



**THE PHOENIX**  
**UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH**  
**GREATER DETROIT DISTRICT**  
**SUMMER 2023 NEWSLETTER**



**Morning Prayer**

May today there be peace within.  
May you trust God that you are exactly where you are meant to be.  
May you not forget the infinite possibilities that are born of faith.  
May you use those gifts that you have received, and pass on the love that has been given to you.  
May you be confident knowing you are a child of God.  
Let this presence settle into your bones, and allow your soul the freedom to sing, dance,  
praise and love.  
It is there for each and every one of us.

*St. Therèse of Lisieux and St. Theresa of Avila*

**PRESIDENT**



Given all the changes internal and external ones, I often felt like a ball in a pin ball machine. I was confronted with health issues that required two surgeries. My son and his wife presented me with a wonderful granddaughter, the lovely Lydia. But they live in Texas. The United Methodist Women's new name, United Women in Faith is not rolling off my tongue easily. Even ahead of the General Conference, churches where I know people are leaving the United Methodist Church. The political and racial polarization keeps me awake at night. People that I thought liked me were okay taking away my right to vote and believed that we live in a color-blind society and others just wanted to go back 75 years where I might be scrubbing floors or picking cotton. Brrr... Ugh...Yuk...

But, and this is a big **BUT**, the words of the Lord spoken in Isaiah have been ringing through my head and heart. "Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?"

Health issues slowed me down. I had time to think about what is really important. How do I want to be remembered? I took time to not only smell the roses, but to call some friends to talk about roses and whatever was important in their lives. Connection matters most.

Yes, my lovely Lydia is in Texas, but there is Facebook portal, Facetime and relatively cheap flights on Southwest. We are staying connected. She has an 11x 16 canvas of grandma next to her toy box.

It is unfortunate that churches are leaving, and polarization seems wide on so many issues. I am focusing on what I as an individual can do. What problem can I tackle and who can I ally with to make a difference? When I am feeling overwhelmed by polarization and racism, I stop and pray and wait for the anxiety to pass. I speak my truth clearly and refuse to compromise my values.

The United Women of Faith's name change is not a new thing. We have had many name changes. So, I carry a sticky to say our name correctly. Zoom will allow us to stay connected with new units. I am glad that there are new membership opportunities where women can join and never attend a meeting. So what? They will do service and find ways to make positive changes in the lives of women, youth and children. It **is** the message and the work - not the medium.

Old programs not drawing enough participants? How can we do things better to engage more participation.

Working on the Soul Care pilot application reminded me that I have to nurture myself or I will have nothing to give. Turn off the TV and listen to Bach, Stevie and Sting. I am also leaning into Selah and Cynthia Clawson. Music renews. I have to reduce the carbs and eat more strawberries.

I used this column to write about my own anxieties and how I am managing them. I know that many who will get this newsletter are or were feeling some of these anxieties too.

Change is constant. But God is always doing a new thing. Perceive it!!!

**Jeanette Harris**

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## **TREASURER**

The GDD Annual Meeting is fast approaching and by the time you receive this newsletter, we will be in the middle of summer, and I hope you are enjoying it.

Mission Giving is down throughout the United States. The National UWF Office reported Mission Giving is down around 8% compared to last year. I am sure COVID has a great bearing on the change. I am guilty, myself, of not returning to the many numerous activities I participated in prior to COVID. Many Units have not returned to meeting or resumed to their fund-raising activities. Unfortunately, many of us are just aging, have medical issues or no longer drive. I have noticed a big difference in Mission Giving. Previously, I received numerous checks per month, compared to now one or two checks per month from the various churches. To give individually, you can always go online, by going to United Women in Faith, as another option. I personally use this method to donate to the Legacy Fund.

Our Annual District Meeting is still on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday in October. Therefore, if you give through the Five Star, I will need your donation by September 15<sup>th</sup> in order to include your name on the list for the program. Five Star Persons give in all 5 areas with a minimum donation of \$60. Many ladies support UWF but only give in one area, for example, Gift in Mission. Many ladies may have too many pins and do not want another. You can donate \$40 to SMR and not receive a pin or give a pin to someone. I recently read that the National Office is in the process of changing the cross on the pin to reflect the new emblem for UWF. I am uncertain when this change will occur.

