



Special Program

A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial 2022

Love, Justice and Service: Answering the Call

By Megan Hale, Christi Campos

OBJECTIVE

The objective of this service is to highlight the lay Order of Deaconess and Home Missioner, administered by United Methodist Women. Women are encouraged to give thoughtfully to support the education and training of deaconesses and home missionaries who work in ministries of love, justice and service, as well as retired deaconesses who continue to make a difference in the lives of women, children and youth.



PREPARATION

Prior to the program, ask readers and helpers to assist with the readings and activities. Consider inviting local deaconesses and home missionaries in your conference; you can find their information in the *Prayer Guide*. Arrange the room so that all participants can see one another. Familiarize yourself with the virtual options available for the program.

Suggestions for virtual sessions are starred and boxed and listed below the suggestions for in-person sessions.

Materials and Resources

- United Methodist Women Bible (NRSV)
- *The Faith We Sing* or *The United Methodist Hymnal*
- Technology for sharing the corresponding videos found online (optional)
- Items for worship center (see below)
- Basket to receive gifts
- Stories for activity (or optional videos found online)

Note: To access videos of stories, songs, PowerPoint presentation and other Call to Prayer resources online, visit: unitedmethodistwomen.org/call-to-prayer

Worship Center

Set up a worship center at the front of the space with the following items:

- Table to serve as altar
- Offering basket

*For a virtual gathering, assign worship leaders and readers in advance. Recorded versions of the hymns can be found in the online resources.

Determine if all participants will be muted or unmuted at specific times for participation/input.

Inform participants to download Zoom if they do not have the app. Also, provide instruction on how to download and instructions for use. See United Methodist Women's general guide to hosting virtual events on Zoom at: unitedmethodistwomen.org/Media/PDF/HowToHostVirtualEvent.pdf



WELCOME

This year the Call to Prayer and Self-Denial offering will support the Order of Deaconess and Home Missioner, which is administered by United Methodist Women. Deaconesses and home missionaries are laypeople consecrated to a lifetime of service under the authority of the church to full-time vocations of love, justice and service. Together they form a covenant community that is rooted in scripture, informed by history, driven by mission, ecumenical in scope and global in outreach. This offering will help support and provide education and training to active deaconesses, home missionaries and candidates. Funds will also be used to provide support to retirees.

Opening Song

Begin your time together with the following hymn: “The Summons,” *The Faith We Sing*, no. 2130, John Bell

*A recorded version can be found in our online resources.

SCRIPTURE READING

1 Corinthians 12:4–7

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.

Reader 1:

Deaconesses and home missionaries are lay people who are called by God to be in a lifetime relationship in The United Methodist Church for engagement with a full-time vocation in ministries of love, justice and service. Together they form a covenant community that is rooted in scripture, informed by history, driven by mission, ecumenical in scope and global in outreach.

Reader 2:

The first deaconesses were commissioned in the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1889 and in the United Brethren tradition in 1897. Deaconesses pre-dated social workers and worked similar to local missionaries bringing healing, services and advocacy to areas of extreme poverty in cities throughout our country. Until 1927, deaconesses were required to wear nun-like garb, lived together in deaconess homes and received \$8 a month for living expenses. Marriage was not allowed for deaconesses until 1959.



Reader 3:

In 1965, the *Methodist Woman* magazine quoted a Scarritt faculty member who called deaconesses “Loving Trouble-Makers.” What she meant, of course, is that they are willing to make trouble to change things for the better for those they serve. They love others enough to raise their voices and speak for those whom Jesus would have called “the least of these.”

Reader 1:

In the 20th century, the deaconess office, now supported by United Methodist Women, provided the first place in our Methodist tradition for large numbers of women to perform full-time ministries of service and justice. In 1950, there were 488 active and 261 retired deaconesses. Methodist deaconesses were serving in about 60 types of work in 67 conferences; 47% of these deaconesses were engaged in projects of the Woman’s Division, 21% in the local church, and 32% in other Methodist or Methodist-related agencies.

