

Stepping Through

Philippians 3:12-14 (NRSV)



2024 WOMEN'S MINISTRY PLANNER



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Vision & Mission

Vision

When you improve the lives of women, you change the world.

Mission

We empower *women* and fund the work of the *gospel* locally and around the world.

Stepping Through

“Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal, but I press on to lay hold of that for which Christ has laid hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider that I have laid hold of it, but one thing I have laid hold of: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal, toward the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.”

PHILIPPIANS 3:12-14 (NRSV)

HOW TO CONNECT:

PHONE: 765-648-2102

E-MAIL: HELLO@WCHOG.ORG • WWW.CHRISTIANWOMENCONNECTION.ORG

BUSINESS HOURS:

MONDAY-FRIDAY: 9:00 A.M.—5:00 P.M.

SATURDAY-SUNDAY: CLOSED

FIND US ON THESE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS



Facebook



Instagram



YouTube



TRAFFICKLIGHT

Christian Women Connection

It is with great excitement that we announce the launch of ChoG Trafficklight as a part of the ministry of Christian Women Connection!

A \$32 billion enterprise and an estimated 27.6 million victims worldwide at any given time, human trafficking is the humanitarian crisis of our time and in many cultures, women and children are particularly vulnerable. Christian Women Connection has long partnered with anti-trafficking efforts and supported agencies strategically serving at risk populations. In 2014, Dr. Kimberly Majeski helped lead the vanguard for the Church of God Trafficklight initiative as the then leader of the nonprofit, Stripped Love, serving survivors of domestic sex trafficking since 2010.

In 2024, with renewed hope we bring the work of freedom to the women and ask you to stand with us and our partner agencies in this good work as we build a better world!

Grace Horizon, Anderson Indiana
Pink Door, Berlin
Hope Ranch, Kansas
The Shelter, Cuttack, India



IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

Sunday, Jan 28, 2024

FREEDOM SUNDAY

Freedom Sunday is an opportunity for your entire church family to deepen their understanding of God's heart for justice, discover the realities of modern slavery and join the fight to end it.

Saturday, Feb 24, 2024

"HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT: Human Trafficking Forum"

11 AM to 3 PM

New Creation Church of God
3472 Lennon Rd., Flint, MI 48507.

Board Chair's Challenge

STEPPING THROUGH

"NOT THAT I HAVE ALREADY OBTAINED THIS OR HAVE ALREADY REACHED THE GOAL, BUT I PRESS ON TO LAY HOLD OF THAT FOR WHICH CHRIST HAS LAID HOLD OF ME. BROTHERS AND SISTERS, I DO NOT CONSIDER THAT I HAVE LAID HOLD OF IT, BUT ONE THING I HAVE LAID HOLD OF: FORGETTING WHAT LIES BEHIND AND STRAINING FORWARD TO WHAT LIES AHEAD, I PRESS ON TOWARD THE GOAL, TOWARD THE PRIZE OF THE HEAVENLY CALL OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS."

— PHILIPPIANS 3:12-14 (NRSV)

Welcome to a new year with new opportunities, potentially new relationships, exciting new encounters, and a new start to walking in your Kingdom purpose. What a blessing and joy that we have the freedom to worship and serve the One and only God who makes all things new!

As we are "Stepping Through" into 2024, I want to encourage you that the best is yet to come! We serve the living God who knows our yesterday, today, and tomorrow. When we Step Through into our Kingdom purpose, rest assured that we are not alone. God is with us as we encounter the realities of life, from times of smooth sailing to times of stormy seas. No matter what circumstances we face, we can move forward with blessed assurance, letting go of all that hinders us and pressing on toward the call of God! When we take that first step, it is always exciting to see what God has in store for each of us.

As we focus on this year's scripture, know and trust that God is walking with you as you move forward and press on in your Kingdom purpose. God has ordained us for such a time as this. We have a uniquely designed purpose, and God will provide all we need to fulfill that purpose. Step Through in the confidence of knowing that you are a daughter of the King! Nothing is impossible! Press on!



It's all about the Kingdom!

Blessings and love,

Angie Rigdon

Board Chair

Executive Director's Challenge

DEAR MINISTRY LEADER,

Greetings to you in this bright, fresh New Year! As we turn the page, crease the binding, sharpen our pencils, or power up our laptops and smartphones, we do so with expectant hearts for what dawns before us like crisp fallen snow.

Philippians 3:12-14 is our guiding verse this year and reads:

"Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus."

This passage frames our theme STEPPING THROUGH perfectly, as the apostle Paul encourages us to let go of what might be weighing us down and step into the promise of what lies ahead. I don't know about you, but I have a lot of old baggage that I'm hoping to leave behind so that I can pick up the heavenly call of Christ with empty hands and an eager heart. Maybe you're struggling to let go of limiting beliefs or of fears that have held you back in the past; maybe you need to forget and forgive old grievances that don't lend themselves to your good health and move forward into healthy relationships, whatever it is that held us back, kept us down, prevented us from living into all that God has for us in Christ Jesus...may we forget it all, leave it behind just like last year's garbage and lean forward, press into the goal, the prize of what is in store!

We have so many exciting opportunities to support your ministry and your heart for growth this year as you are STEPPING THROUGH to your God-sized dreams! In our Women's Ministry Packet, you'll find:

- Exciting News re: CWC Launch of Church of God Trafficklight and how you can be involved in Anti Human Trafficking work locally, nationally, and internationally.
- 4-part Women's Bible Study provided by Women Clergy from our Arise Academy Sisters
- Missions Study, Spiritual Birthday, and Commissioning Service, provided by members of the CWC Council
- Travel Information for all those who want to accompany us to the Ugandan Women's Convention November 2024
- Details on our new and improved user-friendly roster and database process

We're excited to kick off another year of building a better world together! May God bless and keep you as you Step Through the threshold of what awaits!

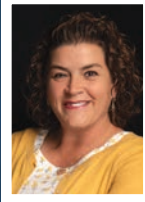


Let's Go!

Kimberly Majeski

Executive Director

Meet Your *National Board of Directors*



Angie Rigdon, Board Chair

Angie is currently a middle school teacher in South Florida, teaching Environmental Wellness & Gardening. She has served on the local, state, and national levels with CWC. She is PASSIONATE about children, gardening, and developing and strengthening relationships with all women.



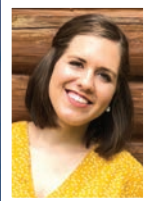
Dr. Kimberly Majeski, Executive Director

Kimberly is a scholar, preacher, and author who challenges her audiences to find the life-transforming connection between their personal story and the inspiring, ancient story of the Scriptures. She lives at the heart of the justice movement as an activist and the founder of Stripped Love, a non-profit serving victims of sex trafficking. Kimberly has been a leader and advocate in the anti-trafficking work in the Church of God, in the state of Indiana, and across the U.S.



Sharon Delfeld, Vice Board Chair

Sharon retired in 2015 from working as an office manager for forty plus years. Sharon has served in many roles in the local church and is serving as New Mexico-West Texas State President. Sharon and husband, Ken, attend New Beginnings Church in Albuquerque. They have a daughter, a son, and four wonderful grandchildren.



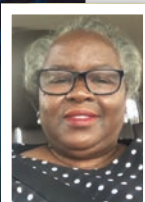
Ryann Mamo, National Secretary

Ryann is a graduate of both the School of Science and Engineering and MBA programs at Anderson University. Her family history is deeply rooted in the Church of God, and she enjoys being involved in her community. She shares a message of hope, growth, and the Lord's abundant faithfulness in all circumstances.



Herline Green, National Parliamentarian

Herline Green, a Jamaican by birth, has been a Church of God member all her life, both in Jamaica and Florida, where she now lives. She is presently part of a family business in the healthcare industry. Herline is the proud mother of two adult children and has two beautiful granddaughters. She lives by Proverbs 16:3 "Commit to the Lord whatever you do, and he will establish your plans." Her favorite scripture is Psalm 139.



Rev. Barbara Williams, National Director of Finance

Barbara has retired after serving in education field for 44 years. She is currently working for Volunteers of America on a part-time basis. She has served CWC locally, state, and nationally. Barbara and Alvin have five children and nine grandchildren.



Rev. Sandra McNeese, National Association WCG President

Sandra McNeese, MBA, has been active in the Church of God's ministry and mission as an ordained minister and a licensed chaplain of pastoral care. As a Business Specialist for the Texas Ministries of the Church of God, she works tirelessly with Pastors and Leaders throughout Texas and other states. She is President of the National Association Women of the Church of God.



Naomi Bryant, *Member-at-Large*

Naomi has been involved in Christian Women Connection nationally since 2002. An accountant by profession, she believes her career is merely the stepping stone for ministry potential. She enjoys speaking and engaging with women and children. She and her husband, Danny, have three children and two grandchildren.



Precious Earley, *Member-at-Large*

Precious lives in Atlanta with her husband, Dr. Kevin W. Earley, and three kids. Her personal ministry is centered around creating craveable moments and physical spaces that attract people to God.



Dr. Carol Merritt, *Member-at-Large*

Dr. Carol Flewellen Merritt has been in private optometry practice in North St. Louis County for over 28 years and is active in the community. She also is the Co-Pastor and Minister of Music and Worship of the New Cote Brillante Church of God in St. Louis, alongside her husband of 36 years, Elder Miki Merritt. They have four adult sons and three small granddaughters.



Sarai Garcia, *Concilio Representative*

Sarai is 26 years old, and attends church at Iglesia de la Comunidad in Santa Ana, California. She was raised in the church and is excited about the generation of women that God is raising to do his work!



Rhonda Phillips, *Global Strategy Personnel Representative*

Rhonda Philips, with her husband, Kelley, have been missionaries with the Church of God for thirty years. They have served in three countries: in Russia as church planters, in Hungary as Regional Coordinators for Europe and the Middle East and in Berlin, Germany with Pink Door. She loves gardening, enjoys spending time in nature, reading biographies, and witnessing young women discover their true identities in Christ. She adores her four children and five grandchildren.



Rev. Ali Robinson, *Chief of Staff & Director of Programming*

Ali is a graduate from Anderson University (BA' 07) with a degree in Christian Ministries. Ali is originally from Englewood, OH. She is an ordained minister of the Church of God and served many years at Madison Park Church of God as the Children's Pastor. Ali is married to Jeff Robinson (AU Graduate, BA 2005) who serves as a teacher at Frankton High School. They have two children, Callie, 11 and Cohen 6. Currently, she serves as the Chief of Staff & Director of Programming for Christian Women Connection.

National Office Staff

The national office for Christian Women Connection is located in Anderson, Indiana. The role of the national office is to coordinate the ministries of Christian Women Connection and develop resources for the national, state, and local leaders of the ministry.



