



OUTREACH SPRING 2026

Prairie Winds District

United Women in Faith

Spring Renewal on the Prairie

In southern Minnesota, spring rarely arrives all at once. Instead, it comes slowly—the melting snow along country roads, the returning birds, and the first brave shoots pushing up through the prairie soil. After months of cold and gray skies, these small signs of life remind us that renewal is always possible.

Our faith journeys often follow the same pattern. There are seasons when growth feels slow or hidden, much like seeds resting beneath frozen ground. Yet even then, God is at work within us, preparing something new.

Spring invites us, **as United Women in Faith**, to notice where new life is emerging—in our spiritual practices, our communities, and our mission with women, children, and youth.

Perhaps renewal begins with a simple prayer, a renewed commitment to study and fellowship, or a small act of kindness in your community. Like the first green shoots in a Minnesota field, these small beginnings carry the promise of abundant life. May this season of thaw and sunlight remind us that God's Spirit is always bringing new growth—even when we cannot yet see it.

Every blessing to you and yours, *Belinda Alkula*, Spiritual Growth Mission Coordinator

2026 Mission u

(July 24-26 at Camp Koronis)

Each year, United Women in Faith develops three justice-focused Biblical curricula for adults, youth, and children, all on a common theme. In 2026, the Mission u theme is *Experiencing Emmanuel*. Our focus on developing three curricula around one common theme means that Mission u offers a unique opportunity for faith communities to create powerful intergenerational learning experiences. This year, the Minnesota Conference Mission u will be held at **Camp Koronis in Paynesville on July 24-26**. You can obtain a copy of [Experiencing Emmanuel](#) by [Linda Louise Furtado](#) at the Resource website. You do not need a copy of the book to enjoy this great study. **Watch for more information about 2026 Mission u and how to register to attend.** A Mission u online version will be offered Sunday evenings in November.

The Purpose of United Women in Faith

United Women in Faith shall be a community of women whose Purpose is to know God and to experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ, to develop a creative, supportive fellowship and to expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church.

Greetings from Betty Stancer, District UWF President:

Spring is just around the corner. I am hopeful that the weather will be sunny and warmer by the time we gather. Cornerstone United Methodist Church (202 N 4th Street) in Marshall will host the Spring Gathering “Joy in the Morning” on April 18, 2026. The program will run from 9:30am to 2:30pm. What a great opportunity for our United Women in Faith women on the western side of Prairie Winds to join us and catch up on district and conference news! To make planning easier for our host unit, please register online or by mail before the April 8 deadline (see registration information on page 9).

I would love to have one of our western UWFaith units volunteer to help with the 9:00am Emma Norton Tea at Cornerstone UMC. This Joy in Fellowship is a wonderful way to serve your district and is greatly appreciated by the host church. If you think this is something your unit could contribute to, please contact me at bstancer10@gmail.com or call me at 507-430-9263. I thank you for your consideration.

At the Spring Gathering, **Rev Fred Vanderwerf** will share his mission experience in Ukraine. I have copied a portion of a January 27, 2026, Facebook post from Fred’s Facebook page.

“Last night, standing in the bitter chill of St. Peter’s outdoor pavilion, I was warmed by a sound I hadn’t quite heard before. To me, it symbolized a spirit of justice that perhaps only Minnesotans can muster when put to the test. The sound was quiet yet fierce, gentle yet insistent; it was the rhythmic heartbeat of a community solidifying in real-time. It was the muffled applause that followed each faith leader’s message. Our gloved and mittened hands created a soft, heavy thrum—a collective “amen” that bound us together more tightly than words ever could. Though it was an interfaith gathering, the crowd largely reflected our region’s Northern European roots. Yet, in that cold air, the sound spoke a universal language: We will stand for those who cannot. We are faithful, we are united, and our convictions compel us to show up for our neighbors—every single time.”

I am moved by the description of the evening and his closing sentence. I have read and heard this sentiment several times this winter as many women in faith stood in the Minnesota cold to show unity. Same unity, different cause, same love, one God. You may take the opportunity to [support Fred’s work in Ukraine through the Advance mission # 14053A Ukraine and Moldova](#) if you desire to be a part of this work.

Joy in Giving offerings received at the Spring Gathering will go toward our pledge to the conference for missions and to Emma Norton Services. Please make checks to Prairie Winds UWFaith. Thank you! Also, see the list of [items you might bring for Emma Norton](#) in Marilyn’s article on page 7.

