

Voices of Purpose

December 2025

Quarterly Newsletter of the Greater New Jersey United Women in Faith

President's Message

Happy New Year! Hope all of you had a wonderful Christmas Season.

Please join me for our training and leadership session on Saturday, January 10th from 9:00am to 12 Noon via Zoom. Check the GNJUWFaith 2026 Calendar of Events for this and other program details.

We will have our very own Joyce Pratt speaking with us at our Spring Meeting Saturday, April 11th at Central United Methodist Church in Linwood, NJ.

Thanks, and take care,

Holly M. Cyrus
GNJUWFaith President



Issue Highlights

- UWFaith Grant Approval to End the School-to-Prison Pipeline
- Criminal Justice Reform – Faith & Facts
- Baseball and the United Women in Faith
- 2026 Special GNJUWFaith Events



United
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in Faith

December 2025

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Editor: Joyce Pratt
GNJUWFaith Communications Coordinator



United
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September 2025

Greater New Jersey Conference United Women in Faith

Welcome Statement

GNJ United Women in Faith affirms that the grace of God is extended to all God's children without exception.

United Women in Faith seeks to connect and nurture women through Christian spiritual formation, leadership development, creative fellowship, and education so they can inspire, influence and impact local and global communities.

We are committed to the inclusion of people of every gender identity, gender expression, and sexual orientation as well as people of every age, ethnicity, physical and mental ability, level of education, and family structure, and of every economic, immigration, marital, and social status.

We make a bold choice to work for intersectional peace with justice and to create inclusive communities that respect the dignity and sacred worth of all God's children, and honor our shared, common humanity.





*Greater New Jersey Conference United Women in Faith
wishes you
Happy Holidays!*

*“Thank you for all your support and guidance this year. And,
best wishes for a healthy, happy, and peaceful New Year.”*



*Christmas is more than just presents,
it's love and harmony.*

--Julie Herbert

Cape Atlantic District (CAD) Receives United Women in Faith's Grant to Interrupt the School-to-Prison Pipeline

Background. Since 2022, members of Greater New Jersey Conference United Women in Faith (GNJUWFaith) have worked cooperatively and diligently to achieve legislative advocacy to support ending the school-to-prison pipeline and mass incarceration in New Jersey and the United States via enactment and enforcement of applicable laws. Our goal was to encourage our Senate legislators to pass applicable legislature on the floor, a crucial stage for legislature. Two things defeated our efforts, lack of transportation funds to Washington, D.C. and cancellation of the Senate Assembly end of year session.

Second Chance. Yet, GNJUWFaith's effort has not been in vain thanks to approval on November 20, 2025 of **UWFaith's grant seed funding to support local efforts to interrupt the school-to-prison pipeline!** Because grants were designated for UWFaith districts and units, Cape Atlantic District (CAD) sponsored our grant application. CAD's approval was also symbolic because previously we all worked under GNJUWFaith and many of our participants were CAD members! For details, visit:<https://uwfaith.org/blog/2025/just-energy-for-all-seed-funding-application/>.

Special thanks to grant team participants who reviewed the grant application written by Joyce Pratt before submission -- Holly Cyrus, GNJUWFaith President; Susan Zahorbenski, UMW NE Jurisdiction Leadership Team Vice President; and Yvonne Bouknight, UMW NE Jurisdiction Board of Directors, Governance Committee for National UWFaith.

Details. The seed funding applied for will support updates to previous work, approval for U.S. Senate Assembly presentation, and free transportation and meals for all our volunteers to make a presentation to the U.S. Senate. Former and current volunteers will be invited to join our reactivated committee and friendly U.S. legislators will be contacted to lend advisory support!

Our timeline is: Calendar Year 2026 for Strategic Planning, Project Implementation, and Final Results report to UWFaith by February 1, 2027.

Participants. Former and new volunteers are invited to join our committee to be led by Joyce Pratt, CAD Social Action Coordinator/Grant Writer, Lou Hyson, CAD President, and Holly Cyrus, GNJUWF President. RSVP at www.gnjuwFaith.org "MORE/Contact."

Please be prepared to accept our invitation to join **or** volunteer now to assist with strategic planning. **Hope to meet with you all soon!**

FAITH & FACTS – Civil and Human Rights

Criminal Justice Reform in the United States

What does the Bible say?

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free. (**Luke 4:18**)



Remember those who are in prison, as though you were in prison with them; those tortured, as though you yourselves were being tortured. (**Hebrews 13:3**)

When all the prisoners of the land are crushed under foot, when human rights are perverted in the presence of the Most High, when one's case is subverted—does the Lord not see it? (**Lamentations 3:34-36**)

What does The United Methodist Church say?

In the love of Christ, who came to save those who are lost and vulnerable, we urge the creation of a genuinely new system for the care and restoration of victims, offenders, criminal justice officials, and the community as a whole. (**Social Principles ¶164.H**)



A justice system that reflects God's desires for the world is one that is healing and restorative. Those who have been victimized by crime and the communities in which they reside need healing. Healing can come as safety and security are restored and the broken bonds of mutuality and shared existence are mended. Those who commit crimes must be held accountable through making amends to those they have caused to suffer, and they must be given the opportunity to return to their full place in society and community. (**2016 Book of Resolutions, #5031, "Criminal Justice"**)

We support measures designed to remove social conditions that lead to crime, and we encourage continued positive action between law enforcement officials and members of the community at large. (**Social Principles ¶164.H**)

Retributive systems of justice form barriers to the realization of the vision of restorative justice because they are tainted with explicit and implicit racial and ethnic bias, they punish children as

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Criminal Justice Reform in the United States

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harshly as adults, and they accommodate a two-tiered system that serves those with wealth and subjugates those without. (**2016 Book of Resolutions, #5031, “Criminal Justice”**)

What do the facts say?

