The Uniter

CHURCH WOMEN UNITED IN IOWA

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WORLD DAY of PRAYER

World Day of Prayer
2015
Written by the women of the Bahamas

Jesus said, “Do you understand what I have done for you?”
Greetings to all as we begin a new year of Church Women United Celebrations. What a blessing it is to be in this ecumenical organization.

John 17:20-23 speaks to all of us working together. “I in them and you in me. May we be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.” That passage says to me that we are called to work together to share the Good News! This is often a challenge and always a blessing.

When we work together, we are a witness to the world. We have more ways to share Christ’s love. We can get more done to further the Kingdom. This seems especially important at this time in history, when the news is often about unrest, fear and dissension. We can lift each other up in love.

Church Women United is an excellent place to share our hopes for the world. We are called “to unite in a way that provides body and fullness for witness in a pluralistic, changing society.” May you find both challenge and blessing in this year.

Lynn Calvert

We ARE Church Women of Iowa UNITED—in action, in celebration, in friendship, and most especially in prayer. Join us every Monday for Sacred Space at Noon to pray for our CWU movement and for our young sisters in Nigeria and an end to ongoing violence there, as well as for other concerns in your community and the world.

The 2015 CWU Celebration theme, Companions on a Journey, reaches out to the community around us as we walk together toward peace, acknowledging diversity and encouraging the caregiver. Consider planning a Human Rights Celebration sometime this year, using materials in your Leaders’ Celebration Guide.

The Local and State Unit Annual Report Form (which replaces the Local and State Officers Form) is due to Sue Hattel, Regional Coordinator Ann Garton, and the national CWU office at this time. The form may be downloaded at www.churchwoman.org or contact us for a printed copy that can be mailed to you.

Plan to join in worship at World Day of Prayer on March 6 as we gather locally and in more than 170 countries globally. The Christian women of The Bahamas have written a powerful service for us. Serving you in LOVE through CWU.

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Church Women United in Iowa

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STAY INFORMED

For national CWU news
Subscribe to the national CWU magazine Churchwoman News. The cost is $15 for one year (six Issues). To subscribe, mail your name, address and a check for $15 to Church-Woman News, 475 Riverside Drive, Suite 243, New York, NY  10115

Make use of national CWU website:
www.churchwomen.org
Women, men and children in more than 170 countries and regions will celebrate World Day of Prayer on Friday, March 6. This year, the women of the WDP Committee of The Bahamas call us to consider Jesus’ words to the disciples after washing their feet: “Do you understand what I have done for you?”

The women of The Bahamas describe what Jesus does when he washes the disciples’ feet as “radical love.” Radical love comes from humility, compassion and commitment. God’s radical love is not static or self-centered; it reaches out and draws others in.

Although we may associate The Bahamas with the pleasures of vacation and images of tropical paradise, there is much more to learn. As we listen to our Bahamian sisters throughout the worship service, we see the transformation that occurs when a teen mother finds support to continue her education and raise her child, when a breast cancer survivor and people living with HIV/AIDS find strength to live out their journeys, and when the chains of oppression are broken. Through this service, the women of WDP Bahamas give us an invitation to beauty and love in the name of the transformative and radical love that Jesus brings to us all.

Invite your friends, family and communities of faith to join the women of The Bahamas in prayer and song to support ecumenical efforts toward justice, peace, healing and wholeness. The annual offering supports the work of World Day of Prayer USA and helps meet the needs of families in The Bahamas and around the world who are victims of many forms of poverty, violence and injustice.

World Day of Prayer is a worldwide ecumenical movement of Christian women of many traditions who come together to observe a common day of prayer each year on the first Friday in March. World Day of Prayer was founded on the idea that prayer and action are inseparable. Services begin at sunrise in the Pacific and follow the sun across the globe on the day of celebration. Each year a different country’s World Day of Prayer committee serves as the writers of the WDP worship service.

World Day of Prayer USA promotes justice and equality for women through prayer, partnerships, service and celebration.

