We may be “staying at home”, but our mission dollars are still on the move.

An Anxious World...

I’m not good at “doing nothing”...I’m a multi-tasker. Being housebound has been an opportunity to give our home a real spring cleaning. It’s also been an opportunity to do things differently and to adjust to doing without. Since our Annual Celebration in 2017 we have often referred to its theme, “Change is Good.” Now we have been forced to put many “changes” into practice. When light returns to this virus-filled world, perhaps we will have become more connected with women around the world who daily struggle for food and basic supplies.

Speaking of “changes,” with the safety of our United Methodist Women members at stake, both the June 12-14 Spiritual Growth Retreat at Lake Junaluska and the July 23-26 Mission u at Pfeiffer University have been cancelled for 2020. Both decisions were a difficult but necessary part of responsible leadership. While we are all disappointed, we had to consider many factors. There were not only safety issues but financial ones for the Conference, Pfeiffer University, Lake Junaluska, and those participants who have registered and/or have reserved housing.

The April 17-19 Southeastern Jurisdiction (SEJ) United Methodist Women Quadrennial Meeting in Mobile, AL, was postponed. Plans are being made for our three conference delegates to vote virtually for National Directors at some point. The SEJ meeting is pending a reschedule later in the year. For those who ordered SEJ cookbooks, I assume those books will be available at that meeting.

Finding Peace...

Our prayers are for a summer of rapid recovery so we can return to Lake Junaluska for Annual Celebration on September 11-13, 2020. The Lake is beautiful in late summer and we hope you will plan to attend. Joanie Strohm and her team will include some spiritual growth aspects similar to those at past events. Save the dates June 11-13, 2021, for Spiritual Growth Retreat with the theme “You Lift Me Up!”

The National Office of United Methodist Women plans to offer online webinars in the summer to cover some of the scheduled Mission u studies. More information will be shared later. Studies for 2021 will be as previously scheduled. Be sure to mark your calendar for Mission u July 15-18, 2021.

As Easter has come and gone in an unusual fashion, I am reminded of a Palm Sunday sermon Rev. A. C. Brock, Jr., shared with my congregation a few years ago entitled “...But Sunday’s Coming!” Just as Jesus rose on that Sunday morning, we should never lose hope during these long, lonely, and anxious days. We know God is still in charge and stands beside us and will guide us toward a brighter future. I pray you and your family are safe and secure as we await the day we can greet each other with loving embraces and fully appreciate the freedoms and opportunities we have in this world.

Julia Willis, Conference President
jawillis1@aol.com/336-685-4857

In Memory
Fran Jordan, Blue Ridge District President, May 7, 2020
Betty Jacobsen, Catawba Valley Mission Coordinator for Social Action, May 12, 2020
Mission u 2020 Update: Moving Forward

How different the world is today from this time last year as Mission u 2019 approached. Earlier this year, our plans for Mission u 2020 were right on schedule: the Mission u Committee had met, Assistant Dean Lynn Alexander and I had been on Zoom meetings with National Office staff, and study leaders were in place—all before any signs of COVID-19 had appeared. A special thank you goes out to those who had committed to be study leaders this year. They are being invited back for 2021.

Fast forward to today. Who would ever think our churches would have to close their doors? The doors to our buildings are closed but not our ‘doors’ to God, who loves us and compels us to meet the needs of our members and communities. Serenity Prayer author Reinhold Niebuhr believed we could work to bring about the reign of God in the here and now. “The prayer does not deny that anxiety exists or that it is powerful, but instead encourages us to place our trust in God. This is a prayer for times of uncertainty, for feelings of anxiety, for moments of fear: it is both a soothing balm and a weapon of resistance.” (Excerpt from the Spiritual Growth Leader’s Guide)

While we will not gather at Pfeiffer University this summer, the Spiritual Growth study Finding Peace in an Anxious World will be offered online. This study uses Niebuhr’s Serenity Prayer as a framework. The National Mission u office and teacher trainers plan to have resources ready by the end of May, and we will get more information to you later. (Because the Pushout study will carry over to Mission u 2021, it will not be online this year.)

