

# Saving Mothers' Lives: Putting Faith in Action



**CHURCH & SOCIETY**

The United Methodist Church

Living **FAITH** Seeking **JUSTICE** Pursuing **PEACE**



United  
Methodist  
Women

FAITH • HOPE • LOVE IN ACTION

# Mission is...

“**Mission** is presence, relationship, witness and sharing.

**Mission** is refusing to turn away when the tears of God are being shed over the violence and injustice and suffering of God’s wayward creation.”

*David Hosey, United Methodist Women-supported mission intern*

# Who We Are

Billie Ray – retired Public Health Worker, a Healthy Family, Healthy Planet Ambassador, and a United Methodist Woman

Rebecca Lucas – BSN, RNC has been a nurse working in Labor and Delivery and Neonatal ICU for 30+ years; United Methodist Woman

Susan Burton – Director, Women's and Children's Advocacy – Church and Society

Healthy Families, Healthy Planet is a UM maternal health advocacy initiative that mobilizes United Methodists to save mothers' lives through:

- Advocacy Training
- Legislative Advocacy
- Grassroots Advocacy

# We hope you will...

- Understand better the causes of maternal mortality and the solutions to save lives
- Be equipped with advocacy tools to take home and save mothers' lives
- Be ready to press your decision-makers to prioritize the lives of women and girls

# What's Going On

- **830** women around the world die each day from complications during pregnancy and birth
- **100,000** lives could be saved with access to low-cost, high-impact interventions
- **22** mothers die in the US for every 100,000 live births, the highest rate of any developed nation
- Black women are **243 times** more likely to die in childbirth than white women in the United States – education and income do not increase chances of survival
- US foreign and domestic policies, e.g. Global Gag Rule, are decreasing access to contraceptives around the world

# Why We Care

- UMC Book of Social Principles: "Health care is a basic human right...We affirm the right of men and women to have access to comprehensive reproductive health/family planning for information and services that will serve as a means to prevent unplanned pregnancies, reduce abortions, and prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS." UM Social Principles, 162V Right to Health Care
- We are called to "support ministry with and advocate for the oppressed and dispossessed with special attention to the needs of women, children and youth." The Book of Discipline of the UMC, 2012
- "We call on all United Methodists, local churches, campus ministries, colleges, universities, seminaries, annual conferences, general agencies and commissions, and the Council of Bishops to:  
Teach, preach and model healthy masculinity and respectful relationships that reflect the sacred worth of women and girls;  
Engage men and boys as allies in the promotion of gender equality..."  
2016 UM Book of Resolutions, #3427 *Eradicating Sexual and Gender-based Violence*

# Why Are Mother's Dying due to Pregnancy & Childbirth?

# Causes of Maternal Deaths in the United States

- Lack of access to healthcare before pregnancy
- Weathering – Racism and Sexism combined
- Pre-existing health problems that increase risks in pregnancy
  - High blood pressure
  - Obesity
  - Diabetes
  - Anemia
- Substance Abuse/Addiction
- Hemorrhaging – severe bleeding
- Implicit Bias in medical system
- Mental Health Issues



# Causes of Maternal Deaths Globally

- Severe bleeding (mostly bleeding after childbirth)
- Infections (usually after childbirth)
- High blood pressure during pregnancy (pre-eclampsia and eclampsia)
- Complications from delivery
- Unsafe abortion
- Girls too young to physiologically deliver babies – forced/arranged marriage, rape, trafficking and become pregnant.
- Challenges with transportation to medical facilities

# Ending Preventable Maternal Deaths

# What Protects Women & Girls in the United States

- Access to health care before pregnancy
- Information and resources to space & time pregnancies – wait at least 18 months between pregnancies
- Long acting contraceptives
- Comprehensive prenatal, delivery and postnatal care
- Bias-free medical care
- Smoking cessation and nutritional counseling
- Diagnosing and treating high blood pressure
- Creating Maternal Mortality Review Committees

# What Protects Women & Girls Globally

- Prenatal care and delivery care for mothers
- Providing women access to high-quality information and services needed to effectively time and space their pregnancies – incl long acting contraceptives
- Training more health workers to increase access to community health services
- Routine immunizations and testing for STIs
- Access to safe water, sanitation, and hygiene
- Ending violence against women and girls

# Creating Political Will

GIVE A CARE! through local church and community involvement:

- Request training for your UMW to become a Healthy Family Healthy Planet Ambassador or to hear a presentation from a current advocate
- Organize support groups that focus on women's health and wellbeing
- Support local health initiatives
- Advocate for programs that support prenatal and follow up care for all mothers, etc.

