

# Social Action/Legislature

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## **Social Action Definition**

Social action is proclaiming the gospel in word and deed. Jesus in his ministry showed what service is by feeding hungry people, healing people who were sick, and caring for people who were needy, poor, and neglected by society. Christian worship, study, witness, and service are not to be separated, for they are the results of a response of faith to God's action in Christ. The Disciples Women/Christian Women's Fellowship (DW/CWF) social action program provides channels of service in the church, community, and world by women who feel a sense of personal responsibility to carry out the mission of Jesus Christ.

We call ourselves Disciples of Christ. We also aspire to be disciples of Christ. Whether we're naming our denomination or proclaiming ourselves students of Jesus, the name implies a desire to model ourselves after Jesus, to examine (and as much as humanly possible) to DO the kinds of things that Jesus did.

Jesus is shown to us as a do-er. Grounded in prayer, quiet time, and alone time, we see Jesus as active in the lives of those who surround him. Quickly leaf through the

gospel of Mark, noticing the name of Jesus and the action verbs that follow. Often described with an adverb indicating speed -- quickly, immediately, with haste, at once -- we see chapter after chapter of Jesus doing the thing which helps the one in need. Jesus healing, Jesus feeding, Jesus listening, Jesus touching, Jesus serving in some way: always Jesus doing.

Action, doing, is the logical and faithful step that goes with study and prayer. When we learn about a situation where God's children are in need, when we pray that God will help them with their need, we may feel ourselves being called to be the answer to those prayers for others. **See the next page for a chart** that deals with taking action to move toward justice.

Alexander Campbell said that anyone who knows the gospel and sees the needs of the world is called to ministry. Where are we called today? We could talk about ministry as "service action" or "social action." Action is the key to ministry. There are different responses to the needs that we see around us.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Written by Carol Q. Cosby.

## Action toward Justice<sup>2</sup>

	CHARITY	DEVELOPMENT	ADVOCACY
			
HOW WE VIEW CAUSES OF POVERTY	Circumstances beyond their control – Bad luck	Lack of education Lack of resources	Exploitation by dominant group. Unjust structures value profits over people, white people over people of color, men over women, adults over children.
GOALS	To relieve suffering, to help needy	To make existing structures work more fairly; to help people help themselves; to provide equal rights and equal opportunity.	To build new economic, political, legal, and educational structures without domination with equitable styles of leadership, governance, work, and organization that foster community
ACTIONS	Giving of Fish	Teaching to Fish	Removing barriers: Giving all access to the fish
	Soup kitchens, homeless shelters, Meals on Wheels, clothing drives, clinics, childcare, refugee centers, famine relief, Christmas baskets. . .	Job training, legal aid, advocacy to change laws and budgets, mentoring women for access to system, halfway houses, welfare reform, low-income housing, individual empowerment...	Setting up co-ops, teaching and affirming equality, challenging racism, sexism, ageism, etc., nonhierarchical institutions and education...
TYPE OF CHANGE INVOLVED	No conflict Functional change	No conflict Functional change	Conflictual Structural change

<sup>2</sup>Chart available from Office of Disciples Women.

Service, charity, the “Band-Aid” approach—this kind of action is certainly needed, and it is what women of the church have always done very effectively. Study of the action chart shows us that if we want to change the system and structure so that people can take care of their own needs, then our action should also include helping people develop their skills and advocating for systemic change that will remove barriers. The term “social action” covers this wider range of action.

Others have noted the connection between our faith and helping others. St. Francis of Assisi tells us, “Preach the gospel every day; use words if you have to.” A Chinese proverb says, “If you want happiness for an hour, take a nap. If you want happiness for a day, go fishing. If you want happiness for a month, get married. If you want happiness for a year, inherit a fortune. If you want happiness for a lifetime, help someone else.”

And Jesus, who asks us to be his disciples, says, “Feed my sheep” and gives us many examples of how to do that. The model Jesus shows us is one of putting our hands and feet where our hearts and minds are, following our souls with our soles—social action.

### **Jack and Jill Revisited<sup>3</sup>**

Jack and Jill came down the hill, toting sandwiches and punch;  
taking a table under a maple, they spread out a picnic lunch.  
These lovers two had a charming view of a swiftly flowing stream,  
but their bliss was thrown amiss by the sound of a human scream.  
Above the waves then they gazed on a frantic, furtive hand,  
in great fright they viewed the plight of a definitely drowning man.  
Jack jumped in and swam to him cutting water like a knife,  
grabbing a hand, dragging to land, he brought him back to life.  
Tired and still, Jack and Jill recovered on the shore;  
then Jill yelled clear, “Jack, come here! I see yet one more!”  
A woman instead, again nearly dead, her skin was turning blue,  
Jill gave a shriek, jumped in the creek; they saved this life too.

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<sup>3</sup>Copyright 1991 by Fred Spannaus, used by author’s permission.

Then came another, a darling young mother, they hurried in vain to save;  
every minute, a new victim in it! Oh, Jack and Jill were so brave.  
Throughout the day, this tragic play happened again and again;  
the clock struck four, they'd rescued a score of perishing women and men.  
Then Jill jumped free and suddenly started to stalk away.  
Jack moaned low, "Jill, you can't go! We're needed here to stay!"  
Said Jill with a wave, "You work to save, you hold them while they shiver,  
I'm going 'round to higher ground, find who's throwing them in the river!"

