



DISCIPLES WOMEN

Interregional Event Planning Guide

OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION: Disciples Women can come together during interregional gatherings to participate in collaborative learning, worship, and fellowship in enjoyable and innovative ways. To ensure a successful event, interregional groups can refer to the following guidelines as a helpful tool. These guidelines should be used in conjunction with the organizer's expertise, institutional knowledge, and understanding of the audience's needs. It is important to remember that there is no one correct way to hold an interregional Disciples Women's event. Creativity, flexibility, and attentiveness to the group's anticipated needs are key.

PURPOSE: To amplify the mission, vision, and values of Disciples Women, provide opportunities for Disciples Women to gain learning and develop leadership skills to be used in their local DW context and the wider Church. Such resources may include workshops, roundtables, and hands-on activities that engage the programmatic pillars (justice, spiritual formation, and leadership development) toward the end goal that Disciples Women will fulfill their responsibilities with increased effectiveness.

TIME & PLACE: Held every four years over a long weekend, e.g., Thursday-Saturday or Friday-Sunday. The leadership of the interregional group determines which region will host the event. Interregional leadership groups may create a rotating host schedule to help with future planning.

FORMAT: Historically, Disciples Women interregional events were intended to serve as a leadership training opportunity for regional staff and volunteer leaders. After the last Quadrennial Assembly in 2014, it was open to any woman wishing to attend to keep Disciples women engaged. Although these were in-person-only events happening every four (4) years, the COVID-19 pandemic has created space for the Church to progress, even in unprecedented times, to continue the good work of the Gospel via the use of technology. To that end, the main interregional event should be held every four (4) years as an in-person event. However, consideration should be given to how incorporating hybrid aspects can broaden one's audience. For example, the planning team might consider streaming evening worship services. One might also decide to plan for a hybrid event with separate registrations for in-person and digital-only attendees. Remain flexible and attentive in this area of planning so that the interregional positions itself to maximize its reach and impact.



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PLANNING COMMITTEE: Interregional groups meet every four (4) years on alternating schedules, so all groups have an opportunity to lead an event without causing scheduling conflicts (see DW Interregional Leadership Chart for the most up-to-date meeting schedule)—the leadership of participating regions and staff of the Office of Disciples Women. Planning begins in Interregional groups at DWLC Meetings. During this time, interregional groups discuss timelines, key leadership assignments, confirm hosts, and any other business that helps make the planning process efficient and effective for a successful event. Upon reaching a common consensus, interregional groups report their preliminary plans and timelines to the IDWM President and Executive Director. Planning teams may add persons to the team who are not members of DWLC to expand the impact and integrate women into Disciples Women when they possess particular skill sets needed for planning and event execution.

The leadership of the hosting region is responsible for registration and housing arrangements. Another regional staff person works closely with the Office of Disciples Women to plan and implement the program. The event is devoted to program introduction training and skill development, led by DW staff and other facilitators from the wider Church. For example, Disciples Overseas Ministries, Christian Church Foundation, or other General Ministries of the Church may be able to arrange for staff availability and travel for educational training. Planning teams may also procure services from community stakeholders (other nonprofits, ecumenical partners, etc.) with the approval of the ODW. Please get in touch with the Office of Disciples Women for assistance in scheduling General Ministry facilitators. Regional leaders generally provide leadership in worship, community building/sharing, small groups, and other areas of interest/need that may arise. However, the planning team may opt to request a guest facilitator to lead or participate in worship. The planning committee should consider the following:

- Compile a list of needs from participating regions well in advance.
- Create a project scope or “to do” list of assignments, point person, and deadlines. This should be a shared document so that everyone on the planning team is kept in the loop regarding progress.
- Model a variety of presentation methods, educational models, group processes, and technology applications.
- Share leadership in the planning and execution of the event.
- Use DWLC meetings, General/Regional Assemblies, and other gatherings as opportunities for long-range planning for this leadership training.
- Confer as early as possible with the Office of Disciples Women and regions to



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determine desired dates and times for training.

- Communicate early and often for best results. The planning team may consider building an email list for planning team leaders, utilizing regional newsletters and social media to market the event, and text updates via mass texting systems (e.g., Text in Church, etc.) to communicate with registrants.

