



United Women in Faith
El Camino Real District Newsletter

March Q1 2024 Issue

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The *Mission Link* is a quarterly newsletter of El Camino Real District United Women in Faith.

Articles for Submission

Please direct items for publication in Mission Link to the Communications Coordinator. If you provide photos of recognizable individuals, please be sure you have obtained permission from those individuals to publish their picture. The next issue will be published in June, 2024. The deadline for articles and photos to be submitted is June 14, 2024.

President's Message



I am just a little jet lagged after returning from a mission trip to Kyrgyzstan yesterday. I have been thinking about what to say to all of you about the trip and the only thing that comes to my mind is that **God is working around the world**. Even in predominantly Islamic countries like Kyrgyzstan, I could see the love of God in the people that I met.

We left on February 28th and flew to Bishkek via Istanbul. This year the trip was even more arduous as we took an excursion to Ushtobe, Kazakhstan to visit a Mission Center that serves families in and around Ushtobe. We stayed at the center in dorm rooms that are used for youth retreats there. We delivered food to several families who live in areas where food scarcity is a major concern. One family that has 9 children was especially concerning to me. The family of 11 lives in a 3-room house. There seems to be little government support for such families and the center provides much needed aid. The pastor of the church there told us that the church had provided bunk beds for the children as they were sleeping on the floor.

Amina was one of the people I met at the center. She is a beautiful 16-year-old girl who hopes to attend college in the future. Her English is excellent and she even follows American politics. We had

several discussions about this topic and her grasp of the issues and her huge vocabulary was amazing to me.

The most enjoyable part of the trip was attending the “Forum” for youth at Lake Issa Kul in Kyrgyzstan. About 65 medical and other youth attended this event which consisted of worship meetings, testimonies, and fellowship. I asked several students to tell me what the most valuable take away from this retreat was. This is what they said:

Sashi: The most valuable thing about the retreat would be the encouragement of the youth to live in the “Right Way.” (The Right Way was the theme of the retreat this year.) The workshops were very impacting, especially the sessions with Dr. David, a physician from San Diego.

Satish: I noticed that some people did not take communion because they were not baptized (although this is not required). After talking to the pastors, 3 of them were baptized in the swimming pool. Several youths from the USA were there and their testimonies reflected a lot and we learned many things from them.

There were certainly challenges during the trip like sleeping on bunk beds with 6 to a room at the Ushtobe youth center. But these inconveniences were overshadowed by the strong Christian fellowship I experienced with people I had never met but were ready to accept me into their lives. The medical students were very open about the challenges they face every day as they study and then take the India medical exam that all medical students must pass before going on an internship. I will be praying for all of them.

My small contribution was to teach line dancing as one of the workshops. Although most of the students were unfamiliar with this music and dance, they tried and I think they really enjoyed it. We even danced to Pakistani music. It actually worked pretty well.

These are my thoughts on the first day back. I will be sharing more experiences later as I process the trip.

For now, I would encourage all of you to sign up for the Central Valley spiritual retreat on April 6th on Zoom and also for one of the Mission u events. I will be attending the 3-day event at Monte Toyon camp. I hope to see you all at these events.

Just a note: ECRD is not having a spiritual retreat this year as the Mission Springs camp requires 60 attendees in order to reserve the facility. We are hoping that we can have a retreat next year.

Sincerely,

Debbie Ow

Debbie Ow
President
ECRD District United Women in Faith

Treasurer's Report

Thank you to all of the units that have sent in remittances for missions. I love hearing about all the creative ways you are raising funds for UWF missions. Please, continue to make remittance checks payable to "ECRD UMW".

The address for sending in remittances is:

ECRD UWF, c/o Carolyn Bircher
1663 Martin Ave.
Sunnyvale, CA 94087

PLEDGE ACCOUNT

Remittances received (Dec-Mar)	\$ 6,499.00
4 th qtr. remittances sent to conference -	\$ 6,069.00
March 15, 2024 balance	\$ 3,159.01

ADMINISTRATIVE ACCOUNT

Connect & Learn expenses -	\$ 100.00
Oct-Mar Communication expenses -	\$ 278.17
Jurisdictional Assembly travel -	\$ 1,600.00
Funds received for Jurisdictional Asmbly	\$ 1,600.00
Donations received	\$ 381.00
Mar. 15, 2024 balance	\$ 3,117.52

The Pledge account is for contributions from the local units for missions, which are passed on to the conference (and then to National) UWF. The Administrative account is for El Camino Real District UWF events and operations.

If you have questions, please email treasurer@elcaminorealumw.org.

Carolyn Bircher
ECRD Treasurer

Remembering for Karen Hall



Many of you may already know that our faith community has had a major loss recently. Karen Hall passed away suddenly on February 9, 2024. She will be greatly missed by her family, Salinas 1st UMC and UWF. Karen was our District UWF Recording Secretary and a vital part of our District UWF team.

