

Celebrations

Commissioning Services – page 1

Service of Blessing or Commissioning – page 1

Service of Dedication – page 2

Spring Training Events and Conferences – page 5

Spring Conference Model: Women’s Ministry, Christian Church in Kentucky – page 5

Spiritual Life Retreats – page 10

Convocation – page 10

Spiritual Growth Retreat – page 11

Resources for Retreat Planning – page 12

Commissioning Services

Commissioning Services are held to lift up the women and the experience they are embarking on before the community and to pray for them on their journey. The commissioning service

- sends them on their way with the church’s blessing
- sends them on their way with God’s blessing
- acknowledges the ministry in which they are participating

Service of Blessing or Commissioning¹

Each of us will be called in many different ways in the days/week ahead, called to live out our faith, called to be disciples of Christ. A very special call has come to _____ (name) to participate in _____.

_____ (First name) will be traveling throughout _____ (location). She will learn from and with the people who travel with her and from and with the people she visits.

We at _____ (name of church) in _____ (city/town, state) send _____ (name) with blessings and prayers. _____ (Name), we thank God for your commitment. We

¹Edited from a blessing by Carol Q. Cosby.

ask that when you return you will share your new information, new insights, and reflections.

Prayer (your own or as follows): We thank you, God, for the call that comes to each of us to put our faith into action. We ask your special presence with _____(name) and with all who participate in _____(event). Give them sensitivity and wisdom that they may learn even more about what it means to be your people, followers of your son, in whose name we pray, Amen.

Service of Dedication

The following service of dedication was designed specifically for the Blessing Box, but the elements found in this service of dedication are appropriate for dedicating social action projects or at other times when a project or special offering is being dedicated. You will find additional Blessing Box Dedications at www.discipleswomen.org and in the Annual Manual for Leaders, also available online or from your Regional DW/CWF president or staff person.

THE BLESSING BOX²

Call to Worship/Scripture: (James 1:17 and 1 Peter 4:10)

“Every good and perfect gift is from above coming down from
the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like
shifting shadows.

“As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as
good stewards of God’s varied grace.”

Meditation: This could be something you have written or song lyrics

An excerpt from a poem, “Drinking from My Saucer,” emphasizes the abundance of our gifts:

And as I go along life’s way,
I’m reaping better than I sowed.
I’m drinking from my saucer,
'Cause my cup has overflowed.

²Written by N. Sue Alexander for *Guideposts for Leaders*.

I thank God for His blessings,
And the mercies He's bestowed.
I'm drinking from my saucer,
'Cause my cup has overflowed.

And may I never be too busy,
To help others bear their loads.
Then I'll keep drinking from my saucer,
'Cause my cup has overflowed.

The giver of every good and perfect gift, our Shepherd, causes our cups to overflow (Psalm 23:5b). God's gifts are marked by kindness and helpfulness. Unlike shifting shadows, God does not change and is always the giver of good gifts.

Each of us has received gifts of time, talents and money to share. By employing these gifts in the lives of others, we become agents of God's grace and find our own gifts in greater measures. Then we, too, can keep "drinking from our saucers."

Hymn: "Thank You Lord," *Chalice Hymnal* (no. 531) or "Called as Partners in Christ's Service" (no. 453).

Litany:

O God, who sent Jesus into the world
not to be ministered unto, but to minister,
and to give His life to set others free,
shape us for your ministry.

Claim us, O God, for your service, and direct us toward your will.

You have graced all members of Christ's body, one by one, with gifts
of the Spirit to fulfill their vocation:

to lead lives worthy of your calling,
to be workers who have no reason to be ashamed,
to shine as lights to your glory.

**You have granted each of us the manifestation of the Spirit for
the common good.**

You give grace according to the measure of Christ's gift,

and some are called to be apostles,
some prophets,
some evangelists,
some pastors and teachers,
to equip the saints for the work of ministry,
for building up the body of Christ.

**Grant that together we may all come to the unity of the faith and
of the knowledge of your Son, to the full stature of Christ.**

Through your grace, O God, may we lead a life worthy of the vocation
to which you call us.

Claim us, O God, for your service, and direct us toward your will.

(Chalice Hymnal, no. 451, used by permission)

Offering: This would be the time to bring Blessing Boxes, items to be dedicated,
items representing social action projects, etc. forward

Closing Prayer of Dedication:

Dear God, giver of everything, use these gifts which we present. May they
show forth your love and our faith in ways beyond our thoughts, sight, and
imagination. Make us one as we go forth in your service. We pray in Jesus'
name. Amen.

Planning Suggestions

Worship Center:

Arrange seven assorted candles (symbolizing the seven gifts of the Spirit)
on a table covered with a purple cloth (symbolizing humility and reverence). Add
a cup and saucer (symbolizing the overflowing cup of gifts from God and a cross
(reminding us of the sacrifice, love, and victory of Jesus Christ).

Offering:

Play softly or sing "Living for Jesus" (*Chalice Hymnal*, no. 610, or "We
Give Thee but Thine Own" (no. 382).

