



MARY AND MARTHA MAIL CIRCLE UMW

Christ United Methodist Church - Mobile, Alabama

JUNE 2014

Sometimes we just have to deal with it.

by Denise Johnson Stovall*

It's the third Saturday morning, and that's the time I get up early, dress in casual attire, grab my Prayer Calendar and head out to church for our United Methodist Women meeting-riding in my electronic wheelchair to a waiting taxicab or "handi ride," the Dallas, Texas, commuter service for persons with disabilities, persons like me. I have difficulty walking without assistance due to a disease called multiple sclerosis.

Multiple sclerosis, MS, is believed to be a disease affecting the central nervous system the brain, spinal cord, and optic nerves. The nerves in the central nervous system are surrounded by a protective fatty material called myelin, which helps nerve fibers conduct electrical impulses. In multiple sclerosis, it is thought that when the immune system attacks the central nervous system, the myelin is damaged, and dense scar-like tissue called sclerosis form. These scars, also known as lesions, occur in multiple places throughout the central nervous system. The scar tissue affects the way electrical impulses travel along the nerve fiber, distorting and interrupting signals coming to and from the brain and spinal cord. This produces the various symptoms of multiple sclerosis such as difficulty standing, walking and use of the limbs in general. Sometimes multiple sclerosis patients become so physically unstable that they appear to look drunk or mentally ill. Television and movie stars known to have died due to complications from multiple sclerosis include Annette Funicello, Richard Pryor and Tamara Dobson.

I have suffered from multiple sclerosis for the past 20 years. I try not to let it keep me from being an active United Methodist Woman member or working as a writer, particularly in venues serving people of faith. That's why I identify with the Apostle Paul. While suffering from some infirmity-and imprisonment and other deprivations-Paul wrote much of what is now called the New

God answered Paul's prayer about the "thorn" in his flesh—just not the way Paul wanted.

Testament, documents that continue to encourage the people of God.

Thorns in the flesh

In the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul talks about "the thorn" in his flesh (12:7b) that greatly bothers him. "A thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to torment me, to keep me from being too elated," he said. There are many opinions about Paul's "thorn," whether it was something causing physical or mental anguish. Whatever it was, being human, Paul wanted to get rid of it and prayed for God to remove it. He said, "Three times I appealed to the Lord about this, that it would leave me" (12:8a). And the Lord responded to Paul, if not in the way he had requested: "But he said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness'" (12:8b).

Paul pleaded with the Lord three times to remove it, just as the Lord himself prayed in anguish three times in the garden at Gethsemane (Matthew 26:36-46). Yet God knows what is best for us, so God's answer may not be what we wish. Paul learned to pray in times of infirmity-even though the Lord may not remove the infirmity.

In other words, sometimes we just have to deal with it. Paul dealt with it this way: "Therefore, most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

When I began my initial treatments for multiple sclerosis in the hospital, I prayed to the Lord to "remove my infirmity." I remember going to a

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

- JUN 1 Hyeyun Hong Seo (M)
 JUN 2 Katie Peterson (CCW/D)
 JUN 3 John Gore (MI)
 JUN 4 Amanda R. Howe (CCW)
 JUN 5 Prumeh Lee (M)
 JUN 6 Umba Ilunga Kalangwa (M)
 JUN 7 Rebecca Dean (MI)
 JUN 8 Neighborhood Center, Camden, NJ
 JUN 9 South Korea: Taejon Christian Center
 JUN 10 UMW health initiative, Zimbabwe
 JUN 11 Navjeevanam-Wanni - Sri Lanka
 JUN 12 Anna Gill (MI)
 JUN 13 Europe Eurasia Methodist E-Academy
 JUN 14 Brenda Thompson (S)
 JUN 15 Dong Min Seo (M)
 JUN 16 Connie Lynn Di Leo (M)
 JUN 17 Taleah Edmonds (CCW)
 JUN 18 Lebanon: World Student Federation
 JUN 19 Czech Republic: English UMC
 JUN 20 Carol Van Grop (S)
 JUN 21 Helen Sheperd (M)
 JUN 22 Cindy Moon (M)
 JUN 23 Bulgaria in Mission Together
 Alicia Golemon
 JUN 24 Ebony Cody (S)
 JUN 25 Austria: English-speaking UMC
 JUN 26 Hong Kong: Bethune House
 JUN 27 Walter Erbele (M)
 JUN 28 Gail Quigg (M)
 JUN 29 Bethlehem Center, Winston-Salem, NC
 JUN 30 Hong Kong: Mission for Migrant Workers

Service Projects 2014

Your involvement with service projects will be published here as you report them to us

- Gift to Mission in memory of Elizabeth Olson.
- Gift to Open Door Ministries - display cases
- Gift to Crossroads - meals at McKemie Place
- Gift to member - flood victim
- Gift to member's friend - hardship, illness.

and shared with CUMW treasurer, combined with others from CUMC and throughout the organization.

