

Voices of Purpose

December 2024

Quarterly Newsletter of the Greater New Jersey United

President's Message

Happy New Year!

Please let your units know that there will be Officers Training on Saturday, January 11, 2025 from 9:00am until noon and that the Team Meeting will begin afterwards until 2:00PM.

The event will be held via Zoom. [Click here for the Meeting I.D. and Passcode details.](#)

Hope to see you virtually!

Holly Cyrus
GNJUWFaith President



Issue Highlights

- Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi
- Thanksgiving and Christmas, What it Means
- New GNJUWFaith Leaders
- Stewards of Our Environment
- Native American History
- Honoring Our Veterans
- Justice



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December 2024

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Editor: Joyce Pratt
GNJUWFaith Communications Coordinator



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December 2024

Greater New Jersey 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.



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Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi

Episcopal Leader of United Methodists of Pennsylvania and Greater New Jersey

During the 2016 Northeastern Jurisdictional (NEJ) Conference in Lancaster, PA, Elder Cynthia Moore-Koikoi was elected as bishop and assigned to serve as the episcopal leader of United Methodists of Eastern Pennsylvania (EPA) and Greater New Jersey (GNJ), effective September 1, 2024.



Bishop Moore-Koikoi's theological credentials are impressive: bachelor's degree in psychology, Loyola University of Maryland; master's in school psychology, University of Maryland-College Park; and master's in divinity, Wesley Theological Seminary. Her father and great grandparents are from church life and ministry, and she is married to the Reverend Raphael Koikoi, Lead Servant, Warren UMC, Pittsburgh, PA, Pittsburgh District of the Western Pennsylvania Annual Conference.

In addition to her educational and experiential background, Bishop Moore-Koikoi has been proactive in helping people connect with our Wesleyan theology as they discern their calling whether it's new, changing or evolving. She is excited about the wonderful things she has heard and experienced about EPA and GNJ and states "there's so much diversity, and the image of God shows up in many different ways."

Bishop Moore-Koikoi shared the following story (1 Samuel 18:1-3) to express her gratitude for the honest and open sharing during each of the three gatherings at annual conference during the formal onboarding process.

Samuel tells the story of David, Saul and Jonathan getting to know one another after it became clear God had called them together for a common mission. They spent intentional time together speaking with and listening to one another. As a result, Jonathan and David's hearts and souls became as one. This process helped each of them be successful in all that God called them to do.

Communion in the Bible is a human participation with Christ and fellow believers. It is an act of thanksgiving and faith in the redemptive work of Jesus for spiritual nourishment and self-reflection within the Christian community.

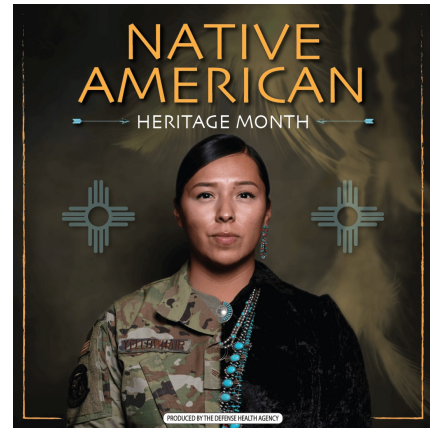
Resources: Western PA Conference, The United Methodist Church (www.wpaumc.org/Bishops); Eastern Pennsylvania Conference, The United Methodist Church (www.gnjumc.org); New Spirit, Fall 2024 (www.gnjumc.org), and www.biblestudytools.com.



2024 Native American Heritage Month

A Message from EEOC Chair Charlotte A. Burrows

Each November we celebrate National Native American Heritage Month, during which we recognize and reflect upon the enduring culture and powerful legacy of Native Americans and their communities. Native Americans, who have lived in what is now the United States for countless generations before its founding, have always been an integral part of our shared society. And, with 574 recognized tribes and almost [10 million](#) Native Americans living across the United States, it is undeniable that the past, present, and future of our nation is interwoven with the cultural, economic, and political contributions of these vibrant communities.



National Native American Heritage Month is also a time to consider that, despite their status as the first Americans, Native Americans have faced discrimination and prejudice in the United States. As the primary federal agency charged with enforcing our nation's laws against employment discrimination, the EEOC is steadfast in its resolve to advance equal employment opportunity so that all Native Americans and every worker can work free from bias, segregation, harassment, or other forms of discrimination.

This commitment is reflected in the EEOC's [Strategic Enforcement Plan](#), which expressly recognizes the need to prioritize protection of Native Americans from unlawful discrimination. An important aspect of that plan is outreach to ensure Native Americans know their employment rights and how to exercise them. To that end, the EEOC was pleased to partner recently with Tribal Employment Rights Offices (TERO) directors from the Nez Perce Tribe and Lummi Nation to create a [public service announcement](#) to help inform Native Americans of their rights under the nation's equal employment opportunity laws. In addition, the agency held its second annual TERO and state and local Fair Employment Practices Agencies joint conference in April 2024, held dozens of outreach events across the country last Fiscal Year, and regularly participates in the Council for Tribal Employment Rights' national conventions and its legal update conferences.

