

PASS IT ON WITH PURPOSE

Winter 2026

Shenandoah River District United Women in Faith



United
Women
in Faith

SAVE THE DATE

January 29 - UM Day at VA
General Assembly, Richmond

March 7 – District Prayer
Breakfast (**NORTH**), 9 am
Braddock St. UMC, Winchester

March 25 – 1st Qtr. Remittances
due to District Treasurer

**Sometime in the 1st or 2nd
quarter** – District event on a
social issue

April 9 – District Executive
Committee Meeting, 7 pm
via Zoom

April 16 – Newsletter Deadline

April 17-19 – Conference Spiritual
Life Retreat, Holiday Inn,
Ruckersville, VA

May 15-17 – UWF National
Assembly, Indianapolis, IN

May 21 – Evening Together
(All Zones; (**SOUTH**), 7 pm, Asbury
UMC, Harrisonburg

FROM THE PRESIDENT

The article below was written by
Loretta Henderson, President of
the Northern Virginia District

UWF. I thought it was worth passing on to you and is quoted
here with permission. The words are powerful. Take them to
heart!



“We step into 2026 standing on legacy -- women who fought,
prayed, and paved the way. Some we lost along the journey,
but their fire still burns in us. We honor them by pressing
forward, louder, stronger, bolder.”

“It is always a pleasure to serve with this group of awesome
women! Together, we are proof that faith in action changes
lives.”

“This year, the mission is clear: build with courage, serve
with power, shine with no apology. But listen -- before you pour
out, you must be poured into. Rest. Renew. Refuel. Because a
weary vessel can't carry the Word.”

“And never forget -- prayer is our superpower. Prayer is our
foundation. Prayer is our force. Prayer is the fire that keeps us
moving forward in Christ.”

“When we are whole, and when we pray, the gospel moves
through us like thunder -- unstoppable, undeniable,
unshakable.”

“So, let's march into 2026 fierce, fearless, and faithful.”

The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.
James 5:16

And now a few words from me:

The **District Prayer Breakfast (NORTH)** will be Saturday, March 7, at 9 am at Braddock St. UMC in Winchester. Once all the little details are worked out, complete information will be emailed to everyone.

Mary Preston, District President

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FROM THE CO-VICE PRESIDENT (SOUTH)

As we start the new year, I'm keenly aware of how quickly 2025 came and went! But we, as faithful women of faith, will continue to move forward with enthusiasm and our sense of sisterhood. Our future efforts start with respect for each other, our ability to listen, our patience in our challenges, our shared skills and talents, and our gentleness. God's grace abounds in all that we do!



In our individual units, plans have been made, projects are probably started and once again, more opportunities than we ever expected will help others to see our love in action. As a part of this District, a calendar of events will offer more opportunities for information, fellowship and future outreach. I encourage you to gather as much as possible. Many have found the car trip to the past year's events, a great time to get to know each other! I will always have fond memories of our racial justice gatherings, our summer gathering at the Shenandoah County Park and the Christmas luncheon, to name several.

One of our upcoming opportunities to make a difference is to attend the UM Day at the VA General Assembly in Richmond on Jan. 29th. We can be a voice for the marginalized. The northern area district will host a Prayer Breakfast at Braddock St. UMC on March 7th, starting at 9am. A time of fellowship and joy! Later in May, the southern area of UWF will host "Evening Together" at Asbury UMC, Harrisonburg, starting at 7pm. Another time of fellowship and joy!

The VA UMC Annual Conference will be held in Harrisonburg this year at JMU. Our Conference UWF are busy making this a special time for all United Women of Faith. More details to follow.

As you can see, again much effort has been put forth to help you know that you are special, worthy, loved, and needed to be examples of Christ's love in action. May this be a good year for all of us. May we be intentional as we serve together! I close with a favorite poem by Howard Thurman: *The Work of Christmas*.

*When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flocks,
The work of Christmas begins:
To find the lost, To heal the broken,
To feed the hungry, To release the prisoner,
To rebuild the nations, To bring peace among the people,
To make music in the heart.*

Blessings to each of you,

Barbara Phillips, District Co-Vice President (SOUTH)

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FROM THE TREASURER

Greetings, All!

Here's information to start off 2026...

Pledge to Mission: Our 2025 pledge was \$45,000. With extra from the district, we ended the year at \$38,251.00 or 85%. Thanks to all units and individuals who give money for missions. No matter how small, it helps others' lives.

- The 2026 district pledge is \$40,000 – it's a more realistic goal that we should be able to meet this year!
- We'd like all Treasurers to meet with your unit soon and set a pledge amount for 2026. I'd love to have the pledges emailed or mailed by the end of March so we'll know what the district can really count on.
- The SRD administrative budget is \$4,475.

Remittances: The 1st quarterly remittance is due March 25. Mail it by that date or it won't make it into the Quarter remit to Conference. Please remember, it takes 2-3 days for mail to get from your mailbox to mine.

- The Administrative and Membership Development (A&MD) fee remains \$3.50 per member. If possible, please send this in with your first quarter remittance so we get off to a good start.