- A brief explanation of the Blessing Box, social action project, etc. could be given before the offering is received.
- Use one or two gift-wrapped shoeboxes with lids wrapped separately so the box can be opened for receiving the offering.
- You may want a note for the program or advance publicity:
- You may want to take the coins you have collected and convert them into a check for the offering.

Spring Training Events and Conferences

Spring events/conferences are held in many regions to introduce the theme and study materials for the coming year. Some regions hold these events in several locations while others hold one event in a central location. The following is a model offered by the Women's Ministry of the Christian Church in Kentucky.

Spring Conference Model

(Women's Ministry, Christian Church in Kentucky)

Planning for our conferences begins with a CWF/Women's Ministries Cabinet retreat in June of the year before the conference. We plan where we will have the retreat, what the theme will be (based on theme of the upcoming study material), choose workshop offerings and decide who will prepare them, and choose speakers to invite for each opening worship. The following February, the Cabinet meets again for a three-day retreat to hear brief presentations of each of the workshops and attend to last minute details and correspondence. At that retreat, the cabinet members also sign up to present a workshop, lead worship, or work at the bookstore.

Our workshops include presentations from our Woman-to-Woman representatives and information on the study material being sold at the conference. A cabinet member/district coordinator in the district where the conference is being held works with the host congregation to set up lunch, room

assignments, and other logistics. Included in the material used is a copy of the coordinators' checklist and a checklist for host congregations. The conferences begin at 10:00 a.m. and end by 3:00 p.m. We allow time for browsing at the book display prior to opening worship.

We have a keynote address at each conference. The speakers use common scripture and theme for their addresses. We have Blessing Box offerings, announcements, and book chat during this opening session. The first session of workshops is offered from 11:30 a.m. to 12:20 p.m. The second session follows lunch and also lasts fifty minutes. Closing worship and communion end the day. We normally take up an offering for Woman-to-Woman at these conferences.

We provide Spring Conference resource booklets for each participant. These booklets are usually about fifty pages long and include information for congregational use on leadership, suggestions for service projects, information on study "dos and don'ts" and resources, a section on stewardship, information on upcoming events, and resources for the day's conferences, including common worship material and schedule.

The conferences have followed a similar format for the past several years. However, there was a new offering introduced in 2004 and it proved to be a great success. We will have another such offering in the future. The new item was the "mini-retreat" workshop that kept fifteen to twenty-five participants together throughout the workshop sessions and lunch. The 2004 workshop was led by an experienced spiritual director, reiki master, and licensed Disciples minister. This mini-retreat was funded by a grant from the Women's Endowment Fund.

We do have a rather large study material and book display that we provide on consignment. The local Cokesbury bookstore provides books suggested for the study material as well as other books that may be relevant to the theme. Study material is, of course, obtained from Christian Board of Publication.

Kentucky Disciples Women Spring Conference Outline Workshops

Presidents Together: Presidents/contacts will meet with staff and cabinet representative to review information and discuss ideas on worship, study, stewardship, and service.

Study Theme: Preview of the *New Day* magazine and the accompanying study guide material.

Mission Study: Information and introduction to DW/CWF mission study country with suggestions for putting this information to use.

Music: Exploration of how one's perception of music expands the search for spirituality and the presence of God.

Prayer and Meditation: Suggestions for prayer and meditation including assembly of prayer bundle, experiencing the scriptures meditatively, journaling, and guided meditation.

Reconciliation: Explore how one can reconcile with self, others, and God.

Bible Study: Exploring scripture from the current year's study

Mini-Retreat/Spiritual Spa: Spirit Rising Workshop: Integrating, Mind, Body, **and**

Spirit: This two-session spirituality workshop will be facilitated by Christina St. Clair. Workshop will help participants seek God's wholeness through deep reading of scripture with *Lectio Divina* and use of reiki in conjunction with Christian prayer for self and others.

Coordinator's Checklist

(Keep receipts for expenses & file for reimbursement after conference.)

1. Publicity

_____ Publicity is being mailed from the Christian Church in Kentucky office.
Letters and registration forms mailed to last year's participants and presidents/cabinet packet by February 13.

2. Host Church

_____ Visit the host church and go over the "host church" checklist with the president and, if possible, the minister.

_____ Arrange for registration area, rooms appropriate in size and location for eight workshops (consider noise and adjacent activity when

combining space). Also decide on table display area for books and crafts. Sanctuary can be used for a large workshop like study. A table or shelf for display items needs to be in each room.

_____ An expense voucher will be supplied. Have women from the host church keep receipts of expenses.

3. Recruiting Help

_____ Registration—Regional office will supply name tags and change. You need to recruit three women to be at the table and hand out tags and check off names. Recruit two women each to count the registration money, offering and Blessing Box. Often the same two women are able to count the money for everything. Special forms and containers will be supplied for each of these monies.