## **Guidelines for Creating Social Action Opportunities<sup>4</sup>**

- Investigate projects before investing your time, energy, and money. Is the project needed and, if so, by whom? What difference can we make?
- Pray for God's guidance as you decide what to do and offer each to God as an act of worship.
- To avoid frustration, secure accurate information and keep other women informed as to the results of your work. Don't drag projects on until everyone is worn out with them.
- Challenge the women of your congregation with action/service projects that relate to the year's study materials.
- Provide variety by balancing local/community projects with regional/global projects.

The following are ideas and resources for you and the women of your churches to address the needs of the community at every level: charity, development and advocacy. For more ideas, check the [discipleswomen.org](http://discipleswomen.org) Web site, the *Resources for Leaders (Annual Manual for Leaders)* and the *New Day* magazine "Can-Do's."

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<sup>4</sup>From 2004-2005 Resource Book for Women of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Kentucky.

# Legislative Opportunities

## How-Tos

1. **Join** a legislative network

2. **Read, learn, inform**

*Read* a variety of sources about issues of economic justice, civil rights, and individual freedoms, education, housing, hunger, health care, child care, etc. as well as foreign policy.

*Learn* what action is expected or taking place related to these issues. Use Church Women United's Updates on Legislative Issues, the League of Women Voters, Bread for the World, Children's Defense Fund, etc. as your resources. Your local League of Women Voters or library reference desk can give you the names and addresses of the appropriate public officials. Web sites also can connect you with current information about many topics.

*Inform* others when it's the right time to send a letter or make a telephone call.

3. **Establish** a network by means of a phone tree.

HINT: When there is need for a legislator to hear many voices, take a stack of postcards to a meeting. Give the background information needed, suggest two or three sentences as the text, have the name and address of the appropriate legislator, offer a prayer of dedication, collect the cards, and mail them right away. This is an easy and effective way of getting response from your members. They will appreciate your helping them to be participating citizens.

4. **Act** using the following advocacy ideas.

What does advocate mean?

(Verb) To speak, plead, or argue in favor of.

(Noun) One that argues for a cause; a supporter or defender; an advocate of civil rights. One that pleads in another's behalf; an intercessor; advocates for abused children and spouses.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, 4th ed. (New York: Houghton Mifflin Co., 2000).

“Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute. Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.”

(Proverbs 31:8–9)

**REMEMBER:** I may be only ONE—but I am ONE, and when one and one and one write letters, make phone calls, pray, and ACT, their voices will be heard and God’s shalom will be a step nearer to reality.

For further information please contact:

Office of Disciples Women

Disciple Home Missions

P.O. Box 1986

Indianapolis, IN 46206-1986

1-888-346-2631

## As Easy as Ordering Pizza . . .

### Lobbying your legislator by phone is as easy as ordering pizza!

**KNOW:** your legislator’s name. You can phone the county election bureau and give them your precinct number from your voting card, or just your address, and they can tell you your legislative district number. The League of Women Voters or the headquarters for any political party can tell you who the three legislators are (two senators, one representative). They won’t think you’re dumb for not knowing – they’ll think you are savvy for finding out.

**DIAL:** (202) 224-3121

**SAY:** “I want to speak to Representative \_\_\_\_\_’s aide.”

Or: “I want to speak to Senator \_\_\_\_\_’s aide.”

**GIVE:** your name and address.

**LEAVE:** your one-sentence message. For example: “I want you to sponsor and vote for HB \_\_\_\_\_ to fund programs to help displaced homemakers.” Or “Please have Senator \_\_\_\_\_ drop me a note to let me know what is happening to SB \_\_\_\_\_.”

## **The easiest letter you've ever written:**

### ***Address***

The Honorable (full name of Senator)  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20515

### ***Or***

The Honorable (full name of Representative)  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

### ***Or***

The President  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500  
Dear Mr. President:

Very respectfully yours,

### **The Visit**

Make an appointment – just as if you were making an appointment with your hairdresser (same steps 1–3 as the pizza example).

- Go in pairs if you can; it's easier to keep the conversation going. But don't be nervous either way. These folks know less about the issue (being a displaced homemaker or whatever) than you do: you're the expert.
- Your message is that people like you need this bill and are watching how she (or he) votes on it. Don't plan to be longer than fifteen minutes; it is easier on you and keeps your talk to the point. Say the same three-paragraph message you gave in the letter. Then ask what they will do to help. Press for a specific commitment. When you leave, thank them for their time.

## Useful Public Policy Advocacy Web Sites

- [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov) White House
- [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov) Senate
- [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) House of Representatives
- [www.un.org](http://www.un.org) United Nations
- <http://thomas.loc.gov> "Thomas" Legislative Information on the Internet
- [www.access.gpo.gov](http://www.access.gpo.gov) U.S. Government Printing Office
- [www.fedworld.gov](http://www.fedworld.gov) Fedworld Information Network
- [www.nationalhomeless.org](http://www.nationalhomeless.org) National Coalition for the Homeless
- [www.politicalindex.com](http://www.politicalindex.com) National Political Index
- [www.cq.com](http://www.cq.com) Congressional Quarterly
- [www.allpolitics.com](http://www.allpolitics.com) CNN/Time All Politics
- [www.bread.org](http://www.bread.org) Bread for the World with hunger news and advocacy tools
- [www.newslink.org](http://www.newslink.org) A link to thousands of national and local newspapers, magazines and radio/TV sites
- [www.nccusa.org](http://www.nccusa.org) National Council of Churches
- [www.churchwomen.org](http://www.churchwomen.org) Church Women United
- [www.disciples.org](http://www.disciples.org) Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
- [www.homelandministries.org](http://www.homelandministries.org) Disciples Home Missions
- [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org) League of Women Voters