# What You Can Do

- Advocate for Maternal Mortality Review Committees in your state
- Call, write and meet with your Senators and Representative.
- Share on social media and invite others to call their members of Congress

## **ACT LOCALLY: Texas Healthy Family Healthy Planet advocacy team**

Texas has the highest rate of maternal mortality

- The death rate for pregnant women double from 18.6 deaths to 35.8 deaths per 100,000 live births between 2010 and 2014.
- The Texas Maternal Mortality Task Force was legislated in 2013 to study the increased rates of maternal death.

Texas HFHP Team has:

- Held one education forum, and one of the candidates for state congressional district attended.
- Created an email list for sending action alerts and articles pertaining to maternal health.

# Essential Components of Action

- Identify yourself as a constituent – someone to whom the decision-maker has a responsibility
- Share a story (paint a picture) of why you care about preventing maternal deaths
- Ask the decision-maker what you want, e.g. support legislation, protect funding



# US Federal Legislation

## **Preventing Maternal Deaths Act (H.R. 1318, S. 1112)**

- to support states in their work to save and sustain the health of mothers during pregnancy, childbirth and after pregnancy.

## **The REACH Every Mother and Child Act (H.R. 4022, S. 1730)**

- will increase the coordination and effectiveness of foreign aid program implementation to have the greatest impact.

**Protect access to and funding for** information and tools (contraceptives) to space and time pregnancies. (e.g. Global Gag Rule)

# Time to Practice Using Your Voice with Decision-Maker

Turn to your neighbor.

Introduce yourself

Share a story

Ask for what you want

Thank them & ask with whom you should  
follow-up

*Good morning. My name is Susan Burton. I live in Washington, DC. I have epilepsy and chose to adopt children. Without access to birth control, many women and girls like me risk dying from pregnancy and childbirth. What is [the senator] doing to ensure funding and access to long acting contraceptives for women who want it?*

# Be Persistent Like the Widow Make Those Calls!

The U.S. Capitol switchboard number is  
**(202) 224-3121.**

Call the switchboard and an operator will  
direct you to your members' offices.

**\*\*Add this number and local office  
numbers to your phone.**

# UM Maternal Health Advocacy Resources for Local Churches

## CHURCH & SOCIETY

### MATERNAL HEALTH

#### WOMEN AND CHILDREN

##### Saving the Lives of Moms and Babies

"Every 90 seconds a woman dies somewhere in the world from complications during pregnancy or childbirth; for every woman who dies, another 20 suffer disability. The main causes of maternal mortality include infection, hemorrhaging, high blood pressure, and obstructed labor. **They are mostly preventable.**"

United Methodist Book of Resolutions, "Maternal Health: The Church's Role"

##### Motherhood is Sacred

United Methodists say that motherhood is sacred. "Mothers are important figures in our biblical tradition. Women like Eve, Hagar, Sarah, Elizabeth, and Mary, Jesus, are remembered for their role as bearers of new life. But within the stories also tell of maternal tragedy and loss. Both Rachel (Genesis 35:11) wife of Phinehas (1 Samuel 4:19-20) died after prolonged and difficult labor stories of maternal death are commonplace today."

United Methodist Book of Resolutions, "Maternal Health: The Church's Role"

##### Access to Quality Care

Jesus' commitment to healing the sick and John Wesley's vision for ensuring well-being teach us that the health of the community must not be neglected; the care needed to maintain health, prevent disease, and restore health. Illness is a responsibility each person owes others and government owes them.

United Methodist Social I

##### Good Stewardship of Resources

United Methodists call for health care that invests in low-cost, high impact that prevent maternal and child deaths (e.g., contraceptives, high blood screenings). "Health is a condition of physical, mental, social and spiritual. Creating the personal, environmental and social conditions in which health is a joint responsibility — public and private. ... Health care is a basic human right."

