

Tips for Planning UMW Annual Meetings*

July 2020

In tumultuous times, our supportive community as United Methodist Women becomes even more important. As you plan for your Annual Meeting, whether virtual or in-person, consider the tips and recommendations contained in this guide. If your meeting will be virtual, utilize this document in conjunction with UMW's guide entitled [How to Host a Simple, Live Virtual Event Using Zoom](#).

Bottom Line: Essential Elements of Your Annual Meeting

United Methodist Women's core identity involves Spiritual Growth, Service and Advocacy, Leadership Development and Transformative Education. UMW's total program, as expressed through these four core commitments, is made possible by our Mission Giving and our "creative, supportive fellowship."

An Annual Meeting is not only a business meeting; it should integrate all aspects of this identity. That does not mean running through a checklist where each area is addressed; it means finding ways to weave these together in a brief time. For example, the program can include Bible study and education and advocacy around a particular social justice issue, incorporating ways to address this through Mission Giving and local mission support. Worship enables us to "know God" and build "supportive community" while seeking to discern God's call to us in this moment.

Whom you invite to help plan the meeting, including young women, is part of leadership development and ensuring our commitment to inclusivity for ALL women. Be sure that the leadership of your Meeting is racially and ethnically diverse, as well as age diverse. Involve young women not only behind the scenes as part of a tech team, but in visible leadership roles in the program. Also seek to involve women whose first language is not English. They can present in their first language and then the same material can be presented in English. Bible passages can also be read in multiple languages.

Below is a list of essential elements that should be in your Annual Meeting, whether meeting virtually or in person. **This is a guide only and should not be literally or mechanically incorporated into your Annual Meeting.** The chart below represents the bare minimum of what should be in your Annual Meeting.

PROGRAM ELEMENT	Description & Suggestions
Worship & Biblical Grounding	<p>Be sure to work with your Spiritual Growth Coordinators in designing the worship elements. Be cognizant of diversity in music and voices when reflecting on biblical texts.</p> <p>If you use a litany, consider worship tools from the UMW website addressing COVID and Racial Justice (Prayer and Responsive Reading, Tools for Leaders).</p> <p>If meeting virtually, follow the lead of your bishop as to whether virtual communion is possible. This Love Feast program is a good alternative.</p>
Transformative Educational Content incorporating Spiritual Growth and Social Action	<p>We encourage you to focus the program this year on racial justice and ending white supremacy. This is an ongoing commitment of United Methodist Women through the <i>Charter for Racial Justice</i>, and this is a moment in history when our church and our organization is calling on us to respond through concerted action.</p> <p>Planning a program that integrates Bible study with social action is a great way to do it. You will find useful program resources in the Tools for Leaders: Resources for Racial Justice.</p> <p>If you have already chosen another topic and lined up a speaker, they can also address that topic from the lens of racial justice, as nearly everything is infused with structural racism.</p>
Social Justice Action	<p>Be sure to include a concrete action suggestion that attendees can take.</p> <p>See the sample schedules on pages 7-15 for specific suggestions on how to conduct this part of the program.</p>
A Word from the National Office	<p>If no national office staff are joining your Annual Meeting this year, Talking Points from the</p>

	national office may be incorporated into remarks by the Conference President or other conference leader. Talking Points will be made available through the conference officer staff liaisons.
Business Meeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • President's Message • Treasurer's Report & Approval of Budget • Where the Money Goes • Election & Installation of Officers 	<p>While discussion of business is necessary at the Annual Meeting, this portion of the program does not need to be long. Keep the business portion interesting and engaging for a diverse set of members.</p> <p>If meeting virtually, we suggest that ALL reports be circulated in writing ahead of time via email or post to streamline the business portion of the meeting.</p> <p>See sample schedules on pages 7-15 for suggestions on these various elements of the business meeting.</p>
Offering	<p>If your offering will go towards local mission, be sure to encourage participants to remember Mission Giving that supports our total program as well as the Legacy Fund.</p> <p>A forthcoming sample script for Mission Giving promotion will be shared with E&Is. Here is a sample script for promoting the Legacy Fund.</p>
Memorial	Honoring the memory of our sisters and their contribution to our collective legacy is imperative.

If Conducting Your Annual Meeting Virtually

Keep It Engaging!

