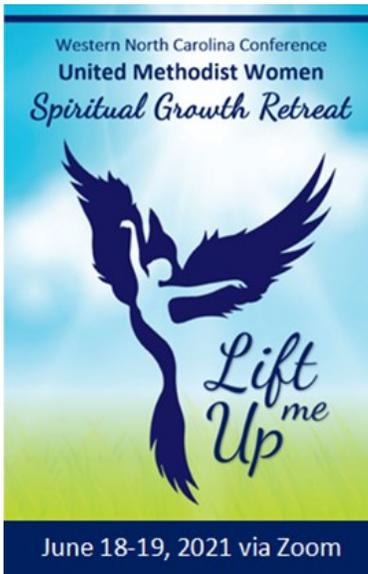




Conference Gram

April 2021

Volume 70, Issue 2



Spring is here at last, and we have so much to celebrate this year. COVID-19 is on the decrease, folks are getting vaccinated, and families are gathering again. “Normal” can be seen on the horizon. As Christians, we have been to the grave on Easter morning and found it empty! Praise God for the Resurrection of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

Make plans now to join us for our Spiritual Growth Retreat this June! We are going to be virtual again this year, just to be on the safe side, but we hope to involve as many UMW members and friends as possible. Our retreat theme is “**You Lift Me Up.**” How appropriate is that?! We will be “lifted up” through music, preaching, and break-out sessions.

Catherine Ritch and Rev. Mark Barden return as our music leaders, and Rev. Lisa Beth White will be our speaker. The retreat begins Friday evening, June 18, at 7:00 and continues for two sessions on Saturday, June 19. The morning session will be at 10:00 and the afternoon session at 2:00. New this year will be break-out sessions on both Saturday morning and afternoon. We will even offer chair yoga! Although we won’t be able to be together at the Lake, through

technology we can still connect with one another. In fact, between those who participated in the virtual event live and those who watched the videos later, more people participated in last year’s retreat online than typically attend the in-person event.

More information, including the online registration link, will be available as we near June.

Darlene Gardner, WNCC UMW Mission Coordinator for Spiritual Growth
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Retreat Leaders

Speaker: Rev. Lisa Beth White

Music Leaders: Catherine Ritch and Rev. Mark L. Barden

Break-out Offerings

- Tea and Meditation
- Knitting Together
- Prayer Journaling
- Commemorating Juneteenth
- Book study on *You Raise Me Up*, written by Catherine Ritch about WNCC mission in Armenia

The Fact of the Matter!

There are two United Methodist Women Mission Issue Priorities for 2021-2024. The first priority is the criminalization of communities of color with a focus on [Interrupting the School-to-Prison Pipeline](#). The second is climate justice with an emphasis on [Just Energy for All](#).



Continuing our advocacy for climate justice could not have come at a more crucial time. Recent catastrophic events have highlighted the need for social action in this area. Global temperatures have increased by more than 1°F during the past century and are projected to increase 2.5-10.4°F by 2100 because of human emissions of greenhouse gases. Each year the world adds 51 billion tons of greenhouse gases to the atmosphere.

The fact of the matter is:

- ◆ The climate crisis is one of the biggest threats to economic stability.
- ◆ Heatwaves make us less able to work and decrease productivity.
- ◆ Hurricanes, tornadoes, and typhoons of historic devastation and frequency are leaving millions in poverty.
- ◆ Droughts are impacting the harvest yield and price of basic crops, so consumer prices are rising.
- ◆ Disease is spreading due to higher temperatures.
- ◆ Fresh water is in short supply in some areas.
- ◆ Wars (especially regional conflicts) are increasing over competition for limited resources.
- ◆ Warmer temperatures are impacting growing seasons, altering carbon cycling and storage in the Alaskan tundra, and increasing frequency and intensity of forest fires.

Who is most at risk due to the climate crisis?

