

Church Women United in Wisconsin

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Spring 2019



CHURCH WOMEN UNITED
2019 May Friendship Day

THE
TIME IS
NOW!
"Agree to Differ"

In this Issue....

| | |
|------------------------------------------|-----|
| President's Letter | P.1 |
| Assembly News..... | P.2 |
| Celebrations..... | P.3 |
| Unit News | P.4 |
| WCC Updates..... | P.5 |
| Social Action..... | P.6 |
| State Board Contact Information | P.7 |
| Unit Presidents..... | P.8 |

Calendar

| | |
|------------------|----------------------|
| April 11..... | State Board Meeting |
| May 3 | May Friendship Day |
| May 9 | President's Luncheon |
| September 7..... | State Assembly |

Words Heal, Words Hurt - President's Message

Yesterday was a beautiful spring day in Platteville. It was the kind of day that makes your heart beat a little faster, and you feel a slight spring in your step. Standing on my patio, I felt a soft, spring breeze as I listened to a robin sing from her perch in the maple tree.

The gift of language is truly a wonderful gift. As a two-way street, it gives us the ability to send and receive messages. Language has the potential to make me feel "over the moon" and that all is "right with the world". Yes, words can be soothing and can heal a broken spirit. But what if words hurt? Are you familiar with the old saying, "Sticks and stones may break your bones, but words will never hurt you?" Not true - and here's why.

The use of hurtful words is a form of bullying. Is that idea new to you? You see, bullying can happen in many ways - as a form of harassment, a threat, a use of force or coercion, an attempt to dominate others or abuse someone, or even to embarrass someone. The target of the hurt may be an individual or a group of individuals, and the effects upon the individual or individuals targeted may be short-lived - or even last a lifetime.

And you wonder, why do people bully others? Of course, the most obvious answer is anger, but also jealousy, resentment, arrogance, or lack of self-esteem - all can make a person act like a bully.

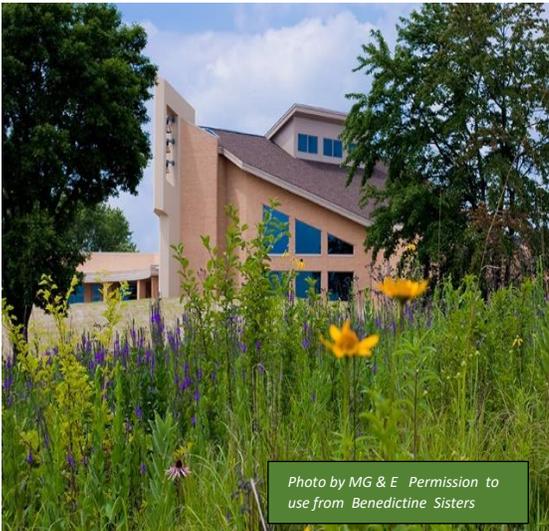
Often people of other abilities, ethnic or cultural differences, the economically poor, the elderly, or those who belong to the LGBTQ community are targets of stereotypes and bullying. I must admit that I am peeved when a young person says that she has a "senior moment," as if only the elderly forget, or he or she feels the need to "talk down" to us.

Name calling also hurts. Perhaps it is so common that most of us experience it at one time or another. When one is 10 years old, a bit pudgy, and is named Carol, and that rhymes with barrel - you can imagine the rest of the story. It nearly caused me to become anorexic later in life!

A recent newsletter from my home church in North Dakota referenced some sensible "fasts" for Lent, such as working on our personality goals. I have decided that my "fast" for Lent this year is to become more aware of the words I speak, my tone of voice, and my choice of words. Proverbs 15:1-4 will be my guiding force.

Let us all resolve to be more aware of our words when speaking to, or about others, for words do have the power to heal or to hurt.

Carol Lange / CWU in Wisconsin State President



2019 State Assembly

The CWU Wisconsin annual assembly will be held Saturday, September 7, 2019, at Holy Wisdom Monastery and Retreat Center in Middleton, Wisconsin. The program will include a morning retreat session and is intended to nurture the soul and spirit of all who attend.

The theme chosen for this year is "Care of God's Creation" and emphasizes not only the wonder of creation, but our responsibility of stewardship for it. We are tasked to care for the earth and all the living things on it, including ourselves. That is why a retreat session has been included with this assembly. We will look at different prayer and meditation practices that bring us closer to Christ and help us to navigate an often stressful and broken world.

The location for the assembly was chosen because it offers a retreat setting at a location that embodies environmentally sound practices. Holy Wisdom has won prestigious awards for its conservation initiatives, and attendees will have the opportunity for a guided tour of the center

and the grounds, which include a restored prairie, lake, gardens and expanding oak savanna. It is currently managed by the ecumenical Benedictine Women of Madison and welcomes visitors of all faiths.

