frances Willard, the union’s agenda broadened to include other pivotal reforms, such as women’s suffrage, women’s health, women’s dress reform, equal pay for women’s equal work, the eradication of prostitution, an eight-hour work day and women’s equality in the church.

It may be difficult to imagine that your United Methodist Women circle can create such dramatic change. Could that first group of praying women in Hillsboro, Ohio, imagine such an impact? Could Frances Asbury and Thomas Coke imagine that a Methodist laywoman, backed by thousands of praying women, would change the face of America only a century after they arrived on American soil? Perhaps they could. They understood the “sinews of Methodism” where class meeting participants would ask themselves and those they trusted, “How is it with your soul?” Those sinews, those practices, those skills are our heritage in the United Methodist Women. So if you haven’t imagined changing your world, you can begin with the 2014 spiritual growth study *How Is It With Your Soul?*

Jack Levison is a biblical studies professor at Seattle Pacific University and author of Fresh Air: The Holy Spirit for an Inspired Life and Inspired: The Holy Spirit and the Mind of Faith.

Priscilla Pope-Levison, a United Methodist clergywoman and scholar of American Christianity, is a professor at Seattle Pacific University and author of Turn the Pulpit Loose: Two Centuries of American Women Evangelists and Building the Old Time Religion: Women Evangelists in the Progressive Era. They co-authored the 2014 United Methodist Women spiritual growth study How Is It With Your Soul?

This publication is the monthly virtual meeting of the Mary & Martha Mail Circle, United Methodist Women at Christ United Methodist Church, Mobile, Alabama. Our Circle is just like each of the other Circles of Christ UMW with the exception that we do not have monthly meetings other than by this “virtual” program, devotion, prayer calendar/concerns, and Response moments. We make annual pledges to mission and participate in the projects of CUMW in all ways possible. We attend General Meetings as we are able. We constantly keep each other and each woman of UMW in our prayers.

Questions? Contact: Circle Coordinator
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