

*From our President***CHANGE — CHANGES —
CHANGING**

HAPPY NEW YEAR! Even though by the time you read this we will all be well into the new year of 2018. I would guess that most of us don't even attempt to declare new years resolutions. It is hard to make commitments. Making a commitment might mean one needs to make a change or changes in his or her life. Most people do not like change. BUT, aren't things, people, situations, life - changing around us all the time?

As I was trying to get a start on writing this article, trying to get my thoughts in order, I ran across this scripture. I wasn't familiar with it. It seemed quite relevant for what I was trying to get formulated in my mind. You know.....how the Lord works in mysterious ways!!

From Hebrews, 13:7-8 MSG)

"Appreciate your pastoral leaders who gave you the Word of God. Take a good look at the way they live, and let their faithfulness instruct you, as well as their truthfulness. There should be a consistency that runs through us all. For Jesus doesn't change—yesterday, today, tomorrow, he's always totally himself."

We are ALL going through some major changes right now in our local units, our local churches, and in our districts. Our conference is merging, ALL of our districts are being re-aligned, ALL of us will become part of a NEW district. What we have always known in our church life is changing. This is quite a process that we are

ALL going through. We need to be patient. We need to be sensitive. We need to ask questions, if there is something we don't understand. We need to not jump to conclusions when something happens that we don't like or don't understand.

There are many changes in leadership. There are many new persons in leadership positions. These are *our* pastoral leaders. We need to "appreciate our pastoral leaders who give us the Word of God." The Bishop and the cabinet and the Design Team have had a huge job these past many months. We need to rely on our pastoral leadership. All their work has meant that we all will be experiencing a lot of change. And, we need to "appreciate our pastoral leaders who give us the Word of God."

Current districts are operating as always and events will continue, as scheduled last year, through this spring. Many of you are already having opportunities to begin joining in with events in what will be your new District. The planning that is being done now for the fall and future need to be done with within the new district lines and with the people and churches within the new district lines. Please remember that EVERYONE is going to be part of a *new* district.

Most importantly, remember that "Jesus *doesn't* change — yesterday, today, tomorrow, He's always totally Himself."

My prayers for everyone as we change together in His name,

Linda Darrow,
Conference President



2017 Conference Team

President: **Linda Darrow (2017)**
232 N. Cooley St., Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858
989-763-8750 darrowlinda@gmail.com

Vice President: **Shirley Chappell (2016)**
719 S. Griffin, Grand Haven 49417
616-846-4197 shirley2billchapel@att.net

Secretary: **Beth Mitchell (2017)**
3813 Rockwood, Kalamazoo 49004
269-343-6806 barmitch55@gmail.com

Treasurer: **Julia Paradine-Rice (2014)**
4114 Sanctuary Dr., Alma 48801
989-576-0675 juliapr@charter.net

Mission Coordinators:

Spiritual Growth: **Simmie Proctor (2014)**
73486 8th Street, South Haven 49090
269-637-6053 simmiepr@hotmail.com

Education & Interpretation: **Sue Stickle (2016)**
10970 Dutch Settlement Rd, Marcellus 49067
269-646-9425 suzannestickle@gmail.com

Social Action: **Randie Clawson (2015)**
384 Lind Drive, Traverse City 49696
231-929-7808 randieclawson@gmail.com

Membership Nurture/Outreach: **Pat Snyder (2016)**
807 S. Sheldon St., Charlotte 48813
517-231-1301 dpsnyder807@peoplepc.com

Program Resources: **Connie Swinger (2015)**
255 Brown St. SW, Grand Rapids 49507
616-452-3532 connieswinger@att.net

Communications Coordinator: **Amber Hassler (2018)**
269 Cayo Dr, Buckley 49620
231-642-7224 upnorthtwinmom@gmail.com

Appointed:
Be Just Be Green Coordinator: **Clarice McKenzie**
Clark Home
231-745-3256
cjmckum@gmail.com

Committee on Nominations:

Chairperson:
Sue Emmons (2017) 4-year term
2226 Anderson Dr. SE, Grand Rapids 49506
616-308-3802 sre.peace@yahoo.com

Committee Members:
Loretta Lee (2017) 2-year term
142 Greenwood Drive, Battle Creek 49037
269-317-7377 weatherby2000@sbcglobal.net

Sue Franklin (2017) 2-year term
2392 Fern Ct., Farwell 48622-9789
989-339-0491 Lsfbflat@gmail.com

Jenny Kroeze (2017) 3-year term
640 Seminole Dr., Fremont 49412
231-924-4814 jennyK48g@gmail.com