In the study of Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools, our question is: Where is the justice in the school systems that allow Black girls to be pushed out? We will reexamine Micah 6:8: No, O people, the LORD has told you what is good, and this is what he requires of you: to do what is right, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God. (NLT)

Next summer, how good and perfect it will be to gather in His name for Mission u July 15-18, 2021!
Patricia Moore, WNCC Mission u Dean
phmoore71@gmail.com/704-502-2383

Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools

Author Monique W. Morris lays out a compelling account of how the U.S. educational system pushes Black girls out of school and into a future that is too often unsafe. This study invites us to “challenge the system rather than change the child” (to quote Sandrea Williamson).

As a retired teacher, it is tempting to take offense at the idea our schools are designed to push anyone out the door. As a member of United Methodist Women, however, I continue to learn systems often perform differently than the individuals making up the system. Schools can have the unintended consequence of excluding some students even if they weren’t designed to do so.

For example, zero-tolerance policies originally intended to protect students from guns on school grounds have ballooned to include everything from dress-code violations to “willful defiance.” In September 2013, seven-year-old Tiana Parker was sent home from school in Tulsa, Oklahoma, for wearing dreadlocks, because her school dress code deemed them “unacceptable.” Think about that: a hairstyle became a reason to send a young child home from school. She was “pushed out” the door because this country established White femininity (and hair) as the standard.

Our belief about what is acceptable may cause us to judge a person’s intentions based on appearance. Dreadlocks seem “rebellious,” so we decide someone has a “defiant” personality. We make assumptions without being aware we are doing so, which is an example of implicit bias.

We can’t challenge the system if we aren’t willing to challenge ourselves. A good starting place is Project Implicit, found at implicit.harvard.edu/implicit, which has an implicit bias test on race. The test asks you to sort pictures and words into groups as fast as you can and analyzes your responses for associations. Expect to be unsettled by the results. Choose how you will respond to your implicit biases. Will you ignore them? Decide the test is wrong? Give up in despair because you think biases make you a bad person? No! As a strong member of United Methodist Women, you will use this information as a jumping-off point to challenge the system and end Pushout. (Submitted by Lisa Bacon, Mission u study leader for “Pushout”)

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A Calming Practice for our Time – Body Prayer

The Spiritual Growth Study for 2020 Mission u—Finding Peace in an Anxious World—offers some excellent practices to help us deal with our stress and anxiety during these trying times.

These practices include a) saying breath prayers; b) using the Examen to reflect on our daily life; c) offering a welcoming prayer to find and accept God’s presence in all things; d) walking a labyrinth or using a finger labyrinth for a time of meditation and self-calming prayer, and e) using a body prayer to center our minds and our bodies on our connection to God. (All of these practices are described in detail in the study book.)

Here’s one prayer practice we can use in anxious times. It comes directly from the Leader’s Guide for Finding Peace. Spend some time centering in your body as you try this prayer. The text for this prayer is inspired by Psalm 31, with some additional scriptures. After you’ve finished the prayer with its movements, spend some time reviewing the comforting scriptures.

Begin by standing or sitting in a comfortable position, with feet shoulder-width apart and hands at sides.

Say: Holy God, you call us to lives of courage and wisdom, not lives of anxiety.
(Deuteronomy 31:6)

Raise both arms above your head.

Say: We raise our hands high, because you ask us to work with willing hands.
(Proverbs 3:5-8)

Stretch your hands out in front of you, palms up.

Say: We stretch our hands in front of us, because you call us to reach out to those in need.
(Proverbs 19:17)

Bring your hands to your brow, above your eyes, as if searching the distance.

Say: We bring your hands to your brow, that we may face the future without fear.
(2 Timothy 1:7)

Slowly bring your hands to your chest, pressed together in the traditional prayer pose.

Say: We move to a posture of centering prayer, because we ask for your wisdom.
(Proverbs 9:10-11)

Amen.

