

Conference Gram

United Women in Faith, Western North Carolina



United Women in Faith

Western North Carolina

United Women in Faith

ASSEMBLY 2026

May 15-17, 2026
Indianapolis, Indiana
uwfaith.org/assembly

**Dream it!
Believe it!
Do it!**

Calendar of Events 2026

March 23
Giving Day

May 15 - 17
Assembly 2026
Indianapolis, IN

June 11 - 13
Spiritual Growth
Lake Junaluska, NC

August 21 - 22
Mission u
Catholic Conference Center
Hickory, NC

September 12
Conference Annual Celebration
Location: TBD

October 17
Leadership Development Day
Location: TBD and virtual

Ubuntu Days of Service

May be held anytime during the year at the discretion of each district.

For detail of our conference events, go online at www.wnccumw.org



Let's be unstoppable together. Who are you going to invite today?

TOGETHER, WE ARE
UNSTOPPABLE





Are you ready to Dream it! Believe it! Do it! Well then you are ready for Assembly 2026. This is an amazing Spirit filled experience with community gatherings, workshops and inspiring guest speakers. Picture a week-end that uplifts your soul, strengthens your faith, and brings you together with an UNSTOPPABLE sisterhood. May 15-17 in Indianapolis, Indiana is where the excitement will be. This will be the first self-sustaining Assembly. Registration is now open .

WNCC UWFaith Scholarship for first timers **or** women under 40yrs **or** those new to United Women in Faith

- o Offering \$3,500 to be split between all those that apply
- o Application has been sent via email and is on our website wnccumw.org
- o Deadline is Dec 15, 2025

Please do not pass up this opportunity to come together to celebrate faith, empowerment, and sisterhood like never before. The only way to make it better would be to invite a friend to come with you!

Stacey Abrams



Keynote Speaker

Carolyn Abrams



Keynote Speaker

We are thrilled to share that Assembly 2026 will host longtime United Methodists Stacey Abrams and longtime UWFaith member Rev. Carolyn Abrams in conversation as our Inspiration Speakers.

A Fond Farewell

When I think of the past four years, I smile and sometimes laugh out loud at how you members of Western North Carolina United Women in Faith have touched my heart. Yes, some of you are hilarious!

It has been years of change, questions of how we can do things differently and still encourage, educate, motivate and live out our Purpose.

We started out with a name change at the beginning of my tenure and I was told to keep it a secret until March—some of you had begun to speculate that something big was going to happen because you are inquisitive and engaged women! I had to carry around a slip of paper for nearly a year with the correct name written on it—United Women in Faith.

Hurricane Helene hit just a little over a year ago and that changed my life and so many lives who live in these beautiful mountains. We still see trucks filled with debris. The flooding will leave this part of the state forever changed! Many of you were affected by this disaster.

I will miss the one-on-one contact, the contact with the entire team, but honestly, I won't miss the never-ending responsibilities of this position. You forgave my mistakes, and I did make many mistakes! Actually, I have a tee shirt now that says, "Not Perfect Just Forgiven."

You are the most talented, educated, hilarious, impossible to understand at times group of ladies on earth.

And I love each one of you dearly

Joanie Strohm
 Conference President
 WNCC UWFaith

Sisters!

Thank you for being part of my journey.

I could have been in a high degree of physical pain while serving this year, especially at Annual Celebration. **God would not hear of it!** Then He blessed me so that I could experience singing at the University of North Carolina - Charlotte with my UNCC Family during Homecoming weekend. Black students who attended this university in the early seventy's experienced racism and it has resonated in who I am today. I reunited with others who followed to sing **Total Praise** and **Melodies from Heaven**, two well-known gospel songs. We reminisced how being in this student led Gospel Choir helped us to maintain our dignity and determination during our time there.

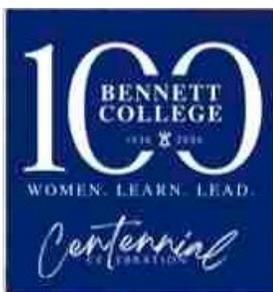
However, it has been my **involvement** with the United Women of Faith where I found the voice to speak up and speak out. Sisters, please change our paradigm of thinking. With the changes in our society. We must be willing to have bold ideas and allow flexibility. More Importantly, how do we connect with each other?

