The all-new United Women in Faith Circles Program Resource shows how we can answer our calling today as women of passion committed to helping women, children, and youth.

As we live into a new name, we will celebrate our identity in Christ and our need for one another, building community that is founded on inclusion and action.

The programs are grounded in Mark 8:27–30 as an invitation to reclaim and explore our identity as children of God and as a community of women of faith. Through the lens of this passage, we will use one of four guiding questions to focus our study in each quarter of the year:

- Who do you say that I am?
- Who am I that I should go ________________?
- Who are we through Christ?
- Are we our siblings’ keepers?

Monthly Bible studies, reflections, program activities, as well as weekly activities to do on your own between each program session will help guide us through this year as we look at who we are in Christ and what that means for how we live in community as United Women in Faith members called to action in local and global communities.

Again, this year you will have an opportunity to experience this resource in an online platform via Mighty Networks. Come and participate in local programs to grow your faith, participate in action, and connect with sisters!
Mosaic of Faith
We Are All Part of God’s Story

Ilka Vega

United Women in Faith
Circles Program Resource
2022–2023
United Women in Faith

Mission
United Women in Faith seeks to connect and nurture women through Christian spiritual formation, leadership development, creative fellowship, and education so that they can inspire, influence, and impact local and global communities.

Vision
Turning faith, hope, and love into action on behalf of women, children, and youth around the world.

Purpose
To be a community of women whose purpose is to know God and to experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ; to develop a creative, supportive fellowship; and to expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church.
JESUS AND HIS DISCIPLES WENT ON TO THE VILLAGES AROUND CAESAREA PHILIPPI. ON THE WAY HE ASKED THEM, "WHO DO PEOPLE SAY THAT I AM?"
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Introduction

The purpose of this Program Resource is to rebuild stronger relationships with ourselves, God, our loved ones, and our beloved communities. From the beginning, members of United Women in Faith, formerly United Methodist Women, have come together to take action and be in solidarity with those in need—those at the margins.

We live in times of change and diverse challenges that have fractured many of our relationships with our family members and loved ones, with institutions that we are supposed to trust, perhaps even with our own bodies.

These programs seek to highlight our interconnectedness as children of God, each with a unique gift, each beloved, each an essential part of the body of Christ. The visual of a mosaic exemplifies that interconnectedness and our role in supporting one another as a faith community and as part of all of God's big story.

Reclaiming Our Identity

The programs will center around Mark 8:27–30 as an invitation to reclaim and explore our identity as children of God and as a community of women of faith. Throughout the programs, we will share stories of faith, justice, and sisterhood to inspire and support our learning journey in community.

Jesus' question in this passage, “Who do you say that I am?” is an invitation to dig deep and reflect on how as people of faith—as people of the Messiah—we have a calling to take a stand for justice and liberation in this world.

Just as Jesus challenges his disciples with these important questions, we must ask ourselves difficult questions and wrestle together to answer to God's call. We must look to change our ways and bring the good news to people living in the margins. In this same spirit, we will focus on four main questions in this program year, focusing on one each quarter. The questions will encourage participants to critically engage with Scripture and offer their own answers and questions.

We understand community as mutual accountability and as something that must be built and rebuilt when necessary. In our work of building and rebuilding community, we get to do the work of justice. We must unlearn unhelpful practices and seek to dismantle oppressive systems that deprive people of God's love. To do this, we also work intersectionality towards the liberation of all of God's children, acknowledging the unique way in which the divine is present. Isaiah 66:13 reminds us that God's love is like a mother's love. It is through such love that our efforts of love in action and justice must follow. To strengthen our language for resistance and liberation, the programs will refer to God using the pronouns she/her. You are also welcome to use neutral pronouns or Godself in the application of these programs.
Soul-Care

As we embark on God’s work of love and liberation and community building, we must ground ourselves in God’s work and actively practice soul-care practices that serve our spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental health needs. Understanding ourselves and our soul-care practices in a holistic manner helps us find sustainable ways to better care for ourselves and serve and love those around us. Through engaging in soul-care, we also invite the divine to be more present in our daily routines. Similar to other United Women in Faith programming, our approach to soul-care embraces both self-care and spiritual rejuvenation.

