



United
Women
in Faith
Minnesota

The *fresh*
Connection

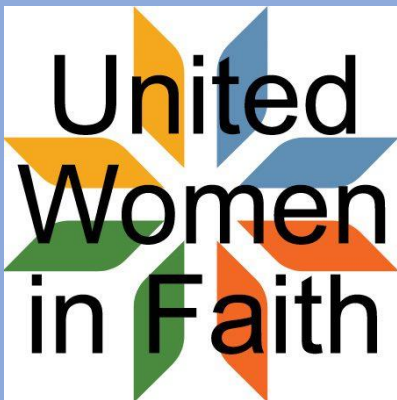
Newsletter of the Minnesota Conference United Women in Faith

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Leadership Development Days



Revive and Lead
Empowered by Resurrection

By Jessica Allen, Fresh Connection Editor

The 2024 United Women in Faith Leadership Development Days featured three days in November that were chalk full of inspiring and motivating activities.

Inspiring Speakers

Below are just a few of the many guest speakers.

Emily Jones and panelists, Ellen Reddy, Dianna Freelon-Foster and Jamie Singer, shared their experiences with corporal punishment as victims and witnesses. They shared how these experiences shaped them and how we can end this abuse.

Andrea Reily Rocha Soares is a regional missionary in Latin America who spoke about her work to reduce women's economic hardships. She is the granddaughter of missionaries who met and married in Brazil in the 1950s. "Everything we are is because of our faith; our faith moves us to service," she said during her speech.

Andrea founded Training for Transformation, an organization that hosts training sessions across the globe to help women build leadership skills and economic independence.

Projects that came out of the trainings include women owned businesses that include a palm oil extraction business in Africa and a peanut butter manufacturer in the Philippines.

Author and founder of Manifest Freedom Brittany Barnett spoke about her book, "A Knock at Midnight," and the GEM program that she founded. The GEM program creates opportunities for girls to stay connected with their incarcerated

mothers and work through their relationship difficulties. “Britney is a wonderful example of leadership and the power of determination and perseverance,” attendee Connie Scott said.

Workshops

Bridging Divides: Navigating Conflict in Multi-Racial, Cross Class Movements, focused on normalizing conflict and how people can view it as an opportunity to build and strength trust in teams.

Ilka Vega, Executive for Economic and Environmental Justice of United Women in Faith, and Marianne Comfort, justice coordinator for Sisters of Mercy for the Americas provided information on taking thoughtful action on climate change and invited attendees to urge Legislators to update a statute on mining. Comfort reminded everyone to research the source of minerals, how these minerals will be used and whether they address climate issues or military purposes.

The session, Case for Support with Shannon Priddy, focused on the theology of giving and the mission of education around giving.

In another breakout session, attendees learned about the Susanna Wesley House in Baltimore and another one in Hawaii. “We are so lucky to have the new Restoring Waters building in St. Paul,” attendee Melinda Kohrt said. “The others haven’t been able to do the fundraising they need and the programs are in very old buildings. There is power in having so many community members who have connections on the Emma Norton Board.”

UWFaith Leadership Development Days also included soul care sessions and networking. Becky Coleman, who attended a networking session, said it was an interesting way to meet others and share ideas. “This was an excellent and rich training — probably the best I’ve attended,” she said.

Recordings of the sessions are available at uwfaith.org/events/leadership-development-days/.

Mission U: Practicing Hope



By Marion Hansen, MN Conference UWFaith President

You will not want to miss this United Women in Faith Mission U study. Minnesota’s in-person study will be held at Koronis Camp near Paynesville on July 25, 26 and 27. This program will also be online with dates to be determined.

If you are asking, “where is hope in this spiritual and political moment where everything seems upside down,” this is your opportunity to watch hope grow within you and become a beacon of hope for others.

Put the above dates on your calendar and watch for more information this spring. This is one you don’t want to miss. If the Minnesota dates don’t work for you, check out Mission U at uwfaith.org for gatherings in other states.

Leading like women of the resurrection, MN UWFaith, along with women around the world, step boldly forward into the future.

With the aid of the 2025 program book, “Carrying our Faith Forward,” by Faye Wilson and Nora Asedillo Cunningham, we will explore an intergenerational conversation about what it looks like to carry our faith forward in an expanding or new context. Our Mission U study for 2025, Practicing Hope by Tabatha Holley, will take us on a journey that begins with the resurrection accounts after Jesus’ death and concludes with a commitment to shape the future and the world that is not yet here but can and should exist.

Yes, we are on a journey. Explore and share this Fresh Connection as we move toward a fully digital platform and make copies, as needed, of the PDF at uwfaithmn.com. There are new features at uwfaithmn.com, such as our updated individual membership page that enables people to support and join our MN Sisterhood. The donation and registration page has been updated to make it easier to join programs and donate to Emma Norton and MN UWFaith missions and programs.