Legacy Fund: March 23 is UWF "Giving Tuesday." If you wish to send a donation directly to New York instead of through me, the address and instructions are on the UWF web page: <https://uwfaith.org/give/legacy-fund/>. Checks are received faster and you get the Legacy Fund recognition back directly.

Forms: The 2026 forms for unit Treasurers were provided in the unit President packets they received last fall. If any Treasurer needs the Remittance, Rainbow Giver, or SMR forms, please let me know--I can email them.

Reminder—Any unit that wishes to send a donation to a UWF mission project not listed on the remittance form needs to send those donations, including UMCOR, directly to that mission—do not send to the District Treasurer. If such a donation is included in your remittance, I will return the check to you to be reissued without such amount(s).

Patti Brown, District Treasurer

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SOCIAL ACTION

Every four years United Women in Faith identifies a specific focus for advocacy in addition to ongoing work on behalf of women, children and youth related to justice issues of gender, race, and poverty. The current justice campaigns are *Just Energy for All* and *Ending Mass Incarceration*. 2026 is the year to advocate in the following ways:



1. Share the good news of United Women in Faith with others in your church and community. Individuals are looking for ways to be in relationship and to make a difference where they live and beyond. Over coffee or lunch offer the opportunities of United Women in Faith to others that transcend partisanship and reach beyond institutions. Tell your story and listen to theirs. If you haven't checked out the UWF website, here's the link:
<https://uwfaith.org/>
2. Continue to nurture your spiritual growth each day. The UWF Daily Prayer Guide, available in hard copy or digitally, provides guidance and information for the journey.
<https://uwfaith.org/resources/prayerguide/>
3. Include response magazine, available in hard copy or digitally, as a resource for inspiration and information. <https://uwfaith.org/resources/response-magazine/>
4. The UWF Reading Program provides extensive resources for inspiration and education:
<https://uwfaith.org/resources/reading-program/>
5. Become informed about UWF Creation Justice resources and choose one or two (out of many) as your focus and follow up with action links on the UWF website:
<https://uwfaith.org/what-we-do/serve-and-advocate/just-energy-4-all/>
Note: Although the date has not been set, the 2026 SRD Social Action Retreat will focus on Creation Justice. Please consider joining the Planning Team for this event. Contact Laura Douglass, lauradouglass@vaumc.org, to share your vision on topics relevant to the Shenandoah River District.
6. Continue the journey to awareness and advocacy for Racial Justice with a greater focus on vulnerable youth who are incarcerated in facilities in the SRD:
<https://uwfaith.org/what-we-do/serve-and-advocate/mass-incarceration/>
Note: Follow up on ways of supporting locally incarcerated youth by joining the SRD Social Action subcommittee focusing on this opportunity.
7. Join with all across the Virginia Annual Conference to learn more about the challenges to our immigrant family neighbors related to social justice:
<https://vaumc.org/immigrantadvocacy/>

Laura Douglass, District Social Action Coordinator

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SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Hello Everyone,

I am your new Spiritual Growth Program Coordinator, Rita Biggs. I am honored to be a part of this nurturing sisterhood of women.

I hope everyone has received their copy of the 2026 Daily Prayer Guide, Wayfinders Together. It is filled with photos, stories, reflections, and prayers. There is also a 2026-2027 calendar and lectionary readings for each day. Included is information on all of our missionary personnel and places of service alongside daily reminders to pray for them and their work. The Prayer Guide is available at <https://uwfaith.org/resources/prayerguide/>.

Because of shipping costs, I would recommend joining with other members to order. Looking ahead, our **Conference Spiritual Life Retreat** will be held April 17-19 at the Holiday Inn in Ruckersville, VA. This will be a time away to nurture our minds, bodies, and spirits. Last year's retreat was wonderful but many of our members had difficulty navigating the stairs and hilly paths. This year we will be in the comfort of a hotel.

The theme for the retreat is "Healing" and our leader will be Leigh Ann Taylor with Laura Douglass leading the music. The retreat will start with dinner Friday night and continue through lunch on Sunday. Exact costs are not yet known, but there will be a fee for food and lodging. Scholarships will be available and persons not spending the night will receive a special rate. I hope many of you will be able to attend. I'll let you know more information as it becomes available.

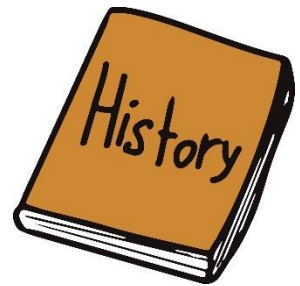
Rita Biggs, District Spiritual Growth Coordinator

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HISTORIAN'S CORNER

American women have been taught the religious and social stereotypes of "what a lady should be" for several hundred years. "In the 19th century women emerged from the confines of home and pew to join in two world-shaking movements of their day – Protestant Christian missions and women's rights." In the 1800s women's missionary societies began forming for the purpose of raising funds for foreign and domestic missions.



