

Study Guide – *Just Women*

Fall 2014

Introduction

Welcome to *Just Women*! We hope this leader's guide will help you plan meaningful study sessions using the *Fall 2014* issue of *Just Women*.

In August of 2003 while addressing the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), newly elected General Minister and President Chris Hobgood named five core values that give the Disciples our distinctive identity. These five values include: confession of faith, centrality of the Lord's Table, priesthood of all believers, love for Christian unity, and the justice of God. The justice of God was deeply rooted in Micah's words, "He has told you, O mortal what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God" (Micah 6:8). For Disciples Women, this core value of justice has been integral to our mission since our beginning. It is at the heart of the name of the magazine that you are studying – *Just Women*. In the words of Arlene Pimentel, the 2014 Quadrennial Coordinator for the Office of Disciples Women as you study the Fall Issue of *Just Women* let yourself consider how you can do "what is fair and just to neighbor, be compassion and loyal in your love, and don't take yourself too seriously – take God seriously" (*Just Women*, page 1).

Preparation

In preparing for the study sessions outlined here, have an individual subscription for each woman in your group. If you need more magazines, go to <http://www.discipleswomen.org/Just-Women-General> and click on Subscribe online in the center of the left column.

This study guide will ask your group to consider the brokenness of the world as we seek to find ways to move toward healing and wholeness in our lives and our communities. It contains four sessions that encourage us to consider the sufficiency of God and how we are called to be God's agents of justice and compassion. Again in the words of Arlene Pimentel, "Disciples women have been modern day prophetesses – like Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Anna, and the daughters of Philip – women called by God no matter their status. Some were married, some were widowed, others single. All took a stand." This study guide will lead your group to consider how others have, and how you can, take a stand.

In the first lesson, we will look at some who took a stand for gender equality as we study Glenda Harper's article, "*We Can Never Go Back: Sharing Our History with the Next Generation.*" In the second lesson, we will look at those who took a stand for race equality as we read Nancy Brewer's article, "*What Does Fried Chicken Say? A Remembrance of the Albany Movement.*". In our third lesson, we will consider how one woman took a stand devoting her life to mission as we read Lori Adam's article, "*Sandra Gordet Journey of Faith.*" Finally, in the fourth lesson we will consider how to take a stand and stand in solidarity with sisters around the world, and in our neighborhoods, as we read the articles of Kassandra Tapia Ochoa, "*We are Called to Empower Our Sisters*" and Lorna Hernández, "*Our Voice is Stronger When We Speak Together.*"

Ask your group members to read the article that you will be focusing on before your meetings, so that everyone will be prepared to participate in the study.

Session 1

Supplies

Bible, Fall Issue of *Just Women*, large piece of newsprint and markers, paper and pens, elements for communion, cross, candle and white cloth.

Resources for history of women in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) along with IDWM website:

Christian Church Women: Shapers of a Movement. Debra Hull (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1994).

Journey in Faith: A History of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Lester G. McAllister and William E. Tucker (St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 1975).

Scripture Focus

Read I Corinthians 11: 23 - 26

Scripture Background

Paul's writings to the community in Corinth is his most extensive communication with one congregation. In his letters, Paul addresses concerns that are related to factionalism and quarrels over issues such as spiritual gifts and the practice of communion. In I Corinthians 11: 23 – 26, Paul uses the form of a story with Jesus as the source to frame the communities participation at the Lord's Table. In this story the words of institution are linked with remembrance. This understanding of remembrance has deep roots in the Jewish tradition. Annual festivals were frequently marked by remembering through stories the history of God's activity in the life of the children of Israel (see Deuteronomy 26: 5 – 11). In these retellings, the old story becomes the storyteller's and the listeners' own story. As Paul shares the words of institution with the Corinthians, he makes this story their story. They "proclaim" this story, and continue to write the story, as they live a life demonstrating Christ's love and justice. In this way they make their faith known. For Paul the act of remembrance, embraces the whole story of redemption in Christ. It is a rehearsal of who we are in Christ and of how we should live in the world.

Read the article "We Can Never Go Back" by Glenda Harper.

Opening Prayer

You may ask a member of your group or you may choose to lead the group in opening prayer.