Obituary information - <https://www.thecalifornian.com/obituaries/pyrk0724915>

We Connect and Learn

On Saturday, February 3, El Camino Real District women gathered for our annual "Connect and Learn" Zoom session. The theme was "Climate Change, You Can Be Part of the Solution".

Gregory Stevens, Northern California Director of Interfaith Power and Light, was our first speaker. Gregory grew up in Tampa, Florida, and enjoys living in San Francisco's Mission District where owning a car is not a necessity.

Gregory quoted David Attenborough who said that we cannot have infinite growth on a finite planet. However, our small efforts such as taking shorter showers and drinking from reusable water bottles, while important, will not save us. Our entire economy must change, moving away from extraction and exploitation.

A pencil is made of five materials – the wood, the graphite, the rubber eraser, the metal eraser holder, and the paint – obtained from ten countries. But often these ten countries were taken over by outsiders and its inhabitants are made to work for small wages under difficult conditions and often while polluting the surrounding land.

Some say “Give a person a fish and that person eats for a day. Teach a person to fish and that person eats for a lifetime.” But in our economy those same people have to pay for a fishing license, rent a pole and buy bait before fishing in a polluted lake. Things need to change.

“Cooperation Jackson” is building a solidarity economy in Jackson, Mississippi, anchored by a network of cooperatives and worker-owned, democratically self-managed enterprises. The community itself owns the land, not individuals. Community gardens and living simply appeal to the residents.

Big new ideas can become a reality. Ralph Nader led the push for seat belts which are now in every car. Electric cars are not new but are finally becoming popular. They were promoted years ago for women because they didn't put soot or smoke on the ladies' pretty dresses.

Interfaith Power and Light helps groups obtain \$10,000 interest-free loans for earth-friendly projects and works to mobilize people of faith to steward Creation.

Our second speaker was Paul Finnegan who had been delighted to hear from his son about one more way to reduce our power usage when the power plants are facing excessive demand. During those times, the public utilities feel forced to add to the green energy they are using by firing up their natural gas generation. But a nationwide non-profit named OhmConnect, founded in 2014, makes it almost fun to ease the utilities' burden during those times by including games and prizes. OhmConnect alerts subscribers and their smart homes when dirty, expensive power plants switch on nearby and the organization pays them for reducing their electricity use. The users reduce their electricity use for one hour to no more than four hours. Paul and his whole family are enjoying the experience. See the company's website for more information.

The meeting closed with the Laurel Tongan UMC choir's beautiful and powerful rendition of the Hallelujah Chorus in Tongan !

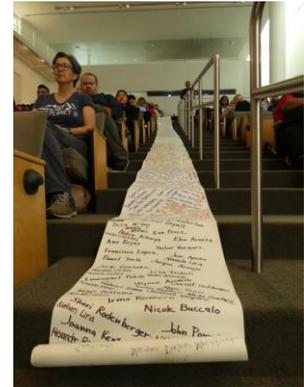
~ Bonnie Home, Almaden Hills UMC

Connect and Learn 2024 Resources -

1. Gregory Stevens, Interfaith Power and Light - additional [resources](#)
2. OhmConnect - To learn more or sign up use this link <https://refer.ohm.co/gpaulfinnegan>

SURJ update

SURJ at City council, Tuesday March 19, presenting signatures in favor of an additional TRUST Truck in the city budget. More details to follow.



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Putting California on the Map

by Bonnie Home, Almaden Hills UWF

Congratulations to Terri Koike, member of United Women in Faith at Wesley United Methodist Church in San Jose, for submitting a wonderful article and photo to the “Bright Lights” section of the January/February **response** magazine, telling about the fleece-heart kits that the group had made for the “Girls Embracing Mothers” (G.E.M.) program. The young girls will use the kits as part of the art therapy when visiting their mothers in prison.

The magazine **response** is headquartered in New York City and many of its articles are submitted by United Women in Faith on the east coast and mid-west. So it is especially thrilling to see an article about our home state.

There are several ways for you to send in California stories –

1) Photo Challenge – Reading Program

Email a photo of yourself reading one of the Reading Program books and write a short explanation telling which books you are reading. Write “Photo Challenge” in the subject line.

2) Photo Challenge – Reading the magazine

Email a photo of yourself reading **response** magazine and tell where you are reading it. In the March/April edition, women were shown reading while getting a pedicure, waiting for the car to be serviced, at a Soul Care retreat, and when visiting parents. Write “Photo Challenge” in the subject line.

3) Bright Lights – Tell what your group is doing to make the world a better place. Include a photo. Write “Bright Lights” in the subject line.

4) Member Profile – Compose an essay of between 300 and 500 words telling about your experiences with United Women in Faith. Add a photo of yourself. Write “Member Profile” in the subject line.

Photos need to be attached, not embedded, and at least 1 MB. Include the name of the photographer, the names of the other people in your photo, and note in which church conference you live.

Email your story to: response@uwfaith.org

Our El Camino Real District women have been featured in **response** before. Let's do it again!