Finally, in January 2024, the EEOC launched the [Reach Initiative](#). This multi-year effort led by Commissioner Kalpana Kotagal focuses on ensuring EEOC's outreach and education

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2024 Native American Heritage Month

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A Message from EEOC Chair Charlotte A. Burrows

(continued)

efforts are effectively reaching workers who often are the least likely to seek the agency's assistance, despite their great need. It is particularly concerned with reaching vulnerable workers and underserved communities, including Native Americans and many Tribal nations.

This November, as the EEOC recognizes and honors the many contributions Native Americans have made to our nation, let us also reconfirm our commitment to protecting Native Americans from discrimination, so that they, and all workers, can enjoy equal opportunity, respect, and dignity.

Charlotte A. Burrows (she/her/hers)

Chair

U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission

<https://www.eeoc.gov/wysk/message-eeoc-chair-charlotte-burrows-2024-native-american-heritage-month>

20 Facts About Native Americans More People Should Know

1. There were once over 300 indigenous languages spoken in North America.
2. The Iroquois Confederacy helped inspire the U.S. Constitution.
3. Native Americans played a crucial role in World War II.
4. The Trail of Tears resulted in deaths of thousands.
5. Native Americans have made significant contributions to science and medicine.
6. First Native American archaeologist (Bertha Parker Pallan Cody and Cherokee aerospace engineer (Mar Golda Ross) for NASA's early space program.
7. Native American Inventions have shaped modern life (from kayaks to syringes).

2024 Native American Heritage Month

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20 Facts About Native Americans More People Should Know

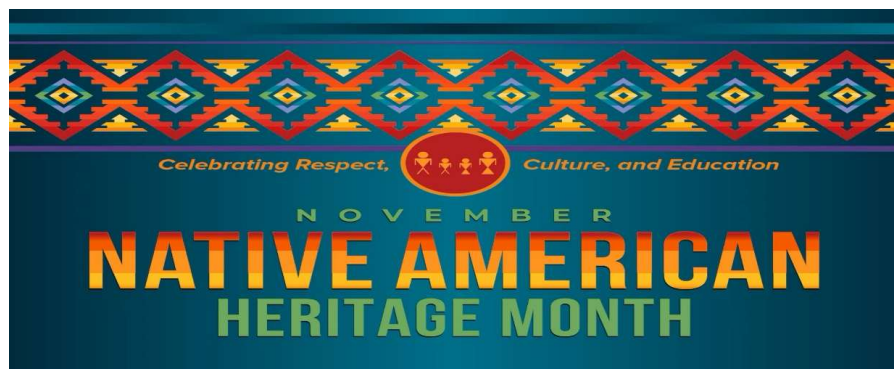
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8. The Iroquois Great Law of Peace promoted gender equality.
9. Native American tribes used sophisticated agricultural techniques to feed large populations.
10. The Navajo Nation is larger than 10 U.S. States.
11. Native American tribes have a long history of environmental stewardship.
12. The Ghost Dance Movement sought to revitalize Native American cultures.
13. Native American art has influenced modern American culture.
14. Native American tribes have fought for voting rights.
15. The Iroquois Confederacy inspired the founding Fathers as they drafted the U.S. Constitution.
16. Native American tribes have a long tradition of serving in the U.S. military.
17. The Pueblo Revolt of 1680 was a successful indigenous uprising.
18. Native American tribes have fought for environmental justice.
19. Native American tribes have a rich tradition of storytelling.
20. Native American tribes are revitalizing their languages and cultures.

Story by Martha A. Lavallie, Viral Chatter

8.30.24

<https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/20-facts-about-native-americans-more-pe0ple-should-know/>



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Veterans Day Honors

Veterans Day was formerly named Armistice Day in commemoration of the armistice between Germany and the Allied nations on the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918. At the request of veterans' service organizations, Congress approved the change of Armistice to Veterans on June 1, 1954 and November 11 became the day to honor all American veterans, whenever and wherever they served.

Celebration of our veterans continues to this day on November 11, regardless of the day in the week, and is marked by parades and church services and “filled with solemn pride in the heroism of those who died in the country's service and with gratitude for the victory” as proclaimed by President Woodrow Wilson in 1919. A number of countries also honor their veterans each year on November 11, although the name and types of celebrations differ from the United States.

Many people confuse Memorial Day and Veterans Day. Memorial Day is a day for remembering and honoring military personnel who died in the service of their country. Veterans Day is the day set aside to thank and honor **ALL** those who served honorably in the military in wartime or peace and largely intended to thank **LIVING** veterans for their service.



Becoming A United Methodist Woman
Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and grant a willing spirit
To sustain me. Psalm 51:12 NIV

How I came to be a United Methodist Woman

Many folks in recent years have chosen a Word for the year as a new year begins. I had never given much thought to that, however, if I did, I would choose two words for 2025. Restore and Revive. I came across the word Restore, and I thought to myself, this needs a helping word to go along with it. I chose the word Revive. To my way of thinking Restore & Revive go hand in hand with each other. I am hopeful that this will unfold as I share how I became a United Methodist Woman. Recently the organization's name changed to a more inclusive name, United Women in Faith, which includes all women of faith. I am reminded of a poem by Robert Frost entitled, The Road Not Taken. This poem had been analyzed and discussed in many literature classes. Class discussions include the classes' opinion about a certain subject. This is outside of that train of thought, and more about being made aware of another train of thought. A revival in a thought process and following through with it.

