

# 5 DEVOTIONS

## FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH





## DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES

The United Methodist Church

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# DEVOTIONS: TO OPEN A MEETING

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**OPENING HYMN:** Many Gifts One Spirit #114 UMH

## CALL TO PRAYER:

**Leader:** Like the Wise Men who came from the East; we come bringing gifts for the service of Christ.

**Right side:** *We come from the East*

**LEFT SIDE:** WE COME FROM THE WEST

**Front half:** *We come from the North*

**BACK HALF:** WE COME FROM THE SOUTH

**Right side:** *Each bringing a different gift*

**LEFT SIDE:** EACH BRINGING A NEEDED GIFT

**All:** We come, bringing gifts for the service of Christ. Loving God, receive our gifts and use them as you will. Amen.

## PRAYER:

As we prepare to continue our work, let us turn our hearts to God in prayer.

*Let us pray for those who continue to struggle and mourn around the world...*

*Let us pray for the poor, the sick, and the hungry in every country...*

*Let us pray for pastors and congregations across the globe...*

*Let us pray for governments and leaders in the midst of transition...*

*Let us pray for the world's children and those who will teach them to live as adults...*

*Finally, let us pray together the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples*

*(Pray: The Lord's Prayer, Traditional or Ecumenical version)*

**HYMN:** They'll Know We Are Christians by Our Love, #2223 TFWS

**SCRIPTURE READING:** 1 Corinthians 12:4-26

**PRAYER:**

Loving God, in your wisdom you have surrounding us with gifted people. Help us to recognize, affirm, and give thanks for every gift you have placed among us. Teach us how to work together for the common good. Show us how to flow into the places where our gifts are needed and when to ask for help from others. Thank you for making us interdependent. Amen.

**CLOSING HYMN:** We Are the Body of Christ, #2227 TFWS



## **DEVOTIONS: TO OPEN OR CLOSE A LEADERSHIP RETREAT**

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**OPENING HYMN:** And Are We Yet Alive #553 UMH

**CALL TO PRAYER** *(based upon Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 NRSV):*

**Leader:** The Preacher said: For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

**People:** *A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted;*

**Leader:** For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

**People:** *A time to seek, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to throw away;*

**Leader:** For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven:

**People:** *We are here today to affirm changing times:  
Time for changes in the way we work together,  
Time for change in the way some decisions are made;  
Time to seat new brothers and sisters around the worktable.  
May God grant us grace as we begin our work together.*

## **PRAYER:**

Almighty God, change is bittersweet. Change challenges us to leave something behind and to embrace something new. Grant us the grace on this day to do both with humility. Help us to affirm the good things of our past as we lean into a future where there will also be good things. As we contemplate the changes that will come, remind us that all good things come from you. Today we commit ourselves to the necessary work ahead. Be present with us; work in us and through us we pray. Amen.

## **HYMN: This Is a Day of New Beginnings #383 UMH**

Sing verses 1-3. Then, divide into groups

**Group 1 discuss:** Verse 1 of Hymn #383 & Psalm 92:1-5a

**Group 2 discuss:** Verse 2 of Hymn #383 & Ephesians 2:4-10

**Group 3 discuss:** Verse 3 of Hymn #383 & Matthew 21:18-22

**Group 4 discuss:** Verse 4 of Hymn #383 & Romans 6:4-5

## **HYMN CONTINUES: This Is a Day of New Beginnings #383 UMH**

Sing verses 1&4

## **LITANY OF THANKSGIVING:**

**Leader:** Today, we pause to give thanks:

**People:** *Today, we give thanks for the faith that has nurtured us and our children, and*

*For the Church that brought meaning to our parent's lives and to ours.*

**Leader:** For what shall we give thanks?

**People:** *We give thanks for good people who gave their time and energies to good causes, and*

*For the laity who have given untold volunteer hours to good works and the clergy who have led them and worked by their side.*

**Leader:** For what shall we give thanks?

**People:** *We give thanks for a moral compass that has shaped nations and governments,*

*And, for all the ways that we continue to impact the world around us.*

**Leader:** Today, we pause to give thanks:

**ALL:** *Today, we give thanks for the many people of the Methodist family who became the United Methodist Church. We thank God for their labors and their struggles; their victories and their setbacks; their past and their future. As we prepare to write a new chapter of our collective history, we thank God for the people we have been and for all we have done together. May God continue to guide us and bless us as we look for new ways to witness and to serve.*

**CLOSING HYMN:** Now Thank We All Our God #102 UMH

**BENEDICTION:**

Go now in peace

To serve God and your neighbor

In all that you do.