As we move through to the summer, I hope many of you will give our District Day Apart a try. We live in anxious times and our own Belinda Alkula will take us on a trip through finding peace in a broken world. Look for more information within this newsletter. I am excited that we will share June 9 in Bloomington with our host church, Normandale Hylands UMC.

It is with great “Joy In the Morning” that I look forward to spending time with you, perhaps meeting for the very first time in April. Just for a little fun, we will have a small gift of Simple Joys Swap if you want to participate – see page 4 for more information.

Until then, be well, and find your joy.

Betty Stancer, Prairie Winds District President

[Bstancer10@gmail.com](mailto:bstancer10@gmail.com) 507-430-9263

UW Faith Assembly 2026

Indianapolis, Indiana

Thousands of United Women in Faith from across the globe will be excited to join together in Indianapolis on **May 15-17 for Assembly 2026**. Two deaconesses from Minnesota will be consecrated at this event: **Chrisanna Tripodi** and **Connie Scott**, our Conference Coordinator for the Lending Library and Reading Program

What awaits you at this empowering Assembly? Opportunities to:

- *Be nurtured by deep soul care experiences.
- *Be equipped through cutting-edge workshops.
- *Be inspired by top women experts in their field.
- *Become influencers through networking connections.
- *Make an impact through action for justice.

For more information and/or to register for Assembly, please visit uwfaith.org/assembly.

Attention Prairie Winds Treasurers from Melody Sanders

I am not sending an introductory letter to you this year to save on postage costs. Mailing Information for pledge money: Melody Sanders, 2733 80th St, Granada, MN 56039. Phone 507-236-0824—please leave a message if I should not answer. Email: melody.sanders@outlook.com.

Remittance Forms are available on the national United Women in Faith website as well as pledge information, recognition pin information and information about where the money goes. The national treasurer has requested a listing of the local treasurers from each of the districts and I am working to compile this as of the information I have currently. If your unit has changed officers, please send me the name, address, email and phone number for the new treasurer. I have Redwood Falls already.

I have sent in a recognition pin order and expect to receive it by Spring Gathering in April. Pins will be available to pick up that day. I have some already paid for and the pin will be marked with your unit's name. Please provide me with a pin order form (if I don't already have it) at Spring Gathering and you can take the pin with you. Your unit does not have to give pins but can still recognize people who serve with cards. I will have those available for your taking as well. The cost to the district is postage only, which runs about \$6.00 for a package of 10 cards. I am going to split the packages for our use. I will have them with me at lunch, so look for me please.

If you have any questions, please contact me. The best way is to email as then I have a record and don't forget. If I do not respond within a day or two though, please call. I did have some email go into the spam folder, so it was greatly appreciated when the treasurer called to see if I had gotten it. Looking forward to seeing everyone in April!

~Melody

REMINDER: If you have not already sent your 2025 Mission Today Form, please send it to Betty Stancer at 105 Driftwood Drive, Redwood Falls, MN 56283. We want to make sure all local units are recognized.

Simple Joys Swap at our Spring Gathering “Joy in the Morning” 😊

NEW: Join us for a Simple Joys Swap on April 18 at Cornerstone UMC in Marshall! Bring a wrapped item(s) that costs less than \$7.00 but something that brings you joy. Simply wrap your item, and include your name, email address, and a brief note inside explaining why the item gives you so much joy.

Ideas of what to include are your favorite soap, lotion, homemade bread, jam, food items, a small plant, book, devotional, toy, puzzle, homemade note cards and bookmarks, personal grooming items, or a small treasure that brings a smile to your face. Add your wrapped item(s) to the Swap Table. And if you choose to bring more than one item to swap, you will go home with more than one new-to-you “simple joy”!

We look forward to sharing this meaningful and joyful exchange at the Spring Gathering in Marshall.

New Prairie Winds UWFaith BLOG!

Prairie Winds has launched a new blog! <https://prairiewindsuwf.blogspot.com/> This space features news you can use, reflections, and ways to stay connected with United Women in Faith across our district. Take a few minutes to explore the latest posts. We hope you will read, share, and be inspired! If you want information shared in a post, you can contact Belinda Alkula at Belinda.Alkula@gmail.com.

FIND UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH ONLINE

United Women in Faith website:

uwfaith.org

This is our primary website. Here you will find the latest news and information about UWF programs, initiatives, and events. It's where you connect with other members and get involved.