We are on the move! Come on, let’s go!

River Bluffs Welcomes TC Units, Spring Gathering Set



**Deaconess Cindy
Andrade Johnson**

By Jane Baker, President, River Bluffs Area

The River Bluffs Area welcomes United Women in Faith units from the Twin Cities and southern Minnesota. We bid farewell to units from the western part of the former River Valley District as we begin a new chapter of the Minnesota Conference of United Women in Faith.

Spring Gathering

The first gathering of the River Bluffs Area will be its Spring Gathering on Saturday, April 5 at The Well UMC in Rosemount. The featured speaker will be Deaconess Cindy Andrade Johnson who will join us in person. Cindy is a humanitarian advocate who has worked with migrants. She lives with her husband on the US/Mexican border in Brownsville, TX. She is currently working as a consultant in education, cultural competence, migration, and missiology.

Cindy will give information about the current migrant situation at the US border. Her presentation will include time for questions and answers. The RB unit plans to live stream her presentation.

Information about Cindy's work at the southern border back in 2021 is in the article, "Migrants looking to Biden for immigration reform at umnews.org. A video of Cindy in the Matamoros camp is at the end of the article.

In addition to Cindy's presentation, the Spring gathering will include the Emma Norton Coffee to raise funds for Emma Norton Services. The offering for the area's UWFaith treasury, lunch and a service project has yet to be decided. The registration fee is \$20. Further information will be available by March 1. Everyone is welcome.

The last meeting of the River Valley District UWFaith was the Fall Gathering on Sept. 14, which was hosted by the Owatonna UWFaith. Featured speaker Ann Girres, who is chair of Emma Norton's Board of Directors and the district's Emma Norton representative, highlighted changes and additions to the organization's plans and services.

Attendees enjoyed time for fellowship, lunch and an opportunity to peruse books from the district's lending library.

Officers for 2025 were elected and installed; officers whose term was ending or who were going to other areas received pins or gifts for the mission. The 2025 budget was approved. A Service of Remembrance was held for members and friends who passed during the year.

My heart is filled with love and appreciation for everyone who served the River Valley District during my time as president and earlier. I have enjoyed working with officers, local units and speakers, and I have made new friends along the way. May we, as United Women in Faith, continue to build God's kin-dom on earth as we serve the women, children and youth of the world.

An Approach to World Thank Offering

By Carol Miller, Conference E & I Coordinator

The Susanna Wesley Circle of the United Women in Faith unit of the United Methodist Church of the St. Cloud Region held a celebration of World Thank Offering this year. The region had an "unassigned" potluck meal not knowing if they would have all desserts. The meal turned out to be quite "balanced" with two types of lasagna, two types of sandwiches (chicken salad and pulled pork), a large green salad with pear slices and a delicious dressing, and bars for dessert.

As they broke bread together like the early church did in Acts 2:42-47, their conversation centered around their families' food traditions at Thanksgiving. They discovered a mix of traditions in the small group.

Following the meal, they had their World Thank Offering program. The World Thank Offering is a way for members of UWF to show gratitude for God's blessings and find creative ways to raise funds to improve the lives of women, children and youth. Their contributions help make the program of mission possible.

Some examples of mission work include:

- social justice work
- spiritual growth opportunities
- leadership development events and resources
- scholarships for women studying for professional success
- resources to promote Just Energy for All
- Interrupting the School-to-Prison Pipeline
- grants for projects developed by our international mission partners (check out the Grassroots International Boston website for more information)
- support for almost ninety National Mission institutions in the United States and regional missionaries in Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Our World Thank Offering gifts allow all people to have a place at the table! Visit uwfaith.org/give and designate your gift to the World Thank Offering.

Just Energy for All (JE4A)

Check out uwfaith.org to find action alerts, news that you can use, a local church check list to help your home church become more climate friendly and more.

Passionate about climate change, but not sure where to start: Start here at [JE4A UWFaith.org!](http://JE4A.UWFaith.org)

Spiritual Growth and Social Action



By Marion Hansen, MN Conference UWFaith President

There is a strong connection between growing spiritually and taking action on social/racial justice issues. As a person engages in self-care, grows spiritually and begins to rediscover that inner fire, a need for making an impact begins to stir. United Women in Faith provides several paths that support growth and give opportunities to make a difference.

You will find multiple self-care opportunities provided at uwfaith.org as well as at our Minnesota gatherings (more information will be in our upcoming district newsletters).

Information on self-care and how to transition into action can be found at uwfaith.org, within the reading program's books and videos, and on UWFaith's YouTube channel.

