

Voices of Purpose

June 2023

Quarterly Newsletter of the Greater New Jersey United Women in Faith

President's Message

I recently attended an exciting Northeast Jurisdiction United Women in Faith meeting where they asked, "What is your why?" For example,

- Why are you a member of United Women in Faith?
- Why is it important to you?
- What does it mean to be a member of United Women in Faith?

For me, I am a member because my mother brought me to meetings and "School of Mission" (now known as Mission U) about 50 years ago. I learned that we are an awesome organization that acts to improve the world for women, children and youth. We bring the kin-dom of heaven here on Earth.

We are a group that leads the church, ahead of the curve. Challenges don't make us panic, but we lead by our example. Two examples: The Charter for Racial Justice¹ was adopted by our predecessors, the Women's Society of Christian Service, in 1952 (but it took until 1980 for the General Church to fully adopt it!). Secondly, the new branding in the face of disaffiliations. We are not afraid of change but anticipate it and prepare for it with a positive outlook.

This "why" is related to our two upcoming events. Please see the flyers elsewhere in this newsletter for the Fall Annual Celebration and our Legislative Action Events. Both are made possible by our Mission Giving, money that makes action and advocacy possible. We put our money where our mouth is!

Our Legislative Action Team is preparing an August training event for everyone with interests in legislative action on a state and national level. Then, in September and continuing next year, we will travel to Trenton.²

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¹ <https://uwfaith.org/what-we-do/serve-and-advocate/racial-justice/>

² Register at

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0ufumppj4uHNEMXHoCGZuq_OiR4ONEyXVF

Issue Highlights

- Advocates for Legislative Action
- Native Americans
- Social Action In and Around New Jersey
- Climate Justice
- Teaching Resilience



June 2023

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United
Women
in Faith

June 2023

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Editor: Joyce Pratt
GNJUWF Communications Coordinator



United
Women
in Faith

June 2023

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.



United
Women
in Faith

President's Message

(continued from page 1)

On October 21st, our speaker will be Meg Isbitski, LSW, the Mental Health Administrator for Somerset County Department of Human Services. With our topic of "TEACHING RESILIENCE: Healthy Perspectives for Children" (& all), we will even have an opportunity to try some of the techniques ourselves! You may practice guided meditation and other ways children (and adults) can face challenges like COVID and virtual learning, to become resilient and empathetic. Register for this event now!³ Bring for the ingathering children's toys for fidgeting and stress-relief,⁴ but also get to play with some of them!

See you on the trail of acting out our faith and love!

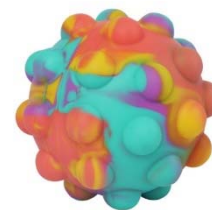
Susan Zahorbenski
GNJUWF President

³ <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEpcu6uqzgiEtLXWHneOZvppQ5MTNijeWV9>

⁴ Examples of "fidget toys." (There are many more!):



[This Photo](#) by Unknown Author is licensed under [CC BY-NC-ND](#)



Would they be welcomed in your church?



This year my children competed in their first regional pokemon card tournament. We had no idea what to expect when we entered the convention center filled with 1,200 people. This was the most eccentric and diverse gathering of people, ranging from babies to senior citizens from all different places and backgrounds. Some people were dressed in casual t-shirts and athletic shorts. Others wore formal suits and dresses. Several people were dressed in cosplay costumes of characters from the card game, and one person was wearing a full body Star Wars Mandalorian outfit like the one in this photo above.

Despite the fact that everyone had gathered to compete, this was the most kind and inclusive community. Everyone was welcomed and respected here. If these people walked through your church door, would they have this same experience of welcome?

At the heart of social action is learning what it means to be in community. It requires seeing perspectives and needs beyond our own and working together to create a world where everyone is welcomed, valued, respected, and given what they need to thrive. What are your strengths in these areas? In what ways could you improve these skills for creating inclusive, just communities?

Here are a few resources from national United Women in Faith for insight and guidance. Keep creating communities that have a place for everyone.

Blessings and peace,

Sherri Shumate, Social Action Coordinator
Greater NJ Conference
United Women in Faith Actions



Greater New Jersey United Women in Faith

Legislative Events Task Force

In our March issue of **Voices of Purpose**, we announced the creation of a Special Interest Group for GNJUWF for legislative visit plans. The group has been officially named the **Legislative Events Task Force** and plans for a September visit to our New Jersey legislators in Trenton, New Jersey have fared very well. We report a synopsis of our progress to date in this article and will announce our success in the September 2023 newsletter issue.

