

ALERT



United
Women
in Faith

Volume 4, Issue 3

ALABAMA-WEST FLORIDA CONFERENCE

FALL 2025

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT: "Moving Faithfully Forward"



Betty Helms
AWF-UWF
Conference President

Inside this issue

President

Vice-Pres

Treasurer

Secretary

SEJ

MNO

Social Action

Save the Dates!

E & I Photos

Our mission is still the same after some 150+ years -- we are still focused on helping women, children, and youth to have a better life on this planet and eternal life with our heavenly Father. Your mission \$\$\$ make this possible.

The first phase of one section of our Purpose states, "The organized unit of United Women in Faith shall be a community of women whose purpose is to know God" -- it is not an accident that "to know God" is the first part of our Purpose, for if we know God, then all our other ministries follow. First and foremost, we must take time in our busy lives to spend time with God in prayer -- which also means we need to listen; we need to spend time reading the Bible.

To help fulfill that part of our Purpose, we offer a wonderful opportunity to do all of these things by attending our **Spiritual Enrichment Retreat** at Blue Lake Methodist Assembly Grounds. The date for this event is **October 3rd-4th**. Our speaker will be the Rev. Ashley Davis, who has been a speaker for us at other events and is always a blessing. I encourage you to register for this special event. Won't you come?

Come to take this opportunity to enjoy the beauty of God's creation.

Come to spend quality time developing a deeper relationship with God.

Come to let your soul be fed with God's words.

Come to let God's blessings flow into your heart.

Our theme is ***Moving Faithfully Forward***. The blessings we will receive at this event will equip us to do just that. Many of us have realized how much we need the SER experience to recharge ourselves, both individually and as United Women in Faith. Join us for a special time of inspiring faith-building!

As we begin to look toward fall (really, it is just around the corner), we are moving toward the end of 2025 and eagerly looking toward 2026. Ideas and plans are already in our thoughts and prayers for this new year. Just remember that **NONE** of our best laid plans will happen without you! As United Women in Faith, we "expand concepts of mission" as we reach out to women, children, and youth locally, as well as around the world. I encourage you to continue to pray, read, learn, attend, and give as we participate in this wonderful ministry of United Women in Faith.

**Let us always "Move Forward Faithfully"
to fulfill our Purpose!**

Betty



Photo courtesy of Laurel Akin

FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT

Greetings!

Mission u this year was a wonderful experience for all who attended. It was held on Saturday, June 28, 2025, at Ashland Place UMC in Mobile, AL. *Practicing Hope* was this year's theme, and participants were able to deepen their spiritual understanding of hope, strengthen community engagement through faith, and foster resilience and action.



Photo of tour courtesy of Laurel Akin

We had two groups for the adult study led by the Rev. Jim DuFriend and Jane Darling. The youth study leaders were Trina Jackson and Jennifer Hope Porto. The children's study leaders were Anita Bryant and Ethan Van Nix. This year's mission focus was the Dumas Wesley Community Center and Sybil Smith Family Village in Mobile. Sarah Laurio, Associate Executive Director of Dumas Wesley Community Center gave a tour of the facilities at Dumas Wesley Center and the Sybil Smith Village on Friday night before the study.

The Sybil Smith Family Village is a transitional housing program for women and children who are experiencing homelessness and helps to provide resources to give these women a fresh start in life for themselves and their children. The Sybil Smith Family Village has a wish list on Amazon.com, so if your unit would like to donate to them, they would be very appreciative.

https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/3KSMAONEHTRTG?ref_=wl_share

Don't forget to register for our **Spiritual Enrichment Retreat**, which will be held at Blue Lake October 3-4, 2025. It is always such a blessing to worship God and reconnect in such a beautiful setting.

Hope to see you there!

Blessings,

Desiree Clarke

Vice President

"Let the heavens rejoice, . . . let the trees of the forest sing for joy." Psalm 96:11-12

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



From the Conference Treasurer

ATTENTION UNIT AND DISTRICT TREASURERS!

