



United Women in Faith  
El Camino Real District Newsletter

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March Q1 2026 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 Q2 2026 will be Monday, June 16, 2026.

## President's Message



Message from the President:

I am so grateful.

That is my thought for today. There are a lot of things that are going wrong but I am still grateful to God for all my blessings.

I am grateful for you. For the friendships I have made. For your dedication to helping others. For your perseverance in the face of great obstacles and personal trials: finances, health, politics, and family. I am still grateful.

I am grateful for my church. They are extended family to me. I am thankful for their support. For their confidence in me. For giving me opportunities for service that I could not do alone.

I am grateful for my retirement. What a luxury to not have to work and yet be able to live a good life. I am grateful for Medicare and the treatments I have received at little or no cost. If born in a third world country I would be dead.

I am grateful for friends. I have made so many friends since I moved to San Jose. K Stone, who invited me into United Methodist Women. For Deb St. Julian, who invited me to join Showing Up for Racial Justice. For my ECRD team, who supports me when I have an idea. Without all of these, I could be lonely. Who could be lonely with so much to do? So many people to meet? So many causes to support?

I am grateful for The United Methodist Church. It takes on the big issues of our times and speaks out against injustice. I am grateful for UMCOR, Church and Society, Board of Global Missions. I am grateful for all the amazing missionaries I have met on mission trips, spreading the love of God to all people.

And last but not least, I am grateful for United Women in Faith. I love this organization because of the opportunities it offers spiritual growth, education on issues, actions we can take, leadership training and fellowship with others. What other organization can say the same for more than 150 years?

We are coming up on UWF Day of Giving. Please consider a special gift to Missions or to the Legacy Fund on March 23rd . It will help guarantee that UWF will continue to support women, children and youth who are experiencing hardships, need education or medical help. I will be giving on that day. I hope you will, too.

Sincerely,

Debbie,

*Debbie Ow*

*President*

*ECRD United Women in Faith*

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## Treasurer Report - Carolyn Bircher

I have only received one remittance for UWF missions this quarter. If you have mission money to send, please get it to me by April 4 so I can include it with our district quarterly remittance to the conference UWF.

Please, continue to make remittance checks payable to "ECRD UMW". The remittance form can be found at <https://elcaminoalumw.org/treasurer-information/>

The address for sending in remittances is:

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

### **PLEDGE ACCOUNT**

Remittances received (Jan-Mar)	\$1,520.00
4th qtr. Remittances sent to conference	<u>-\$19,996.20</u>
March 16, 2026 account balance	\$ 1,549.69

### **ADMINISTRATIVE ACCOUNT**

Connect & Learn expenses	\$ 200.00
Jan-Mar Communication expenses	<u>-\$ 99.00</u>
March 16, 2026 account balance	\$ 563.43

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 operation.

If you have questions, please email [treasurer@ecrduwf.org](mailto:treasurer@ecrduwf.org)

*Carolyn Bircher*

*ECRD Treasurer*

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### **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](mailto:president@ecrduwf.org)

[communication@ecrduwf.org](mailto:communication@ecrduwf.org)

[treasurer@ecrduwf.org](mailto:treasurer@ecrduwf.org)

[webmaster@ecrduwf.org](mailto:webmaster@ecrduwf.org)

If you have the old "[elcaminorealumw.org](mailto: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.

## Showing Up for Racial Justice Campaign Update March 2026

The latest campaign has been related to the license plate readers that have been placed by the County of Santa Clara and the city of San Jose. These devices are sold by the Flock Company. The data from these cameras has been accessed by governmental agencies outside of California including ICE. SURJ speakers advocated for the removal of such cameras, discontinuing contracts with Flock as they had been violated, or the adoption of additional guardrails to prevent unauthorized use by agencies outside the county.

