



United Women in Faith
El Camino Real District Newsletter

Q2 -June 2023 Issue

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

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 September, 2023. The deadline for articles and photos to be submitted is September 15, 2023.

President's Message

Dear Sisters,

I hope this finds you well. Spring has sprung and I hope you have been enjoying being out in the fresh air. I love hiking and have been out there enjoying the wild flowers in and around San Jose. I hope you have, too.

I want to share a new experience that I had this month. As most of you know, I have become active in an organization associated with Sacred Heart Community Service (not a Catholic group), [Show Up for Racial Justice or SURJ](#). This is a national organization with several chapters in the Bay Area. (Google it and find your area chapter.) In San Jose, we are very fortunate to have a staff person named Jen who is a community organizer and she keeps us on track.



**SHOWING UP FOR
RACIAL JUSTICE**

“SURJ at Sacred Heart is a group organizing white people and other folks with privilege to take action in solidarity with Brown and Black communities around issues of decarceration/policing, housing, immigration and indigenous sovereignty, and working to end racism throughout Santa Clara County. It is the local chapter of the National SURJ network.” There are several other groups who are part of Sacred Heart : SOS (Survivors of the Street) and PASOS (Personas Activas Sobresalientes Organizando Soluciones, RECS (Race, Equity and Community Safety), SHHAC (Sacred Heart Housing Action Committee), and several more groups. Please go to the [Sacred Heart website](https://www.sacredheartcs.org) (https://www.sacredheartcs.org) for more information. All of the groups coordinate their efforts to increase impact.



My granddaughter and I went to the Art committee of SURJ. We decorated fans by stenciling houses on them. This was really fun although I was not sure how they would be used. You'll see – read on!

I also met with a couple of SURJ committees who organize activities and help white people understand the impacts of systematic racism in our society. One of the committees is “Faith

Folks” where I ran into other UWF members Deb St. Julien, Lani Ballard and Christina Caps. What a fun surprise for all of us to meet friends there!

Our organizer, Jen, put out the call for people to attend a rally at San Jose City Hall on May 16 at noon. Lani and I went. There were about 100 people there representing various groups and PACT(People Acting in Community Together). Our group all had red SURJ shirts. Well, remember the fans? They were passed out to everyone there. That was a good thing because it was hot, but also because the fans made a really nice visual for the news media.

On May 16, we were ushered into the City Council Room. We all sat together and UWF member Connie Hunter joined us. After some preliminaries, it was time for comments on the budget, specifically on the Allocation of Measure E funds for housing. The issue is that this measure was passed by San Jose voters as a tax on property sales in excess of \$2 million to be used to fund affordable housing. Now Mayor Mahan was changing that to use the funds for temporary housing - such as Casitas de Esperanza. Our group opposed that because

- 1) that is not what the voters wanted and
- 2) if we don't build affordable housing, there is no place for homeless people to go, and
- 3) San Jose has not kept up with the housing needs of our community so housing costs are totally unaffordable for low-income people. This is a major contributor to homelessness.

Jen encouraged me to fill out a form to get a speaking spot. WOW! How scary is that? I actually made a one-minute about why I thought we needed to follow the will of the people and build more permanent affordable housing. I spoke directly to the Mayor and the Council and they were listening.

As a result of making ourselves heard, the Mayor of San Jose has modified his budget proposal to move back much of the money to affordable housing. I am anxious to see his presentation on June 6th at 5:30pm at Willow Glen Community Center on Lincoln Avenue. I will keep you posted and please keep watching for news on Spotlight News.

Check out these Spotlight articles. (Can you find me in the video? Do you see the fans?)

- <https://sanjosespotlight.com/san-jose-officials-challenge-mayors-housing-plan/>
- <https://sanjosespotlight.com/who-loses-in-san-jose-mayors-housing-plan/>

I hope this sparks your interest *or at least provides food for thought!*

Debbie Ow

President

ECRD District United Women in Faith

Treasurer's Report

PLEDGE ACCOUNT

Pledges/Donations received (Jan-May)	\$22,515.71
1st qtr. remittances to conference UMW	\$ 7,198.25
Mission Springs offering sent to Marina	\$ 1,000.00
Interest received	\$ 0.17
May 31, 2023 balance (To be sent on June 30)	\$14,250.90

ADMINISTRATIVE ACCOUNT

Connect & Learn expenses	\$ 100.00
Mission Springs deposits	\$ 7,907.00
Mission Springs expenses	\$ 9,408.20
Jan-May Communication expenses	\$ 247.50
Jan-May Admin. Expenses	\$ 80.23
May 31, 2023 balance	\$ 4,183.62

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 El Camino Real District UWF events and operations.