Ruth Jones (2017) 4-year term
540 Georgetown Dr. #36, Traverse City 49684
231-421-3500 tcgrannynanny@yahoo.com

Dorie Litchfield 4-year term
61470 CR 657, Lawton 49065
269-580-3449 creator.dorie@gmail.com

Program Advisory Group

Suzanne Hewitt (2017)
2250 Knapp St., Grand Rapids 49505
616-361-9565 suzmckhew@att.net

Historian — (appointed) OPEN

District Presidents:

Albion: **Cheryl Proctor**
[517-741-3125](tel:517-741-3125) seldominn_1@juno.com

Grand Rapids: **Sue Rietman**
269-795-7644 Susan.rietman@sbcglobal.net

Grand Traverse: **Susan Wirgau**
[\(231\) 838-5986](tel:(231)838-5986) onthebay@charter.net

Heartland: **Waitha Gaye Leavitt**
231-640-0238 wally@journey.com

Kalamazoo: **Cindy Thiele**
269-673-4514 cindahthiele@gmail.com

From our Vice President

I am looking out the window at my snow covered yard and the snow lying on the trees. It is winter in West Michigan. However, spring is coming and I am looking forward to the many opportunities for United Methodist Women in the next few months. First of all, I want to congratulate Grand Rapids District on a wonderful Epiphany Celebration. It was very inspirational and seeing old friends again made for a very special morning. Also, in the next Highlights there will be information on the first Michigan Conference Annual that will be held in Midland on October 27. (SAVE the DATE). There will also be a program and Officer's training on the night before. More later.

Now, back to our upcoming activities. I will probably miss a couple but the point is, get out and get involved. Here we go – Spring Fling in Cedar Springs, Keep Making Peace in East Lansing, numerous Spring Retreats, and the big one ASSEMBLY. I am looking forward to meeting with my fellow United Methodist Women from around the world as we learn and worship together. We will learn about many new missions and so many ways to offer our service to God and our brothers and sisters. As all of our Districts are changing we have the

opportunity to meet new women from our State. Working on the Steering Committee. I have met women from the Detroit Conference and have found that we all have the same concerns for Missions. With the joining of the two Conferences, please look at ALL of the Mission u possibilities. I think there is a Mission u that will fit everyone's calendar. I am hoping that some of the Detroit Conference ladies will join us in Albion this summer. It will be fun getting to know them better.

Please don't hide your head under a bushel. Get out and join United Methodist Women from all over the State and be prepared for a day of fun, learning about Missions, and praising God.

I leave you with the "*Hymn of Promise . . . In the cold and snow of winter there's a spring that waits to be, unrevealed until its season, something God alone can see.*"

Shirley Chappell
Vice President



Meet the New Conference Communications Coordinator



I am so excited to be on this amazing team of United Methodist Women! A little about me, I live in a tiny town between Cadillac and Traverse City with my husband of 13 years, our 4 kids (ages 6-10), 2 cats, and 20 axolotls. While my degree is in Hospitality and Tourism Management I didn't work in that field long, and have settled nicely into

being a stay at home mom. Sort of. I work for my church, Central UMC in TC, as social media coordinator. I also substitute teach at my children's school and lead a fabulous group of Building Better Moms. In my free time (ha!) I read a lot, craft, and sit on the couch.

As I acclimate to this new position I ask for prayers of clarity and understanding, peace and joy.

Feel free to email me with questions anytime!

MichiganUnitedMethodistWomen@gmail.com
Amber Hassler, Communications

From Your Book Lady

Secretary of Program Resources

Don't you just love these wintery days when you can stay inside and read? My reading list just keeps getting longer and longer, but cold snowy days are the best for catching up!

I am reading The Book of Joy by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the Dalai Lama now. It's on our Reading Program List for 2018 in the Nurturing for Community category. I usually keep a notebook next to me when I read and I write down things I especially like, want to remember or investigate more. I love this book and found I was writing just about everything in the book. (I have switched to highlighting the really profound things instead!) As you can

probably tell, I highly recommend this one from our list. You can see the entire list and past year's lists at www.unitedmethodistwomen.org/readingprogram or pick up the info at the Program Resources table at your upcoming Spring events (If you can wait that long!) As always, if I can help with Program Resources questions contact me.

Connie Swinger
connieswinger@att.net
 616-813-4670



E & I Jottings

From Your Education and Interpretation Coordinator

This will be a year of changes. My husband and I are trying to decide what changes will take place in our lives. Should we downsize or not? How long should we stay in the south during winter months?

