



United Women in Faith
El Camino Real District Newsletter

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December Q4 2025 Issue

Vision - Turning faith, hope, and love into action on behalf of women, children, and youth around the world.

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 deadline for submitting articles, information and photographs for Mission Link Q1 2026 will be Monday, March 16, 2026.

President's Message



Message from the President:

I recently gave a talk at Willow Glen about why I go on mission trips. It was a real challenge as I had not given this too much thought. I had concentrated on the logistics of the trip, the where and when and with whom, but not the why. I thought that you might be interested in why as well.

Why I went on a mission trip

My motivation for going on 3 mission trips is not very complicated. It may be unique to me but I hope it is an experience that you can relate to.

It started 5 years ago when I retired. I was always active in my church on committees but I had never considered mission work. At that time I began praying about what God wanted me to do with the rest of my time, assets, and yes, talents. I had been an accountant for 45 years so I didn't think those skills would necessarily translate to mission work, but I prayed about it anyway.

I had two breakthrough realizations during this time. I realized that God had given me some financial assets that he wanted me to use to spread his love and that even though I thought my talents were minimal, God could empower me to do things I never thought I could do alone. In other words, I should get out of my comfort zone and try some new stuff and that I should not be fearful of future financial situations that might arise.

Wow! How freeing was that.

Anyway, I started searching for opportunities to serve in my church, in my community and in the larger church. Opportunities started pouring in so fast that I was somewhat overwhelmed.

One day I received a conference newsletter from Justin Ryu, the conference mission coordinator and pastor at Calvary church here in San Jose. He was asking for people to go to Kyrgyzstan to witness to medical students. It said that a foreign language was not needed and that the accommodations would be in hotels. The cost would be \$3500. There would be some orientation classes that I should attend and then make a decision.

I felt an urgency that said to GO. Wait! What! Where is Kyrgyzstan? What would I do there? Who else is going? What were the hotels like? I am an old lady; what would I do there? After much more prayer and attending the orientation classes, I paid the money and went on the trip.

Although much of the trip's program was very confusing and sometimes challenging, I am so glad that I went. I made lasting friendships with two students, learned a lot about the Methodist Church in South Asia, and eventually returned another time. The second time I also went to Kazakhstan and met Amina. But that is another story. I have most recently gone on a mission trip to Vietnam. That decision was easier.

My experience with following God's leading is personal to me. Your journey will be different. I would just say that spending time in prayer, listening for God and then responding in ways you never imagined, can be the most rewarding and life-changing experience of your life. It has been for me.

Sincerely,

Debbie

Debbie Ow

President

ECRD United Women in Faith

Treasurer Report - Carolyn Bircher

Thank you to all of the units that have sent in remittances for mission! Any additional mission giving received by December 29 will be sent in on January 1. A link to the remittance form may be found at <https://ecrduwf.org/treasurer-information/>

The address for sending in remittances is still:

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

If your unit has a new treasurer, please contact me at treasurer@ecrduwf.org to let me know the name, contact information and unit of the new treasurer. I can schedule a Zoom training session, if requested.

The offering received at our district celebration was \$643 to support the many missions of United Women in Faith. Thank you to all who attended!

Here is a summary of 2025 finances. 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.

PLEDGE ACCOUNT

Jan 1 Balance		\$ 9,428.29
Mission giving in 2025	\$44,311.20	
Interest received	<u>\$ 0.39</u>	
Total income		\$44,311.59
Remittances sent to conference in 2025	\$32,604.10	
Sent to Legacy Fund	\$ 100.00	
Sent to GBGM for missionary	<u>\$ 1,000.00</u>	
Total paid		<u>\$33,704.10</u>
Dec. 15, 2025 balance		\$20,035.78
		<i>\$19,996.20 will be sent to conference on Jan. 1</i>