When planning your virtual Annual Meeting, consider the tips below to keep attendees engaged and interested in the content:

- Keep it short! More than 90 minutes at a time on your computer, tablet, or smart phone is tough! Our bodies ache, our eyes get sore, and the content can go “flat.” If you need more than 90 minutes for your Annual Meeting, consider doing a morning session, break for a couple of hours for lunch, and then host an afternoon session. Try to keep it at 3 hours maximum although we recommend planning for a 90-minute program.
- Utilize the features of the conferencing platform such as the chat box, breakout groups, gallery view, and polling to encourage active participation. Attendees can introduce themselves, including the name of their unit and/or circle via the chat box. The gallery view can be used for collective activities and discussion so that each can see everyone’s wonderful faces! On Zoom, the poll feature can also be used to create fun quizzes about your UMW conference history, UMW trivia, and more!
- Send the program, lyrics, officer reports, proposed budget, etc in advance to the participants so they have the materials on hand for their reference.
- Be sure to include short breaks as needed to give everyone a chance to stretch and get the blood flowing again.
- Beautiful, colorful worship centers can be created for virtual meetings as well! Share the image of your worship center as you begin your session, during worship and breaks. A photo of the worship center could also be shared. AND/OR, members can be invited to create a simple worship center in their home as they join the meeting—a colorful cloth, Bible, cross, chalice, *response* magazine, the Prayer Calendar. At the beginning or end of your time, members can go to “gallery view” in Zoom and see all of the multiple worship centers.
- Be sure that every speaker/leader knows their subject matter and their time limit. A strong facilitator should serve as timekeeper to keep things on track. Please be flexible. Even with a practice run-through, the program may not go as planned. Be ready to adjust the schedule as needed to stay within the allotted time. If a major portion of your meeting gets delayed, consider setting another date to complete the meeting, rather than running overtime and fatiguing participants.

Technical Aspects

We highly recommend using the virtual Annual Meeting to engage new women and supporters in the work of United Methodist Women. Once you’ve determined your program elements and conduct, invite tech-savvy women who are not yet members of UMW to assist with running the virtual meeting. Get their opinions and advice on what is possible and what is not in a virtual meeting. Have them lead the technical aspects of the Annual Meeting. Engage them and get them interested in all the amazing things we do! You can even offer them a stipend for their assistance.

You can also utilize the support of the Annual Conference to run the technical aspect of the Annual Meeting. For example, you may be able to borrow the Annual Conference’s

virtual meeting platform account. It's always best to designate a separate team to run the logistical/technical aspect of virtual meetings.

The national office has produced a technical guide that introduces our members to the basics of using Zoom. If you and/or your members are new to virtual meeting platforms, check out the [technical guide](#) to get you started. If your conference leadership team is already accustomed to a platform other than Zoom, please use what works best for your members and team.

Here are a few tips to maximize the available features (of Zoom) for administrative and technical aspects of your meeting:

- Avoid sharing the Meeting ID publicly. Set up your Zoom meeting to require registration by all attendees. You can then access the list of attendees later for your records. This also helps to prevent anyone who is not supposed to be in the meeting from joining.
- Remind the administrator (or host) to save the chat transcript so you can review it later to gather ideas and inputs from members and attendees.
- A note on music: If engaging in community singing, have one person lead the music. Others should sing while on mute. This helps with sound quality on Zoom. With permission, the lyrics can be shared on PowerPoint slides or included in the program sent ahead for those joining by phone. Please note that there are legal requirements on licensing: not all music can be shown if it is not licensed and properly cited.
- A note on responsive readings: When doing responsive readings, ask one person to act as the "voice of the people" while others participate on mute.
- It is highly recommended that you do a practice session prior to your Annual Meeting, including your tech person and all of those who will have a leadership role. Practice projecting slides, any music, shifting from one leader to another, muting and unmuting, use of "gallery" and speaker view, use of break out groups or polls on Zoom (if you plan to use them), and every aspect of your program. Even if you have done this before, a walk through makes a huge difference to the final outcome!

Sample Schedules for Virtual Annual Meetings

Below are several sample schedules you can consider given your time and your tech capacity. Please mix and match from the categories or rearrange the elements to create your Annual Meeting.

Sample schedule 1: 90 minutes

Build one or two short breaks into your schedule as needed.

