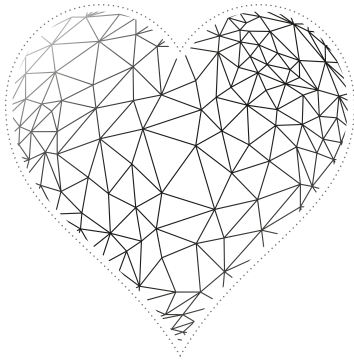


# 2027 Pledge Service





# A Pilgrimage for Mission

by Regina Heater

## INTRODUCTION

The annual Pledge Service is an opportunity to celebrate the work of United Women in Faith and commit to this ongoing work through a financial gift. We call this commitment a “Pledge to Mission Giving” because this offering funds the mission of United Women in Faith at local, conference, national, and international levels.

An essential part of preparing for this pledge service is reflecting on United Women in Faith Mission Giving. Schedule dedicated time with your leadership team to refamiliarize yourself with the breadth and depth of United Women in Faith. Begin with a simple prayer and then explore the United Women in Faith website together. Read the Annual Report on the website and the Leadership Toolkit on UWFaith Digital. As a group, make notes on the things that excite you as a team. You will have an opportunity to share this with your group during the pledge service.

### A mission pilgrimage

A pilgrimage is a journey toward a holy place. There are many ways to experience pilgrimage. One traditional understanding is to choose a destination and travel there, but the way isn’t always a direct one. For example, the Camino de Santiago has dozens of routes to the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, Spain.

In our context, we might think of our work with United Women in Faith as a pilgrimage, with our “destination” the mission of United Women in Faith fulfilled in every way. Every pilgrimage has waypoints that help the traveler find their way. Every pilgrimage requires preparation. The journey is never straight; the path has twists and turns. There may be moments that are physically and mentally grueling; the pilgrim might even get lost. The journey is never a solo endeavor—even if a pilgrim walks alone, they follow in the footsteps of thousands before them, relying on their wisdom, and many people provide food, housing, and care along the way.

Our United Women in Faith journey is similar. We have the wisdom of our ancestors—the women who came before us, fought for us, and nurtured our very

existence. We have the gifts of the sisterhood around us, who help us fulfill the purpose and mission that is held for us. And we have the promises of God. We have every tool we need for the journey before us, moving toward the goal of supporting the mission and work of United Women in Faith. We have been called to this work, and we have everything we need to complete the pilgrimage.

We will begin our pilgrimage by acknowledging where we are and assessing what we have for the journey. We will consider where we have been and what we have learned, celebrating our successes and mourning that which did not work out. We will set a pin in the map for where we will go, dreaming for the future, and believing we have enough for the journey. We will conclude by offering one another a blessing for the pilgrimage ahead.

## **Planning the Pledge Service**

You will want to consider how you want to set up your space for the Pledge Service.

## **Worship Center Material**

If you choose to create a worship center, you could use items that you might need and use when you travel, such as:

- Maps (If you can, use some printouts of United Women in Faith supplied maps along with other maps, such as a state map, local road maps, a star map, and maps of pilgrimages like the Camino de Santiago and even labyrinths.)
  - International Missions Map: [bit.ly/InternationalMissionMap](http://bit.ly/InternationalMissionMap)
  - National Mission Institutions Map: [bit.ly/NMIMap](http://bit.ly/NMIMap)
  - Deaconess & Home Missioner Map: [bit.ly/DHMMMap](http://bit.ly/DHMMMap)
  - Mission Maps: [bit.ly/MissionMaps](http://bit.ly/MissionMaps)
- Shoes
- Candles of various sizes
- Flashlights
- Tote bags, backpacks, suitcase
- Pretend passports
- Blankets
- Compass
- Guidebooks

## **Additional supplies for this service include:**

- Seashells, scallop-shaped if possible. They should be large enough that participants can write their names on them. Seashells can be purchased from craft supply stores or perhaps members who collect them would be willing to share them with you for the pledge service. You could also cut shell shapes on cardstock, either by tracing the design or using a die-cut machine.

- Permanent Markers or paint markers
- Tea lights or votive candles
- Lighter
- Word choice board printouts found at the end of this program
- Pledge forms: [uwfaithresources.org/prodDetail.cfm?productID=10261&catid=2196](http://uwfaithresources.org/prodDetail.cfm?productID=10261&catid=2196)
- Basket to collect pledge forms
- Copies of the pledge service. You could also choose to project the service as slides if that is accessible for you.

