

## 40 Days of Prayer for General Conference

United Methodist Women calls on members to pray for the upcoming special session of the United Methodist General Conference.

In 40 days, a [special session of the United Methodist General Conference](#) will convene in St. Louis, Missouri. The leadership of the General Conference has been planning for the sessions, working to help the General Conference hear the call of God and make decisions together. Delegates have been preparing, praying, sharing and listening. The Commission on the Way Forward and people across the church have been working to clarify and express their own understanding of God's call and whether The United Methodist Church in its current form and with its current membership is able to live that out.

As members of United Methodist Women, we also have been engaged in study, listening, conversation and proposals about what God's call to our church looks like. We too are feeling the growing uncertainty that naturally grows as the special session grows closer. Instead of focusing on the uncertainty, I invite you to a position of confidence that God is at work and that God invites us to work. I invite you to pray with this conviction.

Many of us are engaged in a pattern of prayer as part of the Council of Bishops' [Praying our Way Forward](#), and others are in prayer with conferences or congregations. We pray daily using our United Methodist Women [Prayer Calendars](#). Another way we pray is through the making of prayer shawls. If this is your special call during this time, please pray this way. Once worked out, we will post details about how you can send prayer shawls to St. Louis for General Conference delegates.

If you are not currently engaged in a pattern of prayer or if you would like to add to your ministry of prayer, I invite you to join me in the following weekly pattern:

**Sunday:** Pray for The United Methodist Church, for its lay members, clergy members, fellowship, discipleship and leadership work. Pray that we would ground our feet firmly in hope. Pray also for the future work of the church.

**Monday:** Pray for the delegates. The responsibility they carry can feel heavy, and the emotions they are feeling and receiving can take a toll. Pray for their resilience and openness to the Holy Spirit, who speaks even when we are in "self-protection mode" but to whom are most receptive when our hearts are open and we are hope-filled.



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**Tuesday:** Pray for all who will be presiding and leading during the session and for the staff who will be serving. Their clarity and wisdom make a big difference in the kind of conversation that the delegates are able to have and whether the delegates have confidence in the processes surrounding their work.

**Wednesday:** Pray for the outreach and mission service of The United Methodist Church and how this will be enhanced by the structures and directions set by the special session. Pray for the ministry of congregations, conferences and agencies serving people in need around the world. The Prayer Calendar is a great resource to be reminded of some of these.

**Thursday:** Pray for the education ministry of the church and the ways that this equips us to engage in a future full of possibilities. Pray for the students and faculty that we support through scholarships, student ministries and publishing. Pray for the tutoring work of congregations and national mission institutions, for secondary schools, colleges, universities and seminaries who are also dealing with uncertainty about how they will connect with the church in the future.

**Friday:** Pray for all the justice ministries of the church and for how these will be strengthened by the work of the special session. Pray for the work to address policies that marginalize and patterns that demean. Pray for our relationships with ecumenical partners and persons engaged locally, regionally, nationally and globally in God's love and the vision of justice we are called to lift up. Pray for a commitment to hope that shapes our engagement with a fractured but beautiful world.

**Saturday:** Pray for all of us across the church who are charged with the stewardship of the resources entrusted to us and how our hope, rooted in faith, shapes our use of these resources of time, commitment, effort and finances so that we might give neither too much nor too little regard to the potential of these gifts and our responsibility to use them well.

United Methodist Women, we are praying people. Let us pray focusing not on our own uncertainties but on God's leading and the great mission and ministry ahead of us.

*Harriett Jane Olson is General Secretary and CEO of United Methodist Women.*