- ◆ People of color, indigenous peoples, and people with lower incomes.
- ◆ Those who live close to coasts or rivers or in cities or developed areas that border less-developed natural areas.
- ◆ People working in agriculture, fisheries, construction, or other industries with large, exposed outdoor labor forces.



What can you do?

- ◆ **Be Just, Be Green:** be persistent in your use of [13 Steps to Sustainability](#).
- ◆ Contact your elected officials and advocate for clean energy systems, smarter urban development, and sustainable farming methods.
- ◆ Strongly encourage industry to recycle plastic packaging. 95% of the value of the material from plastic packaging (up to 120 billion dollars a year) is lost after the first use.



The matter is serious, the facts are irrefutable, and **the time to act is NOW!**

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



Those plastic shopping bags...

- ...are made from petroleum. In the US alone, 12 million barrels of oil are used each year to make these bags.
- ...create greenhouse gases if burned and add to the climate crisis.
- ...are part of the 13 million tons of plastic washed into the ocean every year.

...and to experience freedom as whole persons through Jesus Christ...

Spotlight on a WNCC UMW Scholarship Fund Recipient

Justin Snyder shares about the impact United Methodist Women and the [WNCC UMW Scholarship Program](#) has had on his faith journey. Justin was a music leader at our 2018 Spiritual Growth Retreat.

“Growing up in The United Methodist Church, I was surrounded by wonderful **women who embodied faith, hope, and love in the church and in the world.** Paul writes, *‘There are different spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; and there are different ministries and the same Lord; and there are different activities but the same God who produces all of them in everyone’* (1 Cor. 12:4-6, CEB). When I was young, it was UMW members who invited me to participate in the life of the church, encouraging me to join the handbell and vocal choirs and to play piano in worship. They recognized my passions as God-given gifts and showed me how these gifts of the Spirit could further the kingdom of God.



When I enrolled at Pfeiffer University in 2007, I knew God and music would be important parts of my future. **As a first-generation college student, the cost of higher education was overwhelming.** A UMW leader at my home church encouraged me to apply for a UMW scholarship. Out of all of my scholarship interviews, this one was the most fun! I remember the love, support, and encouragement I received throughout the interview. I was reminded of the mutual concern we are called to have for each other as the Body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:25). The committee members genuinely cared about me, my education, and the ways God was working in my life. The assistance I received through the UMW Scholarship Program allowed me to focus on my studies and participate in church internships, which helped equip me for ministry after college.

I graduated in 2011 with a degree in music and taught in public school and also served as a music director in the local church. After teaching for eight years, I transitioned to a full-time role at Forest Hill UMC in Concord, NC. Throughout the years, I have been grateful for the leadership of women in The United Methodist Church.

As a youth, UMW members helped me recognize my gifts and encouraged me to use them in ministry. In college, they supported me both financially and spiritually. And in the present, women of faith (including my pastor) have helped me discern my calling. **Today, I am the Ministry Coordinator and Director of Music at my church.** I am also pursuing a Master’s of Divinity at Hood Theological Seminary with the intent of being ordained in The United Methodist Church. I am grateful for the ways I have been able to experience the faith, hope, and love of God through the mission of United Methodist Women.”

Spotlight on the Weaver Scholarship

Justin received funds from the Weaver Memorial Scholarship and the General Fund. The Weaver scholarship was established in 1960 by Florence Stacey Weaver of Winston-Salem, NC, as a memorial to her husband Rev. C. C. Weaver, a Methodist minister.

Florence Weaver was the first President of the Women’s Society of Christian Service (WSCS), which formed after the 1939 union of the Methodist Episcopal Church, Methodist Episcopal Church South, and Methodist Protestant Church established The Methodist Church. Mrs. Weaver served as WSCS President between 1940 and 1948. Pfeiffer University granted Mrs. Weaver an honorary Doctor of Humanities degree and also established a scholarship in her name in recognition of her more than 75 years’ service to the church.