ADMINISTRATIVE ACCOUNT

Jan 1 Balance		\$ 1,275.29
Funds received from conference	\$ 2,000.00	
Interest received	<u>\$ 0.13</u>	
Total income		\$ 2,000.13
2025 Event expenses	\$ 576.06	
2025 Mission u scholarships	\$ 720.00	
2025 Communication expenses	\$ 356.36	
2025 Officer Expenses	\$ 281.47	
2025 Audit	<u>\$ 0.00</u>	
Total expense		<u>\$ 1,788.60</u>
Dec. 15, 2025 balance		\$ 1,486.82

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

Carolyn Bircher

ECRD Treasurer

New District Website

Our El Camino Real District UWF website has a new home. The URL is now <https://ecrduwf.org/>. Our previous host discontinued the service so we decided that, as long as we were finding a new home, we would update our name to reflect the new UMW -> UWF change.

Also, our email addresses have changed. The new addresses are:

president@ecrduwf.org

communication@ecrduwf.org

treasurer@ecrduwf.org

webmaster@ecrduwf.org

If you have the old "elcaminorealumw.org" email addresses in your contact list, please update them. They will no longer work.

Many thanks to our new volunteer webmaster, Paul Finnegan. He would be happy to hear from you if you have suggestions or updates.

Two Congregations = One New Name

It's official . . . Cambrian Park United Methodist Church and Almaden Hills United Methodist Church are now merged into one congregation. After much thought, the name "Growing Hope United Methodist Church" has been chosen. The merger process took several years of research and planning, with the submission of many documents to both The United Methodist Church and to the state of California. Everyone involved is thrilled that the goal has finally been reached.

[Book Launch - Love in a Time of Climate Change: Honoring Creation, Establishing Justice by Rev. Sharon Delgado](#)

Save the Date! Saturday March 14, 2026

A virtual presentation of [Love in a time of Climate Change](#)

by Rev. Sharon Delgado and ECRD Women in Faith

Rev. Sharon Delgado is an ordained United Methodist pastor, nonviolent activist, and public theologian. In January 2026, Sharon is launching a virtual speaking tour following the release of the revised edition of her acclaimed book, **[Love in a Time of Climate Change: Honoring Creation, Establishing Justice.](#)**

We have been fortunate to schedule a Zoom with her on March 14, 2026. More Zoom information to follow.

The revised edition of her book includes updates based on the latest climate science and underscores the increasing urgency of the climate crisis. It also challenges readers to develop a faithful response to climate change, which disproportionately harms the poor, threatens future generations, and damages God's creation. The purpose of this book is to equip readers with tools of discernment and updated facts related to climate change and climate justice in ways that enable readers to discern a positive and faithful response. Hope persists in this new edition as a response to the grief and anger we may feel, while also moving us towards action.

Historic Mineta home sold to Wesley UMC

San Jose's historic Mineta home sold to church honors its legacy. To read the article from the San Jose Spotlight, the link is below.



<https://sanjosespotlight.com/san-jose-historic-mineta-home-sold-to-church-honors-its-legacy/>

January 10th event at Asbury UMC

Friends of Wadi Foquin in collaboration with El Camino Real District of The United Methodist Church, El Camino Real United Women in Faith, and Cal-Nevada Palestine Task Force, invite you to this important conversation...

The Palestinian Reality Post Gaza Ceasefire: A Time for Faithful Solidarity & Action

Asbury United Methodist Church

4743 East Avenue

Livermore, CA

January 10, 2026

10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

(lunch included)

Since the United Nations approval of President Trump's controversial 20-point peace plan for Gaza, Palestinians have continued to be killed there – and the West Bank experiences a slow, silent takeover of land. Although the administration has publicly criticized Israel for plans to annex Palestinian land in the West Bank - de facto annexation takes place on a daily basis. This event will provide an opportunity to hear about Palestinian reality on the ground and ways we can engage in faithful actions for an equitable peace in the Middle East.

