

ALERT



United
Women
in Faith

Volume 4, Issue 2



Betty Helms
AWF-UWF
Conference President

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ALABAMA-WEST FLORIDA CONFERENCE

SUMMER 2025

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT: "Moving Faithfully Forward"

The 2025 Cooperative Mission u theme this year is focused on HOPE: the adult study title is *Practicing Hope*, the youth study title is *Communities of the Spirit*, and the children's study title is *Hope as a Resurrection People*. I am always in awe of the study focus of our Mission u Event every year. The focus is always so current, yet these themes are selected several years prior to our study. God, in all of his wisdom, knows what we need!

As followers of Christ, we hold fast to God's intention to bring hope and wholeness to the world through Jesus Christ. Grace-filled, we long for a world that moves from brokenness to wholeness, from suffering to healing, from injustice to justice, from scarcity to abundance, from estrangement to reconciliation, from despair to hope. As partners in God's mission, the transformation we seek today is that of taking what is broken and restoring it to fullness in the light of the Good News of Jesus Christ. Faith-filled, we believe that out of the rubble and ashes of devastation will come new life--a life of hope, a life of abundance, a life of joy for the journey.

We have great study leaders again this year. I encourage you to register for this event and to read the study prior to the event. Within this *Alert* you will find a registration form to copy and complete for snail mail, or you can register online. Use the following website, www.awf-umw.org, to find the online registration link. I encourage you to register as soon as you can in order to receive the study book prior to the event. After you register, you will receive the study book in the mail.

Mission u offers 4 different scholarships. They cover your registration fee and hotel expense (only if your travel distance is 4 hours or longer). Each scholarship is for a first time attendee in each of the following categories:

1. Lib Claridy Scholarship: lay members
2. Nell Chance Scholarship: new member of United Women in Faith
3. Don Brill Scholarship: new clergy with 5 years or less as clergy
4. The Youth and Children's Scholarship: youth and children ages 6 - 16

Our Ministry can have an impact on the lives of thousands of women, children, and youth; but United Women in Faith need YOU! Our organization will not grow without you, and if you are really concerned about the direction we are going to take, then BE involved and help steer it in the right direction. You play a key role in determining the direction the Alabama West Florida Conference of United Women in Faith will take based on whether you participate or not. We need each other for encouragement along this journey that calls us to put love into action! What will your investment be? Will you care enough to use your gifts and talents so that our ministry to women, children, and youth will function properly?

My dear friends, we can do this. We can improve the lives of so many. Let us continue to

"Move Forward Faithfully!"

FROM THE VICE-PRESIDENT

Greetings from your *Alert* editor!

Vice-President Desiree Clarke has given me permission to use her space in this issue to remind everyone about an upcoming annual event, one that I always look forward to attending if I can. Bear with me as I try to help you see why this event is one of my favorite United Women in Faith gatherings.

When I taught high school English, many of my students dreaded studying poetry, especially anything written by Shakespeare or English poets from the Romantic Period because the phraseology was so different from their style of communication. We would read a short poem aloud in class, and their faces would turn into puzzled question marks—some would not even look up, hoping I would not ask them what the poet’s point might be. Then, after guiding them to a basic understanding of the poem’s meaning, a young boy (probably my son or one of his friends) would interject in frustration, “Well, why didn’t he just come out and say so?!”

The following words from a sonnet by William Wordsworth initially presented such a challenge, but students could quickly relate when they overcame the unfamiliar style of the poetic language.

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending we lay waste our powers;
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!



United
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I think of this excerpt often as the world is “too much with us” (I’m sure you also have those days when you have the world calling on you from every direction). Sometimes we long for just a day or so to get away from the hustle and bustle of daily obligations. To be honest, we probably feel this way as we return from a family vacation!

Now, I hope you can see why I always look forward to our special retreat in October at Blue Lake. If you have never attended, you are missing an amazing time of getting closer to God and the beautiful world He created for us to enjoy. Our worship, workshop, and fellowship experiences help us bond as sisters in our faith. Keep checking our conference website for registration information so you can escape with us for a little recharging and inspiration—see you there!

SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT RETREAT 2025
OCTOBER 3-4, 2025
BLUE LAKE MEHODIST CAMP
ANDALUSIA, AL



From the Conference Treasurer

With hearts full of gratitude, we are thrilled to share the incredible news that, thanks to your efforts, we raised a total of **\$553,826 for Day of Giving 2025!** Not only did we **surpass our goal of \$450,000**, but together, we've raised even more to support women, children and youth for generations to come.

Your passion and commitment as Legacy Team members have been nothing short of inspiring. Your efforts have made it possible to create lasting change, grounded in the hope that our collective work will continue to empower others for years to come.'

Thank you for your incredible contributions and for being a beacon of faith, love, and hope in this important mission. Together, we are building a future filled with promise and possibility.

Blessings,

Betty Helms and UWFaith Development Team
Cynthia Brown, AWF-UWF Treasurer



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FROM THE CONFERENCE SECRETARY

2025 AWFC UWF INFORMATIONAL GUIDE

The 2025 AWFC UWF THEME: MOVING FAITHFULLY FORWARD

SCRIPTURE: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" Philippians 4:13

AWFC Conference Team:

Betty Helms, President	Desiree Clark, Vice President
Barbara Carroll, Secretary	Cynthia Brown, Treasurer
Gerri Stiffler, Chair of Nominations	Deanie DeFelix, Communications

Coordinators:

Joscie Cutchens, Spiritual Growth	Cynthia Jackson, E & I
Deaconess Clara Ester, MN&O	Deaconess Laurel Akin, Social Action

AWFC Districts:

President

Color

Southeast		Orange
Southwest	Michele Smith	Blue
Central		Yellow
Panhandle	Brenda Boman	Green

District 2025 Pledge to Mission

Southeast	\$15,000.00
Southwest	\$15,000.00
Central	\$ 8,000.00
Panhandle	\$ 5,000.00
Conference	\$ 2,700.00 (Event Offerings)



AWFC Conference Membership: Current: 825 National Goal: 500,000

Legacy Fund: Current Balance: \$46,265.555 National goal: \$60,000.000 by 2028

Social Justice: Climate Justice and Mass Incarceration

2025 Events:

June 8 – 10 Annual Conference First UMC, Pensacola, Florida, Theme: "Make Us One"

June 27-28 **Mission u**, Ashland Place United Methodist Church, Mobile, Alabama
Theme: Hope

Adult Session: *Practicing Hope Together*

Youth: *Communities of the Spirit: Living in Hope as a Resurrection People*

Children: *Hope as a Resurrection People*

Oct. 3-4 Spiritual Enrichment Retreat at Blue Lake, Andalusia, Alabama

SOUTHEASTERN JURISDICTION of UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH



I became a Methodist at the age of 5, and I am embarrassed to say I had no idea about the hierarchy of our church—local, district, conference, jurisdiction, etc.—until I joined United Methodist Women. Having worked through the many layers of the United Women in Faith, I am now the Southeastern Jurisdiction (SEJ) president.

I thought it might be helpful to see a *CliffsNotes* version of United Women in Faith jurisdictions. A jurisdiction consists of geographically related conferences, with The United Methodist Church having five jurisdictions throughout the United States. The Southeastern Jurisdiction has 14 conferences, as seen in the illustration above.

As a ministry of The United Methodist Church, UWF jurisdictions provide spiritual formation, leadership development, and worship opportunities for all throughout the Southeastern Jurisdiction and beyond. We believe that informed, trained, and challenged Christians *can* bring much-needed transformation to the church and communities all over the world when we rely on the strength of our all-powerful Lord Jesus.

United Women in Faith's predecessor organizations established social service programs across the United States at the turn of the 20th century in response to the needs of marginalized and vulnerable communities—newly arrived immigrants, freed Blacks, the working poor, and indigenous peoples. Many of these programs survive today as independent, autonomous non-profit agencies referred to as National Mission Institutions. Located across the United States, United Women in Faith National Office assists these organizations through grants, technical support, and member involvement.