I was a member of The Poverty Task Force in my local church, and in January 2014 I attended a group Meeting held at St. Andrews UMC in Cherry Hill. The meeting was held in a large auditorium, which was conducive to more than one meeting taking place simultaneously.

The meeting I attended adjourned, and I was walking toward the front of the auditorium, and I noticed a group of women gathered together, and one lady saw me and waved me over to join in their meeting. I walked over and took a seat in the midst of them. Little did I know that my life was about to be forever changed.

The meeting was relaxed and energized at the same time. Their discussion included projects that were being implemented, visitations scheduled to members, work to be done at The Neighborhood Center. These women were talking and making plans and asking about members who were not in attendance. In the midst of their discussion about events that were upcoming, someone said, "we really need a newsletter to get the word out to the various units. I heard myself saying, "I can write a newsletter." All eyes were on me. Someone said, "You can write a newsletter?" "Yes" I replied. Someone else said, "you're sure you can write a newsletter?" I told them yes; I had majored in Journalism in college and had written newsletters before. However, I said to them I am not a member of UMW, and several ladies said in union, "you are now!" I stated there was not a Unit at my church. I was assured that did not matter. From that day until now I've been a United Methodist Woman, and adjusting to the On-time name change...

United Women in Faith

I became president of Gateway South two years later. Bishop Schol changed the districts, and I became a member of Cape Atlantic District, where I also was elected president. Recently I was appointed Conference Vice President. I have become a vibrant member of UWF, and I have been blessed beyond measure.

Virgie Anne Williams

District Conferences Return to Greater New Jersey Conference

After more than twenty years of dormancy, district conferences are returning to the Greater New Jersey Conference (GNJ). These gatherings, a staple in Eastern Pennsylvania (EPA), are designed to bring clergy and laity together to celebrate, connect, and prepare for Annual Conference. The revival of this practice in GNJ is part of a collaborative effort with EPA, reflecting a shared commitment to fostering connection and learning across both conferences.

District conferences, as outlined in *The Book of Discipline*, are annual gatherings for lay and clergy delegates to elect leaders to district committees, discuss legislation, and celebrate local accomplishments.

Recognizing the value of in-person dialogue, Bishop Cynthia Moore-Koikoi and GNJ's cabinet agreed to reintroduce district conferences as a way to deepen trust, build community, and encourage participation.

Resource: Excerpts from **NEWSpirit!**, United Methodists of Eastern Pennsylvania & Greater New Jersey, "After Two Decades, District Conferences Return to GNJ – With EPA's Help, page 3. <https://www.gnjumc.org/newspirit/>.

SAVE THE DATES

2025 DISTRICT CONFERENCES

SATURDAY

APRIL 26

Meadowlands District – 10pm

Skylands District -1pm

SUNDAY

APRIL 27

Cape Atlantic District – 2pm

Delaware Bay District – 6 pm

East District – 3pm

South District – 3pm

SUNDAY

MAY 4

West District – 3pm

SATURDAY

MAY 10

Central District – 10am

Raritan Shore District – 1pm

<https://www.gnjumc.org/newspirit/>

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A Word from Yvonne Bouknight UWFaith Director for Greater NJ

I had the opportunity to attend the recent LDD (Leadership Development Days), “**Revive and Lead Empowered by Resurrection**,” that took place virtually, November 21-23, 2024. The topics of sisterhood, impact, inspiration, and influence were uplifted throughout the three days of learning. My biggest takeaway was how are you letting go of the former things for our present and for the generations to come? As well as “Are you taking time to care for your soul using some Soul Care practices to build resilience to do the work that God places before you?”

During LDD, Sally Vonner, CEO of United Women in Faith members of UWF Executive Leadership Team along with our National President Jana Jones, members of PAG and invited guests uplifted areas of our Strategic Plan which includes ways we as members can impact, inspire and influence the world on behalf of women children and youth as it relates to our two areas of our current justice campaigns for 2024-2028, Just Energy 4 All and Ending Mass Incarceration and Criminalization of Communities of Color.

There were sessions and discussions around our strategic goals: to increase membership, our giving, and reach our \$60 million dollar Legacy Endowment Goal. LDD was a blessed and powerful impactful and inspiring event.

Announcements:

- Unit Survey: Calling all Unit Presidents to log into the UW faith member portal to fill out the Unit survey located at <http://uwfaith.org/unit-survey/> . This survey will be open until March 31, 2025. The survey has questions related to how your unit or group is thriving in sisterhood, faith, and action and how you are committed to act boldly for justice and to transform communities. Your unit or all access group **responses matter**.
- Assembly 2026: Dream it! Believe it! Do it! Assembly will take place in Indianapolis, May 15-19, 2026. Looking forward to seeing us all there!

- Check out the UWF resources at uwfaithresources.org

The 2025 Program Resource theme is, *Carrying our Faith Forward*. The Program Bundle includes both digital and print copies of the Program Resource Book, Prayer Guide, 4-year Calendar and Mission u book. There is also The Soul Care Toolkit and newly created Soul Care Card Deck that will help you to care for your soul or create a Soul Care event.

- If you were not able to be attend the Leadership Development Day 2024, check out the leadership toolkit for resources and workshop sessions at <https://uwfaith.mn.co/spaces/12996231/content>

Feel free to reach out to me at any time for updates and information or to join you at one of your local or district gathering. ybouk@verizon.net or 201-396-9531 (text or talk)



Thanksgiving Day Celebration



Thanksgiving Day is a day for people in the US to give thanks for what they have. Families and friends get together for a meal, which traditionally includes a roast turkey, stuffing, potatoes, vegetables, cranberry sauce, gravy, and pumpkin pie.

