

March 2020 Laity Minute

Well, you've made it! You have made it to Daylight Savings Time. That extra hour of sleep and longer days will bring joy and happiness to your soul. This time change often brings many people out of the winter blahs and gives hope that spring is almost here. It's even the month of my Spring Break which is always a welcome event. Find your green attire, as you will probably feel like you may be expected to wear it.

But, March is more than just wearing green. In fact, the color for March could arguably be purple. "What?," you may question. "I thought purple was reserved for Lent." It is in that context. However, the color purple is also reserved for a special day in March: International Women's Day (IWD). IWD is a global day celebrating, "the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. The day also marks a call to action for accelerating women's equality" (IWD website).

In 1909, the U.S. observed a version of IWD. In 1911, IWD was honored in Austria, Denmark, Germany, and Switzerland. More than one million people (men included!) attended IWD rallies which focused on women's rights to work, vote, be trained, hold public office, and end discrimination. Russia followed in 1913 and Europe as a whole followed in 1914. If you have read anything on the suffragettes, you may be interested to know the famous suffragette, Sylvia Pankhurst, as involved in these marches. The United Nations started observing it in 1975 and today IWD is an official holiday in many countries.

Here is the best part: IWD is recognized and celebrated by the United Methodist Women. Since the UMW is a strong advocate for equality in the Methodist church, this relationship is quite unsurprising. In 2019, the theme for IWD was, "Time is now: Rural and urban activists transforming women's lives." The UMW held events globally and encouraged others to "invest in women." One activity in Africa that year hosted a debate entitled, "A wise woman builds her house," which referred to Proverbs 14:1. The 2020 theme is "#EachforEqual" The theme is meant to encourage people to think about equality not as just a women's issue, but also as a business issue. Equality is essential for, "economies and communities to thrive. A gender equal world can be healthier, wealthier, and more harmonious" (IWD website). No doubt the UMW will host events all over the world again this year advocating for equality.

The UMW has acknowledged on many occasions there is still work to do as far as achieving equality within our own denomination. However, marking IWD shows the commitment of the UMW to make a better world for everyone.

The UMW values justice in all forms including climate justice and racial justice. IWD's identifying color is purple, which in this context, signifies justice. Just think what else we probably have in common.



The sign for IWD 2020