Reader 2:

Today, deaconesses and home missionaries are theologically and vocationally trained lay men and women who work in a wide variety of ministries of love, justice and service throughout the United States and beyond. Deaconesses and home missionaries of today work in vocations related to education, healthcare, advocacy, environmental justice, poverty, community organizing, immigration, administration and more! They are consecrated by a bishop to a lifetime of service and appointed to their ministries within the annual conference where they serve.

Reader 3:

Deaconesses and home missionaries are responsible for finding their own vocation and appointments that follow the mandates to alleviate suffering, eradicate causes of injustice and all that robs life of dignity and worth, facilitate the development of full human potential, and share in building global community through the church universal. Unlike in the early days, deaconesses and home missionaries of today can receive a salary, which is paid by their ministry appointment. There are about 400 currently serving in the Order of Deaconess and Home Missioner.

Reader 1:

Even in retirement, deaconesses and home missionaries continue to be involved in ministry. A joke within the deaconess/home missionary community is that they “don’t retire, they just retread.” There is a vibrant community of deaconesses living at Brooks-Howell Home in Asheville, N.C., whose motto is “serving still.” You will find them as leaders throughout the community and neighboring churches, nurturing candidates for the deaconess or home missionary relationship as they take their classes, and attending and leading conferences and workshops.



Reader 2:

Today's offering will help support and provide education and training to active deaconesses, home missionaries and candidates as they fulfill their vocational calls to ministries of love, justice and service. Funds will also be used to provide support to retirees.

DISCUSSION

Option 1: If you have invited a local deaconess or home missionary to join your service, invite them to briefly share about their call and ministry setting, either in person or virtually.

Option 2: Discussion—You can discuss as a larger group or divide into smaller groups to answer the following questions:

- Do you know deaconesses or home missionaries in your church, district or conference? (*Hint, you can find deaconesses and home missionaries in your Prayer Guide.*)
 - Where do they serve?
 - How might you connect with this person or persons?
- What questions would you have for a deaconess or home missionary if they were with you now?
- Do you have experience working in a vocation where deaconesses and home missionaries serve today? (Education, healthcare, social work, mental health, community outreach, advocacy, etc.? How is this work a ministry?)

*If virtual, consider breaking into small groups for this discussion using the breakout room feature in Zoom.

Song

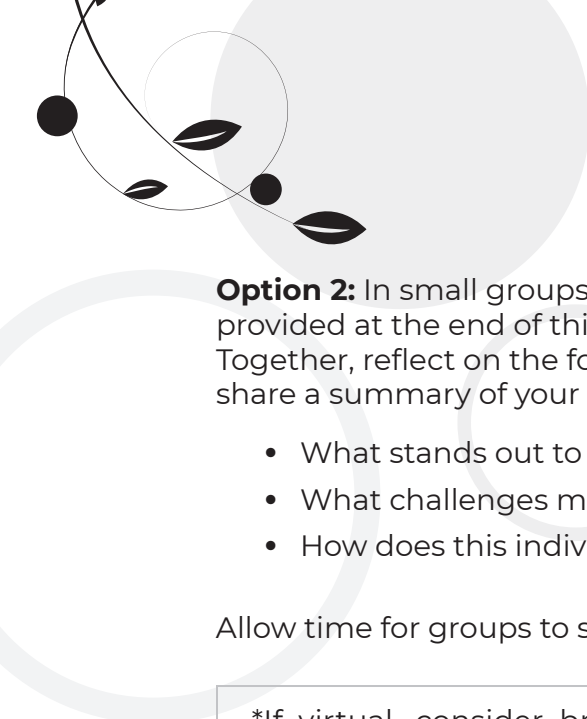
"Seek Ye First," *The United Methodist Hymnal*, no. 405, Karen Lafferty

*A recorded version can be found in our online resources.

ACTIVITY

Option 1: Watch story video in online resources that highlight ministries of deaconesses and home missionaries across the connection. Reflect on the questions below. You may discuss as a whole group or break into small groups for sharing.

*If virtual, consider breaking into small groups using the breakout room feature in Zoom.



Option 2: In small groups, read the deaconess/home missionary story snapshots provided at the end of this program. Each group should have a different story. Together, reflect on the following questions. One person from each group will share a summary of your discussion with the larger group.