In some cities and towns, there are parades during the Thanksgiving weekend. In most areas, these festivities also mark the opening of the Christmas shopping season.

Thanksgiving Day has been an annual holiday in the United States since 1863. However, not everyone sees Thanksgiving Day as a cause for celebration. Some in the US Native American community feel the mythology of the holiday ignores the destruction of indigenous cultures that followed European settlement.

Beginning in 1970, a group of Native Americans and their supporters have staged an annual protest for a National Day of Mourning at Plymouth Rock in Plymouth, Massachusetts on Thanksgiving Day. [American Indian Heritage Day](#) is also observed at this time of the year.

There are claims that the first Thanksgiving Day was held in the city of El Paso, Texas, in 1598. Another early event was held in 1619 in the Virginia Colony. Many people trace the origins of the modern Thanksgiving Day to the harvest celebration the Pilgrims held in Plymouth, Massachusetts in 1621. However, their first true thanksgiving was in 1623, when they gave thanks for rain that ended a drought. These early thanksgivings took the form of a special church service, rather than a feast.

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Thanksgiving Day Celebration

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In the second half of the 1600s, thanksgivings after the harvest became more common and started to become annual events. However, they were celebrated on different days in different communities and in some places there were more than one thanksgiving each year. George Washington, the first president of the United States, proclaimed the first national Thanksgiving Day in 1789.

The Christian meaning of Thanksgiving penetrates the heart. The spiritual person is the one who is thankful for everything. He is the one who receives everything with thanksgiving and who knows that he has nothing except what he has received from God. He shares this wealth with others as he shops for this special dinner. Oh, what a wonderful feeling at your feast as you remember someone else is also dining because of you!

*"A person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven."
([John 3:27](#))*

*"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change."
([James 1:17](#))*

In the Old Testament, thanksgiving was fundamental in the life of God's people. The temple liturgy offered offerings of thanksgiving and praise and sang psalms regularly of thanksgiving to God.

In the New Testament, thanksgiving is the heart of the Church's life. The word eucharist means thanksgiving, and the very center of the Church's worship of God is when, in remembrance of all His salvific acts in Christ, the faithful "lift up their hearts" and "give thanks unto the Lord."

<https://www.crosswalk.com/special-coverage/thanksgiving/the-meaning-of-thanksgiving.html>

We hope your feast was fabulous and your leftovers even better!



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The Legacy Endowment Fund



The Legacy Endowment Fund of United Women in Faith is a permanently invested endowment that supports the work of improving the lives of women, children, and youth at home and abroad through Christian spiritual formation, leadership, fellowship, and education.

United Women in Faith dates back to 1869 when eight Methodist Episcopal women formed to meet the needs of children and youth in India. Today as United Women in Faith with hundreds of thousands of members across the United States and partners around the world, we pursue that mission where needed.

Join us by giving in one or more of three options: Friends of Legacy, 1869 Society, or 150 Legacy Builder. For details visit www.uwfaith.org/legacy. You may also write to the GNJUW Faith Legacy Fund Committee Chair from our contact page at www.gnjuwfaith.org or send an email via legacy150@uwfaith.org.

Other Ways to Give Support for United Women in Faith

Where It Is Needed Most
Social Action & Justice Work
Spiritual Growth and Nurturing
Opportunities
Education & Leadership
Development

Legacy Fund
National Mission
International Mission
Tribute Gift to Mission
Deaconess & Home Missioner
Support

For details, visit <https://uwfaith.org/give/>

Living a Climate Just Life

GNJUWFaith Fall Meeting

The Greater New Jersey United Women in Faith celebrated its Fall Meeting on October 26, 2024 under the theme **“Living A Climate Just Life.”** The program began with a keynote speaker and breakout sessions that complemented the theme and ended with GNJUWFaith’s Annual Business Meeting.

The keynote presenter was Joseph Chiarelli, Endorser Leader at Citizens’ Climate Lobby (CCL). Mr. Chiarelli shared a wealth of information on **Climate Change 2.0** and the need for progressive climate legislation.

The program included breakout sessions on the following topics: Green Units Information, Native Americans, UWFaith Candle, Pollinators: Bees and Honey, Home Remedies, Environmental Sustainability – Water Bottles & Other Plastics Recycling, and Medicine Recycling.

In addition, the ingathering contributions were awarded to Camden Neighborhood Center for school and art supplies and donations offering for Just Energy 4 All.

Save, Rescue, Recycle, Plan, Clean, Care!

DISTRICTS

Cape Atlantic District (CAD)

CAD UWFaith celebrated its 2024 annual business meeting and communion with the theme “Shades of Fall – Shades of God’s Mercy” on October 5, 2024.

The celebration was in honor of UMCOR, the United Methodist Committee on Relief. UMCOR is the humanitarian relief and development arm of The United Methodist Church and assists United Methodist and churches to become involved globally in direct ministry to persons in need.

The keynote presenter was Shelley Hodac, Good Shepherd UMC Missions Chair/Hub Facilitator. Under the title “Let Us Learn About UMCOR, Ms. Hodac reported UMCOR’s direct ministry to persons who suffered from natural or human-caused disasters.

