

# The Bridge



#### **IGRC United Women in Faith**



#### President - Susan Connor

Greetings and welcome to IGRC UWFaith Year 2024!

As I begin my 4<sup>th</sup> and final year as your conference president, I am filled with Hope and Joy. With the help of our amazing Leadership Team, we have learned to serve Jesus in new ways and continue in some traditional ways.

The COVID years of 2020 and 2021 forced us to learn the virtual world. This saved us time and also money that we then gave to Mission. We rejoice and are given Hope in the fact that we met our 2023 conference Mission Pledge. Many women, children and youth were blessed by God because of your sacrificial giving.

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Redistricting brought the challenge of downsizing and cooperation that your District Teams did so well. This year, past disaffiliations will challenge us to form new spaces and reach out to our sisters in towns and churches nearby to be inclusive and welcoming to women whose churches have left them.

I look forward in Hope and Joy to the opportunities we are being provided. I will be able to share about United Women in Faith and connect on your behalf at several gatherings this year:

- April 23-May 3 General Conference in Charlotte North Carolina as alternate delegate
- May 30-June 2 North Central Jurisdiction UWFaith in Indianapolis, IN

- June 6-8 Peoria IGRC United Methodist Church Annual Conference as your representative and voting member
- June 19-23 Church Women United Chicago as your representative
- July 10-18 United Methodist Church North Central Jurisdiction Meeting in Sioux Falls, South Dakota as a voting delegate
- July 21-23 Mission u in Springfield, IL

These meetings are essential for gathering information and sharing the Mission, Vision and Values of United Women in Faith. I hope many of you will join me at these events.

I feel deeply that we are organized for service and accomplish far more when we join our gifts together than we can individually. I am excited to work with each of you in 2024.



#### Vice President - Pam DuFour

I'm the new Conference Vice President. I was formerly Chair of Nominations. I live in Auburn, am a member of Auburn United Methodist Church and have been a United Methodist for 22 years. This is my 4<sup>th</sup> year on the conference team. I'm busy planning the Conference Annual Meeting. It will be at Springfield Douglas Ave UMC on October 5th. I will be working on a flyer soon so stay tuned!

Love and Blessings to all, Pam



#### **Secretary - Louella Christensen**

Many of you know me from my previous position as Conference Treasurer. Surprise! I'm back this year as Secretary! I am happy to report the "2024 Illinois Great Rivers Conference United Women in Faith Directory" has been sent to those who are supposed to have copies. Please email me at <a href="https://www.uwfaith@igrc.org">uwfaith@igrc.org</a> to change your directory contact information, update calendar items or ask questions.

National has already begun holding 2024 meetings with conference officers. Susan Moberg, the staff liaison for conference secretaries, told us the 2025-2028 "United Women in Faith Handbook" will be out this summer. Here's a heads up about three Handbook changes she mentioned:

- 1) National expects changes to <u>tenure rules</u> that will affect the work of Committees on Nominations and potentially our upcoming elections. <u>Bottom Line</u>: Get ready to study the new Handbook this summer and update your officer recruitment procedures.
- 2) Conference secretaries will be required to submit conference and district <u>officer</u> <u>rosters</u> within ten (10) days of the conference annual meeting. Starting this year, they want name, office, email and possibly phone number. <u>Bottom Line</u>: I will need Conference and district roster information <u>by October 14</u>, 2024 so I can submit them to

National Office by October 15<sup>th</sup>. (Directory information with addresses is due to me by December 1<sup>st</sup>.)

3) Conference and district secretaries will likely be asked to keep minutes and conference records for two quadrennia (2020–2028) before sending them to archives. Bottom Line: We're gonna' need a bigger flash drive... or a bigger file cabinet! You may want to wait to archive district records from 2020 on until we see what the new Handbook says. Or... You may want to hurry up and archive your old district records before the rule changes! © Take your pick!

Thanks for all you do for women, children and youth. I'll be praying for you.



#### Treasurer - Sally Smith

Greetings from your re-booted Treasurer!