Listen with a willing spirit.

Learn as we listen to different ideas of change.

Speak truth with **LOVE**.

Brenda Steadman
 Conference Chairperson Committee on Nominations
 WNCC UWFaith 24-25



Celebration—100 Years of Bennett College as a College for Women!

Sign up to learn about the upcoming celebration events. Go to:

100.bennett.edu

The following are recaps of our conference events. We hope you will participate in 2026 and invite a family member or friend!

Annual Celebration 2025 – Sept 6

The WNCC United Women in Faith 2025 Annual Celebration saw many changes this year. With a theme of Celebrate Change we truly lived into the theme. Unlike our traditional 3 day event being held at Lake Junaluska we had a 1 day event held at Williamson’s Chapel in Mooresville. In order to trim the event to 1 day we moved our Mission Recognition, Memorial Service and Late Night to our Spiritual Growth Retreat. Kudos to the SG Team for pivoting so beautifully. I feel that both events benefited and enjoyed these changes. The Annual Celebration was a big success! We had 173 in attendance with an amazing 53 first timers. We had 14 that registered on site. Our guest speaker was Sally Vonn, General Secretary & CEO United Women in Faith. In order to stir up excitement for her coming to speak with us “Flat Sally” was traveling throughout the year in conference. Each District President was given a 16x20 picture of Sally to take with them to their district events. Sally traveled all over our districts to prayer meetings, teas, District meetings, on a boat at Lake Junaluska, packing meals, mission events, and she even attended the WNCC Annual Conference. After months of being with the picture it was wonderful to be with the real Sally and get your picture made with her. The message she brought was exactly what we needed to hear. We had workshops of Jazzercising with Jesus lead by LaDonn Butts and Bethlehem Community Center lead by their Director Deborah Forrest. We ended the day with the installation of our new officers and a word from our President Joanie Strohm. The day was a truly blessing and definitely a celebration!

Leadership Development 2025 – Oct 18

The WNCC United Women in Faith 2025 Officer’s Training was held at First Taylorsville UMC. We offered both in person and online training. We began the morning with a gathering with a reading from the Daily Prayer Guide and reciting our Purpose. The gathering ended with a tutorial of the website and some online features. We then broke out by office for the individual training. The start was rocky trying to get on line but we soon found the magic combination and were able to share. It was a great day filled with Fellowship and learning.

Lynn Alexander–VP WNCC UWFaith



This is us, Ubuntuing at Spiritual Growth, a philosophy we have embraced for almost 150 years. While serving at the Friendship House in Waynesville, a young father brought his son in to the place that had accepted him, supported him, cared for him during the most grievous time in his life. He returned with his son to give thanks.



And serving at the Pigeon Community Multicultural Development Center, sought after treasures were prepared for eager children to “purchase”...Ubuntu at its finest, linking hands and hearts together to offer hope and share life’s joys.

As we gather September 6th for our Annual Celebration, we will continue to rejoice as we share the ways we live out our Purpose. I do love serving and loving our Lord Jesus Christ with you bodacious Ubuntu gals! We have embraced this philosophy

Keep up the good work! Kim Eller, Conference MNO, WNCC UWFaith

MISSION U 2025



Q: What do you call 95 participants + 4 Study Leaders + 2 Music Team members +2 Tech Team members in 1 Conference Center?

A: An awesome Mission u 2025!

This year’s Mission u was a huge success from beginning to end. Our study on **“Practicing Hope”** showed us glimmers of hope where we would least likely suspect it – Refugia. A flower growing from a crack in the sidewalk, plants erupting from depressions of lava flows, any space which supports an isolated population of a once widespread species.

Through Scripture we discovered our Biblical mentors experiencing hope; Mary Magdalene, the Disciples, the travelers to Emmaus. We moved from the disillusionment and despair of Christ’s death to a thriving community full of hope in Acts.

Table discussions, engagement, Soul work & Breathwork all made this study unique and “HOPEFUL”.