Response Moments * *selected by Vera Moore*

Responsively Yours: To Do God's Mission, Organize.
by Harriett Jane Olson*

Organizations are created and maintained to do things that individuals working alone cannot accomplish. They fill needs for members and others who benefit from their actions. Our history is one of women coming together for a common purpose—their faith commitments lead them to raise funds, challenge laws, improve social conditions and bond together to express God's love in the hurting places of the world of their generations.

Our current context is quite different from the ones in which our foremothers organized. Investments are not the preserve of a privileged few anymore, international travel is common and comparatively easy, and information—so much information!—about the conditions faced by women and children around the world and in our own neighborhoods is readily available through physical and digital libraries.

What do we need organizations to do? One thing organizations do for us is to validate and assess information. Just because we can see the video that has “gone viral” about an event half a world away doesn't mean that we know how the promotion of the video is being used by someone to achieve other purposes—which could be good, like promoting a positive social movement, or and less pure, like facilitating personal gain or fame. An organization with relationships in a region can help to interpret the mass of data that we have available to us so that we can make accurately informed decisions.

An organization can help with continuity. All of us get interrupted and drawn away from our intentions at times. In an organization, however, if one member becomes ill, or has a crisis at work or in the family, others of us “stand in the gap” and help the work continue. We also share responsibility for the organization's projects in ways that mean so much more can be accomplished than if we were working alone.

Perhaps most importantly in this era of fragmentation and specialized groups, an organization can become our community—a group of people who know, love and respect us, who share our deep commitments to Jesus and to living Christianly on the earth, and in doing so, making the world a more kind and just place. An organization can amplify and reinforce our “best selves.”

United Methodist Women is an organization with wide connections that helps us assess and interpret information, our processes provide for continuity and build communities of faith that nurture and support us. Our opportunity now is to organize and grow in ways that enable us to accomplish more together than we could separately and that help us to hear God and love each other. We're building something together!

*Harriett Jane Olson, General Secretary,
United Methodist Women

worship service after being diagnosed with optic neuritis, a symptom of multiple sclerosis. After taking a round of steroids and receiving bed rest, I regained my vision. Hearing our congregations sing "Amazing Grace" took on a different meaning for me because, I once was blind, literally, but now I see.

I returned to my writing job, never revealing my real illness for fear of not being allowed to travel again. In the church my husband served as pastor, I told very few persons that I had multiple sclerosis. I didn't want people to feel sorry for me or treat me as though I were incapable of doing anything. In fact, I served as United Methodist Women president at nearly every church where my husband was appointed a pastor in Dallas. I also have been an officer several times in the various districts where we've lived and in the North Texas Annual Conference. And I attended the past five United Methodist Women Assemblies. I am a Dallas County deputy voter registrar focusing on high school seniors turning 18 years old. Prior to the last presidential election, I registered 26 students while canvassing in my electronic wheelchair.

More importantly, I was able to raise our daughter Deanna Renee to be "mission minded." Today she is one of the youngest members of the United Methodist Women Program Advisory Group.

Living with a disability

Nevertheless, over the past five years, my multiple sclerosis has worsened. When I first acquired the illness, my walking became slower. Then my steps were "few and far between," so I began to use a cane and a walker. Soon I became confined to a wheelchair. However, I still enjoy "getting around" through my writing. I jokingly say, "My fingers do my walking" on the computer. For example, I was a coauthor of the study book Poverty, the text for United Methodist Women's 2012-2013 mission study.

Multiple sclerosis has not kept me from doing some of the things I love to do, but the disease has become a barrier to having a normal life. I cannot stand up to sing hymns or walk to the altar to receive Holy Communion. Sometimes I get depressed because I cannot attend certain church activities. For example, once I was not allowed to attend my regional School of Christian Mission for conference study leaders because coordinators were afraid I might fall in the shower.

Differently-abled

My husband, the Rev. Leonard Charles Stovall, says I, like him, am not disabled, but differently abled. An ordained United Methodist minister, he is no long under pastoral appointment because he is legally blind and undergoes dialysis three times a week. However, his illness doesn't stop him from being a pastor. During one month Pastor Stovall attended three birthday celebrations for United Methodist Women members, a "home-going" service of a 90-year-old Latina lawyer and the visitation of a mother at a funeral home, spent an afternoon in prayer with a United Methodist minister in the hospital with kidney cancer, and preached and administered communion during Sunday worship service.

