

**Report to the Synod of the Southern Province 2018**  
**From: The Unity Women's Desk**

Mission, Purpose, and Values

The Unity Women's Desk (UWD) was formed in January of 2011 with the purpose of working with Moravian women around the world to help them deal with the most pressing issues facing them. Based on discussions that had taken place at three previous Consultations, the priorities of the UWD were established as Education, Violence against Women, Employment and Overcoming Poverty, Health Issues of Women and Children, Parenting Children for a More Just World, and Women in Ministry.

We set the giving of scholarships for education as our most important priority as an education is necessary for women to deal with the other issues. Providing loans was our second priority, and providing support (financial, moral, or other resources) for projects developed by the women of the various provinces (but for which they may not have the resources to carry out the projects) was our third focus. With this in mind, all gifts given to the UWD are divided thus: Scholarship Fund—40%, Gretta Gene and Irvin Leinbach Loan Fund—20%, and Project Fund—20%. The remaining 20% portion is reserved for the Administration Fund.

We were very fortunate to receive the proceeds from the sale of the Mission Gift Shop when it was closed in 2015. Since the Gift Shop was started by the Leinbach's, we felt it was important to keep the memory of their unstinting generosity alive by naming our loan fund after them. Also we have been blessed by using an all-volunteer staff until mid-2017, and the generosity of the Salem Congregation in supplying our office space. Thus we have been able to give almost all of the donations to the UWD to the women we serve.

The last four years have been filled with excitement and challenge for the Unity Women's Desk. Keeping in mind the Focus Areas listed above, we have worked with our women around the world to make all of our lives better. We have much to learn from each other and while most of the funding comes from the Southern and Northern Provinces in America, we are learning much from our sisters about life in other parts of the world and about the meaning of gratitude and total dependence on the Lord's grace. Not a day goes by that we do not experience God's guiding hand to lead our work and to provide just what we need to continue it.

Responsibilities

Although most of our responsibilities are self-imposed based on our desire to help the women in the ways they have requested, we have been assigned several tasks by the Unity Board, the Unity Synod of 2016, and the Unity Mission and Development Board (UMDB).

We have received an assignment from the Unity Board to produce a resource on Violence against Women (VAW) to be used in our seminaries for instructing present and future ministers in how to deal with families in which domestic violence is occurring and also how to work against the instance of VAW in our homes and communities. Dr. Deborah Appler has been working on this resource in coordination with professors at Moravian Theological Seminary in Bethlehem and Teofilo Kisanji University in Mbeya, Tanzania. We are planning to present the finished project to the Unity Board at their meeting this September.

We have recently been assigned the task of gathering information and suggestions for addressing the problem of human trafficking throughout the Unity by the UMDB.

Also, at our own request, we are conducting a survey of our Provinces/Mission Provinces/Mission Areas (P/MP/MA) and the ordained women in these provinces to see how the women are being treated and how we might help them to be better accepted and treated equally with their male colleagues.

### Summary of Activities

Since we started the UWD, we have increased our scholarships, loans, and grants for projects by 300%. We have given scholarships to 101 girls and women—some of these scholarships have been renewed for three to five years. We have given a total of 195 scholarships in 20 Provinces, Mission Provinces, and Mission Areas (P/MP/MA). While public education is becoming more widely available, there is still a need for additional funding for girls for supplies and uniforms to take advantage of the public schooling. More of our women are seeking theological education in almost all countries. With increased funding we are able to assist more women and to provide a greater percentage of the total amount needed for each academic year.

We have started businesses in Tanzania and Zambia in Africa, as well as in Honduras and Nicaragua in the Caribbean/Latin America Region. Our most outstanding business is the sewing school in Lake Tanganyika Province, which is now able to start repaying the loan. We have also started a hamermill business (grinding grain meal) and two fishing businesses in Zambia, and a cafeteria and two grocery stores in Tanzania. We loaned the women of Nicaragua \$2,000.00 to supply a grocery/general store in 2016, and they were able to repay their loan in full in 2017. Most recently, we have approved loans for a cafeteria and a secretarial school in Honduras, and a mercantile outlet for the handmade items of women in South Africa. We are also working with several groups of women in forming Vicobas (Village Community Banks) in Tanzania with the intention of loaning them money to purchase land on which they can begin farming or merchant enterprises from which they can repay their loans.