BUDGET & FINANCE: Interregional gatherings are self-funded events, and careful consideration should be taken to ensure that all projected costs are considered during the planning phase. Such expenses will include but may not be limited to:

- Venue
- Lodging
- Transportation
- Meals
- Audio/Visual/Technology needs
- Facilitator honoraria, travel, etc.
- ODW staff travel, etc.
- Printing
- Materials and supplies
- Misc. administrative costs

The registration fee should cover all event expenses unless each region has budgeted funds for interregional events. The Office of Disciples Women sets aside a budget of \$1,000 for each interregional event as an additional source of support. These funds are to be used for the planning and execution of the event (see aforementioned list of expenses) and should not be used for personal expenses for planning committee members (e.g., gas/mileage for site visits, etc.). The interregional planning committee should decide how these funds will be used. Several options for use of these funds include but are not limited to:

- Apply the total budgeted amount towards the expense of the meeting site (rooms/meals/on-site expenses). Additional expenses would be divided among participating regions and covered by registration fees.
- Use the funds for scholarships to the event (a record of all scholarships funded with these funds must be remitted with the final report).
- Divide the budgeted funds equally between participating regions and decide how their portion will be used (e.g., meals, translation services, technology, scholarships, etc.) according to their assigned role in the planning process.

Any unused funds from the Office of Disciples Women should be returned to the Office of Disciples Women. Neither the Office of Disciples Women nor the Division of Homeland Ministries¹ (dba Disciples Home Missions) assumes any financial liability for interregional events beyond the per-interregional funds included in its annual budget and shall in no way be held liable for any financial loss or other liabilities accrued in the

¹ The Division of Homeland Ministries (dba Disciples Home Missions, aka DHM) is the legal holder of funds for Disciples Women as Disciples Women operates under DHM's 501(c)3.



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planning or execution of this event. If an interregional does not take place for any reason, funds received from the Office of Disciples Women should be returned immediately. Finally, all interregional planning committees that receive funds from the office of Disciples Women are required to submit a report that includes a detailed explanation of how funds were used.

EVENT MODEL

I. OPENING GATHERING: This is an opportunity for attendees to get acquainted, introduce ODW staff, IDWM Executive Committee Members, and regional DW leadership, outline the purpose of the meeting, and “break the ice.” The design should provide space for interaction between attendees and leadership in a safe, fun way. One might also consider space for sharing joys and concerns, hopes for the weekend, and answering attendees' questions. Icebreaker games and/or small groups work well here. It is helpful to include some activity that builds relationships and includes laughter. During this time, there should be time for ODW staff, the IDWM President, or her representative to bring greetings and reports; the planning team may also include a leadership panel discussion either during the opening session or as a leadership development workshop, which can be in panel, roundtable, or fishbowl formats.

II. WORKSHOPS: Workshops should engage women in a way that strengthens their skill sets and expands their learning around how DW shows up in the world. Their capacity for being better volunteers or leaders should be increased. Thus, workshops should focus on the three (3) programmatic pillars:

- **Leadership Development (HEAD): How can Disciples Women be better leaders?**

Building Strong Teams	Essentials of Fundraising
Effective Communication	Planning Successful Retreats
Best Practices for Hybrid Events	Conflict Resolution
Leadership Panel/Roundtable Discussion	Transgenerational Ministry Models

- **Spiritual Formation (HEART): In what ways might attendees be spiritually fortified?**

Bible Study Using Just Women	Opening/Closing Worship that supports theme
Bible Lecture	Spiritual Direction



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Learning a Spiritual Practice	Yoga & Lectio Divina
Apophatic/Cataphatic practice	Exploring Worship & Art

- **Justice (HANDS): What pressing issue could Disciples Women give attention to? How can Disciples Women put Micah 6:8 into action?**

Food Insecurity	Environmental Justice
Faith-based Organizing & Community Engagement	Missions (global and domestic)
Gender-Based Violence	Service Project
Advocacy & Activism	Water Insecurity

The workshop examples listed above are not exhaustive and are just a few examples of what could fall under each category. Remain attentive to the needs of the interregional audience and plan accordingly. See Appendix A for workshop examples.

