

First of all, I would like to give credit to Faye Cox for the idea of using Bells for our Memorial Service. What a wonderful way to honor the memory of our sisters that passed during 2009.

"I heard the bells on Christmas Day, their old familiar carols play." The bells in our lives are perhaps too familiar. We go about our days doing our familiar duties and don't really notice the beautiful bells playing.

1. I've always enjoyed reading thoughts of Mother Teresa. She acted out of love – following Jesus. She believed that every act of love is a work of peace. Through the years, United Methodist Women have stepped forward to speak and act for Justice. Perhaps it was as simple as the **Telephone Bell** they heard when they received a call from another United Methodist Woman reminding them to Pray. The prayer could have been for peace, it could have been for those taking a stand on a social issue that was very important to us. The Telephone Bell also rings as she checks on the lonely to cheer them up in nurturing kindness. It could even have been to make plans for an upcoming program. Yes, the Telephone Bell is a very familiar sound to us and was no doubt heard many times as our sisters worked for justice and equality in our world.

2. School Bells were heard as these ladies entered schools to make sure the least were getting the help they needed. Perhaps they left a bed unmade, a casserole thawing for dinner – whatever was needed to go help children. A mere smile and a patient heart filled with love, displayed by our sisters helped many children during their lifetime of volunteering in schools. -- The school bell rings and the day is done but the United Methodist Woman has school supplies to buy for she has again seen a need and rushes to help. Holiness grows fast where there is kindness.

3. Door Bells are familiar sounds to us and were to our deceased sisters. Visits to just hold a sister near during difficult times were experienced by these ladies. It was through Love that they emptied themselves for others. They opened their hearts to the person seeking a home in a new country. They opened their doors by giving of themselves – reading the newspaper to

someone that cannot read or teaching that person to read; writing a letter for a blind person; putting their love for God into Actions. Door Bells ring and lives are changed.

4. Oh, and listen to the **Church Bells**. Perhaps they rung on the day of a service to honor some of these ladies. We hear them ring on Sunday Morning as we gather to worship our King. We look across the congregation and see our UMW sisters, knowing that only a few days or hours ago, we were working together, making sewing kits for the women in Cambodia; or baking casseroles to sell to raise money to help women and children in Africa. We settle into our seats, smiling silently as outside the Church Bells peel to tell the world, God is alive, He's alive in United Methodist Women's hearts. Then, we join in and sing in adoration, "Praise God, from Whom All Blessings Flow."

5. When the **Oven Bell** rung, it could have startled some of our sisters. The bell ringing could have interrupted them from their reading. Cooking for family and friends is a joy and when accompanied by one of the wonderful Reading books of United Methodist Women, one could completely lose track of time. The Oven Bell is a familiar tone and totally taken for granted. However, lives have been enriched and actions motivated because of something we have read. These United Methodist Women which we honor, enriched their lives and the lives of others by being informed and responding to what they read.

6. **Hand Bells** are another somewhat familiar bell that were heard. Yes, we think of Hand Bells as the beautiful music we hear on Sunday morning and that is true. Take just a moment and look at your own hands. These hands have made music to a child that came to believe that they could succeed; these hands have made a joyful noise as they clapped to cheer for children with special needs; these hands touched high notes when they reached down into their pockets and purses to give money to help those less fortunate. Let the Hand Bells ring in all of our hearts as we rejoice to have been in mission with these dear ladies.

7. Listen to the **Bells at the Train Tracks**. No matter our age, we are still fascinated as we watch the train cars go rumbling down the tracks. We're always interested in where the cars have been and where they are going. Some of the United Methodist Women we are honoring have traveled to distant places to help with mission projects – building a church in a deprived

region; holding Bible School for children that speak another language; rendering medical help in villages that have no doctor. The Train Track Bells take us away – they help us see faces of children as they reached their hands high to give a hug. They take us away to women that are learning to sew. They help us recall our dear departed sisters that brought help to the hopeless.