- What stands out to you about this person's story?
- What challenges might this person face in their ministry setting?
- How does this individual's ministry relate to love, justice and service?

Allow time for groups to share their responses with everyone gathered.

*If virtual, consider breaking into small groups using the breakout room feature in Zoom. Before breaking into breakout rooms, instruct each group to select a spokesperson who will report back to the larger group.

Extend the activity—Write a note of support to a deaconess or home missionary. You can utilize the *Prayer Guide* to find contact information of deaconesses and home missionaries.

OFFERING

Just as deaconesses and home missionaries sacrificially follow their calling, we now are called upon to give sacrificially through our offering. We invite you to take a few moments to prayerfully consider your gift.

(After a few moments, invite women to bring their offering to the altar or ask volunteers to pass collection baskets to those gathered.)

***Go to: <https://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/?form=missiongiving>**
Click on "Designate to Where it is Needed Most" and select "Call to Prayer and Self-Denial" to make your donation. Or, mail in offerings to your treasurer.

Song

"What Does the Lord Require of You," *The Faith We Sing*, no. 2174, Jim Strathdee

*A recorded version can be found in our online resources.



Closing Litany

Leader: Creator God, we have been blessed to learn more about our deaconesses and home missionaries and their sacred work.

ALL: We are grateful for their sacrifice and dedication.

Leader: We lift up their varied ministries and ask that You further bless their vital work throughout our country and the world.

ALL: Be with those they serve and with whom they bring comfort.

Leader: We ask that You multiply their efforts and strengthen their endeavors for Your glory.

All: Bless the work of our deaconesses and home missionaries.

Leader: We ask You to be with those who are discerning their call to love, justice and service.

All: Guide and nurture those who are discerning their ministries.

Leader: We ask you to be with those who are in the midst of study to achieve their goal of consecration and commissioning.

All: Use our gifts in support of their process.

Leader: Be with those retired deaconesses who dedicated their lives to service throughout the world.

All: Use our gifts as a means of acknowledgement for their years of dedication and selflessness.

Leader: We ask for continued blessings for all those of the deaconess and home missionary community who are seeking, studying, serving, leading or in retirement.

All: We faithfully give these our gifts of prayer and self-denial. Amen.

*The Litany can be shared via screen or e-mailed prior to the service.

Authors

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MEET DEACONESS **MONICA BARTLEY**

A resident of Brooklyn, N.Y., Monica serves as the Community Outreach Coordinator for the Center for Independence of the Disabled in New York City (CIDNY).

Monica grew up in Jamaica where she survived polio as a child. She knows through firsthand experience the importance of having accessible buildings, restrooms, churches and transportation, and has answered the call to educate, organize and advocate for necessary policy changes relating to accessibility.



“I look at ways in which people with disabilities face discrimination and make recommendations for policy or systemic changes so that people can begin to see themselves as whole persons with a role to play in society as any other person.”

In her work, Monica coordinates the CIDNY Action Network (CAN) to educate people with disabilities and helps them become leaders in community advocacy. She organizes member visits with legislators to advocate and educate legislators on how bills and the law will affect people with disabilities. Monica also trains people to survey polling sites, street access, restaurants and green markets. She works to educate the media about the lives of people with disabilities and access issues in New York City, and she promotes social justice for people with disabilities.

Monica also advocates for church accessibility. “There is a general lack of awareness of accessibility in our churches, which makes it difficult for people with disabilities to participate. Many churches are older buildings, constructed before the Americans with Disabilities Act was enacted. The entrance to the building may be accessible for people with physical disabilities but the restrooms and fellowship halls are inaccessible. There is a lack of accessible material, such as large print for the visually impaired and as people get older some are hard of hearing and there is no provision, so they drop out. It is difficult to invite people in when there is a lack of accommodation.”

Through her work as a deaconess, Monica works closely with people of all ages. While the work is around people with disabilities, she has noticed that her work benefits the entire population as well. For example, the implementation of sidewalks with curb cuts also benefits people traveling with strollers or shopping carts.