I am glad to be serving as your Conference Treasurer again. I can assure you the same rules apply today that applied during my original term in office nineteen years ago. The technology has changed, but I'm working with Louella on that.

The creative, supportive fellowship that identifies our structure today is still strong. In my United Women in Faith lifetime, we have

gone from 12 districts to 10 to 5. We are using our creative, supportive fellowship to move forward as we continue to show God's love to women, children and youth.

By supporting United Women in Faith, we remember our relationships, our legacy of faith and action, and especially the women who have come before us. We will continue our legacy of giving to meet our Pledge goal as the most important priority of each of our units. I believe this is essential to keeping United Women in Faith a sustainable organization. Every penny counts!

We are proud that we were able to meet our 2023 Conference Pledge goal. Let us work to exceed our \$192,000 Mission Pledge goal in 2024. Now more than ever is the time to believe that God is at work in the world.

Sally L. Smith, Treasurer Illinois Great Rivers Conference UWFaith 902 Eldridge, Washington, IL 61571 Telephone: 309-444-8516 Email: slsmom@comcast.net

#### Communications – Temporarily covered by Louella Christensen and Sharon Bauer

Due to United Women in Faith's focus on and commitment to Climate Justice, The Bridge newsletter is distributed electronically 3 times a year: March, June and September. Please forward the newsletter and post it publicly to share with all who are interested.

- Submit questions, articles and photos to: <a href="mailto:uwfaithbridge@igrc.org">uwfaithbridge@igrc.org</a>
- Check out our **updated webpage** and subscribe to The Bridge at: www.igrc.org/uwfaith
- Look for us on Facebook: <u>IGRC United Women in Faith (www.Facebook.com/igrcuwf)</u>



#### Chair of Nominations - Gail Fritzsche

It is my honor to be serving as Chair of Nominations for IGRC United Women in Faith. I look forward to meeting and working with many of you for the first time this year and working with the friends I have made during my years as a member of UWFaith.

Because you are reading this newsletter, I know you realize the value <u>The Bridge</u> has in getting information out to our members. We desperately need someone to serve as Communication Coordinator. You would receive articles and edit the newsletter,

monitor the Facebook page and send out announcements. If you are interested, please contact me (618-240-1139) or any other leadership team member. Louella Christensen put this issue together, but we can't expect her to continue doing it forever. The office of Secretary already keeps her very busy.

We also have openings on the 2024 nominations committee. My committee is a great way to meet other members. Additional leadership positions will be opening for 2025. I ask you to consider this scripture: "Each one has received a gift, use it to serve one another as good stewards of God's varied grace." (1 Peter 4:10). Ask yourself the question: "Where is my gift needed?" Trust that God will lead you to the answer.

#### HAPPENING IN MAY 2024!



# EVERY FOUR YEARS IN DIFFERENT CITIES - NEAR US THIS TIME!

Register online: <a href="www.umwncj.org">www.umwncj.org</a> Email: northcentral@uwfaith.org

Phone: (872) 216-8161

Online Registration closes April 30, 2024 (11 pm CDT) - \$ 265



#### Spiritual Growth - Kay Clifton

Soul Care is one of the new initiatives of United Women in Faith, as we use Soul Care Retreats, in part, to reach younger members. This sounds new, and it may engage some new elements, but it also harkens to Methodist traditions. Response (July-August 2021, p. 16) says: "We define soul care as self-care and spiritual nourishment. So, our soul care events are about nurturing your mind, body and spirit while deepening your faith through spiritual practice and creating bonds of sisterhood."

Christian self-care usually involves several dimensions and employs spiritual practices that foster health and wellness. This often includes time alone meditating, journaling and unplugging from talk media; time in community; prayer and God time, expressing gratitude, forgiveness, and joy; engaging in exercise, healthy eating, resting and sleeping well; and service to others. Arts, crafts and nature are facilitating media. The retreat described in *Response* also included healthy cooking, mixing essential oils, and stretching/yoga. You may have members with these skills. You might invite someone new who has these skills as a nice way to introduce them to United Women in Faith.