CHRISTIAN WOMEN CONNECTION



Kimberly Majeski
Executive Director



Ali Robinson
Chief of Staff and Director
of Programming



Kelsi Rahman
Community Engagement
Coordinator



Darlene McGough
Ministry Assistant



Leah Williams
Director of Communications
and Media



Jan Edwards
Linen Chest Volunteer

Enroll today for Spring 2024

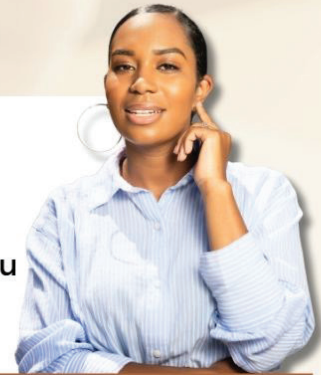
Arise Academy

Begins
Jan 31st
2024

HEALTHY & HEALED

With Jillian Quainoo, RDN

Join Jill, a registered dietician and
wholistic health coach as she teaches you
Biblical Principles for healthy living.



WOMEN AT THE END A Lenten Journey

With Rev. Dr. Kimberly Majeski

This course will walk through the weeks of
Lent experiencing Jesus' last days through
the eyes of the women who were with
him until the end.

Begins
Feb 14th
2024

Register for our FREE one day course!

March 27th, 2024

ANTI TRAFFICKING WORK IN YOUR COMMUNITY

With Rev. Dr. Kimberly Majeski, Rev. Kelsi Rahman & Missionary Rhonda Phillips

This course will cover awareness, prevention, and intervention
strategies. Participants learn to identify signs of trafficking, understand
its impact, and explore ways to support survivors in their communities.

Supporting Women Who Hold Up the World.

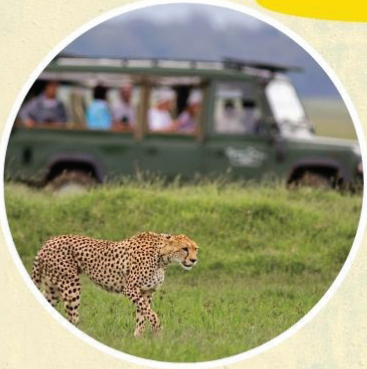
Need a safe place to connect with other called women, to grow in Jesus
and nurture your own gifts? Then Welcome to Arise Academy an online
educational ministry community for women, by women.

Enroll in our Spring courses at christianwomenconnection.org



EXPLORE Uganda


November 2024



Embark on an incredible adventure to Uganda! Stop over in Paris on the way to safari rides, stunning landscapes, and unforgettable experiences.



Make a meaningful impact as we empower local communities! Join us as we dedicate our **sewing centers** In Uganda.



Save the dates! Nov 20-23, 2024
Join us at the Ugandan Women's Convention!



ChristianWomenConnection.org



CHRISTIAN
WOMEN
CONNECTION

JOIN US!

2024



CHURCH OF GOD
REGIONALS


MISFITS

May 15-18, 2024
Center of Hope LA
Inglewood, CA

This Regionals event will coincide with the Misfits Conference, which brings together market disruptors, change agents, and thinkers imagining the next iteration of ministry.

 CROSSINGS
COMMUNITY CHURCH

June 18-20, 2024
Crossings Community Church
Oklahoma City, OK

In collaboration with Crossings Community Church, this Regionals event will empower leaders with innovative resources that will help equip the church for the future.



October 3-5, 2024
Columbus, Ohio

This Regionals event will be in conjunction with the acclaimed Berean Leadership Conference, where church leaders of any capacity are seen, strengthened, and celebrated!

Revelation 3:8 ESV

*...Behold, I have set before you an open door,
which no one is able to shut...*

Mark your calendars and join us this year at
these three collaborative events with
Church of God Ministries.

ChristianWomenConnection.org

2024 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JANUARY

- 11** National Human Trafficking Awareness Day
- 15** Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- 28** Freedom Sunday

FEBRUARY

- ▶ Black History Month
- ▶ Women's Ministry Planners (APG) available online
- 13** International Shine a Light on Slavery Day

MARCH *Women's History Month & ARISE – Women in Ministry Awareness*

- ▶ Women's History Month
- ▶ Arise: Women in Ministry Awareness Month
- ▶ Preach Like a Girl Sunday
- 8** International Women's Day
- 7 – 9** Wesleyan Holiness Women in Clergy
- 24** Palm Sunday
- 29** Good Friday
- 31** Easter Sunday

APRIL

- 30** Last Day to Remit CBO 2023 – Love Gives

MAY

- ▶ Asian Pacific Heritage Month
- 1** Partnership Rosters Due
- 2** National Day of Prayer
- 12** Mother's Day
- 15 – 18** CHOG Regional Misfits
- 19** Pentecost Sunday

JUNE

- 16** Father's Day
- 18 – 20** CHOG Regional Crossing Community Church
- 27 – 30** International Youth Convention (IYC)

JULY

- 28** Christmas in July CBO Reveal

AUGUST

- July 29 – Aug. 4** National Association of the Church of God Camp Meeting

SEPTEMBER

- ▶ Hispanic Heritage Month
- ▶ CBO Online Resources Available TBD
- ▶ CBO Ordering Available TBD

OCTOBER

- 3 - 5** CHOG Regionals
- 5** CWC Annual Council Meeting – Columbus, OH
- 24 – 26** NAWCG Women's Convention
 - ▶ Start Planning for CBO in your churches

NOVEMBER

- 20-23** Excursion Trip, Uganda TBD
- 28** Thanksgiving

DECEMBER

- ▶ 1st Advent Starts
- 1 – 25** Christ Birthday Observance (Advent)
- 24** Christ Birthday Observance Offering

SUGGESTED STRUCTURE -

Leadership Team Descriptions for Legacy Groups

The Christian Women Connection Legacy Group structure centers on a leadership team and is designed to support our mission and vision. The leadership team model allows for flexibility to meet the needs of your unique group. Remember: ***It is not about filling positions but more about meeting the needs of your local or state group.*** If a position is not needed in your group, feel free to eliminate that position or change to a more necessary position. Focus on meeting the needs of the church, your state ministry, and serving the women in your local congregation or groups. Use these as a model when creating new connectors in your ministry.

Coordinator *(Formerly the President position also directs the organizational mission)*

Coordinator for the group and is a contact for local, state, and national communications.

Assistant Coordinator *(Formerly the Vice President position)*

Assists the Coordinator as necessary.

Assumes the Coordinator's duties should she be unable to fulfill them.

Recording Secretary *(This position remains the same as the previous secretary, also serves as historian)*

Takes minutes at all meetings and provides the official written record of all proceedings.

Finance Coordinator *(Formerly the Treasurer and/or Finance Secretary)*

Two (2) positions identified should groups desire both. Oversees the finances and budget of the local/state CWC ministry

Missions Coordinator *(Event planning/outreach)*

Coordinates missions projects for the state ministry.

Identifies missions projects and promotes them to the local groups.

Connection Coordinator *(Like former Friendship/Enlistment Director)*

Helps build relationships between CWC and other women's groups

Identifies mentoring projects and connects them with local churches .

Empowerment Coordinator *(Formerly Spiritual Life position/Director of Programming/Literature Promotion)*

Coordinates retreats for spiritual development and Leadership Training. Suggests resources/tools for spiritual formation

Next Generation Connector

Coordinates the mission of involving and connecting women between the ages of 18-40. She encourages, includes, and equips younger women within the group's ministry for her to "take her place" within the ministry.

Women Clergy Connector

Supports and equips women for ministry.

Pastor Connector

Representative of the State Ministry Director/Pastor and ensures CWC is following the mission of the local/state ministry.

Communications and Social Media Connector

Coordinates and manages all communications within and outside of the CWC ministry, whether through newsletters, emails, texts, phone, social media, etc.

Christian Women Connection

PARTNERSHIP QUESTION/ANSWERS

QUESTION - How much are partnerships and what is new this year?

Answer - There are 2 forms of traditional partnerships which we are now calling **LEGACY PARTNERSHIPS**:

Basic - \$20 (This has increased so that \$15 will be sent to national office and \$5 will be retained by the state)

Lifetime - \$150 (\$125 to national office and \$25 to be retained by state)

***Please note the Challenge Level has been eliminated.**

These partnership amounts began April 1, 2024.

QUESTION- Can I be a part of the online program if I'm a legacy partner?

Answer- If you would like to access the online Bible Study programs and monthly leadership calls you must either be a CWC online subscription member or a Lifetime Partner or a Legacy Group Leader.

QUESTION - What is ARISE ACADEMY and how does it relate to CWC

Answer - Arise Academy is an online ministry academy for all women. In the academy, we offer courses for women in general and women in ministry. We began this academy in 2022 following Covid, since many groups could not gather. We wanted to offer a space for women to connect, thrive and grow. Courses in 2024 begin on Jan. 31. CWC women are invited to participate in any and all courses. Each course is 6 weeks and is offered online at \$89 per course. Arise members and CWC online subscription members receive 10% off all Arise Academy courses.

QUESTION - What do I get for being a partner of Christian Women Connection?

Answer - Once your monies have been received by the National Office, you will receive a weekly electronic edition of the Friday Connection. You receive access to events, resources, and connection to a sisterhood of over 3,500 women across 25 nations. You are also helping to fund the work of the gospel locally and around the world. By participating with CWC your group will receive the Women's Ministry Planner filled with ministry planning materials, a bible study, tools to help you connect with our global strategy personnel and projects to build a better world.

QUESTION - Does the whole amount of partnership fees go to the national office?

Answer - No. Portions of the partnership fee are kept with the state group.

- **Basic Partnership** - \$5 stays with the state group and \$15 to the National Office. Each state and local can determine how it wishes to distribute the portion that remains in state.
- **Lifetime Partnership** - \$25 remains in the state, and \$125 goes to the National Office.

QUESTION - Who gets a copy of the local roster?

Answer - A copy of the local roster should accompany all partnership monies to the state treasurer and the National Office.

QUESTION - How do I know I am a current partner with Christian Women Connection?

Answer - If you have paid your partnerships and they have been received at the National Office, you should receive the Connection Newsletter. If you are no longer receiving the weekly Connection Newsletter, it is because we have not received your partnership monies.

QUESTION - Who do I call if I have questions about my partnership or submitting my roster to the state or national office?

Answer - You can call the National CWC Office, and we will be happy to answer all your questions. The number is 765-648-2102 ext. 2102.

Young Influencer Program

Formerly Young Ambassadors



We are so excited to announce the revamp of the Young Ambassador program. We have renamed this program to be the Young Influencer program. This program is designed to help the ministry of CWC grow into the next generation of leaders for Christian Women Connection! Each girl who participates in the program must apply to serve with the National office of CWC and meet the following requirements:

Applicant Guidelines for High School Students:

1. Must be a young woman who attends a Church of God (Anderson, IN) church.
2. A young woman in 9th – 12th grade.
3. Willing to learn about ministries for women of all ages.
4. Understands and can manage a mature presence on social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tik Tok, etc.)

