



East District Beacon

United Women in Faith

Volume I Issue 4

November 2024

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President Pat's Post

"This is the day the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it!" Fall is here with its invigorating change of temperature and the lovely transformation of nature. May you embrace this time of year and the opportunity to change. What a good time to find a new book to read from our UW in Faith Reading Program. What a good time to use an online program such as a Faith Talks podcast for your local meeting. What a good time to celebrate all the things your unit has experienced already while looking forward to being, serving, and living as women in faith.

I look forward to receiving your unit's Mission Today Report and celebrating your achievements in 2024. (This form is in the August Beacon as well as the East District Directory each president received early this year). Our district treasurer is eagerly awaiting your final pledge payments and remittance form as these funds are passed on to do mission in a variety of places. (Due December 10th or earlier- the remittance form is also in August Beacon and the East District Directory).

We celebrate our first year as East District with a full slate of 2025 officers and embracing our United Women in Faith's mission to connect and nurture women through Christian spiritual formation, leadership development, creative fellowship, and education so that we can inspire, influence, and impact local and global communities.

Our East District now stretches from Bellflower (NW corner) and Donovan (NE corner) in the north, to Robinson (SE corner) and Altamont (SW corner) in the south. Within that area we have only 39 local units, many of which represent small churches. Meeting at a central area sounds like a nice idea except only a few churches approximate that possibility and they would find it burdensome to always be called upon to host our meetings. Until a magical solution appears we will try to have meetings in various areas of our district.

With your ongoing support and willingness to give and serve, we can meet and overcome the challenges this faces by carpooling, committing to ongoing service, traveling some extra miles with smiles, and being eager to meet at least one or more times a year with our UW in Faith sisters as we continue to support this more than 150 year old institution of United Methodist Women.

God asks "Who will go?" and we answer "I will. Send me!"

Pat Davis

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Carol Martin, Vice President

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As we enter into the Holiday Season this year, may all of us take time to Give Thanks for the multitude of blessings we have received this year. As we hear news broadcasts and learn about the many losses some people have experienced, we should consider what each one of us can do to share with other people, be it prayer, monetary gifts, or physical gifts. Consider reaching out to touch someone by your actions and gifts, and you will be more richly blessed as you do so. When we prepare to celebrate again the birth of our Savior, remember it was God's love that sent him to us and SHARE HIS LOVE every day with whoever you meet.



Cheryl Murphy, Secretary and Communications

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I hope you are all enjoying the beautiful colors and cooler weather of Fall – this is my favorite time of the year! It's also the time of year when we start planning for next year's events.

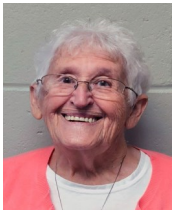
Please remember to complete and return the Officer Update Form for 2025. Even if you have no changes to your roster, please go through the current 2024 Directory and make sure that the contact information that is in there is correct and complete for all officers who will be continuing in 2025. All changes and information should go to your new District Secretary, Sarah Spang – she will be putting the 2025 District Directory together. Her email address is: slspang9@gmail.com

The Fall District Meeting was a great success! I enjoyed seeing many of my friends and sisters in Christ. I am retiring from the District Board this year – I will miss everyone! It has been a privilege to serve alongside you.

Local Unit Spotlight - Weldon



Weldon UWF held a memorial service for long time member, Judy Carr during their monthly meeting. In Judy's honor, the UWF group planted a lilac bush in front of the education wing. Judy's favorite color was purple, so the group of ladies planted and dedicated the purple lilac bush in honor of her.



Dicksie Blakenship, Education and Interpretation

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This is the last of my notes as your Education and Interpretation representative. Starting in 2025 I will be your Nominations representative. Yes, I will be calling you to serve on the East District UWF. My chairman is Carolyn Paullin.

I just want to thank all who have served in the past and those who keep the future of our East District going. It takes all of us to make a go at UWF. Remember John 3:16 – *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”*

Blessings to you all!



Carol Dexter, Membership, Nurture and Outreach

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I hope you are enjoying this beautiful fall weather. The colors of the leaves are gorgeous! We praise God for the beauty around us. To God be the glory!

