



Conference Gram

April 2019

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2019 Spiritual Growth Retreat



Thorns & Roses

THORNS & ROSES! French critic and poet Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr said, **“We can complain because rose bushes have thorns, or rejoice because thorns have roses.”** There is no better place to explore and celebrate our *thorns and roses* than at Lake Junaluska, Thursday, June 13th - Saturday, June 15th for the WNCC UMW Annual Spiritual Growth Retreat.

The 2019 retreat has fresh new formatting and programming in response to your retreat evaluations and survey responses. Retreat information to share with your unit and friends can be found by following this link:

<http://tiny.cc/april2019CG>

Retreat Leader: Clara Ester, retired Deaconess and Vice President of United Methodist Women. Clara is a United Methodist Women member who makes a difference and will make a difference in your life during our 2019 Retreat. Clara said in a recent interview: **“I have come to grips many, many, many years ago that only through love can we make a difference”**. Clara Ester is known to us for her witness and love. You see her as the gentle face representing our Legacy Day of Giving. You may have heard her remarkable testimony witnessing the assassination of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.



(Note: Rev. Alisha Gordan is no longer available as leader due to unforeseen circumstances.)

Music Leader: Rev. Rhonda Smith, Minister of Music for First United Methodist Church in Hickory, will energetically and passionately lead our music. Rhonda has led music for many UMW events both within the WNCC and for our sister Conferences.

Programming: Many of your favorite retreat elements remain, such as the gathering & praise singing and wonderful messages from our retreat leader. We will kick off our retreat with a **casual pizza party for dinner Thursday June 13th**, and the retreat formally opens at 6:45 p.m. with Gathering and Praise. **Friday afternoon will include break-out sessions for discussion groups, Bible study, prayer and meditation, spiritual walks and more.** A prayer bead workshop may be available for an additional cost of \$15.00. Communion will be served during the Friday evening session. We will need communion helpers so if you would like to help serve, contact your District President or me. You need to attend communion practice, which starts at 4:30 p.m. Thursday in Stuart Auditorium. The Lake Junaluska singers will perform for us Friday night June 14th following our evening communion worship service. **The Saturday morning session will have a later start time to allow time for check-out and a relaxed breakfast.** The retreat will conclude before 3:30 p.m. Saturday to allow everyone to get home for church and to celebrate Father's Day. But the retreat is a great opportunity to bring your family, husband, or father to the lake to celebrate them!

(Continued on p. 2)

(Spiritual Growth Retreat 2019, continued from p. 1)

Online Registration: Open now through June 9th, early bird registration is \$15.00. On-site registration is \$25.00. Check in at the Harrell Center 2:00 – 6:30 pm Friday and receive the program book and other materials. Check-in for later arrivals will be available.

Room Reservations: ROOMS AT TERRACE AND LAMBUTH ARE STILL AVAILABLE. Call the Lake Junaluska Conference & Retreat Center 1-800-222-4930 to reserve accommodations. Room rates, inclusive of meal plan and taxes, can be found on the WNCC UMW website at www.wnccumw.org and within the retreat flyer. Use the **group attendee code 17882**. Rooms remaining after March 25th may be released from the retreat pricing block.

Room check-in at the Bethea Welcome Center opens at **4:00 p.m. on Thursday. Check-out time is at or before 11:00 a.m. Saturday morning.** Saturday lunch is included since our retreat extends into Saturday afternoon.

Childcare: “UNDER CONSTRUCTION” to ensure we are “Safe-Sanctuary” compliant. Childcare will be provided by Peggy Wasko, Community Development Liaison for Selwyn UMC. Childcare will include age-appropriate activities that complement and follow our retreat theme. If **you would like child care, contact me directly by e-mail, mdjefird@outlook.com.**

Hands-on Mission: Participate by bringing assembled School Kits to the Lake. Information regarding proper assembly of the school Kits may be found on our web-site www.wnccumw.org or <https://www.umcor.org/UMCOR/Relief-Supplies>. Help is always needed to receive, count, and load the kits so volunteer by contacting Linda Greer, Mission Coordinator – Education & Interpretation at jacklindagreer@bellsouth.net.