All applicants must apply by the deadline as stated on our website. A Pastoral recommendation is also required.

Our Young Influencer prize package includes

- ▶ A \$100 Amazon Gift Card
- ▶ A gift for their year of service with the ministry
- ▶ Attendance to one Church of God National Youth Convention during their year of serving as an Influencer.
- ▶ A packet of materials, including free books about Christian Women Connection's history.

Applicant Guidelines for College/Young Adult:

1. Must be a young woman who attends a Church of God (Anderson, IN) church or University.
2. A young woman enrolled in college or between the ages of 18 – 22 years old.
3. Willing to learn about ministries for women of all ages.
4. Understands and can manage a mature presence on social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tik Tok, etc.)

All applicants must apply by the deadline as stated on our website. A Pastoral recommendation is also required.

Our College Influencer prize package includes

- ▶ A \$100 Amazon Gift Card
- ▶ A gift for their year of service with CWC
- ▶ A devotional publication in the Christian Women Connection Women's Ministry Guide.
- ▶ Attendance to one Church of God Convention during your year of serving as an Influencer.
- ▶ A packet of materials, including free books about Christian Women Connection's history.

If your group would like to nominate a young woman in your church to participate in the Influencer Program with CWC. Please email their name and contact information to Rev. Ali Robinson (Director of Programming) at arobinson@wchog.org. We will be happy to follow up with them about serving as an Influencer.

LEADERS OF LOVE

Begin by honoring each exiting officer with a brief description of her valuable contributions and sincere gratitude for her commitment to the office. Next, have all officers for the upcoming term of office stand. Recognize each by name and position and give a brief word about them.

Leader: Thank you for your new and continued commitments to the ministry of the Christian Women Connection. As women called to leadership positions in ministry, we look to the authority of God's Word for direction to meet every opportunity in love and excellence. While instructing Timothy for his position in Ephesus, Paul tells him that "the aim of such instruction is LOVE and comes from a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith." (1 Timothy 1:5 NRSV).

To prepare for partnering in the work God is already doing, Timothy's own life is put on importance: his heart, conscience, faith, and love.

We ask you to serve in this ministry because of your considerable skills and talents and the unmistakably clear evidence of love you display in your personal, professional, and ministerial lives.

Such love is not easily accomplished. It arises from living in ways that honor God:

- seeking His Kingdom
- pursuing His will, following the Holy Spirit's direction
- reaching out to others to share His saving love

When we live, lead, and serve in love, we ensure His intentions remain first and eliminate personal preferences, biases, or selfishness. God has called you into the service of love; you are Leaders of Love, and His commission is upon you.

Officers, will you be a Leader of Love by first committing your time, resources, and plans to our Heavenly Father, the Lord of Love, looking to the Holy Spirit's leading and acting upon the Lord's direction?

Officers' response: We will.

Leader: Will you commit to supporting your local Christian Women Connection Ministry by regularly communicating with and praying for your team members, praying for, and planning the ministry, and offering thanksgiving to the Lord for the impact your interactions, publications, and events have on those you serve?

Officers' response: We will.

Leader to the audience: As members of Christian Women Connection and ministry supporters, do you pledge to love these leaders and lift them in prayer to the Lord, asking Him to bless them and lead them as they demonstrate His love in service and outreach?

Audience: We do.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, Keeper of our hearts and Lord of our lives, we praise You for these women whom You have called, commissioned, and committed to You. We ask Your blessing on them as they step into their leadership positions. May they seek Your plans for their roles and follow Your Holy Spirit as they walk in love and minister in their various responsibilities and duties. Enable them to see beyond circumstances to find Your hand at work. Inspire them with vision and vigor to bring Your plans to fruition and highlight Your great love to all they meet in their leadership roles. We thank You for their lives of love and ask You to direct their steps. Thank you, Father. Bless them abundantly and encourage them daily. Let them live and love boldly for You. In Jesus' Name. Amen.

A golden silhouette of a nativity scene inside a stable, set against a dark blue background with numerous small, twinkling stars. The scene depicts Mary kneeling on the right, Joseph on the left, and the infant Jesus lying in a manger in the center.

CBO 2024

Theme: Worship Him

Revelation 4:8b NRSV

“Day and night without ceasing they sing, ‘Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come.’”

This year, as we prepare to gather with our gifts around the manger, we acknowledge that heavenly hosts join us gathered around the throne, and together we sing with one voice: He is Holy, and He is Worthy, Christ has come, and Christ will come again. Celebrate Advent with us again this year and invite your community to experience the baby in the manger who now reigns as King and calls us to follow him in his example of love and service.

Following our overwhelming response to the 2023 Children’s coloring book, 2024, CBO resources will include a Children’s activity experience and a Litany to receive the offering as a congregation to further engage your community in the worship of baby and King in the service of building a better world together.

Spiritual Birthday: For God's Glory

Candice Terry
State Coordinator
for Tennessee West

PREPARE

Depending on one's age, when asked, "What is a birthday?" the answers given vary. An elderly saint might answer simply, "The day you were born." However, when I ask my 7-year-old Zach, "What is a birthday?" the excitement and glow in his eyes is priceless. His response recently included, but was not limited to, "... all the activities, food, and excitement "of a grand celebration. This expression of joy is something that we, too, should long to feel – no matter our age --- when it comes to our Spiritual Birthday.

In Romans 8:35, Paul asks a defining question:

*Who shall separate us from the Love of Christ?
Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or
famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?*

In life, we will experience the good and the bad, both highs and lows, and everything in between. Life can sometimes get ugly. Such times, the tough times, the low, sad, or ugly times, are said to be for the making of us. However, they are also for God's Glory to be revealed in us for others to see and take notes. God shows up! God with us! While in these difficult times, there are many stages or levels in which we don't understand why we struggle and why life is hard. We ask ourselves, "How did I get here?" We may even puzzle over how we will get out or be delivered from our trials.

Here's a funny story of trial and unanticipated relief.

There once was a man who found himself trapped in a very deep hole. Panicking, not knowing what to do, not knowing how he was going to get out, he began to despair. All hope seemed lost. A Lawyer came along, saw the man in difficulty, and said, "Sir, that looks like a pretty bad fall, and there are no warning signs. When you get out of there, give me a call!" He then tossed his card down to the poor trapped man and left. The man then heard someone else walking above him. He screamed for help, and there was a doctor who said, "That seems like a hard fall. Here are two aspirins. Call me when you get out of here, and I'll give you a proper physical." He then tossed down the pills and departed. Getting more and more desperate, the man heard more footsteps above ground, and he cried out for help. Passing was a Preacher who said, "You are in a bad situation; keep the faith, and I will be praying for you," and continued on his way.

The man began to lose faith and hope, but even still, he began to pray to God, "Lord, will you please send someone to help me?" More time passed, and the man started to get weak, but he heard some footsteps, and with what little energy he had left, he yelped out a plea for help. There was silence, and then a homeless man jumped into the hole. The fallen man said, "Are you crazy? Why did you jump in here? Now we are both trapped!" The homeless man replied, "I have been down here before and can show you how to get out."

DISCUSS

Have you ever been inside a pit? Reflect upon your spiritual birthday; what was life like before your "climbing out?" Who climbed down into your situation to be with you and showed you the way to Jesus? Reflect on the

story above and all the years since your spiritual birthday; which character best represents who you have been and who you most want to be for others?

THE LESSON

In The Book of Ruth, we find the beautiful, often-told story of Moabite, Ruth, and her loving mother-in-law, the Jewess, Naomi. The beauty of the relationship between

mother and daughter-in-law is tender and never ceases to inspire. When reading Ruth, or when sharing the story with others, we often zoom in on the faithfulness of Ruth

towards Naomi: her care of the older woman, her adopting Naomi's people and culture, in coming to believe in the God Naomi served, and how she was blessed for it in the end. Within the story, we also learn about the loss of loved ones and having to uproot and travel to another land due to the threat of famine. But if we were to rewind this same story to the story of just Naomi, she was able to guide and instruct Ruth through all that the Lord had allowed her to experience. Ruth's story cannot be told apart from Naomi's long suffering. In her moment of trials and tribulations, I am sure she did not understand the plan of God Almighty. However, according to the scripture, her faith remained in God. The intentional God we serve placed these women together. Ruth was able to see the Glory of God through the life of Naomi and, even amid sadness and hardship, could Celebrate her own Spiritual Birthday, the start of a journey that literally led into the story of God's family and the lineage of Christ.

Ruth 1:16 *For wherever you go, I will go; And wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, And your God, my God.*

In the midst of our trying times, God has given us a comforter through the Holy Spirit. So, as we go through, we can easily get distracted and feel forgotten about or forsaken, which can cause us to look aside or turn away from God. But we must be steadfast like Naomi. As Psalm 5:3 says, *Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your path.*

Paul asks that defining question, yet he gives the answer in Romans 8:38-39:

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the Love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

All we go through is for our making and the Glory of God.

Romans 8:18: *For I reckon the sufferings of our present time cannot compare to the Glory that shall be revealed in us.*

The symbolic definition of a birthday is a celebration, a marker of new beginnings, an anniversary, or the start of something new. The best thing about a spiritual birthday is its blessings are ongoing, and we can have multiple celebrations, not only when we first believe, but when afresh falls a newness or renewal of our faith, renewal of hope, renewal of the proper spirit, and the Holy Spirit within us. Maintain that same childlike excitement, joy, and faith as Zach – That a birthday should be celebrated! They should be celebrated even in the face of the unknown, even when faced with adversities or situations we don't understand. This is how we can show the Glory of God, not just for ourselves, but for others to see and, through seeing, experience transformation and newness of life for themselves.

Celebrate for your good and God's Glory.

ACTIVITY

To celebrate your new beginnings, to mark your new beginning, or to remember what it was to be born again into Christ Jesus, purchase a cake or something delicious, get lots of varieties of ice cream, and set the table with hats and horns and confetti. Make it beautiful. Too often, women spend so much time celebrating everyone but themselves. Set the tone for this remembrance by setting a table with all the trimmings of an elegant party. Then, instead of putting candles on the cake, pass out candles to all the participants. Have each one light her candle by the sister standing to her side in the circle,

and as she does, have each woman share what she is celebrating this particular spiritual birthday. Each woman can encourage the other to place a dollar for every year she has been in the faith on the table after every woman has had a chance to share and light her candle, sing a song together, and blow out your candles together. The eldest sister in the faith gets the first piece of cake. At the end, count the money to add up your years together and celebrate your spiritual birthday offering.



ENGAGE YOUR COMMUNITY & BUILD A BETTER WORLD

Here are some ideas for impact!! We'd love to hear about what your doing in your neighborhood so we can share!

