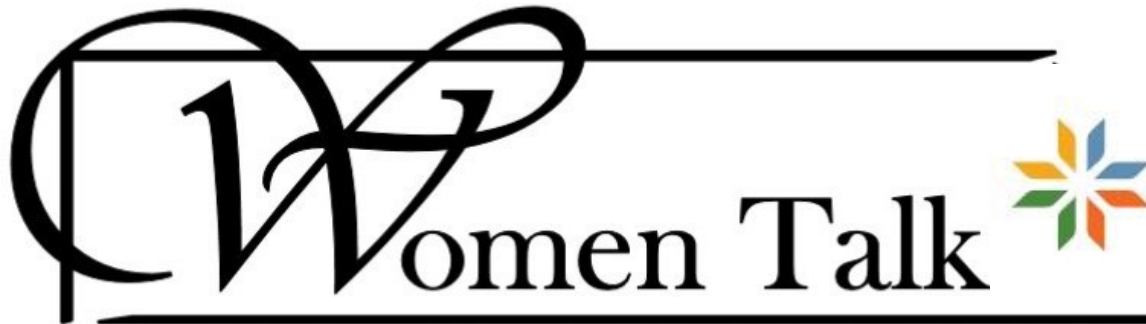


April 2026



United
Women
in Faith

Smoky Mountain District † United Methodist Women † Western North Carolina Conference

Smoky Mountain District United Women in Faith

Day Apart

April 25 – 9:30 AM to Noon

Canton Central UMC, 34 Church St., Canton NC

Retreat Speaker: Rev. Beth Crissman, District Superintendent

Rev. Beth Crissman is superintendent of the Smoky Mountain District of the Western North Carolina Conference of the United Methodist Church, director of Peace Building Ministries for the conference, author of the Purple Church Initiative, and previously served as superintendent of the Uwharrie District. Prior to entering ministry she worked as a family nurse practitioner, a health administrator, a clinical director for community health centers, and an assistant professor in a medical school.



Beth is the author of several books: *The Faithful Path...for Now, Longing to Belong, Feeding and Leading of Shepherds, Stepping in the Stream, and Choosing the Faithful Path* (along with co-author Rev. Dr. Nancy Rankin).

A native of Graham, N.C. Beth graduated from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill (BS Nursing), University of California-Los Angeles (Masters in Nursing-Family Nurse Practitioner), and Emory University (MDiv). She and husband Kelly have two grown children and twin grandsons.

Day Apart Schedule: 9:30 – 10:00 Check-in, light refreshments, and fellowship.
10:00 – Noon Retreat program.

Hands-on Project: Single-serving breakfast items for Canton Central Blessing Box food ministry: cereal boxes or cups, oatmeal packets, Pop-Tarts, packets of grits, mini muffin packs, and breakfast bars.

Please register in advance using this link: bit.ly/SMDRetreat

If you need assistance, please contact Lisa Bacon at 828-226-2433 or lisabacon304@gmail.com.

Registration is requested but not required. We really want you to join us!

WHAT'S IN THIS NEWSLETTER THAT I'D BE INTERESTED IN?

Page 1— **DAY APART**

Page 2—A Table of Contents...so you can find the things you really want to find first!...plus our Mission Statement and a special thought.

Page 3—Celebrating the US by Highlighting our National Mission Institutions.; Hey there, let's talk!

Page 4—Notes from Debbie Ray, Hello, United Women in Faith, and Reminder: First-time Scholarships for Conference Events

Page 5— District Read: "The Book Woman's Daughter" and Host District Opportunities

Page 6—LOCAL UNIT HIGHLIGHT: Fellowship Luncheon

Page 7—District Love Offerings and Ways to Give to the Legacy Fund

Page 8—Joint Book Study with Blue Ridge Dist. and Spiritual Growth Retreat in June.

Page 9—"Practicing Hope" was great!

