



## ALABAMA WEST FLORIDA CONFERENCE

Vol. 3, SUMMER 2024

### A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



Summer officially begins June 20, but I think we can all agree summer is here! The past six months have flown by for me! We had an amazing Zoom Annual Day with over 60 participants. April included an inspiring celebration at the Southeastern Jurisdiction Quadrennial in Chattanooga, TN. Motivational speakers, inspiring music, and informational workshops filled our weekend. Several of our conference team were

elected to new roles:

**Deb Ketzell, SEJ Committee on Nominations;**

**Debbie Bracewell, SEJ President;**

**Zan Jones & Katy Wrona, National Directors.**

This fall Mission u will be held August 17, 2024, at Fairhope UMC in Fairhope, AL. We will have adult, children, and youth classes available. The study this year is titled—*The Kingdom is Among You: Drawing Closer to God and One Another*. This study is a transformative educational program that encompasses a Bible-based study. We will wind down

the year October 25-26 with our conference Spiritual Enrichment Retreat at Blue Lake.

As Sally Vonner said at the SEJ Quadrennial, the limited view from our units may lead to our underestimation of the power of United Women in Faith. Take a few minutes to peruse our website, review our global missions, read the stories in *response* magazine. Our ministries and services reach almost every culture, every portion of our world. We still have six months to be more and do more. Let us continue to inspire, pray, and impact to transform the world.

**Debbie Bracewell**

### NEW SEJ LEADERS FROM AWF UWFaith CONFERENCE

- PRESIDENT,  
DEBBIE BRACEWELL
- NATIONAL DIRECTORS,  
ZAN JONES  
KATY WRONA
- COM ON NOMINATIONS CHAIR  
DEBRA KETZEL

### Inside this issue:

|                                    |     |
|------------------------------------|-----|
| NEWS FROM THE VICE PRESIDENT       | 2   |
| NEWS FROM THE SECRETARY            | 2   |
| NEWS FROM EDUCATION & INTERP.      | 3-4 |
| NEWS FROM SOCIAL ACTION            | 5   |
| NEWS FROM CENTRAL ALABAMA DISTRICT | 6   |
| NEWS FROM PENSACOLA DISTRICT       | 7   |
| NEWS FROM SOUTH EAST DISTRICT      | 8   |
| SCENES FROM SEJ                    | 9   |
| MISSION U FLYER                    | 10  |



**BETTY HELMS**

Special appreciation goes to these AWF United Women in Faith who have used their leadership skills to fulfill their roles with great success in the **Southeast Jurisdiction**. Their desire to spread the love of Christ throughout the nations provides shining examples for others to follow.



**BARBARA CARROLL**

## From the Vice President

Check out the exciting plans for Mission u on page 10 of this issue. Registration will be open soon.

## From the Secretary



OUR  
ALABAMA-  
WEST  
FLORIDA  
CONFERENCE  
UNITED  
WOMEN IN  
FAITH IS SO  
WELL  
CONNECTED.

I have been to the Southeastern Jurisdiction meeting in Chattanooga, TN as a voting delegate . . . for the last time. I am glad for my vote to be counted for the Director delegates from our AWF-UW Faith conference, Zan Jones and Katy Wrona. As I was sitting in a back row and the vote was about to start a person behind me said, "Can I influence your vote?" I said, "politely" I might add, "I don't think so, I know who I'm voting for today."

Katy gets the first "WIN" with 61.7% of the needed votes (after 2 Ballots) and then Zan Jones gets the second "WIN" with 67.2% of the needed votes (also after 2 Ballots.) The Alabama-West Florida conference UW Faith nominees, now Directors, ran the race and won. I appreciate that these talented wom-

en have volunteered and been voted in to "direct and lead" our UW Faith efforts for the next 4 years.

And then our own AWF-UW Faith Conference President, Debbie Bracewell, accepts the position of Southeastern Jurisdiction President and Deb Ketznel, District President, accepts the position of Committee on Nominations Chairperson for these next 4 years. Our Alabama-West Florida Conference United Women in Faith is so well connected.

All that said, I must mention our conference has been "so well" connected and represented for the last 4 years by Betty Helms, National Director and Barbara Carroll, Southeastern Jurisdiction Committee on Nominations Chairperson. Their attention to direct and lead has been a blessing. Thank you both!

