



United Women in Faith
El Camino Real District Newsletter

In this Issue:

[President's Message](#)
[Treasurer's Report](#)
[District Website](#)
[2026 Resources](#)
[Around the District](#)
[ECRD UWF Calendar](#)

June Q2 2026 Issue

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

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

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 Q3 2026 will be Tuesday, September 15, 2026.

President's Message



Message from the President:

What a great day it was! Mission u at Willow Glen was a great success, thanks to a lot of people who pitched in to help and to the nearly 100 who attended. Thanks especially to Janet Ehrke and members of Willow Glen UWF, my District Team, Tia Tapula, and the many Conference Team members who organized the event. And especially to our teacher, Micheal Pope.

The day was truly inspiring. Together we learned about how God worked through many women in the Bible: Shiphrah and Puah, Hagar, the Woman at the Well, and Esther. I would encourage everyone to re-read those stories and share them with others. We were challenged to listen for God calling us to “Dream it! Believe it! And Do It!” Together we can make a difference in the world.

Sincerely,
Debbie,

Debbie Ow
President
ECRD United Women in Faith

Treasurer Report - Carolyn Bircher

We are approaching the end of our fundraising year. Please send in your 2026 remittances for missions by the end of August. Thank you to all of the units that have been working so hard to raise funds for UWF missions. Remittance checks, payable to “ECRD UMW,” may be sent to:

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

Remittance form can be found at <https://ecrduwf.org/treasurer-information/>

I will send reminder emails to unit treasurers soon, showing your current progress towards becoming 5-star giving units. If you have questions, please don't hesitate to ask.

PLEDGE ACCOUNT (for contributions from the local units for missions, which are passed on to the conference [and then to National] UWF). The \$12,139 received this quarter will be sent to the conference treasurer this week.

Remittances received (Apr-June 17)	\$12,139.07
1st qtr. remittances sent to conference -	<u>\$ 3,022.98</u>
June 18, 2026 balance	\$12,168.82

ADMINISTRATIVE ACCOUNT (for ECR District UWF events and operations) Two \$200 donations were sent to Gum Moon and Mary Elizabeth Inn as a thank you to their directors for speaking at Connect and Learn.

Donation received	\$ 200.00
Connect & Learn expenses -	\$ 400.00
Mission u Scholarships -	\$ 125.00
Jan-June Communication expenses -	\$ 0.00
Interest received	<u>\$ 0.00</u>
June 18, 2026 balance	\$ 438.44

If you have questions, please email 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

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.

Social Action Update - Debbie Ow

SURJ has been busy these last few months. The major focus was on monitoring the sweep of the large homeless encampment in the "Jungle" in San Jose. Members came to the camp and assisted residents in packing and moving their belongings, distributing food, and acting as a liaison between the police and the residents. Most residents were placed in a new tiny home community in north San Jose. Many were happy to go there even though this location was not ideal for those who had jobs in other parts of the city. It was a difficult transition for many who had been living at the encampment for many months and had established a community with other residents. The sweep took over a month to clear out everyone and all the remnants of their homes.

SURJ members attended a City Council meeting on June 8th to voice concerns with the 2026-2027 budget. We advocated for increased funding for legal services for those in immigrant detention, and restoration of funding for the MLK library and the Older Adults Health and Wellness Grant Program. We were successful on all three of these items.

On June 15th members of Silicon Valley Allied for the Common Good (the organization that Tom Grubb spoke about in the Social Action Event held on May 9th) attended the Santa Clara Board of Supervisors meeting to ask that the County preserve funding for the county hospitals as much as possible. These hospitals service many residents who are on MediCal or do not have insurance. These services are vital to a huge number of residents and cutbacks would mean that many would go without medical care due the federal cutbacks. The State of California is stepping up to fill some of this gap in funding so we are hopeful that services will continue at current levels at least for the next year. I encourage you to subscribe to the newsletters of these two organizations to remain informed of opportunities to advocate for social justice.

Interfaith Power and Light Legislative Day at the Capital

IPL representatives met with Assemblymembers Irwin, Berman and Kalra and Senators Becker and Cortese. We received positive feedback for these bills.