Soul Care retreats immerse us luxuriantly in these practices for several hours; however, there is no reason to wait for soul care spa days. We can receive their benefits in bits and pieces – alone and in community. You may have personal favorites, for just as we differ in paths to the sacred, we also differ in comfortable and effective ways to nurture and enliven our souls. If nothing else comes to mind to contemplate, try this: do our bodies have souls or are we souls with temporary bodies? Saying 'yes' to either version beckons us to care for the health and well-being of our bodies, minds and souls.



#### Mission u Dean - Caroline Jones

After serving as a teacher and an assistant principal, I am now retired. Besides spending a lot of quality time with my two married children and five grandchildren, I have devoted lots of time to serving Christ. During my many years in United Methodist Women, now United Women in Faith, I have found great joy in our fellowship and have met many admirable women across the conference.

Serving in different leadership positions has been rewarding. I have been a Membership, Nurture and Outreach Coordinator and a Social Action Coordinator for the Conference. I've been a District President, a District Education and Interpretation Coordinator and a District Cunningham Children's Home Representative. I've been a Unit President and an enthusiastic Unit member. These opportunities have been wonderful learning experiences in faith, fellowship, and service. Now I'm back to serve as Dean of Mission u.

I hope to see you at Mission u 2024 in July!





#### Social Action - Ginny Riggins

"Hello" from your new Social Action Coordinator! I'm a member of Normal First United Methodist Church in North District. We may have met during the past four years while I was Conference Secretary.

#### **JUSTICE CAMPAIGNS**

Issue Priorities: 2021-2024



I'm developing a book discussion of "All That She Carried", by Tiya Miles. Her book is a poetic history of women in slavery and will be the basis of a Personal Growth Seminar on March 16 in Herscher. Discussion questions and a resource handout will be available by March 1. If you would like to offer this seminar in your district, please email me at <a href="mailto:ginnyriggins@comcast.net">ginnyriggins@comcast.net</a>.

The seminar will open with a You tube interview of the author. She will provide an overview of our topic. Discussion will be about the life of enslaved women and what they have passed down to their descendants. We'll compare our own family experiences with those of enslaved women, including the family histories, recipes, textiles, and artifacts that have been handed down from generation to generation. The goal is to help us think more deeply about the impact of slavery on the current generation and what has led to racism and mass incarceration in our country. Educating ourselves about our history is an important aspect of interrupting the School to Prison Pipeline and ending mass incarceration.

The 2024 Reading Program list has many books related to historic or current Black experiences if you want to learn more. Here are two:

- "The Three Mothers", by Anna Malaika Tubbs. This contains biographies of the mothers of Martin Luther King, Jr., Malcolm X, and James Baldwin.
- "The Color of Compromise", by Jemar Trisby. This one is about racism in the church.



#### Membership, Nurture & Outreach - Sharon Bauer

My name is Sharon Bauer and I'm your new M,N & O Coordinator. I'm from Bradford in North District and was previously a district officer. I look forward to serving on your conference team and learning more about my responsibilities as the year goes by.

Membership, Nurture & Outreach is about taking care of our members and reaching out to find new members. We also need to take care of ourselves. I will touch base with district M,N & O's later with more information about the new Soul Care manual.

What are you doing to increase membership? Remember, you don't need to be a United Methodist to join United Women in Faith. And we have both in person and online membership options now, which may make it possible for more to become members.

Do you need to try different meeting times to reach more people? Maybe you could start a new circle for women with common interests. Let's share ideas and encouragement!

Finally, did you know we have a Facebook page called <u>IGRC United Women in Faith</u>? If you are on Facebook, I encourage you to find us and join. This is another way we can share ideas on how to increase membership, stay connected and find out what's going on in the conference. You can reach me on Facebook or email me at: shaba\_62@yahoo.com.



#### **Program Resources - Diane Goff**

Do you remember all the adjustments and changes covid made necessary for you? It was no different for the Program Resource people at UWFaith national. They invented, added, altered and supplemented every way possible to bring us a new improved way to communicate digitally after many of our former methods became unusable or impractical.