At the heart of her work, Monica shares: “I would like to be a conduit for God’s love to the least, the lost and the last to encourage and give hope to the hopeless and to do what I can to address injustice so that I can help others to experience God’s love as I have.”



MEET DEACONESS **CECIL BUCUD-ARCEO**

As the oldest of four and the child of farmers in the Philippines, Cecil took on many responsibilities at an early age. A lifelong United Methodist, she knew of deaconesses. As a child, she often admired the lifetime commitment of deaconesses assigned to her home church.

While attending the Youth Christmas Institute at the age of 16, Cecil discerned her call to be a deaconess. She was accepted into Harris Memorial College, and the United Methodist Women of her district helped support her financially by providing full scholarships to cover her tuition, board and lodging.

“While at Harris, I learned a lot about deaconesses and the ministry. I heard stories of deaconesses and I was inspired. I learned to relate to people of different cultures and backgrounds. My faith with God was nurtured and strengthened through devotions, spiritual retreats, chapel services and other activities provided by the school.”

Cecil was consecrated as a deaconess in 1997 and served for two decades in the Philippines. As a new deaconess Cecil was appointed to a church as a preschool teacher, organist, Christian educator, choir director and more. Her second appointment, where she served until 2017, was to Harris Memorial College, the deaconess training school. Here, Cecil taught all ages from preschool to college.

In 2019, Cecil transferred her deaconess relationship to the Office of Deaconess and Home Missioner in the United States. She currently serves as the Director of Children's Ministries at Santa Ana United Methodist Church in Santa Ana, California.

“At Santa Ana UMC, CA, I am teaching Sunday School, offering free piano lesson for children, leading children's choir and leading adult Bible studies/adult choirs.”

During COVID-19, Cecil helped to organize and direct Ninth Harmony, a virtual choir consisting of nine deaconesses who are Harris graduates that served in the Philippines before moving to the United States and transferring their deaconess relationships to the Office of Deaconess and Home Missioner administered by United Methodist Women.



MEET DEACONESS **TRACY TARVER WEISEL**

Welcomed to the Order of Deaconess and Home Missioner in 2020, Tracy Tarver Weisel serves as a special education teacher in Hartford, C.T., working with 4th- to 12th-grade students who have been expelled from the public school system. Students in Tracy's class are facing expulsion for a minimum of 30 days to 180 days, with 180 days being the consequence for most students.



"The major goal of my ministry is to provide my students with constant support and love in the hopes that my actions help to interrupt the school-to-prison pipeline."

One hundred percent of the students in Tracy's school receive free breakfast and lunch. Almost all the students Tracy works with have experienced trauma and need therapeutic support. Tracy works to connect her students and their families with community agencies that can provide the help they need.

Many students and families Tracy works with have had bad experiences with schools in the past. Tracy is committed to building positive relationships with her students and their families, showing them through her actions that she is a true advocate.

"These students come in at their lowest, isolated from their friends and school communities. I get to help them find their most positive self, evaluate their life choices, and work on creating and achieving new positive goals. It is quite an honor."

A challenge that continues to terrorize the community where Tracy works is gun violence. In 2019, when she was preparing for her consecration as a deaconess, Tracy lost one of her students in a fatal shooting.

"I hope my work helps to eradicate injustice by bringing awareness to issues like the school-to-prison pipeline, while working to stop the systemic racism that catches so many young people in its web. I work each day with my students to help them see their full potential so that they can live their best life."



MEET DEACONESS **AMANDA MOUNTAIN**

Church has always been an important part of Amanda's life. As a lifelong United Methodist whose parents met in youth group and coming from a family that has generations of pastors in the Evangelical United Brethren denomination, it is no surprise that Amanda felt called to ministry as well.

After years performing as a professional ballerina, Amanda began seminary at Candler School of Theology. She knew she was called to be in relationship with the church in an official way, but she felt called to work outside the local church walls.

As a part of her discernment, Amanda attended an event where she learned of the rich history of the deaconess movement.

"As I listened to the stories from that cloud of witnesses who had gone before me, I felt a strong connection to their ministries and the passion in the community to be the church in the world through a ministry of love, justice and service."