Because we have an obligation to make a firm commitment at Holy Wisdom, it is necessary to have our registration completed earlier than in other years. The deadline for registration is August 16, 2019. The fee has been kept at \$25 by supplementing the cost with monies from the Christensen Fund, the CWU state board treasury, and individual donations.

In addition to the retreat session, there will be light refreshments/registration, lunch, business meeting, installation of new officers, and a memorial service for those CWU sisters who have died within the last year. Scripture study, music, and presentations will also be on the agenda.

The registration form and brochure will be emailed separately from the newsletter later in April. It is important that the word about the assembly gets out at the unit level early, so that no one misses out on this wonderful opportunity. It would be helpful if units would print and have available assembly information at their May Friendship Day Celebrations. All registration forms and checks should be mailed to Sue Coghill, 4858 Island View Road, Oshkosh WI 54901.

For those who wish to stay at the monastery on Friday night, a separate registration form will be provided in future newsletters. There will also be more information about other possible hotel and motel accommodations.

A full description of presenters and programs will be published in a late May or early June mini-newsletter. (The brochure, posters, and complete registration information should be available by late April.) Just to let you know, President Carol Lange has extended invitations to our national President, Patti Polk, and Regional Coordinator, Judy Reimer, in hopes they will be able to join us for this special assembly.

Be sure to get this assembly on your calendar. It promises to be special time for renewal, inspiration, and connecting with friends!

2019 Assembly Planning Committee

Kris Clausing, Sue Coghill, Gloria Carter,

Carol Lange - Ex officio Member

May Friendship Day 2019

May Friendship Day is scheduled for Friday, May 3rd if you use the traditional date of the first Friday in May.

May Friendship Day dates back to May, 1933 when two independent groups planned luncheons to focus on Child Health and Children of Migrant Families. The first event was sponsored by the Women's Council for Home Mission in New York City. This event continued and expanded until 1939 when the groups merged under the National Council of Church Women, which called for an annual celebration "to strengthen a growing sense of unity, the joy of Christian fellowship and the power of Christianity in the day of need."

In May 1945, a few years after the founding of Church Women United, the celebration was formalized as May Fellowship Day. In 1999, the movement of Church Women United changed the name of the celebration to May Friendship Day, as we continue to celebrate unity in our journey toward wholeness in communities. (*Information obtained from the webpage of Church Women United in Dayton, OH.*)

The overall theme for the 2019 celebrations is "**The Time Is Now!**" based on John 4:23a (CEB) "But the time is coming – and is here." The theme reflects a desire and urgency to keep Church Women United a strong and relevant organization. In developing this theme, the planning committee decided to use our CWU motto "Agreed to Differ, Resolved to Love, United to Serve" in the present tense – because "The Time Is Now!"

May Friendship Day's program "**Agree to Differ**" focuses on uniting us in the spirit to do God's work - despite our differences. We are challenged to reflect on the exceptional diversity we have – be it geographical, cultural or ethnic, religious, educational, or workforce related. Then consider how, through friendship, we can channel this diversity to impact the future of our homes, churches, and communities.

We are also challenged to unite in service and create some type of initiative or project that will meet the needs of our communities. (A list of suggested initiatives is given on page 4.) We hope our units will

share what projects they have chosen to carry out in service for others.

This year, as you plan your May Friendship program, you will see that no music is provided. The Ecumenical Celebrations Committee that plans our celebrations has decided that since music copyrights can be costly and difficult to obtain, each unit should pick out music that is suitable for their own group. A suggested list of appropriate songs is given in the leader's guide.

Have fun with "The Time is Now! Agree to Differ."

The Fellowship of the Least Coin

Do the women of your unit contribute to the Least Coin offering? Did you know that it is usually part of the program for the May Friendship Day celebration?

The inspiration of the Least Coin goes back to shortly after World War II when Shanti Salomon of India traveled to the Philippines and saw the poverty and need in the countries of Asia.

The Fellowship of the Least Coin combines the least coin - for us, the penny - with prayer to help create and realize programs that aid women and children throughout the world.

The areas of work that these gifts are allocated to include: 1 Opportunities and education for women, 2. Raising awareness of gender-related issues. 3. Programs that focus on literacy, health, social concerns, and leadership development. 4. Programs that enhance justice, peace, and reconciliation for women. 5. Opportunities for women to meet ecumenically in regional, national, and world-wide gatherings.

"The least coin teaches us to be humble, to value the least, and to trust that nothing is impossible for God who can do great things from out of the least and unexpected."

Make the "Least Coin" part of your May Friendship Day Celebration this year!

Eleanor Siebert, Celebrations Chairperson

May Friendship Day Initiatives

Have you tried one of these?