United Women in Faith are making numerous changes by opening membership to everyone. The following changes have been made. "The Constitution and Bylaws found in the Handbook provide for the following (see page 5):"

1. Local non-United Methodist church units - women who are members of a church that was formerly a United Methodist church may organize a unit.
2. Charge or cluster unit - a unit may be formed by women from more than one church (including churches that have left the United Methodist Church).
3. District unit - a unit may be formed by women from different churches who choose to meet in locations others than a local church.
4. District member - a woman may become a district member if there is no active unit in her church.
5. Online member - a woman may become an online member if this option is offered by the local or district organization.

When sending checks, please do not write Treasurer, due to the new check scamming fraud. Make checks payable to Greater Detroit District UMW.

**Viola Jones**

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## CO-COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATORS

We would love to highlight the great work Women United in Faith units are doing – not only service projects but events, even if it is just getting together and sharing each other's company. Send what you are doing to Kris Miranne at [kristine.miranne1921@gmail.com](mailto:kristine.miranne1921@gmail.com) and we'll feature you in the next *Phoenix*. Photos are certainly welcome!

We include these websites in each issue of *The Phoenix* because we think they are valuable resources. These are websites you should bookmark in your "favorites" list. Be sure to visit them on a regular basis so you can keep up with the great work of United Women in Faith!

*National*

<https://uwfaith.org/>

*Michigan Conference United Women in Faith*

<https://www.umwmichiganconference.org/> Once you open the page, you can scroll down to the Greater Detroit District.

### Facebook Page

<https://www.facebook.com/pg/MichiganUMW/groups/>

### Reading Program

<https://uwfaith.org/resources/reading-program/>

### MIConnect

<http://news.michiganumc.org/>.

The new United Women in Faith Member Portal has now launched! This special section of the website is **for members only**: Find quick links to member resources, connect with other members, read stories of members and partners boldly putting love into action, and more. [Create your free account today](#).

There are additional ways to connect with United Women in Faith through podcasts:



#### Faith Talks:

Join in monthly conversations with United Women in Faith, hosted by Jennifer R Farmer. Each month, you will explore timely themes and resources, from expert insights on ways to live your faith to inspiring interviews with spiritual leaders. Visit our **Events Calendar** to join the live podcasts.



#### response Podcast

Tune in to audio versions of some of the top articles from each issue of **response** magazine, the award-winning official magazine of United Women in Faith. Topics cover everything from spiritual growth and living our faith to reports on local, national and international work. Go to <https://uwfaith.org/resources/podcasts/> to find how to subscribe.



## Voices from the Field Webinar

Come learn about the national and international initiatives that benefit from Mission Giving, directly through the voices “from the field.” In this interactive format, you’ll hear firsthand from program leaders about their work, daily challenges, hopes and dreams. Visit the **Events Calendar** to join the live podcasts.

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## MEET SALLY VONNER, OUR NEW GENERAL SECRETARY/CEO!



Ms. Vonner joined the organization’s national staff in 2010 as Assistant General Secretary of Membership and Leadership Development. With reorganization in 2018, she became the Transformation Officer, coordinating the organization’s visioning and strategic development to positively impact the lives of women, children, and youth. She oversaw an organizational rebranding that opened new ways for women to join, introduced program innovations and initiatives, and rolled out United Women in Faith as the new public-facing name.

“Sally is not just a woman who knows this organization but also a visionary who possesses a wealth of knowledge and experience,” said ‘Ainise ‘Isama’u, board president. “She is the kind of leader who understands where we’ve been, where we are, and where we need to go.”

Board Vice President Cynthia Rives said, “Sally’s grasp of the current strategic plan will enable her to lead United Women in Faith boldly as we live out our belief that love in action can change the world. Equally important, she brings stability in a time of change as she is well grounded in our organization, knowledgeable of our history, and today’s United Women in Faith.”

“My primary focus is to continue and expand the mission and reach of United Women in Faith as we put our love and faith in action to change the world, and work to improve the lives of women, children, and youth around the world,” Ms. Vonner said. “I commit to lead with faith and trust in God, the support of the directors, the Program Advisory Group, my colleagues, and most of all, the members of United Women in Faith.

“I look forward to connecting with members, soon to be members, and The United Methodist Church family in the weeks, months, and years to come. Get ready for the awesome future God has for us.”

The Texas native has served The United Methodist Church in several other capacities including women's retreat leader, and jurisdictional conference delegate and alternate in 2008, 2016, and 2020 representing the North Texas Annual Conference. Ms. Vonner was an organizer for the denomination's work on immigration assistance, community development initiatives, and dismantling racism work. She was commissioned as a U.S. missionary by the General Board of Global Ministries in 2000 to serve in the North Texas Annual Conference as the Communities of Shalom Coordinator. Ms. Vonner also served as the Associate Director of Connectional Ministries for the North Texas Annual Conference, 2005-2010.