You will also need to invite individuals to be readers. They should be given the materials ahead of time to read through and prepare.

### **Music**

Play some quiet music as people are gathering and as they leave. Apple Music, Spotify, and YouTube all have instrumental Christian hymns and worship music options that you could use with a device and a Bluetooth speaker. (This is a great task to invite one specific person to coordinate.)

### **Room setup**

Participants will be asked to bring things forward to the worship center, so ensure that your setup creates a clear path without obstacles to do so.

As your sisters enter, share with them a shell, marker, and pledge form.

## **PLEDGE SERVICE**

### **Welcome**

#### **Leader:**

We are in the presence of God.

We are embarking on a pilgrimage.

We will acknowledge and give thanks for the experiences we have known.

We are embarking on a pilgrimage.

We will leave behind thoughts of limitation, and we will imagine.

We will walk with God.

We may feel secure right where we are.

But we know that new ways of being in the world is possible for us, as women united in faith.



United in our mission

To inspire,

To influence,

To impact.

God, our light and our salvation, blesses us and invites us to open our hearts and minds to see the paths before us as we celebrate our work and make our commitment to the future of United Women in Faith.

In this place,

in every place,

for this time,

for all time.

### **Litany/Call to Community**

One: What have you brought for our pilgrimage today?

**Many: We have brought our hopes and our fears.**

One: What have you brought for our pilgrimage today?

**Many: We have brought our joys and our sorrows.**

One: What have you brought for our pilgrimage today?

**Many: We have brought our prayer and our voices.**

One: What have you brought for our pilgrimage today?

**Many: We have brought our talents and our money.**

One: Let us give all of ourselves in our pilgrimage! Let us, with gratitude and joy, remember, dream and go forth!

### **A reading of Psalm 139:1–6 (NRSVUE)**

One: O Lord, you have searched me and known me.  
You know when I sit down and when I rise up;  
you discern my thoughts from far away.  
You search out my path and my lying down,  
and are acquainted with all my ways.  
Even before a word is on my tongue,  
O Lord, you know it completely.

**Many:** You hem me in, behind and before,  
and lay your hand upon me.  
Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;  
it is so high that I cannot attain it.

## **Celebrating our present: Where we begin**

### **Leader:**

The Camino de Santiago, or the Way of St. James, is a pilgrimage path in Europe that leads to the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, Spain. It is believed that the relics of St. James, one of the 12 apostles, were discovered, and a church was built around them. From the 10th century onward, pilgrims journeyed from all over Europe to Spain to earn indulgences. In the mid-20th century, the pilgrimage experienced a rediscovery, and interest has continued to grow. Travelers come from all over the world and start in dozens of different places around Europe. The most popular route is the French Way, starting in the Pyrenees, but there is also a Portuguese route and an English Way. The pathways to Santiago de Compostela are marked with a scallop shell shape, which is the symbol of St. James. Pilgrims attach shells to their packs and clothing as a sign to other pilgrims of their journey, and you will see shell shapes on signs and embedded in streets to mark the pilgrimage path. You'll find these shapes all over France, often at churches, to show the traveler they are on the right path.

Today, we are going to make our own symbols of pilgrimage with these shells.

Please write your first name on the shell, as well as the year. You're welcome to doodle on or decorate the shell, perhaps with a symbol that is important to you.

*Allow 2–3 minutes for participants to write their names.*

**One:** Sisters, let us begin our pilgrimage.  
We are United Women in Faith.

**Many:** God is here. Christ is in us. The Spirit keeps our life.

**One:** Today is [name the date].  
We are in [name geographic location].

**Many:** God is here. Christ is in us. The Spirit keeps our life.

We are going to build our altar with our shells, marking our place and space on this pilgrimage. I'm going to invite you to come forward and place your shell on the altar, telling us your name and what energizes you about being part of United Women in Faith.

After each shell is placed, say together:

**God is here. Christ is in us. The Spirit keeps our life.**

***Leader note:** If you have a particularly large group, you could wait to say this until all shells are placed. But consider the power of saying the blessing for each person!*

### **A reading of Psalm 139:7–12 (NRSVUE)**

One: Where can I go from your spirit?  
Or where can I flee from your presence?  
If I ascend to heaven, you are there;  
if I make my bed in Sheol, you are there.  
If I take the wings of the morning  
and settle at the farthest limits of the sea,  
even there your hand shall lead me,  
and your right hand shall hold me fast.