Oh, did we mention the great food? The comfy bed and private bath? Or the fact that it was all under one air-conditioned roof? How about the fact that the Catholic Conference Center in Hickory is centrally located in our Conference? Did we mention being able to apply for Advanced Lay Servant certification? Well, what about the friends you would meet? If we didn’t we are sorry, it is all that and more!

But, if we have tweaked your interest, it will all happen again at Mission u 2026. Mark your calendars for Friday, August 21st through Saturday, August 22nd 2026. We will be **“Experiencing Emmanuel”**. It promises to be awesome too!

LaDonna Butts
Conference Mission U Dean (2025)
WNCC UWFaith



Sandra Williamson
 Conference Historian 2025
 WNCC UWFaith

Bennett College was founded in 1873 as a coeducational institution through the inspiration of newly emancipated slaves. Its first sessions were held in the basement of St. Matthews Methodist Episcopal Church in Greensboro. NC.

The Freedman's Aid and Southern Education Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church assumed responsibility for the support of the school. Lyman Bennett gave the first \$10,000 for the purchase of land and the erection of a building large enough to house the classrooms and also to serve as a dormitory. Shortly thereafter, Bennett died of pneumonia while seeking funds for the purchase of the school bell. The institution was named Bennett Seminary in memory of Bennett, and the first building was named Bennett Hall.

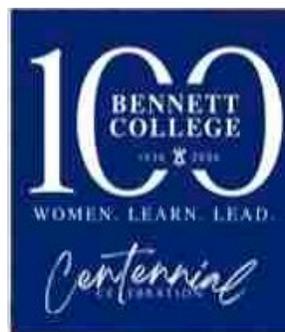
Achieving college status in 1889 as a coeducational institution, Bennett graduated men and women who assumed positions of leadership in all walks of life. Two of the first Black bishops in the Methodist Episcopal Church were graduates of the school. Early in the twentieth century, the Women's Home Missionary Society decided to build a college for the education of Black women. The Board of Education of the Methodist Church offered the Bennett College site for the project. The college was to be operated jointly by the Missionary Society and the Board of Education.

The reorganization of Bennett College was finalized in 1926, when it became a senior college for women. The physical plant consisted of nine buildings, occupying thirty-eight acres. There were 151 high school students and 10 college students. The college grew steadily and by 1980 had a student population of 138 young women.

(From [Bennett's 'Herstory' - Bennett College](#), accessed June 16, 2025)

Bennett currently has an 86% student retention rate, a 7 to 1 student to faculty ratio, a 63% rate of students with internships, and a sixth year as a Fulbright HBCU Institutional Leader because of its commitment to international experiences for its students. The college has adopted a "minimester" system where students can choose to enroll in courses of various lengths, from two weeks to the traditional 16 weeks. The minimester system at Bennett College makes higher education more accessible, flexible, and student-centered. With six entry points each year, students aren't limited to a fall or spring start—they can begin their journey when the time is right. And enrollment is growing at Bennett.

On Friday, October 31, 2025, the College announced its Centennial Celebration, honoring 100 years since its 1926 reorganization as a college for women. The multi-year commemoration celebrates Bennett's faith-filled legacy, the power of sisterhood, and a century of preparing women to lead. On Sunday, March 1, 2026, the United Methodist Women of the Western North Carolina Conference will host a "service of celebration" highlighting our commitment to Bennett as one of the 5 National Mission Institutions in our WNC Conference. Sally Vonner, General Secretary/CEO of United Women in Faith, and Bishop Kenneth Carter have both been invited to participate.



The Reading Program is a powerful tradition for United Women in Faith and its predecessor organizations!

The 2026 program information is now available at:

- www.uwfaith.org/resources/reading-program. The catalog contains comprehensive information which you can print or save to your computer to save paper.
- November/December issue of **response** magazine. This issue features the Reading Program and provides a synopsis of many of the books.

Join over 250 participants from our conference by:

- Reading books from the book list for years 2021-2026 (or listen to audio books)
- Watching "Voices From the Field" and "Faith Talks" podcasts
- Reading **response** magazine.