Ms. Vonner serves on the boards of The Wesley campus ministry at her alma mater Texas A&M Commerce and is vice president of the New York Justice For Our Neighbors. She is a longtime member of Black Methodists for Church Renewal at the conference, jurisdiction, and national levels. She is also part of a women's leadership cohort with J.P. Morgan Chase's Community Development division, since 2021.

Ms. Vonner is a graduate of Perkins School of Theology with a M.Div. and Women's Studies Certification and Texas A&M Commerce with a B.S. in Biology.

A longtime member of First United Methodist Church of Grand Prairie, Texas, she regularly attends Teaneck United Methodist Church in New Jersey, where she is a member of the local United Women in Faith group. She is an active member of the Bergen County Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.

Ms. Vonner enjoys spending time with her adult children, Wesley and Lessie, reading, walking and traveling.

## READING RESOURCES PROGRAM

The Reading Program is a United Women in Faith tradition that brings together members in mission as they explore, share and discuss the written word. To participate, select one of the four plans and start reading! From captivating mysteries and heartfelt biographies to urgent messages about issues such as immigration, racism and mental healthcare, there's something for everyone. Reading Program books are divided into five categories: Education for Mission, Leadership Development, Nurturing for Community, Social Action, and Spiritual Growth. Books are available for people of all ages and reading levels. Books that are suitable for children or youth will be listed among the five categories; look for "Suitable for children" or "Suitable for youth" following book descriptions.

Find out more about the 2023 Reading Program by going to:

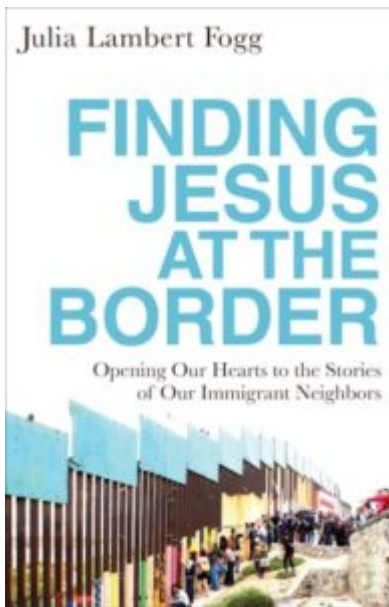
<https://uwfaith.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/ReadingProgramCatalog2023.pdf>

Selections can be from the 2018 to the 2023 reading lists. See lists for the previous years linked above or at the [UWF Reading Program page](#).

You can also receive Reading Program credit for listening to the Faith Talks podcast. Listening to at least two episodes of Faith Talks counts as the equivalent of one book. Listen to three Faith Talks podcasts and the trio will count as two books in the category Spiritual Growth.

Here are a couple reviews of 2023 books:





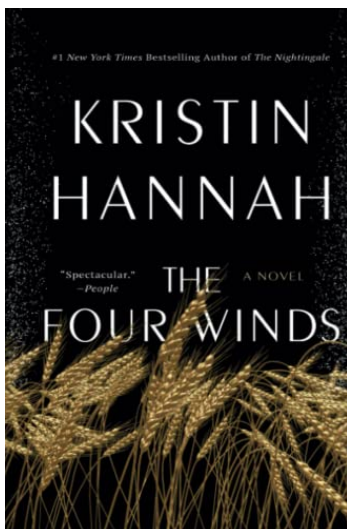
*Finding Jesus at the Border* by Julia Lambert Fogg. Our country continues to grapple with the complex issues of immigration. It is heart wrenching to consider life challenges so severe that they motivate people to leave everything they know in order to take a long, dangerous journey to a land that likely won't welcome them.

Julia Fogg is a pastor and New Testament scholar who has been serving immigrant families in Southern California for a number of years. In her book, "Finding Jesus at the Border," she devotes a chapter to each of these topics:

- Fleeing without Papers
- Border-wall mentalities
- Seeking Asylum at the US Border
- Various vantage points regarding borders
- Behind prison walls
- Standing before ICE

Fogg tells stories of people she's met who have faced these issues. Each story is juxtaposed with a Bible story. Seeing a Guatemalan mother next to Mary and Joseph fleeing to Egypt, or a father being held in an ICE facility next to Paul writing letters from prison, helped deepen empathy for new neighbors.

