

REPORT TO FELLOWSHIP COUNCIL
Janet Minnix, President
January 15, 2009



Thank you for the opportunity to report on the work of Women of Grace USA.

To help picture the challenges we are facing, look with me at a few snapshots of some women in an average church:

- A 20-something woman, who accepted Christ as a child and grew up in a Christian home and in youth activities, is struggling with a relationship with a guy who claims to be a Christian but has no interest in church or anything spiritual. However, she is afraid to break up because she fears he's her only chance for marriage and she believes she has to be married to be happy.
- A young woman wants to be a godly wife and mother but came from a dysfunctional, abusive home and had no model to show her what godliness looks like. She was never taught anything about homemaking or managing her life.
- A young woman who grew up in the church, "did all the right things", and is even leading a women's Bible study, can't see that her critical attitude and sharp tongue are destroying her marriage.
- Another young lady is fighting a same-sex attraction and feels she has nowhere to turn, no one to talk to who won't condemn her.
- A middle-aged woman is carrying memories of something that offended her several years ago. She faithfully attends church services and women's meetings, but because she is unwilling to forgive, she has become angry, bitter, and critical in spirit.

What are we doing to minister to these and other women with deep needs? How are we as a Fellowship equipping our women to come alongside them and walk with them? How can we help Grace Brethren women become ***fully formed followers of Christ?***

What comes to mind when you think of Women of Grace? For many pastors, the answer is foreign missions and giving. And for many years that was fairly accurate. However, in the 1990's the leaders of Women of Grace USA came to realize that an exclusive focus on learning about and giving to missions did not also minister to the deep spiritual or relational needs of women. As an organization, we were not teaching women to depend on God's word and the Holy Spirit to help them discern and reject the attitudes and humanistic values of the world. We were not equipping them to be Titus 2 women or to develop redemptive relationships with unbelievers. **Our leaders** became convinced that our first priority should be to help women be solidly grounded on God's Word so they will internalize biblical values, understand who they are in Christ, see God's plan for women, and invest in the lives of other women and girls. If these things are taking place, Great Commission living will happen.

The process of changing from being primarily a women's missions organization to a broader ministry for women takes time and has not been without challenges. One challenge has been to help women in traditional missions groups to see the needs of women like those described above and minister to them with love and compassion, and with relevant methods. Another challenge is to help pastors evaluate our ministry **in light of our new direction and focus** rather than on the basis of an old paradigm. We know this is sometimes difficult because approximately 60 churches have traditional Women of Grace missions

groups. These are women who have faithfully supported and prayed for the ministries of Women of Grace for many years, and we honor them for the vital contribution they have made in prayer and financial gifts to home and foreign missions. We continue to provide a vehicle through which they can give to projects that meet needs not covered by a missionary's field budget or supporting churches. (In fiscal year 2007-2008 these women gave more than \$25,000.00 to ministries such as Project Hope and Charité, Grace Schools, district camps. SMM and more.) However, our goal is to expand our ministry in ways that are relevant to the needs of young women today, the women who are the young moms in your churches and will be raising the next generation of your church's leaders. During the coming year we will be working on a strategic plan and goals that will strengthen the effectiveness of WGUSA.

RESOURCES

The annual magazine for all Grace Brethren women, ***Women's Spectrum***, offers practical biblical encouragement and inspiration, and promotes community, cross-generational relationships, global vision and the application of biblical theology to daily life. Women who are new to Grace Brethren churches benefit from insights into the ministries of the FGBC. **Transformed by Grace** is the 2008-2009 theme; **Expectant Encounter** (2009-2010) will focus on prayer. The magazine can be ordered on our website.

The WGUSA website, www.wgusa.org, attracts users from around the world, including Grace Brethren mission fields. ***Women's InfoLine***, our semi-annual newsletter, is mailed to over 1,000 Grace Brethren women and is posted on our website. And our newest forum is the Women of Grace group on **Facebook**.

MENTORING AND LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

SMM. Highlights of the past year:

- Praise God for a growing number of inquiries about SMM and Girls of Faith.
- New curriculum for fourth and tenth grades should be ready soon.
- Nicole Miller, member of the SMM cabinet, was approved by the WGUSA Board to start fundraising to become a self-supported Girls' Ministries Coordinator for SMM and Girls of Faith.
- SMM and Grace Brethren Boys have collaborated on a video to help educate our Fellowship about the value of single-gender ministries, starting with young children.

Women's Leadership Summit. The first Leadership Summit for women on the west coast takes place January 30-February 1, 2009 in Seal Beach. Challenge speaker Teressa Pierce will focus on the theme *Paths to Plentiful Grace*, and coordinator Chery Boehm will lead discussions on how to get from being a follower to being a leader, and how to help followers become leaders.

MISSION HIGHLIGHTS

- More that \$2,000.00 was given during IGo Celebration 08 to help provide school supplies and tuition for children attending a Grace Brethren school in Haiti.
- WGUSA is partnering with Eglise Evangelique De La Paix in Florida to take a GO2Haiti Team to Haiti in July 2009.
- The *Honor Her Scholarship* helps Grace College women who are considering a missions/ministry career to participate on short-term missions teams. Two women received scholarships in 2008; one served with a GOGrace Team in Thailand, and one did a 3-month summer internship in Ireland with GBIM.

ITEMS FOR PRAISE

- Young women who are serving on the Editorial Team and are willing to serve on the Board of Directors
- New members on the Board of Directors
- The clarification of our status as a non-profit corporation, and adjusting our procedures to be in compliance with state law.
- Men who are working with us in the areas of financial and strategic planning

PURPOSE

Our purpose is to challenge Grace Brethren women to be radically in love with Christ and actively engaged in God's mission to reconcile a lost world to Himself. We are grateful for the active women's ministries and strong missions and outreach programs that exist in many of our churches. We do not wish to compete in any way with those ministries and programs. Our desire is to offer resources that may supplement existing programs, and to help smaller churches who need encouragement and support in their women's programs. We also want to encourage networking among women for the sharing of ideas, and to invest in encouraging and developing women in their areas of giftedness.

CHALLENGES

Finances

Unfortunately, the transition has hurt us financially. It's one thing to put out a call to invest in missions projects; it's very different to communicate the less tangible value of investing in women's spiritual growth and maturity. This has created a "giving vacuum." We need to find ways to bring in funding for such valuable motivational and training tools as the Women's Spectrum magazine and the Leadership Summit, as well as new venues for training women to disciple other women.

We are deeply indebted to the Grace Brethren Investment Foundation for their contributions which have provided the funding to compensate our Communications Coordinator, the only person affiliated with WGUSA who receives any compensation. All officers/board members volunteer their time and frequently give sacrificially from their personal finances to support and maintain this ministry. However, these and the few offerings received for operations are not enough to maintain our current ministries. We face the possibility of severe cutbacks that would significantly cripple our effectiveness and ability to function. Developing new tools and training opportunities would be out of the question.

We praise God that Ted Rondeau, Chief Development Officer for ICDI, has graciously agreed to donate his time to work with us in the area of financial planning and development.

Strategic Plan

Essential to wise financial planning is a strategic plan for the organization. On January 30 WGUSA board members who are arriving for the Women's Leadership Summit will meet in Seal Beach with Ed Trenner to begin work on a strategic plan for Women of Grace. We thank God for Ed's assistance in this important process.

Prayer Support

We would be deeply grateful for your prayer support as we seek God's will and provision for Women of Grace in the coming months and years. Our passion is to effectively reach and equip women to be fully formed followers of Christ, and to mobilize them to reach their world for God's glory, but this is dependent on the prayers and support of God's people. Thank you for sharing this passion with us.