



United
Women
in Faith
Minnesota

The *fresh* Connection

Newsletter of the Minnesota Conference of United Women in Faith

Fall 2025



MN UWFaith President Marion Hansen, and UWFaith members Connie Scott, Cindy Saufferer and Louis Johnson danced with members of ECA Youth Retreat during the youth group's performance.

Finding Hope, Joy, Refugia at Mission u

By Jessica Allen, Fresh Connection Editor

Sisterhood, nurturing, inspiration, joy — hope. These are among the ways Mission u attendees described this year's retreat.

Mission u is an annual retreat hosted by Minnesota United Women in Faith. This year's retreat, which was held July 25-27 at Koronis Ministries Christian Camp and Retreat outside of Paynesville, focused on the theme of practicing hope and finding joy, even when it may seem impossible.

"I feel like this retreat builds your soul," said Sophia Mohowald, who attended Mission u for the first time.

Led by Cindy Saufferer, the group of about 30 women, discussed and reflected on how grief, hope and joy work in conjunction with refugia to help us survive life's hardest moments. Refugia is an area that provides a haven for species during times of environmental change, allowing them to survive when other areas become unsuitable. They reflected on how to find hope through God and nurture refugia so nature and humanity can thrive.

Joy took center stage when members of the East Central African (ECA) Youth Retreat sang Christian songs in English and Swahili during a concert in the Tabernacle.

ECA is a music retreat for young people who are descendants of or citizens of East Central Africa. Members of the group came from 14 US states and six countries.

The audience watched in awe and delight as the teens sang with the talent of a pro. The performers often left the stage, swaying back and forth as they danced in a line around the room — the same dance that is common in their homelands.

As they danced, each one would take the hands of an audience member and invite them to join the dance line. It was a moment of teaching, learning and joy.



Members of East Central African Youth Retreat performed in the Tabernacle. They sang Christian songs in English and Swahili.



Members of ECA danced around the room and invited members of the audience to join them.

Mohowald, who attends Bethel United Methodist Church in Mound, said she was surprised and inspired by how many women at the retreat were able to be open and vulnerable.

Another theme the group explored was how to resist imperial power. Bible passages provided an example of how Jesus and the Apostles resisted the imperial power of Rome. After his death and before knowing of his resurrection, the Apostles grieved and struggled to find hope.

As a community, we can unite against oppression and injustice as God has instructed and mandated, Mission u group concluded. Together, we can find hope and joy as we navigate loss, tragedy and uncertainty.

An online Mission u was held June 4, 5, 17 and 19.

The next Mission u, “Experiencing Emmanuel” will be held July 24-26, 2026, at Ministries Christian Camp and Retreat in Paynesville. The date for the online Mission u is TBD.

Reflecting on the weekend long retreat, Nancy Kipp of Brooklyn United Methodist Church in Brooklyn Center, said she previously attended Mission u online and liked that the in-person retreat provides an opportunity to interact with other women and get to know them better.

The sisterhood offered a safe space where several of the women shared their personal stories of finding hope and joy after experiencing grief caused by tragedy. The group came together to support one another through their journey.



Cathy Carter holds a seed magnet and painted rock that she made in the Discovery Room at Mission u. The Discovery Room was a space for gathering and making crafts.

Mission u Reminds Us We Are Not Alone

A Reflection of this year's retreat

By Jessica Allen, Fresh Connection Editor

Mission u isn't just a retreat; it's a safe space where a sisterhood gathers to listen, learn and support one another. It's a place to introspect, meditate and renew.

This year was my second time attending Mission u and it gets better every year. I always look forward to gathering with such an amazing group of women.

Discussions at Mission u inspire me to reflect upon myself, my community and the world. It challenges me to aspire to do more to make a positive impact on the lives of others and the environment.

This year, Mission u was a place for joy, tears, release and comfort. It was a space for each of us to share personal stories of hope, joy and loss. The support from my sisters gives me a feeling of calm and love that is particularly meaningful in a time when there is so much hate, fear, anger and division in the world.