Our West Michigan Conference will unite with the Detroit Conference in June. The United Methodist Women have been working on this for over a year. On October 27 we will have our first Michigan Conference Annual Celebration of United Methodist Women at Midland UMC. In September and October the nine new Districts will hold their annual meetings. Please remember we are not getting new units.

We will all be a new District. There is not an "our" District.

Some things will remain the same, we will still have 5 Channel giving. I will prepare certificates for all the units who are eligible. We all worship the same God, who will be with us through all of this.

Don't forget Assembly May 17-20 in Columbus, Ohio. Also Mission U July 11-14 in Albion.

We are all sisters on a new journey. I hope I see you at some of the stops.

Sue Stickle,
 Education and Interpretation



A Note from Texas

The joy is mine here in San Benito Texas as this social action coordinator's article is being written for the Highlights Newsletter. I know that we, United Methodist sisters, are serving God in all the places we journey! I am glad we will have many opportunities to catch up when we are together in the coming months at all the United Methodist Women's events we attend.

GOVERNMENT; "The World"

Reading *Salt for Society* by W. Phillip Keller, I am reminded of God's great concern and love for human society. We know that this is what Jesus' incarnation, death and resurrection are all about! "In the New Testament, the word used to denote society is 'The world.' For example, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believed in him should not perish, but have everlasting life' (John 3:16) ... 'As thou has sent me into the world (the societies of humanity, even so have I also sent them into the world' (John 17:18)."

In the world we represent God's eternal hope and optimism evident in God's sending. We are called and sent to be salt and light. As United Methodist Women, we realize the deepening darkness of the society in which we live and the illness of which we are an integral part. Let's examine where society has impinged itself upon us to the extent we are no different from the world. We are we called to be an element in society that is distinct as salt to food and light to darkness."

OFFER THEM CHRIST

"Offer them Christ." These were John Wesley's words as he sent Thomas Coke to America to ordain Francis Asbury to become Superintendent of the new Methodist denomination. As Wesleyans, we understand salvation in a holistic way. Our journey in the faith is a **journey of salvation**. We are all a work in progress. Because of grace, each person on earth is being reworked, shaped back to reflect the image of God. **That is God's salvation!**

Randie Clawson, Social Action

REALIZE

I chose "Realize" as my pondering word this year. I continue praying, asking God to help me realize me my blind spots. Lament and repent have become parts in my daily prayers of confession.

As United Methodists, we are to use the quadrilateral as we discern our choices in our 24/7. Tradition is one of the things we are to consider. Until reading *Hearing the Call Liturgy, Justice, Church and World* by Nicholas Wolterstorff, I did not realize the Christian tradition regarding feeding of the poor.

In this book, church fathers are quoted. All had similar ideas and created our Christian tradition. Below is the quote from John Chrysostom (349-407):

"This also is theft, not to share one's possessions. Perhaps this statement seems surprising to you, but do not be surprised. Scriptures say that not only the theft of other's goods but also the failure to share one's own goods with others is theft, swindle, and degradation. (...)

I beg you remember this without fail, that not to share our own wealth with the poor is theft from the poor and deprivation of their means of life; we do not possess our own wealth but theirs."

As United Methodist Women, we must realize that the way of salvation for all people in every place is a spiritual journey. A journey developing a holistic understanding of God's salvation. We never get beyond the need to be saved by God. On our journey, we stay receptively open so that we can answers to the question- How is God saving me? How am I being saved so that my life offers justice?

*God of our weary years, God of our silent tears,
Thou who hast brought us thus far on the way;
Thou who hast by Thy might led us into the light,
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.*



Conference UMW Treasurer

As I am writing this, I have just returned from United Methodist Women Leadership Development Days in St. Louis, Missouri. This is a training opportunity for new Conference or District Officers, or in my case a Conference Treasurer who is asked to attend every 3 years.

It is a busy weekend, but it is filled with outstanding worship, inspirational learning, thoughtful devotions, laughter, sisterhood, group selfies and everything that is good about United Methodist Women.

I am exhausted when I return home, but I am also filled with an impatient desire to put my faith, hope and love into action.

Over the course of the weekend, I attended workshops on “Steps to Action: The Tools in our Service and Advocacy Toolbox)” and “Getting to the Heart of the Matter: Mission Giving”. The Mission Giving workshop was led by our National President Shannon Priddy. The first exercise in the workshop was to list what was important to us personally in making our decision to give to United Methodist Women – on a small post-it note in a few minutes. The next exercise was to list the way we feel when we give to United Methodist Women. When we shared some of our responses with the group it was clear that we **trust** United Methodist Women will be good stewards of our giving; we know that our giving will **impact** the lives of women, children and youth; we see the **results** of our mission giving in response magazine; and we feel **blessed** to be a part of the mission and vision of this worldwide sisterhood!