Time allotment	Element	Suggestions
15 min	Opening Worship	Opening prayer and Song Litany on Racial Justice (Prayer and Responsive Reading , Tools for Leaders) Scripture Reading 3-minute Reflection Song
10 min	President's Welcome, Word from National Office	The President's remarks can incorporate any Talking Points from the UMW national office, as well as an overview of the work of the conference UMW. You can also use this time to uplift the need to build our organization by inviting new women, signing up at myUMW , and reinforcing support systems like Pick 3! Ask your MNOs for their input on this.
30 min [OR 15 min and use the additional time for a closing worship]	Program: Focus on Racial Justice with action (linking Spiritual Growth and Social Action)	Options for program: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 speaker OR Interactive workshop and/or Bible study (See workshops and Bible studies on Climate Justice, Living Wage, Interrupting School to Prison Pipeline on UMW website) OR Video with discussion It could be from the national office, OR you could invite several members to create brief videos about the theme. This might simply be their sharing from diverse perspectives, edited into 3 minutes. Be sure to consider age, race, and language diversity. Here's an example from one of our conference leaders for your inspiration. Biblical Grounding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Separate Bible study to ground the topic OR Speakers can specifically address the Biblical grounding for our work, with passages, in their remarks OR Elaborate on the scripture reading from the opening worship.

		<p>Taking Action</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invite all members to go to www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/action and sign up for monthly email Action Alerts. It's a great way to stay involved even during a time of isolation. • Offer a specific action that people can take in this moment. Include 2-3 resources from the UMW and/or UMC websites for next steps members can take around racial justice.
25 min	Business Meeting	
6 min	Treasurer's Report & Approval of the Budget	<p>Approval of the Treasurer's report on the prior year's spending and budget proposal for the upcoming year is an important aspect of reporting and planning for our mission priorities.</p> <p>The report and proposed budget can be sent ahead of the meeting, and/or shared via Zoom or other conferencing platform.</p> <p>The Treasurer's Report can be coupled with the Pledge Service (if doing one) and a word from E&Is.</p>
3 min	Where the Money Goes	<p>Have your Education & Interpretation Mission Coordinator (or equivalent) share a few words, and perhaps some images, about the impact and importance of unrestricted financial gifts through Mission Giving, including urgent national and international ministries' responses to the COVID pandemic and UMW grants for Racial Justice. A script with tips will be distributed through E&I Coordinators and Treasurers.</p>
8 min	Elections	<p>A separate communication about conducting virtual elections will be sent out to your conference leadership team via the Conference Presidents.</p>
5 min	Installation of Officers and Appreciation of Outgoing Officers	<p>Take a minute to thank outgoing officers and install new officers. Invite members to use the chat box to thank leaders and welcome new leaders. OR, they can hold up thank you signs and everyone uses "gallery view" to see them all.</p>

3 min	Awards	<p>Without naming them, the President affirms all the local units receiving awards for Reading Program, successfully completing the UMW census, giving, greatest number of new members and so on. The names of units could be put on a PowerPoint slide to show while the President, or other conference leader, makes her remarks.</p> <p>The list of awardees can be published in UMW newsletter, in the Annual Meeting Program, and possibly included in UMC Conference publication. Actual awards can be mailed or presented later by District Presidents. You may also want to list on your UMW and/or Conference website.</p>
5 min	Memorial	<p>Invite members to light a candle (or use an electric candle). Ask them to turn on the “gallery” view (if using Zoom), so they can see all of the participants. They may need to hit the arrow on the right to see many pages of participants. As the names of those who have passed during this year are read, instruct participants to hold up their candles.</p> <p>Say a prayer for those we have lost.</p>
5 min OR	Thank you, closing prayer and song	Vice President
15 min	Closing Worship & Communion / Love Feast with Offering	<p>If offering communion virtually (follow your bishop’s lead on this) attendees should be instructed ahead of time to have their own bread and grape juice ready to be blessed. Consider using this Love Feast program as an alternative to Communion.</p> <p>Offering (Show a PowerPoint slide with information on where to send checks or how to pay via PayPal, Venmo, e-checks and other payment means set up by your conference.)</p> <p>Closing Remarks</p> <p>Closing prayer and Song</p>

Sample Schedule 2: 2 hours

Build one or two short breaks into your schedule as needed.

Time allotment	Element	Suggestions
15 min	Opening Worship	Opening prayer and Song Litany on Racial Justice (Prayer and Responsive Reading, Tools for Leaders) Scripture Reading 3-minute Reflection Song
10 min	President's Welcome message, Word from National Office	The President's remarks can incorporate any Talking Points from the UMW national office, as well as an overview of the work of the conference UMW. You can also use this time to uplift the need to build our organization by inviting new women, signing up at myUMW , and reinforcing support systems like Pick 3! Ask your MNOs for their input on this.
30 min	Program: Focus on Racial Justice (linking Spiritual Growth and Social Action)	Options for Program elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 speaker OR • 2-3 speakers on a panel OR • Interactive workshop and/or Bible study (See workshops and Bible studies on Climate Justice, Living Wage, Interrupting School to Prison Pipeline on UMW website) OR • Video with discussion It could be from the national office, OR you could invite several members to create brief videos about the theme. This might simply be their sharing from diverse perspectives, edited into 3 minutes. Be sure to consider age, race, and language diversity. Here's an example from one of our conference leaders for your inspiration. Biblical Grounding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate Bible study to ground the topic OR • Speakers can specifically address the Biblical grounding for our work, with passages, in their remarks OR