The theme of hope, joy, grief and refugia — an area that provides a haven for species during time of environmental change, allowing them to survive when other areas become unsuitable — was fascinating and inspiring. It brought difficult memories of my own moments of loss and grief, but it also reminded me that I'm not alone. We are never alone — the sisterhood, our loved ones and God are always with us. There is always hope even when times feel hopeless.

I look forward to joining my sisters again at Mission u next year.



Jessica Allen

Self-Care and Growing Your Spiritual Foundations

By Marion Hansen, MN UWFaith President

Self-care requires ongoing maintenance and attention. Gathering as a sisterhood to learn and take action together reinforces purpose and direction. The 2026 Assembly will include a pre-session opportunity for service through an UMBUNTU project or a Soul Care training program. You can also develop and organize these activities closer to home. A few service projects being implemented in the area include sewing children's book bags as they start school, providing meals for people in your local community, supporting local food shelves/banks, making bed mats from plastic bags for the homeless, a children/youth summer reading program, distributing blankets to shelters and to people experiencing hardship or illness, distributing meals and many more.

You might say "but those are *social action* projects." Yes, they are, but the link between *spiritual* wellbeing, strengthening your spiritual foundations and *self-care* interact firmly with taking *action*.

Be bold. Join a peaceful protest to voice your concern, connect with your elected officials, run for office, give to Mission, volunteer, and/or join your UWFaith sisters in providing support for each other. Engage in your passion and take that first step. Join today by clicking the "join" button on UWFaithmn.com.

More information about the 2026 Assembly can be found on page 10.

Message from the President

Calling for Hope in Action

This year, we have explored and restored Hope through our Spring Gatherings and Mission u programs. Hope is the driving force for the development of Social Action, Racial Justice and Climate Justice movements. That vision “of something better,” is supported and driven through Hope in Action.

Each year, our Conference team meets in August for a visioning retreat where we set the stage for activities for the next year. The support from our approximately 130 units at local United Methodist churches in Minnesota and our growing Individual Members group is invaluable in providing the engine that drives mission efforts in our local community and around the globe.



Marion Hansen

Local Mission giving has been on the rise for needs that are supported through the local efforts of women’s groups around the state. Nationally, however, Mission giving, which supports our global efforts, the Deaconess program and National Mission Institutions has declined. As we near the end of another year, we encourage those who can to support the needs of women, children and youth in the greater community and locally by giving generously to our Minnesota State Pledge to Mission and to our Emma Norton Goal.

I am looking forward to meeting you at Alexandria UMC for our Minnesota Conference Fall Gathering. Remember to check out our [MN UWFaith Facebook](#) page and our [website](#) for more information about how to register for upcoming events and to make a donation in support of the organization. By clicking the “Join” button, you can become an Individual Member of MN United Women in Faith.

Sisters together in Mission,

Marion Hansen, President, MN UWFaith

MN UWFaith Standing Rules, Budget Moves Forward

At our Annual Meeting this fall, we will adopt a full revision of our MN Standing Rules and a 2026 budget. Our Standing Rules team along with our Membership team has been working diligently on this revision. You can download a PDF copy of the Standing Rules and budget from uwfaithmn.com to review. Be sure to review the draft documents before our Conference Annual Meeting where we will finalize the document for publication on our website.

MN UWFaith Annual Fall Gathering Set for October

By Linda Kotschevar, MN UWFaith Program Coordinator

The Minnesota United Women in Faith will host its Annual Fall Gathering on Saturday, Oct. 11 from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Alexandria United Methodist Church, 2210 6th Ave E, Alexandria.

The guest speaker, Rev. Dawn Houser will give a presentation titled, “Native American Boarding Schools: The Generational Impact,” in which she will explore how this traumatic experience continues to affect Native Americans today and how we can influence changes within our communities through engagement in foster care settings, school board advocacy and trauma informed practices.

