



Annual Gathering Learning opportunities

We are excited to welcome our presenters to our annual gathering.

Keynote:

**United Women in Faith National Board President
'Ainise 'Isama'u**

Greetings and Malo e Lelei! Kuou tuku ha Fakamalo mo fakafeta'i kihe 'Otua Mafimafe kihe tauhi 'ofa kuo ne fai ma'mku mo kitutolu hono kotoa. My name is 'Ainise 'Isama'u and what an honor it is to be with you all! I thank God for the opportunity and blessing!

My United Women in Faith (formerly United Methodist Women) story began with a conversation with Brenda Tuita, who was the California-Pacific Conference United Methodist Women Limitless Young Women Coordinator, regarding an event for UMW. The conversation led to talking about Limitless. That's when I attended my first conversation with the West District Limitless team. As we know, Limitless is a UMW Life Mentoring Program for Young Women. To be brutally honest, I admit I was a skeptic at first because growing up, UMW wasn't exactly my "cup of tea." I thought it to be a group of seasoned women who gathered and talked about things from 1869, had long drawn-out meetings and spent time in a circle just sewing their life away. Little did I know that attending a conversation with Limitless would lead me to be a United Methodist Women member for the rest of my life. Today, I am a mother of an 8-year-old girl, a wife, a friend, a mentor... a leader. Since that conversation life hasn't been the same. Almost everywhere I go I meet someone with a United Methodist Women connection. I always feel welcomed and like I have a place at the table.

I have served on the district level and also on the conference level. I still remember how nervous I was to send out my first newsletter to all United Methodist Women of the California-Pacific Conference. My nervousness was automatically put to peace because I never felt alone. As the former Communications Coordinator for Cal-Pac Conference UMW, the lessons I learned in this role taught me so much about being organized, working with women of all ages and making sure information is sent out in proper time. Trust me, there were many learning curves, but the California-Pacific Conference UMW Team were amazing teachers from day one. It's not really that they taught me, but they

embraced me and showed me the way while allowing me to have my own voice. These women have stepped into my life to continue showing me. This group of very special women ... bold, courageous, daring and loving women opened their hearts and mentored me.

Workshop descriptions and leaders

Soul Care-Praying and Praise

Kelli Williams

Be prepared to be an active participant in praying & praising using all of your senses as we enter into a time of soul care that might stir new practices that bring us closer to our Maker. Join Kelli Williams, Spiritual Life Director of AK Child &



Family in a time of awakening ourselves to the Divine in and around us All.

Bio- Kelli Williams has served the mission of AK Child & Family as the Director of Spiritual Life since 1999. Prior to her transition to AK Child & Family, Kelli's was the Director of Youth Ministries at 1st United Methodist Church of Anchorage. Kelli is a Certified Chaplain through the international Fellowship of Chaplains and is a certified Veriditas Labyrinth facilitator. Kelli began her work in human potential as the sole proprietor of Vital Capacity Wellness Consulting where she worked with individuals and organizations at reach their God-given gifts and graces. She holds a Master's Degree in Sport Research / Psychology from the United States Sports Academy and earned her bachelor's degree in PE & Recreation from Seattle Pacific University. Kelli has been honored with the Church Women United - United National Office of Human Rights Award. Through her work, the Spiritual Life Department of AK Child & Family has also won the Lutheran Services in America Award for Excellence.



Solidarity, Not Charity: Mutual Aid as Vibrant Ministry **Erin Baldwin Day**

Food pantries, clothes closets, Jesus gardens... our churches are well-practiced at offering beautiful charity. And yet, the Kin-dom of God invites us to imagine and co-create a world where our neighbors no longer NEED charity for their food, clothing, and basic survival. But how do we actually engage the process of changing the structure of our society? How do we move from charity to

solidarity? Join Erin Baldwin Day for a creative, practical conversation about mutual aid, economic justice, and the transformation of the world.