The year-end reports are due in November. We especially appreciate our treasurers at all levels because they play such a vital role in carrying out the purpose of United Women in Faith to improve the situations of struggling women, children, and youth worldwide. Our monetary contributions help us to put our love into action through a plethora of programs and projects in every corner of the globe.

The Alabama West Florida UWF Conference is honored to provide services that make a life-changing difference through the Dumas Wesley Community Center in Mobile, Alabama.

Check out the work being done in the Baldwin Family Village and the Sybil Smith Family Village at the website: dumaswesley.org



DUMAS WESLEY COMMUNITY CENTER
Serving the community since
1903

The mission of the Dumas Wesley Community Center of Mobile, Alabama is to EDUCATE, EMPOWER and ENRICH our local community through collaborative programs of Christian service that provide for immediate human needs, strengthen family life, develop leadership and encourage personal responsibility.

The website provides opportunities for individual donations online, or your unit can send a donation through your local treasurer.

Thank you all for supporting the amazing work being done through your cheerful donations to Dumas Wesley Community Center

Cynthia Brown, AWF-UWF Treasurer

AWF CONFERENCE UWF FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

ALABAMA WEST FLORIDA CONFERENCE UWIF CONFERENCE COMMITTEE REPORT

COMMITTEE:	FINANCE COMMITTEE X-MEETING (Zoom meeting)	
CHAIR OF COMMITTEE:	Cynthia Brown, Conference Treasurer	
DATE:	Tuesday, June 24, 2025 @ 6:30 PM	
Committee Members Present:	Cynthia Brown, Betty Helms, Desiree Clark, Barbara Carroll, Joscie Outhens, Cynthia Jackson, Clara Ester, Debbie Bracewell,	
	# PRESENT (Committee Members):	8
	# GUESTS (District Presidents not on committee or other AWF-UWIF officers)	3
	# ABSENT (Committee Members):	3
Absent:	Deanie DeFelix, Gerry Stiffler, Laurel Akin	

Action by AWF-UWIF Finance Committee and Recommended to the AWF-UWIF Executive Team

1	1. 2026 Annual Rates	See Rate Sheet
2	Mileage Rate Increase	See Rate Sheet
3	Registration	
4	Non-Sufficient Funds Fee	
5	1. 2026 District Budgets (see attached for breakdown of each)	
	Panhandle	2,490.00
	Southeast	1,450.00
	Southwest (Mobile)	2,625.00
	Panhandle	880.00
	TOTAL DISTRICT BUDGETS	7,445.00
6	2. 2026 DISTRICT PLEDGES	
	Panhandle	18,000
	Southeast	8,000
	Southwest (Mobile)	15,000
	Panhandle	5,000
	Events - Offering	2,700
	Total PLEDGE	48,700
7	4. 2026 CONFERENCE BUDGET	24,320
	COMBINED CONFERENCE & DISTRICT BUDGET	31,765
8	5. CONFERENCE PLEDGE (TO NATIONAL)	48,700

Submitted by: Cynthia Brown

Passed by: 7/19/2025 - Dothan, AL

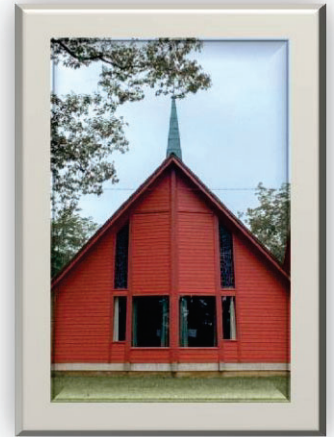
Finance Cmt Action Taken by Executive Cmt: Presented by the committee and passed by unanimous vote at the Executive Team meeting in Dothan.

FROM THE CONFERENCE SECRETARY

MARK THESE DATES ON YOUR CALENDAR
(PASS THIS INFORMATION ALONG TO YOUR UNITS)

SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT RETREAT: Blue Lake
October 3-4, 2025

More information to come on conference website,
www.awf-umw.org
Plan to attend; bring a friend!