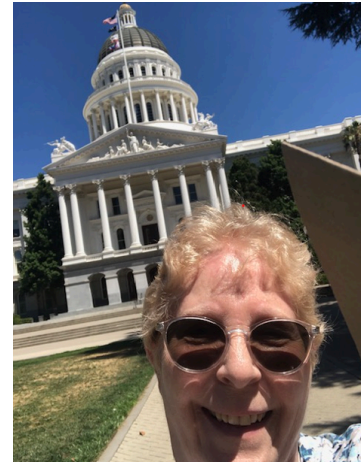
We advocated for SB 868 (balcony solar) which would streamline approvals and establish safety standards for portable solar energy devices.

SB 222 which would align heat pump permitting with other climate technologies and improve access.

AB 2461 which would close a loophole used by oil companies to avoid cleaning up spent oil wells.

AB 2313 which would give consumers the choice to electrify by requiring gas utilities to offer a voluntary incentive.

SB 954 which would modify SB 131 (CEQA) language to protect habitats and communities.



Dream It! Believe it! Do It! Being Unstoppable! The 2026 National UWF Assembly Themes - Terri Koike & Bev Acuna Wesley UMC, San Jose

The 2026 United Women in Faith (Quadrennial) Assembly was held in Indianapolis, Indiana, May 15-17th, 2026. It was filled with inspiring worship, powerful music, and the joy of gathering in a sisterhood connected in faith, justice, and purpose.



Those who attended heard the call to “put love into action so all people can have the abundant life promised by Jesus.” (Rev. Stephanie York Arnold)

We heard strong, inspiring speakers from all over the country. A few are listed below:

Sally Vonner: The General Secretary and CEO of the United Women in Faith. The 2nd black woman to lead the 150-year-old organization.

Jana Jones: The National President of the United Women in Faith.

Stacey Abrams: Brilliant politician, lawyer, author and voting rights activist.

Retired Rev. Carolyn Abrams: Mother of Stacey Abrams, successful church leader, founder of a UMC in Mississippi, serving as an inspiring positive role model for her children, valuing education

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and the importance of serving the community/society for the better. Taught her children by example, one being....”If you see someone is less fortunate, it is your job to serve that person.”

We attended many powerful workshops that deepened our reflection and renewed our connection in our faith. (advocacy & service)

Sally Vonner pointed out that these are sad times in America. The division, the hate, and the violence carried out under the guise of national security. It can all feel deeply discouraging.

The US government is cutting support for primary & secondary education, separating children from their migrant parents, imperiling rights for women and people of color, and reversing strides towards renewable energy. Federal cuts have also affected the UWF’s more than 80 Mission Institutions that serve women, children and youth. (Gum Moon & Mary Elizabeth Inn among them).



It was pointed out that even amid all these changes, the UWF continues to make a difference. They support crucial scholarships/grants here & abroad, cultivating women leaders who drive economic development around the world.

Vonner and the Assembly challenged us to invite others to join the UWF. Some 300,000 strong in the US, her goal is to reach 500,000 by 2029.



This will help the organization to better serve more women, children and youth. We are “Unstoppable!”

At the end of the 3-day Assembly, it was announced that the “Finish Line” dollar amount raised for the UWF totaled over \$300,000. (Their original goal was \$100,000.) \$179,560.69 was raised by the Legacy Fund Banquet.

On another interesting & alarming note, attendance to the National Assemblies has been decreasing. See the numbers below.

There were about 3000 attendees at this year’s 2026 Assembly.

In 2022, over 2000 attended and more than 1000 joined virtually in Orlando, FL (Covid times)

In 2018, 6,000 attended in Columbus, OH.

In 2014, 7,000 attended in Louisville, KY.

in 2010, 6,500-7000 attended in St. Louis, MO

In 2006, 8,000 attended in Anaheim, CA

In 2002, 8,500 attended in Philadelphia, PA

Assembly in Indianapolis, May 2026 - Debbie Ow

About 3000 women gathered for the UWF Assembly this year in Indianapolis. I was privileged to attend along with about 100 other women from the California-Nevada Conference UWF. We began with a Soul Care Retreat on Thursday that featured ways to care for yourself in the stressful days. We received a package of essential oils and many suggestions for how to tune in to God's calling. On Friday morning there was a Community Gathering that featured a message from our President, Sally Vonner. Later in the day we consecrated new Deaconesses and Home Missioners as well as attending several workshops. Other Community Gatherings occurred on Saturday with a Worship Service on Sunday morning. The featured speaker was Stacey Abrams and her mother, Rev. Carolyn Abrams. A panel discussion with these women was truly inspiring. Stacey also spoke at the Legacy Banquet held on Saturday evening along with many other women who shared their stories of courage. After Assembly was concluded, several of us from ECRD went to the Indianapolis 500 stadium and witnessed the time trials of the cars that would race the following week as well as the museum there. It was really noisy hearing those cars race around the track!