Thirty National Mission Institutions are within the Southeastern Jurisdiction that are empowering women, caring for children, educating youth, housing the neglected, advocating for social justice issues, creating economic opportunities, and changing neighborhoods.

Within each UWF jurisdiction, elected Directors and Program Advisory Groups (PAG) have input with the National Board of Directors about the programs and planning of the organization. We plan events, host book studies, keep in touch with conference officers, support National programs, and more!

As you can see from this brief description of how UWF jurisdictions work, each UWFaith member is called to become informed and trained to face the challenges Christians must overcome to spread Christ's transformative love throughout the church and communities around the world. Let us live victoriously under the reassurance that we CAN do all things through Christ who strengthens us!

Debbie Bracewell, President

Southeastern Jurisdiction UWFaith

FROM MEMBERSHIP, NURTURE, AND OUTREACH

One of the most critical issues we continue to face is promoting the legacy of United Women in Faith by sustaining and growing our membership. Sadly, our membership numbers are declining in some areas, but read on for some tips that can help us in our efforts to rekindle interest in serving the world's struggling women, children, and youth. With the love of Christ in our hearts, we can think about new and innovative ways that we can grow our membership. Try some of the following:

- 1) Invite your co-workers, neighbors, relatives, and friends to join you at a hands-on project.
- 2) Invite them to a Mission u event.
- 3) Celebrate United Women in Faith Sunday, a great time to open your doors to others.
- 4) Invite them on a site visit to a project that your circle or unit supports.

There are many ways to invite potential members to the table, where you will always want to make them feel loved and welcomed into your group.

One thing you probably should not do at the beginning is to invite them to a regular United Women in Faith monthly or bi-monthly meeting. Because that's usually a business meeting, it may be too much for a newcomer to take in and then consider being a part of.

On another note, don't forget members that are no longer able to attend church or your regular meetings. Remember the contributions and gifts that they offered the organization. At least three times a year think about small things that your membership can do, such as these:

- 1) deliver a small gift of appreciation;
- 2) send a simple thinking-of-you card;
- 3) drop off a meal that's been prepared at the church for some other event;
- 4) make a phone call, or send a text message.

These are just some thoughts to consider for you and your circle or unit. Inspire us by sharing photos of your successful practices to include in future issues of *Alert* because . . .

TOGETHER WE CAN INCREASE OUR NUMBERS AND OUR IMPACT FOR CHRIST.

Deaconess Clara Ester
Conference Chair of MN&O



Find more ideas about engaging with your members and thousands of other United Women in Faith in the May/June 2025 issue of *response*. Information about joining women around the world through United Women in Faith Digital (see p. 27) is very helpful. Setting up the digital account is free and offers many resources, such as a panel discussion on "Leading to Make an Impact." There are multiple ways to connect on the network to learn together what "Carrying Our Faith Forward, the 2025 Program Resource" offers online. Take advantage of these resources this summer; take a transformative journey with **United Women in Faith Digital.**



United Women in Faith Announces Website for Assembly 2026

[New York, New York, March 17, 2025]—United Women in Faith is excited to announce that the website for Assembly 2026 is now open! This year's Assembly, themed "Dream it! Believe it! Do it!" will take place in Indianapolis, Indiana, May 15-17, 2026. Registration for the event will open on Sept. 1, 2025.

What awaits you at this empowering event?

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.

Now is the time to start promoting Assembly with your circles, friends, and neighbors. Marketing materials are available on the site to help members invite persons to register. The more sisters we gather, the bigger we can **Dream it! Believe it! Do it!**

Come be transformed at Assembly 2026!

Visit uwfaith.org/assembly

*Move faithfully forward:
Start planning NOW!*

From Education and Interpretation

Greetings to ALL!

Giving through UWFaith helps us to give to others, as God has given to us with love.

Where your money goes:

United Women in Faith is trusted with pledges and donations from individual members as well as mission partners and anonymous donors who have a heart for mission. The national office is committed to good stewardship of this generous support. When local members give, a portion of the Pledge to Mission is kept by their respective unit and conference for their own administrative and membership development (A&MD) expenses as well as local mission. The remainder of the Pledge and the other channels of Mission Giving are forwarded to the national office. Therefore, our members' giving supports local, national, and international work aligned with our mission!