Icebreaker

Harper writes, "Since the beginning of time, God's people have been telling their story to the younger generation." Based on the length of your newsprint, designate one or two individuals to be your scribe(s). Create a time-line story of your congregation. Begin with the date of its founding and include times of significant growth (both spiritual and numerical) and significant challenge in the life of the congregation. You might want to include significant leaders including lay and clergy and events that have helped to shape your congregation's story. Include the date of events such as first woman elder, first woman Board chair, and/or first woman minister. As you create this storyline, share some history of the events, i.e. was it a struggle to elect the first woman elder, etc. As you complete your storyline, have each woman write her name on the timeline marking the place that she came into the congregation's story.

Questions

- Share the history of International Disciples Women Ministries (IDWM). If you are unaware of this history you might want to consult the Disciples Women website or the resources that have been suggested.
- Harper noted that a significant moment in the 2014 Quadrennial was when Pat Donahoo stated, "We can never go back." Why is this important?
- The Quadrennial is about empowering women. How does remembering our story empower women?
- Harper shared instances of empowerment in her life, ask women in your group to share instances of empowerment. Have they ever faced obstacles, sexism, in their families, jobs, communities, the church? How did they address these obstacles?
- Who has served as models and mentors in the life of your group members? What did they do that was empowering?
- Harper speaks of "carved-in-stone" traditions that are changing as we reach out to all generations. How has your Christian Women's Fellowship changed? Are there certain traditions that you, or others, hold on to that prevents certain generations from being/ feeling included? If so what are they?
- Distribute paper and pens. Conclude discussion time with a time for each participant to write her story of empowerment. The following question may help them focus their story. Write about a time when you truly felt as if the Bible story was your story.

Communion and Closing Prayer

Spread the white cloth on a table in the center of your gathering space. Place cross and candle on the table. Light the candle. Place elements for communion on the table.

Call to Worship

One Voice: Imagine a Day...

**Unison: when everyone knows and acts on how gifted they (we) are
when no one complains about anything, not another person, nor a
country; not a song nor anything under earth or above the sky
when you have no responsibilities. You are focused on the gift of being a
and delighting in the present moment, sharing this day with
another person and being really tuned into the beauty which
continuously surrounds us.
when raindrops fall all day and my grandchildren and I could run
through the puddles and watch the rain fall on the corn.
when all the wrongs of the past are forgotten
when the sun is shining, “sisters” are sharing, fear is lost, and hearts are
one
when everyone says “please” and “thank you”
when the news is all good
when Christians would really live what Jesus taught
when gentleness is seen as strength
when churches are full and prisons are empty**

*(written by members of the Spiritual Life/ Writing Retreat June, 2005 Eureka College
published in Traveling On: Meeting God Along the Way, Dorothy Sallee, contributing
editor, CCIW, 2006).*

Scripture – I Corinthians 11: 23 – 26

Prayer

Pass the elements of communion.

Close with the Disciples Women’s Benediction or a prayer led by someone in your group.

Session 2

"We are all connected. What unites us is our common humanity. I don't want to oversimplify things - but the suffering of a mother who has lost her child is not dependent on her nationality, ethnicity, or religion. White, black, rich, poor, Christian, Muslim or Jew - pain is pain - joy is joy. In Southern Africa we have a concept called Ubuntu - which is that you can't exist as a human being in isolation. You can't be human all by yourself. We think of ourselves far too frequently as just individuals, separated from one another, whereas what you do, what I do, affects the whole world. Taking that a step further, when you do good, it spreads that goodness; it is for the whole of humanity. When you suffer or cause suffering, humanity is diminished as a result." Desmond Tutu

Supplies

Bible, Fall Issue of *Just Women*, editorial cartoons that can be downloaded from the Civil Rights Digital Library: Baldy Editorial Cartoon: 1946 – 1982, 1997: Clifford H. Baldowski Editorial Cartoons at the Richard B. Russell Library (crdl.usg.edu). This website provides many resources about actions and responses that occurred during the Albany Movement. Further information can be obtained from The New Georgia Encyclopedia (georgiaencyclopedia.org) and Global Nonviolent Action Database (nvdatabase.swarthmore.edu), pen and paper for each member