Results: Santa Clara County voted to discontinue the use of such cameras as they are an invasion of privacy. The County provides policing services to several cities in the county who do not have police departments. Mountain View, Santa Cruz, Los Altos Hills, and some other cities had already discontinued the use of such cameras. San Jose voted to adopt more stringent guardrails including keeping data for only 10 days instead of 1 year, requiring warrants before access will be granted stating the purpose of the search, and auditing for unauthorized use on a regular basis. The vote was unanimous.

## Vonner at Willow Glen UWF



Sally Vonner, General Secretary and Executive Director of United Women in Faith, visited Willow Glen United Methodist Church in San Jose. She was attending the Super Bowl with her sister and stopped by to say hello. Pictured with her are Janet Ehrke, UWF unit President, and Debbie Ow, ECRD UWF President.

## ECRD Connect & Learn Event - “Your Mission Dollars at Work”

On Saturday, February 7, the women of El Camino Real District gathered online for a wonderful “Connect & Learn” event.

Our presenters were Gloria Tan, executive director of Gum Moon women’s residence in San Francisco, and Tanquiesha Kairy, executive director of Mary Elizabeth Inn women’s residence. These residences are two of the more than eighty National Mission Institutions sponsored by United Women in Faith. Both women told about the life-changing work being done at these residences and had prepared slides and videos that made their presentations come to life.

It was heartwarming to hear about all of the wrap-around support services that both Gum Moon and Mary Elizabeth Inn provide for their residents, and also how they work around the services that they cannot afford to do.

Gum Moon does not provide meals for their residents but does have kitchens so the women can cook for themselves. Gum Moon does not have a preschool for the children ages 5 & younger. Rather than hire qualified preschool teachers, they have activities for parents and children to do together. The parents are providing the child care but they are also learning alongside their children.

However, when the San Francisco teachers went on strike for ten days in February, Gum Moon immediately offered daycare from 9 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., lunch included, so that the parents could continue to go to their jobs. (They would ordinarily have provided only after-school care from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.) With Chinese New Year about to start, they had also prepared 120 grocery bags for the residents and for the neighborhood to make the celebrations festive.

In addition, Gum Moon has satellite Asian centers that do not include housing and are located in Richmond and in the Sunset.

Mary Elizabeth Inn provides breakfast only but has the two communal kitchens where the women can prepare their own meals. But there is a meals program for women who absolutely cannot shop or cook for themselves. There is a shared laundry room where the original 100-year-old ironing boards are still being used. The facility has a computer resource center where residents can have video doctor visits, can connect with family, and can look for work. There are activities such as bingo, knitting, doll making, and painting. The front desk is staffed 24 hours a day. Mary Elizabeth Inn has some empty rooms and is thinking of ways to rent those rooms to women who would not otherwise qualify to be their clients.

Women from El Camino Real District are planning to visit both of these residences on Saturday, April 18, and would like to take gifts to the residents, so both of our guest speakers offered

suggestions. The women would welcome new socks, care packages, bed linens and quilts for single beds, and cooking utensils for their little kitchens.

Three additional speakers spoke next.

Our conference president Linda Wright brought a ton of information, as well as lots of enthusiasm for the coming year. The scholarships for Assembly are such good news. The idea of having an arts & crafts auction at Assembly is brilliant ! Attendees will feel that they are giving something really valuable instead of only taking away what they've learned, and making those crafts will be a joy for them and not a chore. What could be better than that?

Our thanks to Carolyn Bircher for letting us know that the Legacy Endowment goal of \$60 million is within reach. The amount raised by last August was \$51 million !!!

Rev. Quentisha Davis Wiles from Sacramento's St. Mark's UMC showed a poignant video about the dear little church and school in Mondema, Sierra Leone. She and the people of St. Mark's are working with (not for) the people there. Sierra Leone can be very hot in the summer. St. Mark's hopes to replace the metal zinc roofs on those buildings in Sierra Leone and put up solar panels so that those very hot rooms can be air conditioned.