4. At the Meeting

_____ Arrive at least forty minutes ahead of registration time.

_____ Call the gathering together by introducing yourself and welcoming those in attendance; allow host president to offer word of welcome and provide directions to workshops; have team stand; provide order of the day by providing information to fill in schedule on back. (More details later.)

_____ Give offering, blessing box, and registration \$ in appropriate envelopes to treasurer or staff.

_____ Call for the evaluations.

5. Send Appropriate Thank-yous

_____ People who have helped you (not the team).

Host Church Checklist

_____ 1. See that sanctuary, classrooms, fellowship hall and restrooms are ready. Have sound system in working order and someone present who knows how to keep it operational.

- _____ 2. Table and three chairs for registration. Coordinator will recruit volunteers. CCK office will call you with registration count and number for child care (if any) one week prior to conference date.
- _____ 3. Have eight rooms/spaces available for groups of twenty-five with adult chairs. We can use sanctuary space, as well as classroom space, and the dining area if necessary.
- _____ 4. Book exhibit should be placed in a highly visible/accessible area with two large tables and two or three folding chairs.
- _____ 5. Table for a display—near registration or fellowship hall area if possible.
- _____ 6. Place signs for workshops and books on doors or walls so they are clearly visible. Consider accessibility for persons with limited eyesight, mobility, etc.
- _____ 7. If parking is a problem, have someone available to help. Have entrances well marked.
- _____ 8. Nursery facilities/child care is to be provided by the host church for persons who pre-register.
- _____ 9. Hosts should arrive at least forty-five minutes before registration time. The team will arrive forty-five minutes to an hour ahead of registration to set up. Please have the building open or arrangements made for them to get in at that time. Also have the workshop spaces marked so the team will know where to set up. Do not wait until the team arrives to make these decisions.
- _____ 10. Designate someone to assist with carrying heavy boxes—handcart would be very helpful. Have them arrive forty-five minutes before registration.
- _____ 11. Station persons at various places to welcome/direct people as they arrive and to meeting rooms.
- _____ 12. Food preparation and other duties should not cause the hosting CWF to miss the program. Plan ahead so all host church members can participate in conference activity. Last year the most highly

praised lunches were those in which the CWF members provided various homemade salads and desserts. The sandwich materials and condiments were purchased by the host (and refunded by the Region). In this way, women who were vegetarian or had health issues could find something they could eat. Do what works for you. One suggestion for serving is to have a line down each side of the serving table to reduce time. A “light” menu is preferred to a “heavy” one. It is recommended that coffee, juice, and doughnut holes or muffins be available at registration time.

- _____ 13. Designate hosts in some simple/recognizable way—ribbons, nametags in a different color, vests, aprons, or hats.
- _____ 14. Please keep track of and submit hosting costs—voucher will be sent later.

Spiritual Life Retreats

Convocation

An event that lasts twenty-four to thirty-six hours for three hundred to five hundred women held at a hotel provides opportunity for fellowship, education, spiritual growth, and building relationships.

This event is planned by a circle of eleven to twelve women who meet six times in eighteen months to two years. Each has specific responsibilities:

- Two co-chairs (one in training)
- Worship
- Speakers/Program
- Hostesses/ decorations
- Treasurer
- Secretary
- Seminars
- Displays (Disciples organizations who want to have a booth)

- Bookstore
- Concurrent children's program director

Schedule

- Opening session with music/worship and speaker
- Two afternoon seminars on topic related to the theme (for example, sixteen seminars for three hundred women)
- Evening session around dinner, banquet style with speaker and music/worship
- Reception for speaker and area parties after session
- Breakfast, prayer time
- Another two seminars on topics related to the theme
- Lunch and third plenary session with speaker and worship

Spiritual Growth Retreat

This is a weekend event at a camp and conference or retreat center for one hundred to one hundred fifty women. A circle of five to ten women with a chair and a co-chair in training plans the event over a year. The planning time will need to be extended if you change facilities from year to year.

Schedule

Friday evening

- Dinner
- Opening gathering to include opportunities to meet one another and begin building the community and form small groups for conversation throughout the weekend
- Short welcome intro session to introduce the theme
- After-session games and singing for anyone interested

Saturday

- Breakfast
- Opening session to include speaker time, small group time and reflection time
- Lunch
- Free time
- Afternoon workshop to plan worship
- Afternoon plenary with speaker again, to include small group time and reflection time.
- Dinner
- Evening session with speaker
- Evening worship led by the community
- After-session movie, games, or singing

Sunday

- Breakfast
- Morning session
- Cleanup
- Closing circle

Resources for Retreat Planning

Check with Christian Board of Publication, Upper Room, Cokesbury or your local Christian bookstore for books and resources for planning retreats. A variety of material has suggestions for theme and activities. Some possible themes:

- Spiritual spa, spiritual healing
- Exploring your God-given potential
- Heart to heart: living in the love of God
- Walking on the spiritual path as a new Christian, a renewing Christian, and a lifelong Christian.

- Nurturing your spirit.
- God's words are gifts (Eph.4:29)
- Mary, Martha, and me: Exploring the Mary and Martha in each of us and finding the balance.