

Voices of Purpose

June 2026

Quarterly Newsletter of the Greater New Jersey United Women in Faith

President's Message

We lost a dear member of our UWFaith family on Saturday, June 13th, 2026. Reverend Elizabeth H. Vaneekhoven went to be with the Lord. She had just been with us at the UWFaith Conference in Indianapolis, Indiana. I still can't believe it.

Many GNJUWFaith members were at her funeral on Friday, June 19th at Groveville UMC in Groveville, NJ. Her prayer card states:

You'll never walk alone.

When you walk through a storm hold your head up high
and don't be afraid of the dark.

At the end of a storm is a golden sky
and the sweet silver song of a lark.

Walk on through the wind, walk on through the rain,
tho' your dreams be tossed and blown.

Walk on, walk on with hope in your heart
and you'll never walk alone, you'll never, ever walk alone.

Elizabeth was a vital part of Mission-U. As we carry on without her, let our prayer be that we will show up for her at Mission-U in celebration of her life and her important ministry that she gave her ALL to.

Blessings,

Holly Cyrus
GNJUWFaith President.

Issue Highlights

- *Advocacy Day on the Hill*
- *Legacy Fund News*
- *UWFaith Seed Funding Continues*
- *Experiencing Emmanuel at Mission U*
- *Regulating Your Emotions*
- *Assembly 2026 Recap*
- *News Around Town*



United
Women
in Faith

June 2026

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Women
in Faith

June 2026

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Editor: Joyce Pratt
GNJUWFaith Communications Coordinator



United
Women
in Faith

June 2026

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.



United
Women
in Faith

GNJUWFaith Advocacy Day on the Hill

Interrupting the School-to-Prison Pipeline

CAD UWFaith Grant

In their efforts to successfully complete their United Women in Faith seed funding grant to “interrupt the school-to-prison Pipeline (S2P),” CAD UWfaith and GNJUWFaith members and supporters met on June 5, 2026 to complete their grant plans. The agenda was to consider creating an Advocacy Day on the Hill (“Hill Day”) to address mass incarceration in the U.S. generally and the school-to-prison disparities specifically. Research indicated that Hill Day could also be a vehicle for other social action injustice projects.

The idea of a Hill Day was suggested during a meeting with New Jersey Senator Corey Booker’s Southern New Jersey Director Mackenzie Belling. The meeting was held to recruit Senator Booker to speak to the Senate on behalf of CAD UWFaith to encourage support of two current bills addressing S2P. Ms. Belling advised that a Senate Assembly presentation was not a possibility at this time and suggested developing an Advocacy Day on the Hill instead. It was discovered that Hill Day is used by various organizations in 42 U.S. states annually to discuss legislation with Senators.

CAD UWFaith and GNJUWFaith members met on June 5, 2026 to review Hill Day possibilities, approve its creation under GNJUWFaith to provide support for all NJ districts and units, and to assign responsibilities necessary to pursue the CAD UWFaith grant under Hill Day. The result was the acceptance of Hill Day and approval by GNJUWFaith President Holly Cyrus. The CAD UWFaith S2P grant process will continue under the Hill Day umbrella for senatorial support.

NOTES.

S2P, the incarceration of children and youth, is considered one of the largest disparities in the criminal legal system. The United States ranks among the highest worldwide in its dependence on incarceration.

While Black Americans are vastly over-represented in the prison population, the disparity widens for those serving lengthy sentences. In 2019, although Black Americans represented only 14% of the total U.S. population, they represented 33% of the total U.S. prison population and 46% of the prison population who had already served at least 10 years.



Emotion Regulation

Emotion regulation is the ability to exert control over one's own emotional state. It may involve behaviors such as rethinking a challenging situation to reduce anger or anxiety, hiding visible signs of sadness or fear, or focusing on reasons to feel happy or calm.

Reacting has become our default. We pounce, panic, and amplify distress rather than pause and regulate. A teenager posts a selfie and spirals when it doesn't get enough likes; a parent reads a critical email from a colleague and assumes their career is at risk; a friend scrolls social media and erupts over a post that wasn't even meant for them.

Dr. Marc Brackett of Yale University in his TIME article terms the small triggers that snowball into outsize emotional responses as "our overreaction epidemic." He advises that the solution is emotion regulation, a set of intentional, learned skills for managing feelings wisely. Brackett shares that "civil rights leaders succeeded not because they lacked rage but because they learned to channel rage." Brackett learned that anger without direction is like wildfire. It burns hot and fast, then leaves nothing but ashes. With emotion regulation, that same anger becomes a steady flame, force that warms, glides, and endures. It shows us how we turn fear into courage, outrage into justice, and grief into solidarity.

Emotions are not the problem. Fear, anger, grief—all are human, appropriate responses to real crises. Brackett's message tells us the problem is when our emotions run unchecked, our nervous systems stay locked in fight-or-flight, and we burn out before we can meaningfully act. Emotion regulation should never mean silencing anger for it is crucial data that tells us we believe something unfair has happened.

So, what does healthy regulation actually look like? Brackett shares it's not about "just breathe and ignore it." It's a set of concrete, science-based skills:

Name it. Accurately labeling emotions —fear, anger, despair— helps us target our responses. Anger may fuel protest. Grief may lead us to seek solidarity.