Page 10—2026 Nurturing Partners and Local Unit Visitations = Consider These Points!

Page 11—The 2026 SMD UWFaith Executive Team and PAG Listing.

Page 12—SMD & WNCC Calendar of Events

MISSION STATEMENT OF UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH

United Women in Faith seeks to connect and nurture women through Christian spiritual formation, leadership development, creative fellowship, and education so that they can inspire, influence and impact local and global communities.

**Sometimes we are so busy adding up our troubles
that we forget to count our blessings.**

* * * * *

*I will remember the works of the Lord; surely I will
remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also
of all thy work and talk of thy doings.*

—Psalm 77: 11,12

Celebrating the US by Highlighting our National Mission Institutions

Last year, we encouraged each local unit to learn about one of our international mission projects and share with other units at our annual Mission Festival. This year our country is celebrating 250 years, so our 2026 focus will be on our National Mission Institutions (NMIs) rather than international projects. Our organization has been making the US a better place for women, children, and youth for more than 150 years.

National Mission Organizations “are community-based organizations and social service agencies that were almost exclusively founded by women in the 19th century to serve marginalized communities and populations across the United States” (quoted from link below).

There is a video, map, and several stories about our NMIs at <https://uwfaith.org/what-we-do/what-we-fund/national-ministries/>.

The history of National Mission Institutions may be found in the January/February 2026 issue of **response** magazine, and a complete list of the NMIs may be found in the March/April 2026 issue.

There are many ways to choose an NMI. You could start by choosing a state you’ve visited or always wanted to visit. You could choose an NMI based on a cause that is near and dear to your heart. You could randomly choose a project and see where chance takes you. Regardless of how your unit selects an NMI to learn about, we hope you’ll join us for another fun time of sharing at our District Mission Festival on October 24 at Murphy First UMC.

Lisa Bacon, Smoky Mountain District President

Email: lisabacon304@gmail.com / Cell: 828-226-2433



HEY THERE...LET'S TALK:

We try to send this newsletter out to officers (and other interested individuals) of all SMD UWF units, using email wherever possible, and snail mail for the rest. If one of your officers is not receiving this document, please let me know so I can correct that. This publication can be helpful to all your members so please remember to forward it to your entire group or make copies and pass it out. If you have any questions or feedback, don't hesitate to contact me by email: smdcommcoor@gmail.com, or by phone: (850) 428-3636. Thanks!

Nancy Jo Willis, SMD Secretary & Newsletter Editor
310 Cassady Ln, Murphy, NC 28906

NOTES FROM DEBBIE RAY

I shared a Reading Program book with my girls' circle and they really enjoyed it. They also enjoyed the video that you can access from YouTube. The name is "Until Someone Listens." It's a children's book but the girls wanted to watch the video twice. It's about a girl who wrote to President Trump after her mom was deported. Perhaps a good read to share with grandchildren.



Debbie Ray, Conference Liaison

Email: wrray@charter.net / Cell Phone: 828-400-3499

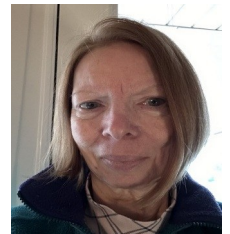
HELLO, UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH!

Thank you for giving to United Women in Faith. Our total giving for Quarter One was \$2,026. Giving is a privilege – a gift of God's grace. ...from United Women in Faith in Mission. Our Love Offering theme is a *"Gift to Mission" in honor of those who are dreaming, believing, and doing on behalf of women, children, and youth around the world.* The new brochure for Love Offering will be in my next letter to the Treasurer. You can give the Love Offering at the 2026 Annual Celebration in September or send to our Conference Treasurer, Bess Redmond. Please read more information about 2026 in the upcoming treasurer letter due out the end of the first week of May. Your remittance for Quarter 2 needs to be mailed by Friday, May 23rd. Remember to share all the lives that are positively impacted through our giving.