Send your stories and photos to lwilliams@wchog.org



Purchase supply lists for teachers at a school in your area



Collect hygiene supplies and prepare kits for local domestic violence shelter



Sponsor a team for your favorite local charity's golf tournament

Deliver coffee and bagels to teachers at a local school on the first day of school



Purchase bibles for teens at women's shelter



Engage your entire congregation in CWC national project



Pray over individual names of school children in local elementary



Create blessing boxes for your local foster care agencies

2024

RESOURCES & PRODUCTS

All products can be purchased online at
www.christianwomenconnection.org



2024 Women's Ministry Guide (formerly Annual Planning Guide)

Contains material for organizing your women's group, information on national projects, programs, organizational contacts, missionary listings and tips for planning the coming year. We have also included a group bible study and missions' study.

B0166 \$20.00 5oz



**Unwritten – Your Story is Not Finished

This curriculum is full of activities that expand relationships with youth while cultivating essential life skills, i.e., cooking, cleaning, auto maintenance, interviewing, and much more.

D0329 FREE BY DOWNLOADING ON WEBSITE

ARISE Academy Courses

Arise Academy is designed for women by women. We know you are busy holding up the world, we want to come alongside, that's why our courses are designed to be accessible on your timetable, to work around your already full plate in ministry and life. We have built these courses to support you in the ways you currently serve, or to aid you as you build new skills for the call you are nurturing.

Visit our website for additional information and course content. **Courses start at \$89.00/course.**

Enroll today for Spring 2024

Arise Academy

HEALTHY & HEALED
 With Jillian Quainoo, RDN

Join Jill, a registered dietician and holistic health coach as she teaches you Biblical Principles for healthy living.

Begins Jan 31st 2024

WOMEN AT THE END
 A Lenten Journey
 With Rev. Dr. Kimberly Majeski

This course will walk through the weeks of Lent experiencing Jesus' last days through the eyes of the women who were with him until the end.

Begins Feb 14th 2024

Preach Like a Girl Tee

"Preach like a girl" tees help bring awareness and support our women in ministry.

Size: XS – 4XL

Ring spun cotton/polyester

(Available in Cherry or Blue Ice)

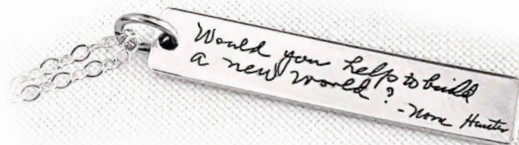
D4175 **\$20.00 + Shipping/Handling**



Nora Hunter Necklace

This beautiful one-of-a-kind necklace features a quote from Nora Hunters' journal. "Would you help me build a better world." It is inscribed on the necklace in Nora's handwriting and is sure to be a staple in your jewelry box! Purchase one today. The necklace chain length is 18'.

D4249S **\$50.00 + Shipping/Handling**



Purpose Jewelry

We are partnering with Purpose Jewelry to help girls and women escaping human trafficking gain economic freedom, access to education, quality healthcare, and a place to belong. Each piece of jewelry is handmade with love by an artisan from one of their sanctuaries in India, Uganda, Mexico, or the Philippines.

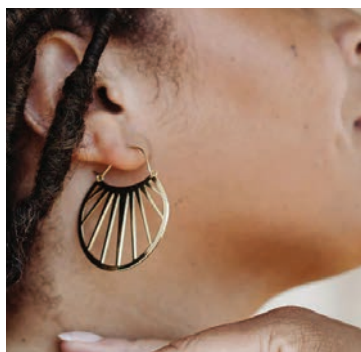
Visit www.purposejewelry.org for more information.

Pricing for each piece is listed below:

PJ1452	Midnight Drops	\$38.00 + Shipping/Handling
PJ1512	Bali Hoops (gold or silver)	\$58.00 + Shipping/Handling
PJ2301	"Starting Strong" cuff	\$40.00 + Shipping/Handling
PJ1493	Costa Earrings	\$56.00 + Shipping/Handling



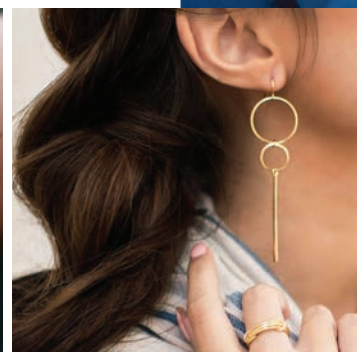
PJ1452



PJ1512



PJ2301



PJ1493



GLOBAL STRATEGY

CHURCH OF GOD MINISTRIES

Africa

Tim & Joy Coppess	Botswana	Missionaries
John and Gwen Johnson	Egypt	RCs for Africa
Bobby & Jenny Mihsill	Cote D'ivoire	Missionaries
Larry & Leann Sellers	Cote D'ivoire	Missionaries
Corey & Abby Stocksedale	Botswana	Missionaries

Asia/Pacific

Don & Caroline Armstrong	Thailand	RCs for Asia-Pacific Region
Bernie & Akiko Barton	Japan	Missionary
Steven & Peggy Beverly	Sri Lanka	Missionaries
Mike & Makiko Boyle	Japan	Special Assignment Missionaries
Kris & Megan Gilbert	New Zealand	Global Pastors
Terence & Christy Van Dam	Japan	Missionaries
Mike Wagner	Japan	Special Assignment Missionary
Tim & Jenn Adams	South East Asia	Missionaries

Caribbean/Atlantic

Mark & Kathy Fulton	Haiti	Missionaries
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Latin America

Alfonso & Elizabeth Ayala	Belize	Missionaries
Deborah Hunnicutt	Honduras	Missionary
Paul & Kattia Jones	Bolivia	Missionaries
Norberto & Nancy Kurrel	Paraguay	Special Assignment Missionaries
Jonathan & Beth Todd	Brazil	Missionaries
Jason & Abby Torgeson	Costa Rica	RCs for Latin America
Brian & Melissa Richey	Costa Rica	Missionaries

North America

Tim & Kim Wardell	United States	Missionaries
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ME/Europe

Alejandro & Carmen De Francisco	Spain	Missionaries
Daniel & Christy Kihm	Middle East/Europe	Missionaries
Zach & Audrey Langford	U.K.	Missionaries
Patrick & Jamie Nachtigall	Italy	Missionaries
Kelley & Rhonda Philips	Germany	Missionaries
Nathan & Stacy Tatman	Spain	RCs for Middle East/Europe

For more information, contact:

Global Strategy at 800.848.2464 or visit <https://chogglobal.org/global-personnel/>

The Linen Chest

The CWC Linen Chest is unlike any other missionary-support program in the world—and is often the envy of missionaries from other traditions!

The Linen Chest serves to provide career missionaries with household necessities as they serve, and again once they return stateside. CWC groups send financial support to the Linen Chest, which enables the national office to shop for practical and high-quality linens in current styles and desired colors. As travel restrictions weight allowances change over the years, missionaries are very conscious of how much they can pack. Therefore, it is prudent to provide excellent quality goods that exceed what is available to them locally in their country of service and worth the space to carry over.

Missionary families receive goods such as:

- Kitchen, Bath & Bed Linens
- Tupperware & Pampered Chef Utensils
- Specific Appliances for on the Field
- Clothing Allowance for Women Missionaries on Home Assignment
- First-Year College Assistance for Missionary Teens
- Linen Chest Supplies for the Missionary Apartments in Anderson, Indiana

Current Needs:

- Quality bath towels and/or match sets (No rubber-backed bath mats)
(*NO PASTELS - Popular colors are shades of gray, khaki, teal, sage green*)
- Quality kitchen towels, dish cloths, hot pads
(We currently have an abundance of red color)
- Tupperware and Pampered Chef Goods
– kitchen gadgets are highly appreciated
- Monetary donations to fund the Linen Chest Mission

"Your continued care of missionaries means so much to us."

- Jamie Nachtigall



Be sure to visit our wish list on Amazon at:
<https://a.co/flKkHKH>



THE STORY OF “US”

RHONDA PHILLIPS

Introduction

Eastern European countries such as Bulgaria, Albania, and Romania, as well as war-torn countries like Ukraine, are fertile ground for human sex traffickers. Germany is a destination country for traffickers to sexually exploit women because, believe it or not, this wealthy, western country has full decriminalization of prostitution. It is legal to buy sex, legal to sell sex, legal to own a brothel, and legal to be a pimp. Even though it is legal, people in prostitution are still stigmatized and experience prejudice and violence.

A Story of Exploitation



Leandra* comes from a former Soviet Bloc country. Her family life was difficult, riddled with physical and emotional abuse, and lacked the presence and love of her father. These put her at high risk for trafficking. Her parents allowed her to attend a university, and in her last year of finishing her degree in finance, she met Arben. He was handsome and charming and showered Leandra with expensive gifts, flowers, magical dates, and, most importantly, attention. He convinced her to move with him to Germany with the promise of marriage. She moved away from her family and others who could protect and support her. Soon after moving, he told her he had lost his money in the stock market; he begged her to work for an escort service “for just a little while” until he could get back on his feet. She “loved” him and reluc-

tantly agreed. A week turned into a month and then a year, and she began refusing to continue with his plan. That’s when the violence started.

Leandra discovered that Arben had other women he was pimping as escorts. She decided to escape this deceptive, destructive life. She set out on her own but could not find a job. She ended up living on the street and once again entered prostitution, but this time she stood on the street. She endured nasty comments being shouted at her. Eggs and water bottles were thrown at her from cars passing by. The humiliation, self-hatred, and shame were unbearable. That’s when she heard about Pink Door, a counseling center in Berlin for women in prostitution founded by Church of God missionaries and a team of German Christians.

*name changed to protect her anonymity

The Realities

28 million trafficking victims worldwide

United States:

- 42% brought into trafficking by a member of their own family*
- 39% recruited by an intimate partner or marriage proposition*

- Prostitution is illegal, except for a few exceptions. Regardless, it is a booming business through escort services, street prostitution, and a vast online presence.

Germany

- Full legalization of prostitution since 2002, which makes fertile ground for sex trafficking.
- Named “The Brothel of Europe”
- Hub for sex tourism. It is estimated that 1 million men buy sex every day.
- Hundreds of thousands of people in prostitution, some willingly, most are forced.
- Most people in prostitution come from Eastern European countries.
- Broad spectrum of sexual services: low-end street prostitution, brothels, online and high-end escort services

*stats taken from Polaris Project www.polarisproject.org

Read. Marinate. Discuss

The numbers and realities of trafficking and forced prostitution can be so overwhelming that we can easily throw up our hands, give up, and become apathetic. Of course, our example of interacting with vulnerable people comes from Jesus. He understood the sacredness of “us.”

Let’s take a look!

Group discussion: Jesus had many interactions with women. He would enter a room, was drawn to the outcasts, and chose to go where love had not yet arrived.

He was a barrier-smashing Savior!

Choose a few women in scripture with whom Jesus interacted and discuss the following questions:

1. How did He approach them?
2. Where do you see Jesus’ value of “us” in how He interacts with them?

Jesus speaks with women in public.

- a. Widow at Nain (Luke 7:11-17)
- b. In the temple (Luke 13:12)

Jesus’ approach is respectful and compassionate.

