

*Invited*  *Inspired*  
**IGNITED**  
**READY TO SERVE IN UNITY**

---

May 11, 2017

Dear Disciples Women:

I write to you today with thanksgiving for all of God's great and bountiful blessings! I pray that your days are filled with thanksgiving as well.

This purpose of this letter is to share some updates and to extend a special invitation.

More than two years ago, the International Disciples Women's Ministries Executive committee (IDWM) prayerfully led us through the closure of the Quadrennial Assembly. Quadrennial, which began in 1959 and celebrated 15 assemblies around the country until 2014, was one of the hallmarks of Women's Ministries. Those of us who experienced Quadrennial, even if only once, we were left with an indescribable void. However, IDWM's skillful leadership, we are encouraged to envision new and creative ways to continue to minister to women of all ages.

After much deliberation, this is the purpose statement which guides our work at present:

**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)

As part of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Disciples Women welcomes all to the table as Christ has welcomed us. The ministries of Disciples Women are part of the movement for wholeness in a fragmented world by providing opportunities for spiritual growth, enrichment, education, and creative ministries to enable women to develop a sense of personal responsibility for the whole mission of the church. We seek to be a network of women committed to the justice-seeking, compassion-focused mission of Jesus Christ with no membership requirements or conditions.

Reference Site: <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/congregations/disciples-women/>

This statement remains true to our core values by including our original statement of purpose (*see underlined in the above statement*), while expanding our horizons for ministry by encompassing strategies for networking in ever evolving ways. Notice that the focus of intergenerational unity with respect to diversity brought forth the statement *no membership requirements or conditions*. Simply put, all women who are members of a Disciples of Christ congregation are in fact members of

Disciples Women's Ministries. This is one reason for the unanimous adoption of the name change from *Christian Women's Fellowship* to *Disciples Women's Ministries* by the 2006 Quadrennial. To that end, the IDWM has invited all regional expressions of DWM to shape their ministries so that the Good News of Christ will impact all women through:

- ❖ Worship for spiritual growth and renewed discipleship;
- ❖ Bible study for greater knowledge, understanding, and service;
- ❖ Issue study for action and advocacy;
- ❖ Mission study for knowledge, understanding and acceptance of others;
- ❖ Service/action for hands-on/personal involvement;
- ❖ Fellowship/networking for building the faith community with other women;
- ❖ Leadership training for service to God in Disciples Women, the church, and the community;
- ❖ Stewardship of time, talent, and resources for the mission of the church.

Reference Site:

<https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/congregations/disciples-women/international-disciples-womens-ministries/>

In keeping with this new focus and enlarged purpose, since the latter part of 2015, your NC DWM cabinet has been praying, listening, discussing, and meeting, (oh boy, have we been meeting!) to make the necessary changes in our thought processes, planning, and programming that will ignite a new passion for the work and calling of women in North Carolina. It has not been easy, but God has been with us!

During each retreat since fall of 2015, the NC DWM cabinet has held individual and group conversations to address the future of NC DWM. In the fall of 2016, the cabinet held three conference calls to address our future endeavors, and how we might be better stewards of the programming for women. Here are some of our findings:

- ❖ There must be a fresh wind of the Holy Spirit to inspire and engage women of all ages.
- ❖ In our quest for unity, we want to reach out to our covenant sisters in the International Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ, in more intentional ways.
- ❖ In order to minister not just to women but to whole families, we must offer some programs at our retreats for men and offer affordable childcare.
- ❖ We need to provide creative and practical opportunities for women to gather and share in their districts and perhaps among several districts.
- ❖ In order to engage the 18-35 age group and middle aged women, we need to create new ways to engage the talents of these women by inviting them to take leadership roles in regional gatherings. We also need to find ways to communicate and share our faith more effectively using current technologies which would appeal to a younger generation.
- ❖ We need to find ways to engage our younger and middle aged women in our local churches through mentoring to identify and use their gifts in all aspects of our life together. As they assume leadership roles, they will lead all of us in reimagining how women's ministry might evolve in order to be more effective and relevant.

From these findings at our retreats, phone conferences and other gatherings throughout the year, new vision began to take shape for the women of NC. The idea emerged to try a weekend conference instead of a retreat beginning Thursday, August 10th through Sunday, August 13, 2017, in the

Piedmont area at a local church. To stretch ourselves, women, men, and children would be invited. Registration would be flexible – different fees for 1 day, 2 days or the full weekend, and lodging would be economical. Conference planners would intentionally invite younger and middle aged women, as well as women who have not presented before, to take leadership roles in panels and workshops, as well as in worship, in order to tap into the many and diverse gifts and talents of NC women. We would promote a plethora of workshops that positively affect our lives by providing knowledgeable facilitators.

Why is the NC DWM cabinet hosting this conference? Because we know our responsibility to each of you is *to serve as a conduit to empower NC DWM to live out their call by providing venues that stimulate the spiritual senses*. Additionally, during our 2016 Christmount retreat, the women voted to support this endeavor.

Since traditionally we have met at our regional campsites, where many have discovered their calling to ministry and heard the voice of God in nature, we wish to confirm that we are not leaving those sites permanently. We are simply selecting a different setting and a new venue for our next conference. Yes, it is risky, but women have always been willing to take a chance for what they believe in. We believe that if we change our methods while remaining true the message, God will honor our efforts.

We pray now that you will believe with us and plan to attend our first NC DWM Women's Conference. The attached information shares registration, lodging, childcare information, some of our confirmed speakers, and so much more. More information about workshops and panels, service projects, and volunteer opportunities will follow. We hope that this ministry event will inspire your spirit to come share and see something new emerge for the Disciples Women of North Carolina. Come and see what God is up to!

With Love and Respect,  
*+Bishop Valerie Melvin*  
NC Disciples Women's Ministries