(Submitted by Sandrea Williamson, Mission u study leader for “Finding Peace”)

Treasurer Tidbit$: Keeping Mission Alive While We “Social Distance”

Across our Conference, we have been practicing “social distancing” and foregoing gathering as units and circles and enjoying face-to-face community. As a result, many of us have not had the opportunity to fulfill our support of Mission through our Pledge and other channels of giving.

This is deeply concerning; the needs haven’t stopped while we are staying at home. Our mission dollars have always supported women, children, and youth in under-resourced areas, and the need is greater than ever. The good news is that our mission dollars don’t have to “shelter in place.” They are still on the move and can go where we cannot.

WNC Conference United Methodist Women has set up an Online Mission Giving option on our WNCC UMW website: https://wnccumw.org/online-mission-giving/

Click on the blue GIVE NOW button, and enter the usual personal information as well as the name of your unit and District, amount, and payment method. If you choose to pay by credit card you will be taken to a secure site. You will receive an email acknowledging your gift. That information will also be sent to your District treasurer, who will credit your unit with the amount of the Mission Giving.

Fast, easy, and once again you have provided essential support to UMW Mission with Faith, Hope, and Love in Action. Try it! You’ll like it!

Nancy Reigel, Conference Treasurer

nancy@reigelridge.com/828-268-0637
Mission Memo

Dear Friends, thank you for $105,000 in year 150! The Hands-on mission donations you gave at Conference and District events in 2019 totaled $105,486.50.

We had planned to collect UMCOR Hygiene Kits for Spiritual Growth Retreat, UMCOR School Kits for Mission u, and Christmas Shoeboxes for Project AGAPE in Armenia at Annual Celebration. I have high hopes that we will have our Annual Celebration at Lake Junaluska in September and you can bring all the kits to that event.

The masks from the Cleaning Buckets at our Mission Resource Center were donated to medical personnel. When the crisis has ended, we will need to replace those masks. What can we UMW members do about this? As masks become available, we can purchase them, or we can make them. (Let’s not use the N95 masks for Cleaning Buckets; they need to be reserved for medical staff.) When we can get back together, we can have mask-making parties. Those who don’t sew can cut and fold and assemble. Have fun with it!

Love, Peace and Joy,
LindaLu Greer, Conference Mission Coordinator for Education and Interpretation
jacklindagreer@bellsouth.net/704-585-6263

A Note from Nancy about our 2020 Love Offering—We need your input!

Your local unit treasurer has received the 2020 Love Offering brochure in the mail. This year’s theme is: A Gift to Mission “Honoring and Affirming Clergywomen: Past, Present and Future.”

You are invited to share the names of clergywomen you wish to honor for their impact on your life. Include names with your check if you mail the donation or put names on a slip of paper included with your donation as the offering basket is passed at Annual Celebration. You will find a section in the brochure to record the name(s) for your own records.

The names of the honorees will be compiled and shared in a 2021 Conference Gram. We know it will be a list to cherish as we celebrate their legacy in our lives.

On Kathy’s Reading List...

The United Methodist Women’s Reading Program has some excellent choices related to “Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools”, which will be offered at Mission u 2021. Take advantage of the opportunity to do some advance preparation while you have extra free time.

So You Want to Talk About Race by Ijeoma Oluo addresses the widespread reporting on white supremacy that has made it impossible to ignore racism, while acknowledging that race is a difficult subject to discuss. Each chapter asks a question about race, such as, “What if I talk about race wrong?” Or, “What is intersectionality and why do I need it?” This book is a Reading Program bonus book and counts as two books in Social Action.

Other 2020 Reading Program choices related to our Mission u studies include:

Midnight Teacher: Lilly Ann Granderson and Her Secret School by Janet Halfman
Holding Up Your Corner by F. Willis Johnson
God Unbound: Wisdom from Galatians for the Anxious Church by Elaine B. Heath
Glory Happening: Finding the Divine in Everyday Places by Kaitlin B. Curtis

Blessings to all; the Lord is so good to His people.

Kathy Chadwell, Conference Secretary of Program Resources
k.sc2008@hotmail.com/336-475-1261
THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL!