Mission u information

El Camino Real District UWF wants to encourage all our members and friends to attend Mission u this year. Unfortunately, due to a projected limited participation, we will not be having our annual Spiritual Retreat in Mission Springs. We are hoping to see you at Monte Toyon in May/June.

MISSION u 2024 Dates

3 Day Event- May 31, 2024 to June 2, 2024 @ Monte Toyon Camp, 220 Cloister Lane, Aptos, CA 95003

2 Day Event- June 28, 2024 to June 29, 2024 @ Carson Valley UMC, 1375 Centerville Lane, Gardnerville NV 89410

3 Day Event- July 26, 2024 to July 28, 2024 @ ECCO, Oakhurst, CA ECCO Conference Center- 43803 Highway 41, Oakhurst, CA 93644

1 Day Event- August 31, 2024 @ Centennial UMC, Sacramento, CA 5401 Freeport Blvd, Sacramento, CA 95822

The theme is **The Kin-dom is Among You: Drawing Closer to God and One Another**

Participants are invited to dig deeper into what it means to live in the kin-dom of God and how this helps us to develop practices for building and existing in healthier communities. Costs vary by location.

The registration fees for Monte Toyon are:

Adults (over age 31) \$275

Youth/young adult (age 12-30) \$250

Children 6-11 \$175

Children under 6 - free

Scholarships are available. Deadline to apply for a scholarship is April 1.

For registration and scholarship links go to <https://canvuwf.org/>

To purchase curricula, go to <https://uwfaith.org/events/mission-u/>

Dress a Girl Around the World Update at Wesley UMC - Feb. 4, 2024

Making a Difference One Dress at a Time

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.” Prov. 3:5-6

Over the past 7 months, nine Wesley UWF members have been quietly sewing dresses for the Dress a Girl Around the World Organization. Most members have participated in this project before, experiencing God “straightening their paths,” but they’ve proven before and even now, that their paths need little straightening.

Fifty-five dresses were completed. They all will be going to the outer Philippine Islands, reaching indigenous groups who have been extremely difficult to reach and to impoverished areas in Manila. They were blessed by Rev. John and the Wesley congregation during the February 4th church service.

The goal of the Dress a Girl organization is “to endeavor to raise the esteem of girls living in poverty around the world by providing them with a made-with-love, well-constructed, beautiful dress.”

This was the third sewing drive at Wesley UMC for the Dress a Girl Around the World Organization. We will continue to do this sewing project as long as there is continued interest. Our members find it very easy because they can sew the dress kits at home whenever they have time.

You can contact Terri Koike at tkoike5037@gmail.com if you would like more information about sewing for the Dress a Girl organization and where you can find the free dress kits.

For more information on the Dress A Girl Around the World Organization go to:
www.dressagirlaroundtheworld.com



Central Valley District Women in Faith Zoom Retreat

ECRD UWF will be participating with the Central Valley District UWF in their Spiritual Retreat on April 6, 2024, 9:00 am - 12:00 pm. The guest speaker is Rev. Quentisha Davis Wiles.

We are suggesting that “Watch Parties” be organized, so you can watch with your sisters, have discussions and perhaps share a meal.

Registration is free, but donations are welcome. [Registration information here.](#) (fix link)

For more information, please contact Amanda Bulls-Stephes at bighatbulls@hotmail.com.

Information How-to for Starting New Circles

There has been some interest in how to form new circles or UWF units. Some resources from the UWF national website: <https://uwfaithresources.org/prodDetail.cfm?productID=10610&catid=2196>

Guidelines for Organizing: <https://uwfresources.org/prodDetail.cfm?productID=9887&catid=2200>

Invite-Excite Recruitment Guide:

<https://uwfaithresources.org/prodDetail.cfm?productID=9936&catid=2175>

Coming Events

April 1 - Deadline for applying for Mission u scholarships.

April 6 - Central Valley Zoom Retreat

May 31-June 2 - Monte Toyon Mission u

October 5 - ECRD Annual Celebration. Save the date. More information will be coming.

Around the District

If you have a photo or announcement about a local unit event, feel free to submit it. We will try to publish some things in this section that may trigger ideas for other units.

UWF at St. Paul's Celebrated Women's Day, March 17



St. Paul UWF celebrating Women's Day March 17th. Speaker was Rev. Motoe Yamada Foor.

Santa Clara UMC UWF

Hi there,

On February 24, Santa Clara UMC UWF met to discuss "unconditional love" and what it means to be loved unconditionally by God and to love others unconditionally. It is important to remember that Jesus loves us, period. We also celebrated the 102nd birthday of one of our members, DeLois Reynolds. Pictured is the group looking at a response magazine article: Lisa Hatchett, Joan Meacham, Berta Schenaker, DeLois Reynolds, Julia Borjeson and Selma Chung.



Blessings,

Lisa Hatchett

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all who contributed to this newsletter. (Any misspelling, errors or typos are ours alone).

Joyce & Leslie