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Jingle Bells for Christmas



Christmas celebrated on December 25 is both a sacred religious holiday and a worldwide cultural and commercial phenomenon. The observance of [Christmas](#) around the world varies by country and people have been observing it with traditions and practices that are both religious and secular in nature. It's a joyous, decorative, gifting, and singing celebration of God's gift to us of Jesus. And we share this joy with others.

Although no one knows the true date of Jesus' birth, December 25 was first identified as the date of Jesus' birth by [Sextus Julius Africanus](#) in 221 and later became the universally accepted date. The date is explained as the "day of the birth of the unconquered sun," a Roman Empire popular holiday. After December 25 had become widely accepted as the date of Jesus' birth, Christian writers frequently made the connection between the rebirth of the sun and the birth of the Son.

Christians celebrate Christmas Day as the anniversary of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, a spiritual leader whose teachings form the basis of their religion. Popular customs include exchanging gifts, decorating Christmas trees, attending church, sharing meals with family and friends and, of course, waiting for Santa Claus to arrive. In addition, Christmas is splendidly illustrated by a number of English "Christmas" carols such as "Here We Come A-Wassailing" or "Deck the Halls," and of course "Jingle Bells!"

"Fear not, I bring you good news" (Luke 2). This is the true meaning of Christmas—the Good News—that God sent His only Son to Earth to save people from their sins.

Whether you're dashing through the snow, singing carols in your neighborhood, opening gifts under the Christmas tree, or brunching and dining with family and friends, remember the true spirit of Christmas – the birth of Jesus Christ!

We wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!





Sing-Along

Joy to the world, the Lord is come!
Let earth receive her King;
Let every heart prepare Him room,
And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n and nature sing,
And heav'n, and heav'n, and nature sing.

Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns!
Let men their songs employ;
While fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat the sounding joy,
Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

No more let sins and sorrows grow,
Nor thorns infest the ground;
He comes to make His blessings flow
Far as the curse is found,
Far as the curse is found,
Far as, far as, the curse is found.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
And makes the nations prove
The glories of His righteousness,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders of His love,
And wonders, wonders, of His love.

Luke 2

¹⁰ And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

https://library.timelesstruths.org/music/Joy_to_the_World/.



Coping with the Holiday Blues

For some people, the winter holidays can be a painful period of reflection, [loneliness](#), [anxiety](#), and depression. This pervasive sadness is known informally as holiday blues or holiday depression.

Anyone—even those who love the season—can experience the holiday blues. The season's demands, gatherings, decorations, and other stressors leave many people stressed and exhausted. Add to this the sometimes-emotional aspect of special days, and it's a recipe for the doldrums.

The most common symptom of holiday depression is a persistent or recurring [feeling of sadness](#) that begins during the holiday season. It can vary in intensity and duration. Some people might feel down periodically but experience brief periods of relief.

Feeling sad during the winter and holiday months may also be a sign of [seasonal affective disorder](#) (SAD), a [major depressive disorder](#) (MDD) that occurs in seasonal patterns during the late fall or early winter. If the holiday season passes and you're still feeling this way, talk to your doctor or a health professional.

Causes of the holiday blues can be lack of sleep, excess eating and alcohol use, financial stress, isolation and loneliness, and unrealistic expectations. Because the holidays mark an impending new year, people tend to reflect on the past year. They might feel regret, failure, or other negative emotions.

In many cases, holiday depression can be managed with lifestyle changes and social support. In addition to talking to your health care provider, consider drinking only in moderation, avoid social isolation, exercise regularly, avoid overcommitting by learning to say “no,” find time for yourself to relax, and set realistic expectations.

Remember, the holidays don't have to be perfect to be special. They don't have to be exactly like the holidays of the past to be just as meaningful and memorable.

www.verywellmind.com



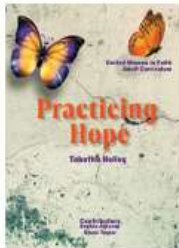
MISSION U 2025



Mission u 2025: Practicing Hope Together

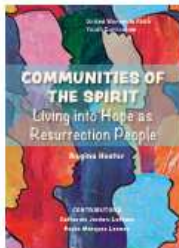
Join us at **Mission u** as we explore the theme, Practicing Hope Together. Mission u participants will study the resurrection appearances of Jesus and the example of early Christian communities to explore what it means to practice hope in God even when things seem to be falling apart.

Mission u 2025 offers three exciting curricula on this theme. Order your copy here: uwfaithresources.org



Adult— *Practicing Hope* by Tabatha Holley

Practicing Hope is a biblical curriculum that explores hope particularly when hope seems hard to find, asking questions such as: How does Christ teach us to embody hope when our backs are against the wall? Participants will find ways to allow all of our communities to cultivate hope that is honest about our current conditions (refugia), restorative when everything feels urgent (rest), and possible even when we transgress (repair).



Youth— *Communities of the Spirit: Living into Hope as Resurrection People* by Regina Heater

Communities of the Spirit is a youth curriculum examining the hope we find in early post-resurrection Christian communities and how they kept hope alive in the most difficult times. Youth will be asked to consider what they believe are important components of a Community of the Spirit, hoping they will identify what they need in a community to help them continue to become the people God calls them to be.