## Social Action Organizations

### Disciples Peace Fellowship

<http://www.homelandministries.org/DPF/index.htm>

In 1935, seventy-five persons concerned about peace met at the Convention of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in San Antonio, Texas. The result was the

formation of Disciples Peace Fellowship (DPF). It is the oldest peace organization of its type in any denomination. DPF carries out its vision for peace and justice as a volunteer organization whose members, friends, and congregations support its work. It receives no direct allocations or funding through Disciples Mission Fund. Disciples Home Missions provides staff support and financial services.

While DPF works on a wide range of peace and justice issues, it is currently placing emphasis on four areas:

1. demilitarization and the nuclear threat
2. abolishing the death penalty
- 3.. justice in *maquiladora* plants along U.S.-Mexico border
4. corporate responsibility for financial investments by the church and individuals

## **Disciples Justice Action Network**

<http://www.djan.net/about.htm>

Disciples Justice Action Network (DJAN) is a multi-racial grassroots network of individuals, congregations, and organizations within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), all working together for greater justice and peace in our church, our nation, and our world. DJAN was established in 1996 to encourage public witness.

## **Disciples Rapid Response Team**

[www.homelandministries.org/PublicWitness/RapidResponse.htm](http://www.homelandministries.org/PublicWitness/RapidResponse.htm)

### **Why a Disciples Rapid Response Team?**

- To assist Disciples in acting on their faith.
- To encourage and support Disciples to become more involved in social action by speaking out about their concerns.
- To provide Disciples a vehicle for quick responses to legislative actions.
- To influence legislation.
- Empower Disciples to make a difference.
- To help deepen Disciples' understanding of the issues

## **How does the Rapid Response Team work?**

As action alerts and legislative bulletins come in from various sources, we will send you information. Then you can choose to write, call, or e-mail your legislator and local media to express your opinion. That's all there is to it! You participate whenever you want and as frequently as you want.

### **For more information contact:**

Rapid Response	Peace and Justice Network
DHM	Global Ministries
Lois Robinson	Marianne Collar
(317) 713-2644	(317) 713-2574

## **Interfaith Alliance**

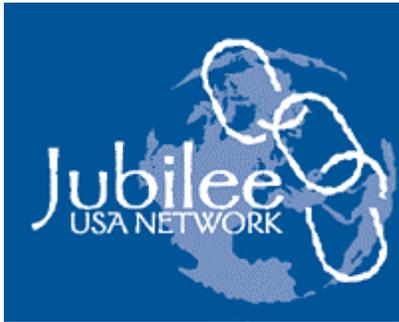
[www.interfaithalliance.org](http://www.interfaithalliance.org)

The Interfaith Alliance was founded in 1994 by an interfaith group of religious leaders who work to promote cooperation around shared religious values to strengthen the public's commitment to the American values of civic participation, freedom of religion, diversity, and civility in public discourse and to encourage the active involvement of people of faith in the nation's political life. The Interfaith Alliance consists of local religious leaders and activists, some with years of political experience, some just starting out. They work in their communities, in state capitals, in Washington, and wherever else their voice is needed.

People of faith and good will, united to:

- Promote democratic values
- Defend religious liberty
- Challenge hatred and religious bigotry
- Reinvigorate informed civic participation

## Jubilee USA



<http://www.jubileeusa.org/>

222 E. Capitol Street NE  
Washington, DC 20003  
(202) 783-3566

The Jubilee USA Network is made up of faith-based groups and non-governmental organizations working to break the chains of debt. They are calling for cancellation of the crushing and illegitimate debts of the most heavily indebted countries, without harsh World Bank and International Monetary Fund conditions, but with full accountability to civil society in each country. They are part of the global Jubilee movement that is now active in more than sixty-five countries.

## Faith Trust Institute

(Formerly the Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence)  
<http://www.faithtrustinstitute.org/>

This name adds the element of faith-based mission, while the new tagline, "Working together to end sexual and domestic violence," describes succinctly what the organization does. While its name has changed, its mission has not. Faith Trust Institute continues to be a leader in providing training and educational resources for clergy, lay leaders, seminary faculty, chaplains, policy makers of religious institutions, and community advocates on the faith aspects of sexual and domestic violence.

## Toll-Free Domestic Violence Hotline

Multi-lingual help is available by calling 1-800-799-SAFE (7233)

TDD for the Hearing Impaired: 1-800-787-3224

Victims and concerned friends can receive instant counseling services as well as information about local resources, shelters, etc.

## Justice for Women Working Group

[www.nccusa.org/nmu/jw.html](http://www.nccusa.org/nmu/jw.html)

Justice for Women has made poverty mobilization a major priority and published a resource in August 2001, "Staying on Course, Navigating the Shifting Tides of Government and Church Partnerships." Distribution to date includes denominational women's programs, hunger and economic justice networks, and some regional and local ecumenical partners. Single copies are available on request and multiple copies at cost; it may also be downloaded from NCCC Web site. Justice for Women is identifying key locations at which to hold Women in Poverty hearings where model projects (best and promising practices) can be identified and celebrated. A summary of the data gathered will be prepared.