† **The Five Channels of Giving** system provides various ways that our members give undesignated funds to our organization. At the national level, the elected Board of Directors vote on the budgeted spending for each year. Use the free download, [United Women in Faith - UPDATED Five Channels of Mission Giving \(English\) D9892, to get more details about the current Five Channels of Giving program.](#)

† Members can also give to projects on our Designated and Supplementary Projects List, which is updated each year. Visit this webpage to view the list: <https://uwfaith.org/who-we-are/financials/> In addition to these sources of funding, United Women in Faith also receives bequests and holds endowments that significantly support our work. We currently have an active Legacy Fund Endowment Campaign, which will be an ongoing support of income, ensuring that our important work will always continue. **On March 23, 2025, we celebrated 156 years of faith, hope, and love in action!** Celebrating the 2025 Day of Giving with a gift to the United Women in Faith Legacy Endowment Fund helped us to provide for future generations. By uniting our hearts and hands, we're building a hope-filled future of support for women, children, and youth. Every gift we make, regardless of size, will make an impact for generations to come. Our AWF Conference President Betty Helms shares a report on the results of this year's Day of Giving on page ____ of this newsletter.

† **Call to Prayer and Self-denial, another example of where the money goes: This offering supports economic development and microenterprise projects, vocational training, life skills, and livelihood training internationally.** Specifically, funds will support the work of United Methodist conference women's teams that design and lead projects that make a direct impact on improving the lives of their families and community members. Funds raised will also support the work of the conference women's desk coordinators and regional missionaries who partner in this work. One hundred percent of the offering goes to the focus projects for that year. For more than 150 years, United Women in Faith members have taken action to turn faith, hope, and love into work on behalf of women, children, and youth in every corner of the world. **United Women in Faith invites women from all over to gather locally to give through A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial.**

† The importance of sustained giving:

Consider the impact YOU can make through **150 Legacy Builder:** With the Legacy Builder, you can help move our mission steadily forward by making a monthly gift of \$18.69 or more.



Why \$18.69? To honor our foremothers who, in 1869, first put out the call to action to raise money to

improve the lives of women and children.

What could \$18.69 impact? By endowing core expenses, we are equipped to make a difference in several areas such as the following:

- Providing healthy snacks to an afterschool program for children living in poverty in rural KY
- Supplying books for an international scholarship recipient in the Phillipines
- Purchasing baby chicks to create entrepreneurship opportunities for women and youth in Mozambique.

Other Resources that your giving supports:

† Great Podcast ***Am I the Right Person?*** With Margaret Wheatley

In this thought-provoking episode of the podcast "Am I the Right Person?," Ben engages in deeply insightful conversations with Margaret Wheatley, an icon in organizational leadership, and Debra Rienstra, author of *Refugia Faith: Seeking Hidden Shelters, Ordinary Wonder, and the Healing of the Earth*. Wheatley paints an unflinching picture of the future, citing escalating climate issues, political tensions, and social unrest. Despite this outlook, she argues that meaningful, spiritually-based work can still be done. By facing the harsh realities, humans can focus on values like kindness, generosity, and community.

† Podcast Season Two Episode 5 – The BTS Center Solidarity with the sojourners | ResourceUMC

In Washington, D.C. Multiple denominational leaders gathered for a webinar to discuss the United Methodist response to immigrant justice and United Methodists across the connection, as well as all interested parties, are invited to join the conversation. "Solidarity with the Sojourner: Understanding U.S. Immigration and Our Call to Respond" was held on Feb. 10. "This webinar provided an in-depth overview of the current U.S. immigration landscape and explore the challenges immigrant communities face and the policies shaping their lives," explains Rev. Kendal McBroom, General Board of Church and Society's Director of Civil Human Rights, one of the speakers for the event. "Together, we [reflected] on our faith's call to action and discuss[ed] practical ways United Methodists can respond."

Through our support, these programs reach and teach many women and children that are looking for a great cause to promote in the field and at home.

