



REPORT TO FELLOWSHIP COUNCIL

Janet Minnix, President

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As a national ministry cooperating with the Fellowship of Grace Brethren Churches, Women of Grace USA Inc. appreciates the opportunity to report to the Fellowship Council on the work of WGUSA in the past year, especially as it relates to the goals of the FGBC and the Commitment to Common Ministry.

The WGUSA Board of Directors is comprised of nine 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 release women to follow and serve Christ by seeing the needs, sharing a vision, and strengthening for ministry. Our desire is to facilitate local ministry with results that are global in impact.

The Board of Directors reviewed and affirmed the Commitment to Common Ministry, and desires to support it in ways that are relevant to and appropriate for our ministry and mission. The activities of WGUSA come primarily in the area of Leadership Development, but we also support church multiplication and encourage women to support and be involved in integrated ministries.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT & MENTORING

Two **Women's Leadership Summits** took place in 2009, in late January in Seal Beach, California, and in October in Columbus, Ohio, with 30-35 women attending each one. Discussion groups focused on how to help followers become leaders. Follow-up evaluations were positive, with comments such as "Thanks for the great weekend to be encouraged and meet 'peers' of like hearts united in His Spirit." One woman spoke about the opportunities she had for meaningful conversations: "I asked LOTS of questions and sought to hear their advice and experiences." Another wrote, "I am busy keeping this ministry going – [I] never considered training my replacement." A Leadership Summit is planned for Fall 2010 in northern Ohio.

As a result of WGUSA Board member Sharon MacMillan's visits with women in the Alaska churches in October, the board is praying about and investigating the possibility of holding a spiritual transformation summit in Alaska in September 2010. In addition, we are exploring ideas for continuing leadership training for women who are Summit alumni.

Leadership summits benefit more than women's ministries – they also impact girls' and youth ministries, and the church as a whole. One attendee commented that the most helpful thing was the "small group discussions relevant to my ministry with girls." A pastor's wife credits the Women's Leadership Summits with providing inspiration and suggestions that have helped bring new life to her church's women's ministries and to the church itself. She comments, "I've never been disappointed in a Women's Leadership Summit. They have been a blessing...I have totally benefited from what I learned."

SMM: Believing that it's easier to build a girl than to repair a woman, we are continuing to invest in strengthening SMM, our discipleship ministry for girls in grades K-12. In addition to developing new curriculum, we are offering leader training to help women effectively mentor/disciple girls in spiritual disciplines as well as in practical life skills. We continue to emphasize the importance of both an attitude of worship and an attitude of service in our girls.

We recognize the importance of women's role in influencing the values of the next generation, and believe that the greatest contribution we can make to the Commitment to Common Ministry is to raise our girls to know and love God and to understand how to serve Him by serving others. We believe that our investment in young women over the next decade will strengthen existing churches and pave the way for effective church planting in the future. Our goal is to help our girls know how to influence well and exercise wise leadership. By involving them in opportunities to serve others, we hope to help them develop compassion for others and a willingness to meet their needs.

INTEGRATED MINISTRIES

On mission to share God's love next door and around the world, the slogan of Women of Grace, expresses our commitment to sharing the message of the Gospel while also ministering to the various needs of people.

- In 2008-2009 Grace Brethren women gave nearly \$28,000.00 to ministry and needs that included orphan care in CAR; ministries to women and families in Cambodia; mission projects in Mexico City, Paris and Village Grace; the Go2/Twin Cities Church Plant; SMM and more.
- The *Honor Her Scholarship* helps Grace College women explore future ministry possibilities through participation in short-term missions. Two women received scholarships in 2009; one spent the summer ministering in Bangui, Central African Republic, and one served in the Philippines over the summer.
- Lord willing, a women's ministry team will go to Brazil in June to work alongside missionary Ellen Patton at a weekend women's retreat, spend a prayer day in the city, and interact with women in Grace Brethren churches in the city and the countryside.

While our involvement in ministries is primarily through giving and praying, many women participate in hands-on ministry in their communities and through the local church in ways that are not reported to us. We praise God for their work of sharing God's love in tangible ways. The 2010 edition of *Women's Spectrum* will focus on mercy as something done in everyday life, making the most every opportunity, and will stimulate women to be more proactive in ministering to peoples' physical and material needs as avenues to present Christ.

A letter from prison: "I recently was reading your magazine and was deeply touched by some of the articles in it. I am currently incarcerated and was given a *Women's Spectrum*...by one of the other ladies in the cell. I am, as many others, on the path put before me by God." The letter went on to ask about the availability of free and/or somewhat affordable reading materials and Bible studies that she could use during her time in prison. Materials were donated and sent. We praise God that He is using *Women's Spectrum* in unexpected ways and places.

The 2009 magazine, titled **Expectant Encounter**, has focused on our relationship with God through prayer; the 2010 edition, **"... to love mercy"**, will deal with a heart and attitude of mercy, addressing the question "What is mercy?" The magazine may be ordered on our website.

Women's InfoLine, our quarterly newsletter, is mailed to over 1,000 Grace Brethren women (including every pastor's wife) and is posted on our website. Our online presence includes the website, www.wgusa.org, the Women of Grace group on **Facebook**, and our blog at <http://womenofgraceusa.wordpress.com/>.

PRAISE TO GOD

We have much for which to thank God. We praise Him for the women who are being strengthened and equipped through the influence of this ministry. We praise Him for women in local churches who are teaching God's Word, investing in the lives of girls and women, encouraging and supporting participation in outreach and mission efforts, and doing God's work on their knees in prayer.

We are deeply grateful 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. Thank God for them.

We are also thankful to God for others who give offerings and contribute to the work of Women of Grace. While most donations come as offerings from women's groups in local churches, individuals can and do use the convenience of donating online.

We thank God for the encouragement and assistance that we have received in the past year from Ed Trenner and Ted Rondeau in the areas of strategic planning, financial planning and development. Their wisdom and expertise has been, and continues to be, invaluable.

We praise God for a band of people (the "Prayer Force") who faithfully pray for the needs and ministries of Women of Grace. Requests are emailed to them monthly, and we depend on their prayers.

We give thanks to God for you, 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.