

2008  
*Called,  
Gifted  
& Sent*



소명, 은사  
그리고 파송

*Llamada,  
Capacitada  
y Enviada*

*Appellées,  
Douées et  
Envoyées*

A resource for Disciples Women committed  
to personal spiritual growth, leadership, stewardship,  
justice and service in the name of Jesus Christ

# Stewardship



## BLESSING BOX— A HISTORY AND AN UPDATE

By Adonna Bowman

The history of women's systematic and sacrificial giving to support their dreams and visions for mission and education began as one of the first projects of the Christian Woman's Board of Missions. Originally named Mite Boxes, the name has changed throughout the years to Thank Offerings, Love Gifts and eventually to Blessing Boxes. Blessing Boxes are kept in the homes and offices of women across the church to enable them to express their gratitude for everyday blessings. Thanks is given for a sunny day, a birth, a reconciling experience, a welcome phone call, a child's smile, a beautiful snow fall, a flower in full bloom, relief from pain, a good book, a safe journey, visits from grandchildren and anything else for which we are grateful.

It is a spiritual discipline even more than a financial one. It helps keep a focus on gratitude to God and on the responsibility to share blessings with others. The amount put in may be a quarter, a dollar, a five or the emptying of one's pockets at the end of each day. The amount is not nearly as important as the discipline of regularly remembering God's goodness thru the acts of giving and praying prayers of thanksgiving.

In 2005 ICWF (now IDWM) began receiving distributions once again from Blessing Box offerings.

Initially the amount was 10%, which amounted to over \$21,000. The percentage increased to 25% in 2006, for \$58,000, and to 50% in 2007, where it will remain. None of these percentages covers the cost for women's ministry, which go beyond what is available through Disciples Home Missions due to decreased giving to Disciples Mission Fund. However, they make a significant difference in the witness provided by Disciples Women.

Blessing Box offerings were and continue to be used for the following ministries and services, plus others as determined by the IDWM Executive Committee:

1. Staff support for the Quadrennial Assembly/ ODW Program Associate in 2008;
2. Creation of a pilot program of hiring part-time inter-regional contract staff, initially supporting the ROSES area;
3. Hiring of an intern from Christian Theological Seminary for the Office of Disciples Women for the 2007 – 2008 school year;
4. Addition of two ethnic constituency representatives to the IDWM Executive Committee;
5. Participation by additional ethnic constituency representatives (6 Hispanic, 1 Convocation, 1 NAPAD) at Cabinet and Staff Fellowship;
6. Contract staff to:
  - a. Perform research and development of the 2006 Bread and Letters Together social action project;
  - b. Develop, solicit writers for and create the Called, Gifted and Sent leadership manual in 2006, 2007 and for 2008 publication;
  - c. Design and editing of Called, Gifted and Sent publications;
  - d. Provide oversight and administration for the 2005 and 2006 Women's Action Web experiences;
7. Overtime for DHM Administrative Assistants assigned to ODW to support the Mix in '06;
8. Participation of an ODW administrative support person at 2007 General Assembly and Cabinet meetings;
9. Participation by IDWM Officers and ODW Staff at retreats across the country;
10. Writing and publication of six retreat modules for use by churches and regions;
11. Creation and promotion of a Disciples Women magazine for introduction in 2009.

There are many more ministries which have not been funded, but we have plans and dreams and faith that God is in the midst of our ministry and everything we need will be provided as we go forward.

Through Blessing Box giving, women are assuring that their own ministry by, with and for women continues and that the support for and needs of women in the church are met.

Adonna Bowman is Executive Director of the Office of Disciples Women, a division of Disciples Home Missions. She lives in Indianapolis and is a member of Allisonville Christian Church.

### DISCIPLES WOMEN GIVING

#### Blessing Box Giving

2007 (thru Oct.)	\$194,607
2006	\$223,394
2005	\$218,870
2004	\$223,605
2003	\$236,834
2002	\$256,053
2001	\$254,913

#### Total Disciples Mission Fund Giving (Includes Blessing Box, excludes all giving outside DMF)

2007 (thru Oct.)	\$1,215,722
2006	\$1,507,170
2005	\$1,595,547
2004	\$1,757,210
2003	\$1,859,143
2002	\$2,057,920

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## LET'S TALK ABOUT A SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE

By Linda Houston



LINDA HOUSTON

For the definition and experience of pure joy you must meet my mentor and pal, Mit, a four year old golden lab and still a puppy in so many ways. She and Tim (her human) are neighbors at our vacation retreat and a cherished part of our lives for several weeks each year. Yesterday, upon our arrival, she ran up to us so excited and happy we couldn't help but laugh and play before beginning our moving in chores. Mit was clear in her exuberance that we were the absolute most wonderful folks she had seen all day! This morning she was amazingly patient each of the five times she visited to let us know that indeed the sun had once again risen (!!!) and she was ready to walk with us in the desert. Her thumping tail and excited whine were not to be denied. It is common for me to look at her with heartfelt gratitude and then easily recall the blessings that I have in abundance. I think too of how easy it is to lose that feeling of awe, the thrill of wonder and of the sacred moments we all have in the everyday.

In some ways, the Blessing Box is my Mit. When Disciples Women began educating and encouraging the use of Blessing Boxes, I found Susan Gonzales Dewey's article (see 2005 *Called, Gifted and Sent*, p. 19 at <http://www.discipleswomen.org>) on their daily use as a spiritual discipline an inviting one. I'm not gifted with a lot of self discipline and, if the truth were known, am not too willing to be so! But I do know that having the habit of awareness and gratitude seems to make me easier to live with, so I have placed these little boxes within easy reach and view: Near the refrigerator, in the living room, and in my car,

providing visual cues that prompt my gratitude in the present moment.

Some of my friends have found that this has become part of their daily lives as well. Jenice Carter remembers a story from the Mix in '06, when a speaker took eleven cents a day and worked it up to some amazing totals. Since then Jenice has found eleven cents on a regular basis. So has her family. In fact, it is now part of the family legacy to 'find' eleven cents placed by loved ones to be discovered! At a committee meeting of clergy and lay leaders in the Pacific Southwest Region, hosted by Mary K. Backstrom, there was a Blessing Box on the table. She explained to us that it is now their custom to pass the Blessing Box around the table as part of the blessing prior to the meal. Each person shares a special blessing at that moment. It was a very sacred moment for us to be included in this family tradition.

So here is the best part: Not only do we share our abundance in a faithful way, not only do we begin to receive some of these funds for Disciples Women, not only is the money used wisely and well, BUT ALSO we get to experience joy. It can be a pure, immediate and shared joy with God in that moment. Why, if I had a tail I would be wagging it like crazy right now. Since I don't, think I'll put a little something in my Blessing Box. How about you? Clink Clink!

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Linda Houston lives in Torrence, California. She is a member of First Christian Church.



# Stewardship



BETTIE DUHON

## Blessing Box Dedication Service

*Blessing Box Dedications can take place in many settings, including individual small groups, group meetings, retreats, or workshops. Usually, Blessing Box offerings are collected and dedicated at the end of a program year, but they can be collected and dedicated at any time that works best for your group, or sent in directly by individuals.*

### Getting Ready

- Prepare a Centering Place where each person can focus on their Blessings and Blessing Boxes. This place could include a Blessing Box, lit candle, Bible, picture of a child, picture of parent or family, flowers; ANY items that remind us of our Blessings.
- Choose a song from Chalice Hymnal, Chalice Praise or African American Hymnal that refers to Blessings and/or Thankfulness. If you need an accompanist, be sure to recruit her in advance and let her know what you want to sing.
  - If this is a large group event, consider providing copies of this service to those in attendance so it can be shared with others.
  - Identify someone who has a new or good idea about using Blessing Boxes and ask them to be ready to share with the group.
  - Share the leadership! Create a leadership team to lead various parts of the service, such as the scripture reading, meditation, singing, litany and prayer of dedication. Invite someone else to create the centering place.
  - Alert your treasurer to be prepared to send your offering to Church Finance Council. (See page 29 for mailing information.)
  - Advertise the time, place and purpose of your Dedication Service. Invite people to attend who may not currently participate in the Blessing Box practice of “thanks-living.”
  - Have extra Blessing Boxes available! Invite takers to begin by placing \$1 in the box in gratitude for the Blessing Box. Remind participants that Blessing Boxes make great gifts, extending the practice of “thanks-living” to friends and loved ones. (See below for ordering information.)

**Blessing Boxes are available from the Christian Board of Publication at 1/800-366-3383 or [www.cbp21.com](http://www.cbp21.com). The cost is \$10 for a package of 10.**

### GATHERING AND WELCOME

#### SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 1:3 – “How we praise God, who has blessed us with EVERY BLESSING in heaven because we belong to Christ.”