Children who attended the schools were torn away from their families and culture, raised in a challenging and difficult environment, and then were expected to return to society.

Looking back, we can now see how that experience shaped their relationships as they formed families and raised their own children.

Be sure to join us for an informative and fun day! The program will be from 9 a.m. to noon and will be livestreamed at www.youtube.com/@AlexUMC/streams.

Rev. Dawn Houser (biidaaban – Anishinaabe name meaning “to have a future vision”) is a descendent of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa and serves as the lead pastor of Aitkin United Methodist Church in Aitkin, Minn. A committed Ojibwe Christian, Houser lives at the intersection of Christian faith and Native spirituality, working to bring healing, understanding, and cultural restoration to both church and community.

She co-founded Migiziwaadiswan, an Ojibwe cultural learning center focused on revitalizing Native traditions and language. Houser also serves on the Aitkin School Board, chairs the Minnesota Conference Committee on Native American Ministries, and co-chairs the North Central Jurisdiction Committee on Native American Ministries. As a spiritual leader and educator, Houser speaks passionately about the generational trauma caused by Native American boarding schools and the ongoing efforts to reclaim identity, language, and tradition among Indigenous people in Minnesota. Her life’s purpose is to build bridges between cultures, generations, and faiths so that healing and unity may come.

Leadership Development Retreat

Attention all Minnesota Conference and Area officers! Leadership Development Retreat will be held at 3:30 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 11 through 2:30 p.m. Sunday, Oct. 12 at Alexandria United Methodist Church.

Once again, this will be in combination with the MN Conference Fall Gathering. All officers should have received an email in mid-August with details about the event and along with lodging information. Leadership Development Retreat is designed for all Conference and Area leaders to strengthen their leadership skills, and learn, worship and experience fellowship. It is an important component of serving as an officer in United Women in Faith.

Register for Annual Gathering & LDR on one form at <https://forms.gle/bYotr9zpQetRbwaQA>.



Image by Artist Avis Charley



Dawn
Houser

2026 Conference Officer Nominations Open

Nominations remain open for all open positions until filled so please consider volunteering yourself or another person for a position.

2026 Offices to be Elected:

President: Marion Hansen (2nd Term)

Secretary: Sophia Mahowald (2nd Term)

Treasurer:

Continuing in Elected Office:

Chair of Nominations: Shirley Jackson (2nd year 1st Term)

Continuing in Appointed Office:

Education and Interpretation: Carol Miller (cont. term)

Lending Library: Connie Scott (cont. term)

Nominations open for Appointed office:

Nominations Team members (up to 8)