For more information on World Day of Prayer, go to www.wdp-usa.org
The Bahamas is an archipelago (a group or chain of islands) covering approximately 100,000 square miles of water in the Atlantic Ocean. The islands that make up The Bahamas are known as the “Family Islands.” The northernmost island, Bimini, is 52 miles off the coast of Florida. From the southernmost island, Inagua, one can see the lights of Cuba and Haiti. The largest island, Andros, is 104 miles long by 40 miles wide at the widest point. New Providence island, home to the capital city of Nassau, is 21 miles long and 7 miles wide. The Andros Barrier Reef is the world's third longest. The temperature in The Bahamas is usually warm, and the hottest months, June to October, also see the greatest occurrence of hurricanes. Wildlife in The Bahamas can be found on land and in the sea. A simple walk in the shallow water near the beach will reveal crabs, snails, urchins, starfish, and sometimes even sharks. On land you will find the beautiful pink flamingo birds, the national bird of The Bahamas.

The total population of The Bahamas is 353,658, of which 248,948 live on the island of New Providence. The island of Grand Bahama, which boasts the nation’s second largest city, has a population of 51,756. Only six other islands have a population of 3,000 persons and over.

The descendants of African slaves constitute about 85% of the present day population, whites 12%, and other nationalities 3%. Haitian nationals, from the French/Creole speaking nation of Haiti on the island of Hispaniola, make up most of the migrant population in The Bahamas. The official language of The Bahamas is English intertwined with a special Bahamian dialect peculiar to most of the islands known as “Smokey Joe.”

The Commonwealth of The Bahamas is a constitutional monarchy and Queen Elisabeth II is the head of state. Until 1953, the Parliament was controlled by a white minority. The formation of the first political national party – the Progressive Liberal Party (PLP) - paved the road for change in these laws. In 1956, the Assembly approved an anti-discrimination law to promote ethnic equality, which gave to the Afro-Caribbean population access to rights that were denied before
Ecumenical Action/Global Concerns

You probably know that the CWU 2012-2016 Quadrennial Priority is "Bringing God's Shalom/Salaam to Our World." It takes no more than a glance at the newspaper or a few minutes of television news to see that we have a long way to go. We hear world leaders make grand references to peace, human rights, justice, security, empowerment, rule of law, and reaffirmation of commitment toward cooperation with each other. However, what we see is fighting, death, lack of consideration for human rights, poverty, refugees, and men, women and children who are suffering. Children in areas of fighting are not able to attend school. Some are homeless or have health problems because of a lack of medicines, food or good water.

Dear sisters in Christ, continue to pray that government leaders will live up to their responsibilities to their populations. May they seek God's wisdom to live for all God's children to be given human value and worth. Let them govern striving to live in peace.

Our 2015 Iowa State Project is Women For Women International. This humanitarian non-profit organization is headquartered in Washington, D.C. Participating women are nurtured and helped to learn how to rebuild their lives after circumstances of war. Placed in small groups, they learn to work together as a community. They are trained in economic, social, and civic responsibilities. Gaining skills, they develop confidence and the desire to mutually help each other. They are also taught basic health and wellness practices. If needed, there are literacy classes. All receive vocational and/or business training as well. A vast variety of programs are available: textiles, handicrafts, agricultural, livestock, service industry, food processing, and other livelihoods depending on their skills and strengths.

Internationally, this project is supported by direct “sister to sister” sponsorships and by governmental grants as well as foundation and corporate donors. As our 2015 CWU Iowa State Project, Women for Women International will be supported by contributions from members and Units throughout the year. Please urge your Unit to participate and give generously.

Both our Quadrennial Priority and our state project reach out to help women and children, our neighbors, in Christ's love. To God be the glory.

Blessings,
Denise Anderberg,
Ecumenical Concerns/Global Action Coordinator
Women for Women International
‘Strong women build strong nations’

The 2015 state project of CWU in Iowa is Women for Women International, a nonprofit humanitarian organization that provides practical and moral support for women survivors of war around the world. The project was approved at the 2014 State Assembly.

Women for Women International was founded in 1993 by Zainab Salbi, an Iraqi-American who is herself a survivor of the Iran-Iraq War. Headquarters are in Washington, D.C. In Women for Women International, participating women enroll in a one-year program designed to help them gain the skills, confidence, psychological healing, and mutual support needed to rebuild their lives after war. The women are placed in small groups that go through an educational program to learn about their rights and role in the economic, social, and civic life of their communities as well as about health and wellness practices and, if needed, basic literacy or numeracy training. That is followed by vocational and business training designed to strengthen existing skills and introduce new ones in both traditional and nontraditional fields. Vocational skills engage women in agriculture, livestock, food processing, various jobs in the service industry, textile and handcrafts, and other livelihoods.