Shift don't suppress. Reframing how we see a situation can turn "This is hopeless" into "This is a call to organize."

Anchor before acting. A pause for breath isn't avoidance. It's ensuring your nervous system is steady enough to act with clarity rather than rashness.

Choose renewal. Rest, joy, and connection are not escapism. They are how we resist burnout so we can keep showing up tomorrow, next year, and for the long haul.

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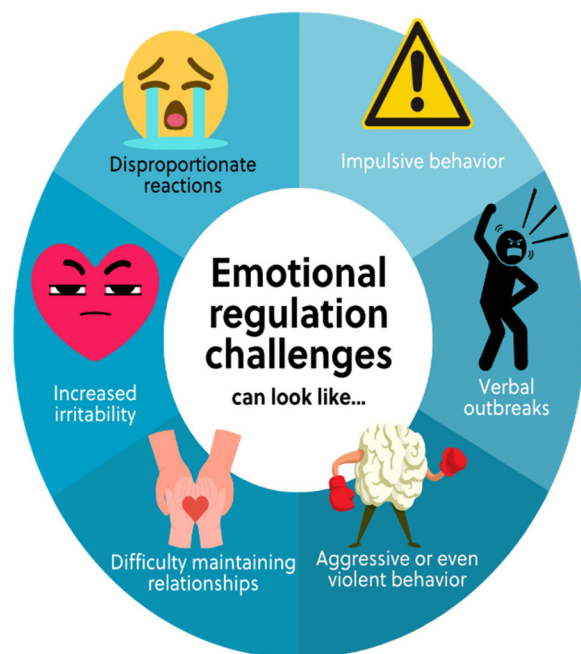
Emotion Regulation

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Without these skills, outrage can spiral into paralysis or misplaced aggression. With them, outrage becomes fuel for sustained, wise action. So, the next time you feel like freaking out, don't silence the feeling. Name it. Anchor it. Share it with someone who can co-regulate with you. Then use it. Because the world doesn't need less passion. It needs passion that lasts.

Resources:

- TIME magazine November 24, 2025 article, "Our Overreaction Epidemic," by Marc Brackett, founding director of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence.
- Emotion Regulation, reviewed by Lybi Ma, 3.23.26.
- Understanding and Improving Emotional Regulation, Copilot Search 6.3.26, citing various sources.



GNJUWFaith Events

Leadership Team Meeting

The Leadership Team meeting was held on June 6, 2026 at Asbury UMC by Atlantic City Circuit UWFaith (see DISTRICTS for details).

Regular leadership reports were read; scholarship announcements were shared for recipient Shunxi Wang's pursuit of a Communication & Media BA at Ewha Woman's University in South Korea; details were shared on the May 15-17, 2026 Assembly in Indianapolis, IN, the May 16-19, 2026 Annual Conference in Wildwood, NJ, and Mission u scheduled for July 17-19, 2026.

In addition, Joyce Pratt gave a summary of our CAD UWFaith racial justice grant and efforts to create an Advocacy on the Hill Day (summarized in this issue) under GNJUWFaith. Her PowerPoint presentation is available at <https://gnjuwfaith.org>, GNJUWFAITH EVENTS page.

Preliminary plans for GNJUWFaith's Fall Annual Meeting scheduled for October 17, 2026 at GNJ Conference Center in Neptune, NJ were discussed and later tabled for Committee planning. Asbury UMC leaders under Pastor Rev. Anson Wilson provided Communion for attendees, participated in GNJUWFaith discussions, and served an awesome brunch.

The next GNJUWFaith Treasurers and Leadership Team Meetings will be held on August 1, 2026 at Christ UMC, 485 Hoes Lane, Piscataway, NJ.

UWFaith Latest News

Use Your Voices During This Year of Influence

General Secretary and CEO Sally Vonner encourages United Women in Faith to use their voices to tell our story and mission as we live through ongoing changes and uncertainty in our daily lives.

"Together we can influence growth through our Unstoppable membership campaign by inviting new women to be part of our sisterhood."

Response Magazine

Editor Tara Barnes announces that this year marks the 47th anniversary of **response** magazine. It's been published now for almost 50 years, but its history goes back even further. In June 1869, the first issue of *Heathen Woman's Friend* was published. Women's organizations of every denomination that is now The United Methodist Church published a magazine. Women were advocating for themselves before they could vote, own property, or be ordained.

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UWFaith Latest News

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United Methodists Celebrate 70 Years of Full Clergy Rights for Women

Seventy years ago on May 4, 2026, the General Conference of the Methodist Church granted full clergy rights to women when it met in Minneapolis, Minnesota. But even before that historic date, women had been shaping the life of Methodism with courage, devotion, and prophetic voice. Julia Tores Fernandez was the First Hispanic/Latina Woman to be received into full connection with the United Methodist Church and the first clergywoman among all denominations in Puerto Rico. Anna Howard Shaw, born in England in 1847, became one of the first women granted a license to preach in the Methodist Episcopal Church.

For details on the above and more news, visit <https://uwfaith.org/news/latest-news/>.



by Regan James, Texas

Just after my first year of high school, I desperately needed a change. I had been going to a private school my entire life and living in the bubble that comes with that. I wanted to escape the familiar and experience something new. I was terrified to go to a public school because it was such an unfamiliar place, and I did not know anyone. But I felt God was urging me to make a substantial change, and so I decided to change schools. I poured all my stress and anxiety into my prayers and trusted God to help me.