Justice for Women has prepared the publication of *Women at the Well* Volume 2. Volumes 1 and 2 are available from Judson Press.

AFRUS-Aids is a new initiative that is developing into a partnership of faith-based and NGO organizations with strong women's networks in Africa. Through the All Africa Conference of Churches and Groot's International and with partners in the United States and Africa, this emerging partnership will identify small grassroots women's projects that tackle the HIV/AIDS challenge and advocate for funding from a variety of sources, including the UN Development Programme. There is a Women and AIDS brochure available at the Office of Disciples Women (ODW).

Also in planning is a new initiative for involving young adult women in ecumenical life, building on challenges that emerged from the WCC Ecumenical decade of Churches in Solidarity with Women, 1988–98.

## The Hunger Site

[www.thehungersite.com](http://www.thehungersite.com)

Your click on the "Give Free Food" button funds food for the hungry, paid for by site sponsors whose ads appear after you click and provided to people in need around the world through the efforts of Mercy Corps and America's Second Harvest.

## Children's Defense Fund



<http://www.childrensdefense.org/>

The mission of the Children's Defense Fund (CDF) is to Leave No Child Behind® and to ensure every child a Healthy Start, a Head Start, a Fair Start, a Safe Start, and a Moral Start in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities.

CDF provides a strong, effective voice for all the children of America who cannot vote, lobby, or speak for themselves. We pay particular attention to the needs of poor and minority children and those with disabilities. CDF educates the nation about the needs of children and encourages preventive investment before they get sick or into trouble, drop out of school, or suffer family

breakdown. <http://www.childrensdefense.org/pressreleases/040713.asp>

CDF began in 1973 and is a private, nonprofit organization supported by foundation and corporate grants and individual donations. We have never taken government funds.

## Responsible Tourism

<http://www.ecpatusa.org/>

ECPAT-USA

157 Montague Street

Brooklyn, NY 11201

Phone: (718) 935-9192

Fax: (718) 935-9173

ECPAT is a network of organizations and individuals working together for the elimination of child prostitution, child pornography and trafficking of children for sexual purposes.

It seeks to encourage the world community to ensure that children everywhere enjoy their fundamental rights free from all forms of commercial sexual exploitation.

There are many definitions, but in a nutshell, it means making sure tourism organizations look after destinations, so that their attractions & resources -- whether natural or cultural -- are not spoiled either for local people or for future visitors.

## Energy Stewardship

<http://www.webofcreation.org/>

The Web of Creation is an interdenominational/interfaith organization working to provide online environmental resources for faith-based communities. We believe religion is a crucial factor in issues of ecology and justice.

We are deeply concerned about the deteriorating ecological state of the world. We believe that religious communities have many key resources for addressing these problems and for helping to bring about the transformation of persons, groups and societies needed for humanity to provide a sustainable lifestyle for our planet. We seek to assist religious groups by offering them practical ideas and resources for transforming their organizations into communities that care for creation and that provide public leadership in environmental concerns.

We seek to cooperate with other groups in society who embrace a way of life that will sustain our world for future generations.

## Church Women United



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

The Disciples Women organization is a supporting partner in Church Women United. We participate in CWU's Special Day celebrations, World Community Day, World Day of Prayer, and May Fellowship Day. The following Mission Statement is taken from the home page of the Church Women United Web site.

### **Mission statement**

Church Women United is a racially, culturally, theologically inclusive Christian women's movement, celebrating unity in diversity and working for a world of peace and justice. Founded in 1941, Church Women United (CWU) is

- a movement representing 25 million Protestant, Roman Catholic, Orthodox and other Christian women;
- biblically based, shared Christian faith;
- organized into more than 1,200 local and state units working for peace and justice in the United States and Puerto Rico;
- supported by constituents in state and local units and denominational women's organizations;
- impassioned by the Holy Spirit to act on behalf of women and children throughout the world; and
- recognized as a non-governmental organization by the United Nations.

### **Contact information**

Church Women United  
475 Riverside Drive, Suite 1626  
New York, NY 10115  
Phone: (800) 298-5551 Fax: (212) 870-2338

## Alternative Living

<http://www.simpleliving.org/>

Alternatives is a nonprofit organization that equips people of faith to challenge consumerism, live justly and celebrate responsibly. Started in 1973 as a protest against the commercialization of Christmas, our focus is on encouraging celebrations that reflect conscientious ways of living.

## Habitat for Humanity



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

Habitat for Humanity International is a nonprofit, nondenominational Christian housing organization. Habitat welcomes all people to join in building simple, decent, affordable houses in partnership with those who lack adequate shelter.

Since 1976, Habitat has built more than 175,000 houses, providing shelter for nearly 900,000 people worldwide. Now at work in 100 countries, Habitat is building a house every 26 minutes. By 2005, Habitat houses will be sheltering 1 million people.

## UNICEF/Change for Good

[www.UNICEFusa.org/donation/change.html](http://www.UNICEFusa.org/donation/change.html)

Since 1991, more than \$31 million has been raised for UNICEF through the Change for Good program. The euro has now replaced local currencies throughout most of the European Union. If you have French francs, German marks or other western European money tucked away in dresser drawers, suit pockets or purse bottoms, you can donate it to provide lifesaving supplies and services for needy children through UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund. In the past, the only opportunity to donate was through flight attendants while returning to the United States. The leftover money

can now be donated from home. UNICEF helps children get the care they need in the early years of life and encourages families to educate girls as well as boys.

