Disciples Women’s Leadership Council Report
Rev. Dr. Patricia A. Donahoo, Executive Director
January 23-26, 2020

Disciples Women’s Ministries is a conduit for diverse connections empowering each woman to find her voice and live out her call. Micah 6:8

Disciples Women staff are amazing people doing a great job. We have two half time support staff doing a great deal to meet the needs of the women of the US and Canada. Since we cannot have full coverage, we appreciate your patience in getting questions answered. Chesla and I have a full travel schedule so the burden of answering questions is on our support staff. My ministry in the past year has included keynoting, preaching, teaching, advocating, advising, listening, comforting, building relationships, and collaborating with other general ministries. We appreciate all you do in your regions and in your congregations uplifting and resourcing women as well as encouraging them in leadership training and opportunities.

While we are facing challenges within women’s ministries as well as the denomination as a whole, we want to continue to resist ‘back to Egypt’ thinking that will hinder these opportunities to think in new ways and create a new way of doing women’s ministries. When we focus on the future, we have the opportunity to listen to God’s call and follow God’s lead. I am honored and blessed to do this ministry with you.

I serve on the General Ministry Cabinet, the DHM Development and PR Committee, and the Governance Committee of the General Board. I have trained Disciples Peace Fellows and the HOPE Leadership Academy about the ministry of Disciples Women and DHM staff women on women’s empowerment. I participate in interregional gatherings, regional assemblies, women’s retreats, worship and other events as requested. In 2019, I had the opportunity to share information about our 145th birthday and the history of our first 145 years.

HerStory Continues Fund: This fund was established in 2019 and has received $8,500 in contributions to date. This fund recognizes what women have achieved, what they are achieving, and what they will continue to achieve. This is a legacy fund to endow Disciples Women’s Ministries. This fund will support these ministries into the future. Pledge cards are available for named funds and other gifts can be made by check or through the website. These funds will be invested with Christian Church Foundation in the Bostick Select Fund that is committed to invest free of human trafficking, fossil fuels, weapons manufacturers, and companies targeted for divestment because of their involvement in perpetuating the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. (This fund was named to honor Sara Lue Bostick one of the first African American women to be ordained in the Disciples of Christ and who worked tirelessly to further the mission of the Christian Women’s Board of Missions.)

Executive Committee: We celebrate the 2019-21 team who are groundbreakers serving as the first team with rotating members and changes made in nominating process for some representatives. We appreciate the hard work of all these women leaders. (List provided in PowerPoint presentation.)

Disciples Women Mission Project 2020: Sparking Joy. Disciples Women’s mission project for 2020 is an opportunity to simplify and streamline our personal space while providing much-needed items to those for whom we can offer support. One of the current popular tidying movements (Marie Kondo) involves deciding if items in your home spark joy. Her suggestion is if they do not they should be appreciated and removed.

Below are some items that may no longer bring you joy and you might be prepared to part with as well as suggested organizations who may be able to put them to good use. I hope that you will be able to identify other opportunities in your local areas or local branches of these organizations. In addition, you are encouraged to
offer additional support to the organizations for which we are recommending these items. As always, we encourage you to contact directly similar organizations in your area to find out what their specific needs are as well as to begin building a relationship.


**Luggage:** It’s My Bag: nationwide movement of travel agents coming together and encouraging the community to donate suitcases, travel bags, and duffel bags so that every child in foster care can have their own bag.
Casa for Children: Most children in foster care arrive at their first placement with little to nothing in their possession. These donations to local agencies are almost guaranteed to be put to good use immediately.

**Prom or Bridesmaid Dresses:**
Project GLAM!: hosted by WGIRLS Inc. is dedicated to providing formal dresses for economically disadvantaged young women who cannot afford a prom dress. GLAM stands for Granting Lasting Amazing Memories, which is exactly what you can give these young women by donating your old dresses.

**Old Shoes:**
Soles4Souls: organization that believes in the power of a pair of shoes.

**Handbags:**
Handbags of Hope or Purses 4 A Purpose: Recycle gently used, unwanted purses. Provides handbags full of necessities to women and teens in shelter situations.

**Clothing:**
Vietnam Veterans of America: Donations go toward supporting veterans of all wars and their families. Donations can be scheduled for pick-up right at your doorstep. All you have to do is label your donation boxes.

**Other highly rated wounded veterans charities include:** Gary Sinise Foundation, Semper Fi Fund, Fisher House Foundation, etc.

**The ARC:** Nation’s leading advocate for those with development disabilities.

**Old Mobile Phones:**
Women’s Shelters: some shelters accept used mobile phones for women to use to call 911 in an emergency.

**Kids’ Games, Crafts and Books:**
Women’s Shelters; Often families have to leave home with just the clothes on their backs.

**Makeup:**
Women’s Shelters: You may have make up sitting around that you bought with the intention of using but changed your mind to something different or it came free with something else.

**Linens:**
Women’s Shelters: From kids’ comforters to queen-size sheets to towels and washcloths, most linens will be appreciated. This may also include kitchen towels, oven mitts, burp cloths, crib sheets and throw blankets.
Also, please share with the Disciples Women office what you are doing so we can celebrate together. If you have stories or pictures to share on social media, please use #DWConnect. Of course, as always, we want to be careful not to exploit or to have the appearance of exploiting the people we are hoping to assist.