I'm glad that United Methodist Women will discuss ways churches can be inclusive and accessible for people with disabilities at **Mission u.**⁽¹⁾ It will be a source of encouragement for people like me-and everyone needs that sometimes.

Mae Alexander, immediate past president of the Dallas Metro District and past vice president of North Texas Conference United Methodist Women, may not have known how much she inspired me to keep on pushing when she said these words:

"Denise Johnson Stovall is a great example of a gift from God in the manner of how she gets around to do the work she does for the Lord. She has always been a hard worker in the church, United Methodist Women and within her community. Now that she is wheelchair bound, this doesn't stop her. She attends local meetings, district and conference events. She has a caring, loving heart for the Lord. "What an inspiration!"

*Denise Johnson Stovall is a member of St. Luke "Community" United Methodist Women in Dallas, Texas.

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, Vera Moore - 888-248-1680 or email - vmoore4474@gmail.com



It's time for a Make Over

The Accessible Icon Project provides supplies and services to transform the old International Symbol of Access into an active, engaged image.

People with disabilities have a long history of being spoken for, of being rendered passive in decisions about their lives. The old icon, while a milestone in ADA history, displays that passivity: its arms and legs are drawn like mechanical parts, its posture is unnaturally erect, and its entire look is one that make the chair, not the person, important and visible. As people with disabilities of all kinds—not just chair users—create greater rights and opportunities for social, political, and cultural participation, we think cities should evolve their images of accessibility too. We agree visual representation matters.

The Icon Graphic Elements:

- ☛ Head is forward to indicate the forward motion of the person through space. Here the person is the "driver" or decision maker about her mobility.
- ☛ Arm is pointing backward to suggest the dynamic mobility of a chair user, regardless of whether or not she uses her arms. Depicting the body in motion represents the symbolically active status of navigating the world.
- ☛ By including white angled knockouts the symbol presents the wheel as being in motion. These knockouts also work for creating stencils used in spray paint application of the icon. Having just one version of the logo keeps things more consistent and allows viewers to more clearly understand intended message.
- ☛ The human depiction in this icon is consistent with other body representations found in the ISO 7001 - DOT Pictograms. Using a different portrayal of the human body would clash with these established and widely used icons and could lead to confusion.
- ☛ The leg has been moved forward to allow for more space between it and the wheel which allows for better readability and cleaner application of icon as a stencil.

Is this ADA Compliant?

The short answer is yes. Federal and state officials have determined that slight variations on the historical International Symbol of Accessibility are generally permissible as long as the symbol clearly displays a wheelchair and signifies accessibility.

Forward thinking companies such as The TJX Companies, have utilized another progressive symbol by the graphic designer Brendan Murphy. We are grateful that companies like Talbots have embraced the Accessible Icon as well.



Former Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton addressed Assembly 2014 in Louisville, Ky., on April 26, 2014.

A video and transcript of her speech may be found online at

unitedmethodistwomen.org/news/wake-up-the-world!

Different states have different regulations concerning the size, color, and placement of the symbol. For instance, in Massachusetts, accessible parking spots must be identified by a vertical parking sign, but symbols on the ground are not required. We recommend reviewing state and local regulations before painting the Accessible Icon on parking spots or placing the sticker on signs.

Although some states require that the background be painted in "Handicapped" Blue – which we will call Accessible Blue from this point forward! – and the figure be painted in white striping paint. Other states such as Massachusetts do not mandate a color scheme. For this reason, some of the logos we've painted have figures that are rendered in striping paint red on a safety yellow background – which we think might be superior for people with limited vision – while others have been rendered the figure in striping paint white over the Accessible Blue background. Again, we recommend that you review state and local regulations before painting the Accessible Icon.

Take Action!

The Accessible Icon Project encourages inclusive groups of youth and adults of all abilities to re-imagine accessibility in their workplaces, schools, and nonprofits.

A free PDF of the Accessible Icon online. Feel free to use this PDF to print off stickers, create parking lot symbols, or maybe even order a batch of temporary tattoos! Use your creativity to create community and promote accessibility. PDF may be downloaded from <http://www.accessibleicon.org/shop.html>

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Note (1) from page 3 - **Mission u** refers to what we formerly called "Cooperative School of Christian Mission." This is where leaders receive training in order to present mission studies in the local churches.