To donate, send the money to:

Travelex America, Change for Good for UNICEF  
JFK Airport  
Terminal 4IAT  
Jamaica, NY 11430

## **World Council of Churches Decade to Overcome Violence 2001–2010**

[www.wcc-coe.org](http://www.wcc-coe.org)

The Decade of Violence was conceived in 1998 World Council of Churches Eighth Assembly in Zimbabwe as a response to a call for peace for future generations. For information and a study guide on how your congregation can be involved in this movement, contact the World Council of Churches or visit the Web site.

## **Heifer Project International**



For nearly 60 years Heifer Project International has been dedicated to ending hunger permanently by providing families with livestock and training so that they “could be spared the indignity of depending on others to feed their children.” Families receiving animals pass on the female offspring to other people in their area so that the gift of food is never ending. Today, millions of families in 115 countries have been given the gifts of self-reliance and hope.

Opportunities for service include financial support, education, study tours and volunteer opportunities. For more information call 1-800-422-0474 or visit the Web site.

## Ongoing DW/CWF Social Action Programs

### Social Action Emphasis

Beginning in 1989, the International Christian Women's Fellowship (ICWF) has selected a Social Action Emphasis for DW/CWF groups. The emphasis covers a four-year period. During this Social Action Emphasis, all women and groups are asked to take some action around the selected topic. The ODW publicizes a wide variety of things to do. A common service project for all groups is chosen for the year preceding the Quadrennial Assembly for women.

Grounding, subject content, and study information you need to help you with action can be found in the current issue of *New Day*. As you study the issue, choose action. Begin with what seems easiest to do, what inspires you the most, what you can do along with others. For more information, contact ODW or visit

[www.discipleswomen.org](http://www.discipleswomen.org)<sup>6</sup>

### Church World Service

Founded in 1946, Church World Service is the relief, development, and refugee assistance ministry of thirty-six Protestant, Orthodox, and Anglican denominations in the United States. Working in partnership with indigenous organizations in more than 80 countries, CWS works worldwide to meet human needs and foster self-reliance for all whose way is hard.

Within the United States, Church World Service assists communities in responding to disasters, resettles refugees, promotes fair national and international policies, provides educational resources, and offers opportunities to join a people-to-people network of local and global caring through participation in <http://www.churchworldservice.org/tools-blankets/index.html> Crop Walks, the Tools of Hope & Blanket Program and the Gift of the Heart Kit Program

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<sup>6</sup>Edited from material on [www.discipleswomen.org](http://www.discipleswomen.org), Disciples Women Social action emphasis.

Ongoing projects to serve people in other parts of the world include the collection of:

- layettes
- school kits
- health kits
- blankets
- tools of hope
- Crop Walks
- moringa tree initiative

For more information on kits and monetary donations, go to [www.churchworldservice.org](http://www.churchworldservice.org).

You or your group can borrow an audiovisual resource from the Church World Service Film & Video Library. For more information, contact 1-800-297-1516 ext. 338, e-mail at [cws.film.library@ecunet.org](mailto:cws.film.library@ecunet.org) or visit [www.churchworldservice.org](http://www.churchworldservice.org).

## **Bread for the World**

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

Bread for the World is a nationwide Christian citizens movement seeking justice for the world's hungry people by lobbying our nation's decision makers. BFW Institute seeks justice for hungry people by engaging in research and education on policies related to hunger and development.

For over thirty years, Bread for the World has been seeking justice as a Christian voice for ending hunger. A nonpartisan citizens' movement of 50,000 people of faith, including 2,500 churches, BFW members help hungry people by lobbying our nation's decision makers on legislation that addresses hunger in our communities and around the world.

## **Community Projects**

Churchwomen can take part in many service projects in the community that are sponsored by private agencies. Some, staffed by professionally trained women and men, are government sponsored. All are in need of volunteers in order to extend

services to the community. What follows are examples of projects in which your fellowship might become involved. Check your local area for additional ways to serve.

### **Ending Child Abuse**

Inquire as to what is being done in the community about help for children who are abused and volunteer services to the group or agency working on this problem.

Toll Free Child Abuse Hot Line 1-800-422-4453

### **Child Care Centers for Employed Mothers**

Many churches are providing child-care centers where employed mothers can leave their children during the day at minimal cost. These centers need helpers, lunches and supplies. Your congregation might consider starting a child-care center.

### **Food Pantry**

There are opportunities in your community to support a food pantry to aid families in temporary difficulties. Collections of packaged, canned and staple foods can be held at the church for the food center.

Your congregation could start a food of the month program.<sup>7</sup> Get a list of most needed items from a local food collection agency, challenge your congregation to bring food every week to church, with goals for the monthly item (one month bring fifty cans of tuna, or 150 boxes of macaroni and cheese).

### **Tutorial Program**

Children do poorly in school because they lack the basic skills in reading, writing and arithmetic. Slow learners and children of immigrant groups are two specific groups who frequently need tutorial help. Check with a local school for more information on how you or your church can help.

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<sup>7</sup>From 2004-2005 Resource Book for Women in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Kentucky.

