



United
Women
in Faith

UWF NEWS

February 2024
Volume 16, Issue 1

WE ARE UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH, 2024!

Don't Miss our March 9 Program!

Our first event of 2024 will be held on Saturday, March 9 in Friendship Center North. We'll begin at 9:30 a.m. with breakfast refreshments provided by the women of Sarah Circle, before hearing from our guest speaker, Karen Crawford Simms.

Ms. Simms is an experienced consultant, trainer, facilitator, and coach. She is the founding director of the Trauma & Resilience Initiative (TRI), a local non-profit organization that provides services and support to individuals and communities impacted by adversity and violence while advocating for justice and equity for all. At our March 9 meeting, her topic will be "Racial Trauma."

As you recall, about a year ago, we set out to find ways to educate ourselves about the effects of racism on individuals, families and communities. We formed a sub-committee on Racial Transformation, presently chaired by Pam Burnside. Our guiding principle has been that racism is a rejection of the teachings of Jesus Christ. We thank the Racial Transformation committee for organizing today's program.

We are excited to have Karen Crawford Simms as our guest speaker on March 9. Please join us and bring a friend!

World Day of Prayer on March 1

International World Day of Prayer is celebrated on the first Friday of March each year to encourage Christian women to engage in personal and communal prayer.

This year's theme is "I Beg You... Bear With One Another in Love," from Paul's letter to the church in Ephesus (Ephesians 4:1-3). The program was written



by a group of ecumenical Christian Palestinian women in response to the passage from Ephesians. Together, they reflected on this theme from the context of their suffering as Palestinian Christian women.

Their hope is to inspire other women around the world to bear with one another in love during troubled times. The branches of the olive tree behind the praying women are a symbol of peace.

World Day of Prayer 2024 will be held on Friday, March 1 at First Presbyterian Church of Urbana, 602 West Green Street. Refreshments will be served at 9:30 a.m. and the hour-long worship program will begin at 10 a.m.

The Plight of Palestinian Women A note from the Editor

I was a little shaken when I read that this year's World Day of Prayer program had been written by Christian Palestinian women. Like many of you, I've been following on TV the crisis in the Middle East, seeing Israel rain bombs down on Gaza. Palestinians, Jews and Muslims live in Gaza, but, because of the article above, I worried most about Palestinian women caught innocently in a devastating war.

The Palestine of today is not a sovereign state. For the most part, Palestinians live in the narrow piece of land called the Gaza Strip—the very place where attacks occur regularly. The answer to why this situation exists is too complicated for me to explain here.

I turned to **The United Nations Women** to find the most accurate information about the effect of the war on civilians in Gaza and on Palestinian women in particular. The report I found at unwomen.org, was dated January 19, 2024, not quite four months after the attack began. What follows are my notes taken from the article **Facts and figures: Women and girls during the war in Gaza**.

- Since the Israeli attacks began, hundreds of thousands of civilians in Gaza have spent months living under unbearable conditions, caught in the midst of a humanitarian catastrophe, where there is a growing risk of famine. Nearly 1 million women and girls have been displaced from their homes
- More than 24,620 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza, about 16,000 of whom were women or children. UNICEF has called Gaza the "most dangerous place to be a child"
- Around 70 per cent of people killed in Gaza are estimated to be women and children
- An estimated 10,000+ children have lost their fathers; more than 3,000 women have become widows
- More than 5,500 women in Gaza are pregnant, with little hope of sanitary medical assistance
- There are numerous accounts of unconscionable sexual violence having taken place in Gaza

After reading all of this information, and with a heart towards our Christian Palestinian sisters, I hope that many of you will join me in attending The International World Day of Prayer on March 1.

What Is Church Women United?

Church Women United (CWU) is a Christian ecumenical movement initiated and carried out by women in the United States and Puerto Rico. Founded in 1941, its purpose is to bring together women of diverse races, cultures and traditions in closer Christian fellowship, prayer, advocacy, and action for peace with justice in the world.



CWU engages millions of women representing twenty-six denominations. Bernie Chamberlain is our representative to the local chapter of Church Women United.