Many of you are busy with United Women in Faith activities and fundraisers. It is a great time to invite the ladies in your church to join you as you grow in your faith, make new friends and join in worship and service together.

I received information from national several days ago on the 2023 UNIT SURVEY. Unit Presidents are being asked to complete the 2023 UNIT SURVEY by **March 31st, 2025**. Please complete and submit the survey soon. Sometimes, when things are put aside, they are not completed!

To complete the 2023 UNIT SURVEY, do the following:

1. Go to United Women in Faith / Members and Leaders Portal website.
2. Click on Log in | United Women in Faith. You may need to create an account.
3. Click on Unit Survey under Quick Links.
4. Click on North Central.
5. Click on Illinois Great Rivers.
6. Complete the survey and submit.

Thank you in advance for completing the survey. Remember, it is for the year 2023. The survey should take only 10 to 15 minutes to complete. Your information will help national guide the organization to continued growth. It will also celebrate the work you are doing on behalf of women, children and youth around the globe.

Blessings to you all!

**Even though we are separated by miles,
we are always close in heart!**



Carolyn Paullin, Nominations

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Beautiful fall blessings, Dear Ladies of God,

What a wonderful Fall Gathering we had in Sullivan! It was a blessing that our Leadership Team could welcome Sarah Spang (Secretary), Barbara Ingersoll (shared Social Action), Janet Thompson (Education and Interpretation), Cindy Dodd (Spiritual Growth), and Dicksie Blankenship (Nominations) for next year. The Lord is rejoicing with us as our generous ladies pledged their time, energy, and talents to serve Him! It brings to mind 1 Peter 4: 10: *“As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace.”* Our team is a living testimony of this grace! Please keep all of us in your prayers as we prepare for the coming new year.

We still have opportunities for 2 new members on our Nominations Committee. I’d love there to be one from the northern section and one from the southern section, so that we have a balanced representation. Please contact me if you have a special talent or interest that you would love to share with our district ladies. Thank you to all our UWF members who are so committed to carrying out our missions at the local, district, and conference levels!

In God’s Love and Thankfulness, Carolyn.



Carol Kessler, Program Resources

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I’ve started a new practice of spending more lap time with my outside cat this summer and I have continued it into the fall. He, Tip, loves it, and I take a book out to read during the petting/loving process. Getting out in the fresh air is good, and I am trying to figure out a way to continue it during some of the winter months. I have made this an opportunity to read books from our Reading Program. Having ordered used books from ABE Books, I have them on hand and will have them ready to share at our Spring District Meeting in April. I am ready to report on many of them, many being novels. I have learned much about cultures and history while reading in the five categories.

“The Girl with the Louding Voice” by Abi Dare is in the Education for Mission category and takes place in Nigeria in present times. As I read along, I was astonished that such things can be happening currently. It is a novel about a 14-year-old-girl growing up in a rural Nigerian village who longs to get an education so she can find her “louding voice” and speak up for herself. This book can be used by a unit for discussion using page 42 in the 2025 Reading Program pages found online. The book focuses on global social justice issues for women and girls.

I hope and expect to see units reporting to me their reading reports for 2024 by the end of this year, either using the reporting form on page 42 or just emailing your reading activity that took place during this year with names of those who completed plans and those who participated but did not complete a plan. Do remember that the reading of response magazine goes along with any completed plan and contains so much information about the many missions around the world that we support through our giving. And don’t forget the online opportunities to earn credit as well.

Happy Fall and Happy Reading!



Patty Russell, Social Action (June thru November)

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Our Northern Illinois Conference United Methodists celebrated Indigenous Peoples Day on October 14th at Starved Rock State Park. The POW WOW included dances, workshops, handcrafted items, food and learning about the history and struggles of our Indigenous brothers and sisters. Attending from our conference were: Judith Unger, member of the IGRC Church and Society, Paul Black, writer for "The Current", Reverend Mike Crawford and Reverend Patty Johansen, the pastor of Dayspring Native American UMC, our only Native American congregation. Judith visited with a woman who said she did not know of her native history until she was an adult because her grandfather insisted her birth certificate be marked "white", in spite of her dark skin, to protect her from discrimination. Many spoke of honoring the native language and history while also feeling invisible and not recognized.