ASSEMBLY OPEN REGISTRATION: September 1, 2025
ASSEMBLY 2026: Indianapolis, Indiana
May 15-17, 2026

Theme: Dream It Believe It Do It

The World-Wide Assembly is held every 4 years. It is an exciting opportunity to
Connect, Engage, Celebrate
(More information to come: uwfaith.org/assembly)

Find this article in July/August 2025 issue of *response*, page 5:

Assembly Plans Underway

Chanda Rule to Lead Music

by **response** editors



Chanda Rule



Jennifer Hockenbury



Pastor Mya P. Miller



Rev. Liz Thoofters

Blessings,
Barbara Carroll

Alert

Fall 2025

SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT RETREAT

In the near future, the registration form to the right will be posted on the following site:

www.awf-umw.org

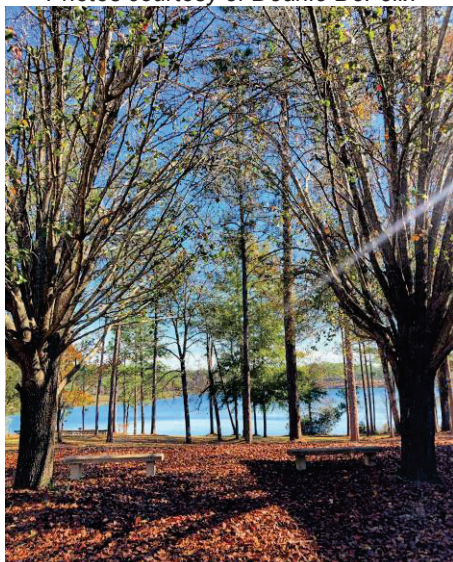
Keep checking to register online. We will provide a printable version that can be mailed with your check also.

A business meeting that will include election of officers is on the agenda, so plan to attend if you possibly can.



SUNRISE AT THE LAKE

Photos courtesy of Deanie DeFelix



Section A HEALTH FORM			
All Participants MUST Register, even Non-Voting. A DISTRICT OFFICER MUST BE AN AGENT WITH PROPER PWD CHECK-IN. A CHURCH-ASSIGNED MINISTRY MUST BE RECORDED WITHIN 15 MINUTES OF ENTERING THE BUILDING.			
Section B NAME - ADDRESS INFO			
Name as to appear on Name Tag		Email (Please PRINT)	
Address		City	State Zip
Phone		County	Local Unit/Church
FIRST TIME TO an SER Alabama West Florida Conference United Methodist Event			
Section C DISTRICT & CONFERENCE OFFICERS - ONLY			
All District and Conference Officers will pay Registration Fee plus any balance not covered by the 2025 reimbursement rate of \$15. If you are on the 2025 State of Nominations for Officer, check Other.			
District Officer		DISTRICT	
Conference Officer		OTHER	
Section D LODGING			
If you don't list a roommate and you wish a Double Room, a roommate will be assigned to you.			
ONE NIGHT Occupancy Per Person PWD Night Single rooms are limited; therefore all request may not be honored. First come - First served.			
LINWOOD			
Double	\$ 45.00		\$ -
Single *	\$ 74.00	No roommate *	\$ -
CENTER SECTION			
Double			\$ -
RV Park			
Hookup		one night only	\$ -
COMMUTER - NO LODGING		Check Here	
NOTE: All campers are to furnish their own linens, including blanket, pillow and towel. Most rooms have twin beds with a few having queen. An email will be sent telling you which size bed you have.			
Section E MEALS			
To get accurate meal count, please indicate by putting 1 or 0 in the # Column Below		#	COST
1	Friday Dinner		\$ 10.50
2	Saturday Breakfast		\$ 8.50
3	Saturday Lunch	1	\$ 9.50
Section F REGISTRATION, LATE FEES & TOTALS			
1	SUBTOTAL Section D and E		\$ -
2	District & Conference Officers can deduct 30% for their 24-hr period from the Total Due. Put in as a Negative \$, no more than \$50.		0.00
3	Blue Lake Facility Maintenance Fee \$3.00 per day		6.00
4	SUBTOTAL Line 8 and 9 (can't be a negative number, enter zero instead)		\$ -
5	Late Fee if postmarked after Due Date	\$10.00	0.00
6	Registration Fee - Required Fee	\$ 20.00	
7	TOTAL OWED & ENCLOSED		
Make all checks payable to AWF-UMW			
Mail to: Cynthia Brown		cynthiabrown350@gmail.com	
2151 Double Bridge Ferry Road, Eclectic, AL 36024		334-202-2468	
Special Needs (dietary or physical):			

District Officer

Conference Officer

SE Officer

National Officer

Check for other dues for voting if applicable

See instructions on back page.