Knowing that the deaconess/home missionary relationship is a lifelong calling and having the freedom to find her own vocational path, was exactly what Amanda was looking for. Amanda was commissioned as a deaconess in 2010 at United Methodist Women Assembly in St. Louis.

"My calling is and always has been to work with young people in some way as they discern how to live their faith in their daily lives and, as they grow, what this may look like in their future vocations."

Over the past decade Amanda has served in a variety of appointments. She began her deaconess journey in her home conference of North Georgia, and she has been appointed as a deaconess in New York, New Mexico and now Michigan.

Today, Amanda serves as the director of Motown Mission, an urban work mission destination located in Detroit.

"I am responsible for creating and managing programming that provides youth and young adults with meaningful mission service experiences that hopefully inform how they live out their faith when returning to their home communities."

While her ministry contexts may change over the years, Amanda's call to love, justice and service is steadfast. She is committed to following God's call in her life, wherever it leads!



MEET DEACONESS **KADY HERR-YANG**

The youngest of seven children, Kady Herr-Yang came to the United States at the age of five during the Vietnam War. Just a few years later, at the age of nine, she lost her dad to cancer. Through these difficult years, Kady could always count on her mom who she describes as “an amazing woman with the strongest will to survive.” It is Kady’s mom who encouraged her to do well in school and gave her a firm foundation in the Christian faith.



In the Hmong culture, women are rarely in leadership positions in the church. It is through United Methodist Women that Kady realized her potential for leadership and became an advocate for equality in the church. Because of the support of United Methodist Women, Kady realized she could be the first Hmong deaconess.

“United Methodist Women has empowered me to serve God to my fullest potential. It has opened my eyes to see opportunities to serve God in ways I never knew could be possible.”

Kady was welcomed to the Order of Deaconess and Home Missioner in 2021. She lives out her vocational call as a Certified Hmong Medical Interpreter for the Advocate Aurora Healthcare where she provides quality medical interpretation and translation services to all Hmong patients and staff in all Aurora hospitals and clinics throughout Wisconsin.

“As I work with a large Hmong community in the Metro Milwaukee area, there are thousands of Hmong people, especially the elderly population, who suffer from depression, anxiety, loneliness and lack of self-worth. I help alleviate suffering due to miscommunications, misjudgment, lack of family trust. I help eradicate where injustice happens by making sure that family and providers understand how important the patient’s decision is and that they do have a voice and an opinion about their own health. I encourage patients to know how important and special they are, and I help to build their self-worth and dignity. At the same time, I connect them to resources to help continue their well-being and self-care.”



MEET DEACONESS **ANNETTE WINSTON**

Officially welcomed to the Order of Deaconess and Home Missioner in 2020, Annette Winston has dedicated her life to nursing since 1976, serving people from birth to 106 years old.

“I have been a caretaker, advocate, teacher, manager, spiritual advisor and so much more. I believe nursing is a ministry, but I always believed I was being called to a special area of ministry, and I knew it was not as clergy.”

Annette first began discerning the deaconess relationship in 2010 when she attended a discernment event. Though her journey towards becoming a deaconess was long, she knew God was calling her to dedicate her life as a deaconess.

Today, Annette continues to fulfill her vocational call as a nurse and is appointed to Alabama-West Florida conference where she serves the Elderly and Disability Waiver of the Alabama Department of Senior Services, which provides home health services to individuals who would otherwise need long-term care facilities.

In her work, Annette reviews applications for the Elderly and Disability Waiver, a program that spans the entire state of Alabama with over 9,000 slots available. Though it can be tough to keep up with the assigned workload at times, Annette is committed to serving her community in this way.

“I serve a population that ranges from newborns with developmental disabilities whose parents require help with their special needs to the elderly, many over 100 years old, who want to maintain their independence or whose family requires additional hands-on assistance to keep their loved one at home.”

As a nurse, Annette has been taught to recognize different types of pain and suffering, whether it is physical, mental or emotional. Not only does she administer medication and tend to the sick, but she is also a listening ear, advocate and adviser.