

March 2021 Laity Minute

“UMW doesn’t stand for United Meal-maker Women. We do more than make food.”

Well, I don’t even do that, I chuckled. I remembered how the employees at Little Caesar’s came to know me because I was always in there a few times a month getting my usual Fellowship Supper and UMW cheese pizza.

“We lead. We take action. We are bold.”

I heard these words, along with many others at the UMW Leadership Development Days (LDD) event which I attended recently. This annual event brings together UMW leadership from all over the world for three days of worship, workshops, and networking. This year the event was virtual, so I was thrilled I could attend with the other 700+ attendees. This year’s theme was *Anchored, Adrift, Ashore* with Acts 27 as the Biblical foundation. And while I sat through inspiring worship services held by amazing women, with music that you couldn’t help to at least tap your foot, I admit I saw and heard things I wasn’t prepared to experience. While I learned many lessons, here are a few.

Lesson #1: Age is a just number.

The UMW isn’t known for having a majority of members who are under the age of 40. As I scanned the Zoom screen to see all the participants, I noticed several, if not most, probably had a decade or two on me as far as age. But, they were wise. Many were experienced. And all were not even close to being finished. As I heard and conversed with these women, many of whom had been in UMW for almost as long as I have been alive, were not slowing down. They are active. While active may mean different things to different people, there’s no question these women had the gas pedal to the floor and were getting things done. I wasn’t surprised, but I knew I could learn an infinite amount from them. They were funny, smart, and confident.

Lesson #2: While we are looking forward, the past can show the way

Acts 27, our Biblical guide, told the story of Paul and his journey over difficult waters. I know you can find a million ways to bring that story into the current context. This story of the past can certainly help us now and always. But, besides Acts 27, another connection to the past was made. Before the event, we were asked to construct a “prayer space.” This could be a small space filled with anything we have to give us a place to pray and meditate before, during, and after the event. Generally, in prayer spaces, you’ll see candles, Bibles, and other peace-inducing items. My prayer space did have those things, but also included one special item: a picture of my great-grandmother, Alma. She was about 18 in the picture (circa 1912). Every time I see it, I see not only a Methodist woman, but a women of strength, wit, passion, and wisdom. I was only a baby when she passed away, but I know her story, and I know she was with me those days. The past was very alive as I was looking forward.

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Lesson #3: The UMW is in good hands.

I can't wait for them to point me the way.

Faith, Hope, Love in Action,

Kelly



Prayer Space for Leadership Development Days 2021