

Introduction

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Introduction

The symbol for Women’s Ministries illustrates our past, present, and future dreams and actions. When asked what she saw in the symbol, Brenda Etheridge, International Christian Women’s Fellowship (ICWF) president during the 2002—2006 Quadrennium, shared these thoughts: “The many bright colors remind me of life, excitement, joy in the Lord! They also remind me that we come from all over God’s beautiful earth, North, South, East, West...from different cultures, from different ethnic groups, from different ways of seeing things and doing things...but we are all united as women of faith! The Christian Women’s Fellowship (CWF) symbol embedded in the new symbol reminds me of our heritage and that we are the proud and faithful women that we are today because we stand on the shoulders of those women of faith and vision. The words that surround these women of action and courage tell the world who we are...lay women and clergy women...old women and young women...straight women and gay women...married women and single women...women who are raising or have

raised children and women who did not...women who work outside the home and women who do not...all sisters...all daughters of God!"

As you begin to explore *Tools for Leadership*, our hope is that you will rediscover information you have heard before and discover new information and ideas. We hope that what you learn here will take you on a continuing journey of boldly seeking new ways of ministry to, with, for and by women, remembering that the ministry women do is not bound by structure. "The legacy left by our foremothers is not the structure we celebrate. It is the commitment to the mission that always calls for transformation and a willingness to risk doing what needs to be done in our time to do the mission."¹

Tools for Leadership is a collaborative effort with content coming not only from the writers but also from the out-of-print *CWF Leaders Manual* and other sources such as *Guideposts for Leaders* magazine, the *Network News*, the Disciples Web site, and ideas submitted by regions and local congregations. It has been designed so that it can be updated from the Disciples Women Web site as revisions and new material become available.

Each region has received a copy of the *Tools for Leadership* CD and is free to reproduce the resource and distribute it to congregations. The Adobe Acrobat PDF files are the best files to use for printing, as the page contents of Microsoft Word files may shift slightly from computer to computer. Regions are able to add information to customize the resource and provide updates as required. Such additional information might include a list of current regional DW/CWF officers, upcoming events, and a common service project for the region. Leaders may wish to insert the material into a binder with dividers to identify each module.

As we move into the twenty-first century, more information will come to us over the Internet. In your exploration of this material, you will find a variety of Web sites referenced for additional information. If you do not have access to a computer, perhaps you can make a connection with another woman in your congregation who does. It will give you the opportunity to build relationships and

¹Words by Rev. Claudia Grant.

introduce other women, who may not be involved or familiar with DW/CWF, to these ministries.

Another idea for women who do not have access to a computer comes from the Illinois/Wisconsin Region.² Ask a woman in your congregation to be a “Web watcher.” A Web watcher’s only task is to keep abreast of what is on the Disciples Women Web site. She need not be an active member of any group, simply someone who uses the Internet with ease and frequency. When something new comes up, she can notify the leader of the group(s) and download it in paper form for them.

We know that you will come up with many other creative ways to use this new resource. You are encouraged to send them to the Office of Disciples Women for posting on IdeaShare.

WHY HAVE A DISCIPLES WOMEN/CHRISTIAN WOMEN’S FELLOWSHIP ORGANIZATION TODAY?

So why have a Disciples Women/Christian Women’s Fellowship (DW/CWF) ministry today? It is because God is still calling us to do the ministry that is ours to do. There is still great need in the world. And that need might be to know the love of God, it might be to be fed and housed and clothed, it might be to enable women to deepen their relationship with God. God is still calling us to do ministry.

Today the DW/CWF is not the only channel through which women can take part in the work of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), but it is the oldest channel. As the organization remains sensitive to and grows with the issues of the era in which it finds itself, it continues to fulfill its purpose.

²Edited from an article by Shirley Martinson, staff for Women’s Ministries in the Michigan Region in the Annual Manual for Leaders.

ICWF PURPOSE

1973

“To 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.”

1994

To provide a channel through which women in the congregational Christian Women’s Fellowships and the regional Christian Women’s Fellowship in the United States and Canada, may be joined in fellowship and find means for effective participation in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

DW/CWF Prayer

Unto you, O God, we give our thanks
And lift our hearts in prayer.
May your presence be with us and your love
Surround us as we work together
as women of faith.
Open our eyes to the needs of the world and
Fill our hearts with concern for all people.
Guide us so that we may truly serve you.
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

DW/CWF Benediction

God, be merciful unto us and bless us;
And cause your face to shine upon us;
That your way may be known upon the earth,
Your saving health among all nations,
Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

HISTORICAL PURPOSES

1874 “To cultivate a missionary spirit; to encourage mission effort in the church; to disseminate missionary intelligence; and to secure systematic contributions for the missionary work of the Christian Women’s Board of Missions.”

--Constitution of Women’s Board of Missions

1928 “To develop a trained Christian womanhood; to unite them in worldwide service for Christ; to encourage systematic giving for missionary work through the United Christian Missionary Society.”

--Missionary Organization Handbook

1949 “To develop all women in Christian living and Christian service as a part of the witnessing church of Jesus Christ.”

--Christian Women’s Fellowship

1960 “To develop all women in Christian living and in Christian service.”

--Christian Women’s Fellowship

1973 “To 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.”

--Christian Women’s Fellowship

SIGNIFICANT DATES

- 1874** Christian Woman's Board of Missions formed
- 1874** National office opens in Indianapolis
- 1874** Woman's Christian Temperance Union formed
- 1875** First overseas missionary is sent to Jamaica
- 1881** First Home Mission work begins in Jackson, Miss.
- 1883** First publication of *Missionary Tidings*
- 1887** National Benevolent Association established by women
- 1910** College of Missions in Indianapolis dedicated
- 1910** Network developed with women in state and local missionary organizations
- 1913–1949** Independent congregational women's groups increase
(Ladies Aids, missionary societies' guilds, councils)
- 1919** CWBM merged with other church mission boards to form
The United Christian Missionary Society
- 1949** Christian Women's Fellowship organized
- 1949** Conference of State Presidents and Secretaries, Turkey
Run, Ind.

- 1953** International Christian Women's Fellowship (Canada and U.S. formed)
- 1955** World CWF organized, with women in 16 countries
- 1957** Women's offerings became part of general offerings through Church Finance Council (first known as Unified Promotion)
- 1957** First ICWF Quadrennial Assembly held
- 1957** CWF offerings go to total church
- 1973** Department of Christian Women's Fellowship becomes Department of Church Women
- 1974** 100th Anniversary of the Christian Woman's Board of Missions
- 1982** International Christian Women's Fellowship Cabinet formed
- 1989** First Woman to Woman Worldwide Program launched
- 1992** Office of Disciples Women established
- 1992** Department of Church Women becomes Office of Disciples Women
- 1995** Missions Building closed
- 1995** Disciples Center opened
- 1999** CWF celebrates 50th birthday
- 2000** Decision made to sponsor joint event for women of Disciples and United Church of Christ
- 2001** Quadrennial Assembly moves to Louisville

An excellent resource on the history of the women's organization in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is *In The Fullness of Time*, available from the Office of Disciples Women for \$10.00 plus \$5.00 for shipping and handling. See the Spiritual Formation module for a study guide for *In The Fullness of Time*.