The program is paid for through a mix of individual “sister to sister” direct sponsorships individual donors, and grants from governmental, multilateral, foundation and corporate donors. The group is currently at work in Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Democratic Republic of Congo, Iraq, Kosovo, Nigeria, Rwanda and South Sudan. For more information, go to the website www.womenforwomen.org.

CWU’s state projects alternates between state and national/international causes—state projects in even-numbered years and national/international projects in odd-numbered years. Last year’s project was Iowa Interfaith Power & Light.
Good things are happening in CWU in Iowa

The 2014 annual reports from CWU Units in Iowa show wonderful, meaningful projects and activities in our state. Here is a sampling of the variety of happenings in CWU.

- Spring and fall forums on environment and local missions.
- More than 1,800 May Baskets delivered to care centers in the Des Moines area.
- Human Rights Awards presented by several Units to local community leaders.
- Breakfast supported local hunger organizations.
- Lenten luncheons supported CWU and local projects.
- CWU operates local thrift shop.
- CWU members deliver Meals on Wheels.
- Bible studies held prior to each Celebration.
- Members assist in managing local food pantry.
- A Children’s Clothing Project provided vouchers for new clothes for kids.

CWU is active in Iowa. Praise the Lord! Amen!

Several Units created meaningful Human Rights Celebrations. In Dubuque, a program on restorative justice featured a talk by Val Bell of the Department of Criminology at Loras College. In Cedar Rapids, the speaker was Abby Pumroy, who shared the gospel with women in jail for nine years. The offering went to a local mission that works to transform neighborhoods. The event in Des Moines honored the Rev. Carolyn C. King, chaplain of the Des Moines Police Department.

Janet Holmes

Church Women United in Fort Dodge was saluted in the local newspaper, the Fort Dodge Messenger, with an article about their longstanding involvement in Operation Christmas, an annual program that collects clothing, toys and household good for families in need in the area.

We can all learn from each other! Local Units are doing interesting, valuable things in their communities. Share your ideas. Tell others what you are doing! Please send reports of your Celebrations to Shirley Frey, Ecumenical Celebrations chair, sjfre68@gmail.com, 316 Keomah Village, Oskaloosa 52577. The information will be part of the permanent record of CWU in Iowa and will be included in the following issue of The Uniter.
Shaping the 2016 campaign
CWU, others seek national conversation on the hungry, poor

Church Women United has joined with other faith groups in the U.S. to challenge our government to prioritize issues of hunger and poverty in our country and abroad. Specifically, CWU and others are challenging 2016 presidential candidates to release statements on how they plan to help hungry and poor people. The effort is designed to encourage more conversation and ultimately political action so that we as a country can responsibly, creatively and faithfully respond to the needs of those who need most. The following is a majority of the text of a letter sent in mid-January to known presidential hopefuls.

Dear ____________________________

Thank you for your willingness to stand for election to the office of president of the United States. The calling to public service is a sacred vocation. We hold you, and all of the candidates for nomination and election, in our prayers.

As national leaders from all the major branches of Christianity, we care deeply about many issues facing our country, but ending hunger and poverty is a top priority of our work together. We are praying for a president who will make ending hunger and poverty a top priority of his or her administration. Are you that leader?

We are making a simple request of each candidate and will publicly pursue your positive response: Please produce a three minute video telling the American people what you would do as president to offer help and opportunity to hungry and poor people in the United States and around the world.

It is our intention to distribute candidates’ videos broadly among our churches and to the public, as we did with similar videos produced by Governor Romney and President Obama in 2012. The Circle of Protection will not publicly evaluate your policy positions or endorse any candidate. Our goal is simply to make [the issue] part of our nation’s election year dialog.