Program Coordinator/Vice President

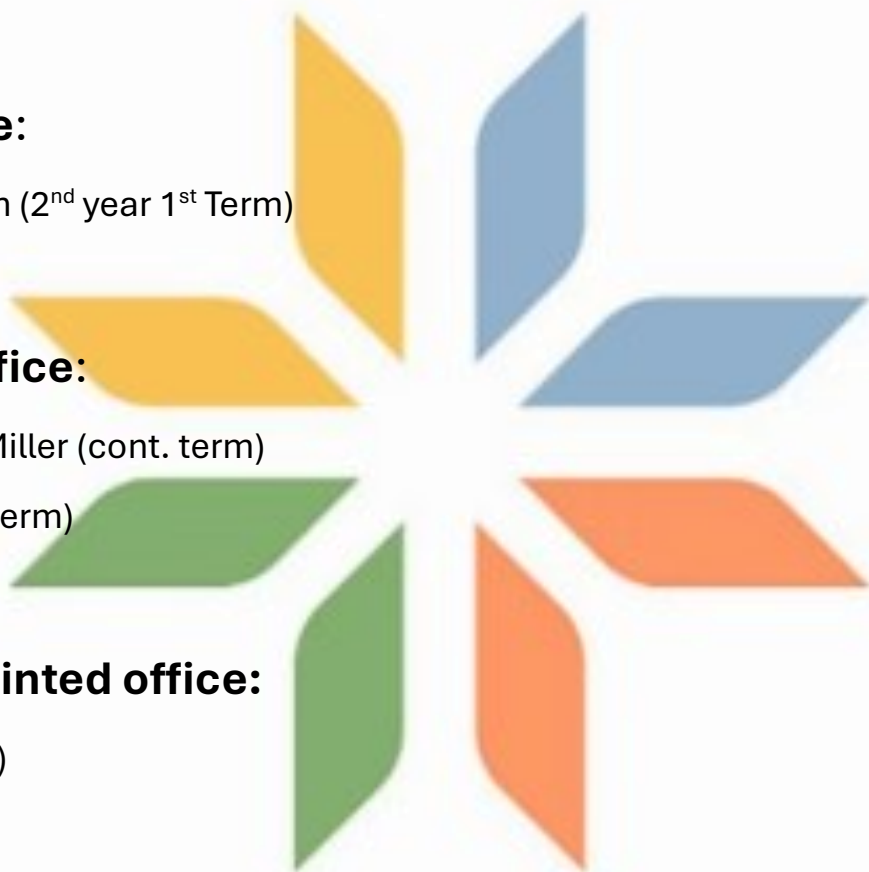
Membership, Nurture and Outreach

Social Action

Spiritual Growth

Assigned Leadership:

New: Emma Norton Scholarship chair: Kathy Hulsebus



2026 Conference Officers/Openings Continued

Continuing in Assigned office:

Data base coordinator: Catherine Williams

Facebook coordinator: Becky Colman

Web Manager and Registrar: Sandy Meyer

Directory Project Leader: Jomyla Choate

Fresh Connection editor: Jessica Allen

Assigned positions available:

Historian, Tech Coordinator

NATIONAL AND JURISDICTION LEADERSHIP:

Kim Harris: National Director

Program Advisory Group: MN/Dak Emma McKirdy-Wilson

Becky Colman: NCJ Secretary

Shirley Durr: NCJ Nominations

COSROW: Shirley Jackson, Laurie Boche

Area Presidents 2026:

Aurora Sky:

Head Waters: Linda Kotchevar

Prairie Winds: Betty Stancer

River Bluffs: Elizabeth Everitt



Moving Hope into Action

By Marion Hansen, MN UWFaith President

A dream, a vision, a plan — all are driven by Hope. Minnesota United Women in Faith members recently participated in UWFaith National educational programming related to climate care and the school to prison pipeline. These programs are available to view on the [National United Women in Faith's YouTube channel](#).

At home, MN Conference Areas hosted their own slate of educational programs. The River Bluffs Area hosted a program on Immigration. Later this month, Aurora Sky and Prairie Winds will host Rev. Brittany Radford, UMC Conference Director of Racial Equity and Justice to share information about racial and social justice. The Headwaters Area will focus on the management of anxiety during these trying times. Team members also participated in the ABIDE and Laity Collaborative programs offered by the Minnesota UMC.

We know many share our passion for action, and we would love to have you join us on our Area or Conference teams. Learn more and view the contact information for our Areas in the section titled “Connect with your Area” We would love to take action with you.

Love Boldly, Serve Joyfully, Lead Courageously

By Marion Hansen, MN UWFaith President

About 500 Minnesota United Methodists gathered in-person and online at the General Conference to learn, celebrate, gain inspiration and consider legislation.

Four proposed amendments from the General Conference were passed including a vote on regionalization. These amendments are forwarded to the “aggregate” vote until all Conferences have voted.

We can serve through:

- the promotion of Creation Care, which incorporates caring for creation in your spiritual practices and encouraging a “caring attitude” to all things in God’s creation.
- sharing information
- active reduction of our carbon footprint
- the formation of Green Teams within our churches

The removal of Racial Covenant Language from the property deed for our churches and UWFaith buildings increases awareness of the issue as well as interruption of harmful practices.

