



United Women in Faith
El Camino Real District Newsletter

Q3 -September 2022 Issue

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

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 next issue will be published in early December, 2022. The deadline for articles and photos to be submitted is November 30, 2022.

Presidents Message

Dear Friends,

I am currently reading *The Time is Now: A Call to Uncommon Courage* by Joan Chittister in preparation for a discussion of the book on September 8 by our own Emily Jones, Executive for Racial Justice for United Women in Faith.

This author has long been recommended by a dear friend and member of UWF. She sends me monthly articles from this author which I have been reading. The author is a Benedictine Sister of Erie, PA and a well-known lecturer and writer. A Catholic champion for women's rights. Who would have thought?

I bought the book for \$6 on Amazon. (Hint: the new cost is \$15.44, but used is much less).

I am loving the book. It is challenging, as you might expect, but it supports a view that I have held for many years that if the world is to change for the better, then we are the ones who must make that change possible. How do we do that? By being a prophet.

What does that mean? Well, that is what the book is all about. I encourage you to read it and to join the conversation on September 8. I will give you a quote from the book as a teaser:

“The prophet is the person who says no to everything that is not of God.

No to the abuse of women.

No to the rejection of the stranger.

No to crimes against immigrants.

No to the rape of the trees.

No to the pollution of the skies.

No to the poisoning of the oceans.

No to the despicable destruction of humankind for the sake of more wealth, more power, more control for the few.

No to death. “

More to come on this later, after I have read the whole book. If there is interest, we could have a book discussion of our own later in the year.

Upcoming Events

Be sure to come to the Annual Celebration of the El Camino Real District on October 1st at Willow Glen UMC in San Jose. Our speaker will be Susan Smith, Children and Family Minister. Our theme is: *Renewal for the Journey*. I am sure that you all can relate to that!

Again, I want to express my sincere appreciation for all that our members are doing to improve the lives of women, children and youth.

Blessings on you all

Debbie Ow

President

ECRD District United Women in Faith

Treasurer's Report

It's not too late to send in remittances for missions. Any received this week will count towards your 2022 5-star Giving status. I'm so impressed by the creativity the units have put into raising funds to support UWF mission projects.

Please send remittances, payable to "El Camino Real District UMW" to:

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

PLEDGE ACCOUNT

Remittances received (April-August)	\$17,130.78
Apr-Aug. remittances to conference UWF	\$15,654.88
Interest received	<u>\$ 0.12</u>
Aug. 22, 2022 balance	\$ 1539.51

ADMINISTRATIVE ACCOUNT

May-Aug Deposits	\$ 0.09 interest
May-Aug Event expenses	\$ 989.80
May-Aug Communication expenses	\$ 309.00
May-Aug Admin. Expenses	\$ 971.52
May-Aug Mission Giving	<u>\$ 200.00</u>
Aug. 22, 2022 balance	\$ 1088.46

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 the El Camino Real District UWF events and operations.

Carolyn Bircher
ECRD Treasurer

My Cuba Mission Trip



I visited Cuba in July of 2022 with the New Creation United Methodist Church of Campbell. The trip was led by Reverend Justin Ryu and Reverend Jung Ahn Yoon was our host leader in Cuba. Our group mostly comprised teens and college students. I wanted to share a little of what I learned and some of the experiences we had during our visit.

Cuba is the largest island in the Caribbean, with a population of over 11.1 million. In physical dimensions it's slightly smaller than Pennsylvania and about 2/3 of it is farmland. The primary language is Spanish, but English is also taught in the schools, and so many Cubans are fluent. The climate is generally mild, with hot, humid summers. Cuba is frequently in the path of hurricanes and tropical storms. (In 2012 Hurricane Sandy swept through, killing 11 people.)

When Christopher Columbus discovered Cuba in 1492, he wrote, "This country is the most beautiful that human eyes have ever seen". Cuba remained a colony of Spain for more than 300 years, and was severely exploited. African slaves came to Cuba in about 1517, replacing the indigenous people as they died from European diseases. Cuba finally became independent of Spain in 1898. Jose Marti, a poet, philosopher and national hero was instrumental in achieving independence from Spain. From 1953-1959, Cuba underwent another revolution, led by Fidel Castro. In 2008, Fidel Castro stepped down as president due to failing health. Fidel's brother, Raul, succeeded him.