“We’re living in unprecedented times,” you’ve undoubtably heard in recent months. As an organization, we’ve had to make agonizing decisions, resulting in plans, work, and aspirations being put on hold. As individuals, we have felt inconvenienced, isolated, and even insecure; it seems we woke up one morning and the earth stopped moving, leaving us to wonder when it will start again. Some say they’ll be happy when things return to normal; for others, normal is a matter of disproportion.

For most of us, the current situation is simply a matter of waiting it out—not so for other communities. The coronavirus has been unrelenting in its impact on Americans of color. While African-Americans make up only 13% of the U.S. population, they account for one-third of COVID-19 deaths. WHY?!

Dr. Deborah Birx, White House coronavirus task force public health official, says, “it’s not that they are getting infected more often, it’s that when they do get infected, their underlying medical conditions—the diabetes, hypertension, the obesity, the asthma—those are the kind of things that wind them up in the ICU and ultimately give them a higher death rate.”

Other factors include the unequal rate of incarceration of African-Americans, since overcrowded prisons and jails are incubators for COVID-19. Blacks are overrepresented in low-paying essential work in industrial areas that puts them most at risk. They come to work sick because they don’t have paid sick leave. Some don’t have medical insurance and are unable to visit a doctor on a regular basis, so they don’t realize they have underlying medical conditions. In urban areas, inhabitants rely on crowded public transportation to get to their destination: no social distancing. Furthermore, Blacks below the poverty level are less likely to live in neighborhoods that give them access to healthy foods that boost the immune system.

And there is another possibility that is not as apparent as the others: some African-Americans don’t trust the American healthcare system. Many remember past discriminatory practices such as the Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis that began in 1932, where Black males took part in a study without full disclosure or mindful consent and were treated shamefully by the very government charged with protecting its citizens.

During this time of testing, United Methodist Women are responding to this pandemic in various ways and we encourage you to check out these resources:


Coronavirus Highlights the Gaping Holes in Our Healthcare and Labor System, by Carol Barton: pnblog.typepad.com/pndblog/2020/03/coronavirus-highlights-the-gaping-holes-in-our-healthcare-system.html?fbclid=IwAR3PC87rHcZ5Rfmuq3j0N5vdGk5VoERmTV1EyqC7zeOQLtAoaDAA

Coronavirus Shows Cracks in the Gig Economy, by Carol Barton: www.route50.com/finance/2020/03/coronavirus-shows-cracks-gig-economy/164176/

Carolyn Payne, Conference Mission Coordinator—Social Action carolynp8g@yahoo.com/336-766-5568 h/336-972-5489 c

Check out the Historian’s article on p. 6 to read how our foremothers were “love in action” during the 1918 pandemic. See how our WNCC mission institutions are serving now (below and on pages 6-8).

Brooks-Howell has implemented protocols to protect the health and wellness of our residents and staff. These include restricting visitors, screening all staff each day upon arrival, and securing the skilled nursing staff units. Independent Residents are encouraged to remain in their accommodations as much as possible and group activities have been suspended or occur via Channel 57 (Sunday school, worship, movies, etc.). A COVID-19 Emergency Fund has been established to purchase personal protective equipment and other critical supplies.

I continue to be impressed with the many actions of care for one another as we face these difficult times with faith and perseverance. Your thoughts and prayers are greatly appreciated.
From the Historian’s Quill….  
As I sit here on a beautiful Sunday afternoon with birds singing and the sun shining, the world seems to be falling apart around me. United Methodist Women have been there for earlier pandemics such as the pandemic of 1918, AIDS, and Ebola. **Our foremothers charted the way for us.** We have always been the hands and feet of Jesus for women, children, and youth around the world.

We know our “origin history”: eight women in 1869 sent a doctor and a teacher to India. But how much do we know about what our predecessor organizations did during the pandemic of 1918 and World War I? Possibly not much. Finding detailed accounts is hard, but we know the roles women played then and they read like UMW of today.