This Program Resource incorporates key values of the United Women in Faith sisterhood through intentional inclusivity and multi-generational sharing as well as a justice-oriented approach to strive to be in continual renewal of our commitment to justice and God’s people through intersectional, transformative, and anti-racist learning, unlearning, and action.

HOW TO USE THE PROGRAM RESOURCE

This Program Resource consists of 12 monthly sessions divided into quarterly themes. Each quarter invites us to explore questions of faith, identity, and relationships. In each, we will explore Scripture and activities to put our faith into action.

Each program is structured to check in with participants, engage with Scripture in creative ways, and encourage meaning-making and discussion. Program facilitators are encouraged to read each program in advance as preparation for the session and prepare available materials. We also encourage different people to alternate as facilitators to give everyone a chance to share their leadership and stewardship gifts.

The sessions are between 40 and 60 minutes and generally follow the outline segments below:

- Welcome and Intention Setting
- Living Scripture
- Unpacking
- Hands-On Activity
- Closing and Taking Home

Each session also will include a first-person video story. At the end of each session activities are suggested to be carried out throughout the month. These activities are thematically divided to intentionally focus on spiritual growth, soul-care, community building, and justice seeking. We suggest assigning one theme of activities per week and to ask one group member to be responsible to share the resources and activity reminders each week. It can be one person per month to share the reminders or one person per week.

Pledge service and A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial service are included after the monthly programs.
PROGRAM SETUP AND SUPPLIES

Participants and program facilitators can make use of different safe spaces where they feel comfortable engaging with the activities and conversation. As part of the setup we recommend sitting in circles to encourage equal participation. Meetings will preferably take place in quiet environments. This could be a room in your local church or community center, someone’s home, or another space that is accessible to participants where people feel welcomed. Keep in mind that some sessions will require the use of screens for playing videos as well as tables for different activities and crafts.

Materials for every program:

- Internet connection
- Projector/screen for playing videos
- Extra Bibles
- Any needed printouts
- Scissors
- Pens
- White paper
- Calming sensory items such as images of nature, relaxing background sounds, soft fabrics or textures

Participants should bring to every program:

- Notebook/journal for notetaking, recording their thoughts, etc.
- Bible
- Pen/pencil

ONLINE ADAPTATIONS

When it’s necessary to meet online for a program or to offer a hybrid option, we recommend using a space with access to a computer, screen or projector, speakers, and a microphone, if possible. Zoom or other free software can be used for virtual meetings for the programs. When small groups are suggested, virtual participants can be split into breakout rooms to facilitate sharing. Where Zoom or video call software may not be accessible for participants, facilitators can discuss offering a phone number to connect to the virtual meeting. A list of needed supplies may also be shared prior to each session so participants can gather them in advance as well as any links for media and additional resources.

As part of creating safe spaces, we encourage checking in at the beginning of each session through the suggested activities. However, there may also be other ways that the group prefers. We want to encourage these programs to be a place where people can share from their own worldviews and ask questions with the knowledge that we are all a work in progress, a mosaic of faith in the need of each other to take shape.

Note: For a digital version of the Program Resource go to uwfaith.mn.co and purchase it right from there. If you are already on MN you can go to the Resources section in Mighty Networks to purchase it.
Outline of the Programs

Each quarter will focus on a different question as we explore our identity as children of God.

