



May 13, 2018

The United Methodist Church
The Philadelphia Area Episcopal Office
(*Eastern Pennsylvania and Peninsula-Delaware Conferences*)

Bishop Peggy A. Johnson

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To the People Called United Methodists,
Grace and Peace to You in the Name of Christ:

Many sanctuaries will be filled by the smell of flowers today as we gather to celebrate our own mothers and motherhood.

As we lift up the mothers in our communities, so too we lift up the mothers of our faith: Sarah, Hannah, Eve, Rebecca, Rachel, Mary, Phineas' wife, Susanna Wesley. Were it not for these women, and millions more, we would not be here today. We give thanks to God for their witness and their care.

It is because of this that we write to you today. As we remember mothers, we call to your attention the mothers who die as a result of childbirth.

For many, childbirth-related deaths might seem like something of the past. The tragic reality is thousands of women die each year in childbirth from preventable causes. Today alone, 800 mothers will die in childbirth, often times because fundamental things — like proper nutrition, skilled delivery, and clean water — are missing. The knowledge and ability to space and time pregnancies are also critical and often missing.

Scripture tells us that Christ came that we may have abundant life (John 10:10). As we celebrate mothers, we also commit ourselves to saving and improving the lives of mothers around the world.

There is work to be done through the church. With 12 million members worldwide, The United Methodist Church worships and works around the world to improve care for mothers. We identify and train frontline health workers, provide improved nutrition, sanitation, and family planning services and educate local communities and people of faith about the importance of investing in maternal and child health.

There is work to be done by our governments, too. For example, the international aid the United States has provided has led the way in improving the lives of mothers around the world and building the capacity of countries to ensure all people reach their full potential. Through these efforts, we have seen tremendous progress, but our work remains unfinished.

As a bishop in Christ's United Methodist Church, I call on you to celebrate mothers today and every day. Support local and global United Methodist efforts to save mother's lives. Talk to your elected leaders and let them know that aid to prevent maternal death is important to you. And in all things, pray.

Sincerely,

Bishop Peggy A. Johnson