First, **the 1918 flu pandemic advanced Women’s Rights.** This virus disproportionately affected young men. More men died from the flu than they did from the war. Women had to step up into roles previously closed to them, such as **railroads** and the **military**.

Outside the workplace, women became more involved in community decision making. In 1919, the **National Federation of Business and Professional Women’s Clubs** was founded. This organization focused on eliminating sex discrimination in the workforce. As more women entered the workforce, the need for quality affordable childcare grew.

This is where the **Woman’s Home Missionary Society** (WHMS) stepped in, opening centers like the Bethlehem Centers and Wesley Educational Centers, centers where the children of underpaid women in the workforce could thrive.

Because of what women like **Lucy W. Hayes** (wife of President Rutherford B. Hayes and first president of the WHMS) and others had set in motion in 1880 at its founding, the WHMS was ready to serve in crisis. They were already preparing for women’s rights in the workplace, women’s right to vote, children’s right to quality health care and daycare. Already being the hands and feet of Jesus with Faith, Hope, and Love in Action. **(See below and on pages 5 and 7 to see how our work continues.)**

Betty Durham, Conference Historian  
betty.durham50@yahoo.com/336-542-8077

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**Bethlehem Center of Charlotte**

“**If one of you says to them, ‘Go in peace; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about their physical needs, what good is it?” (James 2:16, NIV)**

**It’s hard to fill the mind when the stomach is empty.** When the coronavirus pandemic forced schools to close, the **Bethlehem Center of Charlotte** Family Engagement staff assessed family needs and found the first need to be children’s access to nutrition. Without skipping a day, BCC provided breakfast, lunch, and snack as a “drive-by” service. That first week of school closures BCC provided access to food for 130 families! By week three, most families were able to transition to community services for these meals.

As BCC’s primary role focuses on children’s success in learning, the BCC staff, now working from home, turned their focus to **providing caregivers with educational tools.** BCC’s Preschool Leadership team provides resources via their website, phone, text, and email to share “learn at play” ideas for our young learners, while Preschool teachers host read-a-louds, learning-through-play and other small group activities virtually using Zoom. The staff have also created and mailed Take-Home kits filled with supplies to supplement the Head Start and Early Head Start curriculum.

BCC continues to operate a modified version of its **Out of School Time** (OST) program for children whose parents are Essential Workers. Twelve students meet at a local church from 8am to 5pm. Here the BCC staff continue the OST curriculum on leadership skills and college or career readiness, while connecting with the students’ Charlotte-Mecklenburg (CMS) teachers to ensure that their CMS studies were also complete. **You may access a video of their activities** and how BCC was able to connect with a family-operated business who’s making sure that actionable words spoken in James 16:2 are lived here in the Charlotte community by going to: [https://www.wsoctv.com/news/local/restaurant-feeding-kids-free-while-organization-helps-with-student-learning/KGZQ5TUW2RBVZIR5HMCEF6HAIQ/](https://www.wsoctv.com/news/local/restaurant-feeding-kids-free-while-organization-helps-with-student-learning/KGZQ5TUW2RBVZIR5HMCEF6HAIQ/)

(Note: the video was filmed April 9, 2020, and followed social distancing guidelines mandated at that time. Thank you to Kim Lenz, Communications and Development Manager for BCC, for sharing about their pandemic response.)
What happens to my Spiritual Growth Retreat registration and housing fees now that the 2020 retreat has been canceled? (continued from p. 1)

The Spiritual Growth Online $25 registration fee is not refundable, but you have four options:
1. Request your $25 registration fee be applied to the September 11-13, 2020 Annual Celebration.
2. Request your $25 registration fee be applied to the June 11-13, 2021 Spiritual Growth Retreat.
3. Request your registration be transferred to another person for either of the above events.
4. Allow your $25 registration fee to be a Love Offering toward our Pledge. The demands on Mission Giving are greater than ever and your support will be appreciated.

Please notify Julia Willis (jawillis1@aol.com, 336-685-4857) as to which option you prefer.