In conjunction with the challenge to sponsor a unit initiative as part of May Friendship Day, and in addition to the regular activities of the business meetings, here are ideas units have tried and that you might consider.

- * Establish a food pantry or help at a food pantry;
- * Give prayer shawls to shut-ins or baby shawls at baptisms;
- * Host senior meals;
- * Provide a Thanksgiving dinner for the community;
- * Visit inmates in jail or prison;
- * Meet and collaborate with your Muslim neighbors;
- * Prepare meals for low income families;
- * Supply treats or programs for nursing homes;
- * Prepare and lead a bingo party at senior apartments;
- * Offer rides to people who can't drive to church, appointments, or shopping;
- * Support needy families at Christmas, or host a Christmas market or a cookie walk;
- * Provide scholarships for campers;
- * Establish a community garden;
- * Collect and give layettes to hospitals to distribute to newborns;
- * Supply food for hungry children during the summer;
- * Visit shut-ins and bring them a treat of cookies, etc.;
- * Do coupon clipping to benefit schools and churches;
- * Provide a children's gift shop for low income children;
- * Support mission projects with craft items.
- * Send cards to CWU members that are shut-ins, to people serving in the armed forces, or to missionaries
- * Offer to give English lessons to immigrants.
- * Collect materials for health kits or school kits

CWU has a history of doing good and working for change in our communities and beyond. Let's continue to spread the gospel through acts of kindness and love.

Unit News

Columbus County

Columbus Church Women United will observe World Day of Prayer on Friday, April 5th at 1:00 at the Columbus United Methodist Church. The program, "Come – Everything is Ready" will be presented, followed by refreshments. Carol Lange, CWU in Wisconsin, State President, will be our guest. All are welcome to join us! (*The Columbus United Methodist Church is located at 222 S Dickason Blvd, Columbus.*)

Eileen Bennett, Columbus County Contact Person

La Crosse Unit

Greetings from Western Wisconsin! Our calendars tell us it is spring – and we welcome the warmer weather! We have no more snow - but be alert of flooded areas.

At the last minute, we decided to cancel our January meeting. It seemed that the safety of our members was more important than completing an agenda. It did set us back in our planning, but "safety first."

Our March 2019 World Day of Prayer and brunch, hosted by Prince of Peace in La Crescent, was well attended. We were proud to accept three new churches and key women into our unit.

On April 2, two of our members will attend the Wisconsin Technical College President's Reception to honor their donors and recipients. CWU was able to award \$1600 this year to assist women financially as they pursue their further education. It is a wonderful opportunity for CWU to be a visible and positive energy in the community.

We are now planning for our April 12th Key Women meeting. Along with business as usual, we look forward to welcoming Carolyn Colleen, author of F.I.E.R.C.E , a book on reclaiming one's own inner strength when faced with adversity. Carolyn will be with us as part of our efforts to break down racial barriers and work towards understanding, acceptance, and inclusion of others. Later this year we will be hosting our Muslim and Latino sisters who will share their journeys with us as well. We look forward to meeting them and hearing their stories.

Eileen Lang, FSPA, President of La Crosse Area CWU

Wisconsin Council of Churches

WCC 2019 Advocacy Day People of Faith United for Justice

Thursday, April 11

8:30 am – 4:00 pm

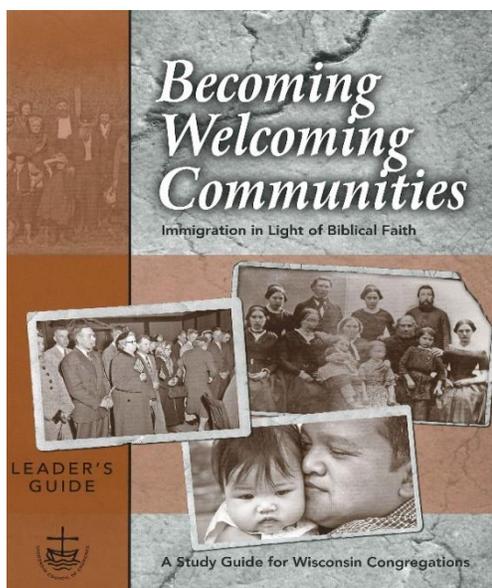
First United Methodist Church

(Near the Capital Square)

203 Wisconsin Avenue, Madison, WI

CWU are encouraged to attend “**People of Faith United for Justice**”, a day-long gathering to learn, discuss, pray and advocate together for social justice issues of importance to all the people of Wisconsin.

As our new legislature begins work on the next state budget, our representatives need to hear from the people. What are our values, priorities, and concerns? What are our expectations and aspirations? Issues discussed at the 2019 Advocacy Day will include; Clean Water, Expanding Badger Care, and Early Child Education.