United Methodist Social I

#### Motherhood is sacred

United Methodist Book of Resolutions, "Maternal Health: The Church's Role"

## Motherhood is sacred



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United Methodist Book of Resolutions, "Maternal Health: The Church's Role"

##### The Numbers

- 830 women around the world die each day from complications during pregnancy and childbirth.
- 100,000 lives could be saved with access to low-cost, high-impact interventions.
- 22 mothers die in the U.S. for every 100,000 live births, the highest rate of any developed country.

##### What Works

- Long-acting contraceptives
- Spacing and timing pregnancies
- Prenatal, delivery and postnatal care
- Bias-free medical care
- Safe water and sanitation
- Smoking cessation and nutritional counseling
- Diagnosing and treating high blood pressure

## What You Can Do

The United Methodist Church calls upon local congregations to:

- 1 Support United Methodist projects around the world working on maternal health and family planning.
- 2 Advocate with policy makers at all levels to increase access to maternal health and family planning.
- 3 Support local health initiatives that expand access to information and services for women's health.

## Write Your Members of Congress

The U.S. Congress is currently considering two bipartisan bills (H.R. 1318, S. 1121) to support states in their work to save and sustain the health of mothers during pregnancy, childbirth and after pregnancy.

Write your members of Congress and ask them to support and cosponsor these two vital bills. Share a personal story, if you have one, and tell them that as a United Methodist you believe motherhood is sacred.

"In the Gospel of John, Jesus tells the disciples that he came so that they could live life to the fullest. God desires that every mother, every child, and every family not only survive, but thrive. Tragically, survival is often a daily struggle for those who lack access to basic services and care. God calls us to respond to the suffering in the world, to love our neighbors throughout the world. As followers of Christ, we are members of the same body. The loss of one member is a loss for all."

United Methodist Book of Resolutions, "Maternal Health: The Church's Role"

General Board of Church and Society, 100 Maryland Ave, NE, Washington, DC 20002

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### MATERNAL HEALTH

#### WOMEN AND CHILDREN

##### Mothers' Day preaching tips

##### Theological Task: Save Mothers' Lives.

Motherhood is sacred. Motherhood is an identity based on relationships that are not defined by any one variable, including childbirth. However, as we celebrate Mother's Day, it is essential that we recognize the perils women and girls face as a result of pregnancy.

Within sacred texts, women like Eve, Hagar, Sarah, Elizabeth, and Mary the mother of Jesus are remembered for their role as bearers of new life. There are also stories of maternal tragedy and loss. Both Rachel (Genesis 35:16-20) and the wife of Phinehas (1 Samuel 4:19-20) died after prolonged and difficult labors.

Women and girls become pregnant today for many of the same reasons we learn about in scripture: love and mutual intimacy (like Elizabeth and Sarah); rape, slavery and human trafficking (like Hagar).

Our responsibility as Christians is to prevent harm and promote the health of women and girls. We know how to do this. Now, let's be like the Syrophenician woman and use our voices to save lives of women and girls, even if it creates some discomfort.

##### Scripture:

Lectionary: John 17:6-19 — Thy will be done

Lectionary reading focuses on the middle portion of a prayer in which Jesus prays on behalf of his disciples.

Throughout the prayer — and throughout the gospels — Jesus repeatedly refers to God as Father. Some interpret this to mean that God is literally a man, though, perhaps, not a man, and at the least, a masculine deity. Others suggest that this doesn't mean that God is a father, but instead is a metaphor used to show the profound bonds between God and Jesus.

Often make use of this rhetorical device in our churches, calling our siblings in Christ brother or sister. This isn't to mean that someone is biologically my sister, but we use the metaphor to indicate our deep, familial relationship.

On this is Mother's Day, you might find it edifying to explore God's maternal qualities. For example, Jesus uses the metaphor of a mother hen in Luke's gospel to describe his desire to protect his people.

## SOCIETY

The Church

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# Additional Resources

- American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology
- Joint Commission on Healthcare Accreditation
- Association of Women's Health, Neonatal and Obstetric Nurses
- American Nursing Association and state nursing associations
- March of Dimes

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