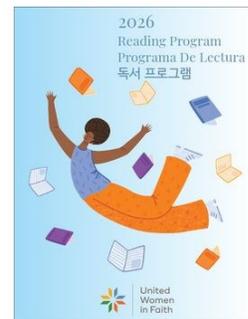
If you need additional information, contact me at cathymc855@yahoo.com

Happy Reading,

Cathy McCauley

Conference Secretary of Program Resources

WNCC UWFaith



THANK YOU

A Word from your Treasurer:

Ladies, we are almost at the finish line! Our conference year ends on November 30. I hope that your unit has been giving through the five channels; Pledge to Mission, Special Mission Recognition, Gift to Mission, Gift in Memory, and World Thank Offering. To make our conference pledge of \$300,000, we need to send \$128,965 to the National Office. **This is not an impossible goal!** Please get your local unit remittances to your district treasurer by November 30.

It is not too late to contribute to the Conference Love Offering. I can receive these offerings through December 31st. This year's dedication is "a Gift to Mission in celebration of the vibrant future of United Women in Faith." You may give to the Love Offering online at our conference website, www.wnccumw.org or send your Love Offering directly to me at:

Bess Redmond, 19 Wright's Cove Trail, Fairview, N C 28730

Looking ahead to 2026,

Our financial goal is: Each unit will make and meet their pledge to mission.

Love Offering Dedication: A "Gift to Mission" in honor of those who are dreaming, believing, and doing on behalf of women, children, and youth around the world.

Thank you for all that you do by helping women, children, and youth in your own communities and around the world. Keep telling our story!

Bess Redmond, WNCC UWFaith Treasurer

What will be YOUR Legacy?

Thank you, Western North Carolina, for your strong support of **The Legacy Endowment Fund!** Our national goal for the Legacy Endowment Fund is \$60 Million dollars. In Western North Carolina...so far, through September 30, 2025, we have given \$565,367.65, not including planned gifts, even significant ones, that will happen in the future. As of September 30, 2025, the Legacy Endowment fund had reached **\$51,994,013.00!** We are now just a little over \$8,000,000 from that audacious \$60 million dollar goal and we can be excited and proud that we have come this far together! **Every gift of every size, every current gift, every continuing Legacy Builder gift, and every planned future gift, moves us towards our goal.** A gift to the Legacy Fund is not just of monetary value; it's an investment in the next generation of bold, courageous women who will live their faith by showing up and taking action in service of love, justice, and mercy. Thank you for your commitment to the work of United Women in Faith!

Ways to Give to the Legacy Fund:

Make a gift to the Legacy Fund **through your local unit United Methodist Women treasurer.**

Online on the national office website at <https://uwfaith.org/give/legacy-fund/>

- **By phone:** 800-278-7771 (8 am-6pm EST, M-F)
- **By check:** note "Legacy Fund" in memo and mail to: United Women in Faith, Attn: Legacy, Church Center for the United Nations, 777 United Nations Plaza, 11th Floor, New York, NY 10017
- **Be a Legacy Builder** by making a gift of at least \$18.69 per month

Other methods include gifts of stock, life insurance, bequests, and other forms of planned giving. If you are interested in making a gift like this, contact the national office at 828-278-7771 or e-mail legacy150@uwfaith.org for more information.



Learn more on our website at <https://wnccumw.org/legacyfund/>

Lynne Gilbert
Legacy Liaison
WNCC UW Faith

The Scholarship Program

This year (2025) the Scholarship Committee awarded a total of \$23,546.24 in scholarships to five students attending three of the five United Methodist supported colleges and universities in our conference: Greensboro College, High Point University, and Pfeiffer University. The other two colleges in our conference that students are eligible to receive scholarships for are Bennett College and Brevard College.

The students who received scholarships are: Mia Spies, Connor Price, Lola Cabaniss-Ali, Aidan Eller and Samuel Castelan Meneses.

Jatana Royster
Scholarship Chairperson (2025)
WNCC UW Faith





**Western North Carolina Conference
United Women in Faith**

Deborah Brooks
PO Box 342
Wallburg NC 27373

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Residents of Western NC mountains are still needing our help. Gift Cards and Hygiene Kits are our immediate needs.

Please contact Vickie Brown at 336 596 5523 or email Vickiebrown961@gmail.com if you have any questions and would like information on picking up your donations for WNCC. Thank you for your support