Mrs. Weaver commented in a 1967 letter written on WSCS letterhead, “My children and I have been contributing to the ‘Weaver Memorial Fund’ for a number of years since Dr. Weaver’s death, hoping that some day the interest will take care of some fine girl or boy studying at Pfeiffer College. It may not come in my lifetime, but I hope that my children will finish it out. Each year on my birthday, we have our family reunion and at that time, each child makes a contribution to this Fund as a gift to me.”



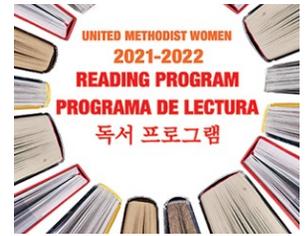
(WNCC UMW Historian Betty Durham and WNCC UMW Scholarship Chairperson Cathy McCauley provided information for these articles.)

... to develop a creative, supportive fellowship...

On Kathy's Reading List...

Greetings in the Name of Our Lord.

As many of us continue to be at home more, we have more opportunity to read books from our [United Methodist Women's Reading Program](#) list. You will find some of the books at your local library and local bookstores. You can also order books online at smile.amazon.com. Hopefully your local unit is able to buy some books for your own library. You can also read books electronically on a laptop, tablet, e-reader, or other device.



The Reading Program has five categories of books: Education for Mission, Leadership Development, Nurturing for Community, Social Action, and Spiritual Growth. There are four levels of participation, all of which also include regular reading of [response](#) magazine:

Plan 1– 5 books a year (one from each category)

Plan 2– 10 books a year (two from each category)

Plan 3– 15 books a year (two from each category and five additional books from any category)

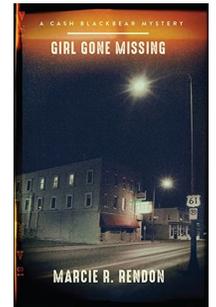
Plan 4– 20 books a year (two from each category and ten additional books from any category)

You may include books from the reading lists for 2017 to the current list if you have not reported them before. Children and youth titles may be included on any plan.



If you listen to three podcasts of [Faith Talks](#), you can count them as a Bonus Book (two books) in the Spiritual Growth category. Faith Talks are monthly conversations hosted by Jennifer Farmer. **The podcasts cover a range of topics, such as creation care, grief, paid family leave, and conversations with regional missionaries and deaconesses.** You can find the podcasts at unitedmethodistwomen.org/faithtalks or wherever you subscribe to podcasts.

I recommend the mystery "[Girl Gone Missing](#)," by Marcie R. Rendon. This book is in the Social Action category. A nineteen-year-old Anishinabe woman (Renee "Cash" Blackbear) hears about a blonde girl in her science class who has "gone missing" and later discovers another blonde girl has disappeared as well. Cash begins to dream about blonde girls calling for help in Minneapolis. She's never been far from her small hometown on the Red River nor is Cash familiar with white slavery. But as Cash gets caught up in a missing person's case, she finds herself in danger. Underlying the mystery is a fictionalized account of how foster care devastated Minnesota American Indian families in the 1960s.



Peace be with you,

Kathy Chadwell, WNCC UMW Secretary of Program Resources

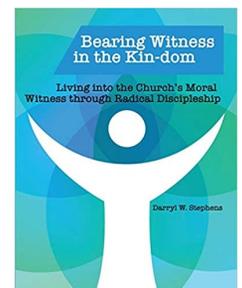
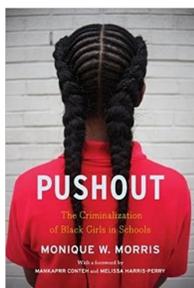
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Get Ready for [Mission u!](#)

Mission u study books are Reading Program Bonus Books.