The Memorial Chapel will be open for prayer, meditation and quiet time throughout the retreat. Program Resources, Social Action displays and other important UMW information will be located with retreat registration in the Harrell Center.

June is a beautiful time at Lake Junaluska. Dress comfortably. Most facilities are air conditioned, so bring a sweater. Wear comfortable walking shoes, especially if you want to walk around the lake. A prayer and meditation walk will be part of the Friday afternoon opportunities. You will have time to visit various other gardens available to us on the grounds.

Martha Efird, Conference Mission Coordinator — Spiritual Growth
mdjefird@outlook.com/704-992-8727

Your Conference Committee on Nominations is working hard to find those **willing and talented women to serve for 2020 and beyond**. You can help us seek new leaders.

We have a link on the UMW website (www.wnccumw.org). Click on Mission Resources and you will find us on the drop down. There you will find: **recommendation forms, job descriptions, and a listing of the members of the Committee on Nominations**. If there is anything we can do for you, if you would like to let us know that you are interested in serving, or you would like for us to come to one of your meetings, please contact any of us on the Committee.

Martha Phillips, Chair
mcwphillips@gmail.com
828-765-7009



Getting to Know Your WNCC Mission Institutions: Bennett College, Greensboro

From the Historian's Quill -- "Vassar College of the South"

Bennett College was founded in 1873 as a "normal school" for training teachers with an enrollment of 70 African-American men and women. The Women's Missionary Society (a UMW predecessor) began supporting the school in 1886.

In 1926 Bennett transitioned to a women's college. That same year, Rev. David D. Jones was installed as President. Under his leadership the college expanded to an enrollment of 400 and was known as the "Vassar College" of the South. **But you know they say that behind every good man is a great woman.** For Rev. Jones that woman was his wife, Susie. Susie Jones became friends with Thelma Stevens, Secretary for Christian Social Relations of the Women's Division of the Board of Missions of the Methodist Church. They had an interracial friendship for years working together on many women's issues, and they worked together on the anti-lynching movement.

With Susie and Thelma's help, Rev. Jones was able to bring First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt to Bennett College on March 22, 1945, to speak to an integrated group of students and citizens. Bennett has continued this tradition of activism and racial justice throughout its history.

#StandWithBennett

Since 1930, the College has graduated over 7,000 "Bennett Belles". Today, a beautiful sixty-acre campus continues to provide a welcoming locale for women seeking to live out Bennett's unofficial motto: **"Education for your future; sisterhood for life."** Financial struggle has been an ongoing theme in the Bennett story, and yet the college persists in educating young women to become analytical thinkers, effective communicators, and phenomenal leaders. "We urge everyone to keep the faith and know that Bennett College is standing strong. Please join us in remaining steadfast in our commitment to #StandWithBennett," said current President, Dr. Phyllis Worthy Dawkins.

The last statement comes as Bennett is fighting to maintain its major regional accreditation. After being cited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) Board of Trustees for a lack of resources, Bennett College launched a major fundraising campaign to address those issues. In two months, with a groundswell of support from individual donors, corporations, foundations, alumnae, and businesses, **the College raised over \$9.5 million** and presented the funding evidence to SACSCOC Appeals Committee members at a February hearing in Atlanta. Despite Bennett's unprecedented fundraising success, the Commission denied Bennett's appeal to maintain accreditation. Bennett College has appealed their ruling in federal court, and they remain accredited while their appeal is heard.

"Don't give up on Bennett because she didn't give up on you," said Brooke Kane, the school's Miss Bennett College. "Just like Dr. Dawkins said, the fight is not over. We have to keep fighting."

**Want to learn more about Susie Jones, Thelma Stevens, and Bennett College?
Come to Mission u 2019, July 18-21!**

(Article by Betty Durham, WNCC UMW Historian, and Sandra Williamson, Northern Piedmont District President .)

#ST♥NDWITHBENNETT

KNOW

Who 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.