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Elaborate on the scripture reading from the opening worship.
5 min	Social Justice Action	<p>Invite all members to go to www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/action and sign up for monthly email Action Alerts. It's a great way to stay involved even during a time of isolation.</p> <p>Offer a specific action that people can take in this moment. Include 2-3 resources from the UMW and/or UMC websites for next steps members can take around racial justice.</p>
5 min	Stretch Break	Consider facilitated activities to get attendees' energy back up. For inspiration, here's a video of Belinda Alkula, Spiritual Growth Coordinator for Mountain Sky Conference, leading some laughter yoga.
40 min	Business Meeting	
10 min	Treasurer's Report & Approval of the Budget	<p>Approval of the Treasurer's report on the prior year's spending and budget proposal for the upcoming year is an important aspect of reporting and planning for our mission priorities.</p> <p>The report and proposed budget can be sent ahead of the meeting, and/or shared via Zoom or other conferencing platform.</p> <p>The Treasurer's Report can be coupled with the Pledge Service (if doing one) and a word from E&Is.</p>
10 min	Where the Money Goes	Have your Education & Interpretation Mission Coordinator (or equivalent) share a few words, and perhaps some images, about the impact and importance of unrestricted financial gifts through Mission Giving, including urgent national and international ministries' responses to the COVID pandemic and UMW grants for Racial Justice. A script with tips will be distributed through E&I Coordinators and Treasurers.
10 min	Elections	A separate communication about conducting virtual elections will be sent out to your conference leadership team via the Conference Presidents.
7 min	Installation of Officers and Appreciation of Outgoing Officers	Take a minute to thank outgoing officers and install new officers. Invite members to use the chat box to thank leaders and welcome new leaders. OR, they

		can hold up thank you signs and everyone uses “gallery view” to see them all.
3 min	Awards	<p>Without naming them, the President affirms all of the local units receiving awards for Reading Program, successfully completing the UMW census, giving, greatest number of new members and so on. The names of units could be put on a PowerPoint slide to show while the President, or other conference leader, makes her remarks.</p> <p>The list of awardees can go in UMW newsletter, in the Annual Meeting Program, and possibly include in UMC Conference publication. Actual awards can be mailed or presented later by District Presidents. You may also want to list on your UMW and/or Conference website.</p>
5 min	Memorial	<p>Invite members to light a candle (or use an electric candle). Ask them to turn on the “gallery” view (if using Zoom), so they can see all the participants. They may need to hit the arrow on the right to see many pages of participants. As we read the names of those who have passed during this year, instruct participants to hold up their candles.</p> <p>Say a prayer for those we have lost.</p>
15 min	Closing Worship & Communion / Love Feast with Offering	<p>If offering communion virtually (follow your bishop’s lead on this) attendees should be instructed ahead of time to have their own bread and grape juice ready to be blessed. Consider using this Love Feast program as an alternative to Communion.</p> <p>Offering (Show a PowerPoint slide with information on where to send checks or how to pay via PayPal, Venmo, e-checks and other payment means set up by your conference.)</p> <p>Closing Remarks</p> <p>Closing prayer and Song</p>

Sample Schedule 3: 3 hours

Build one or two additional short breaks into your schedule.

Time allotment	Element	Suggestions
20 min	Opening Worship	See the suggestions in the other sample schedules Add a pre-recorded choir or other liturgical performance as part of the celebration if you like.
5 min	President's Welcome Message	You can use this time to uplift the need to build our organization by inviting new women, signing up at myUMW , and reinforcing support systems like Pick 3! Ask your MNOs for their input on this.
45 min	Program: Focus on Racial Justice (linking Spiritual Growth and Social Action)	Take advantage of the additional time to utilize the "breakout" feature of Zoom to divide attendees into smaller groups for discussion. Options for Program elements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 speaker OR • 2-3 speakers on a panel AND/OR • Interactive workshop and/or Bible study (See workshops and Bible studies on Climate Justice, Living Wage, Interrupting School to Prison Pipeline on UMW website) AND/OR • Video with discussion It could be from the national office, OR you could invite several members to create brief videos about the theme. This might simply be their sharing from diverse perspectives, edited into 3 minutes. Be sure to consider age, race, and language diversity. Here's an example from one of our conference leaders for your inspiration. Biblical Grounding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Separate Bible study to ground the topic OR • Speakers can specifically address the Biblical grounding for our work, with passages, in their remarks. OR • Elaborate on the scripture reading from the opening worship.