Now, in July the Executive Mission Team will convene and plan 2025 district budgets and meetings and plans. As the Recording Secretary, I will begin to gather my documents and share

into a "folder" for the next Alabama-West Florida United Women in Faith Secretary. If anyone reading this article wants to be our next conference Secretary, please contact Desiree Clarke, CON Chair ASAP. Call or email me if you want to talk about duties and skills. Yep, my term ends on December 31, 2024. Your term, if you accept the nomination, begins January 1, 2025.

As we begin to go through the summer months, let me remind you that we have scholarships (3) for the remaining 2024 gathering, Spiritual Enrichment Retreat at Blue Lake on October 25-26. My duties as Secretary include promoting and chairing the committee that reviews applicants and then decides those to be awarded for this event. Just go to our website at <https://www.awf-umw.org/> Find "Resources," click. Click on "forms" and then scroll down to scholarship form pdf. All other directions are included on the form.

**Debbie Bell**  
AWF-UW Faith Secretary

## From Education & Interpretation

---

Greetings to ALL

Crisis Response: Israel

Israel War 2023 – Updates from April 19, 2024

On October 7, 2023, Hamas terrorists attacked Israel... now, 6 months later on April 13, 2024, Israel is under attack AGAIN. Iran has directly targeted Israel with a drone and missile attack. Israel is now facing TWO attacks at the same time. The need to help Israel and her people has never been greater. As Israel endures an unprecedented attack from Iran, In the last three months, Hamas has fired more than 11,000 rockets at Israel, displaced hundreds of thousands of Israelis, and torn entire communities apart. It has been a long fight. Since the start of the Hamas invasion, 1,200 Israelis have been murdered and 200 hostages taken. Entire communities were left in ruins. We need to find ways to support those that have survived as they endure the effects of a second attack from Iran. Israel needs you now more than ever. And not only them but also remember In 2024, several countries are grappling with armed

conflicts and instability. Here are some notable examples:

**Russia-Ukraine Conflict:** The Russian invasion of Ukraine began in 2022 and has escalated into a large-scale conflict. Military actions include missile volleys, ground troops, and armored units targeting Ukraine's capital, Kiev<sup>1</sup>.

**Afghanistan:** Afghanistan continues to face internal strife and violence.

**Central African Republic:** This nation in Central Africa is embroiled in a civil war.

**DR Congo (Democratic Republic of Congo):** DR Congo is dealing with ongoing conflict and instability.

**Iraq:** Iraq remains affected by conflict and violence.

**Libya:** Libya is another country experiencing war and instability.

**Mexico:** Mexico is at war with drug cartels within its borders.

**Somalia:** Somalia faces persistent conflict and humanitarian challenges.

**Syria:** The Syrian civil war continues to impact the country.

**Yemen:** Yemen is caught in a devastating civil war.

These conflicts have diverse causes, ranging from economic and territorial disputes to religious and political tensions. The international community responds through humanitarian aid, economic sanctions, and political actions, reflecting the complexities of modern geopolitics<sup>123</sup>. Let us hope for peace and stability in these troubled regions.

As United Women in Faith, our prayers and support for the GOOD in our mission must be based on what we believe. Because we believe...that God is the Creator of all people and all are God's children in one family, we commit ourselves as individuals and as a community to follow Jesus Christ in word and in deed and to strive for the rights and the self-determination of every person and group of persons.



## Education and Interpretation (cont.)

**Faith Talks had a great podcast** in April with emphasis on Child Abuse Prevention Month. Interesting interviews included comments from Chelsea Elliott of Somocom Lab, Ellen Reddy of the Nollie Jenkins Family Center, and Dianna Freelon-Foster of Activists with a Purpose. Child Abuse Prevention falls squarely into the priorities of United Women in Faith as an organization committed to women, children, and youth; the podcast offers protective and preventive tips to help us better support and nurture children and families.

Because May is Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, *Faith Talks* held a discussion with several members of United Women in Faith who identify as Asian/Pacific Islander or South Asian. Their comments highlighted the community's trials and triumphs as UWF is committed to learning about and celebrating this commemorative event on *Faith Talks*. Desiring to open doors to deeper understanding, UWF was ex-

cited to interview Selina Soo Lim of Gum Moon Women's Residence, Joni Chun of Susannah Wesley Community Center, and Esther Barkat, a retired school psychologist and United Women in Faith member.

If you missed these excellent podcasts, remember to subscribe to the *Faith Talks* podcast so you can hear previously recorded episodes. Another option is to access the recordings on the UWF webpage. [Podcasts | United Women in Faith \(uwfaith.org\)](https://www.uwfaith.org/podcasts)

In closing have you ever thought about the word *meaningful*? This message came from

What We're Learning:  
Reflections from Nichole Parks, Executive Director



Oftentimes, I would find myself the only - or one of few - Black women in leadership spaces. While many of my colleagues were supportive and inspiring, I longed for a space where I could be my full authentic self, share my experiences without having to describe or defend them, and to be able to network and build a community to promote self and communal advocacy.