2025 SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT RETREAT

OCTOBER 3 - 4, 2025

BLUE LAKE UNITED METHODIST ASSEMBLY GROUNDS

9/19/2025

(A \$10 Late Fee will apply to all LATE registrations)



Spiritual Enrichment Amidst God's Glorious Beauty

Alert

Fall 2025

FROM THE CONFERENCE NOMINATION CHAIR

One of the most important items we will address during the business portion of the Spiritual Enrichment Retreat in October is the election of the 2026 Executive Team. Gerry Stiffler, the AWF Conference UWFaith Nominations Chair presented the following list of leaders to the Conference Executive Team at a recent board meeting held at Dothan First UMC. The list was approved and will be submitted as a recommendation for approval during the election process of the business meeting at SER.

You will find the nominees listed below. Please consider each nominee with prayerful gratitude that each one has agreed to serve in her position. Pray also that God will direct each of us as we consider the nominees in light of our desire to move forward faithfully as United Women in Faith, always following our Heavenly Father's command to lift up the downtrodden and to shine the light of Jesus in this dark world.

2026 Nominees

Betty Helms
Desiree Clarke
Barbara Carroll
Bonnie Brant
Deanie DeFelix
Clara Ester
Joscie Cutchens
Laurel Akin
Cynthia Jackson
Gerry Stiffler
Beth Arp
Marsha Clayton
Frances Parker
Cathy Givan Peterson

President
Vice President
Secretary
Treasurer
Communication Coordinator
Membership, Nurture, & Outreach
Spiritual Growth
Social Action
Education & Interpretation
Nomination Chair
Nomination Committee (2026)
Nomination Committee (2026)
Nomination Committee (2027)
Nomination Committee (2028)



United
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SOUTHEASTERN JURISDICTION of UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH



In the last *Alert* I talked about jurisdictions. This article will relate other roles UWF leaders fill to support the structure of UWF. Each of the five jurisdictions has a set of elected officers just as the local, district, and conferences have. The jurisdictions do not have coordinators, but they are led by a board of directors with advisory input from the program advisory group (PAG) and national staff. The board of directors consists of 25 directors, 20 of whom are elected by their jurisdiction and five are nominated and elected by the national organization. From the 25, a team of leaders is nominated and elected. They meet at least twice a year and serve a four-year term. Their work includes policy and governance, strategic planning, budgeting, care of retirees, and property. Currently on the board of directors are two from our conference—Zan Jones and Katy Wrona.

Another group that works closely with the national staff is the Program Advisory Group (PAG). This group (65 – 70 members) is selected from a pool of leaders nominated at their conference UWF annual meeting and from recommendations from the national board of directors and staff. This group may include the 25 board of directors members, a representative from each conference not already represented on the 25-member board, the five UWF jurisdiction presidents, representatives from United Methodist agencies, and five members selected by the board of directors for diversity. This group meets at least once a year to study issues and prepare recommendations to the national board regarding mission priorities, mission education, interpretation work, and program guidance on behalf of members of UWF.

All of us have a role to play in United Women in Faith. A thoughtful strategy mentioned in a local unit may find its way into a national UWF membership campaign. A district's efforts to clean up local parks may be highlighted in a video for UWF. We all contribute to the "bigger picture," whether we see results immediately or months into the future. We know our efforts turn love into action for women, children, and youth around the world.