Background on the Albany Movement

In November 1961, residents of Albany, Georgia launched a campaign to eliminate segregation in all facets of life. It was the first mass movement of the Civil Rights era whose goal was desegregation of an entire community. Dating back to the Reconstruction period, the Albany Movement has its roots in the Jim Crow era. It began with the efforts of Charles Sherrod and Cordell Reagon of the Student Nonviolent Coordinate Committee (SNCC) to register African American voters. While national Civil Rights leaders such as Martin Luther King, Jr. joined the protest, the movement failed to secure concessions. Despite the initial evaluation that the Albany Movement (1961 – 1962) was unsuccessful, it was a formative experience for subsequent actions that ultimately led to the desegregation of Albany. In Albany the power of song to galvanize protestors as well as the importance mass demonstrations, jail-ins, sit-ins, boycotts, and litigation were all confirmed.

In preparation for this session familiarize yourself with the Albany Movement. The websites that are listed under supplies will be helpful in providing historical information or consult other histories of the Civil Rights Movement that focus on the events of 1961. Download the cartoons and have them available for your session.

Scripture

Read - Zephaniah 2: 3

Background on the Scripture

The prophet Zephaniah's ministry took place in Jerusalem circa 630 BCE. The book challenges our understanding of ourselves and the other, as God uses one of mixed identity Zephaniah ben Cushi (Zephaniah son of the Cushite) to bring his word to the people. The book challenges our understanding of a homogenous society. Closely related to the Temple, Zephaniah assumes that his hearers are aware of the Noahic covenant between God and the family of nations (Genesis 9 – 10) and the Sinai covenant between God and the children of Israel (Exodus 19 – 24). Rooted in this knowledge, Zephaniah puts hearers on notice that God transcends our tribal understandings. He identifies idolatry as an ideology based in domination, i.e. today's racism, sexism, classism, and all that denies the supremacy of God. While themes of crime and punishment dominate Zephaniah, the prophet gives a word of hope that God cares enough to intervene assuring us a future. God's love stands in opposition to humanity's apathy and indifference.

Zephaniah 2:3 calls the people to repentance and just and humble living.

Read the article *“What Does Fried Chicken Say? A Remembrance of the Albany Movement”* by Nancy Brewer (pgs. 10 – 11) and *“Redemption Coupons”* by Nancy Brewer (pg. 29)

Opening Prayer

Let us pray:

God grant that this tragic midnight of man's inhumanity to man will soon pass and the bright daybreak of freedom and brotherhood will come into being.
Amen.

“Thou, Dear God”: *Prayers that Open Hearts and Spirits*. Martin Luther King, Jr. Lewis V. Baldwin, editor (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011).

Ice Breaker

Have a display of the cartoons that you have downloaded from the Civil Rights Digital Library. As your group members arrive, ask them to silently consider the cartoons and to record reactions, questions, and feelings about the cartoons. When everyone has had an opportunity to reflect upon these, provide the opportunity for group to share what they have written. After you have had a time of sharing, ask if anyone in the group has ever experienced segregation or have them share their own memories of the Civil Rights Movement.

Questions and Discussion

- Ask individuals to summarize what they know about the Albany Movement. Supplement the information that is provided with the history that you have gleaned from websites and resources you have consulted. You might want to include information on the Freedom Riders and measures that are used in nonviolent resistance.
- What are your initial reactions and/or feelings to this article?
- Brewer wrote: “The commission truly appears to believe that integration need never come to Albany, if they stand fast, and if King, Abernathy, the NAACP, CORE, SNCC, leave town, and then Albany’s Negroes would forget the whole thing. But we believe that it only the influence of ‘outside agitators’ that has kept violence from erupting.” Brewer seems to be suggesting that the influence of those who counseled nonviolence was a powerful force that prevented those who were oppressed and persecuted from responding with violence. Do you believe that violence only leads to more violence? Why or why not? Are there situations in which you feel that nonviolent resistance would not be the best response? What are the messages that our culture give about violent versus nonviolent response?
- State that racism is more than just “prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed at someone of a different race” According to the Reconciliation Ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), racism includes racial prejudice combined with the misuse of power by institutions, systems, and organizations that lead to discriminatory and oppressive practices toward people of color. Ask where segregation and racism occur today. If your group has difficulty in identifying situations you may suggest the Tyrvon Martin case or the events in Ferguson, Missouri this summer.
- If you are uncertain of what the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is doing to combat racism you may want to visit the Reconciliation Ministry website (<http://www.reconciliationministry.org>). Where and how do you see the church responding to racism today? Where and how is the church silent in the face of racism?
- In her article, Brewer writes how her husband, Don attempted to bring white pastors and lay and clergy from black congregations together. Many responded not now but six white clergy did sit down with black Civil Rights leaders. How do we say “later” rather than seek understanding of those who are different than us? How do we gain a better understanding of those who are different from us?
- Read “What Does Fried Chicken Say?” (pg. 11). What are your initial reactions and/or feelings? How did church women respond in light of the many arrests that were occurring? Brewer writes, “It wasn’t a huge accomplishment or even a hard job, but it did at least provide a means for actually DOING something, and perhaps shed a little light of love on a situation that has so often bordered on hate.” What little lights of love have you participated in?