I define "meaningful" as "relevant and significant to the learner." These are learning experiences that honor the learner's interest, skills, and embrace the experience they bring to the learning as an output of who they are as an individual. I deeply believe that creating affinity spaces where members of populations who have experienced marginalization can be their full and authentic selves is essential for moving forward in equity and becoming the leaders. She is a leader and champion in the being a leader for women of color and helping them to be leaders, I took this message to heart as we all need to pick up our meaningfulness and LEAD.

Cynthia Jackson  
E & I Coordinator and  
Advocate for Children and  
Women





# From Social Action



United Women in Faith



## Interrupting the School-to-Prison Pipeline: Understanding & Amplifying Youth Calls for #PoliceFreeSchools & #CounselorsNotCops

Many communities are re-evaluating the relationship between policing, community safety, and racial justice. As part of this movement, many school districts are rethinking costly police contracts and debating whether they really need to maintain school-based police (often called school resource officers). This work is getting renewed attention; however, youth organizers around the country and their allies have been leading efforts to shift school culture away from school-based policing and towards restorative/transformational justice for quite some time. If we are to successfully interrupt the school-to-prison pipeline, we must resist efforts to criminalize children of color, and we must begin to move away from biased systems that offer a false promise of school safety through policing to real, comprehensive, community-rooted solutions that offer genuine safety for all children.

### A Few Simple Next Steps for Adult Allies

- 1. Listen to youth voices.**  
Listen to young people in your own community and throughout the country. Are you looking for a place to begin?
  - a. Watch Girls for Gender Equity's video, "[Black Girls Breaking Silence on School Push-Out](#)"
  - b. Read this article from Teen Vogue, "[Over-Policing in Schools Is an Issue Black Students Have Been Fighting For Years](#)"
  - c. Hear student concerns via CNN, "[5 students tell you why they want police-free schools](#)"
- 2. Understand and uplift local youth demands.**  
Participate in community listening sessions to hear from students, parents, and community members. Be especially attentive to the voices of youth of color in your community. As United Women in Faith members, we are committed to listening carefully to young people as they share their experiences and perspectives.
- 3. Advocate for change at the local level.**  
Many of the most important decisions about education and racial equity are happening at the local level—through the decisions of

school boards, superintendents, local school councils, and principals. Join with existing community efforts to organize for #PoliceFreeSchools and #CounselorsNotCops locally. Are you wondering who is working on these issues in your state? Explore [Dignity In Schools'](#) partner organization list as a place to begin.

- 4. Redirect dollars for the good.**  
The goal is not just to remove school-based police from schools. We need to divest from systems that exacerbate school pushout and increase racial disparities in school discipline and school-based arrests. We also need to invest in solutions and strategies that work to ensure educational access and success. We need to redirect the funds currently spent on school-based policing towards children's educational success and comprehensive student support services, including restorative/transformational justice. What this looks like, specifically, should be a community-led decision based on the particular circumstances of a local school and school district. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. We should, however, always ensure that the community of students and parents is an active part of the decision-making.

ADVOCATE FOR YOUTH AT THE LOCAL LEVEL

Never Give Up: Cynthia and Michelle's Faithful Fight Against Mass Incarceration

Another resource is a new documentary *Never Give Up: Cynthia and Michelle's Faithful Fight Against Mass Incarceration* that is available in the United Women in Faith resources site on Youtube. This is an excellent resource for videos to use in meetings and social action campaigns.



As always, I'm available to assist with Social Action.

**Joyce Genz**



## From Central Alabama District

---

Hello, dear friends in the Alabama-West Florida Conference United Women in Faith,

We, of the Central Alabama District, are thinking of you as we approach mid-year 2024.

This year, thus far, has been slow-moving in our District, but our concern for women, children, and youth in need still reigns supreme in our dedication, and our units are continuing their support, especially locally.