## **Advocacy for People Who Are Poor and Hungry**

Investigate federally funded programs in your community, such as the food stamp program, special programs for infants and mothers and nutrition programs for the elderly. WIC is one program located in most communities that provides food and education for women, infants and children. Contact your local agencies to find out how you can volunteer.

## **Used Stamp Project – Stamps for Children**

Stamps for Children is a nationwide not-for-profit organization that solicits donations of used stamps (both United States and foreign) and then distributes them free of charge to any children's group (schools, scout groups) in need. The stamps are used not only to interest children in the hobby, but also as educational aids (for history and geography classes) and for arts and crafts projects.

Harold A. Effner Jr.'s role in this effort is to act as a collection point. Mr. Effner publicizes the need for stamps, accepts contributions of stamps, processes them and ships them to children's organizations in need of stamps. Since 1987, over 16 million stamps have been shipped to groups nationwide.

### **Helpful Hints**

- Save space around the stamp when removing it from the envelope.
- Don't save stamps that are ripped, torn, cut, scraped, taped glued, stapled or damaged in any way.
- Don't save stamps that are attached to red or green envelopes
- Pack types of stamps separately

Stamps can be sent to Harold A Effner Jr. 27 Pine Street, Lincroft, NJ 07738-1827. For further information on used stamps go to [www.sotopride.com](http://www.sotopride.com).

## **Women's Shelters**

There are a variety of volunteer opportunities related to women's shelters. Donations of clothing and Christmas gifts for women and children may be appropriate.

Check with your local congregation, community service center, or Volunteers of America for opportunities in your area.

Find a local shelter ministry and offer to do the work of decorating one room. Ask local merchants to donate the items and materials. Most shelters cannot afford to make the space as welcoming as they might wish.<sup>8</sup> Another idea might be to host a shower and gather new items for infants, children, and moms to be donated to the local shelter.

### **Interfaith Hospitality Network** – <http://www.nihn.org/>

The Interfaith Hospitality Network program brings shelter, meals, and support services to families without homes.

IHNs are a cost-efficient, effective, and replicable community response to family homelessness. Because they make use of existing community resources, they can be implemented quickly, without major start-up costs.

IHN programs vary from community to community, reflecting local needs and resources. Visit the Web site to get more information about how your congregation may get involved.

### **Angel Tree Project** – <http://www.pfm.org/>

The Angel Tree Project supports children who have a parent in prison by providing Christmas gifts, summer camp experiences, and mentoring. Right now in your community there are children who are among the most at-risk children in the nation. It is so easy to connect with them through Angel Tree. Your church can minister to children of prisoners year-round by participating in one Angel Tree program or all three.

### **Volunteers of America** –



Volunteers of America is a national, nonprofit, spiritually based organization providing local human service programs and opportunities for individual and community involvement.

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<sup>8</sup>From 2004-2005 Resource Book for Women in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Kentucky.

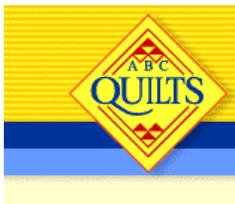
From rural America to inner-city neighborhoods, Volunteers of America provides outreach programs that deal with today's most pressing social needs. Volunteers of America helps youths at risk, frail elderly, abused and neglected children, people with disabilities, homeless individuals, and many others. Contact your local agency for more information.

### **Locks of Love – <http://www.locksoflove.org/>**

Locks of Love is a not-for-profit organization that provides hairpieces to financially disadvantaged children under the age of eighteen with medical hair loss. These custom-fitted hair prosthetics are provided free of charge or on a sliding scale to children whose families meet the Locks of Love Board of Directors guidelines.

Donors provide the hair, volunteers staff the office, and the manufacturer hand-assembles each piece, which requires approximately four months.

### **ABC Quilts –**



<http://www.abcquilts.org/>

569 First NH Turnpike #3

Northwood, NH 03261

Phone: 1-800-536-5694

ABC Quilts was founded in 1988 to give love and comfort to at-risk babies in the form of a handmade quilt, and to use this process to promote awareness, community service and prevention education.

At-risk" babies are defined as those born HIV-positive, affected by their mother's drug or alcohol abuse while pregnant, or abandoned. Their international network of volunteers has delivered over a half million quilts since the organization was founded.

People of all ages are taught to quilt, and through quilt-making work to prevent HIV/AIDS, and alcohol and drug abuse. Volunteers are invited to help by making quilts, volunteering as part of the international Network, and/or teaching.

## **The Lion and Lamb Project – <http://www.lionlamb.org/>**

Children are not born violent—research shows that violence is a learned behavior, and it is a behavior that we are teaching to younger and younger children. Today’s children are constantly invited to play with violence. At every turn, children are faced with violent arcade games, video games, computer games and virtual-reality games. They see violence on television, in the movies, on video. Toy chests are transformed into war chests full of action figures, toy guns, swords, war toys, laser guns, and other implements of destruction.

Violent Toy Trade-ins are events that bring attention to this issue and demonstrate a community’s desire for change. Basically, toy trade-ins invite children to donate one of their violent toys as an expression of their desire for a less violent world.

At the trade-in, children work together to help transform a collection of violent toys into a dramatic Peace Sculpture. In addition, they can participate in a number of creative and nonviolent games and activities – reminders of how much fun they can have without resorting to violence as a theme.

To organize a trade-in through your church, contact Lion and Lamb and receive a step-by-step guide for putting an event together.