Program Presentation

- ***Iyas Sartawi, Project Hope*** - will share about the situation in Gaza
- ***Charity Hanif, International Development and Agribusiness Specialist*** provides a report back from recent Olive Harvest trip to Wadi Foquin and the West Bank
- ***Rev. Emily Lin - A Word on Kairos Palestine II*** - a Palestinian Christian voice
- ***Rev. Naomi Southard - Update on Congressional Advocacy***
- ***District Superintendent Samuel Hong*** shares a Call to Faith

Table Conversations

- ***Kairos Palestine & Christian Zionism (Heather Hammer)***
- ***FWF Congregational Circles (Bob Johnson)***
- ***Boycott Divestment Sanctions (BDS) Advocacy - Chevron Boycott (Patricia Daugherty)***
- ***Trip to Wadi Foquin/West Bank (Emily Lin)***
- ***Community Development Project in Wadi Foquin (Naomi Southard)***
- ***Gaza relief: Project Hope (Iyas Sartawi)***
- ***Congressional Advocacy (Michael Yoshii)***

12 noon Lunch, Fellowship & Community Dialogue, Announcements, Closing

Gum Moon Annual Benefit Luncheon

By Katherine Kim

Supporting the Gum Moon organization, including their projects and services, has long been a passion of mine. I served as a board member of Gum Moon Asian Women’s Resource Center, retiring last year. I encourage you all to find out more about the history, current projects, and future of Gum Moon. This video about Gum Moon history explains how it came to be. “Gum Moon” translates into “Golden Door,” meaning “a new beginning.”

Gum Moon and Mary Elizabeth Inn are two of the mission projects endorsed by the national United Women in Faith. Both are located in San Francisco.

“Gum Moon Women’s Residence and the Asian Women’s Resource Center (AWRC) are projects of The United Methodist Church established to address the unmet needs of women and children in geographic and social transition, in providing a safe sanctuary to live in and programs that develop life skills. Gum Moon empowers these individuals, fostering stability, self-reliance, self-determination, and full access to opportunity.”

Gum Moon is celebrating its 115th Anniversary this year. Gum Moon Asian Women’s Resource Center (AWRC) held a fund-raising luncheon on September 16, 2023 at the Far East Café in San Francisco. The theme was “Women Making a Difference”. There were three 2023 honorees:

Outstanding Asian Woman Award – Mona Lisa Yuchengco
Outstanding Community Service Award – Gerrye Wong
Carol Lee Award – Katherine Kim



It was quite a surprise for me to receive the Carol Lee Award. Carol Lee was a former tenant of Gum Moon, and beneficiary of GM/AWRC. In honor of Carol Lee, one woman is recognized each year for her service to the organization. I also received a certificate of recognition from San Francisco Mayor London Breed, Attorney General Brete Jenkins, City Attorney Peter Chiu, and City Administrator Carmen Chu.



Debbie Ow, our El Camino Real District President, came to the luncheon, and celebrated with me along with my church friends and family members. It was a great honor to have all of them there and it made one of the happiest days in my life even more special. This unexpected recognition of my life and work has made me realize that the work I’ve been doing is important, and so I will continue to do more community work as long as I can. I thank God for the recognition, the honors and certificates. Thank you to everyone who has supported me in this work

Willow Glen United Women in Faith Donation

“Earn all you can, save all you can, and give all you can” is one of John Wesley’s teachings. This principle encouraged generosity and compassion for the poor and needy.

Some forward-thinking people in the 1940’s sprinkled stocks around El Camino Real District without strings attached. They were confident the stocks would be used for good and help raise up women and children who need some hope.

WGUMC-UWF are fortunate to have had custodians over the seven decades manage this small pot of money in dividend stock accounts with only the minimal withdrawals to make the pledge to mission for many years. The balance today has grown to over five figures.