5 min	Social Justice Action	<p>Invite all members to go to www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/action and sign up for monthly email Action Alerts. It's a great way to stay involved even during a time of isolation.</p> <p>Offer a specific action that people can take in this moment. Include 2-3 resources from the UMW and/or UMC websites for next steps members can take around racial justice.</p>
5 min	Announcements, Song, Blessing for Lunch	
BREAK	2 hours	
15 min	Word from the National Office	Be on the lookout for Talking Points from the national office or invite a UMW staff person to say a few words.
50 min	Business Meeting	
10 min	Treasurer's Report & Approval of the Budget	<p>Approval of the Treasurer's report on the prior year's spending and budget proposal for the upcoming year is an important aspect of reporting and planning for our mission priorities.</p> <p>The report and proposed budget can be sent ahead of the meeting, and/or shared via Zoom or other conferencing platform.</p> <p>The Treasurer's Report can be coupled with the Pledge Service (if doing one) and a word from E&Is.</p>
10 min	Where the Money Goes	Have your Education & Interpretation Mission Coordinator (or equivalent) share a few words, and perhaps some images, about the impact and importance of unrestricted financial gifts through Mission Giving, including urgent national and international ministries' responses to the COVID pandemic and UMW grants for Racial Justice. A script with tips will be distributed through E&I Coordinators and Treasurers.
10 min	Elections	A separate communication about conducting virtual elections will be sent out to your conference leadership team via the Conference Presidents.
10 min	Installation of Officers and	Take a minute to thank outgoing officers and install new officers. Invite members to use the chat box to

	Appreciation of Outgoing Officers	thank leaders and welcome new leaders. OR, they can hold up thank you signs and everyone uses “gallery view” to see them all.
10 min	Awards	<p>Without naming them, the President affirms all of the local units receiving awards for Reading Program, successfully completing the UMW census, giving, greatest number of new members and so on. The names of units could be put on a PowerPoint slide to show while the President, or other conference leader, makes her remarks.</p> <p>The list of awardees can go in UMW newsletter, in the Annual Meeting Program, and possibly include in UMC Conference publication. Actual awards can be mailed or presented later by District Presidents. You may also want to list on your UMW and/or Conference website.</p>
5 min	Memorial	<p>Invite members to light a candle (or use an electric candle). Ask them to turn on the “gallery” view (if using Zoom), so they can see all of the participants. They may need to hit the arrow on the right to see many pages of participants. As we read the names of those who have passed during this year, instruct participants to hold up their candles.</p> <p>Say a prayer for those we have lost.</p>
15 min	Moving Forward Virtually: Small Groups Discussions	<p>Use the Zoom breakout room function to divide participants into groups of 5-6 people. Have each group designate a recorder. Groups can discuss how UMW members can integrate membership, spiritual growth, supportive community, Mission Giving, and social action in virtual programming. See some sample discussion questions below. Notes can go to the Conference Mission Team for planning next steps.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you personally need from your UMW sisters at this time? • How do you feel God is calling us to respond collectively as UMW at this time? • What would be a compelling online program or series that you would want to attend and invite others to attend? • How can programs integrate our exploration of the Bible and our call to action for justice in the world? • How can programs consistently convey where our mission dollars are being used, particularly

		<p>in a time of health crisis, care crisis, economic crisis and needed challenges to systemic racism?</p> <p>Quickly reconvene and invite recorders to use the chat to post one idea for a virtual UMW meeting in the conference. They can submit more complete notes later. An assigned person reads the chat and highlights a few suggestions to wrap up this session.</p>
15 min	Closing Worship & Communion / Love Feast with Offering	<p>If offering communion virtually (follow your bishop's lead on this) attendees should be instructed ahead of time to have their own bread and grape juice ready to be blessed. Consider using this Love Feast program as an alternative to Communion.</p> <p>Offering (Show a PowerPoint slide with information on where to send checks or how to pay via PayPal, Venmo, e-checks and other payment means set up by your conference.)</p> <p>Closing Remarks</p> <p>Closing prayer and Song</p>

*We hope you find this resource useful. We welcome your feedback and suggestions to improve this guide and develop it as a regular resource for our leaders. Please contact your staff liaison with any input and recommendations.