## **Recycling Hearing Aids, Eyeglasses, and Cell Phones**

Here are three suggestions that give a new twist to the idea of recycling. No cost is involved, but these ideas can help some of our sisters and brothers.

### **Hearing Aids for the Needy**

Used hearing aids can be donated to those who might not be able to afford them through New Eyes for the Needy (the group also collects eyeglasses). Used hearing aids cannot be distributed in the United States because they require a doctor’s prescription. However, this organization refurbishes them and then sends them to people who are hearing impaired who live in developing nations.

Send new, good used or broken and in need of repair hearing aids to:

New Eyes for the Needy  
Dept. H  
549 Milburn Avenue

Short Hills, NJ 07078

Fax (973)3807



## **Eyeglasses**

What do you do with eyeglasses that you can no longer wear?

**Give the gift of sight:** This program is sponsored by the Lions Clubs and LensCrafters. LensCrafters will accept your eyeglasses at any of its stores.



## **Cell Phones**

The Wireless Foundation and the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence have launched a national Donate A Phone campaign called “Call to Protect.” You can donate your used cell phones which will be recycled, refurbished, and tested, then given to participating wireless carriers, which activate and program the wireless phones to call 911. The phones are donated to domestic violence organizations which distribute them to women in crisis to use for emergencies.

You can find more information at [www.donateaphone.org](http://www.donateaphone.org) and [www.wirelessfoundation.org](http://www.wirelessfoundation.org). You can also call 1-888-901-SAFE or your local battered women’s shelter.

## **Person-to-Person Projects**

### **Foster Grandparents**

There are many children in our congregations and communities who do not have grandparents living in the area. You can start a surrogate grandparent program in your congregation by identifying these children and planning time with them. It can be as simple as making sure to greet them each Sunday, sitting near them in church, taking them for a special lunch, offering to attend their school events, etc. You can also check

with the local boys and girls clubs or local scout troops to connect with children in your community.

## Foster Care Luggage for Kids



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

Children in foster care often have nothing to carry their meager possessions in as they get shifted around from one spot to another. Marc Brown, who founded Foster Care Luggage for Kids in 1995, says, “It looks like they’re just leaving home with trash. No businessman takes his papers in a trash bag. No family goes on vacation with their belongings in a garbage bag. We start out this whole ugly process with a garbage bag when they’re already scared and frightened.”

Often children who are removed from their homes and placed with foster families are abused or neglected. Some children have parents who have sold their child’s possessions to get cash for drugs. Owning a piece of “real” luggage gives children the feel of having a place of their own where they can keep their “treasures” safe.

Consider purchasing sturdy duffle bags or other “cool” luggage to donate to your county’s Division of Family Services or the state Foster Care and Adoption Agency. You could also collect and donate gently used luggage.

Starter kits for beginning your own local program are available at [www.suitcasesforkids.org](http://www.suitcasesforkids.org).

## Hospital/Home Visitation

This important ministry demands sensitivity. Check with your local hospital chaplain or hospice agency for guidelines for hospital visitation. Look in your local Christian bookstore for information on making hospital calls.

## **Telephone Reassurance**

Many elderly persons live alone and need someone to check in on them occasionally. This program of systematic calling provides psychological support and assurance of aid when needed. Names of people who need this service can be obtained from the minister, welfare workers, or social workers at hospitals.

## **Card/Note Ministry**

Develop a network in your congregation to affirm and support people who are ill or homebound by sending cards or notes on a regular basis.

## **Ministry with Aging**

What ministry is the congregation encouraging with aging? Check with your local Ombudsman program or Commission on Aging for needs of the elderly in your community.

## **Mother-to-Mother Ministry**

Forty years ago the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), through the Division of Homeland Ministries, developed and began managing Mother-to-Mother Ministry. Originally funded solely by Disciples, this ministry soon became ecumenical and locally autonomous, spreading to over 60 communities in 15 states.

Its purpose is to provide opportunities for women to build intentional friendships across economic and racial barriers in a ministry of reconciliation. Women learn from one another, each giving and receiving new insights and support. Lives have been and are being changed, stories are shared about these changes, and the changes in perceptions and attitudes help to change society. Praise for the program has come from a variety of voices: victims of abuse, looking for a friend to help in their escape; middle class women learning what it is like to live on a minimum wage income; Al Gore, former U.S. vice president who sees it as a model for changing lives; a juvenile court judge who sees the ministry as a way to curb child abuse; and countless team members whose lives have been transformed.

In this creative program, three church women meet with one woman presently on public assistance. Dealing together with problems such as poverty, housing, budgeting, and health results in growth and new learning for all. For more information contact Shelly Elliott, National Executive Director for Mother-to-Mother Ministry. She can be reached at (913) 782-4077 or [selliott@catholiccharitiesks.org](mailto:selliott@catholiccharitiesks.org).

## **CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocacy)**

### **The National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association**

The mission of the National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association is to speak for the best interests of abused and neglected children in the courts. We promote and support quality volunteer representation for children to provide each child a safe, permanent, nurturing home.

#### **What Is CASA?**

Each year more than 500,000 children in the United States are thrust into court through no fault of their own. Some are victims of violence, psychological torment or sexual abuse. Others have been neglected or even abandoned by their own parents. Most of them are frightened and confused.

In many cases these children become victims a second time in an overburdened child welfare system that cannot pay close attention to each child whose life is in its hands.