Facebook:

[Facebook.com/uwwomenfaith](https://www.facebook.com/uwwomenfaith)

Instagram:

[Instagram.com/uwwomenfaith](https://www.instagram.com/uwwomenfaith)

Twitter:

[Twitter.com/uwwomenfaith](https://twitter.com/uwwomenfaith)

On Facebook, be sure to “like” UWF. On Instagram & Twitter, make sure to “follow” UWF pages!

Minnesota UWF website:

uwfaithmn.com

Minnesota UWFaith Facebook group:

[Facebook.com/groups/127497622121/](https://www.facebook.com/groups/127497622121/)

This group is for members of Minnesota UWF and all who are interested in UWF. Follow the link and press “join the group” and posts will appear on your newsfeed.

Greetings from Melody Sanders, your Prairie Winds Area (District) Treasurer:

Thank you for the very successful fundraising in 2025. We distributed \$42,269 to the conference. \$25,284.25 from local units was sent to meet our pledge goal of \$35,000 and \$7,438 was sent for Emma Norton. The remaining amount goes toward the other pledge areas listed on the remittance form as supplemental giving. Each unit makes the decisions about what pot the money goes into. Units that give in all five of the mission areas of Pledge to Mission, Special Mission Recognition, Gift to Mission, Gift in Memory, and the World Thank Offering will be honored with the 5-stars award given at Spring Gathering. *It is important that someone from your unit is in attendance to receive this award.* **Seven units will be receiving the 5-star unit award: Balaton, Centenary, Hector, Hope of Blue Earth, Redwood Falls, Richfield, and First UWF of New Ulm. Units at Trimont, Montevideo, and Belgrade achieved four out of five areas, and I would like to recognize them as 4-star units.**

To explain a bit of activity within the district, we get payment from the conference each quarter to run the activities and business of the district. The board is very frugal with this money. Many of the board members simply donate what could be claimed as expense, so I feel that we are not showing the true expenses of running the district. There is money available because we need members to step forward and help with the mission of the district in supporting local units. Time and effort are very important. Because we did not spend what is allowed within the budget, a balance built up, so the board (*meeting our mission of service*) voted to return what we did not use in meeting expenses to help meet the pledge and Emma Norton goals. The district sent an additional \$6,000 toward our pledge, and \$4,000 to Emma Norton.

2025 Totals - Pledge \$31,284.26 Emma Norton \$11,438

Our goals for 2026 are Pledge \$25,000 and Emma Norton \$8,000. As you see, we can do this! We did it in 2025, but let's make 2026 even better. Mail checks and remittance forms to: Melody Sanders, 2733 80th St, Granada, MN 56039

~Melody

UW Faith Units Survey Due March 31, 2026

The survey about your UNIT in 2025 is now open on the national website. Each unit is encouraged to complete the survey. The link is <https://uwfaith.org/unit-survey/>. We are part of the North Central Jurisdiction, the Minnesota Conference, and the Prairie Winds District. The survey asks for your membership numbers and ways that you may have participated in the past year. Please **complete this 10-15 minute survey before March 31, 2026.**

As part of our **Unstoppable** shared movement to grow, deepen, and sustain United Women in Faith for the future, the **2025 Unit Survey** gives us essential insight into what's working, what's needed, and where we must go next. Your leadership, and the voices of women across your conference, help shape how we strengthen our sisterhood and expand our collective impact.

Important Dates to put on your calendar:

March 16, 2026	Executive Team Zoom Meeting
April 18, 2026	Prairie Winds District Spring Gathering at Cornerstone UMC, Marshall, 9:30 – 2:30*
May 15-17, 2026	ASSEMBLY 2026 in Indianapolis, Indiana
June 9, 2026	Prairie Winds District Day Apart at Normandale Hylands UMC, Bloomington, 9:30 – 2:30*
June 16-18, 2026	Minnesota Annual Conference in St Cloud
July 14, 2026	Executive Team meeting at Belgrade UMC
July 24-26, 2026	<u>Mission u</u> in person at Koronis
September 19, 2026	District Fall Gathering at First UMC, Redwood Falls
October 10-11, 2026	MN Conference Annual Gathering & Leadership Development, Camphor Memorial UMC, St. Paul
October 20, 2026	Executive Team Meeting at Belgrade UMC

**District Events start with Emma Norton's Tea half an hour before the program begins.*

UWFaith Day of Giving

Take the opportunity on March 23rd, the annual Day of Giving, **to support the UWFaith LEGACY FUND**. Our theme this year is *Grace in Abundance*. Give securely online at bit.ly/DayofGiving2026, text GIVE to 20503. Or checks can be mailed to United Women in Faith Church Center for the United Nations, 777 United Nations Plaza, 11th Floor, New York, NY 10017.