What about my housing reservation at Lake Junaluska Property Housing for Spiritual Growth Retreat?
ALL Spiritual Growth Retreat reservations and payments for Lake Junaluska properties are being transferred to Annual Celebration, September 11-13, 2020. If this is acceptable, you need to do nothing.

If you must cancel the reservation transferred to Annual Celebration, you have four options:
A. Transfer $100 deposit or full payment to 2021 Spiritual Growth Retreat at the current room rate.
B. Give part or all of $100 deposit or full payment as a gift to Lake Junaluska since they have been hard-hit during the “stay at home” order.
C. In lieu of a refund, get a gift certificate for lodging at Lake Junaluska that is valid through the end of 2020.
D. Receive full refund of $100 deposit or full payment, because Lake Junaluska has generously agreed not to charge the standard $15 administrative fee for refunds.

We urge you to consider options A-C during this difficult period.
ALL requests for Lake Junaluska housing payments MUST BE handled with the Lake’s registration staff via email: reservations@lakejunaluska.com.

Indicate in the email:
• Why you are cancelling your reservation.
• Whether you want the deposit refunded to you or donated to Lake Junaluska.
• Whether you want the refund on your credit card or by check.

Please be patient as their “skeleton” reservations staff is very limited and refunds will not be swift. Please DO NOT call the reservations office.
Lake Junaluska has been very gracious in regard to our legal Agreement. We’ve had a long relationship with them and we greatly appreciate the understanding they have shown to us.

If you have housing reservations at area housing/hotels or non-Lake Junaluska-owned property, you must contact that facility directly. The above options do not apply.

During the pandemic, Pfeiffer University has offered online-only courses. Pfeiffer assessed individual students’ technical capabilities and where needed provided laptops or other equipment so students would be able to access the online offerings. Tutoring and counseling are available via phone conferences.

Unlike many other institutions, Pfeiffer allowed students who needed to remain on campus (approximately 75) to do so for the remainder of the spring semester. Meal service continued to be offered as take-out only with strict social distancing maintained. It is also responding affirmatively to students’ requests for refunds of room and board costs for the remainder of the year if they did leave.
Pfeiffer recently launched a new student relief fund, “Help a Falcon Fly,” requesting donations to help qualifying students with the cost of tuition when the university reopens in the fall.

(Additional WNCC mission institution information is on pp. 5, 6, and 8)
"My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." (2 Cor. 12:9, NIV)

As we navigate this unfamiliar way of being United Methodist Women members, we have choices to make. We can fall into despair, or we can rely on God’s grace to see us through and even bring something new into being. As we nurture our membership and reach out to potential new members, we can use old and new methods to share our mission stories and legacy. The challenges that United Methodist Women face today can open new doors if we are willing to walk through them. For this year’s Walks for Mission, consider posting photos and videos on your unit’s or District’s Facebook pages. Involve daughters, nieces, granddaughters, and neighbors in using technology to highlight our faith, hope, and love in action, even if you are engaging in these activities on your own or in small groups.

If British centenarians can raise millions for health care by walking in the garden, we UMW members in the Western North Carolina Conference can rely on God’s grace and our own grit to wring good out of this anxious time. Our legacy can be a sign of our gratitude for the blessings we have received through belonging to our bold organization!

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

Congratulations to our newly commissioned WNCC Deaconesses!

Renee Hayes, Northern Piedmont District
Eloise Moore, Northern Piedmont District

We celebrate their accomplishment and look forward to their “COVID-19-delayed” consecration and commissioning.

(Congratulations also to Joy Prim, formerly of Yadkin Valley District)

Our WNCC mission institutions are not “shut down”. Learn more about their current services and needs:

- Bennett College: http://www.bennett.edu/
- Bethlehem Center of Charlotte: http://bethlehemcenter.org/
- Bethlehem Center of Winston-Salem: https://www.facebook.com/BethlehemCenterWS/
- Brooks-Howell: https://brooks-howell.org/
- Hinton Rural Life Center: https://www.hintoncenter.org/
- Pfeiffer University: http://www.pfeiffer.edu/