Due to legislative time constraints, our September 2023 legislative discussions will consist of only three topics and do not preclude future visits whenever state issues demand. All topics will include current New Jersey bills that address the issues. The current agenda for our planned NJ legislative visit follows.

- GNJUWF Introduction – Susan Zahorbenski, President
 - Summary of United Women in Faith mission and purpose.
- Gun Control/Violence – Sara Joslin
 - NJ district and national issues that include school gun violence, civilian purchase of assault weapons, and tightening NJ gun regulations.
- Climate Justice – Mary Bland
 - Environmental plans that disproportionately impact disadvantaged groups/communities such as selective offshore wind power for electric heating and transportation, minimizing wind turbine burdens on commercial fishermen, jobs forecasted to build offshore wind farms, and continued research to protect our wildlife.
- School-to-Prison Pipeline – Carolyn Pendleton
 - Zero-tolerance policies, suspension equity, alternatives/solutions, and bills recommending tactics for change.
- Conclusion and Q&A Session – Grace Rapp
- Program Coordinator - Joyce Pratt

Each of the presentations will end by asking our legislators the question, “What are your plans to address these issues?”

The Legislative Events Task Force hopes and prays for other members to join us for a powerful showing of GNJUWF members pursuing social action to ensure our legislators consider resolutions and bills that will benefit our society.

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Legislative Events Task Force (continued from page 7)

Visitation requests will be made to New Jersey Legislators in the districts of GNJUWF members attending our September 2023 program. Confirmation of possible legislative scheduled dates will begin July 10, 2023. An invitation mailer will be sent to members requesting a R.S.V.P. of their interest in one of the topics above as well as their confirmation to join us. Only those district legislators for whom we have at least two members will be sent visitation requests. We also hope to have a scheduled brief period during a NJ legislative session to announce GNJUWF and its social action efforts as well as to give our members an in-person experience of our entire state legislators at work. Transportation and refreshments are also in the plans.

Please join us and/or read promotional material sent via email or announced on our website. Many organizations have and are practicing successful legislative visits on various issues affecting our state and nation and we must also! Remember, public opinion is very important to a democratic system and our legislators depend on a reactive public that responds to government actions. Write and RSVP to us from our website "Contact" page at www.gnjumw.org.

Chair: Sue Zahorbenski, GNJUWF President

Members: Marsha Benovengo, Leslie Bivins, Mary Bland, Sara Joslin, Joyce McKnight-Young, Carolyn Pendleton, Joyce Pratt, Grace Rapp, and Virgil Williams.



*The Gospel is only good
news if it gets there in
time.*

Message on the wall of the Jersey Shore
Baptist Church in Galloway, New Jersey.
June 2023



United
Women
in Faith

US Supreme Court upholds Native American adoptions law (ICWA). June 15, 2023



The **Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (ICWA)**, enacted November 8, 1978) is a [United States federal law](#) that governs [jurisdiction](#) over the removal of [American Indian](#) children from their families in custody, foster care and adoption cases.

It gives [tribal governments](#) exclusive jurisdiction over children who reside on, or are domiciled on a [reservation](#). It gives concurrent, but presumptive jurisdiction over foster care placement proceedings for Native American children who do not live on the reservation.

In a 7-2 decision, the US Supreme Court ruled that Native American families should continue to have priority in adoption or foster care of Native American children, thus preserving the 1978 Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA). The decision rejected a challenge by a white Texas couple who argued the law was a form of racial discrimination. Native American leaders argued the law helps protect their traditions and cultures and treats Native Americans as a political class, rather than a racial group.

The ICWA was put in place 45 years ago to address a widely spread practice in the 19th Century by the US government and states of taking children from their Native American families in order to assimilate them into white America.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-65897827>.

Native American Heritage Month November 2023

The United States celebrates Native American Heritage Month in November during which National Geographic acknowledges the Indigenous peoples of the Americas. This collection celebrates the history, accomplishments, culture, and lives of American Indians. In so doing, we acknowledge the systemic discrimination these communities face in our nation, and our collective efforts aim to advance a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable future.

Visit the National Geographic website resources for grades 3–12+ collection of social studies, U.S. History, and World History of American Indians.

<https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/native-americans/>.



LIVING THE GOOD NEWS

Reflecting God's Love



Living the Kin-dom

Come! Let's explore together the heart of Jesus' good news and what fresh vision it offers us as we seek to be in mission today.