The Legacy Fund Endowment Campaign was launched in 2014 to raise \$60 million to secure United Methodist Women, now United Women in Faith, for service in the next 150 years and beyond. We are very close to reaching our endowment goal to ensure women have this supportive sisterhood long into the future. Together, we make quite an impact!

Organized for mission, UMFaith operates from a biblically based understanding that equips laywomen to grow in their faith through prayer, study, fellowship, and action, and to work for social justice to promote a more equitable, safe, and healthy world for women, children, and youth. This is what distinguishes United Women in Faith from other organizations, and attests to its longevity and relevance, today and especially in the years to come. Thanks for your generous gift toward the UWFaith Legacy Fund.



DONATIONS ACCEPTED for Emma Norton Services

From Marilyn Nickel, **Emma Norton** Rep for Prairie Winds District

Spring is upon us and the needs at Emma Norton continue to grow.

Have you heard about Give to the Max day on March 23? It is a day that has helped many organizations around Minnesota. Please remember Emma Norton and all they give to the community. Emma Norton is our closest National United Women in Faith mission.

This year the 2026 Opening Door Gala will be held on April 23 at the InterContinental Riverfront St Paul. If you are able to help with their auction, they are still seeking donations of all kinds especially **experience, travel, gift cards, baskets, and always money.** The auction is a major part of their day-to-day needs and expenses.

The donation needs for their clients are great. **Kitchen tools, Queen sheets, towels, personal care items, and always paper products.** Just a reminder that they do not take used items for sanitary purposes. Bring your donations for Emma Norton to the District Spring Gathering in Marshall and Day Apart in Bloomington and we'll deliver them. Thanks for all you do to support Emma Norton and Restoring Waters.

Prairie Winds DISTRICT UWFaith OFFICERS and where they come from in the district

President:	Betty Stancer	bstancer10@gmail.com	Redwood Falls
Secretary:	Deb Anderson	debraandersonja@gmail.com	Mankato
Treasurer:	Melody Sanders	melody.sanders@outlook.com	Granada
Ed & Interp:	Nancy Iverson	undothree@gmail.com	Prior Lake
Spiritual Growth:	Belinda Alkula	belinda.alkula@gmail.com	Albert Lea
Emma Norton Rep:	Marilyn Nickel	mnickel460@gmail.com	Jeffers
Reading Program Ambassador:	OPEN		
MN & O Coordinator:	Sylvia Farrells	angelseyf@gmail.com	Bloomington
Communications:	Judith Clark	classicalgal49@gmail.com	Blue Earth
Program Coordinator:	OPEN		
Social Action Coordinator:	OPEN		

Will YOU volunteer for one of the OPEN positions? Talk with Betty Stancer for more details!

Minnesota UW Faith Reading Program News from Connie Scott

Announcing a New Program! Summer Book Study: Join us by Zoom for a **6-week book study** of Letters from the Farm – A Simple Path for a Deeper Spiritual Life by Becca Stevens. This discussion class will meet once a week for 1 hour to discuss different themes from chapters in the book. Jill Michael, Headwaters Reading Program Ambassador, will be leading the discussions. The book is available on Amazon for \$10. Join us on Mondays July: 13, 20, 27, and Aug. 3, 10, 17 via Zoom 7-8pm for the weekly book study.

Letters from the Farm describes a faith that strives for justice and peace through loving our neighbors. It began with the simple hope that love can help in the community. That hope led to a social enterprise called Thistle Farm and that led to learning that we reap a hundredfold the seeds that are sown into a loving community.

Accompanying each letter is a verse of Scripture and some questions for reflection so that this book can be used as a devotional guide, as well as a piece to inspire you in your faith and life. “Becca Stevens has written a beautiful book demonstrating the power of God’s healing love.” -Jane Shaw, Dean for Religious Life and Professor of Religious Studies, Stanford University.

In addition to this book study, our current **list of Zoom book discussions** led by Myrna Kuehl and Connie Scott is open to all. Join us to discuss the issues that lead United Women in Faith to action! Contact Connie Scott to sign up for any of the Zoom discussions.

Print a copy of our **updated 2026 Reading Program Calendar** from the Conference website: The Reading Program | UMW Minnesota Note that we now have a Reading Program Event each month in 2026!

We currently have an opening for Reading Program Ambassador for the Prairie Winds Area. Please contact Connie Scott for more information connielulu55@msn.com.