- c. Issue of blood (Luke 8:43-48)
- d. Anointing (Luke 7:26-50)
- e. Adultery (John 8:3-11)



A Rabbi with women as disciples? Scandalous!

f. Name as many women as you can who were disciples of Jesus.

(Hint: Mary, Martha, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, etc.)

Jesus reveals who He is.

g. The woman at the well: "I am HE."

h. Mary Magdalene at the tomb

i. Others?

Marinate on how it must have felt for these women to be...

FULLY SEEN

FULLY KNOWN

FULLY LOVED

Share a time when you experienced this deep spiritual revelation.

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28)

For God so loved the WORLD, that He gave His only begotten son..." (John 3:16)



Action:

We cannot allow our society to continue to live and act with the wrong idea that there are lives out there that matter less than others.

1. How can we, as Christian women, break this wrong idea?
2. Share a time when you were guilty of supporting this idea.
3. Share when you called out a person or a group for supporting this false idea.

What about little 'ole me? What can I do to help in the fight against human trafficking?

Read and Marinate:

“Only the soul who ventilates the world with tenderness has any chance of changing the world.”
Greg Boyle

I want to share some things I’ve learned in the 15 years I’ve walked alongside extremely vulnerable women. Maybe some of these will resonate and inspire you to ventilate tenderness and change the world.

1. Recognizing my own wounds in her broken life and struggles causes me to access the healing message of the gospel over and over again.

2. Embrace her goodness, her greatness! It’s what every girl/woman in the world is dying to hear!

3. Healing takes time. I can’t judge a book by its cover or by its first chapter, even if that chapter is twenty years long.

The prophet Habakkuk writes: *The vision still has its time, presses on to fulfillment and it will not disappoint...and if it delays, wait for it.*”

Most days, I want to share life with the women who come to Pink Door, regardless of the result, reminding myself of “the slow work of God.”

4. Take time to listen to her story. Her shame meets mine when I mistake her for an interruption.

5. Practice empathy! I cannot fool myself into thinking I can fix her pain. I just try to feel it!

6. Show up. Emily Dickinson writes, *“Hope is the thing with feathers that perches in the soul, that sings the song without the words and never stops.”*

I’ve come to value just showing up and singing the song without the words.

7. Learn and look for risk factors that lead to sexual exploitation instead of looking only for the signs that she is being exploited.

An excellent website to learn more about trafficking: www.polarisproject.org

8. Learning someone’s story puts you in a better position to be an ally or mentor ahead of a trafficking incident.

9. Open our eyes to girls/young women who are vulnerable or at risk. Be a mentor. Ventilate tenderness. Learn her story. Stand in awe of the overwhelming burdens she is carrying without judgment.

10. Be a friend who learns what love isn’t and dare to tell her the truth.

11. Check myself! Are my thoughts and practices “us” and not “them” or “those people”? Never forget that we belong to one another.

The way of Jesus is clear!



Read and Marinate on this text by Dan Sadlier:

- Move toward the poor
- Empower the woman
- Create space at the table
- Throw parties
- Widen the family boundaries
- Poke holes in oppressive systems
- Don't retaliate with violence
- Forgive your enemy
- Don't store up wealth
- Be present with people

Heal • Announce • Push back darkness

The kingdom of God is near.



More to Leandra's story: Pink Door walked alongside Leandra in her recovery from sexual exploitation. She finished her degree in finance, began a new job, got married, and is expecting her first child in June.

Jeremiah writes:

"In this place of which you say it is a waste...there will be heard again the voice of mirth and the voice of gladness...the voices of those who sing."

AMEN! Glory to God!

The CWC project for 2024 focuses on the prevention, aftercare, and empowerment of women and girls who are at risk or have already experienced sex trafficking. Pray for the people who are on the front lines of this fight.



If you want to more about Pink Door:

www.pinkdoorberlin.org • email: krphilips@chog.org

facebook: pinkdoorberlin

Instagram: Pink Door Berlin

Resources used in writing this text:

Tattoos on the Heart by Greg Boyle

Polaris Project website

Bible

Life Experiences

<https://www.state.gov/reports/2023-trafficking-in-persons-report/>

Stepping Through

Philippians 3:12-14 NRSV "Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus."

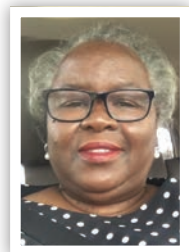
Blessings and greetings to my sweet sisters in the Lord,

As I ponder our theme and this scripture reference, I am reminded of the daily steps I have tried to fulfill during my daily walks. I want to achieve my goal, but no matter how hard I try, I do not. But I start again in hopes that I will succeed. Paul is letting us know that he has not reached his goal of becoming like Christ, neither have we. No matter how hard we try. The point is that we should not give up. Keep going, or better yet, keep stepping through. We must step through the good times (Do not get comfortable when things are going well). We must step through the difficulties in our lives (Do not give up. As the scripture says, "press on.").

I love that we are in another year to do ministry with CWC and that we do ministry together. One phase of this ministry, and an especially important one, is our budget. We, the board, and council members overwhelmingly voted on the budget at our last council meeting. It is time to get to work, and it takes work to reach our goal. We must keep stepping through. We cannot stop giving; we must keep pressing on as we share and seek the Lord to provide more. Let us keep trusting God as we continue to step through these times together.

How can we step through? Let us begin to pray for creative ways to reach our budget. Let us pray as we stretch ourselves to give and give more. Let us commit to pray for those who do the work on the frontline and behind the scenes for this ministry. Let us *begin to pray!*

Father, we are so grateful for the opportunity to serve in this ministry with so many wonderful CWC sisters whose hearts are sold out for You. Thank you to each person who serves at the local, state, and national levels. We honor You for every abundant provision because it all comes from You. Our hearts are full of gratitude for each person You have inspired with the ability to give and the willingness to do so. We pray for Your richest blessings to be poured upon each one. Thank You, Dear Lord, in advance for bringing this budget to fruition sooner than we expected. In Jesus Name. Amen



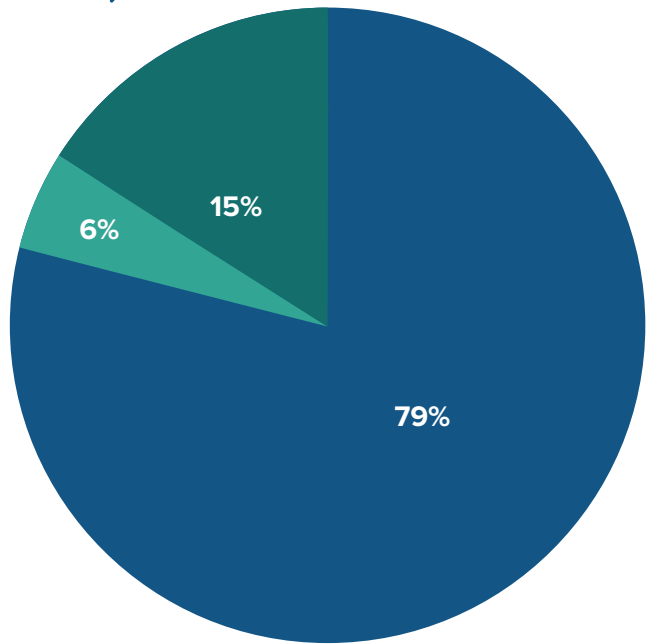
Barbara Williams

National Director of Finance

2024-2025 BUDGET

Income	2024-2025
Missions - Linen Chest	\$17,000.00
Missions - Hunger Fund	\$10,000.00
Missions - National Finance Project (Trafficklight)	\$1,000.00
Christ's Birthday Offering	\$600,000.00
Christ's Birthday Offering - Sales & Shipping	\$12,000.00
Missions--Outreach and Education	\$12,750.00
Change the World	\$5,300.00
Spiritual Birthday	\$7,700.00
Events	\$3,000.00
Partnership	\$37,800.00
ARISE	\$13,000.00
Merchandise Sales	\$1,500.00
Investment Income	\$1,000.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$776,050.00
Expenses	2024-2025
Reserve Fund	\$50,000.00
Missions--Linen Chest	\$15,000.00
National Finance Project	\$1,000.00
Missions - Hunger & Relief Fund	\$10,000.00
Convention--Start-up Costs	\$20,000.00
Convention--On-site Costs	\$10,000.00
CBO Sales/Shipping	\$3,500.00
CBO Production Costs	\$14,000.00
Missions--CBO-COG Ministries Portion	\$120,000.00
Educ. Asst. for Women (Domestic)	\$1,000.00
Educ. Asst. for Women (Overseas)	\$1,000.00
Women in Ministry Support/ARISE	\$3,000.00
Board Leadership	\$27,981.51
Events	\$13,000.00
Connection, Cultivation & Fieldwork	\$69,586.01
Personnel	\$265,160.80
Contract Labor	\$49,600.00
Printing	\$1,250.00
Office (supplies, postage, copier)	\$12,500.00
Rent	\$40,771.68
Cell Phone (Executive Dir.)	\$1,000.00
Insurance	\$9,200.00
Equipment/Moving Expenses	\$10,000.00
Public/Staff/Employee Relations	\$3,000.00
Professional Services	\$19,500.00
Bank Charges	\$5,000.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$776,050.00

Income

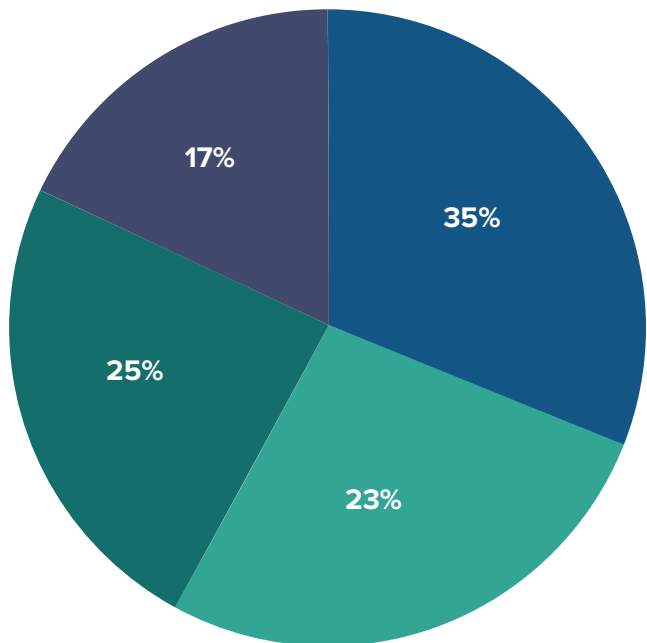


■ **Christ's Birthday Offering 79%**

■ **CWC Partnership/Project Funds 15%**
Change the World, Spiritual Birthday, Partnerships/subscriptions, Arise Academy, etc.