- The United States has the highest reported incarcerated population (2.2 million people) in the world, increasing 500% over the last 40 years. The U.S. represents only 5% of the world's population yet has 25% of the world's prisoners.
- Nearly one in three U.S. adults has a criminal record. For those seeking employment, on average only half are as likely to hear back from an employer as a person without a record. For Black men with records, only one in three will receive a callback. Often stereotypes, bias and overzealous licensing requirements create major barriers to employment for people with criminal records.
- During traffic stops, Black and Hispanic drivers are three times more likely than white drivers to be searched by police. Black drivers are also twice as likely as white drivers to be arrested during a traffic stop despite the fact that police generally have lower “contraband hit rates” when they search black versus white drivers. Black men are also nearly six times as likely to be incarcerated as white men and Hispanic men are 2-3 times as likely.

What do you say?

Take **action** for justice...

Join the Civil and Human Rights Network which connects United Methodists with information about mass incarceration and advocacy opportunities for reform. **Visit umcjustice.org.**

Follow the Interfaith Criminal Justice Coalition on social media. Church and Society created an interfaith advocacy coalition to educate and reform unfair and inhuman criminal justice policies.

Visit your local prison or jail and build relationships with our sisters and brothers inside. Support families of the incarcerated and those who have recently been released.

Source: Church & Society, The United Methodist Church, FAITH & FACTS – Civil and Human Rights, “Criminal Justice Reform in the United States.” For more information contact: Jeania Ree Moore – jmoore@umcjustice.org.

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What is current legislation?

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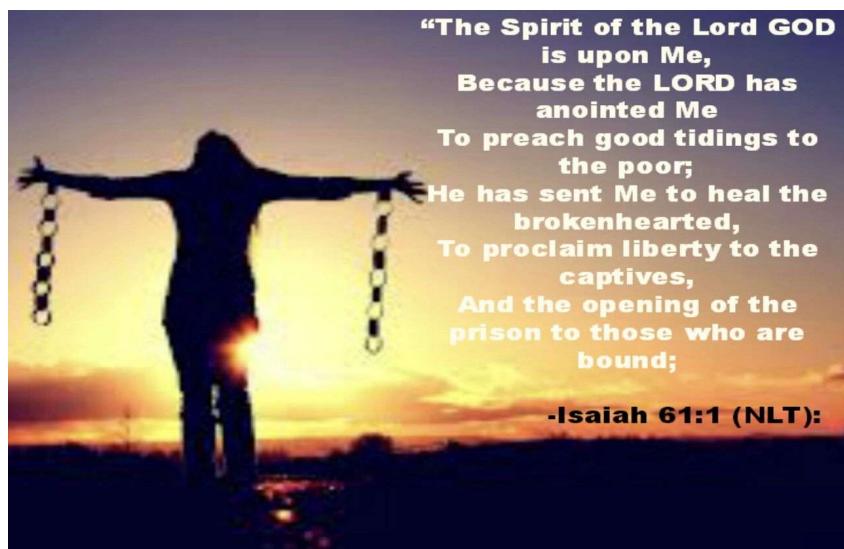
H.R. 2739 – Counseling Not Criminalization in Schools (SIPP) Act

The school-to-prison pipeline (SIPP) is a metaphor describing the national trend where children, especially those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are funneled from public schools into the criminal justice system. This phenomenon is driven by systemic issues, including harsh disciplinary policies, inadequate educational resources, and the increasing presence of law enforcement in schools.

H.R. 2738 – Ending PUSHOUT Act of 2023

 Copilot Search

The **Ending PUSHOUT Act of 2023** is a bill that aims to reduce suspension and expulsion of students by awarding grants to local educational agencies and nonprofit organizations. It calls out the harmful ways in which students are criminalized and overpoliced at school and invests in safe and nurturing school environments for all students, especially girls of color. The bill establishes federal grants for school districts that commit to banning harmful practices and adopting evidence-based approaches, such as restorative justice, to address socio-economic inequities. Specifically, it establishes \$2.5 billion in new federal grants to support states and districts that commit to ban unfair and discriminatory school discipline practices and improve school climates. [Congress.gov +3](#)



Achieving Life Results Beyond Your Expectations

212° - the extra degree™

Samuel L. Parker, co-founder of MaxPitch Media, Inc., shares in his book, **212° - the extra degree,™** that these three numbers absolutely assure life altering positive results if applied. He begins with the fact that:

At 211 degrees, water is hot.
At 212 degrees, it boils.
And with boiling water, comes steam.
And with steam, you can power a train.

That extra effort powered a train! Parker asks *How many opportunities have you missed because you were not aware of the possibilities that would occur if you applied a small amount of effort beyond what you normally do?* Once you are aware, you have a target for everything you do. Your new target – **212**. You will now realize the benefits of your extra effort.

Parker shares quotes from great leaders and the Bible as well as real-life successes supporting his message that *additional effort can achieve exponential results*. He provides ideas to implement the 212 mindset in your life immediately to become a wonderful new habit with a responsibility to **act**. Parker adds:

It's your life.
You are responsible for your results.
It's time to turn up the **heat**.

This small training program book, only 76 pages, can be obtained online at

www.walkthetalk.com.



Baseball and United Women in Faith

By: Virgil (Virgie) Williams
GNJUWFaith Vice President/Program Coordinator
December 13, 2025

Recently, Virgie Williams was invited to speak at the GNJUWFaith Central District's 2025 Fall Meeting. When requested to share some information about this great humanitarian group that we all belong to, Williams quoted a statement from a friend, "I am different, I do things differently." This inspired Williams to do something different, so she shared a unique comparison between **Major League Baseball and United Women in Faith**.