Debbie Bracewell, President

Southeastern Jurisdiction
United Women in Faith



Photos courtesy of Laurel Akin

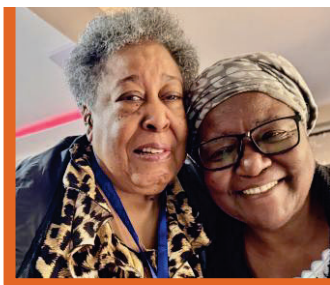
MEMBERSHIP, NURTURE, & OUTREACH

We are using this page to offer our proud **CONGRATULATIONS** to Deaconess Clara Ester, recipient of a new award presented by the conference this year. The "Clara Ester Award," fittingly named for the inaugural winner, our very own AWF Conference UWF Membership, Nurture, and Outreach Chair, recognizes Clara's devoted service to her church, her community, her world. Her leadership for United Women in Faith provides a ripple of faith, hope, and love that will touch innumerable souls around the world.

The **2025 Annual Conference Awards** were reimagined by Rev. Ashley Davis, Pat Luna, and an extraordinary team of leaders who understood how important it was to reinstate these special recognitions. This new award was created by the AWF Board of Church and Society to honor someone who embodies our baptismal vows to resist evil, injustice, and oppression in whatever forms they present themselves. Clara continues to set the bar for all of us in her efforts to live a life of service and inspiration based on the teachings of Jesus Christ. Her unwavering love for others, especially those who feel neglected by society and have never realized the sacrificial love of their Creator and Savior.