■ **Missions 6%**
Linen Chest, Hunger & Relief Fund, Outreach & Education

Expenses



■ **Missions 35%**
Linen chest, missionary support, global and domestic projects to benefit women and children

■ **Empowerment 23%**
Spiritual formation, leadership training, and education (Arise Academy)

■ **Connection 25%**
Relationships, mentorships, conferences and events

■ **Future Investment 17%**
Investing in the next generation of leaders, technology and support

Stepping Through: A Mind-Field

By Rev. Abby Torgeson

About a decade ago, I thought I had the Christian life figured out. I served as a missionary, participated in Bible studies, stayed connected with the Lord during my quiet time, and regularly submitted my plans to Him. I knew I was not perfect and was aware of certain struggles, but overall, I was doing well. I did not see myself as particularly sinful.

Then I got married. Suddenly, I had to contend with another person's opinion and did not get to make all the decisions about what happened in my home or life. Over the next few years, our three children came along, and before I knew it, the quiet, orderly life I had once cherished spiraled quickly out of my control, and I came face-to-face with my own sin and selfishness. Sometimes, I do not want to help clean the garage late at night, stop cooking to take someone to the bathroom or use my day off to play hide and seek. Sometimes, I want to do what I want and am not always kind or patient with those who interrupt my plans.

You may not be in the throes of toddlerhood, and perhaps family life is not a big struggle for you. Still, if we are honest with ourselves, many of us find it easier to model Christ's sacrificial love in vocational ministry than in our homes. But that is indeed what we are called to do: model Christ's service and sacrifice wherever we are, even, and perhaps especially, when we do not feel like it.

Reflect & Discuss: *In what setting do you find it most challenging to model the sacrificial love of Christ?*

How can we model Christ's self-giving love? As Christians and ministers, we agree, at least in theory, with Philippians 3:10-11, that we want to "know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death," but we would rather not think about what that verse truly means. In Genesis 3:5, our ancestors in the garden wanted to "be like God, knowing good and evil," but they failed to realize that to know good and evil, they would have to experience both good and evil. To know Christ and the power of his resurrection means that we will have to experience suffering and learn to die to ourselves. I certainly do not want to compare washing vomit out of a kid's hair at 3:00 am to the sufferings of Christ. Still, there is something about marriage and parenting that teaches us the meaning of sacrifice in a way that even ministry often cannot.

Before we can become like Christ in His death, we should start by becoming more like Him in life. Sometimes, I find myself complaining to God and telling Him that He cannot possibly understand what it is like to live with constant demands, whether from family, friends, ministry, or life in general. Yes, He knows what it is like to deal with a long list of burdens and responsibilities, but He is omnipotent. I am weak. He is omnipresent. I am not. In those moments when I feel overwhelmed and tell God that He cannot get it, the Spirit points me back to Jesus. Jesus took on flesh and made Himself like us, identifying with us in our weakness so we can one day be like Him.

READ: *Matthew 14:13-14. What stands out to you?*

In this text, which I am convinced is included in the Bible for the sake of mothers everywhere, Jesus wants some personal space to breathe, grieve, and be with His Father, but all the needy people around him will not leave Him alone. Sound familiar?

Reflect & Discuss: *How does Jesus respond? How do we respond when we are called to keep giving, even when we want a break?*

If you keep reading, you will find one of the most well-known miracles in the New Testament. The story of Jesus multiplying the bread and fish happened because Jesus first allowed His heavenly Father to multiply His waning energy when His human nature had nearly nothing left to give.

This is not to say that we never need space, that we should not be intentional about setting aside time to reset emotionally and spiritually, especially when we are feeling overwhelmed. If Jesus needed it, we absolutely do, and there is a lot we can learn from the concept of Sabbath and developing a rhythm of rest before stress consumes us. Still, how should we respond when our plans are interrupted, or we are not yet able to pause on the pressures of life?

READ: *Philippians 2:5-8: What does this text tell us our attitude should be? How can we put Christ's example into practice in our own lives?*

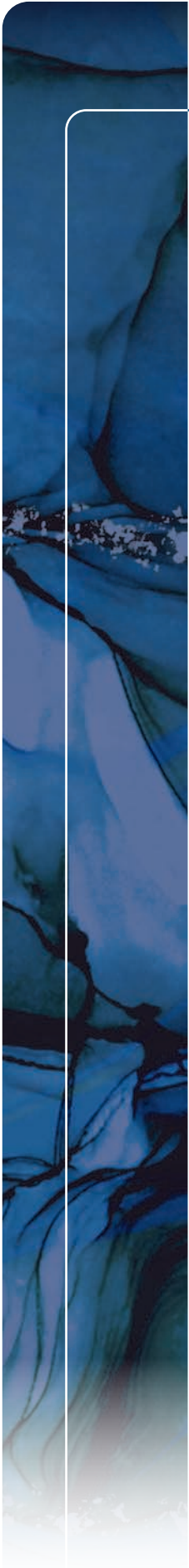
To live like Christ, we must have the mind of Christ. He voluntarily surrendered everything: His title, His power, unending worship, and praise, all for our sake, so that we could know the love of God. He did not cling to what He rightly deserved. Unfortunately, we too often have a sense of entitlement: people should respect us, our family should listen to us, and our lives should be more comfortable. When they do not, and it is not, we become bitter and resentful, and we tell ourselves many stories about how no one cares and how unfair life has become.

Once we give these thoughts free rein, they entrench themselves and become a minefield of buried hurt, fear, anger, and frustration, ready to explode at the slightest trigger and wound the people around us. When something damaging slips out of our mouth, we may say, "I don't know where that came from!" But Jesus is clear about where it comes from:

"...out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks" (Matthew 19:34b).

Ouch. As much as we want to justify our actions and words by pointing to our circumstances or others' decisions, Jesus makes it very clear that what comes out of our mouths comes directly from our hearts. "The tree is known by its fruit," he says in verse 33. When we display fruit that does not reflect the Holy Spirit inside us, we must get to the root of the problem.

Reflect & Discuss: Can you think of a recent example of when you said or did something hurtful or dishonoring to God? What are the root thoughts, attitudes, or narratives that led to that moment?



You may not be the type to blow up or spout off. Maybe you tend more toward subtle snide comments, gossip, or passive-aggressive behavior. When we allow the landmines of hurt, anger, and bitterness planted by our selfish attitudes to affect how we interact with those close to us, the resulting wounds create new minefields in others' hearts and minds. The cycle repeats until we find ourselves with an entire society on edge, simmering with rage.

Christ calls us to something different.

READ: *Romans 12:2. What does this passage tell us?*

How exactly do we go about “renewing our minds”? In 2 Corinthians 10:5, Paul talks about how we can “take captive every thought to make it obey Christ.” Although that verse deals with other spiritual realities, the same concept applies to making our minds look like Christ’s. Instead of allowing ourselves to become passive victims of our negative thought patterns, we must intentionally identify landmines and deal with them before they have the chance to become embedded in our psyche. When we feel negative emotions, such as hurt, fear, anxiety, or frustration, we must pause to figure out what is happening, why, and how to address it.

Reflect & Discuss: *What are some of the emotional and spiritual landmines that tend to pop up in your life? What steps have you taken, or can you take, to keep them from taking hold?*

Philippians 4:8 tells us to focus our thoughts and energy on “whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable...” This does not mean putting on a happy face and ignoring pain or frustration. It means that we make a conscious choice about where to focus. Over time, we can clear the landmines that have taken up residence in our hearts, replacing complaints with gratitude, frustration with faith, and false narratives with truth. This is all easier said than done, of course. We cannot do it on our own strength without the power of the Holy Spirit. Even the Holy Spirit will likely use other people’s help, whether family members, brothers, sisters in the faith, or even godly professional counselors. But it starts with renewing our mind.

Reflect & Discuss: *Are there any landmines of bitterness, anger, fear, or sadness that have already taken root and affected how you see the world? What are some practical steps to “renew your mind” and clear the minefield this week?*

The work is never easy, but if we are willing, Christ will take our hand and walk with us as we step through the “mind field,” identifying areas of weakness, selfishness, sin, or hurt that need to be addressed and helping us take captive any new ones that threaten our progress. We will not always get it right, but Christ will help us extend His grace and forgiveness to others and ourselves as we continue stepping through this life. The more time we spend with Him, the more we will come to know Him, as Philippians 3:11 says, and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death. Maybe not His physical death, but certainly His death to Himself, His preferences, His comfort, and His rights.

In the following verses, Apostle Paul describes this process as an ongoing rigorous athletic endeavor:

READ: *Philippians 3:12-14*

Next time we find ourselves feeling overwhelmed, burnt out, or ready to blow up at those who come too close, let us take a moment to ask Christ to help us navigate the mind field. Let us ask Him to help us leave behind past hurts and mistakes and to give us His heart and mind to assess the situation, the wisdom of His Spirit to know how to respond to others and ourselves, and a dose of His strength to lay down our interests and desires for the sake of someone He has called us to love.

Let us take a moment right now to pray and ask Christ to do that work. Only by committing to this process day in and day out, moment by moment, will we learn to leave behind the minefield of bitterness, anger, fear, selfishness, and emotional reactivity and step through to a fruitful life of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

Stepping Through: Just Keep Walking


By Rev. Ronda Johnston

“Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.”
- Philippians 3:12-14 NRSV

Our brother Paul is the author of these words from Philippians. I love this passage of Scripture, but I believe it is most meaningful with an additional bit of context. Paul struggled with what he referred to as a “thorn in the flesh.” The exact nature of his malady is unknown, but apparently, it was quite troubling and entirely beyond his ability to eradicate. After all, if **anyone** had the spiritual fortitude, self-control, and motivation to eliminate any personal area of struggle, it had to be Paul! Scripture tells us that on more than one occasion, he asked the Lord to get rid of this “thorn,” but his request was denied for the sake of his growth and character as a follower of Jesus (II Cor. 12:7).

READ: *2 Corinthians 12:7-9*

As I ponder this “thorn” that Paul himself **could not** remove and God would not remove, I am reminded of another story from the New Testament. It is a story of ten men who also had an issue that they were powerless to remedy on their own. These men had leprosy, and it is important for us to realize that in Jesus’ time, leprosy could have been nearly any skin condition. Those of us who struggle with eczema or psoriasis might have been considered a leper in Jesus’ time. I once heard it said that although we often think of leprosy as a symbol of sin or uncleanness in an individual, it may be more appropriate to see leprosy as a tragic situation that occurs in the course of human existence. Think about it. Jesus made no



reference to the sin of the lepers when He told them to go show themselves to the priests. These men certainly would not have chosen to be lepers; they were simply humans suffering with their humanity.