- Read “Redemption Coupons” (pg. 29). What are your initial reactions/ feelings? What do you believe that Brewer is saying to us?
- Read Zephaniah 2:3. How do you believe that this scripture speaks to our discussion?

Closing Prayer

Close with the Disciples Women’s Benediction or a prayer led by someone in your group.

Session 3

“No one ever became poor by giving.” Anne Frank

Supplies

Bible, Fall Issue of *Just Women*, copy of *Prayer of Francis Assisi* for each participant, copy of *Black Skin*

Resources

You can read about Sandra Gourdet's experiences in her own words by visiting globalministries.org and searching Sandra Gourdet.

Scripture

Read Acts 1: 8

"But the Holy Spirit will descend upon you: you will receive his power and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the world." The Lord did not leave us orphans; we have the Holy Spirit who acts powerfully in us. His Power cannot leave us motionless. It makes us into dynamic beings. This dynamism consists of announcing Jesus Christ for the salvation of whoever may believe. We also have the task of affirming those who are the brothers and sisters within the Church, beginning with those who are closest to us geographically and culturally, but we must also go to those who are furthest from us geographically and culturally. Such is the recommendation of the Lord, and the reason for the existence of the Power that we receive from the Holy Spirit. If not, why receive that Power?"

Read the article "*Sandra Gourdet: Journey of Faith*" by Lori Adams (pgs. 12 – 13)

Opening Prayer

Distribute copies of the prayer and then pray in unison

Lord, make me an instrument of Your peace;
Where there is hatred, let me sow love;
Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is discord, harmony;
Where there is error, truth;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
And where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, Grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

(St. Francis of Assisi)

Ice Breaker

One at a time have each person share three statements about herself that she thinks others may not know. Two of the statements should be true and one of the statements must be false. Have others in the group each identify what they believe is the false statement. Give each person an opportunity to identify what they believe is false. Give each person an opportunity to share the three statements.

Questions

- Sandra Gourdet was provided with opportunities from age 9 to share and develop her gifts. How were you encouraged to share and use your gifts as a child? How does your congregation provide opportunities for children and youth to discover, develop, and use their gifts?
- After reading the article, what would identify as formative experiences in Sandra's faith? What experiences and opportunities have helped shape your faith?
- What does Adam's identify as the theme of Sandra's ministry? How does this relate to the formative experiences and her passions? What are you passionate about? How does your ministry reflect that passion? What is your congregation passionate about? How do the ministries of your congregation reflect the passion?
- Sandra was bullied and experiences racism while in high school. How did this impact her? How have difficult situations made you stronger?
- When first arriving in Africa, Sandra recalls hearing the voice of her mother in her head. What did that voice challenge her to do? How did it impact her approach and attitude in her ministry? What are the voices and what are the words in your head that help you move through the challenges in life?
- Sandra states that an important leadership skill was learning "to walk more slowly." What does she mean by that? What are the obstacles to walking slowing in your life? What could you do differently so that you could walk more slowly?
- Describe Sandra's relationship style? What is yours? What might you learn from Sandra?

- According to Acts 1: 8 how does the Power of the Spirit act within us? For what purpose are we given the Spirit?
- Sandra describes herself as “an ordinary person being used by and extraordinary God;” her description speaks to the power of the Spirit within us. Who are the individuals in whom you see the Spirit? How are they announcing Jesus Christ to others? Who shared Jesus Christ with you? How do you share Jesus Christ?