Iroquois River Dist. Is No More

The Great Rivers Conference of the United Methodist Church has undergone a reorganization process and a new map has been drawn. We are now in the East District, shown in red. The Iroquois River and Embarrass River Districts have merged, with offices located in Champaign.



Our Pledge to Missions for 2024

As the United Women of Faith of Champaign FUMC, we make an annual pledge to the East District to support the mission work of UWF. For the current year our unit has pledged \$3015.

We will also support Cunningham Children's Home, the Festival of Quilts, Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House, and Church Women United. In addition, we have budgeted money for the purchase of books for our library. Our total budget for 2024 is \$4660.00. (See p.5 of the Yearbook for details.)

**We believe
love in
action
can change
the world**

Each of us, as members of United Women in Faith, is expected to make a personal pledge of any amount to meet the financial obligations of our unit. The dollars pledged by

each of us reduces the need to undertake time-consuming fundraising projects. Fewer cookies to bake. Less soup to stir.

Pledge services are held annually in our Circle meetings. Sarah Circle held its service in January. Dorcas Circle will conduct its pledge service at its March 13 meeting.

*Mission giving is truly
Love in Action!*

Fundraising under Review

The Executive Board decided to review our recent fundraising efforts. It was agreed to take a break from the October Sunday Markets we've held for the past few years. It was also agreed that we needed to begin early in the year. And so, we decided to hold a Palm Sunday Bake Sale, as we've done so successfully in years past!

Palm Sunday Bake Sale!

Palm Sunday is on March 24 this year, so start searching your files for springtime recipes—pies, coffeecakes, tarts, breads using blueberries, strawberries, raspberries; frosted or sprinkled Easter cookies; lemon-poppyseed muffins; small cakes decorated with jelly-beans or pink sprinkles.



We'd like to make this bake sale a joyful celebration of Palm Sunday and Easter Sunday to come, so please help if you can. Look for a sign-up table in Friendship Center on March 10 and 17. If you are unable to bake or to attend church on that day, please consider making a monetary donation in the amount you would have spent to bake or to purchase a strawberry pie or a loaf or two of blueberry bread.

Remember that all proceeds support the mission work of United Women in Faith.

A Change in UWF Leadership

We regret to announce that Karen Wood has resigned her position as President of our unit. We are grateful to Karen for her creative and dedicated leadership since 2021.

For the current year, Vice-President Terry Benson will keep us on track and moving forward by presiding at Executive Board meetings in her role as Acting President. Terry led the fundraising discussion and did indeed keep us on track as we brainstormed ideas. Thank you, Terry, for graciously stepping into this leadership role.

The Nominations Committee will be seeking candidates for President of UWF when they meet this summer.

February is Yearbook Time!



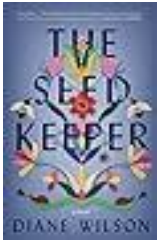
The 2024 UWF Yearbooks are ready! The cover of this year's edition is neon pink. Inside you will find a membership directory,

schedules for Circles, Executive Board, and special events; our budget, a list of our officers, contact information for our members, and other useful information.

Many thanks to Sharon Johnson for her meticulous work in producing and publishing the yearbook; and to Bonnie Berner and Terry Benson for proofreading. Yearbooks will be available at Circle meetings and at our March 9 breakfast gathering.

2024 UWF Books on the Shelves

Stop by the church library, take a look, and check them out. You are certain to find a few that will interest you. Keep track of the titles of the books you read and the category assigned to it (*e.g.*, Spiritual Growth). Sharon Johnson reports that she's reading The Seed Keeper, a novel in the



Nurturing for Community category. Other novels in our 2024 collection include Land of Silence by Tessa Alavar and How Beautiful We Were, by Imbolo Mbue. We'll have more information about our Reading Program and will highlight a few titles in our next issue.

Announcing Our Goals for 2024

At our February Executive Board meeting, we reviewed our 2023 goals, and revised them slightly for the coming year. The final goal is new and represents an initiative begun about this time last year.

You'll find that the goals focus to a great extent on mission, service, education and participation. Embedded are specific actions that each of us as individuals can take as United Women in Faith. We believe that we've made progress in each of these areas. What do you think?