The June 13th Mission u event at San Jose's Willow Glen UMC will be a beauty. Micheal Pope is Conference Lay Leader and she has the biggest heart and biggest smile in the entire state. Those who have attended retreats she has hosted know that she has much to offer. Aton Abril is a District Lay Leader with a wonderful personality . Women, men, teens, and children will absolutely love both of these Mission u leaders.

Written by Bonnie Home, Growing Hope UMC (formerly Almaden Hills UMC & Cambrian Park UMC)

## St. Paul Fremont UWF Interfaith Iftar Dinner - Healing the World

Methodists and Muslims join forces; this started in 1986. Islamic and Christian leaders first met while bidding for the property owned by the City of Fremont. At this time Rev Ardith Allread was leading the congregation known as St Paul United Methodist Church. "Long before I was here, this congregation has been open to inter-faith dialogue," said Allread, "We have become more aware of our common heritage with the Muslims and of the need for a witness that people of different faiths and cultures cannot only work together but live together." Nithal Kahn, former president of the Islamic Society of the East Bay, agreed. "This will give an opportunity to ease misconceptions between two groups of

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people.” he said, We met at the time of bidding. All the people decided, “Hey, it’s a great idea and we want to set an example for the world.”



Over the years we have enjoyed many good and rewarding times. The United Methodist Women (as we were called then) have enjoyed luncheons together with the Ladies of the Islamic Society. We also have combined Ice Cream Socials for a local charity. Shamsa and I also together work on the International Day of Peace every year, Sept 21st. So, it was no surprise when the Tri-city Interfaith Council came to us three years ago for our first Interfaith Iftar Dinner. Of course, we said yes.

Shamsa and I read the Land Acknowledgment together standing outside by the Peace Pole. I would like to share one part with you.

“As we gather during the sacred month of Ramadan, a time of reflection, self-purification, and renewed commitment to justice, we recognize that the struggle against displacement and oppression is not confined to history—it is ongoing. Just as Indigenous peoples here fight for recognition and sovereignty, communities across the world continue to resist colonialism, occupation, and exploitation.”



The best way to describe the meaning of the evening is to hear from the audience.

Earl McDonald, a member of St Paul UMC; “I believe that participating in the Iftar Break of Fast event is a way of following Jesus by gathering with Muslims and others of varied faith communities where together we can thrive in promoting peace that will help to heal the world.”

Rev Anne Choy, former Pastor of St Paul; “It was inspiring to be with old friends and new friends gathering across faith groups in this time of tension and differences in our country. I am so glad that St. Paul continues to support our neighbors and community for peace and connection as followers of Jesus.”

Pastor Bong Simon retired and is currently a Chaplain; “The interfaith gathering reminded me that beyond barriers and labels, we are all humans sharing this world we call home and we share together both struggles and joys. No one religion or faith has a monopoly of the truth. We all come with humility as we approach the holy.”

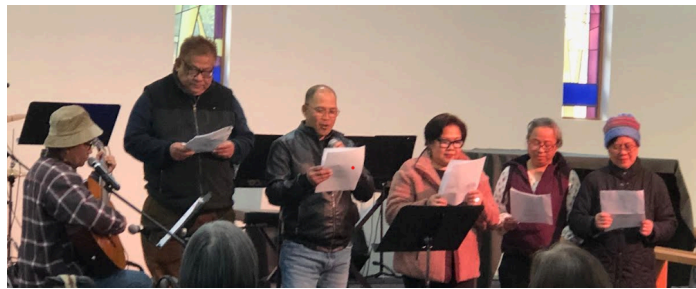


Shamsa Rafay, a member of the Islamic Society; “It was the beauty of humanity where we Muslims were welcomed in the church to break our fast and with us Muslims bringing a meal to share with our Christian and other faiths neighbors.

From hearing different faith leaders about fasting - I could see so many similarities that made me wonder if we could all hear each other more we will appreciate our differences and build lifelong relationships as you (Cheryl) and I have.”