Our 2023 Mission u curriculum is available at the UWF Website: <https://uwfaithresources.org/>

Living the Kin-dom: Exploring the Lord's Prayer as a Spiritual Practice for Social Transformation by Riva Tabelisma (Adult)

Seek and You Shall Find: Living in the Kin-dom by Rachel Mosher (Youth) (Youth scholarships available)

Registration information:

<https://form.jotform.com/230537770480154>

Links also available on: <https://gnjumw.org/news>

In-gathering for Trinity Lord's Pantry items needed:

Personal Feminine products

Baby items: diapers and wipes

Mission u Retreat

Don't miss an exciting study of the Lord's Prayer using the original Aramaic words of Jesus!

In Person
July 14 - 15, 2023

Centenary
University
The Lackland
Center

400 Jefferson St.
Hackettstown, NJ
07840

Virtual Event

July 21 & 22

On Zoom

Renew, Refresh,
Transform

SAVE THE DATE!

2024 NORTHEASTERN
JURISDICTION
Get Together!



Join us in Providence, Rhode Island
April 19-21, 2024

NEJ Leadership Team
northeastern@uwfaith.org

*For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord,
plans for welfare and not for evil,
to give you a future and a hope.*

Jeremiah 29:11





What's Happening?

Social Action in and Around New Jersey

(Creating Positive Change)

Eliminating the Stigma. A teen suicide prevention and mental health awareness virtual event held in May 2023 for teens and parents/caregivers presented by Meg Isbitski, Somerset County Mental Health Administrator. The event was hosted by Jennifer Gomez, Director of Health & Wellness for EmPoWER Somerset in Somerville, NJ. Links to the recorded presentation can be requested at GNJUWF website "Contact" page at www.gnjumw.org.

Assault Weapons Ban of 2022. The U.S. House of Representatives passed the Assault Weapons Ban of 2022 on July 29, 2022. The bill makes it a crime to knowingly import, sell, manufacture, transfer, or possess a semiautomatic assault weapon (SAW) or large capacity ammunition feeding device (LCAFD). The bill was received in the Senate on August 1, 2022, Read twice and referred to the Committee on the Judiciary. For details, search H.R.1808 at www.congress.gov.

The Ending PUSHOUT Act of 2023. Join with United Women in Faith sisters and siblings across the country as we ask our legislators to cosponsor the Ending PUSHOUT Act and do their part to interrupt the school-to-prison pipeline. For details, visit www.uwfaith.org or email Emily Jones at ejones@uwfaith.org.

Funding Support Opportunity for Charter for Racial Justice Work! The Office of Racial Justice invites United Women in Faith Conferences to apply for funding to help support their 2023 Charter for Racial Justice work. Consideration will be given to funding requests up to \$500 per UWF Conference. Application link: <https://forms.gle/C7y3SWJy1f21c6bKA>.

Remaining and Joining United Women in Faith. You play a crucial role in letting women know that they can remain a part of United Women in Faith even if their church is not or is no longer United Methodist. It is a great time to invite women in your churches and communities to our supportive sisterhood of action. <https://uwfaith.org/latest-news/2022/sept-oct-response-faith-action-sisterhood/>.



What is “Climate Justice?”

It begins with the idea that the adverse impacts of a warming climate are not felt equitably among people.

By Daisy Simmons
Yale Climate Connections
July 29, 2020
[Excerpts]

Climate change, an inherently social issue, can upset anyone’s daily life in countless ways. But not all climate impacts are created equal or distributed equally. From extreme weather to rising sea levels, the effects of climate change often have disproportionate effects on historically marginalized or underserved communities.

“Climate justice” is a term, and more than that a movement, that acknowledges climate change can have differing social, economic, public health, and other adverse impacts on underprivileged populations. Advocates for climate justice are striving to have these inequities addressed head-on through long-term mitigation and adaptation strategies.

Three key factors to consider in thinking about climate justice:

- 1) Climate justice begins with recognizing key groups are differently affected by climate change.
- 2) Climate impacts can exacerbate inequitable social conditions.
- 3) Momentum is building for climate justice solutions.

In the end, there is no single way to define, let alone champion, climate justice. But in combination with other current social justice movements, many experts see climate justice becoming an increasingly significant component of overall concerns raised by climate change.

Full article: <https://yaleclimateconnections.org/2020/07/what-is-climate-justice/>.

See also: *Youth Climate Activism Needs Nurturing. Here are 4 Ways to Make it Happen.* <https://time.com/6246933/how-to-nurture-youth-climate-activism/>.



UWF Resources

Brittany K. Barnett Author Talk:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rLKbsb9YE8I> General SAC Resources.
Leadership Toolkit (or through your Bridge account):

Leadership Toolkit (or through your Bridge account):

<https://umwomen.wufoo.com/forms/k1skpqlx0ey2xr3/>

Prioritize Climate Justice: <https://p2a.co/7nDIIFr>

PUSHOUT Act of 2023: <https://p2a.co/i3od24w>

Social Action Coordinator (SAC) Form:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfb0V8pAYJ8aUrgU1lczKR1_WgtmkkabIO_qMw4I3Jlhos_bA/viewform.