"On a rainy night in March, 1869, Mrs. Clementine Butler and Mrs. Lois Parker, wives of Methodist missionaries to India, met with 8 women of the Boston area. They told how women in India were not allowed any contact with a man other than their husband and infant sons. The need for female doctors and teachers was urgent. After examining the constitution of the Congregational Women's Society that Mrs. Butler had thought to bring along, the 8 decided to meet the following week, inviting others. Although it rained again 26 women came. They

nominated officers, set dues of \$1 a year, and adopted their own constitution “for the purpose of engaging and uniting the efforts of the women of the Church in sending out and supporting female missionaries, native Christian teachers and Bible women in foreign lands.”

This upset the male officials of the Church who wanted the women to raise funds for mission work in India and maybe China. The men would do the administrative work. The women did not want to be an auxiliary; they wanted to be partners. A compromise was reached; the women would seek the counsel and approval of their work and they would not take collections in church meetings and assemblies. In September, 1869, the Women's Foreign Missionary Society sent out two missionaries – Isabella Thoburn, a teacher, and Clara Swain, a doctor.

The spirit of women's rights was a definite presence in the Women's Societies.

Old or young, interested women were talked into leading the society of their church. Elders and bishops frequently helped them. Husbands and preachers frequently fought the society. Women's missionary magazines were produced. Study programs were developed. Native evangelists and orphans were supported. “But the most convincing argument of all to the doubters was the decorum of their new partners in mission: the women still behaved like ladies.”

Quotes are from Conduct Becoming to a Woman by Elaine Magalis. Revised and Expanded Edition with new forward and program guide. The history of our organization will be continued in future newsletters. Stay tuned!

Janice Webb, District Historian (NORTH)

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EDUCATION & INTERPRETATION

New Year Greetings!

As we start the new year we think of resolutions, new beginnings, and renewal. As United Women of Faith we have our “Living Into Our Purpose” (LIOP) to guide us into the new year.

The LIOP form has been revised for 2026. There is now a place to set your unit's goals for the year on the first page. If your unit hasn't had a chance to set their goals or review this form, then now is a good time to do this.

Another way to start the new year and fulfill some of the items on LIOP is to use the Daily Prayer Guide. It is so important to pray for and support our missionaries, mission personnel, and mission institutions. These men and women dedicate their lives to service and represent us nationally and around the world. Did you know that snippets of information from the Daily Prayer Guide can be found on Facebook? Search *Daily Prayer Guide* on Facebook to find the mission personnel for whom to pray each day and daily scripture readings. *Response* magazine

is also a way to keep informed about the many activities of UWF. I hope these suggestions are things that you are able to use regularly in your units.

I'm sure your unit is already doing many other things listed in LIOP. Now is the time to take a look at your LIOP form and identify these. This year our Conference Education & Interpretation Coordinator, Angela Sokolowski, would like each unit to video one of the activities or projects that you are doing as you live into your purpose. Your video can be sent to her email address: sokolowski.angela@gmail.com. This will allow everyone to see and celebrate all the good work that is being accomplished during the year.

If there are questions or concerns about LIOP or making/submitting a video, please contact me.

Blessings to all,

Sharon Harold, District Education & Interpretation Coordinator

sharold714@aol.com

Home: 540-879-2270 or Cell: 540-246-4940

"May He give you the desire of your heart and make all your plans succeed."

Psalm 20:4 (NIV)

NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

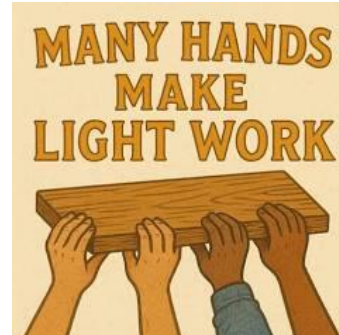
There are two vacant positions on the District UWF Executive Committee. Please prayerfully consider serving as **Co-Vice President (NORTH)** or a member of the **Nominations Committee**. United Women in Faith work together as a Sisterhood of Grace.

Debbie Creech

Chair, Nominations Committee

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OUR PURPOSE

We are a community of women whose purpose is to **know God** and to experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ; to **develop a creative, supportive fellowship**; and to **expand concepts of mission** through participation in the global ministries of the church.



PROGRAM RESOURCES

2026 Greetings!

We're nearly halfway through the 2025-26 UWF Reading Program year. I hope you've been steadily reading since last August.

The subject areas encompassing diverse genres in the four program plans include:

- Education for Mission
- Leadership Development
- Nurturing for Community
- Social Action
- Spiritual Growth

There are many good books on all program reading lists -- books that will help you look outward ... inward ... and make you think. One book on the 2026 list is The Women, a novel by Kristen Hannah (Nurture category). It's an epic coming of age story during a dangerous time in American history. Read about the women who had tremendous courage and grit. You won't want to put it down!

Remember *Response* magazine and Faith Talks podcasts are also part of the Reading Program.

Keep a record of what you've read to report by August 31 and receive credit toward the Reading Plan Completion Requirements. Continue or even start your reading in 2026!

The UWF Reading Program for 2021 – 2026 may be downloaded as an Excel Spreadsheet: <https://uwfaith.org/resources/reading-program/>.

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