Fogg encourages us to step out of our comfort zones and cross social, ethnic and religious borders, just as Jesus did. The last chapter gives practical ideas for how we can help our new neighbors feel welcomed and secure.



*The Four Winds* by Kristin Hannah. Texas, 1921. A time of abundance. The Great War is over, the bounty of land is plentiful, and America is on the brink of a new and optimistic era. But for Elsa Wolcott, deemed too old to marry in a time when marriage is a woman's only option, the future seems bleak. Until the night she meets Rafe Martinelli and decides to change the direction of her life. With her reputation in ruin, there is only one respectful choice: marriage to a man she barely knows.

By 1934, the world has changed; millions are out of work and drought has devastated the Great Plains. Farmers are fighting to keep their land and their livelihoods as crops fail and water dries up and the earth cracks open. Dust storms roll relentlessly across the plains. Everything on the Martinelli farm is dying, including Elsa's tenuous marriage; each day is a desperate battle against nature and a fight to keep her children alive. In this uncertain and perilous time, Elsa – like so many of her neighbors – must make an agonizing choice. Should she fight for the land she loves or leave it behind and go west – to California – in search of a better life for her family. *The Four Winds* is a rich, sweeping novel that stunningly brings to life the Great Depression and the people who lived through it. A testament to hope, resilience, and the strength of

the human spirit to survive adversity, the book is a portrait of America and the American dream, as seen through the eyes of one indomitable woman whose courage and sacrifice will come to define a generation.

**“I call on the next generation of young women to be the mothers of the Compassionate Revolution that this century so desperately needs. You have a special role to play in creating a better world. It is often thought that women are more empathic and sensitive, and more receptive to the feelings of others. These are qualities that are embodied by mothers. In this sense, women are models of humanity.”**

**~ HH. 14TH DALAI LAMA**

## **ONGOING ADVOCACY**

Every four years, United Women in Faith identifies a specific focus of advocacy in addition to ongoing work for gender and racial justice and for oppressed and dispossessed communities, with special attention to the needs of women, children and youth. Current justice campaigns are Just Energy 4 All and Ending Mass Incarceration and Criminalization of Communities of Color. Some of you may remember that several years ago, our Greater Detroit District hosted a panel discussion on the School to Prison Pipeline that was well-attended. Certainly, an important topic that needs to be revisited! The following article by Emily Jones, Executive for Racial Justice at United Women in Faith, appeared in the response.

### **Dignity In Schools Campaign Is Committed To Ending School Pushout**

On Nov. 15, 2022, United Women in Faith hosted a workshop led by two women of faith who are pillars in the movement to end corporal punishment in schools: Janice Harper of Nollie Jenkins Family Center and Dianna Freelon-Foster.



Dianna Freelon-Foster (photo on the left) is a lifelong resident of Grenada County, Mississippi, who began her work of activism as a teenager in the 1966 Grenada County Freedom Movement. Janice Harper (photo below) is a community organizer and advocate at Nollie Jenkins Family Center in Durant, Mississippi, who has been organizing for more than a decade to eliminate corporal punishment and advocating for families and children with special needs. Both are leaders within the Mississippi Coalition to End Corporal Punishment. Their work—and the work of many other leaders who share the struggle with them daily—focuses on ending corporal punishment in public and charter schools in Mississippi and across the United States.

In 2018, the Nollie Jenkins Family Center won an end to corporal punishment in their own school district, but they continue to press on for a statewide end to the



practice, as well as leading the national charge for the Protecting Our Students in Schools Act, of 2021, which would achieve the end of corporal punishment on a federal level. This is work that furthers the well-being of all children and youth and that specifically addresses “the legacy of the lash,” an unfinished history which continues to haunt the American present. All women of faith should heed their call to action and join in the movement to end corporal punishment in schools. It is a matter of justice, and also a matter of grace.



Black children are rarely afforded the opportunity to be children. They are rarely given the grace that childhood deserves. Grace recognizes that all God’s children - age 6, 16, or 60 - are people in the process of formation, in the midst of becoming. Grace is especially vital to children and adolescents whose bodies and brains are changing at such a rapid rate that they are quite literally not the same people this month as they were last. Grace is the opposite of corporal punishment, juvenile incarceration, and the relentless expansion of zero-tolerance policies. Grace is vital to growth.