#### MEDITATION

God has truly blessed us with so many blessings. Please take a moment to reflect on your life---Yes, we all have trials, heartaches and troubles; but we also ALL have many blessings.

Have you ever thought of finding the blessing in your pain or heartache? In every situation, even painful ones, there are blessings to be found. The following story is shared by Bettie Duhon, former Disciples women staff in Louisiana.

“My son and his wife both work 25 miles from where they live. They are both gone by 7:00 o'clock in the morning. They have a 17 year old daughter who needs to be at school by 7:30, and two boys, six and ten, who cannot be at school until 7:30. Someone has to be at their house by 7:00 every morning and wait with them until time to go to school. Trying to help, since there is no one else, I take on this role. Each morning I get up at 6 o'clock, get dressed and drive over to their house and take the boys to school.

One morning, as we were on our way to school, I was thinking about how I wished I were still home, in my bed, not fighting traffic and so on. Then, suddenly, I thought, What a blessing!!! It is just great being with these two grandsons each morning, just the three of us. We talk about all kinds of things on the way to school. So that morning, after this thought, I shared with them what a blessing it was for me to have this special time with them each day and how God is so very good to us. I hope this will help them realize the blessings in their young lives. Blessings are like gifts, some are small, some are large. Sometimes they are hidden and we have to look for them. Look for the hidden blessings in your life, and when you find them, proclaim with me, ‘What a blessing!!!’”

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*Blessing Box offerings represent our gratitude for daily blessings. After your Blessing Box gifts are dedicated, have your treasurer send a check for the total amount to Disciples Mission Fund, PO Box 1986, Indianapolis, IN 46206-1986. Write "Blessing Box" on the memo line. (Note: offerings may be sent at any time with a note indicating the amount given during the dedication service.)*

## **BLESSING BOX IDEA-SHARE**

This is a brief, informal time in which participants are invited to share ways in which they use their Blessing Boxes. Prime the conversation with an idea or two solicited ahead of time.

## **LITANY**

Leader: If you have family members, give thanks.

All: Thank you God. Bless them, bless me, make us a blessing to others.

Leader: If you have young children and youth with whom you interact, give thanks.

All: Thank you God. Bless them, bless me, make us a blessing to others.

Leader: If you have a church family, give thanks.

All: Thank you God. Bless them, bless me, make us a blessing to others.

Leader: If you have friends who care, give thanks.

All: Thank you God. Bless them, bless me, make us a blessing to others.

Leader: If you have heartaches, trials and disappointments, ask God to turn them into blessings! Give thanks.

All: Thank you, God. May we feel your presence in all circumstances and may we always give thanks.

## **SONG OF THANKSGIVING**

This song can be played and/or sung while Blessing Boxes are brought forward to the centering place.

## **PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

Thank you, God, for all your blessings, great and small. We humbly ask that you receive these Blessing Box gifts as tokens of our gratitude for the many blessings of our lives. Bless these gifts, bless us, and make us a blessing to others. Amen.

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Bettie Duhon retired in 2007 after 18 years as Women's Ministries staff person in the former Louisiana Region, now part of the Great River Region.



# Stewardship



SUSAN GONZALES DEWEY

## HOW TO SHARE THE BLESSING OF THE BLESSING BOX

By Susan Gonzales Dewey and Judy Row

**F**or some women, the Blessing Box has become a part of their daily prayers, for others it has moved from being a once-a-day discipline to being incorporated into every aspect of their daily living, and there is still a group of women out there waiting to be introduced to the attitude of gratitude!

How do we make that happen in our corporate church life?

- Have Blessings Boxes for sale at every event (available through Christian Board of Publication)
- Make sure that all presidents and regional staff have a supply on hand to give away when appropriate.
- Model the practice.

- o Carry them to every meeting you attend, whether it is a women's meeting or a church board meeting, and when it is your turn to speak, model the practice by making sure you have coins available, offer thanks for the opportunity to be there and put some coins in the box.

- o Put coins in the box when you have struggled with and resolved an issue.

- o Put coins in the box when a new member joins your fellowship.

- o Put coins in the box for a great idea or a new idea.

- o Put coins in the box for a successful meeting.

- o Use the Blessing Box as part of your community building time at the beginning of meetings. Invite others to participate by asking what blessing they bring to the meeting. You will be surprised at how quickly what began as an obligation to share turns into an eagerness to share!