First Quarter | Fall 2022: Who do you say that I am?
- September: Who Do You Say That I Am?
- October: God Is Not Neutral Towards Injustice
- November: World Thank Offering: Life-Giving Creation and Transformation

Second Quarter | Winter 2022-2023: Who am I that I should go__________?
- December: Answering the Call
- January: On Our Journeys to and with Christ
- February: Reconnecting with Our Sacred Bodies

Third Quarter | Spring 2023: Who are we through Christ?
- March: Growing Seeds
- April: Peacemakers and Justice Seekers
- May: Bold Women of Faith

Fourth Quarter | Summer 2023: Are we our siblings’ keepers?
Rebuilding community through the work of justice and liberation
- June: Faith in Action Dismantles Oppressive Structures
- July: Healing Together
- August: Working in Community Towards Liberation
About the Author

ILKA VEGA

Originally from Ciudad, Juárez, Mexico, and El Paso, Texas, borderlands, Ilka Vega holds a B.A. in Sustainability, Culture, and Social Justice and is currently finishing a master of science in Innovation, Human Development, and Sustainability at the University of Geneva. Vega has worked for more than 10 years with NGOs in the United States, Mexico, and Switzerland in the areas of immigration, racial justice, and climate-action capacity building. Vega began her advocacy and community organizing efforts with United Methodist Women while still in high school at Lydia Patterson Institute in El Paso. She currently serves in United Women in Faith’s Charter for Racial Justice. Vega is passionate about music, intersectionality, and the intersections of faith and social and environmental justice.

Personal Message

I’m so grateful for the legacy of United Methodist Women and all the bold and inspiring women that have mentored me since my high school years at Lydia Patterson Institute and nurtured in me the love and language of social and environmental justice. To the many women in this journey that always invited me and challenged me to be better, I want to invite you and challenge you to continue growing our spirituality and work of justice together in this new chapter as United Women in Faith. Our community of faith is a unique intergenerational space of women who love God, themselves, and their communities. It is out of love that we seek justice and strive to build a beloved community where the love of God can be manifested to all her children and creation. Unlearning, relearning, and putting our faith into action is not always easy, but through God’s grace and with a committed sisterhood in Christ may we seek to do God’s work of love, justice, and liberation. Special thanks to Praveena Balasundaram and the reviewing team for all their work and support and to my mom, Miriam Vega, and grandmother, Susana Vega, for all their love and spiritual guidance. Thank you again for your love and for being my family in Christ.
PLEDGE SERVICE 2023

Who Is This Jesus—What Does He Have to Do with My Money?

OBJECTIVE

Through this service, United Women in Faith members will have an opportunity to remember the names and nature of Jesus and renew their commitment of financial support to address the needs of women, children, and youth through their Pledge to Mission.

SET THE ATMOSPHERE

Create an altar draped in a cloth of choice; add pillar candles in various heights; have tea lights scattered about the altar area. Place a Bible open to Mark 8:27–30 (this passage may also be projected via PowerPoint). On the altar, have pictures or sculptures of Jesus from different countries or perspectives (if possible). Include a basket for receiving pledge cards. Also place around the basket various denominations of money, coins, and bills. Where available, use money from other countries as well.

SUPPLIES:

- Index cards (4 by 6 inches) of assorted colors (10 for each person)
- Permanent markers of assorted colors (one or two for each person)
- Blue painter’s tape, several rolls will be needed
- Pledge cards at “Shop and Download” on uwfaith.org (one for each person)
- Pens

PREPARATION

To prepare for the service:

- Read through the service in its entirety, making any notes for how this would best work in your context.
- Listen to possible music selections to use in the service (see next page). Decide which ones you will use or make selections of your own.
- Designate a wall in the area where you are meeting where paper can be hung (using painter’s tape).
- Gather all needed supplies.
- Set up the altar.
- Ask a volunteer Scripture reader to read Mark 8:27–30 during the service.
**SUGGESTED MUSICAL SELECTIONS**

Songs with CCLI and One License may be projected on a wall or shared on screen for local use. Please do not record or print out lyrics. YouTube videos are to provide a tune reference for leaders/musicians only and can be played on individual devices in a group setting. CDs should be used whenever available.

**Songs Featuring Jesus’ Name**

“Waymaker” by Sinach (CD: 2016)¹
Tune: [youtu.be/n4XWfwLHeLM](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n4XWfwLHeLM)

“His Name Is Wonderful,” The United Methodist Hymnal, No. 174 ²
Tune: [youtu.be/KCYidpA7-4A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KCYidpA7-4A)

“Twelve Days of Christmas Praise” by The National Christian Choir (CD: Birthday of a King, 2006)
Tune: Use *Birthday of a King* CD.