Thank you all for your dedication to raising funds to support the many United Women in Faith ministries. The Mission Springs offering of \$1,000 was sent to Marina UMC to help support a Ukrainian refugee family that the church is sponsoring. The family was very grateful to receive this gift.

An updated remittance form can be found at

<https://elcaminorealumw.org/treasurer-information/>

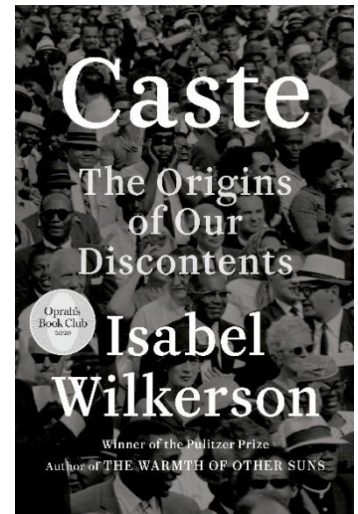
Carolyn Bircher

ECRD Treasurer

Book Review: Caste

When we think of caste, we generally think India or Nazi Germany. In *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents*, Isabel Wilkerson examines the unspoken caste system that has shaped America and shows how our lives today are still defined by a hierarchy based on race. She explores, through a deeply researched narrative and stories about real people, how America today and throughout its history has had a hidden caste system. This caste system affects health, depression, life expectancy, culture and politics.

This book, although very readable, was not easy reading. It gave me plenty of opportunities for examination of attitudes that I grew up with. However, lest we feel discouraged, she concludes with ways America can move beyond the destructive separations toward hope in our common humanity. This is a bonus book (counts as 2) in the Social Action category of the reading program. It is available from nearly all public libraries.



If you feel the need to discuss after reading this book, Bonnie Home of Almaden Hills UWF will lead a Zoom discussion on Friday, June 30 at 4:00 pm. Email bonstance22@yahoo.com to get the Zoom link.

Carolyn Bircher
ECRD Secretary of Program Resources

Marina UMC/UWF Host Ukrainian Families



Marina UMC's UWF unit has been fortunate to take the lead in supporting two different Ukrainian families for the Marina United Methodist Church. The first family arrived in Marina in early December. This family consisted of a mother, Olena, her daughter, Oksana and the grandson, Illia, age 9. The church was able to provide Christmas gifts for them, to aid in their stay here. The intent for the family was to stay until it was safe to go home. There was also a generous donation from UWF members in the ECRD UWF. As there were additional funds available, we decided to try to support the family throughout the year.

At Easter, I again contacted the host family. The Ukrainian family was so homesick that they had already returned to Ukraine. It turned out that a new family had just arrived from Ukraine, the Nedilko family. The Nedilko family consists of Yana and her two sons, ages 8 & 10. Yana was also about 8 months pregnant. The Marina UMC decided to continue support for this new family. That support included donated funds from the congregation and a very generous special offering from the ECRD UWF Spiritual Retreat, totaling an amazing \$1000. The support has included clothes shopping for the boys, bedding for their room in the host family's home, gift cards from a church member, and now after the birth of the youngest son, David, diapers and baby supplies. We have also been able to provide transportation for appointments. The remaining funds will be used to continue our support throughout the coming year. Thanks to all who gave so generously!

Joyce Wilkinson

Marina UMC/UWF
ECRD Board Member

Mission Trip to Kyrgyzstan

When Debbie Ow heard that Justin Ryu, the mission director for the Northern California-Nevada Conference of The United Methodist Church, was planning a mission trip to Kyrgyzstan (south of Kazakhstan), she felt she couldn't pass up this unique opportunity. Her team consisted of five pastors and six lay people.

This article has been edited for space. For the complete article, please see the post on the web at: https://elcaminorealumw.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Kyrgyzstan_edited.pdf

NOW I KNOW WHERE KYRGYZSTAN IS

... AND I CAN SPELL IT, TOO!

We arrived in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, on March 3, 2023 via Istanbul. We lined up with our passports in front of the officials who were in their little cubicles. Their faces were dour and unsmiling and their Soviet-era uniforms were intimidating. An American passport is looked upon with suspicion. When asked the purpose of our visit, we had to say that we were there for tourism. We had been warned not to say that we were Christians or that we would be visiting churches, as the country is primarily Muslim. There were mosques everywhere.