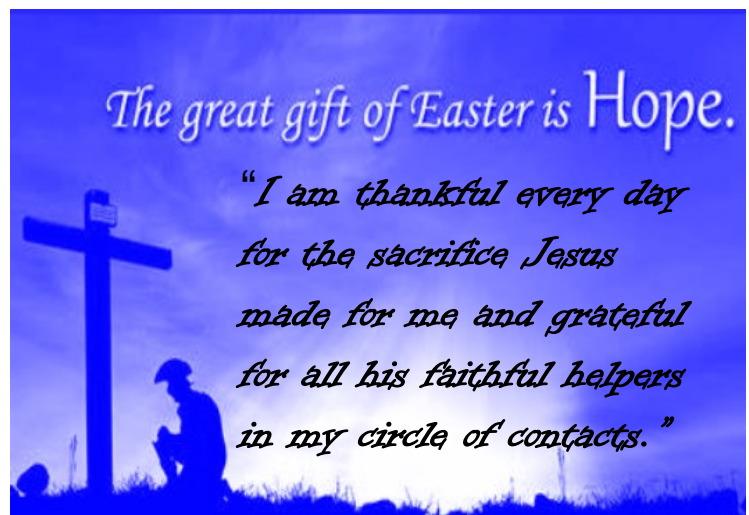
Our District held its District Annual Day event on April 6 at Millbrook First UMC. The theme for the event was "A Special Time of Togetherness," and our time together was shared in five sessions covering our PURPOSE and Mission, Giving for a Reason, programming opportunities, time for recognition and remembrance, time for questions and answers, suggestions and ideas, and a time for lunch, fellowship and appreciation. Our host church unit was most gracious, but we were hopeful and anticipating attendance reflecting more of the membership from our local units. Those present applauded the event.

We are now in the planning stages of our next District-wide event, our District Spiritual Enrichment set for August 24, 2024, at Locust Bluff UMC. While we look forward to the remainder of our year in United Women in Faith, it is with some reservation as

we seek to fill leadership positions for 2025. We know that the talented women are out there. We just pray they will avail themselves and come forward. Additionally, we pray that our district participation will increase as we become more informed and knowledgeable about our new structure and organization.

God bless us all.

Respectfully,  
**Marsha Clayton**  
Central Alabama District President



# From Pensacola District

We are excited to have our churches partnering with Family Promise of Escambia County and to have our UWFaith members participating. This innovative program partners with area churches of various denominations offering a holistic solution to family homelessness to keep families together and safe, and to provide case management to help families connect with financial resources, search for jobs, find affordable housing, offering mentorship and support.

We were fortunate to have Jennifer Lusher, Executive Director, as our guest speaker at District Annual Day. Family Promise began in Summit, New Jersey, and has

become a national movement whose mission is to help homeless families find their way home. Features of the program include faith organizations using unoccupied spaces to provide a place for families to sleep at night and a Day Center to provide basic needs and case management. The Day Center is in a building at First UMC Pensacola. UWFaith members participated in a clean-up day at the Day Center and attended the Day Center open house and ribbon cutting ceremony.

As part of our Alabama-West Florida Conference Teaming with Tanzania partnership, the UWFaith unit of the First UMC Pensacola is host-

ing Tanzania Tamasha—a Tanzanian style festival with refreshments and music, introducing Deaconess Anna Migera from Tarime, Tanzania. It should be a great fun event, so we would love for many people to come—men as well as women. Join us on

**Saturday, June 8<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 p.m., First UMC Pensacola, Wright Place, Great Hall.**



*Teaming with*  
**TANZANIA**



In 2018, local advocates saw a crucial need for shelter and support for homeless families and after learning of the **Family Promise** model, a group of volunteers committed to forming . . . Family Promise of Escambia County (FPEC, Inc.), officially established in January 2020.

***"Our vision is of a community in which every family has a home, a livelihood, and the chance to build a better future."***  
***FamilyPromiseofEscambia.Com***





# From South East District

MOSS HILL DAY APART in April {Thanks to Laurel Akin for her beautiful photos!}



Every spring members from South East District enjoy taking a step back in time to remember the dedicated United Women in Faith who've gone before them, extending the legacy of the eight Christian women who met in 1869 to seek a global way to follow Christ's command to love one another. Their efforts resulted in the founding of a women's missionary society with a major focus on meeting the needs of women, children, and youth worldwide.

THE HISTORIC METHODIST CHURCH SOUTH OF VERNON, FLORIDA, IS A PERFECT SETTING FOR A TIME OF REFLECTION ON THE INSPIRING LIVES OF THE WOMEN WHO CONTINUE TO PUT THEIR



LOVE FOR OTHERS INTO ACTION.