The Sisterhood of Grace, which is United Methodist Women, offers a wonderful model to The United Methodist Church of what it looks like to embrace diversity and love all as we work together in mission throughout the world. Our CEO Harriett Jane Olson issued a statement from General Conference that stated in part: ***“For United Methodist Women, commitment to the Purpose and prayer are the only litmus tests for determining who can belong, who can serve, and who can devote themselves to mission. Our differences make us stronger. . . United Methodist Women will continue to pray for our beloved church and stand in solidarity with all those who are in pain. United Methodist Women will continue to focus on mission, living out our Christian discipleship together, and addressing the needs of women, children, and youth.”***

GROW



GO



District events happening this spring – prayer breakfasts, mission studies, walks for mission – are prime opportunities for us **intentionally** to nurture all our members and to reach out in **radically new ways** to new women in our faith communities and beyond, doing **whatever it takes** to facilitate participation in our events and our mission – for young mothers, for those challenged by mobility issues, for those challenged economically.

Our first Conference-wide event is our Spiritual Growth Retreat. To enable more young women and economically challenged women to participate, we have a group of the Junaluska Apartments available at the retreat. **Please help us spread the word** that these lodgings will allow families the opportunity to meet and to network as they become active participants in our WNCC **creative, supportive fellowship**.

~Blessings, Renee Hayes

Conference Mission Coordinator — Membership, Nurture, & Outreach
renee.hayes1956@gmail.com/336-707-2980

KNOW



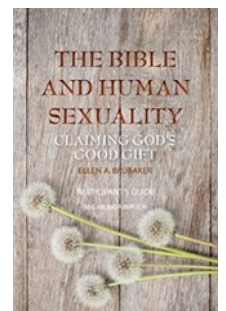
GROW



GO



United Methodist Women’s **Reading Program** has some excellent choices on the topic of Methodism and sexuality (see Justice Today article on p. 5). Read (or reread) our 2016 Mission u Spiritual Growth study book, *The Bible and Human Sexuality*, which offers this timely reminder: “God created the process of sex, love, and birth. We may continue to discuss and discern in different ways. This is essential to growth in the faith. **We need not determine right and wrong in ways that separate believers from one another. More significant is our oneness in the truth and love of the God who has created us and called us good.**”



Other choices:

We Shall Not Be Moved: Methodists Debate Race, Gender and Homosexuality (2016 Bonus Book)

Welcoming But Not Affirming: An Evangelical Response to Homosexuality (2018 Social Action)

(Because of the changes to Program Resources, there will be an extremely limited number of Reading Program books and Mission u Study Books available at Conference events. You are encouraged to buy books from major retailers or check your local library for availability.)

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Did you know?

Since 2009 Mission Giving in the Western North Carolina Conference United Methodist Women has been declining steadily. BUT the per attendee giving at our Conference gatherings (Spiritual Growth Retreat, Mission u, and Annual Celebration) has been increasing. **Members who come, learn, and participate understand the Power of Mission Giving.**

Why does that matter?

90% of the world's youth live in Developing Countries. That is the world in which our children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren will be living. It is in these Developing Countries that you will find UMW Missions and mission partners offering programs for community development, skills training, personal growth, and empowerment. Programs unleashing the Power of Mission Giving!

With the above in mind, I offer for your consideration:

Maybe we need to revisit our language of "Giving" and "Donating" and replace those with the more powerful and positive action word "Investing"; for indeed, that is what we are doing with our Mission "Giving". We are **Investing in the future** of all those who are touched through United Methodist Women Mission and in doing so, improving the prospects for them and for generations of our own children as well.



Peace, Nancy Reigel, Conference Treasurer/nancy@reigelridge.com/828-268-0637

Justice Today: Human Sexuality and the 2019 General Conference



The 2019 Special Session of the General Conference has come and gone. My friend "Ginny" is heartbroken because as a lesbian married to her partner, she finds the "we love you but not your sin" response to be cold comfort. **Ginny left The United Methodist Church several years ago, saying, "They rejected me, so I rejected them."** Her prayer that her childhood denomination would accept her fully went unanswered.