Disciples Women’s Endowment Fund: Due dates are March 15 and October 15. The committee receives many more requests than there are funds to cover so be sure to include all necessary information. These are grants given for new and creative ministries by and for Disciples Women.

W2WW: This year’s Woman-to-Woman Worldwide journey will be to Southern Asia in sync with Global Ministries’ Southern Asia initiative. Tentative dates are October 24 – November 7. Applications for this journey are due by February 15. Please check all requirements (physical, emotional, spiritual) online before applying. Last year’s journey was to Morocco. I will be sharing more about this journey tomorrow and you can get information on the website about those who were part of the delegation and how to contact them to hear more.

General Assembly 2019: Last year’s assembly was in Des Moines and Disciples Women were actively involved. Women crocheted/knitted/quilted well over the goal of 3,000 finger labyrinths that were given to attendees of opening worship providing another example of a spiritual discipline. Labels were attached identifying the women and their home congregations to illustrate the breadth and width of participation of women in Disciples Women’s ministries. Additionally, extras were picked up by friends, pastors, group leaders who wanted to take them home for those who were not able to attend so they could join in using this spiritual discipline.

The women’s luncheon was moved from Wednesday to Sunday because of the compressed GA schedule so a time of praise worship was included. This event was well attended, as usual.

Sunday afternoon we led a workshop on leadership styles; Monday we spotlighted Domestic Violence at the DHM booth; and, Tuesday afternoon we participated in a panel conversation on justice, highlighting women’s work to fight human trafficking along with other justice ministries.

We also celebrated our 145th birthday during the Monday evening aftersession.

As usual, women were in leadership throughout the event.

UN Commission on the Status of Women: Thanks to a generous donor, three representatives participated in the UN’s Commission on the Status of Women in 2019. Both the Executive Director and Program Director as well as the IDWM President were part of the delegation. The main theme was “Social protection systems, public services and sustainable infrastructure for gender equality.” This opportunity expanded our knowledge of the circumstances and situation of women and girls around the world as well as the amazing work being done to support and improve the conditions of women and girls. We heard repeatedly that the vulnerability of women and girls is the main contributor to their poor situation in the world. We learned of the connections to situations such as a lack of clean water that affects many other facets of their lives that we may not have been aware of but rather seeing clean water as a solitary issue. Disciples Seminary Foundation has created a course on what was learned at the UN and how we can participate in reducing those vulnerabilities. The current Bible study has information included in it on how to sign up for this study.

2020 Experience: It’s Real: This event will be held in Fort Worth July 22-25, 2020. This is an historic, one-time event where you will have the opportunity to celebrate the diversity of our church with leadership by Obra Hispana, NAPAD, and National Convocations disciples. This is an opportunity to experience multicultural,
multilingual, multigenerational worship, powerful preaching, and more. There will be over 30 educational workshops...two of which include a Disciples Women focus.

**Blessing Boxes:** Blessing box giving is down again marking the lowest giving ever. Please remember that checks sent to Treasury Services must be noted with “Blessing Box” for the funds to be deposited in that fund. There has been some confusion with this in the past. This giving affects both Disciples Women’s funding and the funding for the mission of the whole church.

**145th Birthday:** We celebrated the history of women in the Disciples church as well as the history being made today. We celebrated all year long with parties and gatherings, preaching and performing, and ideas that women around the US and Canada created. We did not make our goal but we did receive gifts from 200 donors totaling $21,943.60. Giving directly to Disciples Women is not yet a discipline for many women and we are hoping that in addition to the celebration that this will reinforce the need for direct funding. Part of our funding comes from our covenantal relationship with DHM from whom we receive a portion of their Mission Fund offering. However, any other gifts given to DHM are not used to fund DWM; we have found that many women are not aware of this change.

**Our Future:** God continues to call women to serve in a variety of ways. The women have kept the church focused on mission, outreach and service...the very DNA of discipleship. Women have built wide and varied relationships organizing their work across geography and other factors that are often seen as barriers.

Our current struggle is reimagining our ministry to understand what God is calling us to do and be NOW. Change happens; moving forward requires change; moving forward means leaving behind any “Back to Egypt” thinking. Disciples Women’s Ministries is working with fewer and fewer resources. Regenia has reduced her hours and we are considering other changes as well. Many of those other changes will occur in how we do the Bible study in the future, e.g. Lisa will be doing the design and layout of the Bible study. Again, based on feedback we have received, there are changes to the Bible study that are needed and those will be reflected as we work within the budget we have allotted.

Currently, we project not having enough funding to continue through 2020 without major changes. Without increased funding we may not be able to do all the ministry we are called to do and will have to make sacrifices and adjustments in the future. We will continue to experiment with doing our ministry in new ways. For example, we will be meeting as DWLC online through GoToMeeting, webinars, or whatever makes sense as we move forward. This will provide an opportunity for larger numbers of women to be included with possible ‘watch parties’. Women with children will not have to find caregivers; women will not have to use vacation time to travel across the continent. While we value this time of networking and relationship building our funding requires that for now we meet in new ways. Our hope is that in the future, we can meet face-to-face again, possibly on alternate years...again, funding will be a factor. The travel pool funds will be used to provide whatever software/technology is needed to have these online meetings and, hopefully, in the future for another in person meeting.

Together we can work together to overcome our funding challenges so we can continue to encourage and empower all women to be all that God has created them to be. Working together with God, we can do far more than we can imagine.