Jesus often came near and touched those He healed, but in this situation, Jesus responded to their cries for mercy by sending them on their way. In fact, He did not indicate one way or the other if He was willing to heal them. He just set them on the path to the priests for inspection. Scripture tells us that **as they were walking** in faith and obedience to the command of Jesus, something miraculous happened, “And as they went, they were made clean.” (Luke 17:14b)

Both Paul and the ten lepers struggled with the consequences of being human in a fallen world. In both cases, there was some issue that was not of their choosing and entirely beyond their control to remedy. Both Paul and the lepers cried out for deliverance; the lepers were granted their request, but Paul was not.

Reflect & Discuss: *Sisters, what has happened to you in this fallen world? What weight of suffering do you carry every single day in your walk with Christ? From what do you feel you need healing or deliverance?*

As a trauma therapist and ordained minister, I have encountered so many women who carry heavy burdens throughout their lives and ministries, burdens that were not of their choosing but rather inflicted on them. Some of our sisters were terribly abused as children. Some were battered physically, mentally, or even sexually by a husband who was supposed to love and cherish them. Some women struggle with persistent mental illness or a chronic physical health condition. What about those of us who have been devastated by, dare I say it, the family of God? The suffering we may have to endure in this fallen world is nearly without limit. None of us get through life unscathed. That said, I believe the story of Paul’s thorn in the flesh and the ten lepers, as well as numerous other passages in Scripture, offer real answers for how to walk out our faith, even with the suffering that is common to our humanity.

Many of us have been on this journey of faith for years now. As a result, we have come to understand that although we are a new creation because of the grace, mercy, and love of our Savior, we still carry the scars of what has happened to us in life. We do everything we can to make ourselves whole, and sometimes, we even see success in these endeavors. But at the end of our human efforts, when we are still struggling with our scars, we ultimately turn to God for the complete deliverance that eludes us. Sometimes, God does the miraculous as he did with the ten lepers, and we find instant healing. But more often than not, as with Paul, the answer is, “You must continue to carry this, my child.” How do we know which will be **our** answer? We have no way of knowing, so what do we do? **We keep walking.**

I imagine the ten lepers talking amongst themselves on the road to the synagogue and the priests.

“Hey, did any of you hear Jesus say He was going to heal us?”

“No, He really didn’t say one way or the other.”

“Do you think He was just brushing us off to get us away from the crowd?”

*And then one man, probably the one who came back praising Jesus, said,
“Jesus said walk, so I’m going to take Him at His word and keep walking.”*

As they walked, with no guarantee of healing, they began to feel a difference in their skin. Somewhere along the journey, one of them looked down and realized he was healed. He must have started asking the others about their skin and their own healing. I imagine the last half of that walk to the synagogue turned into more of a sprint!

Sister, I have seen it happen so many times in my career. Women labor for years under the burden of their old hurts and pain, **even after** the Lord and Savior set them on The Way. They walk on in faith because Jesus told them to, and they do so with no guarantee of healing this side of glory. But somewhere along the journey, their burdens become easier to carry. These women discover that their steps are lighter and that their obedience and faith have led them to a place where they no longer struggle under the oppression of their pain. As they walk, they take stock and realize that God has indeed healed them! Praise be to God, our deliverer!

But sometimes, like Paul, no matter how many faithful and obedient steps we take, we must carry our burden throughout this earthly life. Interestingly enough, what did Paul say about his burdens? He said that despite the suffering, despite his struggle with this “thorn in his flesh,” despite the hunger and prison bars and beatings, he fully intended to press on! Just like the ten lepers, Paul was determined to keep walking, no matter what. He even takes it a step further and says, “Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.” This is the exciting part, Sister! Paul discovered that in his earthly life, he could not achieve perfect wholeness; that would only be possible when he finally stood in the presence of Jesus Christ, his Lord and Savior. But until that day, he was going to press on, forgetting what was behind him, forgetting what weighed him down. Not literally, of course; we don’t just forget the things that happen to us in life. Rather, Paul is saying I am going to keep walking. I am going to keep pressing forward despite my burden so that my pain does not have the opportunity to overtake my present or my future in Christ. Paul decided in his heart that, if need be, he would suffer every step of the journey with all joy as long as it meant he could rejoice in the power of Christ’s resurrection at the end of his sufferings.

Paul is living proof that in the economy of God, nothing is wasted. Deliverance is never promised in this lifetime. Sometimes, it comes, and when it does, we rejoice and give God all of the glory, just as the one leper did. But when it does not come, like Paul, we must determine in our hearts that we will keep walking, pressing on, straining forward until the day that we see the purpose of our suffering, the day when we see our deliverance!

Reflect & Discuss: *Knowing that God wastes nothing, it is very possible that the things you suffer will ultimately bring Him great glory. How might the burdens you carry be used in your ministry to others?*

Stepping Through: Our Callings

By Rev. Cindy Magsig

“Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.”
- Philippians 3:12-14 NRSV

I will never forget the day when I was called upon to preach. My first initial thought was, “I don’t preach. I sing. I don’t have a history of preaching, and I don’t know the first thing about homiletics.” Truthfully, I felt like Moses, trying to scrounge up any excuse to get out of it.

Nevertheless, I began to seek God about whether it was His will for me to be open to the idea of preaching and teaching God’s Word.

Truth be told, I have never seen myself as a singer, a teacher, a preacher, or anything with a title or position. I have always identified as a “messenger” of the Gospel of Jesus.

I am a messenger, whether singing, preaching, teaching, discipling, or caring for others. The message is always the message of Jesus. My status as a messenger never changes, but the application might.

One of the New Testament parables I have always resonated with is the parable of The Talents found in Matthew 25:14-30. The first servant wasted no time stepping up and stepping through because his goal was to maximize what was placed in his hand. In the same manner, I press on for the goal of God’s call. And that goal is about God’s Son, Jesus Christ.

In the early verses of Philippians chapter 3, the Apostle Paul reflects on where he has come from. He thoroughly acknowledges his past, but he is clear to communicate that he does not stay there. Instead, he writes these words:

“Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ.”

In this season of your life, God may be asking you to trust Him and step through the unknowns with Him and for Him.

Twenty years ago, I agreed to preach for the very first time. Little did I know that seventeen years after that first sermon, I would be called on to become the lead pastor of a beautiful family of faith in Austin, Texas.

As any pastor will tell you, full-time ministry is not for the faint of heart. There are times when I can relate to the Apostle Paul’s words when he says he is straining forward to what lies ahead. Have you ever felt that you are straining in attaining? I have. Many times, unfortunately.

Sometimes, there is a cost associated with pressing on toward the goal. It’s not always smooth sailing as we would like for it to be. Thankfully, there is growth that comes with straining. Straining causes me to look to Jesus as my hope and help in times of difficulty.

The act of pressing on calls for great commitment on our part. It is an inspiring sight to behold when you see a person who is deeply focused and committed to God's goals, and nothing can stop their zeal for the kingdom. I have known many Christians who served despite physical ailments and limitations. They have proven that even though the body may, at times, break down, the spirit rises up and presses on. There is power for you and me in the act of endurance. Perhaps we can begin to see endurance as an act of worship unto the Lord.

READ: *Romans 5:3-5*

Endurance is key as we strain to press on toward the goal. Perseverance will help us to stay the course as well, just as it did for many of the faithful who have gone before us. Consider the words in Hebrews 12.

READ: *Hebrews 12:1-2*

Jesus endured the cross for the joy set before him. The goal of God's kingdom gave him great joy. The goal of being your Savior and my Savior gave Jesus great joy. The prize of the heavenly call is indeed full of great joy. It is worth it all to press on!

One of my grandfather's favorite things to say in the church was, "It is worth it all to serve the Lord." Because he felt so strongly about this, my father also came to feel strongly about this truth. Because my father felt strongly about it, I also came to feel strongly about this truth. I caught it because they taught it. And after many years in the ministry, I couldn't agree more with this statement than I do today. I do not regret having answered God's call.

Stepping through requires that we totally engage our faith. It requires faith in action. In other words, faith doesn't just become something we have, rather, it becomes something we do. I can think about stepping through towards the Heavenly call. I can pray about stepping through.

I can seek counsel about whether or not I should step through, but there comes a time when we must put some muscle behind our faith and take that first step!

This is when our faith has a chance to grow. While we cannot always know what we will encounter up ahead, we can rely on what we know is true about God's character. We know He was, and is, and always will be, faithful. Nothing we encounter will ever change this truth.

When I think of what it takes to step through as we press on to what lies ahead, I think of the Israelites who, under Joshua's leadership, were crossing the Jordan to take down Jericho and ultimately enter their promised land; scary and exciting times all rolled into one.

The Priests who carried the Ark of the Covenant were instructed to step into the waters' edge of the Jordan. At that moment, God would cause the rivers flowing from above to stop so that God's people could cross it safely and get to the other side. This miracle would not have occurred unless the Priest were willing to step through, thus creating a dry ground for the Israelites to cross over the Jordan.



READ: *Joshua 3:14-17*

Are we willing to step through to what lies ahead? Are we willing to press on toward the goal? Will we press on by stepping into the water's edge to participate in the miraculous things God desires to do?

If so, we step through by faith. We step through with confidence that comes from Christ. With assurance. Why? Because God still goes before us today. He has already made a way. And if He has already made a way, He will lead the way. It is up to us to boldly step through.

Reflect & Discuss:

- Have you ever made excuses that have prevented you from stepping through into God's call?
- What has God placed in your hand right now that will help you press on toward the goal of God's call?
- How does the parable of The Talents encourage you to press on?
- Think of a time when you stepped through by faith and saw a strong move of God as a result.

Stepping Through: An Open Door

By Rev. Joy Sherman

During a sermon series on the letters to the seven churches in the book of Revelation, I was captivated by these words of Jesus to the believers in Philadelphia: "Look, I have set before you an open door, which no one is able to shut" (3:7). This was spoken to a small community of Jesus followers whose city was originally established to become a missionary community for Greek culture to the uncivilized world. Jesus was commending the church for their faithfulness to His name and His word, and in response, He presented them with an open door. But for what purpose?

There are other references to open doors in Scripture. Many have a missionary or evangelistic emphasis attached. The apostle Paul often used this kind of language to speak about opportunities for sharing the Gospel:

"A great door for effective work has opened to me" (1 Cor. 16:9)

"At the same time pray for us as well that God will open to us a door for the word, that we may declare the mystery of Christ" (Col 4:3)

Read: *Acts 14:27 & 2 Corinthians 2:12*

Some scholars think this "open door" for the church in Philadelphia was a call to step into a different kind of missionary service. Don't make "culture" your message; make Jesus your message. For a people with a vast frontier of uneducated minds, Jesus was the only name they needed to know. God is an expert at making open-door offers.

To Abram: *“Leave and go to a place I will show you”* (Gen 12:1)

To Moses: *“So now, go. I am sending you to Pharaoh to bring my people the Israelites out of Egypt.”* (Exodus 3:10)

To disciples: *“Go, therefore, into all the world, and make disciples, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”* (Matthew 28:19)

Reflect & Discuss: *What are other “open door offers” you can think of in Scripture? Look at John 2 and Acts 9 for examples.*

Open doors from God are generous gifts. They are portals to potential. They are pregnant with possibility and effervescing with excitement. But before an open door is an activated gift, we must make a “threshold decision.” What does that mean? As we stand at the precipice of what lies beyond, each person must make the critical choice: Will you step through?