- ❖ Pray for United Methodist missionaries here and around the world at UWF Board Meetings and Special Program Meetings
- ❖ Request volunteers to pray for and communicate with persons/missionaries listed in the Daily Prayer Guide
- ❖ Encourage members to attend a district or conference meeting and share information in our newsletter and at our meetings
- ❖ Invite a district or conference officer to inform us about UWF activities at a Special Program meeting
- ❖ Use the UWF Program Book at a Special Program meeting
- ❖ Participate in activities related to a UWF mission priority issue by attending podcasts

or viewing a recorded session and sharing at the Special Program meeting

- ❖ Support local service programs that benefit women, children, or youth through Love Gifts or service opportunities
- ❖ Continue to invite and welcome women to attend Special Program and Circle meetings and to participate in UWF District/National projects and events
- ❖ Encourage participation in the UWF Reading Program
- ❖ *Continue to educate ourselves about the effects of racism on individuals, families and communities, following the precept that racism is a rejection of the teachings of Jesus Christ*

District salutes Sharon Johnson!

When Sharon Johnson attended the 2023 Fall Iroquois River District meeting, she had no idea that her name would be announced as District Woman in Mission of the Year! She tells us that she was completely surprised and that she thanks our unit's Executive Board for nominating her for this honor.

Here are just some of the reasons we nominated Sharon Johnson. She is a role model for sharing her gifts of time, talents and service to God. She serves as unit secretary and Program Resource Coordinator, produces the annual yearbook and assists with the publication of the newsletter.

Sharon has coordinated homemade soup for bazaars and Markets, faithfully attended district meetings, and participated in the Wrapped in His Love needlework group. She is an active member of Dorcas Circle and the Racial Transformation subcommittee.

There is no doubt that Sharon Johnson deserves recognition as Woman in Mission of the Year!

UWF Daily Prayer Guide 2024

The UWF Daily Prayer Guide informs us about what is happening in mission and encourages us to put our faith, hope and love into action—and into prayer. The focus for 2024 is “Let Us Break Bread Together.” Throughout the Guide, you’ll find messages from missionaries in the field, verses from Scripture, and prayers. We have a copy in our library, so take a look for yourself. To order a copy, visit umwmissionresources.org. The price is \$19.99.

You can also follow the daily readings and prayers by joining a community forum on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/dailyprayerguide/>

East Dist. UWF Gathering April 16

We always look forward to the annual Spring District UWF Gathering. This year the meeting will be held on **Tuesday**, April 16 from 9:15 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Effingham Centenary UMC, 203 E. Grove Ave. Effingham. (Road trip, anyone?) Watch this space as we learn more information about the theme, speakers, and registration process.

You may be surprised to see that the meeting is set for a Tuesday. We believe this represents a compromise with women from the Embarrass District who have always held their meetings on a Tuesday. The fall meeting will most likely be held on a Saturday.

CCH Quilt Festival, April 12-13

This is the 20th anniversary of the most important fundraiser for Cunningham Children’s Home. All proceeds benefit the children and youth of CCH. The event is held in the Spiritual Life Center at CCH. This is what the Quilt Festival has to offer:

- **Quilts for Sale** featuring hundreds of beautiful traditional and contemporary quilts
- **Quilt Show** with hand and machine quilted pieces

- **Centerpieces and Such** including centerpieces, wreaths, planters and more, available for purchase
- **Gift Shop** packed with donated handcrafted items
- **Bake Sale** with delicious homemade goodies and treats
- **Walking Tours** of the campus

Deadline for submitting items in the first four categories is Friday, March 22. Bake Sale items may be delivered on Friday and Saturday during the Festival.

Volunteers are needed! For questions about Festival or to volunteer, contact Brooke Buzard Watson at bbuzard@cunninghamhome.org or (217) 337-9073.

Contributors to this Issue

Carol Bond, Editor

Terry Benson, Assistant Editor

*Sharon Johnson, Associate Editor
and Circulation Manager*

Photo by Terry Benso



Sarah Circle women celebrate Christmas 2023