So, take a moment now to think about WHY **you** give and HOW **you** feel when you do. If you ever have a question on “Where the Money Goes” – please contact me at juliapr@charter.net, 989-576-0675, 4114 Sanctuary Drive, Alma, MI 48801.

Blessings,
Julia Paradine-Rice
Conference Treasurer



National UMW Membership Log

Members of United Methodist Women are invited to complete the new membership log on our website:

www.unitedmethodistwomen.org.

By logging in member information, emails will be sent about Assembly, Calls to Action, events and opportunities.

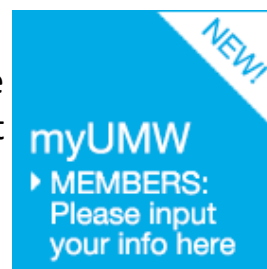
When finished you will be able to print a personalized membership card.

United Methodist Women is a membership organization dedicated to mission with women, children and youth.

All mission-minded women within and beyond The United Methodist Church are welcome. We are an open, Christian organization with ecumenical ties and connections around the world.

United Methodist Women will never share your contact information without your permission.

Look for this tab on the United Methodist Women's website.



**WHEN WOMEN UNITE,
BOLD AND COURAGEOUS
ACTIONS HAPPEN**



UNITED METHODIST WOMEN
ASSEMBLY MAY 18-20, 2018
GREATER COLUMBUS
CONVENTION CENTER
COLUMBUS, OHIO

United Methodist Women Assembly 2018 is a time for fellowship, it is also an opportunity to empower faithful women to be stronger discipleship leaders in their communities. Through moving worship, inspiring speakers, immersion experience exhibits, riveting workshops and town hall-style meetings, members will leave Assembly with the knowledge, courage and determination to change the world as part of a daring and compassionate 150 year-old movement.

Register Now

www.UMWAssembly.org 2018
United Methodist Women
Assembly 2018
MAY 18, 19, 20, 2018,
Columbus, Ohio
www.unitedmethodistwomen.org



New Districts



District 1: Tip of Mitten and Upper Peninsula

District 2: Northern Lower Peninsula

District 3: Northeastern and Central Lower Peninsula

District 4: West Lower Peninsula

District 5: Central Lower Peninsula

District 6: Central Eastern Lower Peninsula

District 7: Southwestern Lower Peninsula

District 8: South Central Lower Peninsula

District 9: Southeastern Lower Peninsula

District 7 Update

The changes are a comin', but that is good. Conference and district levels will see big changes. Yet, at the local level you will find basically only names changes and greater distances to events.



District 7 Kalamazoo is excited about blending with the west part of Albion district. Combining ideas and talents to build a new and better District 7 is our goal. Our first chance is the combined Spiritual Growth Retreat with Albion, Heartland, and Kalamazoo Districts at Wesley Woods. It will be a great slumber party, a get-to-know-you weekend May 4 & 5. I need to boost or should I say announce our Mission Evening at Stevensville June 20. Faith Fowler will be speaking on the tiny homes in Detroit! If you have never heard her speak, she is informative and very humorous. Get your reservations in and fill the car with women & men.

Lastly, I want to ask you if you have heard of "the Way Forward". Ask your pastor when a program will be lead for the members in your church.

See you at the spiritual Growth Retreat at Wesley Woods.

Cindy Thiele

Kalamazoo District President



Excerpts from Bishop David Alan Bard's Message, November 21, 2017

So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation, everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation. - II Corinthians 5:17-18

At the 2017 Annual Conferences, members voted to create nine districts as we come together to form the Michigan Conference of The United Methodist Church. Following *The Discipline*, it is the responsibility of the bishop to draw the lines establishing these boundaries.

For the Michigan Conference, we have said that we envision a conference that is Christ-centered and connected: to engage in shared mission and ministry, to support bold and effective leaders, and to nurture vibrant congregations. With nine districts instead of twelve, we are re-directing ministry share monies to help provide staff that will work with district superintendents and other lay and clergy leaders to fulfill our mission and vision.

With mission foremost in mind, we also identified other important values in forming nine districts: honoring current shared ministry ar-

rangements; creative possibilities for mission-al alignments; creativity in providing district leadership; regional identity/affinity; transportation patterns; considering resources and capacity for new districts; diversity; and connectedness.