We wish to thank Mrs. John D Crummey, from a generous family with ownership in FMC (Farm Machinery Corporation), who decided to make stock donations to all WSCS units, now known as UWF, in El Camino Real District. The dividends from the stock were maybe a hundred dollars that went to each unit. The Willow Glen unit appreciated the significance of this amount of money, so the group paused on deciding how to spend it.

At the last business meeting of the year in 2025, WG UWF decided to disburse approximately half the amount as a year-end donation.

Like the parable of the mustard seed, we didn’t know a generous gesture from the 1940’s would transform into Willow Glen UMC deciding to give \$10,000 in 2025 to UWF Mission. We hope the impact of this donation to women and children around the world will transform into wonderful future gifts that only God can imagine!

Meeting a Reading List Author

On the 2025 United Women In Faith reading list was the book, “After The Last Border,” a non-fiction account written by Jessica Goudeau. Those of us who had read that amazing book jumped at the chance to meet the author when Emily Jones, who is UWF executive for Racial Justice, interviewed her during an online event in November. From all over the country, 217 women signed on to watch and to ask questions in the “chat.”

Jessica had written about getting to know two immigrant women, one from Myanmar and one from Syria, as these women were learning to adapt to life in the United States. She told us she was surprised that what she thought might be important to those women's stories was not what was actually the most important to them. She confessed that the intensity of writing "After The Last Border" had taken its toll on her. She had been wise enough to connect with a therapist right away to deal with the stress.

After publishing that book in 2020, Jessica wrote a book about her own ancestry titled "We Were Illegal: Uncovering a Texas Family's Mythmaking and Migration." In it she tells that her great-great-grandfather had been a Bavarian stowaway. She reveals uncomfortable truths about her family's involvement in slavery, land swindling, and violence, challenging the whitewashed narratives often passed down about her state's history. That book is not on the UWF reading list but it might be a good one to pick up.

At the close of the interview, Emily Jones told us about Della Lamb, one of the UWF Institutions that our donations help to fund. This institute is located in Kansas City and provides support for refugees, offering services in education, employment, and self-sufficiency.

Willow Glen UWF lead Sunday Worship during Annual Conference

On June 29, as the Annual Conference was taking place, and Willow Glen UMC awaited our new pastor, the Willow Glen UWF prepared and conducted the Willow Glen worship service. Gwen McElwee, Vice President of UWF, led the service. The children's time was led by Karen Ehrke.

Michelle Unger, Secretary and past recipient of the Special Mission Recognition pin, presented a pin to Leslie Fisk in recognition of all her work in support of UWF and Willow Glen UMC. Leslie currently serves as our Social Justice Chair. Leslie has been with the church since she was a teen and has been a consistent supporter of the Joint Youth Ministry, the Casitas de Esperanza ministry, and many more.



UWF members Carolyn Lamcke (Morgan Hill) and Laurie Lindsey (Willow Glen) played a piano duet, "Shall we Gather at the River."



Gwen McElwee's message was "The Mighty Force of Women." Gwen spoke first of her roots in the Baptist church and her mother's connection to the Methodist church. She recalled how her mother had sown the seeds for her to come back to The United Methodist Church. She spoke of our biblical role models: Mary Magdalene, Ruth and Naomi, Esther, and Deborah. These women exhibited attributes we value: strength, resilience, and faith.

We concluded the service with a hymn not in our hymnal, but which seems to summarize our mission perfectly: “Christ Be Our Light.”

Our UWF President, Janet Ehrke, gave the benediction. We are truly blessed to have so many dedicated women in our ranks!

2026 Resources

Youtube link to Voices from the Field

[Voices from the Field - YouTube](#)

Social Action Campaign Resources

<https://uwfaithresources.org/prodlist.cfm?catID=2210>

UWF 2026 Prayer Guide & Resources

[United Women in Faith - Shop](#)



Glen)

ECRD Officers

President: Debbie Ow (SJ - Willow
president@ecrduwf.org)

Secretary: Cheryl Harmon (Fremont - St. Paul)

Treasurer: Carolyn Bircher (Cupertino - Good Samaritan)
treasurer@ecrduwf.org

Communication: Joyce Wilkinson (Marina)
communication@ecrduwf.org

Social Action: Leslie Fisk (SJ - Willow Glen)

Spiritual Growth: Meletatafu Kei (Tongan Palo Alto)

Climate Justice Advocate: Betty Dickey (SJ – Growing Hope)

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.