Children— *Hope as a Resurrection People* by Joni Cisowski

Hope as a Resurrection People intends to help children build trust in Jesus to bring comfort and support as they find courageous hope in the face of uncertainty. Through each session, children will develop their understanding of hope by reflecting on important people, communities, places, activities, personal goals, and desires for the future. Then, they will look for ways to build communal hope to be the change our world needs today.

JOIN US dates/times:
[Enter your Mission u events date here.]

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

Come learn together for the transformation of the world!



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DISTRICTS

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Central District

Central District UWFaith hosted its Fall Breakfast/Communion Meeting on November 2, 2024 with guest speaker Danny Thomas, Executive Director of the Peace Center. The mission of the Center is to educate, empower and support individuals and organizations to prevent violence, promote peaceful resolution of conflict and foster inclusive, equitable and safe communities locally. Topics included the School to Prison Pipeline and Kids for Cash.

Delaware Bay

Delaware Bay UWFaith's Fall Meeting was held on October 28, 2024 at Pitman UMC. The program featured Mike Landis, Executive Director of the Camden Neighborhood Center. Center's focus is a two-generation approach to lifting families out of poverty. Mr. Landis has been associated with the Center since a volunteer in 1988 and under his leadership, the Center has grown in making a positive difference in the lives of children, teenagers, and the community.

OTHER UWFaith ORGANIZATION EVENTS

Church Women United in New Jersey (CWU)

CWU-NJ hosted its 2024 Fall Gathering on October 9, 2024 at First United Methodist Church in Toms River, NJ. The program under the theme "Solutions to End Hunger and Homelessness" included speakers Betsy Kaplan of Fulfill and Laurie Singer of Toms River Housing and Homeless Coalition. Visit <https://www.facebook.com/cwunj/> for additional information.

United Women in Faith Mission u 2025

Mission u 2025 with the theme *Practicing Hope Together* will take place in conference and local events across the country beginning in the summer of 2025. <https://uwfaith.org/events/mission-u/>.

Three curricula on this theme are the Adult – Practicing Hope, Youth – Communities of Spirit, and Children – Hope as a Resurrection People. See flyer on page 15 for details.



I Finally Get It-- Unfinished

by Brittany Robertson*

February 19, 2011 @ 12:12 AM

**My Pastor has been telling us for years that we need to have heart knowledge of
Christ and
not just head knowledge...**

**I thought I completely understood what he was saying. Head knowledge can read
and comprehend
who God is and what He does. Head knowledge can recite scripture and memorize
names and stories.**

**Head knowledge can even analyze scripture, find symbolism, search for themes,
and get a deeper meaning.**

**The heart's knowledge is filled with love and appreciation. The heart knowledge
required less analysis
and more trust. It once seemed to me that the heart knowledge was the origin of
faith.**

**But there's more. Let's address it. Pastor endorsed heart knowledge of the
Messiah. Many songs
and speakers also encourage people to let Jesus into their hearts. Why? Why the
heart? Why not
just say, "Love Him"...There must be something special about the heart.**

**I think I get it! The heart is where the blood originates. The blood pervades the
entire body.**

The entire being--In each crack and crevice of the body there is blood.

If Christ is in your heart, He flows through your entire being.

Shared: Blessings and Merry Christmas, Virgie Williams 12.23.24

*Brittany Robertson is the granddaughter of Virgil Williams, newly elected GNJUW Faith Vice President & Program Coordinator and outgoing Cape Atlantic District President.



United
Women
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December 23, 2024

Our God Reigns

Isaiah 52:7–10

John 1:1–14

by Sally Vonner

How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.”
—Isaiah 52:7 (NRSVUE)



Blessed Christmas Day! The day the Light of the World was turned on for all peoples and nations to see and rejoice. The Star of Bethlehem shone brightly at the birth of Jesus, Immanuel, God with Us. Isaiah tells us that God would send a messenger to announce peace, good news, salvation, and “Your God reigns.” This was good news for the Israelites in exile facing dark days and waiting for signs that God was still with them. Their hope had waned, and their light dimmed.

No matter how dark the times may seem, we must celebrate with joy, remembering that Isaiah’s prophecy came true on Christmas Day many centuries ago. A messenger was born to bring peace, good news, salvation, and assurance that God reigns. Jesus invited others, including you and me, to be his messengers with the assurance and joy that God reigns through dark times and good times.

No matter if we feel despair and hopelessness or joy, this Christmas, let’s commit to being messengers of inspiration, influence, and impact as we work for peace, love, and justice. No more waiting, Jesus showed us the way and promised our God reigns. Believe it! Together, as bold messengers with faith, hope, and love, we can change the world with peace and goodwill for all.

Excerpts from: <https://uwfaith.org/blog/2024/christmas-day/>



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GNJUWFaith Charter for Racial Justice

Excerpts from Amanda Gorman's inaugural poem 'The Hill We Climb' January 20, 2021

Beginning...

When day comes, we ask ourselves, where can we find light in this never-ending shade?

The loss we carry. A sea we must wade.

We braved the belly of the beast.

We've learned that quiet isn't always peace, and the norms and notions of what "just" is isn't always justice.

And yet the dawn is ours before we knew it.

Somehow, we do it.

Somehow, we weathered and witnessed a nation that isn't broken, but simply unfinished.



Ending...

So let us leave behind a country better than the one we were left.