It is my hope and prayer that our new nine districts will be as helpful and as spirited as the districts have been in the past. I have been delighted by the work I have witnessed in our current districts and trust we will find ways to use these new districts to work out our mission and toward our vision.

Grace and Peace,

David Alan Bard



Breaking News

Ownership of the United Methodist Community House, in Grand Rapids has changed hands. As of February 9, 2018, United Methodist Women of West Michigan Conference of the United Methodist Church no longer owns the property at 904 Sheldon SE (and the surrounding lots and properties accumulated in recent years.) The ownership has been transferred to the Board of Directors of United Methodist Community House. It was time.

It was highly recommend by the National Office of Untied Methodist Women, Inc.,to that take this action. Ownership of United Methodist Community House has been a huge financial burden to our conference over the years and it was becoming even more so. After much discussion at the November 2017 Conference Mission team meeting and hearing the pros and cons, the group voted to take care of the details to pursue this action.

The proposal to “purchase” the properties was made to the Board of Directors of United Methodist Community House at their January 2018 meeting. The vote to accept this proposal was unanimous. The members of the board were very pleased.

Their main concern was how this would affect the relationship of United Methodist Women with UMCH. Assurance was given that United Methodist Women across the two Michigan Conferences were committed to continue their support, not only with money, but also with involvement and prayer.

We are no longer the “landladies.” We no longer have to worry about raising money constantly to take care of the building and property. NOW, we can raise our money to support the wonderful programs offered, and support the babies, children, youth and seniors who receive the benefits of those programs at this United Methodist Women National Mission Institution.

Linda Darrow, President
United Methodist Women
West Michigan Conference





Thank You to all United Methodist Women

February 12, 2018

Ms. Linda Darrow
United Methodist Women
West Michigan Conference
232 N. Cooley St.
Mt. Pleasant, MI 48858

Dear Ms. Darrow,

We want to thank you for the graciousness that the United Methodist Women have demonstrated to The United Methodist Community House over so many, many years. The deeding of the property to UMCH is a great blessing to us. As you are aware, I am new to the UMCH and am just beginning to understand our strong and historic relationship with UMW. Yet, we are totally humbled by the professionalism, compassion and commitment that you have exhibited to the cause of serving others.

UMCH is at a critical stage and our team is working diligently to ensure that the organization founded and supported for over a century by UMW will thrive for another 100 years. It is imperative that we re-imagine our vision for the future but I want to reassure you that the mission that first compelled UMW to create our agency is still intact and is just as relevant today as it was in 1902. We are honored to carry on this great work on your behalf.

As we move forward, we are pleased to continue our partnership with UMW as members of our board of directors, committee members and volunteers. Please share our gratitude with the United Methodist Women of Michigan. We will also keep you updated as we re-imagine how we can best serve our community in the Name of our Lord. Thank you for your unending support and we covet your prayers daily.

Sincerely,

Eric J. Williams

Eric J. Williams
CEO

Carla Moore

Carla Moore
COO

West Michigan Conference of the United Methodist Church

www.umwmichiganconference.org

United Methodist Women

269 Cayo Dr, Buckley MI 49620



United
Methodist
Women

FAITH • HOPE • LOVE IN ACTION

NONPROFIT ORG.

US POSTAGE

PAID

LANSING, MI

PERMIT # 933

Inside This Issue

From Your Book Lady
Update on Community House
District Changes
and more

HIGHLIGHTS-- the official Newsletter for West Michigan Conference United Methodist Women; Is published quarterly: Dec., Mar., June, Sept.

Submissions requested by the 5th of each previous month to:
Editor: Amber Hassler
michiganunitedmethodistwomen@gmail.com

2018 Calendar of Events

March 17	Spring Fling	Cedar Springs UMC
March 23	Annual Day of Giving	unitedmethodistwomen.org/150/day-of-giving
April 14	Keep Making Peace	University UMC
April 21-22	Spiritual Growth Retreat	Lake Louise Retreat Center
May 4-5	Spiritual Growth Retreat	Wesley Woods Retreat Center
May 4-5	Spiritual Growth Retreat	St. Francis Retreat Center, Dewitt
May 12	Michigan Conference UMW Mission Team Meeting	TBA
May 17-20	UMW Assembly	Columbus, OH
May 31-June 3	Michigan Area UMC Conference	Grand Travers Resort, Traverse City
July 11-14	Mission U of the South	Albion College
July 22	One Day Mission U	Erie UMC
August 9	Mission Day	Horton Bay UMC
August 17-18	Mission U of the East	Lake Huron Retreat Center
October 22	Conference Annual	Midland UMC