The next Assembly will be in 2030 in Richmond, Virginia. I would encourage everyone to plan on attending this event so please plan for it. I will be going for sure!

Fieldtrip to Gum Moon and Mary Elizabeth Inn - Carolyn Bircher

On April 18, 2026 ECRD UWF sponsored a fieldtrip to our two local ministries.

I wanted to share some of my takeaways while they're fresh in my mind and would be happy to hear your input, if you have additional comments.

Some ways that we can **continue to support** these wonderful mission institutions are:

- In-kind gifts of socks, toiletries and bedding for twin beds.
- Cash donations. Each website has a "giving" button, but it's best to send designated gifts to the district treasurer with your remittances, so our conference gets credit for supporting missions.
- Volunteer to cook a meal or plan a craft for one of the facilities. The women living there provide and cook their own food and always enjoy a special meal. Call ahead to arrange this beforehand.
- Pray, especially during April and May, as there will be difficult negotiations with the San Francisco mayor's office regarding future funding from the city.

Videos of the presentations done by the facility directors for our February Connect & Learn event are available on our website. <https://ecrduwf.org/connect-and-learn/>

I really appreciated those who stepped up to arrange Uber/Waymo rides. I need to get the apps and learn how to arrange those.

<https://uwfaith.org/latest-news/2026/march-april-response-mary-elizabeth-inn>

by Betty Dickey

A photograph of a table set up in a church sanctuary for a 'Create in Me a Green' event. The table is covered with a green cloth and holds various items including a globe, a small altar with a cross, candles, a bottle of vinegar, and a sign that reads 'create in me a green'. The background shows rows of church pews and a piano.

Next to them is a cardboard box with different sizes of home compostable bags to use instead of plastic ziplock bags. They are called **compostic bags** and are available in various sizes. They can be washed if you wish, and when thrown away they will compost quickly at home instead of taking

Other items are made of bamboo which grows much quicker than trees and is available in many stores or online now. **Bamboo** grows in 6 to 8 weeks, and is made into toilet paper, paper towels, napkins and paper plates. Bamboo is a much better choice than cutting down our forests which take 50 to 100 years to grow back.

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June 14 Mission u Experiences - “A Deep Knowing; Experiencing Emmanuel Through Every Part of Our Lives”

Attending Mission u for the first time was a meaningful and enriching experience. I learned so much about the women heroes of the Bible and the theme of “Emmanuel—God with us.” Learning alongside my sisters in faith deepened my understanding, strengthened my spiritual journey, and inspired me to continue growing in faith and service.

Charlotte Dimaya
Valley Faith unit treasurer



I entered Willow Glen UMC and was greeted with welcome smiles as I registered.
I was lifted as we were led and joined in singing hymns of praise!
I found joy in meeting new UWF sisters and laughing with familiar UWF sisters.
I engaged in meaningful and insightful small group discussions.
I literally sat and took in the outside warm weather while enjoying lunch.
I read, watched and heard beautiful Bible stories and words of *Emmanuel*.
I prayed with gratitude and renewal.
I drove home knowing that I had just spent precious time with our gracious and loving God.

- Mary Horio, Wesley San Jose

I loved Experiencing EMMANUEL AND Mission u! I was warmly greeted. I sat w/3 ladies & a guy @ breakfast. I'm glad the guy joined us amongst mainly ladies. After hearing many singing famous hymns, we heard a few speakers. I loved our speaker in Kohlstedt Hall. Her message was told w/scriptures. She also let people speak. Lunch was great, too. Two of us sat w/6 friendly women. Food was tasty & satisfying. I love crafts! So that was fun, too. In all, Experiencing EMMANUEL was an awesome event! Thank you for hosting! I look forward to attending other Mission u events.

- Joanna Kumano

It was such a joy to be with all the incredible women attending Mission u last Saturday, greeting old friends and making new ones! My heart was especially touched by a young woman at our table from San Francisco who shares the same name I grew up with of “Kathy.” It was her first

time attending Mission u, and she was soaking it all in, taking notes, purchasing books from program resources, and looking to learn and grow in the Word. Kathy Wallace's enthusiasm truly inspired me!