~Connie Scott

Prairie Winds Day Apart

Finding ^{and Building} Peace in an Anxious World

Join us at **Normandale Hylands UMC in Bloomington June 9, 2026** for a time of reflection – registration information on page 9. The church is at 9920 Normandale Blvd in Bloomington. We will begin with Emma’s Tea at 9:00 pm (*see list of their needs in article about Emma Norton – page 7*) The program will begin at 9:30am and end by 2:30pm.

District Spiritual Growth Coordinator, Belinda Alkula, will lead sessions on “Finding and Building Peace in an Anxious World.” It will be expanded version of the 2021 Mission u study “Finding Peace in an Anxious World”. We will explore how to build and sustain peace within ourselves and our circles of influence. We will focus on spiritual tools and actions we can take to calm anxieties and to explore our faith, enabling us to serve as peacemakers in these anxious times.

Hope to see you there! *~Belinda*

BOOK REVIEW

Connie Scott, Reading Program Coordinator

What if with little warning you were forced to flee Minnesota to save your life, and had to flee to another county? What if the country you were sent to did not want you there? What if they didn't speak English and you were not allowed to practice Christianity? What would you carry with you to preserve your ethnic heritage? Your family history? Your faith? Your own identity? What songs or stories or items would you take with you to give to future generations of your family not yet born so they would know who you were and where they came from?

What We Remember Will Be Saved – A Story of Refugees and the Things They Carry by Stephanie Saldana tells the story of refugees from Iraq and Syria who fled from ISIS. Thought provoking, gut wrenching, and at the same time hopeful in learning how the people in this story kept their own stories alive.

REGISTER FOR TWO DISTRICT EVENTS

To Register for Prairie Winds Spring Gathering April 18 at Cornerstone UMC in Marshall (by April 8) AND/OR to Register for Prairie Winds Day Apart June 9 at Normandale Hylands UMC, Bloomington (by May 24) follow the directions below. You do NOT have to register for both district events now. You may register for one now and keep the information to register for the other later. **The easiest way to register is to do it online with Sandy Meyer, UWF Conference Registrar.**

REGISTER: Online preferred at <https://forms.gle/HSmzjcKF5eCB1TKY9> - pay \$20 registration fee at door or online (\$20 for EACH event.) OR Complete the registration below and mail with \$20 for each event you wish to attend. Checks made out to Prairie Winds UWFaith and mail with registration to **Sandy Meyer, 8724 Valley View Pl, Chanhassen, MN 55317.**

QUESTIONS: Contact Sandy Meyer at 952-270-1157. Email: regumumw@gmail.com.

I'm registering for Spring Gathering (by April 8): _____

I'm registering for Day Apart (by May 24): _____

Registration information:

Name: _____

Address: _____

E-mail Address: _____ Phone: _____

Church: _____

Previous district (if applicable) _____

First time attendee at a Prairie Winds District event: Yes _____ No _____

Mark if Local/District Officer: _____ Office held: _____

Food Allergies or dietary concerns: _____



Prairie Winds District UW in Faith
OUTREACH Spring 2026
9184 377th Ave
Blue Earth, MN 56013
Attn: Judith Clark

Nonprofit Organization US POSTAGE PAID Blue Earth, MN 56013 Permit No. 50

Return Service Requested

United Methodist General Conference 2028

The next UM General Conference takes place **May 8-18, 2028, in Minneapolis**. That means delegate elections take place next year in 2027. This means the time to start discerning if you are called to serve the church in this holy and influential way is now.

Women make up 58 percent of The United Methodist Church. But we are far from 58 percent of its leadership! Let's get more women at the table and watch the church and the world change for the better! The more we understand how decisions get made in the church, the more we can mobilize our supportive, powerful sisterhood to ensure women's voices and other underrepresented voices are heard in the church.

Please **consider serving as a delegate for General Conference** which will take place in Minnesota in 2028. While it seems like a long way off, now is the time to consider serving in this way. To volunteer or ask questions about being a delegate, contact Marion Hansen at marionha@wcta.net.

As always, if you have a change of address – either snail or email – let Judith Clark know. We would hate for you to miss the Prairie Winds District UW Faith news! Send changes to the return address or email address below. For those who are presently receiving a copy of OUTREACH via USPS, if you are able to receive it via email, we encourage you to do so. Simply email your address to me at classicalgal@hotmail.com saying that you want a copy online and I will place you on our email-only list.

ALSO: To subscribe to the free online newsletter FRESH CONNECTION sent out by the Minnesota Conference of United Women in Faith, go to <https://www.umfaithmn.com>.