Williams stated, "I really enjoy baseball, and whenever I get the chance, I'm out at the ballpark. From the time the first pitch is thrown, through the seventh inning stretch, right down to the last out in the ninth inning, I'm right there. I love it all. The crowds, the chanting, the people sitting around me yelling for more hot dogs and drinks. It's really an electric way to spend an evening. I get caught up in the thrill and/or the agony of my team's efforts. I'm on the edge of my seat, sweating out a 3-2 pitch, and then shout for joy when a base hit is made. Yet the ultimate thrill for me is a bases loaded, 2-outs in the ninth inning--grand slam that clinches the game. I jump up and scream with the crowd. The fireworks are blasting, and people are giving each other good-natured slaps on the back. The good mood lingers on, even when I'm in bumper-to-bumper traffic trying to get home."

So, friends, what does Baseball have to do with United Women in Faith (UWF)? Let's take a look at a few scriptures first.

Scriptures on being in a unified belief system and purpose, like in 1 Corinthians 1:10, where Paul appeals to believers to be of one mind, united in thought and purpose. Or Ephesians 4:3, which urges believers to make every effort to keep the unity of the spirit through the bond of peace.

Compare this to a Baseball Team.

The team is made up of Pitchers, Hitters (pinch hitters), Catchers, Outfielders, Infielders, Short Stop, First, Second, & Third Basemen, and Several Coaches. Think on this scenario: There is a runner on first base, a runner on third base, no outs, and the team's best hitter is coming to bat. The coach for the opposing team calls for a time-out; he, the catcher, and sometimes another coach come out to talk to the pitcher. Of course, we don't know what he says, probably words of encouragement. Or the player at bat does a

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Baseball and United Women in Faith

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sacrifice fly. Which gives the player on third base a chance to tag up and race to home plate—the player on first base dashes for second base. They remind one of dancers doing a synchronized dance in a Baseball Game.

Now compare these purposes to the UWF Mission Statement.

United Women in Faith seeks to connect and nurture women through Christian formation, leadership development, creative fellowship, and education, so they can inspire, influence, and impact local and global communities.

We're alike, the Baseball Team and UWF, because we all have an important part to play in giving our team the best coaches, the best giving spirit, the willingness to be a pinch hitter and to keep our winning team moving forward. Our teams are spirited in the sense of the World Series. Women and families are waiting for that three-two-pitch, because they need food assistance, they need after-school programs, they need Pampers and formula, a strong arm to support them. Just like the batter that steps up and knocks one out of the park, and the runner that touches all the bases, so also UWF TOUCHES all the bases when they work together as a team and do the work that Our Lord calls us to do. It's about love, it's about giving, and giving up a day a few times, and some days it pours, and you give more.

We are a team, and we work together, and do it with love and laughter, as well as with diligence. In other words, we not only swing the bat, we also knock the ball out of the park. In return we feel grateful that we can help by serving, that we not only share our gifts, but also share our smiles and love with humanity. We are a coordinated team following the teachings of our Lord and Savior joyfully, whether we are visiting the sick, distributing clothing, or giving assistance to The Neighborhood Center. Our Units know their vineyards, they know where the need is, and they serve with love and a joyful spirit in their hearts. It's what we do.

We are devoted to ending 'The School to Prison Pipeline,' ending mass incarceration, and stopping the criminalization of communities of color. We are devoted to supporting The Neighborhood Center whether it is supplying art supplies or funds for recreational sports fields. UWF is continually committed to growing in our faith, keeping our passion alive to help women and families. We are constantly learning and growing, staying at the top of our game—for how can we assist others if we are not at the top of our own game? There are free courses and workshops online periodically throughout the year.

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Baseball and United Women in Faith

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We all need to take time to re-group and restore our inner selves so that it reflects in our outer selves. We in essence are a UWF World Series Team, each working toward the same goal.

We must believe in the concept that I cannot be all I can be

if my sister is not all she can be.

(Motto of the National Hook-Up of Black Women)

We must believe in the concept of being a HOW THINKER AND NOT AN IF THINKER. We must work together as a team that cares about the women and families in our midst, and being a part of the Leadership Team, this is ever uppermost in our minds. How can we ensure that the local units feel the work they do is important? Frankly speaking, if there were no local units, then the Leadership Team would not be needed. WE NEED YOU!

Remember the song that many churches sang back in the last century:

I need you, you need me, we're all a part of God's family.

I won't hurt you with words from my mouth.

I love you. I need you to survive.

Women and families need you to survive! The Leadership Team needs you, the Local Units, to survive, and you, in turn, need the Leadership Team to assist you when you have issues or concerns.

Our Leadership team consists of ladies who are willing to assist you when you have questions or issues. There is information about UWF on the website:

<https://gnjuwfaith.org>. On the site, you will be able access information about the organization as well as contact information for the officers. Recently, United Methodist Women evolved to become United Women in Faith, as we are cognizant of all women in faith. If you have not experienced Assembly, we encourage you to join us in Indianapolis, Indiana, next Spring. The date is May 15-17, 2026. <https://uwfaith.org/assembly>.

When you talk about the World Series, remember we will all hit it out of the park with our happy dances as we greet each other in Christian love and share our gifts and talents with women from all over the world. It is truly a beautiful thing!