Don't forget to continue to support the Legacy Fund and don't hesitate to let me know if you have any questions.

Kim Shafer, SMD District Treasurer

Cell: 704-965-2022 Email: kimshaferuwfsm@outlook.com



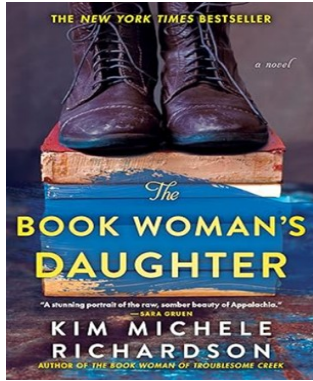
REMINDER: First-Timer Scholarships for Conference Events

A woman who attends a Conference United Women in Faith event for the first time can apply for a scholarship to cover expenses. A first-time attendee can apply to be reimbursed for up to \$150 for such fees as registration fee, mileage, and lodging. Spiritual Growth Retreat is June 11-13 at Lake Junaluska, Mission U is August 21-22 at Hickory Catholic Conference Center, and Annual Celebration is September 12 at St. Luke's

UMC (Hickory). Scholarships may be divided among applicants, so feel free to share this information with a friend!



To request the brief application form, contact Lisa Bacon at lisabacon304@gmail.com / 828-226-2433 (cell)



District Read: “The Book Woman’s Daughter”

Last year, we decided to choose one book from the United Women in Faith Reading Program and encourage women in every unit to read the book and participate in a book club discussion at our Annual Mission Festival (October 24 at Murphy First UMC). The goals are to increase awareness of and participation in the Reading Program and to build community in the district.

This year we will read The Book Woman’s Daughter, by Kim Michele Richardson.

“Both a standalone and a sequel to the bestselling novel *The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek*, *The Bookwoman’s Daughter* tells the story of Honey Lovett, daughter of the famed, blue-skinned Troublesome Creek packhorse librarian. Honey and her Kentucky family have been hiding from the law all her life. But when her mother and father are imprisoned, Honey realizes she must fight to stay free. Picking up her mother’s library route, Honey begins to deliver books to the remote hollers of Appalachia. But the route can be treacherous, and Honey’s going to have to fight for her place.” (Description from the 2025 United Women in Faith Reading Program catalog.)



Host District Opportunities—help us welcome participants at the WNCC Spiritual Growth Retreat and Mission u.

- Smoky Mountain District is the host district for two Western North Carolina Conference United Women in Faith gatherings. The first event is the annual Spiritual Growth Retreat at Lake Junaluska June 11-13. Host duties include providing welcome bags for attendees and assisting with duties such as welcoming participants at registration.
- The second event is Mission u at Hickory Catholic Conference Center August 21-22.
- Our main responsibility there is to provide refreshments at registration.

If you or your unit can help with items for Spiritual Growth Retreat welcome bags, snacks for Mission u, and/or hands-on help at either event, please let District President Lisa Bacon know. You may reach her at lisabacon304@gmail.com or 828-226-2433. THANKS!

LOCAL UNIT HIGHLIGHT: Fellowship Luncheon

Canton Central United Women in Faith hosted a fellowship luncheon on February 22, 2026, for other United Women in Faith units in the Canton area. The group enjoyed a delicious lunch of soup and sandwiches provided by the host church and desserts from the guests. Women from Beaverdam, Canton First, Clyde Central, Longs, and Love First churches attended.

Spiritual Growth Coordinator Linda Masters opened the meeting with prayer and introduced Pastor Tom Owens, who gave a devotion on 1 Corinthians 1:1-9. Linda led a singalong for the blessing.

The first song was a poem written by a former resident of Brooks-Howell Home and was sung to the tune, "O For a Thousand Tongues to Sing." (Brooks-Howell Home is a retirement home in Asheville owned and operated by United Women in Faith.) The second song was Wesley's Grace, "Be Present At Our Table, Lord" sung to the tune of the Doxology.