Today, Cuba remains a socialist government, dominated by the Communist Party of Cuba. The collapse of the Soviet Union caused hardships for Cubans who were severely dependent on Soviet aid. The average person receives about \$50/month in salary and the government provides basic food rations, education, and medical care.

Cuba boasts one of the highest literacy rates in the world, and education is free up to the university level. One of Cuba's biggest exports is medical workers. In fact, Cuba pays for oil imports with revenues from exported medical workers. In addition, Cuba is home to a thriving "medical tourism" industry.

The US does not have normal diplomatic relations with Cuba, and so sightseeing by US visitors is restricted.



Cuba also restricts religious activities. Nevertheless, religion is very important in Cuba and in recent years, the government has softened its stance on religion. There are many Roman Catholics and followers of Santeria (a religion that mixes Roman Catholic and African beliefs). After a visit by Pope John Paul II in 1998, Catholic followers have steadily increased. Only about 4% of the population is Protestant.



Our group conducted a Vacation Bible School, including puppet shows of David and Goliath and a short message about Jesus from Reverend Ryu. We did arts and crafts with the children, making beaded bracelets, paper dish crowns, pipe cleaner figures and crayon drawings. We visited eight churches and were received by the children with great enthusiasm! We shared goodies, including gummy bears and crayons with the children, as well as other supplies.

Our teens and students presented several “card shows” (similar to Tangram game).



We sampled Cuban food, which blends the strong flavors of Latin and African cuisines. The Cuban diet depends heavily on beans and rice, seasoned with onions, garlic and peppers. However, the food we ate was very bland, so we spiked it with Sriracha and Chinese hot sauce. There was chicken and pork, root vegetables, fruit and eggs. Interestingly, fishing is prohibited (because the Cuban government doesn't want citizens to have access to boats), so fish is not available. Thus, seafood is great treat!

The accommodations were challenging: cold showers, flushing the toilet with a bucket of water, and intermittent air conditioning. Drinking the local water was hazardous, so we wished we had brought more medication for diarrhea. Thankfully, we had medication for mosquito bites.



Sadly, conditions in Cuba remain discouraging. Young people see no future due to the lack of opportunity in the current political and economic system. State security maintains control by spying on everyone, especially, writers, teachers and community leaders. While Castro has achieved limited success in Education and Medicine, his critics point out that he has largely failed to create a just, fair, and prosperous society for the Cuban people.

Cubans who reach the shore of Florida are accepted as refugees, but although Cuba is only 90 miles away, there is no easy way to get from Cuba to Florida. Traveling through other neutral countries is costly, at about \$40,000 per person.

The trip made us truly grateful for the freedoms we enjoy and the comforts we live with!

Katherine Kim
ECRD District Team Member

Mission U 2022– “WHO CAN WE BE TOGETHER?” - Sparks, Nevada

Mission U is a program of the California Nevada Conference United Women in Faith.

Mission U was a new approach for curriculum starting 2022. For over a century this annual gathering has taken place with the objective of helping us better understand how to live our faith in the world. The two main areas of focus are on increasing spiritual growth by study, and learning about current issues and neighbors in different geographic areas. The California and Nevada conference will now introduce new curricula each year on one biblical theme for three levels in the church family to participate in: adult, youth and children. The biblical theme for 2022 was around Luke 13, a book of Jesus' parables

For 2022, Mission U was held at Monte Tyron, Aptos, CA and Spark UMC, Sparks, NV. The three-day event was orchestrated by two people: Martha Parker, Dean and Kalesita Faasisila, Assistant Dean. But they couldn't have done it without a dedicated and energetic Mission U team: Susan Kopp, Jo Neish, Lynn Hermoso, Jorge Domingues and Judith Prichard. The study leaders included: Pastors - Elizabeth Cademartori, Justin Chesung Ryu, Fel Cao and Lee Neish. Also leading were Talita Tu'ipulotu, Joni Cisowski, Lynn Hermoso, Suzanne Calhoun, Sina Vuna, and Iva Turaga.

In each of the eight sessions, participants explore a different passage within Luke 13 – what is meant to the people of Jesus' time and what it means to us today. The goal of the study is to inspire a global community of justice-oriented believers to challenge damaging theologies and create health rituals for abundant living.