God told Samuel, as he was choosing a national leader from among Jesse’s offspring, to look at their hearts (I Samuel 16). We will be calling on people of faith to examine presidential candidates to see if they have a heart for poor and hungry people. We want to know how each candidate proposes to fulfill the mandate to those who govern to "give deliverance to the needy" (Psalm 72).

Thank you again for your public service. May God bless and guide you in the months ahead.
(Your Signature)

CWU in Iowa suggests that you pose the same questions to candidates in your local elections. In addition, ask them about their campaign contributions—where they are getting funding.
Iowa will be in the CWU spotlight

An upcoming issue of Churchwoman News will feature Iowa, one of the states in the Central Region. We know about our state, but here is what we’d like others to know about us.

- Iowa is crossed by Interstate 80 (east-west) and Interstate 35 (north-south). The two roadways intersect in Des Moines.
- Church Women United in Iowa was established in 1935—five years before the national CWU.
- We have 24 local Units, mainly in the eastern part of the state, which is the most populated.
- Most Units celebrate at least two of the three Celebrations. In addition, the state had more than 100 World Day of Prayer observances in 2014.
- Fellowship of the Least Coin and Nickels for National are well supported.
- CWU in Iowa is focusing on adding churches that have come about in the last few years and on updating our denominational representatives.

Ann Garton, Central Region coordinator

The Central Region will hold a conference/retreat on Friday through Sunday, August 28-30, at the St. Benedict Retreat Center in Schyler, Neb. (east central part of the state). The theme will be “Journeying Together with ‘GPS.’” For information, visit the North Dakota CWU website at www.northdakotachurchwomenunited.org.

Welcome to the board

Denise Anderberg of Cedar Rapids is a new member of the State Board. She is Ecumenical Concerns/Global Action chair. Denise has been involved in CWU since the 1970s, serving as president and vice president of the Cedar Rapids/Marion Unit. She looks forward to getting to know members of the board “as we together serve God to bring unity to all our sisters in Christ’s name.” If you would like to receive valuable updates on national CWU news, please contact her at denise.anderberg@mchsi.com

We CAN help

Continue to collect tabs from beverage cans. Bring them to your Celebrations, then encourage your Unit to bring them to the State Assembly in October. The tabs are redeemed to finance educational opportunities for women in the Iowa prison system at Mitchellville.
The Uniter

2015 Celebrations
Companions on a Journey

May Friendship Day
Journey of the Caregiver
Caregiving is a journey entrusted to us by God. How can we provide support for our sisters in Christ who give of their own lives in order to care for others?

Human Rights Celebration
Journey Toward Peace
In a world troubled by war, injustice, slavery and bigotry, the journey toward peace is difficult and uncertain for many of God’s children. Since 1941, CWU has worked to be an advocate and guide for those deprived of their human rights.

World Community Day
Our Journey Together
The goal of the service is to unite the faith community in a time of praise and worship that demonstrates Christ’s reconciling love to the community.

For information about ordering Celebration materials, please contact the CWU national office at (212) 870-2347, prompt #2, or call direct (212) 870-1197.

Church Women United also observes World Day of Prayer in March. Information: www.wdp-usa.org

IMPORTANT IMPORTANT IMPORTANT

Please send a report of your Celebrations within four weeks after the event to (1) Shirley Frey, Ecumenical Celebrations chair; (2) Ann Garton; regional coordinator; and (3) the national CWU office. Addresses are elsewhere in this issue. Celebration forms are available at www.churchwomen.org

CWU Calendar

Friday, March 6
World Day of Prayer

Friday, May 1
May Friendship Day

Thursday, July 23
State Board meeting

Friday-Sunday, August 28-30
Central Region Retreat
Schyler, Neb.

Thursday, October 22
State Board meeting
Des Moines

Friday, October 23
State Assembly
Des Moines

Friday, November 6
World Community Day

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Please send a report of your Celebrations within four weeks after the event to (1) Shirley Frey, Ecumenical Celebrations chair; (2) Ann Garton; regional coordinator; and (3) the national CWU office. Addresses are elsewhere in this issue. Celebration forms are available at www.churchwomen.org
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Mission Statement of Church Women United
Church Women United is a racially, culturally and theologically inclusive ecumenical Christian women's movement, celebrating unity in diversity and working for a world of peace and justice.

Adopted by CWU Common Council
July 2000