Often these children also become victims of this country's overburdened child welfare system—a complex network of lawyers, social workers and judges who frequently are too overburdened to give thorough, detailed attention to each child who comes before them.

That's where CASA comes in. Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASAs) are trained volunteer community members who are appointed by a judge to advocate, on a one-to-one basis, for a child who has been removed from home due to abuse, neglect,

or abandonment. The volunteer gets to know the child and then lets the judge and others in the child welfare system know the child's perspective and needs.

## Girls Inc.

Girls Incorporated is a national nonprofit youth organization dedicated to inspiring all girls to be strong, smart, and bold. With roots dating to 1864, Girls Inc. has provided vital educational programs to millions of American girls, particularly those in high-risk, underserved areas. Today, innovative programs help girls confront subtle societal messages about their value and potential, and prepare them to lead successful, independent, and fulfilling lives.

**Our History:** The Girls Inc. movement started in New England during the Industrial Revolution as a response to the needs of a new working class: young women who had migrated from rural communities in search of newly available job opportunities in textile mills and factories.

**Program:** Girls Inc. develops research-based informal education programs that encourage girls to take risks and master physical, intellectual, and emotional challenges. Major programs address math and science education, pregnancy and drug abuse prevention, media literacy, economic literacy, adolescent health, violence prevention, and sports participation.

## Adventures in Global and Local Mission

### Global Ministries

A common witness of the Division of Overseas Ministries, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and Wider Church Ministries, United Church of Christ.

Global Ministries is committed to Critical Presence... meeting God's people and creation at the point of deepest need: spiritually, physically, emotionally, and/or economically. There are many ways for congregations and individuals to be involved with Global Ministries. Go to [www.globalministries.org](http://www.globalministries.org) and you will find information on Global Partnerships and how to support missionaries and global mission projects.

## Inviting a Missionary to your Congregation

### **Making International Mission Come Alive<sup>9</sup>**

Missionary visits make what our church is doing in international mission through Global Ministries come alive.

How can your congregation receive a missionary visit? The Office for Missionary Relationships schedules most visits from missionaries through your regional office. If you wish to request a missionary visit, please contact your regional office to find out when a missionary is scheduled to be in your area. You may be surprised to learn that a missionary is expected in your area soon.

For more information please contact Office for Missionary Relationships, P.O. Box 1986, Indianapolis, IN 46206-1986, telephone: (317) 713-2571, Web site [www.globalministries.org](http://www.globalministries.org).

## Mission Trips

### **Woman-To-Woman Worldwide**

Woman-To-Woman Worldwide is an opportunity to personalize mission in the life of congregations and regions by inviting women to participate in a travel experience in the country of study.

Woman-To-Woman Worldwide is a program coordinated and administered by ODW (Homeland Ministries) in conjunction with Global Ministries (a common witness of Disciples of Christ and United Church of Christ). The International Christian Women's Fellowship is the primary network through which W-T-W information is channeled.

Woman-To-Woman Worldwide responds to the call for church women to experience solidarity with one another, to affirm the unity of the church in Jesus Christ and to join the common struggle for justice and peace in the world today. These

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<sup>9</sup>Article by Bob Shebeck.

international, ecumenical and personal experiences encourage faithful women to identify and support their diverse ministries.

Woman-To-Woman Worldwide is designed to establish a network of “growing concentric circles of world proportion.” (T.J. Liggett)

### **Woman-To-Woman Experiences**

- 1989 – Philippines
- 1989 – Northern Ireland & Scotland
- 1990 – Costa Rica, Nicaragua & El Salvador
- 1991 – Japan
- 1992 – Haiti, Puerto Rico & Jamaica
- 1993 – Zimbabwe
- 1994 – Czech Republic, France, Germany & England
- 1995 – Hong Kong & China
- 1996 – Brazil
- 1997 – Indonesia
- 1998 – Cuba
- 1999 – Mexico
- 2000 – Vietnam
- 2001 – The Sudan (canceled)
- 2002 – India
- 2003 – Colombia
- 2004 – Kenya
- 2005 – Korea

### **Women’s Action Web (WAW)**



The purpose of the Women's Action Web is to provide Disciples women with a leadership development event related to service and justice issues.

WAW participants build a faith community in which experience and learning leads to:

- developing an awareness of common needs and possible solutions, both in the areas visited and in the participant's local community
- developing skills to recognize needs in one's local community
- learning how to link one's congregation to existing programs and services.
- developing skills to create ministry where none exists

For further information contact ODW. To check to see if your region has held a WAW experience or to identify women from your region who have been part of a WAW experience, contact your regional staff person for DW/CWF.

### **Women's Action Web National Experiences**

2000 – Kentucky/Appalachia

2002 – Southern California

2004 – Virginia and the Capitol Area

Regional experiences have been in Arizona, Indiana, Michigan, Pacific Southwest, Texas and West Virginia.

### **Volunteers in Mission**

The Web site <http://www.homelandministries.org/VIM/> describes Volunteers in Mission as:

- a chance to put your faith to work!
- serving with "the least of these" and loving it!
- life changing, exciting, uplifting, frustrating, empowering, transforming, renewing
- long term (one to three years)
- short term (one to three months)
- vacations with a purpose (one to two weeks)
- group work trips
- building houses, churches, chicken coops...bridges between cultures

Volunteers in Mission provide opportunities to participate in planned mission trips and resources to create your own mission experience.