

WFWP USA: Awaken Chicago - Women Gather to Reconnect, Reflect and Radiate

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August 2026



It was a beautiful summer day when 20 women of various ages and stages of life gathered in Chicago for a one-day Awaken Retreat: Rooted in Radiance. It's been two years since the last retreat hosted by the Women's Federation in the area, so it was wonderful to regather and have a chance for women to connect to their true value and personal journeys of womanhood.



The day opened with a look at God's nurturing, fiercely protective love, and how women uniquely reflect that image. This session also unpacked the Hebrew word "ezer neged" (translated as "helpmeet"), revealing it's not a term of subservience, but one pointing to women's unique and divine power to give exactly what is needed by the receiver. Indeed, throughout the Hebrew scriptures, ezer is used for only two specifically named beings: God and Eve.

Awakening the Divine Feminine in Me: Tapping into My Personal Confidence and My Season of Life introduced four faces of femininity - Lover, Mother/Nurturer, Warrior/Queen, and Sage - and how we move through them in dynamic, cyclical rhythms rather than a fixed line. Recognizing our current season helps us embrace where we are now, trusting it as preparation for what's next.

A highlight of the day was when participants were able to choose a creative breakout to attend, where they could either complete a diamond painting, design and make their own bag charm, or participate in a music therapy circle. In our busy schedules, it's not always easy to find time for creative self expression, so this was a great opportunity to step back and be refreshed through the joy and beauty of creativity.



The day closed with a look at how women, despite being misunderstood and undervalued throughout history, have consistently drawn on quiet, powerful strengths to lead through hardship. Drawing on Mother Han's life and legacy alongside other women leaders, this session affirmed that women's unique touch is essential to peacebuilding in the world.



Participants consistently pointed to the "Seasons of Womanhood" session as the heart of the retreat. For many, it offered a rare chance to pause and locate themselves honestly in their current season of life. As one busy mother put it, "As a busy mom, it's still important to make time for perspective." Others found permission in the framework itself - one attendee shared, "It's easy to feel guilty for not being able to be what I 'should' be. But the seasons are a reminder that we have cycles and to work with that... rather than fighting it." A central metaphor of the retreat, comparing life's rhythms to the menstrual cycle, stayed with many long after. A testimony from presenter Dr. Katarina Conner about "the warrior trudging along"

resonated deeply as well, helping another attendee feel "less of a pressure to do it all and more joy and embrace in the process."



Across nearly every response, two themes rose to the top: self-compassion and connection. Attendees left committing to value themselves, make time for self-care, and extend themselves grace, alongside a deep appreciation for sharing space with women across generations and life stages. As one participant summarized simply, "I had a beautiful experience and I learned more. It was a precious time with women and sisters." The gratitude was overwhelming, with many attendees, including first-time attendees, thanking organizers for creating a space where they felt truly seen.

