

**How a Garden Grows**  
**A Special Worship Service**  
**Celebrating 135 Years in Mission – United Methodist Women**

**Leader:**

Creator God,  
You have called forth United Methodist Women  
To celebrate our history of 135 years.

**People:**

**We are organized for mission**

**Leader:**

From a small beginning

**People:**

**To a strong foundation of mission.**

**Hymn:** Many Gifts, One Spirit. (# 114 in the *United Methodist Hymnal*)

*(The four characters may bring props, create costumes or simply have an 8 ½ x 11 inch sheet of paper with their title pinned to them.)*

**Gardener**

In the cool, dark earth a seed grows.

**United Methodist Woman**

Tremont Street Church, Boston, Mass. After church one Sunday in March of 1869, Mrs. Parker, Mrs. Flanders and Mrs. Butler organize the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

**Historian**

1869 is a time of new beginnings. The country unites after Lincoln's assassination and the Civil War's end.

**Sunday School Teacher**

Remember the First Chapter of Luke, students?

<sup>30</sup>But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup>You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. <sup>32</sup>He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High."

**Gardener**

The seed needs water, sunlight and fresh air. The seed begins to send out a young, green shoot.

### **United Methodist Woman**

The Missionary Society women regularly give a small amount to support mission. They pray, study and help. The first women missionaries to be commissioned and sent forth are Isabella Thoburn, a teacher, and Clara Swain, a doctor. They minister to the women of India.

### **Historian**

In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, women advocate for the rights of women.

### **Sunday School Teacher**

Do you remember Ecclesiastes 3?

<sup>1</sup>There is a time for everything,  
and a season for every activity under heaven:  
a time to be born and a time to die,  
a time to plant and a time to uproot.

### **Gardener**

The seed matures and grows tall. At times, the wind knocks the plant down. The living organism continues to thrive, showing resilience and strength, growing tall again.

### **United Methodist Woman**

In the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, church women are ahead of their times. In 1952, they adopt a charter of racial justice. Despite opposition, church women risk their lives to advocate for peace, justice and equality.

### **Historian**

During the 1960s, young people demonstrate against inequalities and the Vietnam War. Many organizations are restructured. Civil rights guarantee freedom and equality.

### **Sunday School Teacher**

Let's think about a time when you have grown. A time when you faced conflict and God stood with you -when a civil war raged in you or prejudice limited you. Let's think about that time.  
*(A moment of silence.)*

### **Gardener**

With the proper care, fruit-bearing trees give apples, plums or pears. Flowers bring beauty and joy. All plants make shade when the sun shines. All plants endure hardships. Some plants are incredibly resilient.

### **United Methodist Woman**

United Methodist Women provide the water, the sunshine and the solid ground to support the lives of women, children and youth...around the world, in our neighborhoods and in our church. *(This can be a time to commemorate some significant events in your own local unit, such as your unit's formation date.)*

### **Historian**

A small group of committed individuals with limited means can better society and the world in ways a social historian like me could never dream of. From their humble beginnings, the mission-minded women have made great strides. Today, they are United Methodist Women. I cannot begin to imagine the good they will do in years to come.

### **Sunday School Teacher**

In John 19, we learn, “<sup>1</sup>At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid.

*(The four characters return to their seats.)*

### **Leader:**

There are some women among us who have been to the garden. They have tended our garden with all of our diversity -- fruits, vegetables, flowers and even some prickly weeds. These women are more than sunshine, water and solid ground for us. They are rainbows, doves and wisdom. We would like to honor \_\_\_\_\_ for her \_\_\_\_\_

*(This is a time for lifting up by name a woman or women who have contributed to your local unit in an outstanding way. It is a time for giving special mission recognition pins or Gift to Mission cards.)*

### **Offering**

We encourage women to give one cent for each year of our organization’s existence...\$1.35.

Let this offering be a seed...a small gift that will grow and provide nurture and abundance for those with greater needs.\*

As the Song of Solomon, Chapter 8:13, says:

“You who dwell in the gardens with friends in attendance, let me hear your voice!”

As we bring forward our offering, let’s sing.

### **Closing Hymn**

“Sois la Semilla” or “You Are the Seed” (#583 in the United Methodist Hymnal).

### **All:**

**Loving God, thank you for**

**United Methodist Women and our foremothers.**

**Help us to continue to grow, To continue to celebrate our past, And to look to our future with joy.**

**Leader:**

Almighty God, never leave our side.

As we seek justice, love kindness and walk humbly with you, our God.

**All:**

**Amen.**

**Written by:** Mary Beth Coudal, *Executive Secretary for Mission Opportunities*

*\* (Please send in. the remittance using the Special Remittance Form.)*

***Info for Articles:***

Celebrate our past! Celebrate who we are today! Celebrate who we can become! Release your creative energies and make this *135 Years in Mission* a celebration to remember. Here are some ideas:

Research your local unit's history.

Send a story about United Methodist Women to your local newspaper.

Create a church bulletin board to let people know about the *135 years in mission*, the celebration and the good work of United Methodist Women.

Make a scrapbook with special memories from your unit.

Celebrate a "Woman of the Month" honoring the contributions of all women –including young women and community women.

Have a huge birthday party - group people by their birthday month.

Send invitations to women in your church for the special celebration.

Share your party with another unit or women's group that meets in your church.