III. SERVICE PROJECT: The planning team should incorporate a hands-on project. The planning team may wrap this up in the justice workshop or make it a separate item on the agenda. Many regions will already be involved in the IDWM Service project in some way and therefore doing some time to support it is appropriate.

IV. SCHEDULING: When creating the event schedule, it's helpful to keep a few things in mind:

- Ensure that workshops, etc., are germane to your theme, purpose, and goal of hosting the event.
- The attention span of attendees. Don't overwork them! Leave space for rest and fellowship.
- Make time for worship and fellowship.
- Engage both the head and heart for a well-rounded event.

There are several methods for accomplishing the goal of this event. Some options include:

- Divide into three or four workshops according to office held, interest, skill training, etc.
 - Two major portions of the time (4-5 hours total) are allocated for in-depth work in these groups.
 - The third major block is divided into two or three ½-1 hour mini-workshops where participants get an overview of the workshops they did not attend. At the end of the event, everyone has experienced all the topics but has



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“majored” in one.

- Series of workshops (2-2 ½ hours each) where participants may choose which ones to attend.
- Divide the day into three or four sections, and everyone attends the same workshops in succession.

Should the planning committee decide to allow attendees to choose which workshops to attend (e.g., attendee chooses 3 of 5 workshops), consider requiring this information in the registration form. This allows for more accurate attendance projections and advance planning.

V. OFFERINGS: The work of the Disciples Women is made possible by the generosity of donors who give to our ministry. Collecting and offering for the Disciples Women General Fun during interregional gatherings is essential and helps to ensure this ministry can continue the important work of missions and programming for women and can be remitted to the Office of Disciples Women.

VI. GLOBAL MISSION PARTNERS: Historically, interregional gatherings included a woman from a global ministry partner. If the event team chooses to include this, please communicate with the ODW as soon as possible so that ODW staff can collaborate with Disciples Overseas Ministries/Global Ministries for partner availability, travel feasibility, and resourcing. Planning teams should be prepared to help pay for travel, provide gratis registration and meals, and an honorarium to the representative present. Availability of funds from either the Office of Disciples Women or Disciples Overseas Ministries/Global Ministries varies from year to year and can affect their capacity to assist with this effort. Please notify the Office of Disciples Women as soon as possible should this be considered in the planning process.

VII. DW PROMO PRODUCTS & OTHER MATERIALS: The Office of Disciples Women will provide via email PDF documents of any flyers, brochures, and other material for the Disciples Women’s Endowment Fund, Woman-to-Woman Worldwide, Herstory Legacy Giving Fund, the Cathy Myers Wirt Fund Missions Fund, etc. Don't hesitate to contact the Office of Disciples of Disciples Women to request materials to print for your event.

Promotional products, such as pens, badge ribbons, etc., can be purchased directly from ODW and are subject to availability. The planning team may opt for matching polo shirts, and purchase DW-branded merchandise items for swag bags or giveaways.



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These items can be purchased in advance of your event from the Office of Disciples Women. For bulk merchandise pricing, contact the Office of Disciples Women.

VIII. EXHIBITORS: Including exhibitors is a great way to provide networking opportunities. General Ministries, Regional Leadership, Community Stakeholders (e.g., nonprofits focused on women, women-owned small businesses), and other organizations with direct connections to women are appropriate as the venue allows. Exhibitors present should engage attendees around programming and upcoming initiatives where women benefit, highlight existing partnerships between that ministry/organization and Disciples Women, and generate leads for their organizational contacts for potential partnership opportunities. Determine in the planning phase whether exhibitors will be included in the interregional event and make the appropriate requests early to ensure available representation.

IX. EVALUATION: The evaluation should be created by the planning committee. A written and/or digital evaluation at the event is requested to assist in future planning. Both written and digital evaluations should be completed at the end of the event to garner prompt feedback. Digital surveys can be created in free software such as Survey Monkey and emailed to attendees in the early morning of the last day. Printed surveys should be made available at the beginning of the closing session and collected onsite. If both printed and digital forms are used, the planning committee should ensure that they are identical in nature, asking the same questions. Upon collection, the planning committee is responsible for compiling the evaluations and sending a copy of the results to each participating region and Office of Disciples Women.