Our leaders and institutions know how to extend empathy and grace to some kids: We habitually afford grace to White children and adolescents. We wonder about the “why” of their actions without pathologizing the “who” of their persons. We assume that they will make mistakes, and we treat those mistakes as opportunities to learn. We give second, third, fourth and 44th chances. That is not bad. White kids and teens are growing and changing, and that’s not easy. They deserve our love and compassion. But Kids and Teens of Color are also growing and changing, and that’s not easy either. They, too, deserve our love and compassion. But it is rarely forthcoming. We simply do not provide the same grace margin to Children of Color that we do to White children. That is especially true for Black children.

Black children are routinely held to absurdly age-inappropriate standards and expected to perform to perfection as a means of survival. Even in death or serious harm, the media and others rush to blame Black children and Black people in general. And all Black children are vulnerable. The Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality detailed the “adultification bias,” finding that Black girls are perceived as older than they actually are and erroneously believed to be less in need of protection and nurturance.

Living under a veil of hyper-surveillance and racist suspicion starts early. The U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights has clearly documented that racial disparities in school discipline begin by preschool and persist throughout PreK-12. Recent qualitative research on Black boys’ early experiences paint a clear picture of anti-Black racism and educational harm from the outset. Both Kristin Henning’s *The Rage of Innocence* and Monique Morris’ *Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools* describe the criminalization of Black childhood and adolescence.

United Women in Faith and Nollie Jenkins Family Center are both members of the national Dignity in Schools Campaign, a coalition committed to ending school pushout. Among the issues contributing to school pushout is punitive discipline, which can include corporal punishment. According to the Office for Civil Rights at the U.S. Department of Education, a total of 69,492 students were subjected to corporal punishment at school in the 2017-2018 school year. These students came from more than 20 states plus the District of Columbia. The victims of corporal punishment at school were disproportionately Black and Native American/Alaska Native students. (Black students make up 15.1

percent of enrollment, but 37.3 percent of students subjected to corporal punishment. Native American/Alaska Native students make up 1.0 percent of enrollment, but 1.9 percent of students subjected to corporal punishment.) The echoes of historical violence are disturbingly clear.

In some religious corners, people cite the Scripture “spare the rod, spoil the child” in defense of hitting children in schools and elsewhere. But I would argue that Scripture has been taken out of context. Indeed, the throughline of the Gospel reveals Jesus to be particularly protective of children and young people. When his disciples try to turn away crowds of children and parents, dismissing them as a distraction to his ministry, he responds with indignance directed not at the children but rather at the disciples, who have yet again so clearly missed the point. Making his message as clear as possible, Jesus instructs, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to such as these.” (Matthew 19:14, NIV)

It is time for widespread reflection on the urge to hit those who are most vulnerable. It is time to question the ways that corporal punishment is permitted in communities and schools. We can raise healthy, well-adapted children by seeing their humanity and loving—not beating—they. Children and youth should experience school as a safe and supportive environment in which to learn and grow. The use of corporal punishment undermines student safety and well-being. We can and must do better.

## UWIF ACTIVITIES

At the Metropolitan United Women of Faith meeting on June 10<sup>th</sup> attendees heard a powerful message on the evil of human trafficking. Thank you Karen Moore and Irene Faziani of Sanctum House. When you know more, you must do more.



## Mission u, Summer 2023

This summer’s mission was hosted by Mt. Pleasant First United Methodist Church. The topic was “Living the Kin-dom: Exploring the Lord’s Prayer as a Spiritual Practice for Social Transformation”. The study was designed to empower participants to become a reflection of God’s



love to make the world a better place for all God's people. Here are just a few photos showing great faces and smiles!



**If all over the world the woman is allowed freedom to grow to her potential, there will be many, many women enlightened; many, many women mystics, poets, painters. And they will enhance not only the woman's part of the world – because the world is one – they will enhance the whole world. They will give man also new dimensions because their ways of seeing things are different. Man looks at things in one way; the woman looks from a different perspective. Life will become richer.”**

**~ OSHO**

## United Women in Faith: Supreme Court Decision in Affirmative Action Cases Gravely Disappointing; We Mourn But We Are Not Defeated

June 29, 2023

NEW YORK, NY – United Women in Faith, the largest denominational organization for women, today issued a statement regarding the Supreme Court decisions in *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard*, and *Students for Fair Admissions v. University of North Carolina*. The statement can be attributed to Sally Vonner, general secretary and CEO of United Women in Faith, and Elizabeth Chun Hye Lee, director of mobilization and advocacy for United Women in Faith:

“We are gravely disappointed in this decision, which represents a massive step backwards for racial equity. We are concerned about the immense harm this decision will have on students as well as the long-term precedent of eroding affirmative action. United Women in Faith also joins the United Methodist Church, **which previously issued a resolution on affirmative action**, and reiterates our support for affirmative action as an important tool in efforts to achieve equity. The resolution states:

*“The implementation of affirmative action has resulted in concrete gains for people of color and women in higher education and the corporate world. However persuasive [the alleged grounds of opposition to affirmative action] seem on the surface, they tend to slough off or to ignore the persistence of significant and widespread inequalities of opportunity affecting women, ethnic and racial persons, and persons with disabilities throughout our social system.*

*From the perspective represented by The United Methodist Church, the most fundamental premise underlying the concept of affirmative action is both moral and spiritual. Concern for the disadvantaged and the oppressed is a major feature of the message of the Hebraic prophets and of Jesus. According to biblical teaching, we are mandated, in the face of inhumane discrimination—whether that discrimination is intended or unintended—to do what we can to redress legitimate grievances and to create a society in which the lives of each and all will flourish. For this fundamental reason, we reconfirm our commitment to the concept of affirmative action.”*

“We are disappointed in the decision but not surprised; there has been a long-lasting campaign against affirmative action, which exists as part of a broader current backlash to historic and present-day racial and gender justice movements. In alignment with the collective body of the United Methodist Church, United Women in Faith remains committed to the principles of affirmative action as a vital tool in advancing the civil and human rights of women, people of color, and people with disabilities, while simultaneously strengthening the fabric of our whole society and enriching the lives of all persons. We have a moral interest and a practical interest in this issue. Of the National Mission Institutions we support, 5 are HBCUs.”

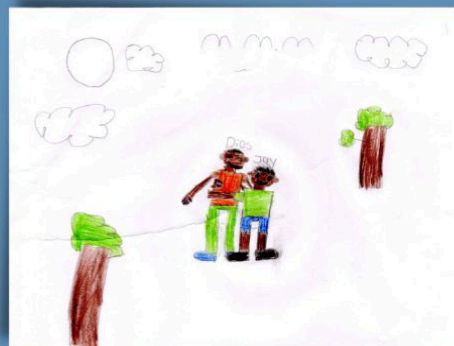
“While we are mourning today’s decision, we are not defeated by it,” said Elizabeth Chun Hye Lee, Director of Mobilization and Advocacy for United Women in Faith. “We recognize that the Supreme Court has brought both highs and lows for the broader movements for racial justice and gender justice. Today’s low will not be our resting place. As women of faith, we will continue to work in support of affirmative action in the church and in the world.”

## DAILY PRAYER GUIDE

Have you ordered your 2023 Daily Prayer Guide? The Guide lets you know what is happening in a mission and moves you to put love into action. Here are but two of the short prayers accompanied by children's artwork:

**Heavenly Father, during  
our darkest days...from  
you, we receive wisdom,  
clarity, understanding,  
discernment, provision  
and protection. God,  
your love is faithfulness!**

TAMMY A.K. MIXON-CALDERON,  
Executive Director, Wesley  
Community Centers of Savannah,  
Savannah, Ga.



Artwork by a child from Costa Rica,  
(MCCA) - District Limón



United Women in Faith *Daily Prayer Guide 2023*



Rushing wind, gentle breeze, fill us with the presence of the Holy One. Holy Fire, burn what is not needed. Ignite our passion. Light our way. Warm our hearts. Breathe your Holy Spirit into us and renew our faith. In Jesus name, Amen.

CLAUDIA GENUNG, Global Missionary from U.S. serving in Japan, Outreach and Support Pastor, Kobe Union Church



Artwork by a teen from Kids Above All Group Homes, Chicago, Ill.



United Women in Faith Daily Prayer Guide 2023

## UPCOMING EVENTS

Saturday, October 14<sup>th</sup>: Greater Detroit District Annual Meeting  
Ferndale First UMC, Ferndale, MI

Saturday October 28<sup>th</sup>: Michigan Conference Annual Meeting  
Holt UMC, Holt, MI

May 30<sup>th</sup> – June 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2024: North Central Jurisdiction  
Indianapolis, IN

As more information becomes available, an email will be sent out. Also, periodically check the district's website: [www.umwmichiganconference.org](http://www.umwmichiganconference.org)