Our next General Conference of the UMC will be held in Minneapolis on May 8-18, 2028. UWFaith will continue its impactful presence not only in the planning and formation of this gathering, but also in the provision of volunteer time. Plan now, pray now and remember that 2028 is only a step away.

Following the General Conference, Minnesota United Women in Faith put Mission into action by co-sponsoring four legislative resolutions that all passed thanks to the women who wrote the proposals and all the legislators who voted to pass it. As a result, two resolutions related to Ethnic Cleansing and US Humanitarian Aid to Gaza will now be forwarded to our Minnesota Congressional Delegates.

Where Does the Money Go?

By Carol Miller, *Education & Interpretation Coordinator for MN UWFaith*

“When you make a gift through the United Women in Faith, you can be confident it will be used to make the greatest impact where it matters most,” according to the United Women in Faith [website](#).

I recently did some research using the MN UWFaith [website](#), the United Women in Faith website and Response magazine. I found that the United Women in Faith support international partners and the amazing work being done includes:

Liberia: Microeconomics training is helping women develop businesses to create economic independence. Some businesses include soap making and the making of reusable sanitary napkins, which helps girls stay in school. These items are sold at a price that is affordable to people in rural villages.

Zimbabwe: Women have learned sustainable poultry farming (although climate change has also caused a need for adaptation, such as greenhouse farming). Scholarships help young women be trained in agribusiness.

Kenya: A poultry husbandry project aids in the purchase of local grain, incubators for hatching guinea fowl and turkeys, and providing microloans.

Sierra Leone: Unusual microfinance programs and entrepreneurship training has been rolled out for women.

These are just a few examples of the use of our Mission money.

I am the Equity and Inclusion coordinator for my local unit, First United Methodist of the St. Cloud, MN Region; located in Sartell.

I often report on money-making projects at our executive board meetings after having read about them in the Response magazine. One article that recently caught my eye was a story from UWFaith in Berryton, Kan. They reported that a local project taken on by their local UWFaith is cleaning and caring for cemeteries in the Berryton area.

Real flowers that have died are gathered and disposed of. Artificial flowers are collected, cleaned and resold—a sort of “recycling” project. Funds from the resale of the artificial flowers are used for children’s programs, which includes sending youth to summer camp and funding Vacation Bible School.

Yes, UWFs around the world are working for women, children and youth!



Photo by Josh Appel on Unsplash

Assembly 2026: Dream It, Believe It, Do It

Every four years, the sisterhood gathers in mass to celebrate the legacy and the movement that is United Women in Faith. Women from around the globe will gather on May 15-17, 2026, in Indianapolis, Ind. for Assembly: Dream It, Believe It, Do It.

Registration will open Tuesday, Sept. 2, and Minnesota has a block of rooms reserved. More information can be found at Assembly.uwfaith.org. A list of people interested in attending/receiving more information and being included in our Minnesota delegation and block of rooms should contact Marion Hansen at marionha@wcta.net.

The North Central Jurisdiction is offering two scholarships to the MN Conference which would cover the early bird registration fee of \$365.00. Top priorities are for women who have never attended Assembly and who are not part of the Conference Leadership Team. Applications for the scholarship will be managed by the MN Conference Leadership Team.

Local Units: Consider supporting a person from your unit to attend by paying some or all of the expenses for registration, travel etc. They will bring back information from multiple dynamic speakers, sisterhood networking and a newfound connection to the impact you have on our society in general.

Reading Program/Library

Reading Program Discussions/Schedule

Below are event schedules for the Minnesota UWFaith Reading Program.