“This was my first Mission U attendance, and I went to Sparks, Reno. Sparks UMC were so welcoming and generous with sharing their facilities for the event. We were able to attend their

Sunday service with the choir singing and Jo Neish leading the music program. Also, communion was given by several pastors attending Mission U, and a great send off with a thoughtful sermon from Pastor Lee Neish. “

Leslie Fisk
ECRD District Team Member

Banks and Fossil Fuels

Amidst the 2021 pandemic challenges, I, with a group of United Women in Faith (then, United Methodist Women) from *Almaden Hills UMC, Cambrian Park UMC, Willow Glen UMC and St. Paul's UMC*, attended an Interfaith Rally, ***Make a Holy Noise for Climate Action*** in San Jose, CA.

Thus, was introduced to “Socially Responsible and Ethical Banking.” I learned of the significant involvement of banks for the fossil fuel industry; the need for change to end this financial stream; to bring about a just and livable future. I was shocked to find my bank to be one of the top four, supporting fossil fuel funding.

Shortly after, having relocated, I worked to learn more about banks who were considered socially and ethically responsible.

Today, I Acted! I aligned my beliefs with an organization, in my community, rated as a **B-Corp** (business having met verified standards of social and environmental performance, thus building a more inclusive and sustainable economy and reducing inequality); as well as **GABV** (Global Alliance for Banking on Values. Financial institutions working to change the system by making it transparent and supporting social, environmental, and economic sustainability).

If any are interested, below are sites to help in taking this same journey.

- <https://bankforgood.org/> → **Bank for Good** Find a bank, credit union, or other financial institution that doesn't fund fossil fuels and backs the planet and the people.

“The four largest US banks (Bank of America, Chase, Citibank, and Wells Fargo) poured more than \$210 billion into the fossil fuel industry in 2019 alone, accelerating an already dire climate crisis.”

- [Socially responsible and ethical banks in the US: what to look for and what to avoid | Mighty Deposits](#) → **Mighty Deposits Guide, 2022 Edition** Socially responsible and ethical banks in the US: what to look for and what to avoid.



- <https://youtu.be/OOp4yS2C3NQ> → **Dayenu Teach-In and Passover Action Report back** **What: Banking on Climate Chaos:** Hear highlights from the Rainforest Action Network's decades of pressuring financial institutions, and their latest data findings on how banks are funding the climate crisis.

K Stone

Past ECRD District President

UWF Reading Program

Did you or anyone in your unit read at least one book from each of the five UWF Reading Program categories since September 1, 2021? If so, please submit a list of the books that each person read to me so you can be recognized at our district celebration on October 1. You may use the Reading Program Reporting Form at <https://uwfaith.org/resources/2022-reading-program/> or just send an email to me with your name, church and the list of titles read.

You may count books read between Sept. 1, 2021 and August 31, 2022 or earlier if you haven't counted them in previous years. Books read from lists going back to 2016 may be counted. Youth and children's books may be counted. Mission u textbooks also count. The *Finding Peace in an Anxious World*, *Bearing Witness in the Kin-dom*, and *Who Can We Be Together?* textbooks count as bonus books in the Spiritual Growth category. *Pushout* counts as a bonus book in the Social Action category.

Note that more books were added to the list for 2022. The newly added books can be found at the back of the current Reading Program catalog, after the Korean books.

<https://www.umwmissionresources.org/downloads/ReadingProgramCatalog2021.pdf>

Also:

Listening to or participating in *Faith Talk* podcasts can be counted in the category of **Spiritual Growth**.

Two *Faith Talk* podcasts = 1 book.

Three *Faith Talk* podcasts = 2 Books in the Spiritual Growth category.

Find the podcasts at: <https://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/faithtalks>

Watching these **movies** and documentaries will also count in the same category as the book with the same title:

1. Just Mercy (social action)
2. The Hate U Give (nurturing for community)
3. Pushout (social action)

If you found any of the books to be particularly inspiring, please add a sentence to tell us how it moved you.