Always remembering our purpose:

United Women in Faith seeks to connect and nurture women through Christian spiritual formation, leadership development, creative fellowship, and education so that they can inspire, influence, and impact local and global communities. Turning faith, hope, and love into action on behalf of women, children, and youth around the world, our community of women focuses on this purpose:

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.

"We give to the work of United Women in Faith to make new beginnings possible for women, children, and youth. Through our Mission Giving, God is at work, and we have the opportunity to change lives around the world."—Heidi Careaga, Board Member and Finance Committee Chair, 2020-2024

Cynthia Jackson
E & I Coordinator



FROM SOCIAL ACTION

Greetings!

Spring in my corner of Southeast Alabama has been mostly pleasant, and I hope it has been for you, too.

As you may know, our AWF Conference United Women in Faith, as well as the AWF Board of Church & Society, is a supporting member of Alabama Arise. Alabama Arise advocates for legislation in Alabama to alleviate poverty. On March 20, seven United Women in Faith members from the Southeast District attended Arise's Legislative Day. We learned about current legislative issues and had the opportunity meet with our state senators to share our concerns. You can learn more about Alabama Arise at <https://alarise.org/>, sign up for newsletters, join as an individual or UWFaith unit, and learn more about the issues.

We would love to interact with a similar organization in Florida, so please let me or any of our Conference Team know of how we can do that!

I applied for a grant from the National office to purchase four books related to our social justice campaigns. These books are available to share with your local units. I will bring them to Mission U. They are as follows:

For Racial Justice:

† ***The Rage of Innocence: How America Criminalizes Black Youth*** by Kristin Henning

† ***Lift Us Up, Don't Push Us Out: Voices from the Front Lines of the Educational Justice Movement*** by Mark R. Warren with David Goodman

For Climate Justice:

† ***So We and Our Children May Live: Following Jesus in Confronting the Climate Crisis*** by Sarah Augustine and Sheri Hostetler and

† ***Love Your Mother: 50 States, 50 Stories, and 50 Women United for Climate***

I hope to see you all at Mission u in June!
Peace and Blessings,

Laurel Akin

Social Action Coordinator

Find related photos
on pages 11 and 13.

UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH PUTTING THEIR LOVE INTO ACTION

**St. Andrews UWFaith
Easter Sock Bunnies Project**



**ALABAMA
ARISE**



SAVE THE DATES:



June 8th - June 10th

AWF Annual Conference
First United Methodist Church, Pensacola, FL
Theme "Make Us One" is based on
our United Methodist communion liturgy.

Fri. and Sat., JUNE 27-28 Mission u

Ashland Place UMC, Mobile, AL
Theme: "HOPE"
Studies for children, youth, and adults
Scholarships available

Clara Ester, Mission u Dean

More details coming with registration information
link. Check the www.awf-umw.org
website often.



October 3 – 4, 2025

Conference Spiritual Enrichment Retreat
Blue Lake Methodist Camp
Andalusia, Alabama



October 18th Panhandle District
Fall Meeting Gulfview United
Methodist Church
(time TBD)

245 Wisteria Ln.
Panama City Beach, FL 3241

SUMMER READING SUGGESTIONS



EASY DOES IT!

Here's a good recipe to use for your big summer get-togethers. We can thank Peggy Pelt of St. Andrews UMC, Panama City, in the Panhandle District for sharing it with us.

Easy Brunswick Stew

- 2 15 oz. containers Lloyd's barbeque* in original sauce (use 2 of 3 meat choices – beef, pork, chicken)
- 16 oz. can cream style corn
- 16 oz. can whole kernel corn, drained
- 16 oz. can tomato sauce (or diced tomatoes)
- 16 oz. can lima beans, drained
- 16 oz. can English peas, drained
- 2 16 oz. cans sliced (or diced) potatoes
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2 T. Worcestershire sauce
- 2 T. oleo
- ¼ cup BBQ sauce
- ½ T. black pepper (or to taste)

Mix all ingredients in crock pot and simmer several hours. (Can also be cooked on stove, brought to boil, and simmered 25 – 30 minutes – but I think it's better in the crock pot – and less trouble too.)

Freezes well.

*Found in refrigerated meat section of grocery store.

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