- Make the Blessing Box visible in several locations at your church facility, such as the office, meeting rooms, women's and men's restrooms.

How do we encourage the spiritual discipline of gratitude as a part of the personal lives of women in our churches?

- Give them a Blessing Box or two and share your personal stories of the significance of practicing the discipline of gratitude in your life.

- Share with them places they might place boxes such as:

- o Workspace
- o Dining table
- o In the car
- o On the washer or dryer

- Encourage them to have a supply of coins on hand and share that when they need more, they can buy them out with bills, write a check, or go to the Click and Give site at <http://www.discipleswomen.org>.

- Share examples of times, people, situations that prompt you to put a coin in the box, such as:

- o Being aware of the gifts around you and celebrating them,
- o The first day you notice a change of season,
- o A safe trip in the car,
- o A sunrise or sunset,
- o A special moment with a child or grandchild,
- o Finishing a good book,
- o Spending time with a friend,
- o Completing a project,
- o Receiving a letter or email from a friend,
- o Waking up to sunshine,
- o Waking up to rain,
- o A good conversation,
- o An ah-ha moment during your devotions.

What do we gain from the practice of the Blessing Box?

- We develop a new stewardship discipline of over and above giving.
- We begin to recognize spirit moments as gifts from God.
- We learn to see and celebrate the ordinary as well as the extraordinary in each day.
- We learn to celebrate the gifts from God in our lives.
- We build community in a new way.
- Our offerings make a difference or, as former moderator Alvin Jackson says, "make a different world" by creating opportunities for ministry through our gifts.

Susan Gonzales Dewey is co-regional minister with her husband, Don, of the Pacific Southwest Region. Judy Row is president of IDWM.



JUDY ROW

## WOMEN LEAVE A LEGACY

By Deborah Wray



DEBORRAH WRAY

**M**aritza Morales and Leah Dewey never met Mary Merchant. But they are living her legacy, because Miss Merchant included a gift to the Women's Endowment Fund in her estate plans. Because of her generosity and foresight, women like Maritza and Leah have received scholarships to participate in the Woman's Action Web and are becoming leaders in the church.

With a gift of \$1,000 you can establish a named fund within the Women's Endowment Fund. Adding to it is easy through regular gifts, gifts in memory of loved ones, and with your own gift by will or on the beneficiary form of your IRA or 401k. You will be making a significant faith statement, providing

an enduring witness and ensuring that the church of tomorrow will be properly led.

God has richly blessed us all with abundance. Our call is to give back to God's church with generous hearts. What will your legacy be?

For more information about how to make plans for a future gift, and to make a gift now, contact the Christian Church Foundation at (800) 668-8016 or visit the Foundation at <http://www.disciples.org/ccf>.

Deborah M. Wray is a member of Southport Christian Church in Indianapolis. She is a Vice President in the Christian Church Foundation.

### Women's Endowment Fund Supports Vital Ministries

These ministries were funded by WEF grants awarded in October, 2006 and March, 2007.

East Second Street Christian Church, Lexington, Kentucky  
Engaging 30 women in discovering the power of prayer through intentional mentoring.  
Grant Amount: \$500

International Disciples Women's Ministries  
Enabling Disciples Women leaders and regional presidents of the Haitian Community, the Hispanic Assembly, the Convocation and NAPAD to attend the IDWM Cabinet Meeting in Greensboro NC, January 2007.  
Grant Amount: \$5000

Mision Cristiana Favo de Luz, Lorain, Ohio  
Holding 3 women's retreats serving women of the Midwest Hispanic Convention in Kansas City, Indianapolis and Ohio.  
Grant Amount: \$3000

North American Pacific Asian Disciples (NAPAD)  
Providing funds for a women's luncheon at the NAPAD Event – August, 2006  
Grant Amount: \$2500

Office of Disciples Women – International Disciples Women's Ministries  
Enabling the 2006 Class of the Leader Apprentice Program (LAP) to attend the IDWM Cabinet Meeting in January, 2007.  
Grant Amount: \$5000

March, 2007  
International Disciples Women's Ministries  
Bringing women of NAPAD, the Convencion, and Assembly Churches to an Interregional Event.  
Grant Amount: \$1000

Olivia Bryan and Leah Dewey  
Women's Action Web – Young Adult Edition  
Providing an avenue for young Disciples women to develop leadership skills, learn how to create ministries of service and justice, and to discover ways to bring their unique gifts to the table of the larger church community.  
Grant Amount: \$5000