Pat Owen, President of Canton Central UWFaith, welcomed the group and invited women to tell what church they were from and share some of their mission projects. The group also brainstormed about programs and ways to share God's love in their communities and the world.

Lisa Bacon, president of the Smoky Mountain District UWFaith, closed the meeting with a few words about the upcoming district gatherings and the benediction. The meeting adjourned with joy over being together as one group and excitement for future gatherings.

(Article and photos provided by Pat Owen, Canton Central UWFaith President)



←
Pastor Tom Owens and
Spiritual Growth Coord.
Linda Masters.

Unit President Pat
Owen led a
brainstorming session.



↓
Canton Central UWFaith mem-
ber Bobbie Markham. She is a
retired Deaconess who lives at
Brooks-Howell Home.



District Love Offerings:

We invite you to give generously to your district love offering. Your Mission Giving continues the work of United Women in Faith, making a difference, every day, in the lives of women, children and youth around the world. Thank you for your support of Mission Giving! Every single dollar makes a difference!

You may give to your district love offering in a couple of ways:

- ♦ Make an online donation using the special link for your district found on the District Events 2025/2026 page at wnccumw.org. Each district has a unique link so that we can give your district credit for your gift.
- ♦ Mail a check to your District Treasurer (Kim Shafer), made payable to United Women in Faith, and designated as District Love Offering. We will share those addresses during the meetings, and you will also be able to find them in a recent newsletter for your district on your district's page of our website.



Ways to Give to the Legacy Fund

- ♦ Make a gift to the Legacy Fund through your local unit United Women in Faith treasurer.
- ♦ Make a one time donation or consider becoming a Legacy Builder by giving a monthly gift of \$18.69 or more.
- ♦ Use our Western North Carolina Conference Legacy Commitment Form, available on our website at www.wnccumw.org/legacyfund.
- ♦ Online on the national office website at <https://uwfaith.org/give/legacy-fund/>
- ♦ **By phone:** 800-278-7771 (8 am—6 pm EST, M-F)
- ♦ **By check:** note "Legacy Fund" in memo line & mail to: United Women in Faith, Attn: Legacy, Church Center for the United Nations, 777 United Nations Plaza, 11th Floor, New York, NY 10017.
- ♦ **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 800-278-7771.



Smoky Mountain

DONATE to the
Smoky Mountain District
Love Offering

**Book Study (with Blue Ridge)
The Four Winds by Kristin Hannah**

May 2, 2026 via Zoom

10:00 AM

[Zoom Registration Link](#)

[Link to Flyer](#)



Save the Date:

Winds of Change

Western North Carolina Conference

United Women in Faith

Spiritual Growth Retreat

June 11-13, 2026

Lake Junaluska, NC



Session Leader:
Rev. Lucy Robbins



Mission Session Leader:
Rev. Holly McKim

OUR MARCH 21st DISTRICT MISSION STUDY OF **“PRACTICING HOPE”** WAS HELD AT Maple Grove UMC. We had good attendance and everyone had a great time! We learned how to practice HOPE when hope seems hard to find, how we imagine a more hopeful future in the midst of hard realities and how Christ teaches us to embody hope in our neighborhood and around the world.



SMD United Women in Faith

Nurturing Partners 2026

Nurturing Partner	NP Contact Info	UWFaith Unit
Lisa Bacon	Lisabacon304@gmail.com 828-226-2433	Andrews, Beaverdam, Canton First, Shady Grove, Sylva First
Debbie Ray	wsray@charter.net 828-400-3499	Maggie Valley, Elizabeth Chapel
Laurel Bevill	laurelbev@icloud.com 828-456-5528	Clyde Central, Maple Grove
Vicky Mayse	mayse706@bellsouth.net 706-505-7546	Bryson City, Franklin First
Esther Manchester	Ehm1@yahoo.com 828-226-7481	Robbinsville, Tomotla
Ellyne Stonebraker	Jumperlady21@gmail.com 828-524-8787	Cullowhee, Hayesville First, Murphy First
Celeste Wall	wallceleste@gmail.com 336-402-4661	Canton Central, Waynesville First
Kim Shafer	kimshaferuwfsm@outlook.com 704-965-2022	Crabtree UMC