You can access the website at <a href="www.uwfaith.org">www.uwfaith.org</a>. The best way to get familiar with it is to use it. Check it out: see what is available

there. For example: go to MENU (upper right), What We Do, Educate, Mission u and you will find a description of Mission u. At the bottom of that page is a link to the adult study book for this year. Click on it and you will find the book description. If you're ready to purchase the *Welcome Home* study book, you can add it to your cart from there.

If you are a truly bold Christian leader of women, take the plunge into the new digital platform at <a href="www.uwfaith.org/digital">www.uwfaith.org/digital</a>. Go ahead and register yourself: it costs nothing (so you won't need your credit card unless there is something you <a href="intended">intend</a> to purchase) and it opens a new world to explore. If you are active on social media, it will likely seem familiar for the most part. If you are not so experienced, it may seem daunting or possibly overwhelming. Take heart, beloved adventurer! The creators and maintainers of this intricate website have assured us that we can play around with it all we want without fear of breaking anything. Prominently located on the home page is a place to ask questions that arise in your aimless wandering wondering if you'll ever figure it out. Answers do not necessarily come in real time, but you will be answered- usually within the day. At this point you may need to take a deep breath, say a prayer, and get another cup of coffee.

If you scroll down that center part of your HOME page, you will find under a neon "hello" that United Women of Faith is hosting a "Digital Open House" on March 5 from 7-8 p.m. RSVP for the opportunity of your digital life! Whether you are new to the platform, experienced but have questions, need a refresher on the why and how of this digital platform, or just want to communicate with some other intelligent, knowledgeable United Women in Faith members, here is your opportunity.

Until we meet in person... Blessings! Diane

#### Meet our 2024 District Presidents!

# Central District President



Brenda Moland served in Mountain Sky Conference, then Sangamon River as Vice President 2022-2023.

# East District President



Pat Davis served on Iroquois River Leadership for 6 years & as President 2021-2023.

# North District President



Joyce Goodwin served on Vermilion River Leadership as 2020 Nom Ch & as President 2021-2023.

#### South District President



Patsy Hebron served on Kaskaskia River Leadership for 8 years & as President 2019-2023.

#### West District President



Donna Mueller served 4 yrs in Galesburg District then Spoon River as 2019 Nom Ch & M,N & O 2020-2023.



#### **Education & Interpretation - Barb Smith**

This is my fourth year as Education & Interpretation Coordinator. Before this, I served four years as the Conference Language Coordinator. I've been a United Methodist since birth.

I'm of Native American and Celtic descent and my culture is very important to me. I've lived on the Navajo and Hopi reservations and in California and Hawaii, mostly working as a Family Nurse Practitioner. In Illinois, I've worked for DCFS and for Public Health. I'm also a

Licensed Social Worker, a Certified Lay Speaker and Chaplain. I guess you could say my life has revolved around medicine, my culture, my faith and working for justice for those who don't have a voice.

Everywhere I've lived and worked, I've met wonderful people. You don't realize how many people have made an impression on your life until you sit and think about it! The reverse is also true. As women and as United Women in Faith, what we do and the Mission money we raise makes an impression on many lives. United Women in Faith gives us many opportunities to grow personally and spiritually, learn to be leaders, and take action to get things done. Love in action really can change the world.

If you want to know more about how our Mission giving makes a difference, check out "What We Fund" at https://uwfaith.org/what-we-do/what-we-fund/.

May you walk in beauty.

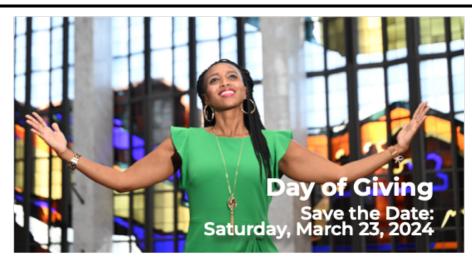


#### **Program Advisory Group - Alice Staley**

I give to the United Women in Faith Legacy Fund to honor our saints who encouraged, nurtured, and guided me in my journey with UWFaith. I am honored to be able to do the same for those who are newer to UWFaith. Mission with women, children and youth has always been one of the important tenants of our mission and still is today. By giving to the Legacy Fund, I help ensure that we will be in mission around the world, now and into the future for many, many years. By giving to the Legacy Fund, United Women

in Faith and National Mission Institutions like Cunningham Children's Home and Lessie Bates Neighborhood House can continue to change the lives of those they serve.