Amen.



# DEVOTIONS: FOR TIMES OF DISCERNMENT

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## GREETING:

**Leader:** Jesus is the Light of the World!

**People:** *Thanks be to God for the Light!*

## EXHORTATION:

Unless the LORD builds the house, those who build it labor in vain. Unless the LORD guards the city, the guard keeps watch in vain. (Psalms 127:1 NRSV) Our work is only effective as we look to God moment by moment, day by day, for the guidance we need.

*(Silence)*

## SONG: *Guide My Feet (see next page)*

Cantor sings verse one alone, without music

People stand to sing verse 1 with music:

*Sing slowly, expressively, prayerfully.*

## GOSPEL READING:

Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. So they signaled their partners

# Guide My Feet

*The Faith We Sing, no. 2208*

The musical score is written on four staves in a 4/4 time signature with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The lyrics are: "I. Guide my feet while I run this race. Guide my feet while I run this race. Guide my feet while I run this race, for I don't want to run this race in vain!"

WORDS: African American Spiritual  
MUSIC: African American Spiritual

GUIDE MY FEET  
88.8.10

The United Methodist General Board of Discipleship, Center for Worship Resourcing, PO Box 340003, Nashville, Tennessee 37203-0003. Telephone (615) 340-7070; Website <http://www.umcworship.org>; Email Address: [WorshipCenter@gbod.org](mailto:WorshipCenter@gbod.org). This hymn is in the public domain.

in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink.

(Luke 5:1-7 NRSV)

*(Silence, people seated)*

## PEOPLE SING: "Guide My Feet," Verse 5

Search my heart while I run this race....

## UNISON PRAYER:

*Merciful God, we strain to hear your direction for this day. As we lean forward to listen, we also struggle with the weight of the cares we brought with us. We bring those cares to you this morning, knowing that you are both compassionate and powerful.*



## **PEOPLE SING: “Guide My Feet,” Verse 2**

Hold my hand while I run this race...

## **PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE:**

Together, let us pray for the world and its peoples ....

*(Silence)*

Together, let us pray for all who suffer and grieve on this day...

*(Silence)*

Together, let us pray for the leaders and laity of United Methodist Churches across the globe, and for those who minister in troubled places...

*(Silence)*

Together, let us pray for individuals who are in need of special care from God on this day...

*Say aloud the first names of people in need of special prayer.*

*When all have finished close with the response:*

Lord in your mercy,

*Hear our prayers.*

With confidence as people of God, together let us pray the prayer that Jesus taught his disciples:

*(Pray the Lord’s Prayer, Traditional or Ecumenical Version)*

## **PEOPLE SING: “Guide My Feet,” Verse 3**

Stand by me while I run this race...

## **GOSPEL READING:**

Jesus said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (Luke 4:18-19 NRSV)

## **UNISON PRAYER:**

*Empowering God, Set us aside this day for good news, for liberating work, for ministries that reveal your goodness to the entire world. Anoint us and let the acceptable year of your favor be made known!*

## **PEOPLE SING:** “Guide My Feet,” Verses 4 & 6

I'm your child while I run this race....

Guide my feet while I run this race....

## **BENEDICTION:**

May the glory of God's grace shine upon us,

May the peace of God rest upon us.

As we set our hands and our hearts to the work that lies before us. Amen.