Last Two Zoom Book Discussions for 2025:

Sept. 8: "Our Missing Hearts," Celeste Ng

Nov. 10: "Spiritual Practices for Soul Care," Barbara I. Peacock

Lending Library Schedule:

Sept. 6: Headwaters – Minnetonka

Sept. 13: River Bluffs – Stewartville

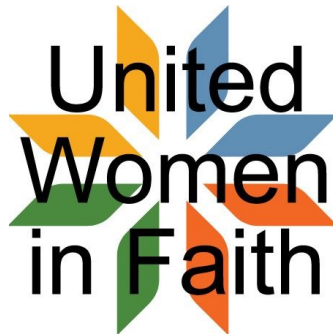
Sept. 20: Prairie Winds – Blue Earth

Oct. 11-12: Annual Conference - Alexandria

For information on the MN Conference UWFaith Reading Program, visit UWFaithmn.com and open the tab, "What We Do" 'Reading Program.' There, you can find PDFs for the 2025 Reading Program and a downloadable list of books in the Lending Library

Contact: Connie Scott, 507-456-3073, connielulu55@msn.com for more information.

Headwaters Area Fall Gathering Sept. 6



By Linda Kotschevar, Headwaters Area UWFaith

Headwaters Area Team is hosting their Annual Fall Gathering on Saturday, Sept. 6 from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Minnetonka United Methodist Church at 17611 Lake St. Ext in Minnetonka.

Marion Hansen, Current MN Conference President for UWFaith will lead our keynote session titled “Does Anxiety have an EMOJI?.” An excellent resource for this topic is, “Finding Peace in an Anxious World,” by Erin James-Brown.

The cost is \$20 payable to Headwaters UWFaith.

Registration is online only by completing this [form](#). The registration fee can be paid online when you register or mailed to Diane Bublitz, 1514 Aspen Lane, St. Cloud, MN 56303.

Aurora Sky Area Fall Gathering Sept. 20

By Myrna Kuehl, Aurora Sky Area President

The Aurora Sky Area Fall Gathering will be on Saturday, Sept. 20 from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at Fridley United Methodist Church at 680 Mississippi St. in Fridley.

Enjoy Emma Noron Coffee beginning at 9 a.m. The annual meeting/program will follow at 10 a.m.

We will be viewing the Prairie Winds United Women in Faith program by live stream.

Reverends Brittany Radford and Genia Garrett will offer a panel discussion on social action as related to Black women in ministry. Radford is the Minnesota Conference Director of Racial Equity and Justice. She has launched a Cross Racial - Cross Cultural Bible Study. Garrett is the pastor at First United Methodist Church in Redwood Falls.

Register online [here](#).

Cost: \$20.00 per person for registration in advance/\$25.00 per person for same day registration.

Send a check payable to: Aurora Sky UWFaith and mail to Karen Strobel, 811 S 6th Street, Brainerd, MN 56041

Or pay online and make an online offer [here](#).

Registration deadline is Sept. 12. Information on all Area Fall Gatherings is available at the Minnesota United Women in Faith [website](#).

Emma Norton

2025 Juneteenth Celebration Among the Best

By Myrna Kuehl, Area Emma Norton Representative & Aurora Area President

This year's Juneteenth celebration at Emma's Place was the best one yet! So many volunteers showed up to help with setting up, cooking, activities, and clean-up — freeing up staff to engage more with the community in this joyful space.

There were fun competitions throughout the evening, like a sack race, and a spoon and egg race. The evening wrapped up with a raffle for different toys and prizes, and with the help of volunteers, clean-up went fast!

Thank you to everyone who helped make this event so special!

Emma Norton Back-to-School Donation Drive

Emma Norton Services are putting out a call for anyone interested in hosting a back-to-school donation drive for youth. Children will be back to school before we know it, and identifying partners for donation drives early is a huge help! If you have donations to drop off or are a part of a group or organization interested in a drive, contact Mo Mayberry at mmayberry@emmanorton.org for more information.

The following items are always needed:

- **Household cleaning supplies:** disinfectant, floor cleaner, sponges, dish soap, Clorox wipes, paper towels
- **Baby supplies:** diapers, wipes, formula, pacifiers
- **Art Supplies:** art hanging hardware, glue and epoxy, jewelry making materials, good quality brushes/sponges, watercolor paper, watercolors, tissue paper, empty journals
- **General household needs:** queen size sheets and comforters, towels, brooms, non-stick pans

Contact Mo Mayberry at mmayberry@emmanorton.org for more information and volunteer opportunities.