Assembly 2026

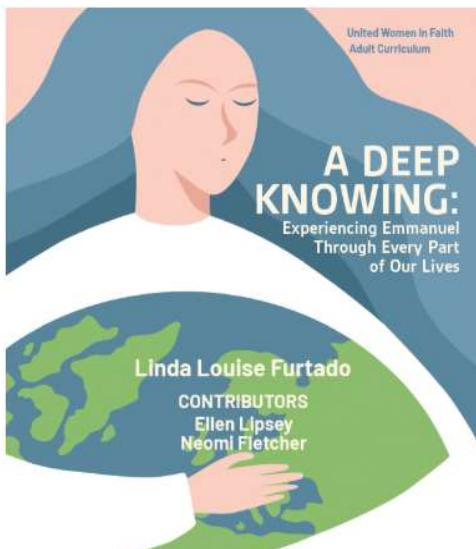
May 15-17, 2026
Indianapolis, Indiana
Indian Convention Center, Halls A, B & C

Dream it!
Believe it!
Do it!

There has never been a more important time for women of faith to come together, tap into our strength and unite to change the world.

What to expect at Assembly 2026

United Women in Faith Assembly 2026 is a once-every-four-years gathering of women committed to faith, empowerment, and making a difference. Picture a weekend that uplifts your soul, strengthens your faith, and brings you together with an unstoppable sisterhood. Register now for our May 15-17 2026 Assembly in Indianapolis, Indiana at: <https://assembly.uwfaith.org/ereg/index.php?eventid=821058&>.



[A Deep Knowing: Experiencing Emmanuel Through Every Part of Our Lives](#)
Adult Curriculum by Linda Louise Furtado

Mission u 2026

The 2026 Mission u theme is *Experiencing Emmanuel* and will take place in conference and local events across the country beginning the summer of 2026.

Each Mission u curriculum is designed for eight one-hour sessions and can easily be used in Sunday school, VBS, small groups, or other ecumenical settings.

You are encouraged to share the Mission u curriculum with your pastor, minister, group and Sunday School leaders, and others all year long.

<https://uwfaith.org/events/mission-u/>

District News

Cape Atlantic District (CAD)

UWFaith Seed Funding (Grant). Under the direction of President Lou Hyson, Cape Atlantic District accepted GNJUWFaith's invitation to lead, in title only, its UWFaith grant proposal. The grant is seed funding for GNJUWFaith committee members to continue their advocacy work to end the school to prison pipeline. The UWFaith grant was accepted on November 1, 2025 and approved November 20, 2025 for a 2026 start. All will be invited to join us. **Stay tuned for updates!!!**

GNJUMC District Information:

<https://www.umc.org/en/content/northeastern-jurisdiction-district-offices>.



Legacy Fund 2026 Challenge

Every United Women in Faith conference is being challenged to donate to the Legacy Fund. And the conference with the most giving will be rewarded!

The goal is to reach \$60 million by Assembly 2026. Our current balance is \$52,455,923.00.

GNJUWFaith total contributions since October 31, 2025 is \$4,421.82. We are so close.

Please give today!

Marilyn Powell

GNJ Legacy Liaison

For giving details, visit: <https://uwfaith.org/give/legacy-fund/>.

The Legacy Endowment Fund Campaign

As a permanently invested endowment, the Legacy Fund will be an ongoing source of income, providing the assurance that our important work can always continue.

Giving to the Legacy Fund will support United Women in Faith in perpetuity. That's why gifts to the endowment fund are such a vital way to sustain and grow our capacity to serve and advocate.



In 2014, the Legacy Endowment Fund Campaign was created and set a bold goal of raising \$60 million for the endowment. Through the generosity and efforts of women like you, we are confident this goal can be reached! We are almost there!!

With every gift received in 2026 and beyond, we will secure the financial resources needed to deepen and expand our mission. Consider joining your legacy with ours and making a gift today.

Submitted by H. Cyrus

Greater New Jersey United Women in Faith

2026 Special Events

GNJUWFaith Training and Leadership Meeting via Zoom on January 10th from 9:00AM – 12:00Noon.

Please join me for a training session and leadership meeting via Zoom on Saturday January 10th from 9:00AM – 12:00Noon. Link to be distributed with R.S.V.P. You won't want to miss learning your roles and meeting with the leadership team.

GNJUWFaith Spring Meeting on Saturday April 11th from 9:00AM – 2:00PM.

We will be having our Spring Meeting on Saturday, April 11th at the Linwood – Central United Methodist Church, 5 Marvin Ave, Linwood, NJ 08221, from 9:00AM – 2:00PM. Our speaker will be our very own Joyce Pratt talking about the grant CAD received to work on "The School to Prison Pipeline." We will have a light breakfast and lunch at the meeting.

Holly Cyrus,
GNJUWFaith President

Leadership Training

1 Timothy 3:1: "Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task."

Thanksgiving Leftovers Casserole

This Thanksgiving meal is a layered comfort-food casserole made with leftover stuffing, turkey, veggies, and cheesy mashed potatoes. Drizzle with gravy and serve with cranberry sauce.

Submitted by **Kraft**

Prep Time: 15 mins

Cook Time: 30 mins

Total Time: 45 mins

Servings: 10

Yield: One 9x13-inch casserole



Ingredients

- 3 cups leftover stuffing
- 4 cups chopped leftover roasted turkey
- 2 cups leftover cooked vegetables
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup mayonnaise
- 3 cups leftover mashed potatoes
- 1 cup shredded Cheddar cheese
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon ground paprika

Directions

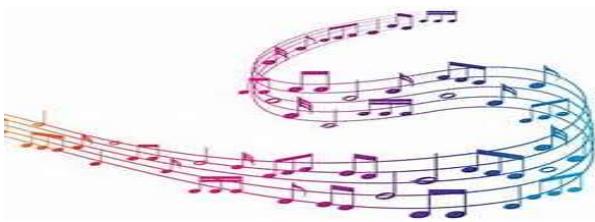
1. Gather Ingredients. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C). Spray a 9x13-inch baking dish with cooking spray.
2. Spread stuffing evenly in the bottom of the prepared baking dish.
3. Mix turkey, vegetables, and mayonnaise together in a bowl until well combined; spoon over stuffing and spread into an even layer.
4. Mix mashed potatoes and Cheddar cheese until well combined; spread over the turkey mixture. Sprinkle paprika over top.
5. Bake in the preheated oven until heated through, 30 to 40 minutes.