Many: If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me,  
and the light around me become night,"  
even the darkness is not dark to you;  
the night is as bright as the day,  
for darkness is as light to you.

### **Where have you been?**

**Leader:**

We know who we are. We know where we are. Let us take some time to remember where we have been. Let us share our memories of our United Women in Faith work over the years. Tell us your favorite memories and share with us about the women of this place who dwell now in light. Tell us of the good and the difficult times. We will light our candles as a symbol of how the wisdom of our ancestors lights our way forward.

***Leader note:** You can enhance this portion by sharing a slide show of a selection of information from United Women in Faith's work beyond the local unit. Using*

*the information provided by United Women in Faith on its website and the Daily Prayer Guide, highlight the mission of United Women in Faith interspersed with the sharing about the local group. Choose a National Mission Institution, the ministry of a home missionary or deaconess, or a Regional Missionary; share statistics from the Annual Report about the reach of United Women in Faith, available on the United Women in Faith website and in the Leadership Toolkit on UWFaith Digital. Use the time you spend preparing as a time of prayer and renewal for yourself as you renew your knowledge about the mission of United Women in Faith.*

### **A reading of Psalm 139:13–18 (NRSVUE)**

One: For it was you who formed my inward parts;  
you knit me together in my mother's womb.  
I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.  
Wonderful are your works;  
that I know very well.  
My frame was not hidden from you,  
when I was being made in secret,  
intricately woven in the depths of the earth.  
Your eyes beheld my unformed substance.  
In your book were written  
all the days that were formed for me,  
when none of them as yet existed.

Many: **How weighty to me are your thoughts, O God!**  
**How vast is the sum of them!**  
**I try to count them—they are more than the sand;**  
**I come to the end—I am still with you.**

### **Where do we pilgrimage to?**

**Leader:**

We have named who we are; we have given thanks for the wisdom and experience of the past. Now, let us name our dreams for the future. What will we do as United Women in Faith members? Where will our journey take us?

Please share with us what you are looking forward to with United Women in Faith this coming year here in our area and what our sisters around the world will do with our support.



## Setting off on the pilgrimage

**Leader:**

We are ready to begin this part of our pilgrimage. We know our gifts and graces; we know our strengths and passions. We carry with us the stories and wisdom of those who have journeyed before us. Now it is time to commit to our pilgrimage.

*Distribute the word choice boards.*

On this handout are words of attributes or actions that might be helpful to “pack” for our pilgrimage.

What do you need for the journey? Do you need confidence or encouragement? Forgiveness or strength? Choose the words you need as you begin this pilgrimage to support the mission of United Women in Faith.

*Spend 3–5 minutes in silence to contemplate the choices.*

Invite participants to share as they are comfortable.

## Committing to our mission journey

**Leader:**

We are ready for our mission journey. We know who we are; we know our gifts and graces. We have honored our past. We have gathered what we need to go forward. It is time to present our pledges which financially support our way forward as United Women in Faith.

**One:** We are United Women in Faith! We have been called to this moment.

**Many:** **God is here. Christ is in us. The Spirit keeps our life.**

**One:** Today we mark a waypoint on our United Women in Faith journey. It is a beginning, but it is also a continuation. Our journey as United Women in Faith began 157 years ago.

**Many:** **We are United Women in Faith!**

One: We are a community of bold women on a journey, believing that love in action can change the world and with God make the impossible possible.

**Many: We are United Women in Faith!**

One: We are women who influence. We are community leaders, justice champions, and brave changemakers, we are connecting to boldly transform the world. We are reading, listening, learning, and leading.

**Many: We are United Women in Faith!**

One: We are women who are inspired. We are growing in our faith, deepening our relationship with God, caring for our souls.

**Many: We are United Women in Faith!**

One: We are women who make an impact—on our own block, in our communities, and around the world. We are advocating for clean and renewable energy where equity and justice are centered. We are addressing the unfair policies and practices that criminalize children and youth of color and drive school pushout. We are working to support the worldwide struggle for liberation and eliminate all forms of institutional racism in church and community.

**Many: We are United Women in Faith!**

One: Our actions have always spoken as loud as our words. Acts of love. Acts of faith. Acts of change. We show up and get things done.

**Many: We are United Women in Faith!**

One: Our commitment to advocate for women, children, and youth, is unwavering. Together, we're making the world a better place: locally, globally, fearlessly.