Wesley UWF

The UWF at Wesley United Methodist Church increased the number of Blessing Bags from 40 to 60 this year. The bags are full of household items including laundry soap, fabric softener, foil, toothbrushes, toothpaste, dental floss, a kitchen towel, Scotch tape, treats for the children, and other small items. They were given to low-income families, 45 Grant Elementary School families and 15 families who have children under 18 and are not associated with Grant. All come to our Wesley Food Distribution Program for bags of produce, milk, meat or eggs, canned goods, dry goods, some donated, some purchased, but most of it is delivered and picked up from Second Harvest, a local food distribution site. The items in the Blessing Bags were paid for from the proceeds of our Wesley UWF Rummage Sale held in June or donated by individuals, and donations from the Sage Dental office, made possible by Dr Grant Shimizu and Dr Brittany Chou. We are blessed to be able to give to those who need some help on their journey and we pray their families are healthier, stronger, and more hopeful, knowing that someone cares.



Fremont St. Paul UWF

This was our 'World Thank Offering' meeting, and also assembling kits for the homeless.



Marina

Marina UWF held their Annual Holiday Faire in November. It was a very successful event that raised enough money to meet our goal to be able to give our 50% to Mission, while still supporting our annual contributions to local community philanthropies, such as the Thomas Carmen Food Pantry and, new this year, the Watsonville Law Center & Solidarity Network of Monterey County that provides direct services to immigrants in need.



Watsonville UWF Supports Local Tiny Homes Project

The Watsonville United Women in Faith have contributed to the Tiny Homes project built behind the Westview Presbyterian Church in Watsonville. Initially planned to house many left homeless after the Pajaro River flood, it will provide housing for up to 34 people. The village will be a closed campus and have 24-hour security. It will offer a wide range of services such as on-site case management, medical and mental health services and housing navigation.



Our group contributed what we could from our treasury and supplemented it with additional individual contributions from our members. Pastor Hoffman of Westview says the first occupants will move in on January 6, 2026, then more gradually in the following months.

El Camino Real District UWF Annual Celebration 2026

The Annual Celebration for next year will be at St. Paul UMC, Fremont.

Mission u 2026 in Willow Glen UMC

A one-day Mission u event will occur at Willow Glen UMC on Saturday, June 13, 2026. Mark your calendar!

UWF National Assembly 2026

The United Women in Faith National Assembly 2026 will be held in Indianapolis, Indiana, from May 15-17, 2026. The theme is “Dream it! Believe it! Do It!” and keynote speakers will be Stacey Abrams and her mother, Rev. Carolyn Abrams. Registration is open on the United Women in Faith website.

[Registration Now Open for United Women in Faith’s Assembly 2026 | United Women in Faith](#)

Scholarship information, please contact Pamela Fuhrman, <https://canvuwf.org/contact-vice-president>

Coming Events

January 10 - Palestinian Conversation at Asbury UMC 10:00 am to 1 p.m.

February 7 - ECRD Connect and Learn on Zoom 9:00 - 12:00, registration information available soon.

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May 15-17, 2026 UWF National Assembly

June 13, 2026 Mission u Willow Glen UMC

ECRD UWF Calendar

The ECRD UWF Calendar is now functional. If you would like to add your upcoming events to our calendar, please check out our new website.

[El Camino Real District United Women of Faith Calendar | El Camino Real District United Women of Faith](#)

Please send any announcements for any upcoming events to:

joyce.wilkinsonuwf@gmail.com

Acknowledgements

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

Joyce & Leslie

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