

## MISSION ALIGNMENT FOR DISCIPLES WOMEN

As stated in the Rules of Procedure, the purpose of the International Disciples Women's Ministries (IDWM) shall:

- Provide opportunities for spiritual growth, enrichment, education and creative ministries to enable women to develop a sense of personal responsibility for the whole mission of the church of Jesus Christ, and
- Provide a channel through which women in congregations in the United States and Canada may be joined in fellowship and find means for effective participation in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Disciples Women have historically organized their life together for mission on behalf of the whole church. The heritage of the Disciples women's movement has empowered and inspired every generation to engage new challenges and forge new ministries at home and throughout the world. Disciples Women are engaged with every expression of Disciples life as well as in ecumenical relationships.

Since the first Worker's Conference of women in leadership held in 1949 at Turkey Run, Indiana, women's ministries have been organized and structured to assure representation, voice and vote for all Disciples women. The Church Women's Staff Fellowship is comprised of women from every region and every constituency in the life of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) who carry the responsibility to be the conduit through which information flows to and from local congregations, regions and the general church around resources, programming and mission opportunities available for Disciples Women. This group meets annually to vision and conduct business on behalf of the women.

The Disciples Women's Cabinet is comprised of all the women who make up Staff Fellowship (above) as well as all regional and constituency Women's Presidents. This group is convened every other year, with travel, housing and meals paid for by International Disciples Women's Ministries (IDWM), for education, leadership training, networking, visioning and planning for the ministry to and from Disciples Women.

The IDWM Executive Committee is made up of officers elected every four years by Disciples Women at their Quadrennial Assembly. Nominations for these positions may be made by any Disciples Woman and are also solicited from all Cabinet members. These elected, volunteer officers consist of a President, Vice President, Regional/Constituency Staff and Presidents representatives, and representatives from every constituency as part of the 2-4 at-large members. The Executive Committee meets semi-annually to conduct the business of the organization. The Executive Director of the Office of Disciples Woman (ODW)

serves as the IDWM Secretary and Treasurer and ODW staff serves on the committee as well.

One of the hallmarks of Disciples Women is the way in which they have kept their Rules of Procedure fluid and flexible to assure the ministry remains relevant and contextual throughout the years. One way this has been manifest is through the addition of elected representatives from every ethnic constituency group to the decision making table of the Executive Committee and the addition of representatives from every established geographic region for the Hispanic constituency (resulting in six elected Hispanic Women's Ministry Presidents becoming part of the Cabinet).

### **SCOPE OF MISSION AND MINISTRIES OF DISCIPLES WOMEN**

- 1) **Mission Education** has sent women into the world to forge relationships with the church in many places. In partnership with DOM the women have made Woman-to-Woman trips in 20 countries over 22 years. Women who are part of these trips agree to become mission interpreters as congregations use study material about these countries and Disciples mission in those places.
- 2) **Mission Funding** provided by the women over-and-above congregational mission offerings average 10% of DMF. Treasury Services, in partnership with the women, is planning a stewardship education and stewardship interpreters training for Disciples Women preceding the 2010 Quadrennial Assembly. It would be hard to calculate the effect women have had in keeping Disciples Mission in congregational budgets.
- 3) **Leadership Education** is part of everything the women do. For example the Leadership Apprentice Program has identified women of racial/ethnic backgrounds to be part of an extended program of leadership development. A number of these women have gone on to play important roles in the life of the whole church. Study materials have permeated the life of congregations by offering solid education in bible, mission and Christian living used by thousands of women.
- 4) **Advocacy and social action** is a strong value for women. The Women's Action Web immerses women in local initiatives to relieve suffering and poverty in places such as Chicago, Washington D.C., Southern California, Colorado and Kentucky. Women then return to their regions and use this model to plan and lead regional immersions in social action initiatives. Every quadrennial, Disciples Women engage in a joint effort related to a specific advocacy project. The project which will culminate at the 2010 Quadrennial Assembly is called Break the Chains of Human Trafficking.

- 5) **Spiritual Formation** is developed in a network of regional retreats that bring women together to explore their faith and be empowered to live as Christian women in the world. Through hundreds of circles of women meeting in congregations for study, prayer, support and service, women provide ministries to one another and to the church. *Just Women* is a new quarterly magazine for all women of the church, regardless of their participation in traditional groups. It is a joint project of IDWM and Disciples World and is a resource to inform and inspire.
  
- 6) **Quadrennial Assembly**, begun in 1957, successfully brings all of the ministries of the church together. Dozens of women have heard the call to ministry in these events. Women have found courage to leave abusive relationships; create new ministries in their communities; form lasting friendships across generational, racial and language barriers; transform worship in their congregations; and connect in powerful ways with the mission of the whole church. The stories are endless. The transformation of individuals and through them churches and communities abound.

### **WHAT'S THE POINT?**

The real point of naming the core principles and the extensive scope of women's ministries is to provide perspective in order for the church to make a sound judgment for where this ministry can be most effective and what conditions would be useful for it to thrive.

Based on this brief history and overview of Disciples Women and their organization and structure, please answer the following questions.

**Questions to Inform the  
MISSION ALIGNMENT COORDINATING COUNCIL  
(MACC)**

*Please give careful consideration to answering this questionnaire.*

1. Given the history, mission and structure of Disciples Women, where would you house Women's Ministries within the structure of the church to make it most effective in fulfilling this mission?
  - a. part of \_\_\_\_\_ (an existing unit);
  - b. a stand-alone organization;
  - c. reporting through the OGMP to the General Board (e.g., Week of Compassion);
  - d. something entirely new (please describe)
  - e. \_\_\_\_\_  
Don't care.
  
2. What suggestions do you have about how the Women's Ministries might be more visible and effective in communicating this mission?
  
3. How would you fund this ministry to assure its effectiveness, so that it will strengthen and empower women as they seek to fulfill the mission of the gospel in the world?
  
4. Other Comments: (please attach a separate sheet or use the back if more space is needed)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Church: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_

*Mail the completed questionnaire by OCTOBER 1 to:  
Office of Disciples Women, P.O. Box 1986, Indianapolis, IN 46206  
or email to:*

***[bgearlds@dhm.disciples.org](mailto:bgearlds@dhm.disciples.org)***

For more information on Disciples Women, visit:

[www.discipleswomen.org](http://www.discipleswomen.org)