**Many: We are United Women in Faith!**

One: Today, as we continue this pilgrimage journey, we give thanks for the waypoints that show us the way of justice, like our National Mission Institutions that empower women, care for children, support seniors, educate youth, provide housing for domestic violence survivors, and offer residences for special needs children and youth.

**Many: We are United Women in Faith!**

**One:** Our international mission is to empower women and youth and make positive, measurable change in their communities through skills-building workshops, leadership development, economic empowerment, advocacy, and community building.

**Many: We are United Women in Faith!**

**One:** Our deaconesses and home missionaries who work to alleviate suffering, eradicate causes of injustice and all that robs life of dignity and worth, facilitate the development of full human potential, and share in building the global community through the church universal.

**Many: We are United Women in Faith!**

**One:** When this part of our pilgrimage is complete, more women, youth, and children will have experienced justice. Lives will have been transformed. We do this together as United Women in Faith members. Your pledge is more than a symbol, it is an example of your trust in and commitment to the mission we have together. Let us renew that commitment to one another and our sisterhood. We are unstoppable!

Please complete your pledge card and  
place it in the basket.

**Leader:**

Let us pray.

Gracious and loving God, giver of all that is good and true and beautiful and life-giving: we offer these pledges at this waypoint on our journey. These pledges represent our lives, our dreams, and our confidence that we, your people, are your partners and co-creators in the transformation of the world. We are grateful you have chosen us for this pilgrimage and these missions. We are grateful that the blessings of our lives give us this opportunity to share. We are grateful that you have shown us the paths to justice, mercy, and equality. May these gifts be multiplied through the connections you have helped us forge in this sisterhood of United Women in Faith. This is our hope and our prayer, in Jesus Christ. Amen.

## Closing and benediction

**Leader:**

We go forth from this place ready for the journey. Each of these shells is a reminder and a promise of this pilgrimage of mission we share together as United Women in Faith. Take the shell of another sister, and let it be a reminder of this commitment to our sisterhood and this journey.

Hold this sister in prayer in the coming year.

One:     Peace be with you.

**Many:   And also with you.**

One:     May God be for us our companion on the walk,

Our guide at the crossroads,  
Our breath in our weariness,  
Our protection in danger,  
Our refuge on the Way,  
Our shade in the heat,  
Our light in the darkness,  
Our consolation in our discouragements,  
And our strength in our intentions.

**Many:   With Christ's own breath within us, we shall travel well. Thanks  
          be to God.**

*Adapted from the Pilgrim's Prayer prayed at the Pilgrim Mass along the Camino de Santiago.*

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## Helpful Web & Digital Resources

United Women in Faith website: [uwfaith.org](http://uwfaith.org)

Daily Prayer Guide: [uwfaith.org/resources/prayerguide](http://uwfaith.org/resources/prayerguide)

National Mission Institutions: [uwfaith.org/what-we-do/what-we-fund/national-ministries](http://uwfaith.org/what-we-do/what-we-fund/national-ministries)

Office of Deaconess & Home Missioner: [uwfaith.org/what-we-do/deaconess-and-home-missioner](http://uwfaith.org/what-we-do/deaconess-and-home-missioner)

International Mission: [uwfaith.org/what-we-do/international-ministries](http://uwfaith.org/what-we-do/international-ministries)

Annual Report: [uwfaith.org/who-we-are/financials](http://uwfaith.org/who-we-are/financials)

Leadership Toolkit: [uwfaith.mn.co/spaces/12996231/content](http://uwfaith.mn.co/spaces/12996231/content)

## Word Choice Board

|                      |                     |                             |
|----------------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>Courage</b>       | <b>Authenticity</b> | <b>Healing</b>              |
| <b>Encouragement</b> | <b>Knowledge</b>    | <b>Compassion</b>           |
| <b>Confidence</b>    | <b>Flexibility</b>  | <b>Willingness</b>          |
| <b>Love</b>          | <b>A smile</b>      | <b>Community</b>            |
| <b>Forgiveness</b>   | <b>Peace</b>        | <b>Optimism</b>             |
| <b>A hug</b>         | <b>Strength</b>     | <b>Wonder</b>               |
| <b>Affirmation</b>   | <b>Sleep</b>        | <b>Choose your own word</b> |
| <b>Patience</b>      | <b>Support</b>      |                             |