Having now finished high school, I could not be more thankful that God gave me the courage to make that change. Even though I was nervous at first, eventually I found peace in my choice. I learned so much in those three years about respecting others with different beliefs and life experiences. My eyes were opened to so many different walks of life, which made me grow stronger in my faith and realize how God works in mysterious ways.

No matter how big or small the change may be, God has our best interests at heart. Following God's call — even when it requires a big change — can be a wonderful blessing.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come:
the old has gone, the new is here!
2 CORINTHIANS 5:17 (NIV)

Seed Funding

United Women in Faith (UWFaith) announced seed funding for two of its major missions: Just Energy for All and Racial Justice.



2026 Just Energy for All Seed Grants

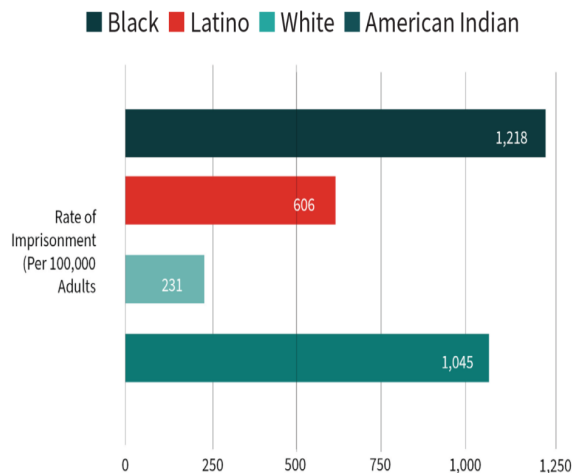
On April 22, 2026, UWFaith invited applications for small-scale seed grants supporting climate justice and energy transition work.

Grants of \$100-\$5,000 are available to United Women in Faith-led initiatives, local environmental justice groups, and coalitions between the two.

Applications due by June 17, 2026, decisions will be made by July 25, 2026, and funding disbursed by September 2026.

Project implementation is calendar year 2027 with a final report due by December 2027.

For details, visit: <https://uwfaith.org/?s=2026+just+energy+seed+grants>.



Seed Funding to End Mass Incarceration

On May 26, 2026, UWFaith, Office of Racial Justice, invited UWFaith groups at any level to apply for funding to support their local work to interrupt the school-to-prison pipeline, stop the criminalization of communities of color, and/or end mass incarceration.

Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis until all funds are disbursed.

Applications will not be accepted **after September 30, 2026** and the process may close sooner if all funds are disbursed.

For details, visit: [Application Directions](#).

NEWS



Ending Veteran Homelessness

Last year, more than 50,000 Veterans were moved to permanent housing. Douglas Allen Collins, 12th U.S Secretary of Veterans Affairs since February 2025, shared how VA is not looking to address Veteran homelessness for a moment, but looking to fix it for a lifetime. No Veteran should be homeless in the country they fought to defend. [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, [#VetResources](#), 6.3.22]

School Board Elections Matter

Your vote is extremely powerful in school board elections: a small fraction of people who turn out for national elections turn out for local ones. Moreover, school board members make up the majority of all elected officials. In 2025 alone, over 22,000 school board seats were up for election. Your local school board, in tandem with the state instructional agencies, makes policy decisions about which curriculum topics will be taught in schools-or excluded entirely-such as **U.S. history, sex education, and social issues**. [Karla Hernandez-Mats, 6.3.26 email]

UWFaith Resource Center Update

UWFaith has been preparing to transition from their online store to UWFaith Digital. Currently during this transition through May 2026, remaining items and resources will continue to be available for purchase while supplies last and many of the remaining physical resources will be featured at Assembly 2026. From May/June and beyond, free downloads will be available on UWFaith Digital and print resources will continue to be added to Amazon. [uwfaithresources.org and UWFaith.org/Digital]

AARP Helps You Build a Healthy Brain

Is there a secret to staying mentally sharp? It comes down to six habits you can follow every day. Decades of research have revealed several ways to tilt the odds in your cognitive favor. Much of it comes down to lifestyle: Eat a healthy diet, exercise regularly, manage stress, sleep well, socialize, and keep learning. Known as the six pillars of brain health, these practices are the foundation of AARP's Staying Sharp program. [Cori Vanchieri, AAARP Brain Health Editor, AAARP Bulletin May/June 2026]

Lay Servants

A United Methodist Lay Servant is an active member of a local church or charge who is ready and desirous to serve the Church and who is well informed on and committed to the Scriptures and the doctrine, heritage, organization, and life of The United Methodist Church and who has received specific training to develop skills in witnessing to the Christian faith through spoken communications, church and community leadership, and care-giving ministries. Lay Servants serve by leading, caring and communicating. Visit the following link for Spring 2026 training and recertification: <https://www.gnjumc.org/leadership-academy/lay-servant-ministries/>.

News Around Town

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Mission u 2026 – NJ Registration Deadlines

The Greater NJ Conference United Women in Faith (GNJUWFaith) Mission u 2026: Experiencing Emmanuel event is **July 17-19, 2026** at Centenary University, Hackettstown, NJ. Registration deadline is **July 6, 2026**. See flyer below for details.