Minnesota Gatherings (spring and fall) provide opportunities to gather as a "sisterhood of faith," learn about important current topics and network together.

Service on our district and conference teams is necessary for us to be the strongest organization possible. Don't forget to check out the information right here in the Fresh Connection regarding positions currently available. We are always seeking people to participate in their area of passion.

Emma Norton Services New Housing Opens



By Shirley Jackson, ENS Development Team Member

Emma Norton's brand-new housing residence and organizational headquarters, Restoring Waters, in St. Paul's Highland Park neighborhood is open to more than 60 individuals and small families who call it home. Built with a trauma-informed design that offers safe and welcoming spaces, it includes not only beautiful apartments, but also wonderful healing spaces such as cozy gathering spaces, an outside roof-top garden, a gardening prep room, exercise space, art room and children's play area.

More information can be found by watching the "Welcome to Restoring Waters" video on YouTube.

The Living Room, available to walk-ins without an appointment or insurance, offers respite for individuals in need of immediate support. More information is in a recent Star Tribune article.

Housing for larger families and youth programming are available through Emma's Place and Scattered-Site Housing situated throughout the community. A total of about 350 children and individuals receive housing and holistic supportive services through Emma Norton each year.

Generous donors make these supportive programs possible and make a lasting social/emotional and hopeful impact on residents. Donations can be made in several ways such as:

- Online at <https://emmanorton.org/donate/> and/or by contacting Emma Norton Services.
- See their website for advancement about other forms of gifts: stocks, IRA, other means.

With the financial help of individuals, agencies and corporations, those in need are able to overcome extreme trauma and move forward in health, opportunity and joy.

Watch for the Emma Norton Services Opening Doors Gala on April 24.

All contributions make a difference and are deeply appreciated.

Committee on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW) Update

by Shirley Jackson

Co-Chairs Rev. Debra Collum & Shirley Jackson joined on Nov. 11 with Cindy Saufferer, Faye Christensen (via phone), Susan Clark Harris, Rev. Carol Zaagsma, and Martha Rockenstein (via Zoom), who served as staff support to conduct the Fall COSROW meeting.

Rev. Debra reflected about her experience viewing the musical, "Suffs," which reminded her that since the movement is so needed, Alice Paul wrote the Equal Rights Amendment bill, which has yet to be added to the state Constitution. She also reflected about how women who have been the leaders in the past and will be leaders of the next generations need to share power, learn from each other and get out of the way when it is more advantageous to the cause. The group also watched a video of the song "Speechless" from the movie, "Aladdin." She encouraged people to teach this song to their children, particularly girls.

Rev. Carol Zaagsma, our Conference/Cabinet liaison to the work of COSROW, asked how word about COSROW gets out. Faye and Shirley spoke about Coffee Chats available from GCSRW. Carol suggested that these Coffee Chats be advertised more widely through Conference Connections and United Women in Faith groups.

The Constitutional Amendment Paragraph 4 Article 4 will be put to a vote during the Annual Conference 2025. Carol reminded us that the following apology was read by the Bishop at Annual Conference 2024: "The United Methodist Church apologizes for allowing the protection of the Church to outweigh our desire to care for victims and survivors of sexual misconduct. We have allowed polity and protection of the institutional Church to prevent us from holding persons accountable, thus perpetuating harm within our local churches and other ministry settings and damaging the whole United Methodist connection. We apologize for the times we have not listened to you, doubted your stories, ignored your wounds and have not tended to your pain. We believe this has contributed to allowing an unsafe culture to exist."

There was discussion around how this statement could be made more widely known after Faye shared a story of encountering a young woman who had been abused by clergy and is no longer attending a church because of it. Would making such a statement more public help or hinder the work of the Church in transforming the world? It is something to continue to ponder. We did not come to a consensus on this matter. Carol also told us that the Bishop, along with the leadership of the Conference, is actively building trauma response teams for the purposes of having trained leaders available in the Annual Conference to respond to traumatic events, including sexual violence and harm.

We affirm this work by the Bishop and encourage the leadership to remember that GCSRW has resources for reporting sexual misconduct, so that the wheel doesn't have to be reinvented. A discussion with Carol was about the Expansive Language Resolution that was pulled from the floor of the Annual Conference 2024. She has questions for us about the resolution and wants to make connections with COSROW leadership about further steps. Debra and Shirley will continue to make plans with Carol for furthering this dialogue. Debra will also connect with Matt Sipe/BOOM to find out what expansive language usage is required by candidates seeking credentials.

We then affirmed our intention of sponsoring a Zoom conversation/seminar on the topic: "What Does It Mean to Be Female? Let's Hear from our Trans Sisters." Debra will connect with United Women in Faith, Reconciling Ministries and Church & Society to see if they would be interested in co-leading/planning the event. Once we know the partners, we will begin planning the seminar. Most attendees on the call expressed interest in planning this.