Social Action Coordinator (SAC) Google Drive:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/133Qs4c3YotK68ojCUXa8KTPj6JTm5_Tb?usp=sharing.

Social Action Coordinator (SAC) Job Description:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1tGwaJCBfHx7jnYEp81Ngn8v_0KLPoexE/view?usp=share_link

Sisters in Action Toolkit:

<https://uwfaithresources.org/prodDetail.cfm?productID=10620&catid=2209>

Submitted by Sherri Shumate

Proverb 31:8-9: “Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute. Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.”

By Solomon’s writing, “*Open your mouth,*” he may mean we have to speak up for those who have no voice in society. We can’t keep silent when we see social injustice. The fact that he repeats the phrase “*Open your mouth,*” shows the importance of speaking up for those who are being treated unfairly, and most often it’s the poor and needy, including those who are disabled and have no other means to seek justice on their own.

[Article by Jack Wellman, Pastor of the Mulvane Brethren Church in Mulvane Kansas.]



GNJ United Women in Faith Calendar of Events 2023-2024



2023

- | | |
|--|--|
| January 14
10am to 3pm | Leadership Development and Day of Action |
| February 11
Noon to 1pm | Day of Action, Day of Love
Plans for Congressional Outreach. |
| January 19-21
7pm Friday
Noon to 7pm Saturday | National Leadership Development Days “On Towards the Goal,” Philippians 3:12-16
Virtual for Conference and District Presidents, Conference Vice President, Conference and District MNO |
| February 11
Noon to 1pm | Charter for Racial Justice, Day of Action & Love |
| March 11
9:30 to 11:30am | Leadership Team |
| April 1 | GNJUWF Leadership Development |
| April 15 | Spring Celebration “Welcoming the Stranger” |
| May 6 | Leadership Team |
| May 10
7pm | Finance Committee |

(continued on page 16)



2023 GNJUWF Calendar of Events (continued from page 15)



July 21-22 **Mission U – Centenary University**

July 27
12:30pm **Women’s Day at South Seaville**

August 24
7-9pm **“How to be an Advocate: Legislative Action Training” - Presenters’ Practice**

August 26
9:30am **“How to be an Advocate: Legislative Action Training” – Training Session**

August 24 and/or 26 registration:

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0ufumppj4uHNEMXHoCGZuq_OiR4ONEyXVF

September 9 **Micro-Retreat**
10-10:45am **Zoom Link:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83396872153?pwd=aUNHckxIV0RZVE1aNlpCK284SGVzd09>

September 23 **Treasurers’ Meeting**
9:30 & 10:30am **Leadership Training**

October 21 **Fall Celebration - Hybrid**
9:30am **Teaching Resilience: Healthy Perspectives for Children**
12:30pm **Annual Meeting**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZEpcu6uqzgiEtLXWHneOZvppQ5MTNijeWV9>

November 4 **Micro-Retreat**
10-10:45am **Zoom Link**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83396872153?pwd=aUNHckxIV0RZVE1aNlpCK284SGVzd09>

Meeting ID: 833 9687 2153 / Passcode: 621827

November 15 **Planning meeting**
7-8:30pm

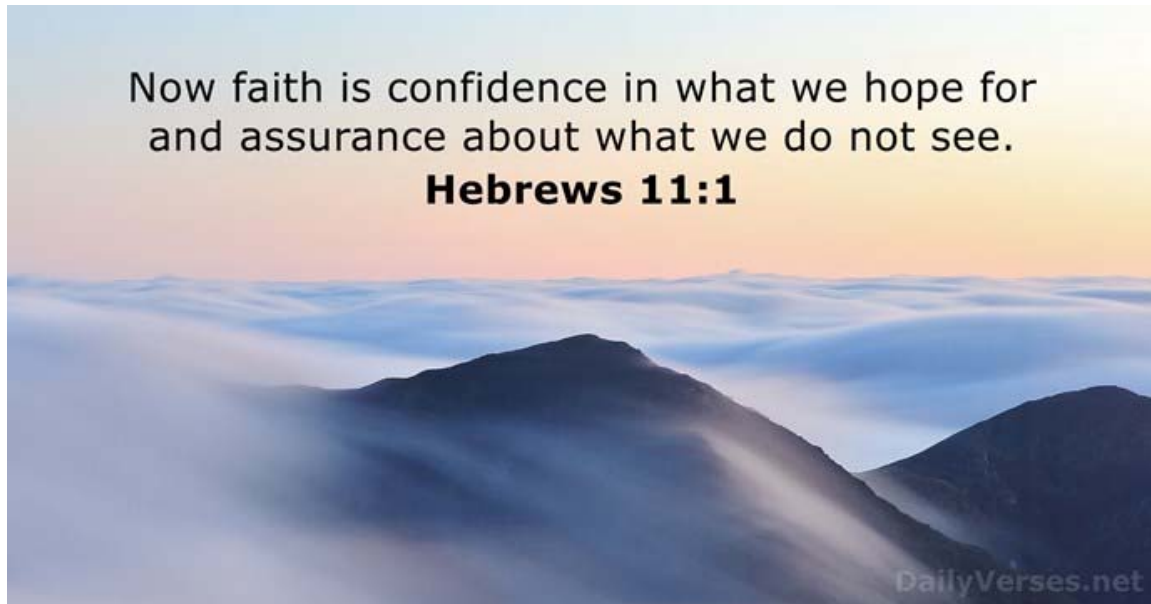
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Voices of Purpose