Enes Bilgin, member of the Tri City Interfaith Council; “St. Paul United Methodist Church opens its doors, and our communities come together — not despite our differences, but because of what we share. The Peace Pole outside tells the same story. Peace is not the absence of conflict — it is the presence of relationships. Tonight, we are building that peace together.”

Healing the World was not only the theme of this event but also the theme of The United



Methodist Church this year. The song in the Methodist hymnal, “For the Healing of the Nations,” was sung at the event by our group, “Friends of Harmony”. We are getting ready to set a date for next year’s event. I am looking forward to this and many more.

Cheryl Harmon, President  
of St Paul Fremont, UWF

## Climate Change Event - “Climate Change, Climate Justice, Climate Action” by Sharon Delgado

On Saturday, March 14, El Camino Real District women plus women from Grand Junction, Colorado, from Tucson, Arizona, and from Nevada City, California, spent a morning on Zoom with climate expert Rev. Sharon Delgado. Sharon began by reading Psalm 69, which includes these words – “Save me, O God, for the waters have come up to my neck.” That is the cry of many around the world.

Sharon reminded us that climate change affects the economy, causes animals to suffer, and forces immigration as people leave their homelands where it has become impossible to live.

The countries that emit the least carbon dioxide into the atmosphere are the countries that suffer the most.

“Fridays For Future” is a youth-led movement that began in August 2018, after 15-year-old Greta Thunberg and other young activists sat in front of the Swedish parliament every school day for three weeks, to protest the lack of action on the climate crisis. She posted what she was doing on Instagram and Twitter and it soon went viral.

Rather than despairing over climate change, we can remember the quote, “I am glad we are alive at this time when the earth needs us most.”

Sharon recommends the 21 books written by environmentalist Bill McKibben, founder of “Third Act” which is a community of Americans over the age of sixty determined to change the world for the better. Bill points out that installing solar panels saves people piles of money.

Our Methodist founder, John Wesley, wrote that God is the soul of the universe. To frame our United Women in Faith activities, we can use the Wesleyan Quadrilateral – (1) Scripture, (2) Tradition, (3) Reason, and (4) Experience. Sharon urges us to take our worries about the world to God in prayer.

Sharon posed three questions for us to discuss in the Zoom break-out rooms –

- 1) Did anything in Sharon Delgado’s talk surprise you?
- 2) What action step will you take next?
- 3) How does your faith help you in fighting climate change?

Sharon closed her talk with two posters, encouraging us to install solar panels –

“God put a huge nuclear reactor in the sky.”

“Sunlight doesn’t travel through the Strait of Hormuz.”

~ Bonnie Home, Growing Hope UMC

A copy of the March 14, 2026 presentation, "Climate Change, Climate Justice, Climate Action" by Sharon Delgado is available on our ECRD UWF website or you can use the link below.

YouTube video link: [https://youtu.be/\\_p-Dt-r2jvYYo](https://youtu.be/_p-Dt-r2jvYYo)

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## St. Paul’s San Jose UWF - Coming Events

Sunday, May 17, 1:00 pm, South Bay CROP Hunger Walk

Gathering at Growing Hope UMC, 1200 Blossom Hill Road, San Jose, CA 95118

CROP Walk is a fundraising program of Church World Service (CWS), an organization that serves people around the world with food, shelter, emergency response supplies and more. Faith communities across CA and the nation join together to walk and raise money to end hunger, locally and globally. [Click here for more information.](#)

Saturday, May 16, 1:00 - 3:00 pm, St. Paul’s UWF, 435 S. 10 th St., San Jose, CA 95112

You are invited to join us for lunch and a program on Palestine. We will hear from people who have visited the West Bank recently and from representatives of the Jewish community in the Bay Area with the goal of creating deeper understanding and identifying opportunities to respond with love in action.