Please give what you can to United Women in Faith's Day of Giving on March 23, 2024. If you are not available on March 23rd, you can give any time before then and designate your donation for The Legacy Fund.



#### **Faithfully Forward**

uwfaith.org/dayofgiving

Save the Date: March 23, 2024





Faithfully Forward Join United Women in Faith as we step faithfully forward, uniting hearts and hands to create a brighter, more compassionate tomorrow for women, children, and youth. Give to The Legacy Endowment Fund on the Day of Giving, March 23.

#### WAYS TO GIVE

- · Online at: uwfaith.org/dayofgiving
- By phone: 800-278-7771 (8 am -5 pm EST, Mon.-Fri.)
- Text: "FUTURE" to 20503
- · By check to:

United Women in Faith, Attn: Legacy 777 United Nations Plaza, 11th Floor Church Center for the United Nations New York, NY 10017

Write "Day of Giving" in the memo section.



#### Together we are building our Legacy!



United Women in Faith

The Legacy Endowment Fund is a permanent investment that supports the work and the future of United Women in Faith.

#### A Few Words from our National Mission Institutions



East St Louis: <u>Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House</u>-Lisa Graves

### "Caring for All, One Family at a Time"

The community agency that is now Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House began in the early 1900s when a large Bohemian-Slavonic population came to American to start a new life near the National Stockyards in East St. Louis, Illinois. Rev. W.F. Fransee, of Bohemian descent, came to the area with support of the Women's Home Missionary Society as a missionary to these people. A small cottage near the corner of 9th and Winstanley was obtained and thus began the Slavonic Settlement, as it was first known.

Church services and Sunday School were held regularly, but from the beginning, the mission sought to meet the social, physical and spiritual needs of the community. One of the first programs was a day care for children of working mothers. In 1914, the Women's Home Missionary Society of Southern Illinois Conference provided the funds for a new building at the corner of 9th and Winstanley.



2024 Sneaker Ball

Under the direction of Deaconess Carrie Johnson, Methodist pastors and missionaries, the Settlement House continued to expand in the 20s and 30s. By 1939, programs had grown so much that more room was needed. Mrs. Frank L. Davis (Lessie Bates) took a special interest in the project and was able to raise \$125,000 from the Southern Illinois Conference and the United States to build the present facility at 13th and Winstanley. In honor of her 24 years of hard work, love and support, the building was dedicated as the Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House in May of 1940.

Today, as a National Mission Institution, Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House continues to provide programs and

services that nurture the social, physical and spiritual needs of the community. Current programs include Early Childhood Education, Teen REACH, Illinois Youth Improvement Program, AmeriCorps, Providing a Sure Start, Senior Meals, a Food Pantry and more. In February, the childcare children and PASS program had a Sneaker Ball and seniors had a Valentine's Day Party. All programs at Neighborhood House aim to help community residents meet their basic needs and enrich their lives.

Contact Lisa Graves at <u>lgraves@lbdnh.org</u> or 618-874-0777, ext. 1113 for more information about how you can help support the children and families served by Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House.



Urbana: Cunningham Children's Home-Brooke Buzard Watson

# "Hope begins here."

Many of you know the history of Cunningham Children's Home, but if you are a new friend to Cunningham, allow me to share a little bit about our mission. Cunningham was established in 1895 when Judge Joseph and Mary Cunningham deeded their large country estate in rural Urbana to the women of the United Methodist Church, to help children in need. The day the home was deeded, Judge Joe wrote in his journal, "May God's blessing go with this gift, and may it be the means for doing much good."

**United Women in Faith members** have served as incredible stewards of our mission for over 129 years, including generations of units from the Illinois Great Rivers Conference. Cunningham is a National Mission Institution for the United Women in Faith, one of only 87 nationally and one of two in Illinois. You have served alongside our staff, answered calls to provide funding and in-kind items, and have prayed for our young people and families. We are so grateful.