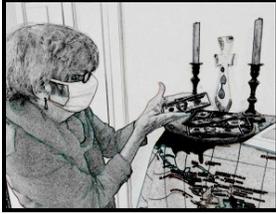
- [Pushout: The Criminalization of Black Girls in Schools](#) by Monique W. Morris (as well as the Leader's Guide by Vanessa M. Wilson) counts as two books in the Social Action category .
- [Bearing Witness in the Kin-dom: Living Into the Church's Moral Witness through Radical Discipleship](#) counts as two books in the Spiritual Growth category.



...and to expand concepts of mission through participation in the global ministries of the church.

2021 Financial Goals: Lessons from 2020

I chose to write this article from a **positive, hopeful perspective**. But I also know many of us are reading these words with **loss still aching in our hearts**—loss of life, loss of job, loss of time with family and church, loss of opportunities.



These experiences color our reactions and expectations as we move further into 2021. Yet our hopes are brightened as the rate of vaccination accelerates. We also have reason for hope as we consider our 2021 Love Offering theme, *“A Gift to Mission in honor of our members’ Faithful Commitment to Mission Giving, through good times and pandemic times.”*

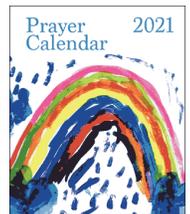
Hope because your faithful commitment was a reality during 2020. While so many opportunities for giving were cancelled or converted to virtual, your faithful giving continued. And while overall giving was down, so were our expenses for gatherings. The net effect was that our Conference still met its Pledge to UMW Missions, reason indeed to honor your faithfulness.

But why do we expect this “honoring” to continue in 2021? First, we fervently believe some in-person gatherings will resume this year (at least at the local level) and as a consequence, giving will rebound. Second, we are seeing increased use of online giving. A silver lining of the pandemic is that many of us became more comfortable with buying clothes and food and other items online—and with giving online. Together, we can see 2021 as indeed a year to honor *“our members’ Faithful Commitment to Mission Giving, through good times and pandemic times.”*

Now let’s look at our **2021 Financial Goal**: *Each unit will make at least one Gift to Mission of at least \$5.00, using any cards they have, in honor of one person in Mission listed in either the Prayer Calendar or a **response** magazine article.*

Let’s break down this complicated goal:

- *Each unit will make at least one Gift to Mission...*One of our [Five Channels of Giving](#) is a Gift to Mission (GTM) to honor the Christ-like mission service of the recipient while also remembering them on a birthday, at Christmas, on a special day, or simply thinking of them. (Giving in all Five Channels meets #10 of our [Mission Today](#) criteria.)
- *Using any cards they have...*Many units purchase GTM cards at District and Conference gatherings to have on hand for future use. Moving these gatherings online meant we missed those handy opportunities to purchase GTM cards. But does making a Gift to Mission require us to use a GTM card? By no means. Unprecedented times require out-of-the-box thinking. This opened a second path—to use any card you have on hand to send a **message of Mission** to your recipient. Then send the GTM donation to your local unit treasurer as you have always done. The money travels its usual route, even though the card may look a little different. This is a win-win: you have sent a message about Mission as you supported Mission giving. (You can also [send an e-card](#).)
- *In honor of [a] person in Mission listed in either the Prayer Calendar or a **response** magazine article.* This stipulation strengthens the tie to Mission by encouraging units to draw on two valuable mission resources—our [Prayer Calendar](#) and [response](#) magazine—to choose a recipient. Communicating with five people listed in the Prayer Calendar fulfills #16 of our Mission Today criteria, so now we have an opportunity for a win-win-win.



Life is an opportunity to continually learn and improve. 2021 (and we) will be better for it.

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





Our 2020 Conference Love Offering was “A Gift to Mission Honoring and Affirming Clergywomen—Past, Present, And Future.” In addition to the names in our hearts, the names of the following clergywomen were submitted to Nancy Reigel in 2020. We give glory to God for all clergywomen and their gifts shared with us then and now and going forward.