Recipe Tips

Not enough leftovers? Use cooked ground turkey, a prepared 6-ounce box of Stove Top stuffing, frozen mixed veggies (thaw them first), and prepared instant mashed potatoes.

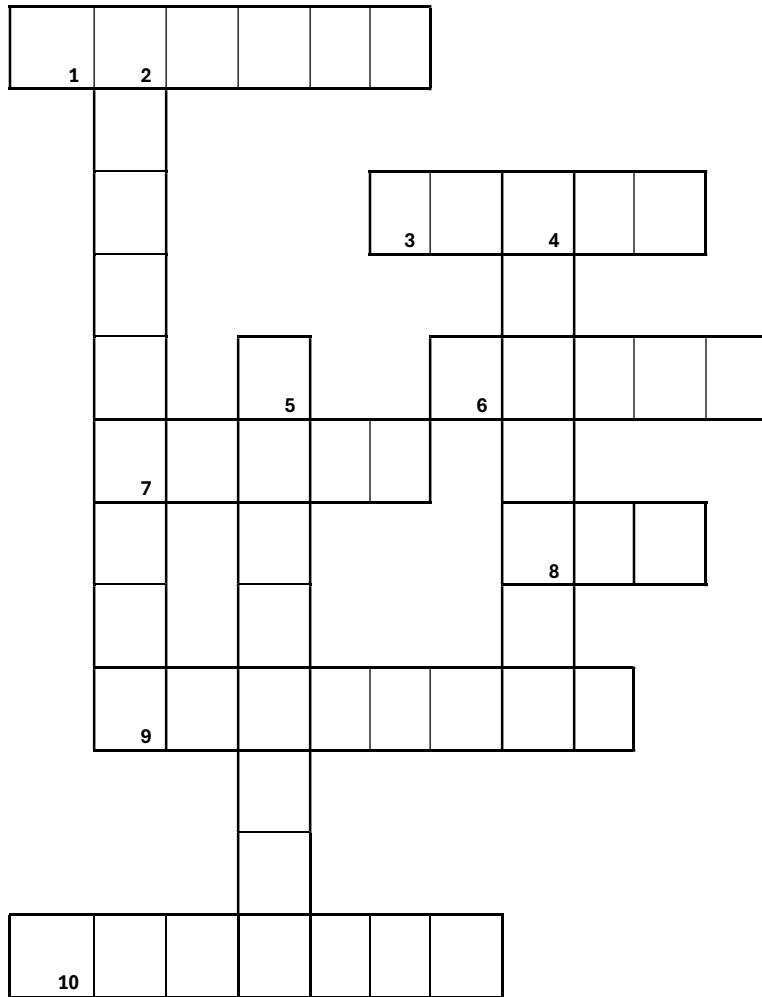
You can substitute low-fat mayonnaise and Cheddar if preferred.

<https://www.allrecipes.com/recipe/234631/thanksgiving-leftovers-casserole/>



MUSIC, MUSIC, MUSIC!

GNJUWFaith December 2025 Puzzle



Across

1. _____. (See 8 across).
3. Don't Worry, Be ____ " by Bobby McFerrin.
6. Amazing ____.
7. Musical notes.
8. The best is ____ (See 1 across.)
9. Andrea Bocelli hope song.
10. Singing along with recorded singers.

Down

2. Large instrumental ensemble.
4. ____! Band in Germany.
5. A _____. Sung without accompaniment.

Answers on page 26.

Mentally taxing?

When your brain is tired,
even simple tasks can feel like
climbing a mountain.

thebadpod.com



CHRISTMAS FUN

Etsy.com

Guess the answers by remembering the [John Denver song lyrics](#).



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Easy Christmas Bible Trivia Questions



1. On what day do Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus?
2. In what kind of building was Jesus born?
3. Who told Mary that she would have a baby?
4. What did the Kings and Shepherds follow to find the Baby Jesus?
5. How many gifts did the Kings/Wise Men bring to Jesus?
6. In place of a crib, what did Jesus sleep in?
7. What was the profession of Mary's husband, Joseph?
8. In what modern country would you find the town of Bethlehem?
9. What territory did King Herod rule over?
10. Complete the famous line from John 3:16: 'For God so loved the world, that'

<https://www.quiztriviagames.com/>

Answers on page 26.



Christmas Isn't Celebrated Everywhere

Christmas is celebrated in lots of countries. However, Christmas isn't celebrated everywhere in the world, and it can actually be dangerous to celebrate Christmas in some countries, or in parts of some countries. Let's begin with a few **Christmas traditions ("pros")**.

Christmas in the USA is celebrated by approximately 90% of the population, with some considering it the most important time of the year. Families from across the United States gather together, sing carols, and open presents from Santa Claus under a decorated tree in the morning of December 25th. Traditional American Christmas meals often include turkey with stuffing, ham, and eggnog flavored with cinnamon and nutmeg.

