

The Laity Minute

Feb 2019

I have always loved Valentine's Day. I remember the little Valentines we used to distribute in elementary school. Everyone would place a box on their desk. The box would fill with all kinds of characters and fun sayings on little cut-out cards. And who doesn't love candy in a heart wrapper?! Roses, anyone? It is also a time when we can show others, whether it is a loved one, special friends (or even yourself) how special they are.

This outpouring of love is also present in the UMW! You see, this is the month that our District UMW will celebrate Mission Awareness Day. As you know, the UMW's main focus is mission. Always has been. Always will be. Mission Awareness Day is a day set aside on the UMW calendar for units to come together, celebrate, worship and give to mission work. This year, the Mountain View District will hold Mission Awareness Day on Saturday, Feb. 16 at Centenary. What a joy it will be to see units gather, fill our church and watch mission come alive. At the time of this writing, the guest speaker will be Linda Stransky, of the Jubilee Project, located in Hancock County. Many of you probably know about this project. However, have you had a chance to read their ideas about why they are in existence? They have several, but my favorite is that they want to bring about the, "creation of hopefulness." This phrase is at the heart of the UMW and we are extremely excited to have Jubilee as our focus for this gathering of mission. Together, we can create hopefulness and show others, just as those little Valentines in elementary school, that we care.

Another event on the calendar, is the Special Session of the General Session of the UMC. This conference will be held Feb. 23-26 in St. Louis. The purpose of this special session will be to "receive and act upon a report from the Commission on a Way Forward based on the recommendations of the Council of Bishops. The 32-member Commission was authorized by the General Conference 2016 and appointed by the Council of Bishops to examine paragraphs in The Book of Discipline concerning human sexuality and exploring options to strengthen the unity of the church" ([umc.org](http://www.umc.org)).

The Mountain View District held an informational meeting in Fall 2018, which I attended. It was held at First UMC, Morristown. There have been Conference gatherings, as well, such as the informal meeting held in mid-January 2019 in Farragut, TN.

As a member of the laity, the UMW, and a member of the Methodist church, I encourage you to explore the Plans put forth by the Council of Bishops. You can find more information on the [umc.org](http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/commission-on-a-way-forward) site (<http://www.umc.org/who-we-are/commission-on-a-way-forward>). This is a significant time in the history of our church and one the UMW has called upon for 40 days of prayer (<https://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/news/40-days-of-prayer-for-general-conference>).

Peace be with you!