8. Listen – it's the **Ice Cream Bell**. This has been an exceptionally hot summer and one of the joys is to see the children running to meet the Ice Cream wagon. Many of the children are from families that may have to sacrifice to give the child enough money for just a cup of ice cream. We would probably be amazed at the sacrifices our deceased sisters have made to help others. I have a feeling they received their reward as they were able to see smiles on faces as lives were changed.

9. Some years ago, I received these little bells at the School of Christian Mission. They are **Bells made from Shells**. In 1975, the Khmer Rouge seized power in Cambodia, beginning a four-year reign of terror which killed one million Cambodians. Cambodia now lives with the plague of millions of landmines. For years these scraps of war – spent shell casings, have been sold to village foundries where they are melted and recast into little bells. The bells are used to adorn the harnesses of cows, oxen, and water buffalo. 'Gun shells into Bells' is a moving witness to the transformation underway in that country. Our sisters sat with us as we studied at the School of Christian Mission of ways to *expand concepts of mission*.

10. Aren't **Car Bells** wonderful! They ring if we leave the key. They ring if the seat belt is not hooked. Our Car Bells, ding, ding, ding,ding, ring to protect us. Many times United Methodist Women bow in prayer as they lift up missionaries and projects listed in our Prayer Calendar. The next time you hear your Car Bell, take it as a call to pray. We could think of it as our Call to Prayer – a reminder of our Self Denial program each year. These are important in the life of any UMW member and were certainly important to those that have gone before us.

11.The **Elevator Bell** lets us know when we get to our chosen floor. It's an indication that we are moving . Lifting is part of the personality of all United Methodist Women – the lifting up of spirits as we create a *supportive community*. We work also to lift children and youth from poverty of spirit as

well as material poverty as we open doors of community centers such as the Bethlehem Centers. As those before us pushed the elevator to reach new heights, may we follow their example boldly.

12. Wind Chimes may jingle with tones from deep, rich sounds to high pitched tones. So it was with the women that departed in 2009. Their diversity made our organization rich. During storms in life, as long as we hear the wind chimes, we are reminded that our Heavenly Father loves, protects and cherishes us, and our diversity makes us special.

13. Our service would not be complete without **Jingle Bells**. We sing a catchy little tune each year during the Christmas Season. These Bells draw our thoughts to family and to this special season. Our heart-felt appreciation to the families of these ladies as they shared them with us and with the world. Many hours were given as they perhaps hummed, "o'er the fields we go, laughing all the way". They laughed because they were skipping their way along with Jesus as they sought to help the least, the lost, and the lonely through United Methodist Women.

14. The **Garden Gate Bell** is one of my favorites. The visits with friends, the early morning dew, the first smiles from little pansies, -- all of these things are so welcoming. The songs of birds, the flow of fountains, shared in a garden. No doubt, the women we uphold today, enjoyed these gifts from God. The **Garden Gate Bell** opens for us a place to meditate and commune with God. *To know God.* --- Thank you, God for our neighbors next door and far away. Thank you for United Methodist Women that open their gardens of love.

15. Do you hear the **Nurses' Bell** as you push it at a patient's bedside? Perhaps you do not hear the end result but help usually comes for the patient. Some of the ladies that passed away last year may not have seen the end results of their labors but we are here to make sure their efforts were not in vein. It is through our Undesignated Giving, our thoughtful actions and our Love of God and His children that we can make sure their endeavors are completed. The Nurses' Bell brings help - United Methodist Women bring help as we join our hands to reach around our world.

In life we loved you dearly, in death we love you still.
In our hearts you hold a place no one else can ever fill.

It broke our hearts to lose you but you didn't go alone.
For part of us went with you that day that God called you home.
You left us beautiful memories; Your love is still our guide
And though we cannot see you, you are always at our side.
The bells lay silent now, and nothing seems the same.
But as God calls us one by one, the Bells will ring again.
(- Copied with changes)

Amen

LISTEN TO THE BELLS!