Hanging Advent calendars in Germany. Advent, meaning "coming" is the period beginning four Sundays before Christmas. German Protestants counted down the days to Christmas first by marking 24 chalk lines on a door and rubbing one off every day in December until Gerhard Lang introduced cardboard calendars with doors that opened and included chocolate. Today, giant Advent calendars on building facades can be seen in many European towns and cities.

Decorating fir trees in Europe by pagan Europeans during the winter solstice. Tree worship was common, and a living tree outdoors with candles and ornaments would also be practiced symbolizing the sun, moon, and stars on the tree of life. Since evergreens symbolize eternal life, greenery helped Europeans visualize the spring to come.

Night of the Little Candles (Noche de las Velitas) in Colombia. On December 7, Colombia honors Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the Feast of the Immaculate Conception with Noche de las Velitas, an enchanting celebration that marks the start of the holiday season. Colombians light up their homes and streets with millions of white and colored velas (candles) in patterned paper lanterns. In public there is music, fireworks, and food markets.

Christmas on January 7 in Ethiopia. It's generally thought the three wise men referred to as magi or kings who followed a miraculous guiding star to Bethlehem "from the East" to pay homage to the infant Jesus came from Asia, Europe, and Ethiopia. Many Ethiopians believe that all three wise men (some say it was 12) were Ethiopian.

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Christmas Isn't Celebrated Everywhere

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Christmas on January 7 in Ethiopia (continued)

Ethiopians follow the Julian calendar and celebrate Christmas (Ganna or Genna) on January 7. People dress in white, with most wearing the traditional netela – a thin white cotton scarf with brightly colored stripes across the ends, draped like a shawl or toga, looking very kingly.

Giving Poinsettias in Mexico. A Mexican legend tells of a girl who had nothing but a bunch of weeds to offer the baby Jesus at a Christmas Eve service, knelt to place the weeds by the nativity, and the bouquet burst into bright red flowers. Ever since, the flowers, shaped like the star of Bethlehem, have been known as the Flores de Noche Buena (Flowers of the Hoy Night) and synonymous with Christmas.

Burning of the Devil (La Quema del Diablo) in Guatemala. At sunset on December 7, the eve of the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Guatemalans practice a ritual unique in the world, La Quema del Diablo (Burning of the Devil). Since the 17th century, they have believed that burning an effigy of the devil will cleanse their homes of the evils and misfortunes suffered in the previous year. Communities gather in plazas to light bonfires and burn the devil, often a pinata, at 6pm, vendors sell devil horns and firecrackers, and many revelers wear devil disguises. Afterward, families come together to eat bunuelos (traditional donuts) and drink warm fruit punch.

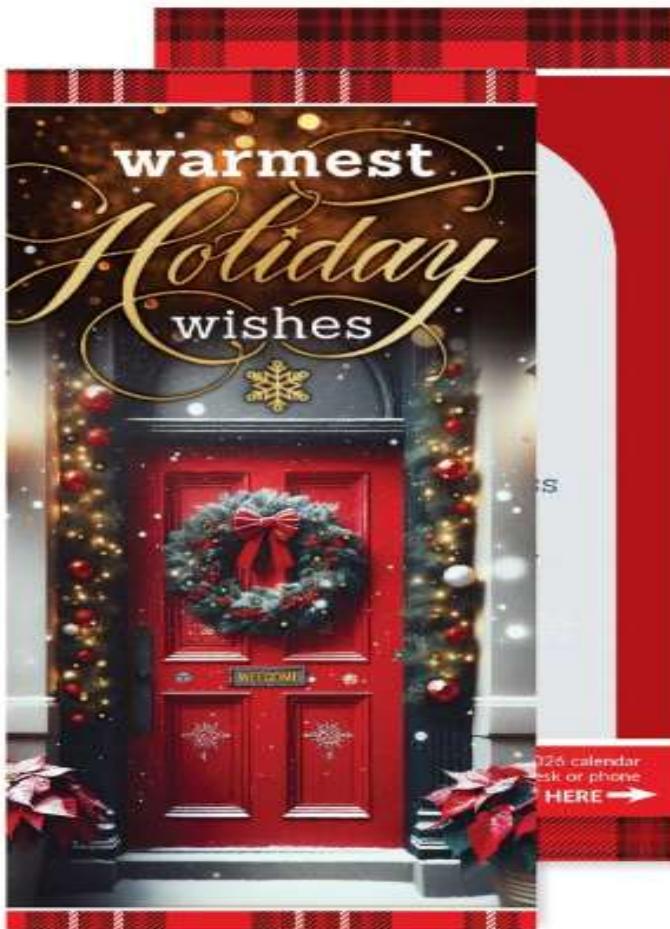
Midnight Mass in Rome. Theologians believe the midnight mass tradition originated with Pilgrims to what is now Israel. In the late 4th century, a pilgrim from Rome joined a group of Christians in a vigil in Bethlehem on the night of January 5 – Christmas Eve in the Eastern tradition. The vigil was followed by a torchlight procession to Jerusalem, culminating with a dawn gathering. In the 5th century, Pope Sixtus III introduced midnight mass on Christmas Eve in the chapel and the tradition has spread to many Christian countries worldwide.

Christmas Eve (Reveillon de Noel) in Quebec. In Quebec, French-speaking families celebrate Christmas on the evening of December 24. It's a late-night to early-morning event, hence the term réveillon, which comes from the French word reveal, meaning "wakening." Originating in Franch, it is similarly celebrated in New Orleans. Families would attend midnight mass before returning home, where Santa Claus would magically appear to dole out gifts. Afterwards, a gluttonous meal would be eaten with festivities lasting until dawn.