Immigration Resources

We are a nation of immigrants. As waves of different immigrants have arrived on our shores, our country has been reshaped and redefined as new groups bring diverse cultural identities, perspectives, and resources. Yet, nationwide, including here in Wisconsin, immigration has become one of the most emotionally charged and polarizing social and political issues.

As we, Church Women United, engage in another year of working for social justice, we may want to look at some new resources Wisconsin Council of Churches has to offer on immigration. WCC has engaged in collaborative efforts to address the issue of immigration, focusing on education, advocacy, and building understanding between older and newer immigrant communities.

A new resource, ***On the Misuse of Scripture to Justify Injustice***, is the result of collaborative efforts by WCC to address the misuse of the Bible to condone injustice. The document also is an ecumenical statement to protest the current federal policies being implemented at our southern border, including the indefinite detention of families, the separation of children from their parents, and other trauma imposed on people seeking refuge. You can find this statement on their website, or go to

<https://www.wichurches.org/programs-and-ministries/becoming-welcoming-communities-immigration-reform/on-the-misuse-of-scripture-to-justify-injustice/>

Another WCC resource available on immigration is a study guide to help congregations and other organizations host workshops on Immigration. The program guide, ***Becoming Welcoming Communities***, and all pertinent handouts for each session, are available as a free download from the WCC webpage, or go to <https://www.wichurches.org/programs-and-ministries/becoming-welcoming-communities-immigration-reform/>

Becoming Welcoming Communities begins with a look at the history of immigration in the United States and Wisconsin. After a look at the personal stories of immigrants and studying what the Bible says about welcoming the stranger, participants will look at what churches and communities can do to become more welcoming.

We encourage our units to check out these resources and consider using them to generate conversation about immigration within our units, churches, and communities.

Dear CWU Sisters,

As the State Board of Church Women United representative to Wisconsin Council of Churches Peace and Social Justice Committee, I would like to share happenings related to two important issues: racism, and gun violence.

Wisconsin Council of Churches co-sponsored an inspiring event on March 9th in Madison regarding racism. Austin Channing Brown, keynote speaker for the event, and a leading new voice for racial justice, spoke on her recent book titled "*I'm Still Here: Black Dignity in a World Made for Whiteness*" (2018).

It was inspiring to see a solid turn-out of over 200 people to participate in the day's events and hear Ms. Brown speak. As a white person, I came to new realizations and understandings about the painful and routine experiences of racism and social exclusion caused by white dominance. Brown's message stressed the urgency of fighting institutional racism with our political action of advocacy, and by voting. The call to action in our own daily lives is critical.

Some of the topics addressed in Ms. Brown's book include: White People are Exhausting; The Other Side of Harmony; Whiteness at Work; Why I Love Being a Black Girl; White Fragility; and How to Survive Racism in an Organization That Claims to be Anti-racist.

I highly recommend this book, and hope, once you have read it, that you take time to share it with others. It would be an interesting book study for the women of CWU.

Meanwhile, the efforts of one primarily white church to reduce racism in their community continue: Grace Episcopal Church in Madison has now completed three of the four sessions on *Healing Racism Dialogues: When the Diagnosis is Racism*. The fourth session will be held after Easter, on April 28th. You are welcome to join us and observe for yourselves what is happening in our primarily white parish, and to get an idea what you could do in your church to host a conversation or dialogue on racism.

At our Healing Racism Dialogue sessions at Grace Episcopal, table leaders host groups of 8, discussing racism for two hours. Since silence when one observes racist behavior is unacceptable and considered complicit, we provide opportunities to do role playing situations wherein participants can practice responding to true scenarios of racism. Then we discuss what we have learned.

If you are interested in hosting a Healing Racism Dialogue, I invite you to email me for more information, or join our final session on April 28th.

Let's turn to what has been happening in terms of gun violence. On January 26, Wisconsin Council of Churches hosted a state-wide Youth Summit on Faith and Gun Violence. This event, organized for church youth from across the state, focused on addressing the scourge of gun violence as people of faith, not people of fear. The intent was to listen, find a voice, and share one's personal stories of gun violence, followed by a call to action. The discussions and stories were videotaped for use as training materials to be used in parishes across Wisconsin.

I was able to be part of the committee that reviewed and critiqued this initiative. Because we felt there were insufficient voices of African-American youth from Milwaukee on the video, another date in April is being organized for youth to gather and be videotaped. Once the training materials are developed, youth will be asked to review and comment on them, so their perspectives are accurately reflected. The plan then is to publish the new "Faith and Gun Violence Study-Action Guide". The guide and the videotape will then be made available for churches and organizations throughout the state.

We look forward to sharing these training materials with CWU. This is a wonderful initiative by WCC, and all churches are encouraged to support this work.

Happy Easter to all of you!

Lynn McDonald, CWU in WI /Peace & Justice
CWU Representative for Wisconsin Council of Churches