My friend "Lori" is also heartbroken at the outcome. She agrees with the current phrasing in the Discipline that states, "The practice of homosexuality is incompatible with Christian teaching." Lori is distressed because many who disagree with her viewpoint have accused her of "hating gays". **Lori cried out: "I don't hate anybody. But I can't condone sin.** How is it loving to encourage someone in a life of sin?" Her prayer that her church would unite in "upholding Scripture" also went unanswered.

These stories are only two of the thousands being told, and I am not alone as a member of UMW in my concerns about how we will be impacted by the Special Session. Luckily, we have guidance in our PURPOSE, our Charter for Racial Justice, and our leadership (see Renee's article on page 4).

The Charter states, **"God is the Creator of all people, and all are God's children in one family"** and affirms, "We commit ourselves as individuals and as a community to follow Jesus Christ in word and in deed, and to struggle for the rights and the self-determination of every person and group of persons."

(Article by Lisa Bacon, Justice Today Committee member and Conference Communications Coordinator)



Social Action Priority — Maternal & Child Health

*"All the beautiful sentiments in the world weigh less than a single lovely action."
~James Russell Lowell*

Maternal & Child Health is a Social Action Priority for 2016-2020 and rightfully so. **Regrettably, the United States is the only developed country in the world to have seen an alarming rise in maternal deaths.** Between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality rate in the U.S. jumped from around 17 percent to 26 percent. UNICEF reports that maternal deaths, in total, have declined 54 percent globally, highlighting U.S. reversion in this matter.

Not only does the United States have the highest maternal mortality rate in the developed world, maternal care is among the costliest—in-hospital births can cost a woman up to \$8,000.00. In 2016, roughly 11 percent of adult women (not including the elderly) were uninsured; if a woman has little or no insurance coverage, she may choose to opt out of necessary obstetric care services. Blacks, Latinas, and Native American women have the highest rates of maternal mortality at around 47 and 39 deaths per 100,000 live births.

United Methodist Women have always been on the frontline in the fight for women, children, and youth. Ever since the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society (forerunner of United Methodist Women) sent Dr. Clara Swain to Bareilly, India, in 1870 to be the physician for the local women there, we have stepped up, spoken out, and supported efforts to improve lives.

Currently, **United Methodist Women support *The Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions* bill (S.1112) which has advanced in the Senate.** "This bipartisan legislation, introduced by Senators Heidi Heitkamp (D-ND) and Shelley Moore-Capito (R-WV), will help reverse our country's rising maternal mortality rate by assisting states to establish or improve multidisciplinary committees that will track, analyze and identify local solutions to prevent maternal deaths. These are known as maternal mortality review committees (MMRCs).

How can you help?

Contact your U.S. Representative and Senators at the Capitol Switchboard (202-224-3121) or in their district office to voice your support for:

Maternal Deaths Act of 2017, H.R. 1318 and **Maternal Health Accountability Act, S.1112**, which incentivizes states with federal funding to establish Maternal Mortality Review Committees.

Mothers and Offspring Mortality & Morbidity Awareness (MOMMA) Act, H.R. 5977 – legislation to extend Medicaid coverage for pregnant women, ensures accessible, quality, and available natal care.

Let your members of Congress hear from you! Let's make sure these important pieces of legislation become law!

Grace and Peace to you,

Carolyn Payne, Conference Mission Coordinator — Social Action
336-766-5568 h/336-972-5489 c/reginaldtpayne@bellsouth.net

Stretching and Rocking: A Message from the Legacy Fund Committee



As you are reading this article we United Methodist Women have already formally celebrated our 150th Birthday Celebration...150 years in Mission. But just as our Mission continues, so does our opportunity to build our Legacy. As a matter of fact, **now** is the time to intensify our commitment to that Legacy.