In 2016, we sponsored the Fourth Unity Women's Consultation, held in Paramaribo, Suriname. One hundred and thirteen women from twenty countries and twenty-five P/MP/MAs participated. We learned that the original six Focus Areas covered the various situations with

which women must deal; however, new aspects of some of the Focus Areas are now problems. Violence against Women now includes human trafficking of women and children. The health issues of women are changing and expanding as new foods and lifestyles are introduced in countries. Diabetes and high blood pressure are now as rampant as malaria in Africa. The Consultation also provided us with an opportunity to explain the work of the UWD. That has resulted in more provinces seeking support.

In addition, we have sponsored leadership seminars, HIV/AIDS seminars, an Emancipation Project in Albania for women who are victims of domestic violence, and the development of a Sunday School program to teach children and adults how to work for a more just world for everyone. In cooperation with Calvary Moravian Church, we have funded two separate locations of feeding programs in Honduras for children who are suffering from malnutrition.

### Future Direction and Opportunities

For the last year (beginning on March 12, 2018), the UWD has been engaged in a Southern Province-wide fund drive to raise funding to assure the future of the UWD for years to come. The Synod of 2014 approved the campaign in principle, dependent on further approval by the Provincial Support Services Board and the Provincial Elders' Conference. That approval was given in the fall of 2016 and a schedule was finalized to begin the campaign in March of 2017. The theme chosen for the campaign was "Standing with Our Sisters: Empowering Moravian Women around the World." "Standing with Our Sisters" was intentionally chosen to indicate that we were not just working on their behalf but were working with them to assure their success in this world. As approved by the Synod (and PSSB and PEC), our goal was set at \$250,000.00. We began with a "silent phase" in which we approached possible lead givers but also as a time to inform the Province about what the UWD is and what we are doing. Each month from March to September, we produced bulletin inserts to be distributed to all churches explaining the six Focus Areas of the UWD. From stories of women seeking ordination to the heart-rending photos and story of little Amelina, a small child suffering from malnutrition in Honduras (who participated in the feeding program at the Ahuas clinic and was returned to health)—through each month's insert, we told the stories of the girls and women we are attempting to help with our projects, scholarships and loans.

By the time we were ready for the public phase of the campaign in September, we were already very close to our goal. With the approval of the Steering Committee of the campaign, we decided that any funds over the amount we had raised by the end of September (\$320,000.00) would be used for our most pressing issue—being able to provide more funding for women attending seminary and university studies. Before the campaign, we were limited to awarding on \$500.00 per year for each woman unless no other requests were made from her province. With the additional \$80,000.00 we have raised, we will now be able to cover the full cost of tuition and/or living expenses (\$1,000.00 to \$5,000.00) for 2 or more women each year.

With the financial base we now have we are now contemplating raising the amount we award in each Province/Mission Province/Mission Area to \$3,000.00 per year (our limit in 2012 was \$1,000.00 per year). Our ultimate goal is to have \$5,000.00 for each P/MP/MA. That would amount to approximately \$150,000.00 per year in addition to loan funds and project support. Reaching this ultimate goal will depend on our supporters continuing to give so generously each year.

Attached to this report is a report on the fund-raising campaign, “Standing with Our Sisters” from the Moravian Ministries Foundation of America, which helped us administer the campaign.

We are very excited about the progress our women have made since 1995 toward a more satisfying and blessed existence. More of our women are getting a basic education and an increasing number are pursuing college degrees and other advanced training to prepare for the workplace. We see our role as standing with our sisters to assist them in whatever ways they request.