Jill Alventosa-Brown
 Veranita Alvord
 Lauren Anderson
 Laura Hubbard Auten
 Tammy Bales
 Sherri Barnes
 Sarah Belles
 Arnetta Beverly
 Pamela Blackstock
 Patience Brumley
 Laura Byrch
 Diean Campbell
 Shirley Canty
 Michelle Chappell
 Kimberly Clarke
 Phyllis Coates
 Amy Coles
 Faith Conklin
 Patricia Connelly
 Megan Sweeny Cook
 Bev Copley
 Elizabeth Coppedge-
 Henley
 Beth Crissman

Ashley Crowder Stanley
 Pat Dixon
 Kelly Dotson
 Karen Doucette
 Renee Easter
 Carter Ellis
 Lynda Ferguson
 Peggy Finch
 Stephanie Foretich-
 McKey
 Kaye Fry
 Meg Gaston
 Jane Goodman
 Mary Gordon
 Mae Graves
 Janet Greene
 Kelley Groce
 Martha Halliburton
 Jody Halstead
 Stephanie Hand
 Jeanette Hayes
 Julia Trantham Heckert
 Elinor Heermans
 Jessica Henson

Lynda Hepler
 Faye Herbin
 Sharon Howell
 Lory Beth Huffman
 Kim Ingram
 Tammy Ingram
 Alycia Johnson
 Mitzi Johnson
 Charlene Kammerer
 Linda Kelly
 Denise Kilgo-Martin
 Hea Sun Kim
 Laurie Knoespel
 In-Yong Lee
 Katie R. Lineberger
 Tracy Fulbright Love
 Suzanne Michael
 Linda Moore
 Caren Bigelow Morgan
 Joy Moss
 Karen Mouw
 Patricia Murphy
 Virginia Myers
 Angela Pleasants

Delores Queen
 Sally Wooten Queen
 Nancy Rankin
 Lisa Rettew
 Julie Roberts
 Karen Roberts
 Leigh Ann Shaw
 Debra Short
 Dot Simpson
 Donna Smith
 Toni Ruth Smith
 Amelia Stinson-Wesley
 Melissa Swofford
 Carol Thompson
 Jacqueline Tookey
 Margaret Wannemacher
 Shelly Webb
 Susan Suarez Webster
 Cindy Wechter
 Marilyn Weiler
 Lisa Beth White
 Carol Williams-Gilbert
 Aryn Williams-Ruebel

Love Offerings, Grace, and “Do-Overs”

The February 2021 issue of the Conference Gram shared the names of clergywomen submitted to Nancy Reigel in 2020 by members of United Methodist Women who wished to lift up names of clergywomen who had impacted their lives. Compiling the list involved dozens of e-mails, phone calls and texts, and slips of paper sent with checks. It’s no surprise that after the February issue landed in mailboxes and Inboxes, we received messages about additional names that were accidentally omitted previously.

God’s grace offers us “do-overs,” and we are counting on the grace of our members to allow us this “do-over.” But while God’s grace is unlimited, our publishing space is not, so this will be our final update. And in reality, no single list of names can adequately celebrate the lives and spiritual gifts of the many clergywomen who have helped us grow in grace.

Let Us Hear from You: Dedication of Annual Report Book



Each year, the Western North Carolina Conference United Methodist Women Annual Report Book is dedicated to a special woman who has served on the local, district, and conference levels of United Methodist Women. The honoree will have demonstrated leadership abilities and the ability to work well with her peers. She will be honored at our Conference Annual Celebration in September. **Nomination forms must be completed and returned by June 1, 2021.**

Request forms by contacting Nancy Reigel, 828-268-0637 or nancy@reigelridge.com.

COVID-19 and Its Effect on Children and Youth

Children and youth are not the face of this pandemic, but they risk being some of its biggest victims. Even though children and youth have been largely spared from the direct health effects of COVID-19, the crisis is having a profound effect on their mental, emotional, and social wellbeing.