Bio: Erin Baldwin Day is a community strategist, agitator for systemic change, and follower in the subversive Way of Jesus. Her varied work as a community organizer, pastor, nonprofit director, and entrepreneur informs her commitment to restorative community, public advocacy, and hospitality as spiritual practice. She currently serves as lead organizer with Mutual Aid Network of Anchorage (MANA) and the part-time convener of an experimental faith community called The Spacious Table, which invites spiritual refugees and church misfits of all sorts to find belonging together. You can find her written work at erinbaldwinday.substack.com.

Climate Justice: Finding resources and restoration in Alaska **Lia Slemmons**

Alaskans are experiencing climate change in ways that impact communities, including spring flooding, erosion of coastal communities, damage to food storage cellars, roads, and buildings from permafrost melt, shifting subsistence access,



forest fires, and more dangerous winter travel. Alaskans also have a wealth of cultural and natural resources to adapt to and reduce climate change. As we respond to lessen and prevent future harm, we can weigh our calling to do so justly. In this workshop, we will investigate how climate impacts and energy policies relate to Christian justice. Specific legislative examples on the table

and partner resources will be discussed, with the option of sharing local projects. We will strive to consider both the impacts and responses to climate change in Alaska with a lens of Christian justice.

Bio: I grew up in Chugiak, Alaska and loved fishing and berry picking in the summer and dog sledding in the winter with my family. My husband and I have two girls, 6 and 9 years old in Anchorage. I studied Chemistry and German in college and researched the pathway of iron into the equatorial Pacific during my PhD in oceanography at the University of Washington, where I also designed hands-on experiments for a public climate change impacts course. At our church in Seattle, UTUMC, our Creation Care team worked to understand our individual and church carbon footprint and to learn about ocean acidification. I developed the curriculum for the Northwest Climate Science Center “Climate Bootcamp” for early career management scientists. We moved home and joined St. John UMC where I currently serve on the Earth Stewards team and I taught environmental science and environmental studies for a few years at UAA. I joined the United Women in Faith *Just Energy for All* training in Springfield, IL in 2019. I started a long-term substitute science teaching assignment at Service High last month. Personally, I am praying and working to discern how justice is integral to and integrated in climate policy.

How To Become A More Welcoming And Affirming Ally For The LGBTQ Community- Rebecca Absher



What does it mean to be a “safe place” for LGBTQ persons? What are the meanings to all these terms relating to LGBTQ? In this workshop, you will discover some ways in which you can support and affirm our LGBTQ siblings. You will be given resources for learning more about the scripture. Like the “Jesus fish” drawn in the sand during the beginning of Christianity as a password or secret symbol when they faced persecutions for their faith, so must the gay queer community know if others are “safe” to be their authentic selves. We will make and take a

“safety sign” for them to know our LGBTQ siblings are safe with us.

Bio-I was born in Mississippi, an Army brat, so before I was in Kindergarten, we had moved from Mississippi, to Germany and then back to Dad's hometown Washington, Pennsylvania. When he retired, we moved to West Virginia, because my dad liked to fish for trout. My father died when I was in 8th grade, leaving my Mom, brother and I to figure out where we would go from there. I knew that I wanted to go to college and made it my goal to be the first one in my family to get a college degree. I always loved science and so I graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Zoology. The best laid schemes of mice and men often go awry, and the same was true for me. Instead of going to Veterinary school, I followed my heart and my first spouse to Virginia. I would changed course again, and followed my mother's footsteps becoming a teacher. I taught science for 27 years. I became certified in teaching all sciences, and levels (middle, and high school classes). I soon fell in love again, following my heart, and this time, she is my soulmate.

We like to hike, canoe, camp, chase the auroras, and travel to experience and see all the beauty in the world. I especially love talking about matters of the heart and soul with her, and since she is a pastor, that is pretty often. We have a 19 year old high school senior, Victoria, and upon her graduation, we will be moving to Battleground, Washington. I love the boldness and diversity of the beautiful LGBTQ community. I have always been an Ally, but now that I am part of the LGBTQ community, I want to help others who wish to be Allies become more welcoming and affirming to all people.