Archeological sites have shown evidence, in all of our states, across both North and South America, that Indians lived about 30,000 years ago, long before Europeans explored the New World. Native Americans were the original Americans, and Columbus's "discovery" began the gradual decline of their cultures, their diaspora, assimilation, decimation and enslavement.

The trauma continues in subsequent generations, as recent genetic testing and research have shown. Hundreds have overcome their past trauma to become great leaders, inventors, scientists, builders and more; although many hid their heritage for fear of discrimination, harassment and bodily harm.

November is Indigenous Peoples History Month to celebrate their resilience and achievements. United Women in Faith hopes to raise awareness about the challenges our brothers and sisters face and to promote reconciliation, justice and equity.

Take action:

1. Attend local events
2. Support Indigenous businesses and artisans
3. Learn about their culture and history
4. Advocate for Indigenous rights and equality
5. Read books from our reading program
6. Listen to UWF podcasts and community gatherings
7. Watch movies
8. Learn about Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women and Girls and the Red Dress Project
9. Study the two Indian Missionary Conferences our UMC has in Alaska and Oklahoma

Some possible books you can read are:

- "First Nations Version, An Indigenous Translation of the New Testament"
- "The Land is Not Empty, Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery" by Sarah Augustine
- "Every Day is a Good Day" by Wilma Mankiller and other Native American women

Some movies you can watch are:

- "Killers of the Flower Moon" 2023,
- "Trick or Treaty" 2014,
- "Rumble: The Indians Who Rocked the World" 2017,
- "Dances With Wolves" 1990

First Nations Version-Romans 12:11-12: *"Be a good fire keeper and never let your spiritual fire go out as you serve our Honored Chief. Let hope make your heart glad. Keep sending your voice to the Great Spirit, even when the road gets hard to walk."* Aho! May it be so!



Holly Hirschert, Treasurer

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I hope you are enjoying the fall weather. Since Halloween 2024 is over, I am transitioning to Thanksgiving season. I am thankful for all of you, my United Women in Faith sisters.

Our 2024 East District Pledge goal is \$50,000. As of October 19th, we have given \$27,598.14 in the five channels of Mission Giving. That means we still need to contribute an additional \$22,401.86 to meet our goal.

Twenty-nine units have remitted funds and 19 of those have met their pledge goals. Two have qualified as Five Star Units and one is a Rainbow Unit. Twelve units have yet to remit funds to the district this year.

Our Conference Treasurer must have all Mission Giving funds by December 15th. As a result, I must have all 2024 remittance checks in my hands before **December 10th, 2024**. After that date, I will return any other 2024 remittances that are received. Please use the Remittance Form For All Treasurers included in the August Beacon or the form I sent to you. Write all checks to **IGRC UWF East District**.

For 2025, I have not received pledge goals from 16 units that remitted funds in 2024. Please send your 2025 pledge goals to me by email, or call me as soon as possible. Your unit must set a pledge and meet it in order to qualify as a Five Star Unit.

Thank you for answering God’s call to be in mission with women, children and youth. Every penny counts!

2025 Calendar

Date	Event	Location
Saturday, February 22 nd	IGRC Spiritual Growth Retreat	Chatham UMC - See Page 14
Saturday, March 8 th	East District Personal Growth Seminar	Champaign Faith UMC, Champaign
Friday, April 4 th and Saturday, April 5 th	Festival of Quilts	Cunningham Children’s Home, Urbana
Saturday, April 26 th	East District Spring Gathering	To Be Determined
Sunday, July 20 th thru Wednesday July 23 rd	Mission u	Northfield Inn, Springfield

Body Prayer

Here is the information of the **Body Prayer** Pat Davis used at the East District Fall Meeting if you would like to add it to your personal meditation or introduce it to your local group.

This body prayer has four simple postures.