We in the Western NC Conference lead the nation in our support of the Legacy Fund. Let me say that again...*We in the Western NC Conference lead the nation in our support of the Legacy Fund.* How much is that support, you ask? As of the end of 2018 the total is \$251,745. But **our Conference Goal is \$1.5 million, a S-T-R-E-T-C-H objective by any measure.**

How might we—each member, circle, unit, district—go about achieving such an objective? Set benchmarks. Use those hallmark numbers, 1869 and 150. Pledge to add \$18.69 per member or \$186.90 per unit per month to the Legacy Fund. Mix and match numbers—the point is to keep the giving vibrant and alive...**a Legacy never ends.**

Many districts are having events and activities to keep the Legacy going. Join yours! Join others! The Conference will continue to provide “Legacy Opportunities” for your participation (and just plain fun) at our gatherings.

A “Must Do” at the Spiritual Growth Retreat will be the “Rock Around the Lake.” It is called a “Rock-a-Thon”. How does it work? Each participant chooses to rock in a rocking chair for a specific number of minutes (her choice). She gathers sponsors to pledge a specific amount per minute (her choice). She comes, she rocks, and she donates the proceeds to the Legacy fund. What could be easier? And what better place? We all know Lake Junaluska is the “Land of the Rockers”. At our Spiritual Growth Retreat, let’s make it a land full of Rockers Rocking for Legacy.

And there is more! There will be a “photographer” at each designated location to snap photos of every rocker. These will be shared as the Retreat is closing, thus creating another kind of Legacy for participants and friends to enjoy. You will also find them posted on the WNCC UMW website and Facebook page. So, bring your best smiles and even a sign sharing something about you, your unit or church or who your sponsors are.

Will this be your only opportunity to Rock? Of course not! Your Legacy Fund Committee is busily looking around for rockers (and Rockers) at Mission u , and they will certainly be available at Annual Celebration.

Yes, we Western NC United Methodist Women have had remarkable success in our support of the Legacy fund up to now. Here is our chance to show we are in it for the long run.



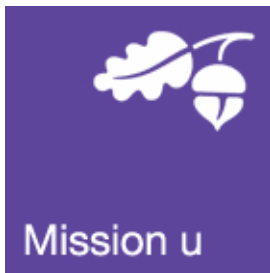
Help us get Conference Gram into the right hands! Do us a favor and check with your fellow officers to see if they are receiving the Conference Gram. **The US Postal Service does not return undeliverable mail sent under a non-profit permit.** Let us know of any additions or corrections. This newsletter is mailed or e-mailed to all Local Unit Presidents, Vice-Presidents, Secretaries, Treasurers, and Circle Chairs. You may choose to receive the newsletter via e-mail by contacting Lynne Gilbert at lynnegilbert2@gmail.com. If you prefer a hard copy via “snail mail”, it is essential we know that and have a correct address for you. Thank you!



Lisa Bacon, Conference Communications Coordinator
(contact info on back page)

**Western North Carolina Conference
United Methodist Women**

Lisa Bacon
1028 Old Cullowhee Rd
Sylva, NC 28779-6539
lisabacon304@gmail.com



Call it a well-kept secret, or an undiscovered treasure, **Mission u is a place to learn to be more like Jesus.** After we sing, pray and break bread together, we make commitments to serve our Lord through our organization. We are BOLD in our faith but cannot rest until all are fed, all have clothes and shelter. We know that our skies are just as blue in Haiti, as in Cambodia, in Russia and in Armenia. We know that mothers everywhere want what is best for their family just as we do. Until young girls feel safe from trafficking, until no one is in prison, until no child is abused, until no child or adult goes to bed hungry, until everyone has clothes, until the sick are well, until no one feels alone or alienated – until then, we have work to do. What better way to serve than through United Methodist Women, and Mission u?

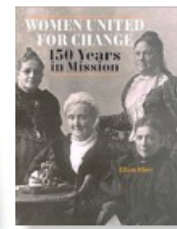
(shared by Patricia Shoffner, former Dean)

Remember to order your study books ahead of time.

Study books may not be available at Mission u and will be in **limited** supply at the Spiritual Growth Retreat because of the new Program Resource guidelines.

Mission u 2019 is July 18-21 at Pfeiffer University.

“Radical Discipleship: Then and Now”



For more information, visit www.wnccumw.org