“Through” is an interesting and highly interactive word. It carries the idea of movement from one side or place to another side or place. It moves the concept of time from one moment to another. It implies continuation, keeping on until arrival or completion. It also implies endurance; a lasting or persevering mindset for a period of time.

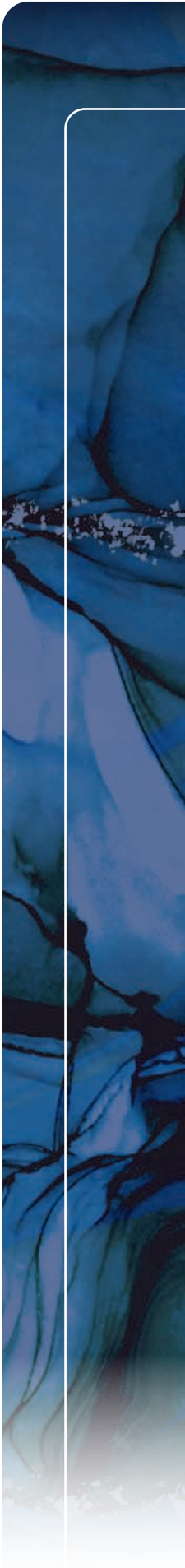
Spiritually speaking, followers of Christ are through people. It is through Jesus we are reconciled to God (2 Cor 5:18); He is the gate through whom we enter to find salvation (John 10:9), and He is the way through to the Father (John 14:6). Because of these incredible gifts, those who are in Christ are now people through whom the Gospel is proclaimed, demonstrated, and affirmed. We are the called-out ekklesia sent into the world as messengers of the Good News and emissaries of God’s restorative work through Christ.

As sent people, we don’t stand still with this assignment; like the shepherds of Christmas, we “go and tell” it everywhere, moving through the world in our spheres of influence to make Jesus known. We are the prophetic voices of the Lord today, functioning as the prophets of old in Scripture, through whom God brought words of warning and hope. Paul writes to the church at Corinth and says, “So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us” (2 Cor 5:20, NRSV). Jesus prayed for people who would come to believe in Him through the message His disciples (then and now) would speak about Him (John 17:20).

Reflect & Discuss: *Where else in Scripture do you see God’s people as “through” people? (i.e., wilderness journey). What other ways do you see God working through you?*

READ: *John 17:15-18*

In that same John 17 prayer, Jesus also gives us another window to the “through life” His disciples will live. Followers of Christ are sent into a world they are not “of,” but commissioned into a life they will step through daily as they share the love and transforming power of God until Jesus returns.



Yet with God, there is no forcing His people to walk through any door He opens into the future He prepared for us. He simply makes an invitation and allows us to RSVP. And here's where it gets tricky. We often overcomplicate the invite and get paralysis by analysis. Where? How long? What do I have to give up? Will it be difficult? Will it be worth it?

One of the reasons God shaped us to be through people is because of the situations and state of affairs we encounter walking through His open doors, many of which will bring hardship or challenge. The apostle Paul possessed this through attitude. He regularly encountered obstacles, disappointments, and roadblocks to his divine assignment to share the Gospel of Jesus. Several of his letters were penned during times of imprisonment and conflict. Yet whatever he experienced, a pervasive peace pierced through his predicaments. Because Paul's eyes weren't fixed on the present but on the future, he wasn't looking at his struggle or limitation. He looked through to who awaited him on the other side.

Consider Paul's words to believers in Philippi, written while "in chains for Christ" (1:13); Paul's spirit was joyful. Paul neither pined for the past nor stayed stuck in his suffering, but he carried the key to getting through it all: Christ alone. Paul determined he had nothing worth hanging onto except Jesus – not his lineage, not his education, not his rule-keeping, not anything (3:4b-7). In fact, Paul believed "knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" is so important; everything else is garbage (3:8), and it is worth enduring anything to obtain (3:9-14).

What has been your "go-to" to get through a difficult season? How does hanging on to Jesus enable you to endure and step through what is heavy and hard? When you consider all that you have, where does Jesus land on your value list?

It's not just that Paul feels this way about Jesus. His faith in who Jesus is and what Jesus has done for him causes Paul to follow his emotion with action. Listen to how he phrases it:

READ: *Philippians 3:12-14*

"I press on." Paul's power-packed plan is to push through. Other translations read: "I press toward," "I strive toward," and "I pursue." This is the language of active endurance, seeking eagerly to move ahead and forward with intentional effort. Paul was willing to go through whatever he needed to in order to have more of Jesus and make Him known.

Reflect & Discuss: How do you find the motivation to "press on" when you're in the midst of hardship? What keeps you going forward?

In Paul's letter, he makes plain the necessary choices he made to grow in intimacy and the knowledge of Christ and to go further up and further into the Presence of the Lord.

- 1) He chose to pursue Jesus more than anything else (vv 7-10)
- 2) He released things in his past (v 13b)
- 3) He allowed himself to be stretched (v 14)

For Paul, nothing mattered more than knowing Jesus and making Him known. Paul made a critical decision to pursue Jesus. He was willing to set aside everything he counted "gain" – reputation and prestige, education and heritage – to have a greater knowledge of Jesus.

He stepped through the trappings of a life defined by society's standards to take up a life only defined by Christ.

Reflect & Discuss: *What might God be inviting you to set aside to step through the open door of knowing Him more?*

Paul also relinquished things from his past. He uses a Greek word for forgetfulness, meaning “no longer caring for.” Those words from Paul are a powerful reminder that we must release things behind us to step through into the future. Mistakes, regrets, and hurts can weigh us down, preventing us from moving forward. Even joys from the past we hold onto can keep us tethered to believing we can only experience the Lord “the way we used to do.” You cannot drive a car only by looking through the rearview mirror. You’ll miss what’s ahead and likely miss your turn or run off the road.

Reflect & Discuss: *What things may God be asking you to release in order to take hold of more of Him?*

Paul also stepped through a limiting mindset and reached beyond himself to take hold of what Christ was offering. Our translation says “straining forward,” and the Greek word here literally means “to stretch one’s self forward.” To walk through an open door often requires us to stretch our thinking, stretch our willingness to do things, and go places we have never gone before. Certainly, for the church in Philadelphia to pioneer into untested territory with the Gospel message would take a “stretchable spirit.” Paul definitely had such a spirit and was willing to change course when the Lord closed a door and opened a different one (see Acts 16:6-10).

Reflect & Discuss: *How may God be stretching you with an open-door invitation? What spiritual muscles is He asking you to exercise to step through your fears and worries into a new season of life with Him?*

Remember what was at stake for Paul and for the Philadelphian church and what is at stake for us: “the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus” (v 14). God made us His own. He opens doors for us to experience more of Him and to make Him known to those who do not yet know. Every time we press on and make a threshold decision to step through into what He prepared for us, we know no matter what we encounter, we are moving toward the prize of His Presence forever and helping lead others into that same reality.

Prayer: *Lord, we thank You for the doors You have opened, that no one can shut. You don't force us to step through, but You invite us to trust You to take that step of faith. May we become Your “through people” who trust You to bring us through any situation so that You might make Your appeal to the world through us! In Jesus' name, Amen.*

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Description of Forms

The following pages have various forms to be used to update leaders on the state and national levels. This page provides a brief description of the forms and instructions for their use. One form is on each page for clarity and ease of sending that form to its proper location.

Page 49: National Mailing List Update Form

This form is to notify the national office of the name and other information for the incoming 2024-2025 local coordinator/leader. Once you, as a local group, have selected your local leader for the new year, fill out this form and **mail it to the national office** (P.O. Box 2328 Anderson, IN 46018-2328). This will allow the national office to update our records and to mail important information to each local leader. Feel free to make copies of this form as needed.

Page 51: Local Leaders List

This form is **sent to the state president** once you have selected each connector/officer for 2024-2025 term. Filling this form out as completely as possible and mailing it to the state president allows her to keep up-to-date records of each local unit of the Christian Women Connection. She, in turn, is then able to send out important information to each officer as needed so that ministry can occur in both directions. Feel free to make copies of this form as needed.

Page 53: Life Partnership Form

This page has two copies of the Life Membership form. For each person who pays a life membership, fill one form out as completely as possible and **mail it, with the \$150.00, to your state treasurer**. The state treasurer is then able to keep up-to-date records of those who have their paid life membership. Feel free to make copies of this page as needed.

2024 - 2025 National Mailing List Update

This page is for the incoming 2024-2025 coordinator/leader only. Complete the form after the new coordinator/leader has been selected. Please send this form to Christian Women Connection.

Name of the 2024 – 2025 coordinator/leader:

Street Address/Route/Box # _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Area Code/Phone # _____

Email Address _____

Group Name _____

Number of Members _____

Average Meeting Attendance _____

Former Leader's Name _____

Pastor's Name _____

Name of Congregation _____

City _____

State _____ Zip _____

Return this form to:

Christian Women Connection

PO Box 2328

Anderson, IN 46018-2328

Policy: The national office of Christian Women Connection attempts to remain in contact with every local group each year through annual mailings. By completing this form and returning it to the national office, you ensure that we have the correct information so that the right person will receive these mailings.

If your congregation has been receiving one mailing only but has more than one group, please make copies of this form and complete a form for each group. Once we receive the form for each group, they will receive their own mailing.

Make copies of this form as needed.



2024 - 2025 Local Leaders/Officers List

This page is for incoming 2024-2025 leaders only. Complete the name and address of each local leader/officer. Send the completed form to your state president.

State Coordinator/President Name: _____

District Name (use only if your state has multiple presidents):

Congregation Name: _____

City/State: _____

Position _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Daytime phone # _____ Email _____

Position _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Daytime phone # _____ Email _____

Position _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Daytime phone # _____ Email _____

Position _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Daytime phone # _____ Email _____

Position _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Daytime phone # _____ Email _____

Make copies of this form as needed.



Lifetime Partnership Form

This form is for a Lifetime Partnership (payment of partnership for life).

Date _____

Attached is payment of

☐ \$150.00 Lifetime Partnership (includes Lifetime Partnership Pin)

Please issue the Lifetime Partnership Card for:

Address of Lifetime Partner:

(Street) _____

(City) _____

(State) _____ (Zip) _____

Email of Lifetime Partner _____

Telephone # of Lifetime Partner _____

Church Lifetime Partner Attends _____

Send card and pin to _____

(Street Address) _____

(City) _____

(State) _____ (Zip) _____

Name of Sender: _____

(Street Address) _____

(City) _____

(State) _____ (Zip) _____

**Send this form along with \$150.00 to your
STATE TREASURER. Make copies as needed.**



[illegible]

[illegible]



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