- Kat Teraji, Gilroy UWF Secretary

It was a wonderful experience to meet so many UWFaith members and leaders from our district and conference. I was fortunate to sit by Aton Abril, our El Camino Real district lay leader, and share in the study lead by Micheal Pope with him and others at our table-- the highlight of the day's event for me. While I had ordered the book after hearing about it at Assembly, I had no idea how I was going to use it at our church.

After attending the study session with Michael leading, I could see how wonderful the stories were, and how through the readings and discussion sections, we could replicate this either just in our unit, or church-wide as a Sunday School class or study group. The stories of strong women of the Bible and follow-up questions were interesting and engaging, and I am now excited about sharing this study with others!

Thank you, Mission U!

- Stephanie Mott

The book study was super. Very meaningful. The spirit of God sparked in all of us, openly sharing. The church was full of comforting, very quiet. Opened our hearts to sense the truthful study and meditation. "God is with us".

- Adi Magalanivesi-Nabou

Dear Mission u Willow Glen Team,

Thank you, thank you, thank you!

I've led music at many Mission u events over the years, but I realized this past Saturday that I had never actually attended any of the classes. Oh my, I didn't know what I was missing!

Micheal Pope is an amazing speaker, storyteller, and facilitator, and I was so grateful for the opportunity to learn from her as our study leader.

I am also deeply grateful for the wonderful hospitality of Willow Glen United Methodist Church. Bravo, friends! You truly embodied hospitality through your dedicated team and your partnership with the Conference Team in making this one-day event such a success. Thank you for creating such a welcoming, meaningful, and inspiring experience for all of us.

With gratitude and Blessings,

- JoAnne (Jo) Neish

Perspectives on Palestine

St. Paul's United Women in Faith planned and hosted a program presenting "Perspectives on Palestine" that are not commonly found in the media. The event was held in St. Paul's church tent. People from across the community, including other United Methodist churches, were welcomed. Palestinian treats, such as carob balls, stuffed dates, and lemon sage tea, made by Ellen Shaner, were enjoyed by all. Karen Parker was our emcee.



Our speakers included Charity Hanif, a Muslim woman who had recently travelled with a United Methodist group to Wadi Foquin in the West Bank; Dorah Rosen, a Jewish woman who is also a member of Jewish Voice for Peace, an anti-zionist organization; and Dina Saba, a Palestinian American woman who is an orthodox Christian and who has family in Palestine.

Wadi Foquin is in a verdant valley surrounded by expanding settlements. Charity Hanif showed photos of the encroaching settlements, and photos that showed how little of the olive orchards the people of Wadi Foquin could still access. She experienced the adverse effects of wide-spread surveillance and observed the disrespectful treatment of Palestinians at check points. 'Do no harm' is a tenet of the Jewish faith, said Dorah Rosen. She was taught as a young girl and a member of the Jewish community that all life is sacred and to be Jewish is to be called to make the world a better place (tikkun olam). What Israel is doing to Gaza and in the West Bank violates the Jewish faith. She emphatically stated that to be anti-zionist and to be anti-Israeli policies towards Gaza and the West Bank is not anti-semitic.



Dina Saba, whose dad survived the Nakba, that is the catastrophe where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were driven off their land, presented a history of the Palestinian's loss of land from 1947 to the present. She shared photos depicting the way of life of the Palestinian people and stories of loved ones who lost their lives peacefully resisting the occupation by Israel.

In 1997, Nelson Mandela said, “All of us need to do more in supporting the struggle of the people of Palestine for self-determination.” Sadly, Mandela’s statement is just as true today as it was nearly thirty years ago. The United States is the number one seller of munitions to Israel as well as other equipment, such as caterpillars and bulldozers, intelligence gathering technology and more that enables Israel to oppress the people of Palestine, denying them their basic human rights. Because we believe that all people are children of God, we are called to respond, to use our voices and our vote to demand our government use its power to bring Israel’s oppression of Palestinians to an end.