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Women
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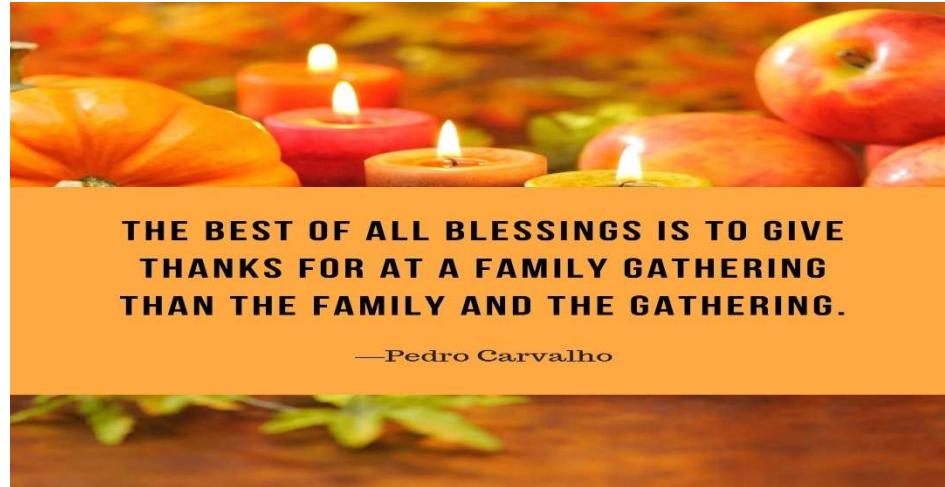


2026



Conifer Park

— JANUARY —							— JULY —						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31				26	27	28	29	30	31	
— FEBRUARY —							— AUGUST —						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
— MARCH —							— SEPTEMBER —						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
29	30	31					27	28	29	30			
— APRIL —							— OCTOBER —						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	18	19	20	21	22	23	24
26	27	28	29	30			25	26	27	28	29	30	31
— MAY —							— NOVEMBER —						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	15	16	17	18	19	20	21
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	22	23	24	25	26	27	28
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	29	30					
— JUNE —							— DECEMBER —						
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
28	29	30					27	28	29	30	31		



United
Women
in Faith

Christmas Isn't Celebrated Everywhere

(continued from page 24)

Christmas “cons” - countries that **do not celebrate Christmas** or Christmas is not a public holiday:

1. Afghanistan – Islamic Nation
2. Bhutan – Buddhist traditions
3. China – Not officially recognized but urban areas celebrate it commercially.
4. Egypt – Cultural events
5. Mongolia – Buddhist traditions
6. Morocco – Muslim traditions
7. Pakistan – Islamic nation. Founder born on December 25.
8. Qatar – Non-Christian country
9. Thailand – Buddhist country but tolerant of other religions.
10. Tunisia – Sunni majority.

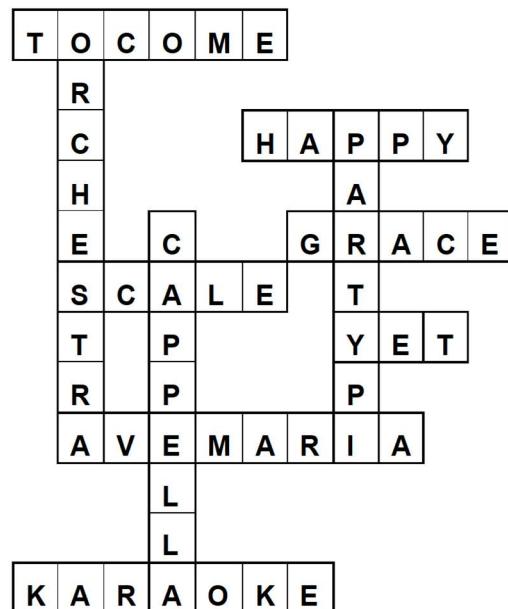
There are 34 countries that do not celebrate Christmas the western way, but Christian religions are tolerated. –<https://greenglobaltravel.com/countries-that-dont-celebrate-christmas/>.

Easy Christmas Bible Trivia Questions (Answers)

1. 25th December
2. A stable
3. The Angel Gabriel
4. A Star
5. Three
6. A Manger
7. Carpenter
8. Israel
9. Judea
10. He gave His only Son



Music, Music, Music [Puzzle Answers]





GNJUWFaith 2026 Calendar of Events

November TBD **Leadership Development Days via zoom (National)**

January 10 **Conference Leadership Development Event: 9 am - 12:00 pm**
Leadership Team Meeting, 12-2pm via Zoom. **RSVP** to holly.cyrus@faa.gov by January 9th.

April 11 **GNJUMW Annual Spring Meeting – 9:00-2:00 pm**
Location: Central United Methodist Church, Linwood, NJ. **RSVP** to holly.cyrus@faa.gov by April 9th.

May 15 – May 17 **Assembly in 2026** in Indianapolis, IN

June 6 **Leadership Team Meeting - 10 a.m. to Noon**
Location TBD. **RSVP** to holly.cyrus@faa.gov by June 6th. Gather at 9:30 a.m.

July 17-19 **Mission “u” Three Day School**
Centenary University, Hackettstown, NJ

July 23 **South Seaville Camp Meeting**
4th Thursday Women’s Day; Tabernacle, South Seaville, NJ

August 1 **Treasurer’s Meeting 9:30-11:30, Leadership Team Meeting 12-2** Location TBD.

October 17 **GNJUMW Annual Fall Meeting, 9 am-2 pm**
Mission Resource Center, 205 Jumping Brook Road, Neptune, NJ 07753
RSVP to holly.cyrus@faa.gov by October 16th.