X. FINAL REPORTING: Upon the event's conclusion, the planning committee should have a wrap-up meeting within 15 business days to review the final status of financial attendance, review survey results, and tie up any loose ends. During this meeting, a final report should be completed that includes (See Appendix B for complete reporting format):

- Logistics (date, location)
- Leadership team/planning committee
- Final financial report
- #of attendees
- Workshop titles and facilitators
- Survey results
- Anything the ODW should know



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OTHER MATTERS TO CONSIDER

CONNECTING DURING NON-MEETING YEARS: As a leadership team, make every effort to remain connected via hybrid or fully digital events at least once yearly. This could be a webinar, writing workshop, roundtable, panel discussion, bible study, cooking class, or any other event that will bring women together and engage. The point of having events is to provide learning and skills training and attract new Disciples Women to grow your ministry.

CHILDREN & CHILDCARE: Providing childcare is a great way to get women involved who might not otherwise be able to attend. Securing age-appropriate youth can be an option to assist in this area. When planning for this, please ensure all necessary safety precautions are taken to ensure the well-being of all who attend. This includes venue safety, child-to-caretaker ratio, food allergies for children, and age-appropriate activities.

COVID-19 PRECAUTIONS: The health and safety of this ministry's constituents and its partners are preeminent. While on travel or hosting an event in the name of Disciples Women, please follow all local safety guidelines and laws related to COVID-19. The planning team may decide how to handle testing and other precautionary measures so long as it does not conflict with local, state, and federal regulations.

SHARE YOUR INTERREGIONAL STORY: Take a lot of pictures! The Office of Disciples Women loves to share what is happening around the denomination in DW Connect, the official ODW newsletter. Send photos and copy (5-7 sentences), date, location, and theme to dwmcommunications@dhm.disciples.org. Note *INTERREGIONAL EVENT COPY* in the subject line.

MEALS: When planning meals, be attentive to and make the necessary arrangements to accommodate food allergies and other dietary restrictions.

PLANNING CONSULT: In the event that the interregional planning team needs additional support during the planning process, they may request a planning consult with the Office of Disciples Women via email (discipleswomen@dhm.disciples.org). ODW staff will schedule a virtual meeting based on the staff's availability.



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APPENDIX A: WORKSHOP IDEAS

Decision Making Skills	Effective Leadership (evaluating, goal setting, developing short and long-range plans)
Conflict Management & Resolution	Creative Problem Solving
Project Management in a Nutshell	Wellness (mind, body, spirit)
Anti-racist/Pro-reconciliation Training	Healthy Boundaries for Ministry
Transforming Ideas into Action	Technology and Ministry
New Models for Women's Ministry	Best Practices for Fundraising
Telling the DW Story (creating excitement, promoting ministry)	Stewardship
Communication methods (email, newsletters, web sites, etc.)	Worship planning
Spiritual Practices for Daily Use	Art as Spiritual Practice
Workshop development	Best Practices for Event Planning
Service and social action	Bible study
Just Women Bible Study	Visioning
Intergenerational Discovery	Woman-to-Woman Experiences
Missions (global and domestic)	Women as Justice-Seekers
Advocacy	Community Engagement
Rest as Resistance	Transgenerational Ministry



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APPENDIX B: REPORTING FORMAT

- Interregional Name
- Report Date
- Event Date
- Location (venue, city, state)
- Host region(s)
- Planning team members
- Theme and scriptural focus
- Agenda
- Copy of flyer
- Brief description of the planning process
- Communication plan
 - Who was the target audience?
 - How was the event marketed?
- Attendance:
 - # registered
 - # attended
- Financial report
 - Record of income and expenses (pre- and post-event)
 - Details regarding how \$1,000 from ODW was spent (include receipts and invoices as appropriate)
- Giving Report
 - Disciples Women General Fund
 - Other Offerings
- Survey Results
- Any learning from this process will be carried forth in future planning.
 - Successes
 - Challenges
 - Impact
 - Opportunities

Email the final report with all supporting documents to:
discipleswomen@dhm.disciples.org