LOCAL UNIT VISITATIONS (LUV)

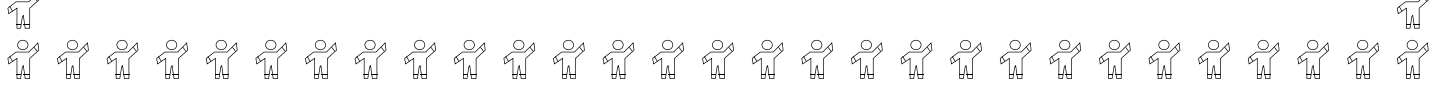
A few reasons to invite a district or conference officer to your local unit:

- Gain information and resources.
- Build stronger relationships between your unit and conference.
- Share any thoughts or concerns you may have—this is a chance to have your voice heard.
- Fulfill criterion #22 on Mission Today.
- Enjoy fellowship.

CONSIDER THESE POINTS!!

How do I invite an officer to come to my local unit?

- Contact Your Nurturing Partner. Each local unit has a district officer who is a Nurturing Partner. You should hear from your Nurturing Partner throughout the year. Invite them to come to a local unit event, a unit meeting, United Women in Faith Sunday, etc.
- To invite an officer who is not your Nurturing Partner, check your district or conference newsletter for contact information. You may also find contact information on the website under About Us (conference officers) or Districts (district officers).
- Check your district newsletters for a list of the Nurturing Partners and their local units.
- Contact your district president if you can't find Nurturing Partner information.



DON'T HESITATE TO CONTACT US IF YOU NEED ANYTHING!

United Women in Faith 2026 Smoky Mtn. District Exec. Team & Program Advisory Group

President:

Lisa Bacon (Cullowhee)
1028 Old Cullowhee Road
Sylva, NC 28779
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Vice President:

Vicky Mayse (Cullowhee)
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Secretary:

Nancy Jo Willis (Murphy First)
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Treasurer:

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**Education & Interpretation:
[Open]**

Spiritual Growth:

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Email: wallceleste@gmail.com

**Membership, Nurture & Outreach:
[Open]**

**Program Resources:
[Open]**

**Communications Coordinator:
[Open]**

Parliamentarian:
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**Historian:
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Newsletter Editor
[see N J Willis under Secretary]

Conference Liaison
Debbie Ray (Waynesville 1st)
569 Country Club Drive
Waynesville, NC 28786
Phone: 828-400-3499
Email: wray@charter.net

**Nominations Chairperson:
TBD**

**Nominations:
TBD**

TBD

TBD

TBD

Legacy Liaison:
JoAnn Black (Cullowhee)
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1/31/2026

Nancy Jo Willis
Secretary & Newsletter Editor, SMD
310 Cassady Lane
Murphy, NC 28906

TO:



United
Women
in Faith

2026 UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH CONFERENCE & DISTRICT EVENTS

WNCC UWFaith CALENDAR OF EVENTS

June 11-13	WNCC Spiritual Growth at Lake Junaluska
Aug.21-22	Mission u, Catholic Conference Center, Hickory
Sep. 12	WNCC Annual Celebration/TBD; 10:00am-5:00
Oct. 17	WNCC LDD for all District Officers; (Virtual) 10am-12pm

SMD UWFaith CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Apr. 25	SMD Day Apart at Canton Central; 9:30am-12:00noon
Aug.15	SMD Annual Celebration/Virtual; 10:00am
Oct. 24	SMD Mission Festival at Murphy First UMC; 9:30am-12:00noon