“Hallelujah Chorus” from Handel’s Messiah (CD: Great Handel Choruses, 1996)³
Tune: [youtu.be/BBZ7AfZR9xs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BBZ7AfZR9xs)


**Songs for Worship and Background**

“Not Forgotten” by Israel and New Breed (CD: Alive in South Africa, 2005)
Tune: [youtu.be/aqz2nvpnomQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aqz2nvpnomQ)

“For Everyone Born” by Shirley Erena Murray⁵
*Global Praise 2: Songs for Worship and Witness*, No. 34 (Per Harling Tune)⁶
For Everyone Born: Global Songs for an Emerging Church, page 4 (Brian Mann tune)⁷
Tune: [youtu.be/MJJ9Eii3DEY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MJJ9Eii3DEY)

**Songs About Giving**

“You Can’t Beat God Giving” by Doris Akers⁸
Tune: [youtu.be/fZml3CuP7s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZml3CuP7s)

“. . . Until All Are Fed” by Bryan Field McFarland and Jacob’s Join (CD: Until All Are Fed, 2010)⁹
Tune: [youtu.be/zkxLcekmF8c](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zkxLcekmF8c)

“Oh, Give Thanks Unto the Lord” by Judith Christie McAllister (CD: In His Presence Live, 2007)¹⁰
Tune: [youtu.be/RVKSyQCqDds](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RVKSyQCqDds)
ONLINE OPTIONS TO PREPARE FOR THE SERVICE

• Set up a small altar in your home with the Bible, a candle, and a picture or drawing of Jesus.
• Collect needed resources.
• Listen to suggested music to familiarize yourself with songs that identify Jesus' names and nature and that call you to give as God.

GATHERING | 5 MINUTES

Play one or two versions of “The Hallelujah Chorus” as women enter. Ask each woman to take 10 index cards, one to two markers, a sheet of construction paper, and a pledge card. (These items may be packaged and placed on each participant's chair or table.)

WELCOME

This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it!

Did anyone find it odd to hear “The Hallelujah Chorus” as you entered? After all, it’s not Christmas. To be honest, we can listen to Christmas music all year long, yes?

This song was chosen, not because it’s Christmas music, but because it tells us something about Jesus. Just from listening to it or from your memory, what names do you hear for Jesus in this song? Shout out your responses.

ONLINE OPTION

After listening to the song, type names that refer to Jesus using the chat function.

WHO ARE WE? | 10 MINUTES

The Pledge Service is always a time to look back and look within, to consider what we have done and can continue to do to meet the needs of women, children, and youth. It is a time when we as members of United Women in Faith focus on our financial giving and why we give each year through our Pledge to Mission.

This is a time when we recall the pathways that God has given through United Women in Faith to address inequities and injustice, to heal brokenhearted and abandoned people, to love people like Jesus said to love them, and to ask: Lord, how shall I give?

Before we give, let’s first think about who we are. In Mark 8:27-30 (NRSV), Jesus asks his disciples, “Who do people say that I am?” Imagine that Jesus is asking each of you: “Who do people say who you are?”
ACTIVITY 1: WRITE YOUR NAMES AND SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR NATURE

Take six of your index cards. On one, write your name, what you like to be called. Tape that to your chest, right by your heart. On the other five, write down a name or a trait by which you are known. You may have nicknames such as Peaches or Froggie. You also may be known by traits such as generous, hugs, the family bank.

Ask someone to help you tape your remaining five cards on your back or other places on your body.

Now that you have defined and described who you are, I invite you to mix and mingle, take time to read, and share a word or comment with at least three other people.

Facilitator note: Play music in the background such as the song “Not Forgotten.”