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## Fieldtrip to Gum Moon and Mary Elizabeth Inn

Save the date, Saturday, April 18, if you would like to join us to tour these two UWF supported Mission projects in San Francisco. We will take public transportation and have lunch together. This is an all-day event. We will meet at Diridon Caltrain Station in San Jose at 7:30 am and return in the late afternoon. You should bring a Clipper card or have the Clipper app. on your phone. The total transportation cost will be about \$25 (less if you have a senior Clipper card). This trip will involve several blocks of walking, so may not be accessible for those with mobility challenges. If you plan to join us, please sign up at [Registration is now open](#) or on our ECRD website.

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## 2026 Resources

Youtube link to Voices from the Field

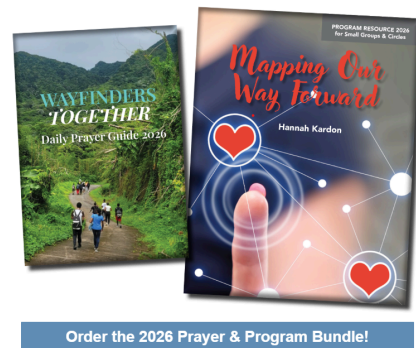
[Voices from the Field - YouTube](#)

Social Action Campaign Resources

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

UWF 2026 Prayer Guide & Resources

[United Women in Faith - Shop](#)



## ECRD Officers

**President:** Debbie Ow (SJ - Willow Glen)  
[president@ecrduwf.org](mailto:president@ecrduwf.org)

**Secretary:** Cheryl Harmon (Fremont - St. Paul)

**Treasurer:** Carolyn Bircher (Cupertino - Good Samaritan)  
[treasurer@ecrduwf.org](mailto:treasurer@ecrduwf.org)

**Communication:** Joyce Wilkinson (Marina)  
[communication@ecrduwf.org](mailto: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)

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## 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.*

### Wesly UWF - poem

#### Just Bring a Cup for Coffee or Tea

Good stewards of earth we are called to be. That's all of us, yes, you and me.  
Just bring a cup for coffee or tea.

The landfills are full as we can all see. Let's lower cost and save a tree.  
Just bring a cup for coffee or tea.

What's the plan and how do we start?  
Use your head and follow your heart.  
Just bring a cup for coffee or tea.

We can do this, yes, we can!  
It's up to us, each woman and man.  
Just bring a cup for coffee or tea.

Mary Horio [rev 6/21]

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## Marina



Marina UMC's Pastor Ki Sung Kim had a launch of his book, "Be Strong and Very Courageous," on February 28. The book is an autobiography of his life, a very inspiring story of adventure, faith, radical commitment, and Jesus. From 1987-1992, he smuggled thousands of Bibles into Communist countries in Asia and Europe, and preached God's Word.

Each person attending the event received a free copy of the book. In addition, Pastor Kim donated all the donations to MUWF to aid with our mission projects.



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## Save the Date - Ca-Nv UWF Zoom Event: “A Time for Action - Implementing the Charter for Racial Justice”



The Social Action team of the Ca-Nv UWF are hosting a Zoom event on May 9, 10:00-12:00. Has your unit had problems with implementing the Charter for Racial Justice? Come and learn about Social Action, what Advocacy looks like, and be introduced to the new form that will help your units reflect on racial justice and activities you can do. Registration information will be available soon.

## El Camino Real District UWF Annual Celebration 2026

The Annual Celebration for this September will be at St. Paul UMC, Fremont. More information will be coming.

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### 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!

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### 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>

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### Coming Events

April 18 - Gum Noon and Mary Elizabeth Inn Field Trip

May 9 - Ca-Nv UWF Social Action Zoom Event: “A Time for Action - Implementing the Charter for Racial Justice”

May 15-17, 2026 UWF National Assembly

June 13, 2026 Mission u Willow Glen UMC

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## 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](mailto:joyce.wilkinsonuwf@gmail.com)

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## Acknowledgements

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

*Joyce & Leslie*

[joyce.wilkinsonuwf@gmail.com](mailto:joyce.wilkinsonuwf@gmail.com)

[lesliefisk1@gmail.com](mailto:lesliefisk1@gmail.com)