Living Room at Emma Norton Available to Adults

The Living Room, which provides a compassionate peer support team at Emma Norton is available to anyone in Minnesota ages 18 and up. It is open noon to 8 p.m. every day of the week (except for holidays or special occasions), and it is free. No appointment is necessary. If you are unable to visit in person, you can call the Living Room at 651-251-2629 to schedule a free telehealth appointment. If you know someone in Minnesota who is struggling due to recent events, whether in the news or in their personal life, please share this resource with them.

The Living Room is located at 2265 Hillcrest Ave, St. Paul, MN 55116.

Emma Norton Scholarship Recipients Named

By Myrna Kuehl, Area Emma Norton Representative & Aurora Area President

The Emma Norton Scholarship will assist three Minnesota women this year to fulfill their calling.

Amanda Hodge of the St. Cloud region, Alyssa Saleem of Fairmount and Connie Scott of Mankato were named 2025 Emma Norton Scholarship recipients.

Hodge will begin her first year at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary in Evanston, Ill. to pursue a master's in divinity. She has been involved in serving First UMC of the St. Cloud Region.

Saleem is finishing her master's in divinity at Luther Seminary in St. Paul. She has served in several capacities at Centennial UMC in St. Paul. She was recently appointed as a newly licensed local pastor to Fairmount Ave UMC.

Scott is studying to become a United Women in Faith deaconess. She currently serves as the MN Conference United Women in Faith Lending Library coordinator and has expanded the Conference Reading Program. She attends Centenary UMC in Mankato and is creating a summer reading program in her community.

What became the Emma Norton Scholarship began was a gift of \$25,000 more than 100 years ago. By 1967, the fund had grown to \$156,000 and was taken over by the MN Conference United Methodist Women. The endowment funds are currently held at the UWFaith National Offices and interest is sent to the MN Conference United Women in faith to manage the disbursement.

Congratulations to all the recipients.

Membership

Come Join MN UWFaith as Individual Member

Individual Membership is available to all women who share our passion for spiritual growth, social action and making a difference for women, children and youth. It's easy to join and it's free!

Go to UWFaithmn.com, click the "Join" button, complete the requested information and click "submit."

Taking action is as simple as that. Local Women in Faith unit members and people who do not have access to a local unit but desire to be a part of United Women in Faith can quickly take that step toward personal connection. UWFaith is a local, state and national organization that has been putting hope into action for over 150 years.

If you have questions about Individual Membership, contact Marion Hansen at marionha@wcta.net.

Connect with Your Area

Aurora Sky: Myrna Kuehl, President, myrnakuehl@comcast.net, 763-567-8892

Karen Strobel, Treasurer, fritz-1234@charter.net, 218-839-7413

Headwaters: Marion Hansen, Acting President, marionha@wcta.net, 218-539-0954.

Diane Bublitz, Treasurer, bublom01@gmail.com, 320-267-0912

Prairie Winds: Betty Stancer, President, bstancer10@gmail.com, 507-430-9263

Melody Sanders, Treasurer, melody.sanders@outlook.com, 507-236-0824

River Bluffs: Jane Baker, President, janekbaker@yahoo.com, 651-764-2505

The treasurer position is open. Contact Jane for disbursements to the Area and to apply to serve as treasurer or to suggest a person to contact.

Calendar

October	November	December
10 Conference Exec. Team meeting, Alexandria UMC 11 Conference Annual Gathering, Alexandria UMC 11 –12 Leadership Development Retreat, Alexandria UMC 13 <i>Indigenous People's Day</i>	27 <i>Thanksgiving</i>	10 Area Book's Close 15 Conference Book's Close 25 <i>Christmas</i>



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