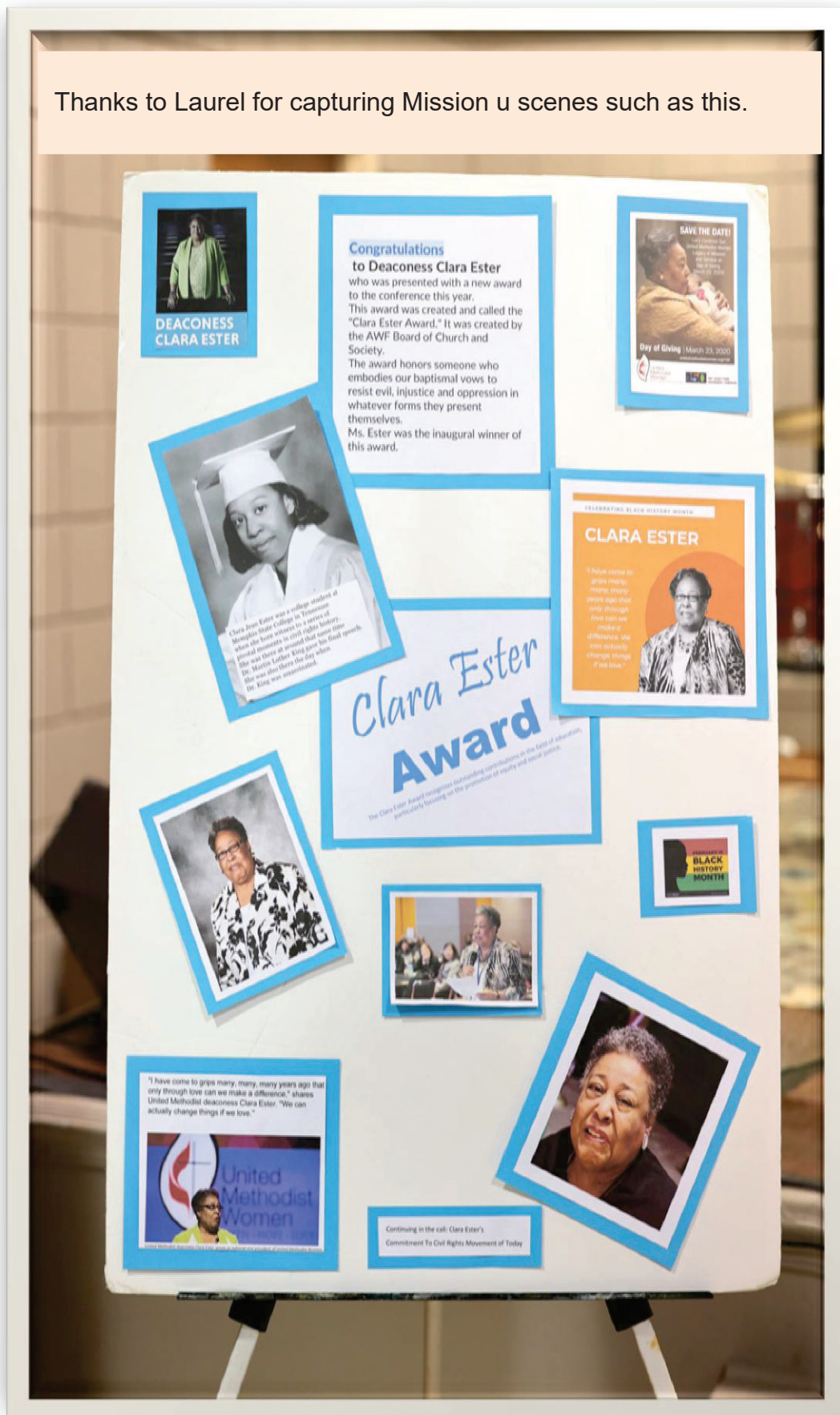


Photos: Laurel Akin & AWF Annual Conf.



God Bless You Always, Clara!

Thanks to Laurel for capturing Mission u scenes such as this.



FROM SOCIAL ACTION

Social Action Update

Summer is flying by, school will have started by the time you read this, and do you know what that means? We will soon be gathering at Blue Lake for our Spiritual Enrichment Retreat (SER)!

You may be wondering why your Social Action Coordinator (SAC) is writing about SER. This year we have a special event lined up for Friday night! Our conference was chosen as one of 30 to be granted a license to show the movie *Pushout!* The movie is based on Dr. Monique W. Morris' groundbreaking book of the same name, which many of you are familiar with from our study in 2021. Please don't miss this opportunity!

Speaking of opportunities, have you explored the wealth of resources available at uwfaith.org? Learn how you and your circle, unit, or district can advocate for the current social justice areas of focus for United Women in Faith. Our current justice campaigns are Climate Justice and Criminalization of Communities of Color.

Visit <https://uwfaith.org/what-we-do/serve-and-advocate/climate-justice/> to learn more about what we can do to care for God's creation.

Visit <https://uwfaith.org/what-we-do/serve-and-advocate/racial-justice/> to learn more about racial justice.

Our conference website, <https://www.awf-umw.org/>, has helpful information and links, and check out our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61578876710964>

Moving faithfully forward,
Deaconess Laurel Akin,
AWF Conference Social Action Coordinator



United
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Photo credit: Laurel Akin

UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH PUTTING THEIR LOVE INTO ACTION

Diakonia World Federation Assembly in Tanzania



Photo courtesy of Laurel Akin

Diakonia World Federation Assembly in Tanzania

Deaconesses and home missionaries in the United Methodist Church are members of the Diakonia World Federation (DWF), an international and ecumenical community of diaconal friendship. Every four years the DWF holds an assembly, bringing together deacons and deaconesses from all over the world and from many Christian denominations.

This year the Assembly took place July 7-12 in Moshi, Tanzania, the first time on the continent of Africa. Alabama-West Florida deaconesses Clara Ester and Laurel Akin were two of the 250 people from 26 countries who attended.

A highlight of the Assembly was the special consecration service held for 15 new members of the United Methodist Order of Deaconess & Home Missioner, also a first on the continent of Africa.

SAVE THE DATES:



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

E & I: Each photo in this section expresses the impactful spirit felt by all who attended Mission u in Mobile's Ashland Place UMC. Thanks to all who planned and participated in this most beneficial study of the Hope we practice each day in our walk with God. *Photos courtesy of Joscie Cutchens*



Alert



Fall 2025



EASY DOES IT!

Here's a delicious recipe to whip up for fall tailgating. Send your favorite holiday party recipe to share in the December issue of *Alert*.

Warm Taco Dip

8 oz. cream cheese, softened
16 oz. canned chili without beans, or homemade chili
8 oz. shredded cheddar
8 oz. shredded mozzarella

Spread soft cream cheese over bottom of a baking dish, medium size.
Pour chili over first layer; spread evenly.
Top with both cheeses

Pop into the microwave to warm until cheese is bubbly. Conventional ovens will take a little longer, maybe 20 minutes at 350.

*Serve with your favorite corn chips.



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