- **AWAIT** (hands at waist, cupped up to receive): Await God’s presence, however it may come to you.
- **ALLOW** (reach up, hands open): Allow a sense of God’s presence
- **ACCEPT** (hands at heart, cupped towards body): Accept as a gift whatever comes or does not come.
- **ATTEND** (hands outstretched, ready to be responsive): Attend to what you are called to, willing to be present and be God’s love in the world.

Cunningham Children's Home

Joe's Mountain Dew Christmas Tree

Joe became a youth in care due to neglect and abuse, both mentally and physically, by members of his biological family and other adults in positions of trust. The abuse only got worse around the holidays.

When Joe came to Cunningham Children's Home's Transitional Living (TL) program, he was introverted and self-harming. Over time, through engagement and building relationships with staff and other young people in the house, he began to trust others. Still, because of the trauma he had suffered around the holidays, Joe wanted to isolate in his room from Thanksgiving to New Year's Day. So, Patty, a TL staff member for more than 20 years, had an idea.

Joe loved Mountain Dew and the show *Family Guy* so the staff made a Christmas tree for his room using Mountain Dew cartons. They made ornaments and garland from pictures of *Family Guy* they printed out. On Christmas Day, the staff brought his gifts up to his room but didn't pressure him to join in the festivities with the rest of the house.

Joe was truly touched and overwhelmed by the presents he received from our generous donors and by the way his staff tried to make Christmas special without pushing him. The next year, the holidays were a little better for Joe. He was able to go downstairs and join the others for part of Christmas and even ate Christmas dinner with everybody. Joe is now in his late 20's and out on his own but the time he spent at Cunningham remains prominent in his heart.



We are grateful for the many individuals, families and organizations that help in making Christmas amazing and special for youth, like Joe.

You too can provide Christmas joy and hope to the youth, adults and families we serve:

1. Purchase Gifts from our Christmas Wish List:

- Our wish list is full of gift ideas that are requested by our youth. You can help fulfill many Christmas wishes by shopping from our general Christmas wish list. Please deliver all gifts unwrapped to the Spiritual Life Center at Cunningham at 1301 N. Cunningham Avenue in Urbana by Friday, December 13th.
- Shop directly from our Christmas Amazon wish list here:
https://www.amazon.com/hz/wishlist/ls/1FBOCHJTGRGoO?ref_=wl_fv_le
- You can help fulfill many Christmas wishes by shopping from our general Christmas wish list:
<https://cunningham.org/give/shop-our-wish-lists/christmas-wish-list/>

2. Help us fill the Kids' Shop:

- Our youth learn about the spirit of giving and generosity through the Kids' Shop. They write out wish list items for their loved ones and with the help of Cunningham staff, they shop for those special gifts! You can give gently used or new items to the Kids' Shop to make sure our youth have plenty to choose from. Favorite items include bath & body sets, jewelry for women/girls, inexpensive phone accessories, wallets for teens, men and women and hats for men. Please drop off items at Cunningham's Spiritual Life Center by Friday, December 6th.

Cunningham Children's Home (Continued)

3. Shop for a specific youth:

- If you are interested in helping fulfill a youth's Christmas wish, we can provide you with their specific wish list. Contact Brooke Buzard Watson at bbuzard@cunninghamhome.org or 217-337-9073.

4. Wrap Christmas Gifts:

- Help wrap Christmas gifts for Cunningham's youth and families! Limited gift wrapping opportunities are available the week of December 2nd-6th, December 9th-13th and December 16th-20th. Spots fill quickly and must be coordinated in advance. Reach out to Brooke at bbuzard@cunninghamhome.org or 217-337-9073 for availability for you and your group.

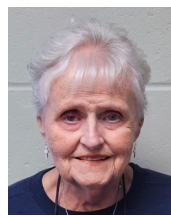
On behalf of the youth, families and staff from Cunningham Children's Home
May you have the gift of Faith, the blessing of Hope and the Peace of His Love this Christmas and Always!