ONLINE OPTION

Place participants in breakout rooms (four to six people maximum). Ask them to complete their cards and take turns introducing themselves by their given name and then share information placed on other cards. Each person should use painter’s tape to put their name on their right or left shoulder so that it is visible when returning to the group.

REFLECT ON JESUS’ QUESTION—WHO DO PEOPLE SAY THAT I AM?

10 MINUTES

Now it’s also a time to remember, recall, and reflect on WHOSE we are and why we are called to live as members of United Women in Faith in such a time as this. Let’s turn our Bibles to Mark 8:27–30. Let’s call this passage: Jesus’ Question and Peter’s Proclamation.

Let’s hear the Scripture for our service.

Volunteer reads Mark 8:27–30.

Now that you have heard the Scripture, we invite you to look anew at Jesus—for who he is and all that he stood for. Look at Jesus and see the miracle worker, the promise keeper, the light in the darkness. Look at Jesus and see the ways in which he gave from the depths of his being to make life better for people.

He healed the bent-over woman (Luke 13:10–17). He healed the boy plagued by seizures (Matthew 17:14–18). He entered into conversation with a woman at a well, restoring her to her community (John 4:4–26). And Jesus shared the story of the “Good Neighbor,” also known as the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25–37). In this story, the man gave time and money to help a beaten man. Jesus calls us to do the same.
ACTIVITY 2: WRITE NAMES OF JESUS AND SOMETHING ABOUT HIS NATURE

10 MINUTES

Use your remaining index cards to think about who Jesus is to you, your family, your church. Be sure to think about the ways that Jesus gave and how his generosity influences your giving through United Women in Faith. We give because he gave!

Think of additional Scriptures and songs that talk about the names of Jesus. In Isaiah he is known as Prince of Peace; in John, he is the Good Shepherd, the Bread of Life; also, in John, to the woman “caught in the act of adultery,” Jesus is an advocate. In Mark, to the woman who anointed Jesus’ feet and wiped his feet with her hair, Jesus is a forgiver.

Now take some time to write your names for Jesus and identify his nature. Please feel free to grab more index cards if you need them.

When you are finished, help create a word wall. Using painter’s tape, post your cards horizontally, vertically, or diagonally on the wall we have set aside for this.

Facilitator note: Play “Twelve Days of Christmas Praise” as participants write on their index cards.

ONLINE OPTION

Listen to the Scripture; perhaps ask two people to read it aloud. Ask participants to write down their names for Jesus and words/phrases that describe Jesus’ nature. For the latter, ask them to link the word or phrase with a biblical story where possible. Return to the larger group and create a word wall using the whiteboard feature of Zoom. Larger groups may want to use breakout rooms for this activity to keep the discussion and word-wall time more manageable.

LITANY: HEAR ANEW THE CALL TO MISSION | 5 MINUTES

The participant (or a volunteer) reads the part marked “One.” The remainder of the group together reads the part marked “All.”

One: We have taken time to think about who Jesus is and the many names by which he is known. So, because of Jesus, who do we say that we are?

All: We are United Women in Faith members, women who love God with all our hearts; we are united in sisterhood to act for justice and transform communities; we are focused on the needs of women, children, and youth—that’s who we are!

One: We have a legacy of more than 150 years in mission giving, mission service, and mission advocacy. Why do we continue to give?

All: We pledge to give because of God’s blessings in our lives. We believe in the parable of the boy who gave two fish and five loaves of bread. What we have may not seem like much, but when we yield it to Jesus’ touch, our financial gifts multiply over and over to change the world.
One: Where does our money go? What does our money do?

All: Our money goes to support National Mission Institutions; we support Regional Missionaries; we work towards climate justice; and we give to eradicate racism and injustices throughout the world. With every gift, we renew our commitment to improve the well-being of women, children, and youth.

One: So then, how shall we give?

All: We give with “good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over” (Luke 6:38), knowing that in our giving, God will multiply it—as it is seed and will do above and beyond what we expect.

Together: There is no place we can go where God is not already present. So, we offer all we have—our hearts, our minds, our will—as living sacrifices so that we can give more than we can even imagine. We trust God to bless our gifts and bring forth abundance to put love in action.