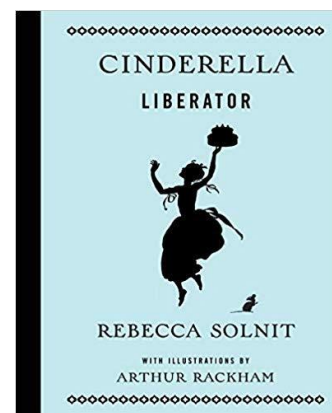
I'm looking forward to hearing from you **by September 15.**

Carolyn Bircher
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Book Review: *Cinderella Liberator* – by Rebecca Solnit

I have come to regret how many times I allowed my daughter to watch her Cinderella video when she was little because it promoted the idea that a handsome prince will swoop down and solve all your problems. In this modern twist on the classic story, Cinderella, who would rather just be Ella, meets her fairy godmother, goes to a ball, and makes friends with a prince. But that is where the familiar story ends. Instead of waiting to be rescued, Cinderella learns that she can save herself and those around her by being true to herself and standing up for what she believes.

If you need to read a "Leadership Development" book to complete your UWF Reading Program or if you just want a fun twist on an old tale, this is the book for you. Many public libraries offer it as an ebook, so you can check it out without leaving home. It's a quick read with delightful silhouette illustrations.



Carolyn Bircher
ECRD Secretary of Program Resources

Coming Events

- District Annual Celebration on October 1st, location Willow Glen UMC - **Save the Date!**
- Sunnyvale UWF 53rd Annual Holiday Craft Faire – Sat., Oct. 22, 10:00-3:00. (see below)

Sunnyvale UWF 53rd Annual Holiday Craft Faire – Sat., October 22, 10:00 – 3:00



The Sunnyvale United Women of Faith have reimaged their Holiday Craft Sale, but the talent that has gone into creating the hand-crafted items remains as high as ever. They offer handmade quilts, seasonal décor, wall hangings, aprons, placemats, baby items, homemade jams & jellies and other goodies. All proceeds benefit their United Women of Faith. Although I'm not part of the Sunnyvale UWF, I felt compelled to promote this event because it is always such a delight to attend. The church is located at 535 Old San Francisco Road in Sunnyvale. There's plenty of parking behind the church. Mark your calendars

and come on down to get an early start on holiday shopping and to meet up with other UWF ladies. Please, plan to wear your facemask. ~Carolyn Bircher

Registration and Preview for ECRD Annual Celebration

Registration is open for the Annual Celebration. Please register to let us know if you are attending via Zoom or in person. Also indicate if you want to order lunch. A link to the Annual Celebration page is on the Home page of our ECRD website: <https://elcaminorealumw.org/>

This year's keynote speaker is Susan Smith, who is the Pastor of Children and Family Ministries at Willow Glen UMC. She is also the Director of the Woodhaven preschool on the campus of Willow Glen UMC.

Joining us again this year, Deo Augustin will be bringing her beautiful voice to sing for us and lead us in hymns,

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.



UWF ladies from Santa Clara UMC and Good Samaritan UMC held a joint meeting. We learned about labyrinths and prayed our way through one. After the prayer time, we had a time for sharing and refreshments. District president Debbie Ow joined us and gave an update on upcoming events.

The Wesley UWF prepared 20 “Blessing Boxes” for their neighbors in need. Boxes were filled with practical items including: detergent, dishcloth, paper towels, tin foil, shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrushes, soap and post it notes. Cute and fun items were also included: mini heart pillow, homegrown lavender bundles, cork floral magnet, stickers and small cloth bag filled with sweet treats.



Communications Update

You may have noticed a few changes on the ECRD website. With the help of Carolyn Bircher, Debbie Ow and Joyce Wilkerson, a plan for revising the website was made. While websites are always a work in progress, most of these changes have been completed. The following list is a brief summary:

- Reworked the Home page to try and make the key elements readily available and a little more obvious, including:
 - Accessing the most recent Mission Link newsletter and archives
 - Subscribing to Mailchimp emails for “Quick News” and “Mission Link”.
 - Links to national and conference websites, Facebook, and YouTube
 - Access to the Calendar
- Simplified Navigation via main menu bar (and increased font size)
- A new menu tab for Forms and reporting
- Consistency in page layout – all but the *Home* page now have a sidebar containing the important links to other websites and the national Twitter feed.
- Consolidation and rearrangement of some pages that were seriously broken by the UWF name change.

If you have suggestions for other changes or additions, please [contact Laurie Lindsey](#).

Some of the changes have been made with a view toward making the site a little easier to maintain. If anyone has an interest in learning about this or helping, please [contact Laurie Lindsey](#)

Laurie Lindsey
Communications Coordinator