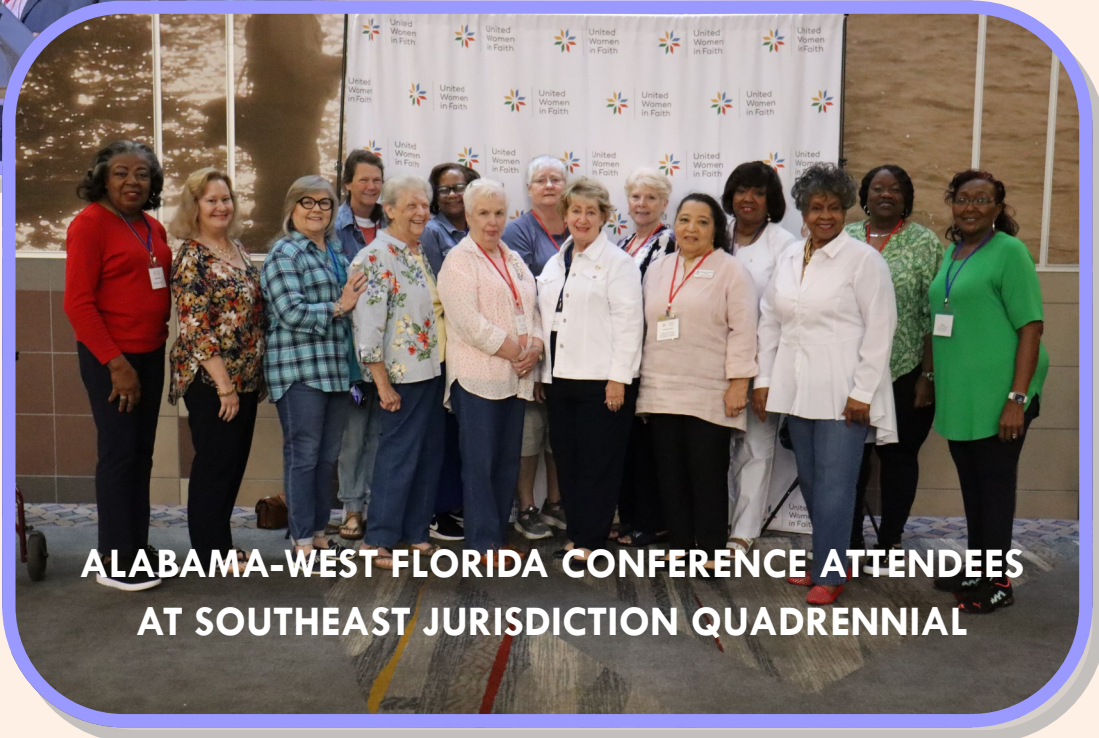
## PHOTOS from MOSS HILL

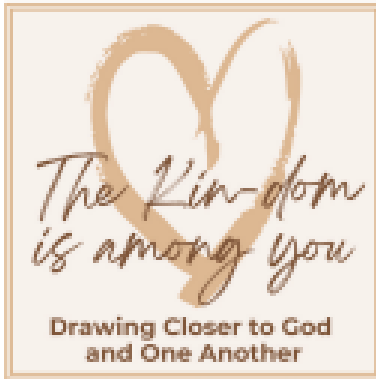






United  
Women  
in Faith





# SAVE THE DATE

## Mission u 2024

### August 17, 2024

## Fairhope UMC

## Fairhope, AL



United  
Women  
in Faith

Join us at **Mission u** as we explore what it means to draw closer to God and one another. We will examine Scripture together and join in worship, fellowship, and action.

Mission u 2024 offers three exciting curricula on this theme:  
Order your copy here: [uwfaithresources.org](http://uwfaithresources.org)

**\$55--full package--registration, lunch, study book**

**\$35-- registration & lunch**

**Adult** — *Welcome Home* by Neomi Fletcher

The adult curriculum uses the image of home to explore how living in close proximity to the kin-dom is like making a home with God. Participants are invited to develop practices for building healthy, welcoming communities as a result of being anchored in the abiding love of God.

**Youth** — *Cultivating Symbiosis: The Nature of God's Kin-dom* by Nica Sy

In Creation, we see the power of symbiosis, or interdependent relationship. The youth curriculum explores the idea of symbiosis between our relationships with one another and our relationship with God. By drawing closer to one another and our world, we draw closer to the kin-dom.

**Children** — *Me in the Kin-dom* by Kathy Cook

The children's curriculum uses the Lord's Prayer as a lens to help us see that we are all members of the family of God. Children will begin to understand that the kin-dom is living with Christ and one another on earth as in heaven.

**Scholarships available**

**Registration begins at 8:00**

[Enter RSVP information here]

[Include your url/link to the event, if any, here.]

**Closing Worship at 4:30**

***Come learn together for the transformation of the world!***