

"Virginia Conference United Methodist Women: Still Living Into Our Purpose"

A Message to our UMW Sisters

Greetings to each of you! Our United Methodist Women's plans, meetings, events, etc. have changed with the COVID-19 pandemic. What has not changed is our work in mission for women, children, and youth all over the world. Some of our advocacy focuses have been touched deeply by the coronavirus such as domestic violence, health for women and children, and economic inequality to name a few. Sisters, even though we are not able to be together at this time physically, there are ways to still connect and do the best we can to continue our work safely. Your Virginia Conference Mission Team met via zoom a few weeks ago and it was a team decision to continue with *Living into Our Purpose (LIOP)* and to give recognitions rather than awards at our Annual Meeting. *Living into Our Purpose* is our "blueprint" for our work. It helps keep us on the path of our foremothers, our purpose and our mission as United Methodist Women. PLEASE CONTINUE READING THIS COMMUNICATION FOR INFORMATION FROM MEMBERS OF THE MISSION TEAM REGARDING "LIVING INTO OUR PURPOSE."

Mary Jane Rawley, President

It is an unsettling reality that COVID-19 has seriously impacted our organizational life and interfered with aspects of our program, including "*Living Into Our Purpose*," report period September 1, 2019 to August 31, 2020. All has not been lost as many units were able to work on *LIOP* goals for the six months (September to February) prior to the closing of our churches.

It is a time of learning new technology, relying on old fashioned communication and "thinking outside the box." We all need encouragement to move ahead. So, we thought it might be helpful to focus attention on what can be done during the remaining summer months and even beyond. We will do this by referencing the *LIOP* template and including ideas that we the Mission Team would like to share with you. (*LIOP* form attached) So here goes:

1. Purpose (Mission Giving)

Suggestions: Specifically provided by Linda Borrer, Conference Treasurer

1a. "Make and Meet a Pledge to Mission Giving."

Even though this year is a very difficult time, try to be vigilant in encouraging your units/individuals to send in their pledge money so that our UMW Mission Projects can remain open for women, children and youth. This can be done by a telephone call or note to your members which would serve two purposes: (1) staying connected to your members and checking on them; (2) asking if they need anything and then a gentle reminder that pledge money, if at all possible, is still being collected.

1c. "Increase the local organization's Pledge to Mission this year."

There is no set limit on the amount as it could be anything from \$1 on up.

1d. “Qualify as a Five-or-Six Star Organization by contributing to five or Six Channels of Mission Giving.” This is for the period Sep 1, 2019 – Aug 31, 2020

This is simple to do as any amount paid on your pledge during the year would qualify a unit, as well as \$5 for a Gift in Memory or Gift to Mission Card. One Special Mission Recognition at \$40 and any amount for the World Thank Offering and Candle Burning makes your unit a six-star organization.

1e. “Have one (1) member become a Rainbow Giver.” This must be turned in to your District Treasurer by early August. Only one (1) member at \$60 is a part of the Living Into Our Purpose and qualifies your unit as a five-star organization.

1f. “Participate in the United Methodist Women Legacy Fund”.

Any amount from an individual(s) earns you a point and more importantly insures the future of United Methodist Women.

All of the above can be accomplished by sending your check through your unit treasurer as the first step. She then sends it to the District Treasurer who compiles and forwards it onto the Conference Treasurer. This can be done from your favorite chair at home or from your front porch.

JUST DO THE VERY BEST YOU CAN

2. KNOW God (FAITH)

2a. “Encourage the practice of Spiritual Disciplines (i.e. scripture, prayer, fasting).”

Suggestion: Begin a covenant group among the members; Members agree to privately read devotionals, scripture, the Upper Room etc. and meditate on the source for the week(s). Members connect regularly by conference calls, round robin emailing or Zoom. Note: Devotionals written by UMW Conference officers are posted on-line every Monday. Email Mary Jane Rawley to be placed on the email list.

3. EXPERIENCE FREEDOM AS WHOLE PERSONS (HOPE)

3b. “Present a Program or initiate a project based on District or Conference Social Action Priority.” (Reminder: The Conference Priorities for 2016-2020 are Economic Inequality, Climate Justice, Criminalization of Communities of Color; Maternal and Child Health)

Suggestions:

1. Have a Social Action Study using Zoom: For example, one unit has been doing a Climate Justice Study weekly on Zoom. Could your unit have a study addressing one of the Social Action Priorities and do it on Zoom?

2. Have a Program on one of the priorities during a Zoom meeting, using material from response, guest speakers; relevant book reports(s) from Reading Program; Also, view Faith Talks Podcasts individually at home and discuss at a zoom meeting. The Faith Talks Podcasts are monthly conversations with UMW members exploring themes, many with spiritual growth content, but also with topics relating to our priorities such as Paid Family Leave, Creation Care, Education Inequality. Back episodes are available. Find information on unitedmethodistwomen.org.

3f "Have at least one (1) member sign up to receive Virginia Interfaith Center for Public Policy alerts (<http://www.virginiafaithcenter.org>) and use ideas to advocate for justice."

Suggestion: One volunteer can receive the alerts from the Virginia interfaith Center for Public Policy and share with members by way of letter or email, and the members can study the information and determine whether to advocate for justice while at home, through providing signatures, letter writing etc. Also, Social Action Coordinator, Karen McElfish, frequently sends out emails with information and requests for advocacy.

4. DEVELOP A CREATIVE/SUPPORTIVE FELLOWSHIP

4e. "Write to at least five mission workers listed in Prayer Calendar."

4g. "Submit names of deceased members to District MN & O Coordinator by Aug. 31."

Suggestions: The two items above can be easily accomplished while at home.

5. EXPAND CONCEPTS OF MISSION

5c. "Select a Mission Institution or Project which is supported by funds from the United Methodist Women National Office or the Ministry Grants of Virginia."

Suggestion: Conduct a poll on-line if consensus is required for allocation of funds.

Wesley Community Service Center, the only National Institution in Va., continues to need our support, especially at this time of COVID-19. Wesley is currently holding a fundraiser raffle, May 10-June 20 to raise funds for much needed repairs. For information: goggle Wesley Community Services Center or link: thewesleycenter.ouraffle.org.

5d. Have or participate in at least one current mission study during the year.

Suggestion: This year we won't have Mission Encounter, but National Office has informed us that there will be an adaptation of one of the studies, "Finding Peace in an Anxious World." The study guide has been adapted to be used easily either individually or in virtual small groups. Study leader trainers have also worked to create a series of companion videos to enhance the study. Available very soon.

A final thought: Let us remember to stay connected with our UMW sisters who may not be moving as quickly in adapting to technological advancements. Keeping them invested as valued members is essential; We cannot afford to lose them. The old -fashioned methods, calling or writing a note, still work.

Looking to the Future: We anticipate that changes will be made to the *LIOP* template for 2020-21 to include more realistic and attainable goals. We look forward to Annual Meeting and a time of recognizing you for your accomplishments. We pray that all will stay connected, encouraged, safe and healthy.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COMMITMENT TO OUR PURPOSE. JUST DO THE VERY BEST YOU CAN!

Peace and blessings,
Your Sisters of the Virginia Conference UMW Mission Team,
Mary Jane Rawley, President