Upcoming Events **Assembly in 2026** in Indianapolis, IN, May 15-17, 2026.

Voices of Purpose

2025 Newsletter Deadlines & Distribution

Newsletter Issue	Deadline for Articles	Deadline for Distribution
Spring 2025 (January – March)	April 4, 2025	April 8, 2025
Summer 2025 (April – June)	July 4, 2025	July 8, 2025
Fall 2025 (July – September)	October 3, 2025	October 7, 2025
Winter 2025 (October – December)	January 3, 2026	January 7, 2026

Visit GNJUWF website for previous published newsletters: www.gnjuwfaith.org/news.



The Greater New Jersey United Women in Faith (GNJUWFaith) newsletter ***Voices of Purpose*** is a quarterly bulletin published and distributed to bring news and events of united women in faith and the religious services they embrace. Our “voices” can be heard in every corner of society from science and medicine to the economy, politics, and race, always through God’s grace.

We invite you to share your knowledge, experiences, and opinions with our readers. Don’t worry about writing skills for we have volunteer editors who would love the challenge. Please visit our website contact page to submit your presentation. We await your call!

www.gnjuwfaith.org

Greater New Jersey United Women in Faith

LEADERSHIP TEAM 2025

PRESIDENT

Holly Cyrus ('24)

VPRES/PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Virgil Williams ('28)

SECRETARY

Linda Wilson (27)

TREASURER

Carol Bloch ('25)

SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT ADVISOR

Agnes Bockari ('28)

Membership, Nurture and

OUTREACH CHAIR

Betty Sayner ('28)

CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ACTIONS

ADVOCATE

Open

PROGRAM RESOURCES

Open

STANDING RULES CHAIR

Grace Rapp

PHOTOGRAPHER

Lou Hyson ('27)

COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

Joyce Pratt ('27)

NATIVE AMERICAN MINISTRIES REP.

Cynthia Wilks-Mosely

LGBTQ Representative

Open

GNJUWF Website: www.gnjuwfaith.org

COMMITTEE ON NOMINATIONS

NOMINATIONS CHAIR

Open

CLASS OF 2025

Kathy Schulz

CLASS OF 2026

Rosa Williams

CLASS OF 2027

Jill Morrow

CLASS OF 2027

Deborah McDermott

CLASS OF 2028

Rebecca C. Grant

CLASS OF 2028

Marilyn Powell

CLASS OF 2028

Open

APPOINTED

CHARTER FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

Chair: Sue Zahorbenski

Members: Leslie Bivins, Joyce Pratt

Carolyn Pendleton, Millie Grey

Mary Bland, Barbara Miller

Legacy Fund Committee

Chair: Marilyn Powell

Members: Open

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LEADERSHIP TEAM – 2024-2025

(continued from page 29)

DISTRICT PRESIDENTS

COASTAL PLAINS

CAPE ATLANTIC

Lou Hyson ('28)

CENTRAL

Debbie Campion ('25)

DELAWARE BAY

Staci Sheetz ('25)

METRO HIGHLANDS

MEADOWLANDS

Tracy Carroll ('25)

Tia Swanson ('25)

RARITAN SHORE

OPEN

SKYLANDS

Elizabeth (Liz) Steen ('26)

ELECTED BY OTHER GROUPS

KOREAN NETWORK PRESIDENT

Kyungmee Kim

KOREAN LANGUAGE COORDINATOR

OPEN

KOREAN LANGUAGE

OPEN

HISPANIC NETWORK PRESIDENT

OPEN

HISPANIC LANGUAGE COORDINATOR

OPEN

CHURCH WOMEN UNITED

Sara Joslin

OTHER LEADERSHIP TEAMS

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Susan Zahorbenski

DEAN MISSION “U”

Rev. Elizabeth Vaneekhoven (25)

ASSISTANT DEAN MISSION “U”

Rev. Bernadette Cataline

UMW NE JURISDICTION BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Governance Committee for National UWFaith

Yvonne Bouknight

UMW NE JURISDICTION LEADERSHIP TEAM

Vice-President

Susan Zahorbenski

UMW NATIONAL DIRECTOR/SECRETARY

CEO

Sally Vonner

GNJUMC PRESIDING BISHOP

Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi

GNJ CONFERENCE UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH WEBSITE

www.gnjuwfaith.org

Revised: 8/2/25

Social Action Resources

Greater New Jersey United Women in Faith Website

www.gnjumw.org.

National Human Trafficking Prevention Month

www.state.gov/national-human-trafficking-prevention-month/

New Jersey Assembly Bills Pending

<https://legiscan.com/NJ/pending/ssembly-state-local-government-committee/id/3085>.

New Jersey Legislature

List of all New Jersey legislators in alphabetical order showing, party, house, and district. Legislators can also be found by municipality/city. Click on “Members” and then “Legislative Roster.” <https://njleg.state.nj.us/legislative-roster>.

United States House of Representatives

Directory of U.S. Representatives (also referred to as congressmen or congresswomen) showing district name, party, office, phone, and committee assignment.
<https://www.house.gov/representatives>.

United States Senate

Listing of all U.S. senators alphabetically by name, showing state, party, office room, and phone.
<https://www.senate.gov/senators/>.

United Women in Faith Website

<https://uwfaith.org>.

United States Congress

Meeting sessions and links for House of Representatives and Senate and current bills search.
<https://congress.gov>.

The Essence of Empathy and Understanding

THE GREAT GIFT OF HUMAN BEINGS IS THAT WE HAVE THE POWER OF EMPATHY, WE CAN ALL SENSE A MYSTERIOUS CONNECTION TO EACH OTHER.

– MERYL STREEP