



REPORT TO FELLOWSHIP COUNCIL
Janet Minnix, President
January 2012

"You do what you can, and God will do what you can't."

With these words, Priscilla Shirer challenged the audience at the Christian Leadership Alliance Conference in April 2011. Speaking from Joshua 3:1-5, she summarized Joshua's obedience to God's command to lead two million people across a river in flood stage. "Joshua could lead the people but he couldn't part the waters of the river. *But God could.*"

During the past year in Women of Grace, we saw both victories and challenges as we endeavored to fulfill the mission God has given us. But the principle Priscilla Shirer drew from Joshua 3 rang true: "If you act in obedience to God, you have a Father who loves you and has gone behind the scenes to enable you to be who [and what] he called you to be."

As a national ministry cooperating with the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches, Women of Grace USA Inc. is grateful for the opportunity to report to the Fellowship Council on the work of WGUSA in the past year. We are even more grateful for what God does behind the scenes as we endeavor to be obedient to the calling and mission he has given to this ministry.

The WGUSA Board of Directors is comprised of ten women who live in the three geographic regions designated in the FGBC Bylaws and are members of churches affiliated with the FGBC. The mission of the organization is to *challenge women to be radically in love with Christ and actively engaged in God's mission to reach the world*. WGUSA seeks to help women understand how to truly become women of grace who reflect the character of God. That will happen as they are solidly grounded in God's Word, internalizing biblical values and understanding who they are in Christ. They will then be equipped to minister in a gracious, Christ-like servant spirit, as God calls all His people to do.

The Board of Directors desires to support the Commitment to Common Ministry in ways that are appropriate for our ministry and mission. The activities of WGUSA are primarily in the areas of Leadership Development and Spiritual and Ministry Development.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

The first class of the **Women's Leadership Studies, Women and Scripture**, was offered as a 2011 pre-conference option at the Grace Brethren Church of Wooster, Ohio – the joy of seeing a vision become a reality. Praise God. Close to 20 individuals, including one pastor, participated in the class.

We are grateful to be partnering with Grace Seminary to facilitate the Women's Leadership Studies program through which a woman can earn a certificate in Women's Leadership Studies or, with additional pre- and post-course work and a Bachelor's Degree, class credits can be applied toward a Master of Arts in Local Church Ministry with a concentration in Women's Leadership Studies. Classes are taught by Dr. Christy Hill and offered on weekends in areas with a heavy Grace Brethren presence. The

next class, *Soul Care in Leadership*, will be February 3-4, 2012, at Community Grace Brethren Church of Long Beach.

We anticipate offering another Women's Leadership Studies class as a pre-conference option this year (2012), and a Women's Summit in Maryland in early November.

The **SMM/Girls of Faith** program continues to be a key part of our strategy for Leadership Development. The importance of the role of women in influencing the values of the next generation must not be underestimated. We believe that the greatest contribution SMM can make to the Commitment to Common Ministry is to equip women to raise and teach girls to know and love God and to understand how to serve Him by serving others.

The summer and fall of 2011 saw increased requests for information about SMM. While some churches are switching to midweek programs that combine girls and boys, a number of those who made that switch several years ago are now returning to gender-specific ministries. The SMM Cabinet continues to work with Grace Brethren Boys to promote gender-specific discipleship.

New SMM curriculum for grades 4, 5 and 6 is available on CD; new curriculum for grades 1, 2 and 3 will be available this summer. While the old curriculum can still be ordered this year from CE National, it will be phased out in the near future.

INTEGRATED MINISTRIES/CHURCH PLANTING

Our tagline, *Local Ministry with Global Impact*, describes the importance Women of Grace places on moving outside the walls of the church to serve in neighborhoods, cities, and around the world. Women are challenged to look for opportunities to minister to people in their own communities and cities who have physical, social and material needs.

Reaching beyond the city limits, many women support church plants and mission points with prayer, special offerings, and on-location work and ministry projects. Others contribute to development projects such as Bessie Betoney's rug-weaving classes that will provide Navajo women with a way to earn a living. During the 2010-2011 year, offerings were given to special projects for missionaries serving with Encompass World Partners and Go2 Ministries, and for CE National ministries, SMM, and the renovation of the Missionary Residence kitchen in memory of Doris Julien.

Short-term ministry opportunities are a part of the global focus of Women of Grace. Mary James, a Grace College student, received a \$1,000.00 scholarship toward a three-month summer internship with Encompass missionaries at the Chateau de St. Albain in France. And a women's team that will minister with Cindy Swain in Czech Republic is planned for June 17-30, 2012.

Three of our board members, Chery Boehm, Teressa Pierce and Cathy Webb, are church planters' wives who keep us alert to the needs and concerns of the women who are partnering with their husbands in planting new churches.

SPIRITUAL & MINISTRY DEVELOPMENT

Supporting and encouraging women in their spiritual growth are foundational to equipping women for service and mission. Our publications are tools of encouragement. The monthly e-newsletter, **Grace Touch**, which has replaced the semi-annual print newsletter Women's Infoline, always includes a brief devotional thought or spiritual application. And the **Women's Spectrum** annual magazine, which provides inspirational stories and devotional themes, will this year include a Bible study on the theme passage. A future goal is to post downloadable Bible studies on our web site that will also teach women to do inductive Bible study.

God is using the web site (www.wgusa.org) to open doors for Women of Grace to minister elsewhere in the world. Last fall we were contacted by a woman from Cameroon who is a new believer and asked for help to grow in her faith. We have responded with recommendations of several web sites that she can use for Bible study and scripture memorization. Praise God for this long-distance ministry opportunity.

Spiritual support and encouragement also take place in community. To that end, plans are underway for a second **Women's Transformational Summit** in Anchorage, Alaska October 5-7, 2012, where the focus will be our identity in Christ.

Board member Teresa Pierce, who is experienced in developing women's mentoring programs, is available to lead **Mentoring Conferences** in local churches that will cover her expenses. She is leading two conferences in Virginia churches this spring.

Prayer is the most powerful weapon and tool we have. We are deeply grateful for nearly 60 women from around the world (the **Prayer Force**) who receive our monthly prayer updates and are supporting the ministries of Women of Grace. We thank God for them and for what he is doing in answer to their prayers. Moving beyond praying for Women of Grace, we are asking God for wisdom about developing a Prayer Watch where women will commit to praying about social issues such as victims of abuse, sex trafficking, and drug abuse, as well as responding to disasters with prayer.

GIVE THANKS TO GOD

As you can see from this report, Women of Grace USA has much for which to praise God. In addition, we are grateful to him for the individuals who give offerings and contribute financially to the work of Women of Grace. Many people are now using the convenience of online giving to donate.

We are deeply grateful to the Grace Brethren Investment Foundation for their contributions that provide most of the funding to compensate our Communications Coordinator. All other officers and board members volunteer their time and frequently give sacrificially from their personal finances to support and maintain this ministry. We thank God for them.

And finally, we give thanks to God for Bob Fetterhoff, Moderator, Tom Avey, Fellowship Coordinator, and all the members of Fellowship Council, for your commitment to God's Word and His mission, your vision for what God can do through the FGBC, and for your wise and prayerful direction. We are grateful for your prayer support and encouragement of Women of Grace as we seek God's will and provision. It is our joy and privilege to partner with you and your ministries in reaching, equipping and mobilizing women for the glory of God.