Real-Life Avengers

On Feb. 18, 2025, astronomers determined that an asteroid 130 to 300 feet long had a 3.1% chance of crashing into Earth in 2032. Never had an asteroid of such dangerous dimensions stood such a high chance of striking the planet. Then, just as quickly as history was made, experts declared that the danger had passed. On Feb. 24, 2025, asteroid trackers issued the all-clear: Earth would be spared. But during those six days, planetary defenders all over the world crewed their battle stations under tightest of deadlines. [MIT Technology Review, printed in Reader's Digest February/March 2026 edition.]

Coffee – Benefits, Side Effects, and Risks

Moderate coffee consumption offers numerous health benefits, including improved alertness, reduced risk of chronic diseases, and liver protection, but excessive intake can cause anxiety, digestive issues, and sleep disturbances. [Studies by Dr. Axe, Harvard University, Health Care Readers, WebMD, and Mayo Clinic. For detail URL links, contact <https://gnjuwfaith.org>.]

Good News About Racial Justice

Stories of hope and progress in the fight for racial justice and equality include “Vulnerable to Vibrant” job training program for formerly incarcerated (Texas), Young Latinos advocate for migrants and reshape the future of the Catholic Church as ICE tensions rise, and Former inmate buys prison to create housing and job training for other ex-convicts (North Carolina). [For details, visit <https://www.goodgoodgood.co/impact/racial-justice>.]

The Biden-Harris Administration championed racial equity and further advanced equal opportunity for underserved communities through landmark legislation and historic executive actions such as the **American Rescue Plan, Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, CHIPS and Science Act**, and the **Inflation Reduction Act**. [National Archives]

Isaiah 1:17: “Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed.
Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.”

District News

The United Methodist Church in Greater New Jersey is comprised of six (6) districts of about 60-90 churches each and are clustered into two main regions as a result of 2021 redistricting plans:

Metro Highlands Region

Meadowlands District, Skylands District, and Raritan Shore District

Coastal Plains Region

Cape Atlantic District, Central District, Delaware Bay

In addition to events posted on the GNJUWFaith website and District Facebook pages, reports are submitted quarterly for the Voices of Purpose newsletter.

Cape Atlantic District (CAD)

CAD UWFaith Annual Spring Meeting, *Community Advocacy a Shared Mission*, was held at Belleplain United Methodist Church in Woodbine, NJ on May 30, 2026. A presentation was made by Sarah Matthews, Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity Cape May County. Ms. Matthews shared Habitat for Humanity's future programs to include construction to assist cities with their affordable housing commitments and their 2026 Golf Tournament fundraiser at Cape May Court House, NJ. For details: 609-463-0244, ex. 77 or executive.director@habitatcapemay.org.

Atlantic City Circuit is a cooperative of three UWFaith churches – Asbury UMC, Hamilton Memorial UMC, and Venus Park UMC. Atlantic City Circuit hosted GNJUWFaith's June 6, 2026 Leadership Team Meeting at Asbury Park UMC. Their next event will be an ANNUAL TEA "United Women in Faith" on August 15, 2026 at 3:00pm. Contact Bernice at 609-437-1682 for details.

CAD UWF Grant Progress Brief. The CAD UWF Grant committee was fortunate in obtaining from Mike Sulieman a referral for Senator Corey Booker's Southern New Jersey Director. The Director Ms. MacKenzie Belling directed committee members to creating an Advocacy on the Hill (Hill Day) program vs a Senate Assembly which is not viable during its current status. Details on Hill Day efforts are reported above under "Advocacy Day On the Hill."

Delaware Bay District

President Staci Sheetz submitted a report on Delaware Bay District events. Included were a Facebook series during Lent entitled "Forty Days of Social Justice" focusing on the Social Principles of UMC; a hybrid "A Call to Prayer and Self-Denial" event expanding on the Program Book with happenings in New Jersey and the country, and a "Hands on Mission" event in April where 235 health kits for UMCOR were created. Staci created the slides for the first two events and offered copies to those interested.

Church Women United in New Jersey

Former President Sara Joslin reported the following events for Church Women United in New Jersey (CWU-NJ).

New CWU-NJ Leaders Elected April 25, 2026

Co-President Reverend Vivian D. Cook, South Orange Vailsburg UMC (South Orange)

Co-President Coleen Williams Lewis, St. Mark A.M.E. Church (Cranford)

Vice President Gerry Harve, Crescent Ave Presbyterian Church (Jersey City)

Treasurer Janice T. Watson, Calvary C.M.E. Church (Jersey City)

Church Women United in NJ – P Box 183, South Orange, NJ 07079

<https://www.churchwomenunited.net/>

Other events include

CWU-NJ Executive Board virtual 2026-27 planning meeting scheduled for June 12, 2026.

CWU Book Club is reading **No More Boring Bible Study** on June 11, 2026, Noon.

The Sound of Faith: Music for the Christian Soul on June 24, 2026, 3pm.

CWU-North East (NE) Regional Assembly virtual gathering on September 19, 2026.

The Fellowship of Least Coin, the global ecumenical prayer movement for justice, peace, and reconciliation, will issue Sharing Christ's Healing Peace in the World in June 2026.

Sewn Together

THE UPPER ROOM
DAILY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE



When I begin a new sewing project, I choose fabric from my fairly large stash of remnants that vary in size and shape. I take into consideration the patterns, colors and fabric thickness when deciding what to use.