Both Shirley and Debra wish to attend the Collaborative Paths to Gender Equity Conference on April 1-3 in Atlanta, Ga. Topics include ratification of Paragraph 4, Article 4; leadership development & conflict resolution; amplifying voices in the UMC; and strategies for the future of women's leadership.

Monitoring Annual Conference: Thanks to the many volunteers. COSROW members monitored most sessions of the Annual Conference. Debra monitored the Clergy Session and gave immediate feedback to that session, noting the lack of voices of persons of color. Susan is still compiling the data gathered at the Annual Conference. Faye and Cindy expressed appreciation for having monitoring reports given daily at the General Conference. It is the intention of the Bishop to have a monitoring report given at Annual Conference. We are unsure what form that would take. We will continue to investigate.

Become Involved

As a forward acting organization, we, MN United Women in Faith, celebrate the bold actions of our predecessors while we build for the future.

In 2025 and onward, we:

- Join the National United Women in Faith organization. National online membership is FREE. Action step: go to uwfaith.org, set up an account and explore.
- Join or form a local unit in your church or community. Each United Methodist church can have a person that represents United Women in Faith serving on the church's administrative council. Contact Marion Hansen, MN President at marionha@wcta.net to establish a local unit or for questions.
- Explore your personal self-care needs as well as your passions toward making an impact now. You are here! Now is the time to make a difference.
- Not sure how to proceed, check out the multiple opportunities within this Fresh Connection.

Member Portal: Come join our Minnesota group

The Minnesota Conference has established a member portal on its website. Perhaps your local unit has become inactive, or you are seeking ways to make an impact on your local community, a particular justice issue and/or personal growth.

It is easy to join *and it's free!*

Go to uwfaithmn.com. Click on the JOIN icon and complete the registration form. You will receive the Fresh Connection and the district newsletters, which provide information regarding local events and opportunities to make a difference.

If you are a member of a United Methodist church that doesn't have a local unit, consider being the contact person in your local church so that your church and members are informed about sponsored events. Our sponsored events are open to all clergy as well as others who support the mission and ministry of the United Women in Faith.

Connecting with Your District

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

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

Headwaters: We are seeking a President to serve Headwaters. Contact Marion Hansen marionha@wcta.net 2185390954 for more information or to suggest a person for this role.

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

Prairie Winds: Betty Stancer, President balancer10@gmail.com 507-430-9263

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

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

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

MN Conference Directory

The new 2025 MN Conference Directory has been sent out. All local units should have received a directory so if you haven't received one, contact Jomyla Choate at jomylac@gmail.com.

2025 Calendar

<p>February 22 River Bluffs Exec. meeting via Zoom 22 Aurora Sky Exec. meeting via Zoom 27 United Women of Faith Day at the Capitol</p>	<p>August 9-10 Conference visioning retreat, Koronis Ministries Christian Camp, Paynesville 10 Mission U recap, Koronis MC Camp</p>
<p>March 5 Ash Wednesday</p>	<p>September 6 Headwaters Fall Gathering 13 Prairie Winds Fall Gathering 13 River Bluffs Fall Gathering 19 Aurora Sky Exec. Team meeting 20 Aurora Sky Fall Gathering</p>
<p>April 5 River Bluffs Spring Gathering, The Well, Rosemount 12 Conference Exec. meeting via Zoom, 9 a.m. -12 p.m. all officers, 1 p.m. presidents 20 Easter 24 Emma Norton Opening Doors Gala 25 Aurora Sky Exec. Meeting 26 Prairie Winds Spring Gathering, Centenary Mankato</p>	<p>October 10 Conference Exec. Team meeting in person, Alexandria UMC 11 Conference Annual Gathering, Alexandria UMC 11-12 Leadership Development Retreat, Alexandria UMC</p>
<p>May 2 Headwaters Exec. Meeting in person Northern Pines, Park Rapids 3 Head Waters Spring Gathering, Northern Pines, Park Rapids 26 Memorial Day</p>	<p>November 8 River Bluffs Exec meeting via Zoom 27 Thanksgiving</p>
<p>June 10 Prairie Winds Day Apart 11-13 Minnesota Annual Conference UMC-St. Cloud 14 Aurora Sky Executive Team - Onamia</p>	<p>December 10 Area treasurer's books close 15 MN Conference treasurer's books close 25 Christmas</p>
<p>July 4 Independence Day 19 River Bluffs Exec. Team meeting 25-27 Mission U in person, Koronis Ministries Christian Camp, Paynesville Virtual Mission U to be determined</p>	