# **DEVOTIONS: FOR SMALL GROUP MEETINGS 1**

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**HYMN:** Come, Holy Ghost, Our Hearts Inspire # 603 UMH

## **SCRIPTURE READINGS** *(use one or multiple readers):*

*Our God is a Pillar of Fire, lighting the way for weary travelers.*

*Hear the familiar words of the Exodus:*

The LORD went in front of them in a pillar of cloud by day, to lead them along the way, and in a pillar of fire by night, to give them light, so that they might travel by day and by night. Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people. (Exodus 13:21-22 NRSV)

*(Pause for Reflection)*

*Our God is a Cleansing Fire that burns away the chaff.*

*Hear the familiar words of John the Baptist as recorded in the gospel of Mark:*

John answered all of them by saying, “I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.” (Luke 3:16-17 NRSV)

*(Pause for Reflection)*

*Our God is an Empowering Fire, giving us abilities to do the work of the ministry.*

*Hear the familiar words of Luke describing the Day of Pentecost:*

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

(Acts 2:1-4 NRSV)

*(Pause for Reflection)*

**Leader:** Let us reflect together on what we have heard by responding to this question:

What words in the reading do I particularly remember and why?

*(Allow 3-5 minutes for scripture reflection in pairs or in small groups. Then, gather the group for prayer.)*

## **PRAYER:**

**Leader:** There are so many reasons that we need your Fire. When it is dark, we are unable to see the way forward without your presence. When we are bogged down with too many unnecessary things, we need your wind to blow the less

weighty things away and we need for your Fire to burn them. When we feel weak and powerless, you are the fire shut up in our bones! As we warm by your fire, we call to your remembrance:

Those in this world who need direction and guidance...

*(Prayers spoken aloud from the gathered community)*

Those in this world who are broken under the load of bureaucracy, oppressive structures, or the mismanagement of the world's resources...

*(Prayers spoken aloud from the gathered community)*

Those who need an Advocate...

*(Prayers spoken aloud from the gathered community)*

And now, as people of God, we pray with confidence:

*(Pray the Lord's Prayer, Traditional or Ecumenical Version)*

**HYMN: Spirit of the Living God #393 UMH**

**BENEDICTION:**

As you go from this place,

May God's Empowering Fire be ablaze in your life,

And may God use you to bring light to dreary places. Amen.



## **DEVOTIONS: FOR SMALL GROUP MEETINGS 2**

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**HYMN: Spirit of Gentleness TFWS #2120**

**SCRIPTURE READINGS:** Exodus 14:21-22; Mark 4:39-41; Acts 2:1-2 *(for multiple readers)*

**First Voice:** Then Moses stretched out his hand over the sea. The LORD drove the sea back by a strong east wind all night, and turned the sea into dry land; and the waters were divided. The Israelites went into the sea on dry ground, the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left. (Exodus 14:21-22 NRSV)

**Second Voice:** He woke up and rebuked the wind, and said to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" Then the wind ceased, and there was a dead calm. He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" And they were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?" (Mark 4:39-41 NRSV)

**Third Voice:** When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. (Acts 2:1-2 NRSV)

*(Silence for Reflection)*

## **UNISON PRAYER:**

*God of the cooling breeze and the disruptive gale, we are both awed by your power and gentled by your love. As we greet this day together, we are reminded of the winds of the Egyptian desert in Exodus, the winds of the Sea of Galilee, and the Winds of Pentecost -- are all under your command.*

### **First Voice:**

Even the winds of our private storms must obey you

And, so in confidence

We silently commit every problem and every storm to you.

*(Silence)*

### **Second Voice:**

We ask that your cleansing wind

That sifts the chaff from the wheat

Blow through the plans we have made for our time together.

*(Silence)*

**Third Voice:**

Finally, God,  
We ask that you blow away any fog  
That clouds our minds.

*(Silence)*

Amen.

**HYMN: Spirit, Spirit of Gentleness #2120 TFWS (refrain)****BLESSING:**

May the gentle winds of God's presence be felt among us today,  
And may we be carried by that wind  
As we do God's will and God's work  
Long after this meeting ends. Amen.

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