Once I've chosen the fabric, I start measuring, cutting, ironing, and sewing the pieces together, ensuring that each piece meshes well with the next one so that the end result is strong and cohesive.

Much like a sewing project joins various fabrics, Christian community brings diverse people together. Just as fabrics have their own unique characteristics, every person is distinctive. Our life experiences also shape us and help us to connect with others. Times of grief, uncertainty, or even joy can help us to become more compassionate toward others.

When we support one another, our lives are woven together, forming a strong unit. The strength and confidence we find in community help us to care for each other and show the love of Christ.

Encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:11 (NIV)



Assembly 2026



From May 15th through May 17th 2026, United Women in Faith (UWFaith) leaders hosted thousands of members and their family and friends for a spectacular conference for learning, spiritual enrichment, and neighborly networking. Keynote speakers were Stacey Yvonne Abrams, Rev. Carolyn Hall Abrams, and Elizabeth Eckford.

Stacey Abrams is an American politician, lawyer, voting rights activist, and author who served as minority leader of the Georgia House of Representatives (2011–2017) and became the first Black woman major-party gubernatorial nominee in U.S. history. Founder of Fair Fight Action, she's credited with boosting Georgia's voter turnout in 2020. Abrams is also a bestselling author and entrepreneur, with work spanning politics, business, and advocacy.

Retired pastor and mother of Stacey Abrams, Rev. Carolyn Abrams is founding pastor of H. A. Brown Memorial United Methodist Church in Wiggins, Mississippi, and served the congregation for fifteen years. [<https://uwfaith.org/blog/2026/united-women-in-faith-assembly-2026/>]

The Legacy Banquet featured Elizabeth Eckford, one of the “Little Rock Nine” who integrated the Little Rock Central High School in 1957. Elizabeth’s family did not have a phone and was the only one of a group of brave Black students who had been told for their safety not to come to school the first day of the attempted desegregation at Central High School. As a result of her experiences, Ms. Eckford became a civil rights activist and despite her age continues to share her story in public and in the media. [<https://uwfaith.org/latest-news/2026/jan-feb-response-legacy-banquet-to-featureone-of-little-rock-nine/>]

Community gatherings, workshops, townhall meetings, Experience Hall, networking dinners, and the Legacy Banquet contributed to UWFaith’s promise to uplift souls, strengthen faith, and bring people together with an unstoppable sisterhood!

For photos, visit GNJUWFaith website at <https://gnjuwfaith.org>, NEWS section.

Leviticus 19:18 – “Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the Lord.”

UWFaith Assembly 2026 REFLECTIONS

Susan Zahorbenski

Vice President NEJ UWFaith and Diaconal Minister UMC New Brunswick

How fortunate I was to go to Assembly in Indianapolis in May! Less than a week after I returned, I preached on Pentecost Sunday. Ironically, my flight was originally booked on Spirit Airlines (now defunct). My thoughts here reflect on those fresh insights.

“Dream it, Believe it, Do it!” was the theme of this once-every-four-years gathering. Imagine over 3000 women, committed to faith, empowerment and making a difference! We had a full-day Soul Care retreat, workshops and town hall meetings, and awesome speakers.

The most impressive of these were Stacey Abrams and her mother, Rev. Carolyn Abrams. The mother was almost as inspiring as her famous daughter! Rev. Abrams was library director at a university, then began seminary at age 40. She went on to become the first Black District Superintendent in Mississippi! As a pastor, she merged three churches (a feat in itself) and built a new worship center from them.

If you attended the Legacy Banquet (I did not), you got your money’s worth, because Stacey Abrams was the keynote speaker there. The dinner was sold out, even though we were only told the speaker was one of the Little Rock Nine. Elizabeth Eckford was also very good, but the rave reports were about the former State Representative from Georgia.

I report from the Assembly Gathering these quotable quotes that I jotted down as Stacey Abrams was interviewed, along with her mother, by UWFaith CEO Sally Vonner:

- Church is the space where politics has life.
- Carry our faith into the public sphere.
- Faith is a shield to protect, not a sword to knock down.
- Politics is not partisan but people.
- Help people understand what (harm) their choices may cause.
- No matter how little we have, someone has less. Serve them.
- Know what’s wrong and start fixing it.
- Meet people where they are, not where you want them to be (then move them).

The last is my favorite and the one I need to apply in my life. I hope some of these quotes also spoke to you. And I hope and pray all of you will come to Stamford, Connecticut for our Northeast Jurisdiction Gathering from March 31-April 2, 2028! It’s like a mini-version of Assembly and much more easily accessible. The train station is only a few blocks away from the hotel.

Visit <https://gnjuwfaith.org>, NEWS, for photos by Sue Zahorbenski.

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UWFaith Assembly 2026 REFLECTIONS

(continued from page 17)

Holly Cyrus

GNJUWFaith President

Holly checked with GNJUWFaith members attending Assembly 2026, joined most for events, sessions and/or lunches/dinners, and gathered others for the group photo below. In addition, she assisted with and monitored the Jurisdictional Table that included GNJUWFaith information. Holly exclaimed to all that Assembly 2026 was one of the best!