You have ensured that in 129 years, there have always been two constants. The first is that every child who comes to Cunningham receives a quilt, as the women share that "Those that sleep under a quilt, sleep under a blanket stitched with love." The other constant is how your contributions meet the evolving needs of kids facing difficult life circumstances. Youth like James, who was non-verbal when he started with Cunningham

but now can express himself by talking in sentences.

We celebrate both of those constants-the quilting tradition and helping kids-through our signature



fundraiser, the Festival of Quilts. **April 12–13 marks the 20<sup>th</sup> annual Festival.** Will your unit celebrate that legacy by making a 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Tribute gift of \$20 or more? If 350 Illinois Great Rivers Conference units participate by making a tribute gift of at least \$20, a total of \$7,000 will be raised to underwrite the expenses of the Festival of Quilts. **Watch this special video to learn more about the history of Festival and legacy of the women:** https://youtu.be/oaGa10rbWgl

Thank you to the units who have contributed so far! We are excited to continue celebrating, hopefully with YOUR UNIT's Tribute gift. There is still time to submit items for Festival. Deadline for Quilts, Show Quilt entries, Centerpiece and Such, and Gift Shop is Friday, March 22. Bake Sale items may be delivered on Friday and Saturday during the Festival at the Spiritual Life Center.

We also still need volunteers! For questions about Festival or to volunteer, contact Brooke Buzard Watson at bbuzard@cunninghamhome.org or (217) 337-9073.

# **Upcoming District Events**

#### March 14th

#### **South District United Women in Faith**

Personal Growth Retreat at Harrisburg UMC, 9 a.m.

"Fostering Personal Growth"

Register with Sue Beal by 3/8/24. Email: <u>sueebeal@hotmail.com</u> Phone: 618-252-5443 (\$10 lunch)

#### March 16th

#### **North District United Women in Faith**

Personal Growth Retreat at Herscher UMC, 8:30 a.m.

Study on book, "All That She Carried"

Register with Joyce Goodwin by 3/9/24. Email: <u>terrygoodwin@sbcglobal.net</u>

Phone: 815-592-8431

#### March 20th

#### **West District United Women in Faith**

Personal Growth Seminar at Roseville UMC, 9:30 a.m.

"Toward Native American Justice"

Questions to Donna Mueller Email: wi\_dmueller@mymctc.net Phone: 309-639-4276 (Bring finger foods to share for lunch)

## Save the Date!

#### **April 13th**

#### **West District United Women in Faith**

Spring Gathering at Macomb Wesley UMC, 10 a.m.

#### April 16th

#### **East District United Women in Faith**

Spring Gathering at Effingham Centenary UMC, 9:15 a.m.

#### **April 20th**

#### **South District United Women in Faith**

Spring Gathering at Mt Vernon First UMC, 9 a.m.

#### **April 27th**

#### North District United Women in Faith

Spring Gathering

#### Changed to May 4th

#### **Central District United Women in Faith**

Spring Gathering at Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House

The Bridge – Mar 2024
The newsletter of IGRC United Women in Faith

Subscribe free at: www.igrc.org/uwfaith



# United Women in Faith

Please feel free to make copies of this newsletter - either individual pages, or the complete issue - for others in your districts and units who would be interested in the information!

Mar 9



# 2024 Conference Dates

May 15	IGRC Bridge articles & photos due
May 31	District Budgets & Pledge goals due
Jul 1	District & Conference audit reports due
Jul 13	IGRC UWFaith Leadership Team meeting, 9 a.m.
Jul 21-23	Mission u 2024, Springfield Northfield Inn
Aug 15	IGRC Bridge articles & photos due
Sep 15	Contact info for CCH/LBDNH Board & District Representatives due
Oct 3	IGRC UWFaith Leadership Team meeting, 7 p.m.
Oct 5	IGRC UWFaith Annual Meeting, Springfield Douglas Avenue UMC
Oct 14	2025 Officer Roster information due
Dec 1	2025 Calendars & Directory info due

IGRC UWFaith Leadership Team meeting, 9 a.m.