Idea for Giving: Muh-Dikhai

Perhaps we could be led to use a tradition in India to give a *muh-dikhai*, which is giving each time they see someone’s face for the first time—or for the first time in a long time.

**ONLINE OPTION**

Put the litany on a shared screen. Ask two people to take the parts of the One and the All. Remind participants to put themselves on mute and read along with the All and Together sections.

**MAKE YOUR PLEDGE TO MISSION | 5 MINUTES**

Take the pledge card that you received upon entering, complete it, and bring it to the altar and place it in the basket.

*In the background play a musical selection such as “Oh, Give Thanks Unto the Lord” or “Waymaker.”*

**ONLINE OPTION**

Ask women to complete their pledge cards and give a copy to one of the following venues: local, district, conference, or virtual unit.

Play a minute or two of one of the song selections while participants are completing their pledge cards. When done, ask them to “wave” the cards in time to the music, as a sign of affirmation that they are trusting God to do miracles through their gifts.

Give online: uwfaith.org/give
CLOSING PRAYER

Most holy and gracious God,
We are thankful for one more opportunity to be your hands and feet in the world.
We are thankful that we know who you are and that we know whose we are. Please take every fiber of our being and bless us so that we may bless others. Keep us forever focused on making your will be done here on earth as it is in heaven. Amen.

CLOSING SONG

Play the song “For Everyone Born” and listen to several minutes of this arrangement. Encourage everyone to join in the chorus, standing if able, waving hands, clapping hands, finding joy in pledging anew their financial gifts to the work of United Women in Faith!

ONLINE OPTION

Ask a volunteer to read the Closing Prayer aloud. Then play the song (or ask someone to sing the song) “For Everyone Born.” Encourage women to stand if they’re able, to wave and clap their hands and join in on the chorus so that they can experience joy as they boldly pledge their gifts and time to the work of United Women in Faith.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Faye Wilson is treasurer for the Lower Shore United Women in Faith, Peninsula-Delaware Conference, and vice president of her local unit at Mount Zion United Methodist Church, Quantico, Maryland.
Endnotes

1. “Way Maker” by Osinachi Kalu Okoro Egbu. © 2016 Integrity Music Europe. CCLI #11221925. All rights reserved; Spanish version is “Abres Camino” by Coalo Zamorano and Osinachi Kalu Okoro Egbu

2. “His Name is Wonderful” by Audrey Mieir. © 1959 Audrey Mieir. Renewed © 1987 Manna Music Inc. CCLI #11221925. All rights reserved.


4. Quincy Jones arrangement of “Handel’s Messiah: A Soulful Celebration.” WMG. Warner Chappell. All rights reserved.

5. “For Everyone Born” © 1998 Murray, Shirley Erena. Hope Publishing Company. CCLI #11221925. All rights reserved.


8. “You Can’t Beat God Giving.” By Doris Akers. © 1957 Manna Music, Inc. CCLI #11221925. All rights reserved.


10. “Oh, Give Thanks Unto the Lord” by Judith Christie McAllister. © Judah Music. CCLI #11221925. All rights reserved.

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As we live into a new name, we will celebrate our identity in Christ and our need for one another, building community that is founded on inclusion and action.

The programs are grounded in Mark 8:27–30 as an invitation to reclaim and explore our identity as children of God and as a community of women of faith. Through the lens of this passage, we will use one of four guiding questions to focus our study in each quarter of the year:

• Who do you say that I am?
• Who am I that I should go ________________?
• Who are we through Christ?
• Are we our siblings' keepers?

Monthly Bible studies, reflections, program activities, as well as weekly activities to do on your own between each program session will help guide us through this year as we look at who we are in Christ and what that means for how we live in community as United Women in Faith members called to action in local and global communities.

Again, this year you will have an opportunity to experience this resource in an online platform via Mighty Networks. Come and participate in local programs to grow your faith, participate in action, and connect with sisters!