Read:

Black skin

*I am black.
 I was born to blacks
 All blacks, be proud of being black.
 You also, Mrs. Sandra
 Black like us, be proud.
 There is nothing that compares to black skin.
 You can imitate skin that is white, yellow, etc.
 But not black.
 If one is white
 There is no pharmacy to become black.
 Thanks to God for this black skin,
 Which I didn't buy
 And which can't be purchased.
 Thanks for this very pretty skin.
 Thanks also to the teacher
 For having made us aware of the value
 And the richness of the black skin.
 By black skin we are original.
 By black skin we are very different.
 By black skin we are without complexes.
 By black skin we are always unique.*

Poem dedicated to Mrs. Sandra Gourdet at Monieka

Closing Prayer

Close with the Disciples Women’s Benediction or a prayer led by someone in your group.

Session 4

Supplies

Bible, Fall Issue of *Just Women*, poster with the seven principles that were developed by the Woman to Woman Mexican Committee.

Additional Resource

God's Dream. Desmond Tutu (Candlewick, 2010).

Scripture

Scripture

I Corinthians 12: 4 - 11

Opening Prayer

Pray in unison

God, giver of all good gifts, I thank you profusely for the gift of life and **all the beauty** and joy that accompany it.
Help me to live my life with kindness and generosity toward all.
Teach me how **to bring peace** into a troubled world,
at least into my piece of the world.
And help me always to be grateful.

Marie, Immaculate Heart Community in *Golden States of Grace: Prayers of the Disinherited*. Rick Nahmias (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2010).

Ice Breaker

When all your group members arrive ask them to form groups of two. Designate one as the listener and one as the speaker. Give each person three minutes to talk about what they have experienced in the last five days. As the speakers are sharing play some soft music in the background. After three minutes, have the listener of each group report on the activities of her partner. Ask the partner to rate her partner from 1 (not very successful) to 5 (very successful) on accuracy of the report. Ask the listeners to share what made it easy or difficult to report accurately. Next switch roles. Remind the listener to pay careful attention. Play the same soft music in the background. Ask the partner to rate her partner from 1 (not very successful) to 5 (very successful). Ask the listeners to share what made it easy or difficult to report accurately.

Read the articles Kassandra Tapia Ochoa, "*We are Called to Empower Our Sisters*" and Lorna Hernández, "*Our Voice is Stronger When We Speak Together (pgs. 16 -18)*"

Questions

- When we think about mission work/ trips, we frequently think about doing something for others. We define mission as serving. Yet in Tapia Ochoa's article it is suggested that mission is about empowerment. How is empowerment different than serving? What makes empowerment more difficult?
- Tapia Ochoa speaks of the importance of authenticity and intentionality. How are these important in ministry? What are the obstacles to authentic and intentional ministry? In *Golden States of Grace: Prayers of the Disinherited*, Rabbi Mark writes: "The lie is that we can fit into the world. We are all misfits. We're all misfits who find our place; by living authentically, then we fit." (Rick Nahmias, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2010). What do you think that he means by that? Do you agree? Why or why not?
- How would you define a "ministry of presence?" How do you engage in ministries of presence? How does your congregation engage in ministries of presence?
- Tapia Ochoa states that "As women, we have the ability to empower one another." How do we do this? Why are we reluctant to empower others?
- Read I Corinthians 12: 4 – 11. What does this scripture say about diversity? How does an appreciation of diversity help with empowerment?
- How can you be more intentional and present in what you do?
- Consider the seven principles that are listed on the poster. Have your group summarize each principle in their own words. While members of your group may not have the opportunity to participate in global mission work, how can these principles help shape your ministry in you neighborhood and community?
- Prior the your group meeting visit <http://globalministries.org/lac/projects/woman-to-woman-worldwide.html> Summarize for your group what you learn about micro-credit projects and how you can support them as individuals and as a congregation.
- If you choose to obtain a copy of *God's Dream* by Desmond Tutu close the discussion session by sharing this book.

Closing Prayer

Close with the Disciples Women's Benediction or a prayer led by someone in your group.