We were welcomed at the airport by Naalya, the pastor of the Bishkek church. She was a lovely person in charge of our itinerary and provided us with bottled water, even though the water is fine for local people to drink. The Indian students at her church had prepared a dinner for us and we ate in a room of the house that serves as the worship area and social hall. Almost all of the country's Methodist churches are houses that have been converted into worship spaces, surrounded by outside walls to protect them from rocks thrown by hostile neighbors.

We visited the church at Tokmok for their Sunday service. The room was sparsely decorated but had computer screens for the songs and readings. The service was mostly in Russian, translated into English for us by a team member originally from Russia. The thirty people in the congregation were mostly Indian students with a smattering of neighbors. The entire church joined us for a nice lunch.



The Lakeside Retreat With Indian Medical Students

The “Forum” retreat was held at a resort on the very large Lake Issyk-Kul, surrounded by huge snow-covered mountains. It was the perfect site for a spiritual retreat. The attendees were medical students from India and Pakistan who were studying in Kyrgyzstan’s many medical schools.

The schedule was packed with preaching and singing and Bible discussion with not much room for personal time. I was asked to give my testimony, which was a new experience for me. I kept it short and sweet. The students loved to sing in whatever Indian dialect they

knew. We ate in a large dining hall together. The menu included lots of rice and very few sweets. Some of the students cooked meals that featured dishes from their home countries, making for a delightful change of pace.

The students were very friendly and began calling me “Grandma.” They treated me with extreme respect, carrying my luggage and even tying my shoes for me.

Two More Churches

Next, we visited the church under construction in Kara-Balta. A Korean church in San Diego has donated \$40,000 to have it built from the ground up. The very young pastor and some of the members were working on it when we arrived. The pastor manages a gym where he meets young people and invites them to church. He and his wife also teach school.

The church we visited in Kaindy was the District Superintendent’s home church and he lives on the site with his family. Another visitor and I were invited by his friendly wife to see their small but very nice house. She teaches at the school where their two children attend. Because these churches are not self-sufficient, the pastors have “day jobs” to support their families. The District Superintendent also runs his own landscaping business.

Meeting the Bishop of the Central Asia Conference

One evening the bishop arrived from Moscow and we were invited to dine with him in a private room in a very fancy restaurant where music was being played on a stringed instrument.

The next day we met the bishop again for lunch at a pizza place. The students may have realized that we were hungry for some American food. The bishop explained that the entire Central Asian Conference would be leaving The United Methodist Church. The cultures there feel very strongly that homosexuality is sinful. This was quite disturbing to me and I have had a hard time processing this information. I have finally come to accept that this is a cultural issue. I know that the Holy Spirit is working in these churches under very difficult conditions, something we here in the U.S. know nothing about.

Coming Home

I was glad to be heading home after nine days that had been both mentally and physically exhausting. Even though it was a challenging trip in many ways, I enjoyed learning more about

myself, and about the Kyrgyzstani, Indian, and Russian cultures. I even learned about the Korean culture as most of the pastors on this trip were from Korean churches. I learned a lot about the churches in South Asia, and about the people there who are working for God.

If I do decide to return to Kyrgyzstan next year, I would want to give a workshop on meditation. I really needed some quiet time when I was there!

Please feel free to contact me with any questions you have about the trip.

Debbie Ow

Mission Springs Retreat – April 14-16, 2023



“Connecting with Creation and Experiencing a Sense of Awe” was the theme of 2023 Mission Springs Retreat. The event was held April 14th through 16th, with 34 attendees enjoying connection with old friends and soaking up the beautiful, serene wonders of the forest. After all the winter rain and stormy weather in the Santa Cruz Mountains, this weekend had sunshine and clear nights. Amazingly, the Mission Springs Conference Center had not incurred any loss of the magnificent redwoods that surround the facilities.

El Camino Real District had not hosted the event since 2019. Rev. Jennifer Goto challenged the assembly with the human need for aspiration and with building a foundation of spiritual appreciation. This starts with the wonder of creation.



Group breakout sessions provided time for Bible verse study and the opportunity to create a nature altar in the surrounding woods. The tables for snack and book exchange were popular gathering places during breaks. The Sunday worship included a devotion about the assurance of hope from Sandra Nesheim. Blessings to all who attended and may the memories of the retreat energize you throughout the year!

Leslie Fisk
El Camino Real District

Spiritual Retreat – Kathy Kim’s Biscotti Recipe

As mentioned in the previous article, the snack table was very popular – especially the wonderful biscotti baked by Kathy Kim. Since many people asked for Kathy’s Biscotti recipe, she was gracious enough to provide it. Bon Appetit!