Every breath from my bronze-pounded chest, we will raise this wounded world into a wondrous one.

We will rise from the golden hills of the West.

We will rise from the windswept Northeast where our forefathers first realized revolution.

We will rise from the lake-rimmed cities of the Midwestern states.

We will rise from the sunbaked South.

We will rebuild, reconcile, and recover.

And every known nook of our nation and every corner called our country, our people diverse and beautiful, will emerge battered and beautiful.

When day comes, we step out of the shade aflame and unafraid.

The new dawn blooms as we free it.

For there is always light, if only we're brave enough to see it.

If only we're brave enough to be it.

For full text visit: <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/01/20/amanda-gormans-inaugural-poem-the-hill-we-climb-full-text.html?msocid=1c13b76bdf2161ca3997a3f3dead6095>.

Sustainability

Environmental – Ecosystem Restoration

Because of its importance to you, me, and Earth, GNJUWFaith's **Voices of Purpose** newsletter, will continue sharing information in 2025 on sustainability to enable us to individually and collectively control the safety of our environment in nine ways and become "stewards of our environment!" We hope this introduction will whet your appetite enough to engage in efforts within your daily lifestyle in the coming months.



GNJUWFaith's September 2024 newsletter issue shared our upcoming Conference Fall Meeting flyer on "Climate Justice." The meeting's special program on October 26, 2024 included a breakout discussion on the three pillars of sustainability – environmental, social, and economic. Our website at www.gnjuwfaith.org shares the Environmental Conservation: Plastics" presentation for readers.

Until we begin **ecosystem restoration** in our 2025 issues on sustainability, please enjoy the following poem by Jordan Sanchez as she calls for a greener world. You can watch her recitation on YouTube at: <https://thejordansanchez.com/reimagine-recreate-restore/>.

Reimagine. Recreate. Restore. (Final Version)

By Jordan Sanchez

Tick. Tick. Tick. Tick.
Have you ever seen time fly?
Watch it slip through your fingers like a cloud
passing by...
Too slow to notice it leaving,
Too fast to make it stop.

All we've known is to destroy like it's breathing.
The pitter patter of raindrops
Match the sounds of clocks
Counting down.

Tick. Tick. Tick. Tick.
How lucky we are to live.
We are a fraction of a second
In earth's lifetime
Yet she is our only lifeline.

Resilient, we stand on our own two feet.
I'll tell you, reimagining the future has
never tasted so sweet.
Like nectar to a bee,
Honey to a home.
We're trying to recover ours, but
No one can do this alone.

Tick. Tick. Tick. Tick.
The promise of restoration lives within us.
We see her in the hues of the youth
And she's asking you
What will you stand for?

Now is the time for our re-generation.
Reimagine. Recreate. Restore.

###

Written April 2021 for the United Nations Environment Programme's 2021 World Environment Day.

Performed in the Generation Restoration curtain raiser video.

[<https://thejordansanchez.com/2021/05/10/reimagine-recreate-restore-final-version/>]

Farewell message from

Barbara Miller

GNJUW Faith Spiritual Enrichment Advisor

"Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! I thank God for you. I commend your faithfulness in service and the offering of your gifts and graces in the work of building the kin-dom throughout our GNJ Conference and beyond.

I am thankful for your support and encouragement as I have served as your Spiritual Enrichment Coordinator. It has been a joy and a privilege to serve alongside of you, and to grow my own faith and spiritual life as I have tried to support your spiritual growth over these last four years. You are awesome!

I am especially grateful for your presence and support through our micro-retreats, and the amazing support, technical and otherwise, freely given by Sherri Shumate. Thank you, Sherri!

These retreats have challenged me to move beyond my comfort zone and expand my understanding as we have taken a break with Jesus; played, colored and danced our prayers; practiced presence; and prayed without ceasing as we explored ways to turn the ordinary things like our to do lists, the news we hear, and the ads we see, upside down, making all of these things an opportunity for prayer.

I also thank God for our new leadership team. I know you will support and encourage them in their new roles as we continue to work for economic, climate, racial and gender justice in this difficult environment. I especially commend Agnes Bokari to your care and keeping as she steps into her role as Spiritual Enrichment Coordinator. You are in good hands.

Our team will each shape their new roles according to their gifts and vision, and nothing is more exciting than new ideas and new directions!

May God bless you all with hope and with joy and may the love of God go before you to lead you, behind you to guide you, above you to protect you and within you to give you peace.

Grace and peace,
Barb

EVERY DAY IS A
fresh start

Quote from Reader's Digest, December 2024/January 2025.



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GNJUWFaith Calendar of Events 2024 – 2025

2024

November 21 –23 UWFaith Leadership Development Days via Zoom (National)

December 10 GNJUWFaith Leadership Development via Zoom – 7-9pm

2025

January 11 Conference Leadership Development Event: 9 am - 12:00 pm
Leadership Team Meeting, 12-2 pm
RSVP to holly.cyrus@faa.gov by Jan. 10th.
via Zoom.

April 12 GNJUWFaith Annual Spring Meeting – 9:00-2:00 pm
Need location.
RSVP to holly.cyrus@faa.gov by April 11th.