Sandy Meyer and Julie Noel, Board Members

Church Women United, Inc. (CWU)

This once-every-four-years gathering brings together women committed to faith, empowerment, and making a difference. The weekend offered inspiration, spiritual renewal, and connection within a powerful sisterhood.

Nearly 3,000 people gathered to kick off the event with a vibrant worship celebration featuring interpretive dance and music led by Chanda Rule, who wrote the Assembly's theme song, *Dream It, Believe It, Do It*.

With so many meaningful moments, it was difficult to capture the full experience in one article. For more information about the Assembly, visit CWU's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/uwomenfaith>.

Start by doing the necessary,
then the possible, and suddenly
you are doing the impossible.

--Francis of Assisi

Sight & Sound Theatre

Lancaster, PA

300 Hartman Bridge Road
Ronks, PA 17572



Sight & Sound Theatres began nearly 5 years ago in rural Pennsylvania when a dairy farmer went from producing milk to producing live entertainment with a purpose. Now with two state-of-theater locations, an online streaming platform, and a film studio, Sight & Sound brings powerful stories from the pages of Scripture and history to life on stage and screen.

Plays have included live animals walking from the audience up to the stage, enormous characters such as Goliath falling across the stage, the sounds of the whale in Jonah, and beautiful singing and dancing!

The 2026 Sight & Sound shows in Lancaster, PA are of Joshua. Jonah will be featured in 2027. There are various biblical and passion plays in other cities as well. The areas include outdoor food, beverages, and shopping. It is well-worth a day trip! Visit <https://www.sight-sound.com/lanaster> for details.





Mission u 2026: Experiencing Emmanuel

3 Day In-person Event

July 17-19th

Centenary University
400 Jefferson St.
Hackettstown, NJ 07840

Join us at **Mission u** as we explore the theme, Experiencing Emmanuel.

How do we experience God in times of joy and in challenging times of anxiety, fear, or sadness?

Can we experience God's presence in community as we work for justice?

Mission u will explore the times in the Bible when people experienced Emmanuel, or "God with us." What can we learn from these Emmanuel encounters in the Bible to help inform our discernment of faith, hope, and love in action?



Join us for a time of spiritual renewal!

Registration Deadline: July 6, 2026

Registration Link: <https://na.eventscloud.com/876780>

In Loving Memory

[Prayers are requested for grieving families and friends.]

Elizabeth Vaneekhoven



Elizabeth Vaneekhoven, lovingly known to many as “Betty, Mr. Van or Oma,” a widow, mother, grandmother, pastor, and mentor to countless people in the Bordentown, NJ area, died Saturday, June 13, 2026 surrounded by her family and close friends.

She is particularly known and adored by United Women in Faith members and visitors as she participated in many sections of the GNJUWFaith Mission u annual programs.

In addition to memorial highlights in the “President’s Message” above, visit the Elizabeth Vaneekhoven Facebook link.

Jenneh Rishe

Jenneh Rishe is the daughter of **Agnes Bockari**, GNJUWFaith Spiritual Enrichment Advisor from St. Paul UMC in Willingboro, NJ.

Jenneh was a nurse and advocate who founded The Endo to support those with endometriosis. She shared her debilitating journey with endometriosis with her more than 20,000 Instagram followers before she died on April 15, 2026 at the age of 40.

Her husband Joe Rishe shared that as a faithful believer in Jesus, he believes she is now doing her advocating for the sick alongside Him in Heaven.

For more information, search Jenneh Rishe on [Facebook](#) or www.legacy.com.



**“Blessed *are* they that mourn
for they shall be comforted.”**

Matthew 5:4



Legacy Fund 2026 Update

The Legacy Fund Update from Assembly 2026 was very successful. The giving was very generous by all. The Legacy Banquet giving was \$189,000. This made the Legacy fund total of \$56,112,338.97. Yvonne Bouknight came forward to challenge others to come forward and become an 1869 society member of donating \$5000. Another woman took the challenge and pledged an additional \$5000. It was a great night with speakers Stacy Abrams, voting rights activist, and Elizabeth Eckford who was one of the original nine black children who in 1957 started desegregation of schools in Alabama in the south.

The next day our total giving at Assembly started at \$290,860.55. By the end of Assembly 2026, we made over \$300,000 for mission giving. Our UWFaith giving has exceeded our expectations.

Currently as of May 30, 2026 our total Legacy giving is \$57,137,716.64 in reaching our goal of \$60,000,000. GNJUWFaith has given \$205,659.89. This year we have given \$4,318.35.

Keep up the good work ladies.

Marilyn Powell

GNJUWFaith Legacy Liaison

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

GNJUWFaith received the following Legacy Fund program CONGRATULATIONS!

Keep up the great work!!!

Peace and God's blessings

In Christ

Derrick

KCC

6/30/26



Rev. Dr. Derrick Doherty

Cape Atlantic District Superintendent

LAUGHTER

The Best *Medicine*

The Worst Daily Affirmations Ever

- ❖ Don't let anybody make you feel bad about yourself. That's your job.
- ❖ Not every day is precious. Waste today. You deserve it.
- ❖ Try something that scares you. Like doing the dishes or returning a phone call or leaving the house or ...
- ❖ Today I am putting myself first. If that's OK with you.
- ❖ Take a moment to be grateful for all that you have. OK, now back to wishing everything was different.

--From *Disappointing Affirmations* (Chronicle Books) by Dave Tarnowski. Printed in Reader's Digest, August/September 2025.