There are three main channels through which children/youth are affected by this crisis:

- The first is infection with the virus itself, even though children and youth have not commonly suffered the severe symptomatic reactions more common among older people—at least to date. Much more common has been the loss of a parent, family member, or caregiver to COVID-19.
- The second channel is through the socioeconomic effects of the virus and the measures to stop transmission of the virus and end the pandemic. These include the job losses that plunged families into poverty, unequal access to technology required for remote learning, and the increased risk of abuse in the home during lockdowns and sheltering in place.
- The third channel is the pandemic's impact on longer-term efforts to ensure the realization of the rights of all children. Before this crisis, we lived in a world that failed to care adequately for children; where a child under age 15 dies every five seconds; where one in every five children is malnourished; over half of 10-year-old children in low- and middle-income countries can't read and understand simple stories; and one child in four under the age of 5 does not have their birth registered. What started as a public health emergency has snowballed into a formidable test for global development and for the prospects of today's young generation.

“Around the world, [United Methodist Women is taking swift action](#) to assist and ensure protection of the underserved elderly or disabled people and the women and children who are directly or indirectly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through financial gifts to United Methodist Women, international groups are supported as they take unprecedented steps to prevent, care for, and heal the people most at risk of suffering from the virus's most devastating consequences. While recognizing that isolation is required to combat the disease, United Methodist Women's partners are creating online support opportunities and spatially-distanced communities to share information with [our] neighbors in need.”—Mary Beth Coudal, consultant, journalist, and teacher

*Information contained in this report was taken from a [United Nations Executive Summary](#) and a quote printed in a news article from Mary Beth Coudal.

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A poster created by United Methodist Women in Cameroon to educate communities about the Coronavirus.



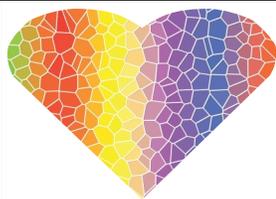
Ms. Lizzie Boti expresses gratitude for the handwashing supplies.

Learn more about the International COVID-19 grants supported by our mission dollars. Even as we continue to shelter in place, our Mission Giving is on the move to improve the lives of women, children, and youth.

<https://www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/news/international-covid-19-grants-united-methodist-women>

**Western North Carolina Conference
United Methodist Women**

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Stronger Together: Our Legacy

There is a recurring theme in this newsletter, unplanned but serendipitous: we are stronger together—connection is important. Throughout this pandemic (and during other times of crisis), we have heard phrases such as “Stronger Together.” Let’s review the pages in this issue with “connection” in mind.

- Page 1: Christ connects us and lifts us up.
- Page 2: Our individual actions become collective actions to either help or harm our planet.
- Page 3: Justin recalls Paul’s words about the importance of both diversity and unity in the Spirit.
- Page 4: Our Reading Program helps us connect what we read with the needs around us.
- Page 5: Our 2021 Love Offering theme celebrates the collective giving of individual local unit members and connects local units with people in mission locally and globally.
- Page 6: We affirm the clergywomen who shepherd us as members of the Body of Christ.
- Page 7: We learn new ways to connect even in the isolation of the pandemic.

Consider the heart mosaic on this page. It is made up of many colors, sizes, and shapes. Any missing piece would detract from the whole, and the design would be incomplete. Every piece, no matter how small, has a role to play. As do we. We may never establish a scholarship, but we can contribute to the [UMW Scholarship Program](#). Few of us will serve as a deaconess or missionary, but we can all support their work through our [Mission Giving](#) and the [Legacy Endowment Fund](#).

In our 150th Anniversary Study ([Women United for Change](#)), we read about Belle Bennett’s 1890 vision of a school for deaconesses. When the question arose of how to raise the funds, Bennett replied, “I would rather have a dollar a year for five years from every woman in the Church than to have the full amount required by one person.” Bennett knew the value of connecting members to a common vision.

How will you connect? What will **your** legacy be?