CCH North Representatives



Roberta Benschneider
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CCH South Representatives



Jackie Lindley
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West Union 62477



Kathy Perisho
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61802



Margie Campbell
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IL 62465

Local Unit Spotlight - Catlin



Kay Smoot & the Catlin United Women in Faith are sponsoring chair yoga. The group is led by instructors from Yoga Faith who include Bible scriptures and prayer in the session.

Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House

From Lisa Graves - Updates on our programs

- **Teen REACH** programing is just getting started for this school year. We currently have **120** youth enrolled, ages 12-18. This is an increase in program participation from the previous grant year. We've entered into an agreement with the Dunbar Elementary School to serve as a "**Safe Place**" for students to go to in case of an emergency before and after school. The Illinois State Police has partnered with us to assist in mentoring activities for our youth. This partnership is proving to be very successful in that its bridging the gaps of distrust that some youth may feel about law enforcement. Staff is dedicated to enhancing the lives of youth in our community by coming up with innovative ideas for engagement.
- **AmeriCorps** program has been awarded **35** full time and **10** half time volunteer slots for this grant year. We currently have **38** of the combined slots filled and an additional **6** being processed. These volunteers are placed at various sites throughout the community providing assistance where needed. We are also in partnership with Southern Illinois University Edwardsville where we have **80** minimum time volunteer slots. SIUE students are currently being enrolled to provide tutorial services.
- **The Food Pantry** serves approximately **5,000** individuals yearly. We are constantly reaching out to the community spreading awareness of the availability of our services. We are also in discussion with the University of Illinois to provide cooking demonstrations at our agency so that our clients can ascertain advance knowledge on healthy cooking and learning how to cook foods obtained in our pantry that are not a part of their normal diet. We are making updates to our pantry kitchen area to accommodate this service.
- **TANF** (Temporary Assistance for Needed Families) program, receives referrals for the local Department of Human Services. Clients are engaged by providing employment readiness skills. We also assist clients by connecting them with employment opportunities and assisting them in maintaining meaningful employment with a goal of coming off of state assistance. We currently have **12** referrals.
- **Continuum of Life** Senior Services program experienced smoke damage to its building a few months ago, which caused services to be relocated to our Family Development Center. Our seniors experienced the same quality of services during this interruption. The senior building was renovated and services resumed in the building on September 9th, 2024. During this down time, we were able to extend the parking area of the building by **15** parking slots. The additional slots enable our seniors to enter and exit our facilities safely. We are exploring other areas of our grounds to provide much needed additional parking for our senior's safety when additional funding is realized to do so. We currently serve **80-100** seniors daily, providing breakfast and lunch as well as engagement in social activities as well as health and wellness education.
- In our **Meals on Wheels** component currently serves over **400** meals weekly. This number continues to grow based on the needs of our community.

Cindy and Jo continue to be impressed with LBDNH awesome programs!



Cindy Cook, LBDNH North Representative

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Jo Sanders, LBDNH South Representative

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Mission u 2025

Save the Date: Sunday night, July 20th, 2025 through Wednesday noon, July 23rd, 2025

2025 Theme: HOPE AS RESURRECTION PEOPLE

Mission u Dean: Caroline Jones

Brief description: We will explore the hope that emerged within a small community of followers after the resurrection of Jesus that changed the world. Out of so much confusion and fear following the crucifixion of Jesus grew “Resurrection People” steeped in hope, who began living our faith in powerful ways.

Content: How do we understand hope as followers of Christ? Is it merely optimism despite what we witness all around us or is it something deeper than that? This theme would begin with the resurrection appearance of Jesus to explore how these people were changed and the actions that followed (Acts). The hope that grew in these “resurrection people” in the 21st century, and what can we learn and apply to our own lives from the accounts of people who encountered Jesus after his resurrection. We will explore what it means to have hope in God when things seem to be falling apart. A meaningful focus for UWF/Mission u might be Mary Magdalene as a commonality among the four accounts. The study will also look at how Paul writes about hope. *“For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.”* (Romans 8:24-25 NRSV). Paul speaking to hope in the midst of so many challenging circumstances continues to resonate today as we are witness to worsening climate catastrophes, ongoing racialized and gender-based violence and the decay of our capacity to communicate across differences.