Miracle? Maybe not.

A man is playing fetch with his dog by a lake. He throws a stick out on the water and the dog trots out atop the water, retrieves the stick and walks back to him. The man is flabbergasted. He throws the stick again. And again, the dog trots out atop the water, gets the stick and brings it back.

Spotting a nearby stranger who had been watching, he asks, "Did you notice anything unusual?"

"Yes," says the stranger. "Your dog can't swim."

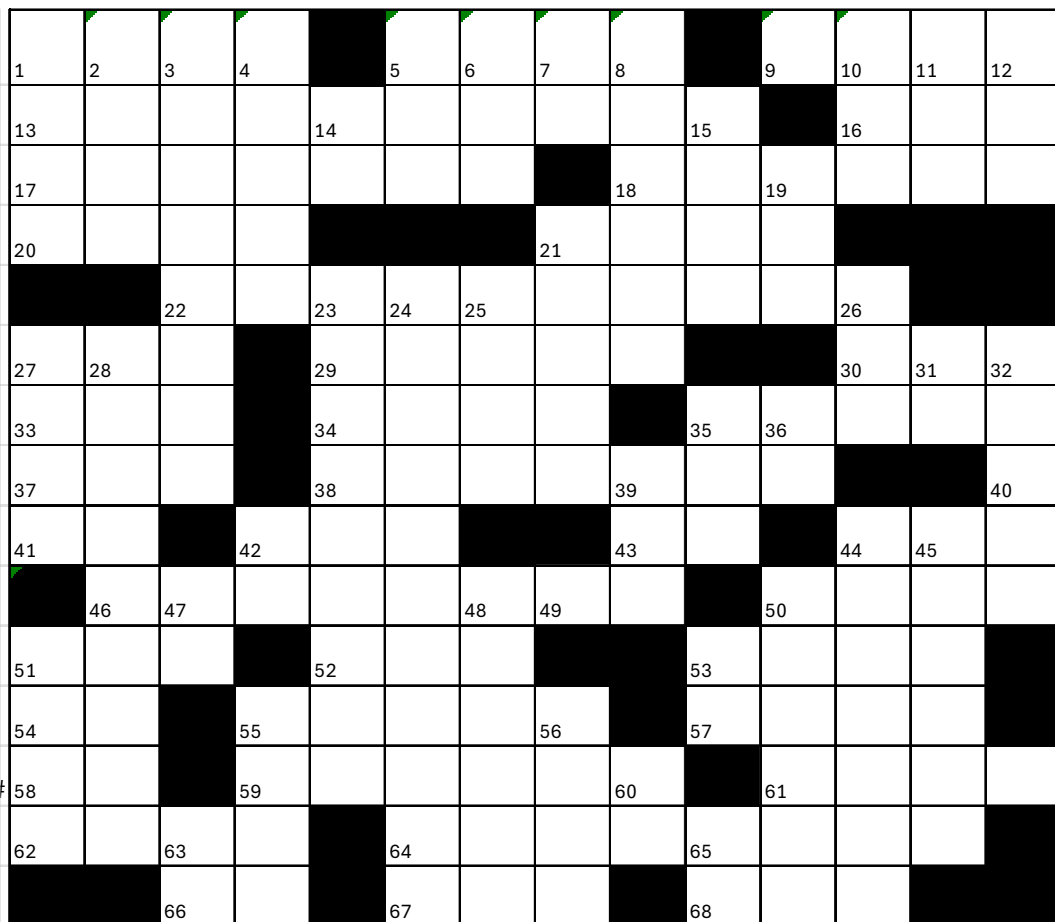
--Submitted by Julie Fink/Brantley,
Choteau, MT



SOUL CARE

Across

1. Musical term (abbrev)
5. Cause the loss of
9. ____-care
13. Soul care practice
16. Brand of Jeans
17. Part of a whole
18. Body arteries
20. Tidy
21. About
22. Soul care practice
27. Symphony Orchestra in Boston
29. Small fibers
30. Paternal figure
33. Possess
34. Sacred mound
35. Pleasant smell
37. Born
38. Powercranks (2 words)
40. Ninth alphabet letter
41. Chemical element
42. Nail polish brand
43. U.S. state (abbrev.)
44. Snake-like fish
46. Point of view (2 words)
50. Sports performance award
51. Beverage
52. Game app
53. ____ buco
54. Wi__
55. Looks as though.
56. Oil exporting countries
58. Whether?
59. Soul care practice
61. Institute of Natural Health & Education
62. Science fiction film
64. Acceptance of something as true.
66. Occupational therapy (abbrev)
67. Eating disorders
68. Certificate of secondary education (UK)

**Down**

1. So be it.
2. Erase
3. Apple of one's eye. (3 words)
4. German village
5. Able to
6. Over the top (initials)
7. Yes
8. Salutes
9. Alpha letter
10. English Language teaching
11. Meadow
12. City in Morocco
14. Chemical element
15. Notification (abbrev.)