Newsletter Deadlines & Distribution

Newsletter Issue	Deadline for	
	Articles	Distribution
Spring 2023 (January – March)	April 4, 2023	April 8, 2023
Summer 2023 (April – June)	July 4, 2023	July 8, 2023
Fall 2023 (July – September)	October 3, 2023	October 7, 2023
Winter 2023 (October – December)	January 3, 2024	January 6, 2024

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



Greater New Jersey United Women in Faith

LEADERSHIP TEAM 2023-2024

PRESIDENT

Susan Zahorbenski ('24)

VPRES/PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Pat Schutz ('24)

SECRETARY

OPEN

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

COMMUNICATIONS

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 2023

Marilyn Beres

CLASS OF 2023

Alice Bennett

CLASS OF 2024

Cynthia Lydon

CLASS OF 2024

Ivy Daniels

CLASS OF 2024

Rosa Lee McNair

CLASS OF 2025

Kathy Schulz

CLASS OF 2025

Open

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

LEADERSHIP TEAM – 2023-2024 (continued from page 16)

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

Kyungmee Kim

KOREAN LANGUAGE COORDINATOR

OPEN

KOREAN LANGUAGE COORDINATOR

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"

*Marilyn Powell

ASSISTANT DEAN MISSION "U"

REV. ELIZABETH VANEKHOVEN

UMW NE JURISDICTION MISSION ADVOCATE

REBECCA PARSONS

UMW NE JURISDICTION REPRESENTATIVE

MARILYN POWELL

UMW NATIONAL DIRECTOR/SECRETARY

BETHANY AMEY-SUTTON

GNJUMC PRESIDING BISHOP

Rev John R. Schol

CONFERENCE UMW WEBSITE: www.gnjumw.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, hose, 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>.

*So, whatever you wish that others would do to you,
do also to them,
for this is the Law and the Prophets.
Matthew 7:12*

Greater New Jersey



United
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in Faith

Legislative Action Team presents:

How to be an Advocate:
Training for Legislative Action

Saturday, August 26, 2023

10:00am-noon

(or come to our presenters' practice session,
Thur., Aug. 24, 7-9pm)



Zoom only (but we will actually be going to Trenton in September! Your registration now guarantees you will hear about that date later. Sign up now if interested.)

Registration:

https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0ufumppj4uHNEMXHoCGZuq_OiR4ONEyXVF



United
Women
in Faith

**Greater New Jersey
United Women in Faith
(GNJUWF)**

SAVE THE DATE!

GNJUWF New Jersey Legislative Outreach

Trenton, NJ

September 2023 (TBA)

Topics:

Gun Control/Violence

Climate Justice

School to Prison Pipeline

Look for Sign Sheets at each GNJUWF event to register your interest
in joining or for more information.



United
Women
in Faith

Greater New Jersey



United
Women
in Faith

Fall Annual Celebration

Saturday, October 21, 2023

featuring

Meg Isbitski, LSW,

Somerset Co. Dept. of Human Services, Mental Health Administrator

TEACHING RESILIENCE:

Healthy Perspectives for Children (& all)



9:30am Meet & Greet
10:00am Welcome to all
11:30am Lunch (\$10, please register*)
12:30pm Annual Business Meeting

Location (hybrid - live & Zoom*):
GNJ Mission Resource Center
205 Jumping Brook Rd.
Neptune Twp, NJ 07753

Ingathering: Stress-Relief "Fidget" Children's Toys
Offering: Camden Neighborhood Center and Pledge to Mission

*Registration: holly.cyrus@faa.gov 609-226-5337