Local Unit Spotlight - Marshall First



We sold desserts at the weekly ice cream social & band concert at the courthouse for one of their fundraisers. Over \$500 was raised.



On the first Thursday of each month in June, July, & August, the we held a book study. Circles took turns hosting & reviewing books from the Reading Program list. We also had a Reading Challenge over the summer. 130 Reading Program books were read!



We purchased a loom from MMDC last spring. When Lori, from MMDC, comes to speak on UWF Sunday we will be blessing & sending at least 10 mats back with her.

2025 East District Officers

2025 EAST DISTRICT UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH OFFICERS

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Cunningham Childrens Home Representatives
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Lessie Bates Davis Neighborhood House Reps:
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Finding United Women in Faith Online

UNITED WOMEN IN FAITH WEBSITE

uwfaith.org is our primary website. Here you will find the latest news and information about United Women in Faith programs, initiatives, and events. It's where you connect with other members and get involved. You'll also find links to our many resources and the **e-store**. Find new brand elements, member materials, programs, and catalogs here.

ONLINE COMMUNITY

uwfaith.mn.co Connect with United Women in Faith members on Mighty Networks, a safe and secure online space to deepen our community and engage digital resources for local programming and transformative education. The platform features the digital Program Resource, Prayer Guide, Mission u curricula, online groups around specific interests, and more.

FACEBOOK

facebook.com/uwomenfaith If you're on Facebook, be sure to "like" and "follow" United Women in Faith so that our posts will appear on your home page.

TWITTER

twitter.com/uwomenfaith Do you tweet? So does United Women in Faith! Use the link to find our Twitter account @uwomenfaith. Follow us, tweet with us, and become a part of the continuing conversation around faith, hope, and love in action.

YOUTUBE

youtube.com/uwomenfaith Need a video for a presentation? You'll find it on YouTube. Check out the video resources available by following the link. New videos are posted often!

FLICKER

uwfaith.org/flickr Need a photo for your newsletter or PowerPoint? Follow this link and you'll find terrific images illustrating the work of United Women in Faith members.

October Spiritual Growth

On a beautiful sunny October morning some ladies from our district travelled to Villa Grove, IL for the Spiritual Growth Seminar. After sharing wonderful homemade sweet breads, muffins and fruit, we gathered at tables in small groups.



The program began with worship time and was followed by a series of Scripture readings and discussions in our groups. We also prayed and sang hymns. The readings and discussions focused on Resurrection Women. They included the woman who met Jesus at

the well, and the woman who anointed Jesus' feet. We also talked about the life of Mary Magdalene and her relationship with Jesus.

The morning ended with hymns and prayers during our closing worship. Many women expressed appreciation for the opportunity to think about these special women in more detail. Leaders for this morning were Holly Hirschert and Carol Martin.



East District Fall Meeting



IGRC Spiritual Growth Retreat

Illinois Great River Conference United Women in Faith
SOUL AND EARTH CARE SPIRITUAL GROWTH RETREAT

Saturday, February 22, 2025



What is soul care? What is earth care? Our inner selves and our outer subsistence, given to us by our loving God. Come with ears to hear what the Bible says and how our Church and UWFaith are working to enliven our souls and sustain the earth. These are more connected than you thought. Program by Christina Krost and Kay Clifton.

9:00 a.m. Check in and fellowship (bring snacks to share)

9:30 – 2:00 Program (includes lunch)

The offering will go toward our 2025 Pledge to Mission.
(Checks payable to: IGRC United Women in Faith)

Where? Chatham United Methodist Church, 104 West Chestnut St, Chatham, IL

Cost? \$25.00 (includes lunch). Register by? February 12, 2025.

Questions? Contact Kay Clifton, akclifton38@gmail.com

2025 Spiritual Growth Retreat registration form (1/person) and payment due by Feb 12, 2025.

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____ Email _____

Unit _____ District _____

Amount Enclosed _____

Food allergies _____

Please send form(s) and check payable to 'IGRC United Women in Faith' to:
Sally Smith, IGRC UWFaith Treasurer, 902 Eldridge, Washington, IL 61571