Our speakers suggested that we:

-
- Write our congressional legislators and ask them to support the “block the bombs” bill. [Click here](#) for information prepared by the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC);
 - Ask our legislators to work tirelessly to get US funding of UNRWA, the primary provider of humanitarian aid to Palestinians, restored;
 - Support organizations actively seeking to provide humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people, eg UNICEF, AFSC, Doctors without Borders;
 - Purchase Palestinian products, eg olive oil. Working together, we can bring shalom to the Holy Land. Israelis and Palestinians will live side by side and no one will be afraid. With God’s help, we can do it.

2026 Resources

Youtube link to Voices from the Field

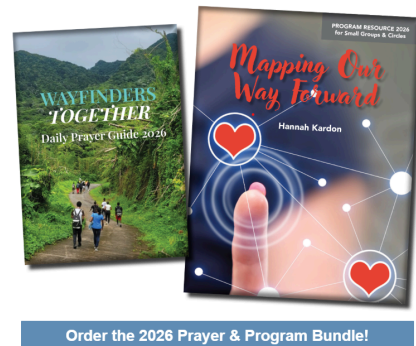
[Voices from the Field - YouTube](#)

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

Secretary: Cheryl Harmon (Fremont - St. Paul)

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

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

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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.

Watsonville UWF - Takes Tiny Home Tour



Recently the United Methodist Women contributed to the Tiny Homes project which has been installed at the Westview Presbyterian Church in Watsonville. On May 7 our group was offered a guided tour. The Westview Presbyterian Church is located one block from the Pajaro River. The homes house up to 32 people in the small rooms. They have concentrated on helping people who camp on the banks of the Pajaro River both the Santa Cruz side and the Monterey side. The Community Action Board has offices on the church property. They have provided security for these homes 24 hours a day. They prepare breakfast, lunch and dinner and various services, including healthcare, searching for jobs and permanent housing. The residents are chosen from a waiting list and began moving in last February. They started with around 6 people, adding a few every week or 10 days. They have room for 32 residents and they are currently full. The program allows them to stay around 6 to 8 months. Individuals may be asked to leave but so far it hasn't been a problem, according to Pastor Dan Hoffman. Our group was quite impressed with the project. It seems to go a long ways towards helping with the homeless problem.

Marina

On May 2, 2026, Marina UMC held the Annual Rummage Sale and Bake Sale. It was a successful community event with many new visitors and old friends.

Continuing our prayer shawl ministry, on Sunday, June 28, prayer shawls were presented to our retiring Pastor Ki Sung and his wife.



Plans for MUWF Annual Afternoon Tea are scheduled for Sept. 5.



Valley Faith -

Valley Faith United Methodist Church recently celebrated its 35th Founding Anniversary. The United Women in Faith contributed to the success of the celebration by participating in our beautiful Filipino heritage attire, honoring their culture while supporting this special milestone in the life of our prayerchurch. We also thank Aton Abril, ECRD lay leader, for his presence during this special milestone of our church.



El Camino Real District UWF Annual Celebration 2026

The Annual Celebration for this year will be on October 10 at St. Paul UMC, Fremont. More information will be coming soon.

California-Nevada UWF

Hello Dear UWF District:

We have some exciting events coming up across our Conference United Women in Faith, and we would greatly appreciate your help in sharing the attached flyers with your district members, local units, and churches.

Coming Soon:

Conference UWF Annual Celebration

Saturday, October 17, 2026 ~ 9:30 a.m. - 3 p.m. ~ Loomis 1st UMC

We are especially excited to welcome **Sally Vonner**, General Secretary and CEO of United Women in Faith, as our keynote speaker for the Annual Celebration.

For each event, you will find two flyer formats attached:

- A half-page version designed for bulletin inserts (print and cut in half)
- A full-page 8.5" x 11" flyer for bulletin boards, newsletters, and sharing electronically

We also encourage you to invite your members to stay connected with Conference UWF by joining our email list:

[Conference UWF Email List Sign-Up](#)

And be sure to visit our Conference website for upcoming events, resources, and news:

[California-Nevada Conference United Women in Faith Website](#)

Thank you for helping us spread the word and keep women connected across our Conference. Your partnership in communication and outreach is greatly appreciated!

Blessings,

- - - Jo

JoAnne (Jo) Neish

CANV Conference UWF

Webmaster, Marketing and Brand Ambassador

Coming Events

July 24-26, 2026 Mission u Oakhurst, ECCO Center

October 10 - ECRD UWF Annual Celebration, St. Paul UMC, Fremont

October 17 - Ca-Nv UWF Annual Celebration - Loomis 1st 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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