Down

19. Winnie the Pooh character
21. Paul Newman
23. Flipbook maker
24. Soul care practice (3 words)
25. Fountain (Hewbrew)
26. No days off (initials)
27. Bell sound
28. La dolce vita
31. Time
32. Soul care practice time.
35. Flavored drink
36. Rio Grande do Sul (acronym)
39. Lyric poem

Down

42. Masculine pronoun
44. Soul
45. Suspension of judgement
47. Masculine pronoun
48. Workout studio (var.)
49. Liquid (chem.)
50. E-bikes
51. ____ Tracker (i.e. fingerprints)
53. English sound
55. Perceives
60. Location abbreviation
63. Negative
65. Executive Committee

Puzzle by J. Pratt 6.15.26

Puzzle answers on last page.

UWFaith Reading Program

The Reading Program is a cherished tradition that brings together members to explore, share and discuss books.

There's something for everyone—the Reading Program is available for:

- Adults, youth, and children
- Enlightening subjects in diverse genres, including:
 - Education for Mission
 - Leadership Development
 - Nurturing for Community
 - Social Action
 - Spiritual Growth

[response](#) magazine and the Faith Talks [podcast](#) are part of the Reading Program.

- Reading Program [Reporting Form](#)
- View [previous Reading Program catalogs](#)
- [Suggest a book](#)
- [Reading Program book list](#)
- If you are planning to purchase books, please consider buying at bookshop.org/shop/uwfaith to earn 10 percent back for United Women in Faith.

Also, visit GNJUWFaith website at <https://gnjuwfaith.org/NEWS> for details on the 2021-2026 UWFaith Reading Program Resources **book titles and resources**.



GNJ UWFaith Calendar of Events 2026

November ?	Leadership Development Days via zoom (National)
January 10	Conference Leadership Development Event: 9 am - 12:00 pm Leadership Team Meeting, 12-2pm RSVP to holly.cyrus@faa.gov by Jan. 9th, via zoom.
April 11	GNJUMW Annual Spring Meeting – 9:00-2:00 pm Central UMC 5 Marvin Ave, 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 Atlantic City Circuit. Asbury UMC 1213 Pacific Ave, Atlantic City, NJ RSVP to hollycyrus99@gmail.com by June 6th. Gather at 9:30 a.m. Meeting from 10 a.m. to Noon. Parking at 1219 Pacific Ave, Atlantic City, NJ 08401 (AC Bar & Grill)
July 17-19	Mission “u” Three Day School Centenary University, Hackettstown, NJ
July 23	South Seaville Camp Meeting 4 th Thursday Women’s Day; Tabernacle, South Seaville, NJ
August 1	Treasurer’s Meeting 9:30-11:30, Leadership Team Meeting 12-2 Christ UMC. 485 Hoes Lane, Piscataway, NJ 08854.
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

2026 Newsletter Deadlines & Distribution

Newsletter Issue	Articles	Deadline for Distribution
Spring 2026 (January – March)	April 3, 2026	April 6, 2026
Summer 2026 (April – June)	July 3, 2026	July 6, 2026
Fall 2026 (July – September)	October 5, 2026	October 9, 2026
Winter 2026 (October – December)	January 4, 2027	January 8, 2027

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 because 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

Jill Morrow ('26)

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

(continued on page 31)

LEADERSHIP TEAM – 2024-2025

(continued from page 30)

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

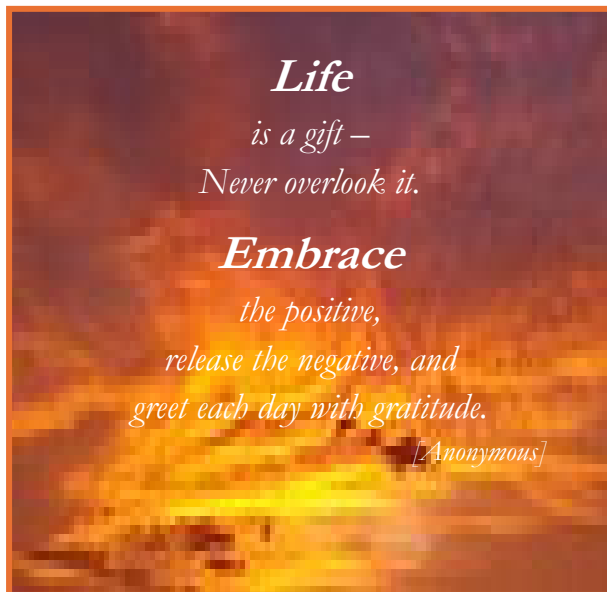
<https://uwfaith.org>.

United States Congress

Meeting sessions and links for House of Representatives and Senate and current bills search.

<https://congress.gov>.

SOUL CARE Puzzle Answers



A	D	A	G		C	O	S	T		S	E	L	F
M	E	D	I	T	A	T	I	O	N		L	E	E
E	L	E	M	E	N	T		A	O	R	T	A	S
N	E	A	T				A	S	T	O			
		R	E	F	L	E	C	T	I	O	N		
B	S	O		L	I	N	T	S			D	A	D
O	W	N		O	V	O	O		A	R	O	M	A
N	E	E		W	E	N	R	O	D	S			I
D	E		O	P	I			D	E		E	E	L
	T	H	E	A	N	G	L	E		E	S	P	Y
A	L	E		P	P	Y			O	S	S	O	
F	I		S	E	E	M	S		O	P	E	C	
I	F		P	R	A	Y	E	R		I	N	H	E
X	E	N	O		C	R	E	D	E	N	C	E	
		O	T		E	D	S		C	S	E		