Italian Cookies (biscotti)

Mix together:

- 1 cup (2 cubes) of butter or margarine, softened
- 2 cups of sugar (may use less)
- ½ bottle of Anise extract (Kathy uses 1 Tbsp)
- ½ of 1.75g package of Anise Seeds (Kathy uses 1 Tbsp)
- 4 eggs

Blend in:

- 4 cups of flour
- 4 tsp of baking powder

Mix all ingredients together (you may need to use your hands). Batter will be sticky, but DO NOT add more flour.

Divide dough into six (6) parts. Roll and then flatten each. Put 3 of the rolls on a greased cookie sheet and bake at 350 degrees F. for 25 minutes, until light brown. Cool the cookies.

Slice the cookies on an angle and put them on a cookie sheet to bake at 250 degrees F. for 30 minutes.

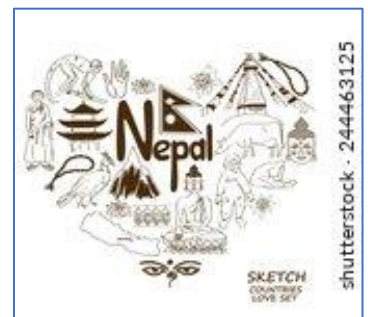
Cool. Seal in airtight container.

Coming Events

Days for Girls Workshop, August 21, 2023 at Wesley UWF, 10:00-4:00

UWF members interested in learning how to assemble and sew washable menstrual pads for women and girls in Nepal are invited to participate in a hands-on workshop with Katherine Parker. Katherine is a missionary with the General Board of Ministries of the UMC, working with community development in Nepal. Her area of service (and passion) is with:

1. Adolescent empowerment, including sexual reproductive health and rights, mental health, and menstrual hygiene.
2. Dignity for migrant workers, and
3. Water, sanitation and hygiene.



Registration for this workshop is required. Contact Terri Koike at tkoike5037@gmail.com or cell# 408-838-2774. The [event flyer](#) is available online.

Just Food – CA-NV Social Action Event

In 2023, one in six individuals was food insecure. You have neighbors, church members and friends who are finding it difficult to afford food. CA-NV Conference United Women in Faith invites you to a Zoom presentation titled “Starving in the Land of Plenty.” It will be held on Saturday, June 24th from 9 am to Noon. To access the official flyer [click here](#). To register, [click here](#).

After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. **The registration deadline is Friday, June 23rd.**

Marina UMC/UWF Rummage Sale

There will be a rummage sale at Marina UMC on Saturday, June 24, 2023 from 9:00a.m. to 2:00p.m. To access the flyer, [click here](#).

The sale features household items, gifts and more. There will be baked goods and a BBQ sandwich lunch for sale as well.

Marina UMC is located at 281 Beach Rd., Marina, CA.



Upcoming Mission U Events

July 28-30, 2023 at Episcopal Conference Center, Oakhurst (ECCO). [Click here](#) to access the registration form.

August 25-27, 2023 at Centennial UMC in Sacramento. [Click here](#) to access the registration form.

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.

Willow Glen UWF held their annual See's Easter Candy Fund raiser. In addition to selling candy, members of UWF made and sold these adorable knitted “chickens” to keep those Easter eggs warm!



The **Wesley UWF** held their annual Rummage Sale, June 10th, 2023 after a 4-year absence. Folks got to clean out their drawers and closets, the people (many low income) in the surrounding community received wonderful bargains, the proceeds went to missions, and Hope Services benefited from the leftovers. Fun fellowship also was enjoyed again working together for this common cause.



Wesley UWF also hosted a Pentecost “tea-time” after the Pentecost service on May 28.



Communications Update

During the Connect and Learn technology session, I made an offer to help anyone who wanted to develop a small website for their local unit, using the “Google sites” method to create a website. As it turned out, Terri Koike took up the challenge. We cloned the sample I made and then she made it her own. I think she did a great job!

In my quilting circles, we always say “Done is better than perfect!” While Google sites is a pretty crude tool, it was sufficient to make this site and to communicate what the Wesley UWF are up to. The site is now linked to the Wesley UMC website. It can be viewed here:

<https://sites.google.com/view/wesley-uwif/>

Please talk with Terri (tkoike5037@gmail.com), if you would like to assess how difficult this was.

Finally, we are still looking for folks who would like to take on the newsletter and the website (2 separate jobs) for 2024. If you are interested, please let me know. I am planning some tutorial Zoom sessions in August. If you would like to attend, even if you aren’t quite ready to commit, please let me know.

Laurie Lindsey
[Communications Coordinator](#)

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all who contributed to this newsletter. Special thanks to Bonnie Home for her extraordinary editing skills! (Any misspelling, errors or typos are mine alone).

Laurie