May 18 – May 22 26th EPA & GNJ Annual Conference

Wildwood Convention Center, Wildwood, NJ

June 7 Leadership Team Meeting (including all District Presidents) – 9:30 am-
noon
Need location.
RSVP to holly.cyrus@faa.gov by June 6th

July 18-20 Mission “u” Three Day School
Centenary University, Hackettstown, NJ

July 24 South Seaville Camp Meeting
4th Thursday Women’s Day; Tabernacle, South Seaville, NJ

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United
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GNJUWFaith Calendar of Events 2024 – 2025

(continued from page 28)

2025 (continued)

- August 2** **Treasurer's Meeting 9:30-11:30, Leadership Team Meeting 12-2 pm**
Need location.
(Leadership Team Meeting includes all District Presidents)
- October 18** **GNJUWFaith 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 17th.
- Upcoming Events** **Assembly in 2026** (Indianapolis, IN) - **May 15-17, 2026**

NE Jurisdiction – 2028 April 11-13 No location yet.
Register at nejuwfaith.org.

Retreat & Meeting Recordings

Visit GNJUWFaith website at www.gnjuwfaith.org,
GNJUWFaith EVENTS, Program Resources.

GNJUWFaith Resources and Actions

<https://tinyurl.com/ResourcesGNJUWF>

UWFaith National Events

<https://uwfaith.org/events/calendar/>

New Brand Resources

<https://umwmissionresources.org/>

United Women in Faith YouTube

<https://m.youtube.com/c/uwwomenfaith>

UWFaith. In 1972, United Methodist Women first became the women's mission organization as part of The United Methodist Church's Board of Global Ministries. And in 2012, The United Methodist Church General Conference voted to make United Methodist Women's national policymaking body autonomous.

<https://uwfaith.org/who-we-are/our-history/>.



United
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Voices of Purpose

Newsletter Deadlines & Distribution

Newsletter Issue	Deadline for	
	Articles	Distribution
Spring 2024 (January – March)	April 4, 2024	April 8, 2024
Summer 2024 (April – June)	July 4, 2024	July 8, 2024
Fall 2024 (July – September)	October 3, 2024	October 7, 2024
Winter 2024 (October – December)	January 3, 2025	January 7, 2025

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



United
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Greater New Jersey United Women in Faith

LEADERSHIP TEAM 2024 - 2025

PRESIDENT

Holly Cyrus ('24)

VPRES/PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Virgil Williams ('28)

SECRETARY

Linda Wilson (24)

TREASURER

Carol Bloch ('24)

SPIRITUAL ENRICHMENT ADVISOR

Barbara Miller ('24)

Membership, Nurture and OUTREACH CHAIR

Holly Cyrus ('23)

CHRISTIAN SOCIAL ACTIONS

ADVOCATE

Sherri Shumate ('23)

PROGRAM RESOURCES

Grace Rapp ('25)

STANDING RULES CHAIR

Grace Rapp

PHOTOGRAPHER

Lou Hyson ('23)

COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

Joyce Pratt ('23)

NATIVE AMERICAN MINISTRIES REP.

Leslie Bivins

LGBTQ Representative

Open

GNJUWF Website: www.gnjumw.org

COMMITTEE ON NOMINATIONS

NOMINATIONS CHAIR

Open

CLASS OF 2024

Cynthia Lydon

CLASS OF 2024

Ivy Daniels

CLASS OF 2024

Rosa Lee McNair

CLASS OF 2025

Kathy Schulz

CLASS OF 2027

Rosa Williams

CLASS OF 2027

Jill Morrow

APPOINTED

CHARTER FOR RACIAL JUSTICE

Chair: Sue Zahorbenski

Members: Leslie Bivins, Joyce Pratt
Carolyn Pendleton, Millie Grey
Mary Bland, Sherri Shumate,
Barbara Miller

Legacy Fund Committee

Chair: Yvonne Bouknight

Members: Sherri Shumate

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United
Women
in Faith

LEADERSHIP TEAM – 2024-2025

(continued from page 31)

DISTRICT PRESIDENTS

COASTAL PLAINS

CAPE ATLANTIC

Virgil Williams ('22)

CENTRAL

Debbie Campion ('25)

DELAWARE BAY ('25)

Staci Sheetz

METRO HIGHLANDS

MEADOWLANDS

Tracy Carroll ('25)

Tia Swanson ('25)

RARITAN SHORE

OPEN

SKYLANDS

Elizabeth (Liz) Steen ('26)

ELECTED BY OTHER GROUPS

KOREAN NETWORK PRESIDENT COORDINATOR

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

Kathleen Schulz

ALTERNATE NATIONAL DIRECTOR

Yvonne Bouknight

DEAN MISSION "U"

Elizabeth Vaneekhoven

ASSISTANT DEAN MISSION "U"

BERNADETTE CATALINE

NORTHEASTERN JURISDICTION VICE PRESIDENT

Sue Zahorbenski

UMW NE JURISDICTION MISSION ADVOCATE

REBECCA PARSONS

UMW NATIONAL DIRECTOR/SECRETARY

BETHANY AMEY-SUTTON

GNJUMC PRESIDING BISHOP

Rev John R. Schol

CONFERENCE UMW WEBSITE: www.gnjuwfaith.org

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>.

Standing Rules – GNJUWF of GNJ Conference 2023

GNJUWF revised Standing Rules approved at the 2023 Annual Fall Meeting can be accessed at www.gnjuwfaith.org, under “Rules & Regulations.”

