

**Empowering Women
to
“Glorify God and
Enjoy Him Forever”** ₁



*Organizing or Re-energizing
Women’s Ministry
in the Local Congregation*



By Kathy Barron

Bible Study & Workbook

A Resource of ARP Women’s Ministries

FOOTNOTES

¹Westminster Shorter Catechism

²Susan Hunt discussion at Erskine College, June, 2003

Bible Study—Introductory Guidelines

❖ Pray! Pray! Pray!

- ◆ Remember the importance of prayer to the success of this project:
 - *“If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.”* James 1:5
 - *“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.”* Ephesians 6:18
- ◆ Use the Devotional Guide along with the Bible Study Workbook.

❖ Before beginning! The leaders should read through the entire workbook to better understand the flow of the process.

❖ Work with the pastor, staff, and church officers.

- ◆ Ask for their prayer support.
- ◆ Explain what you are about to do:
 - Share ARP Women’s Ministries Vision Statement.
 - Build up women spiritually.
 - Redevelop women’s ministries so that it primarily enhances the work of the local church.
 - Encourage tithing and consolidate offerings to Synod’s agencies.
 - Spend a year in transition.
- ◆ Look at the Bible study plan to schedule meetings as necessary with pastor, session, and diaconate/finance committee.

❖ Possible time lines for your schedule

- ◆ Minimum of 8 weeks—9 programs.
- ◆ 3 Big Events—All women come together.
 - Start with the first Big Event – the Kick-off Event. Follow this with

the first four Bible Studies.

- ◆ Then, hold the second Big Event—the Speaker Event. Follow with the remaining two Bible studies.
 - ◆ Finish with the final Big Event—the Celebration Event.
 - ◆ The 6 Bible studies are planning meetings for the Planning Team of your church.
 - ◆ Could be 8 months—allowing 1 month between meetings.
 - ◆ Could be 16 weeks—allowing 2 weeks between meetings.
- ## ❖ For small churches:
- ◆ Your entire WOC or women’s Bible study may be your planning team.
 - ◆ In one of our smaller churches, the church has a family night dinner and the women meet while the Session meets, having made arrangements for activities for the children and youth – maybe you could use a format like this as you begin this work.
- ## ❖ For larger churches: Possible membership of your planning team (keep under 10 people.)
- ◆ Current and/or past president of WOC.
 - ◆ Former leader with a good grasp of church WOC traditions (this may be the same as above.)
 - ◆ Someone representing younger women.
 - ◆ Someone representing new members (could be same as above.)
 - ◆ Someone representing women’s groups not part of the WOC.
 - ◆ Someone representing long-time members who are not involved in WOC.
 - ◆ Someone clear about finances.
 - ◆ Be sure someone does complete and accurate recording of your discussion and plans—quickly getting copies to each member following each meeting.

- ❖ Making copies:
 - ♦ Each church will be given a copy of the entire Bible Study Workbook and Devotional Book.
 - ♦ Copies should be made of the Devotional Study for *every woman* in your church so that she may participate and your planning teams will be covered in prayer. Copies may also be obtained from the office of the *ARP Magazine* (See details below.)
- ❖ Publicity
 - ♦ Get events on the church calendar as soon as possible.
 - ♦ Include in the church and/or WOC newsletter.
 - ♦ Send personal invitations to the Kick-off Event to every woman—list the other two events as “coming” and to look for details in the bulletin/newsletter/etc.

- ❖ Models
 - ♦ Make a model of what you have now.
 - ♦ Model for building a “whole new thing” is included in Appendix A.
 - ♦ Examples from other churches with new approaches are in Appendix B.
 - ♦ Consider new job titles.
- ❖ Please provide feedback to ARP Women’s Ministries Board:
 - ♦ What is your Vision Statement?
 - ♦ What is your new structure?
 - ♦ Who is your point of contact for communication?
 - ♦ How useful was this Workbook? What worked and why/why not?
 - ♦ What was the result of the 40-Day Devotionals?

At any point where you need assistance, please contact the ARP Women’s Ministries Administrator or any member of the Women’s Ministries Board.

DEVOTIONAL BOOKLETS

Each church should have received master copies of *FROM THE GROUND UP—A 40-day devotional study & prayer guide focusing on uniting & building your local women’s group* for duplicating. For those who would prefer to purchase them in finished booklet form, they are available from the *ARP Magazine*.

Please send _____ copies @ \$1.25 ea. = _____

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Please mail this coupon (or a copy) with payment (including shipping) to:

Devotional Booklets
c/o ARP Magazine
1 Cleveland St., Ste. 110
Greenville, SC 29601-3696

Kick-off Night: Prayer and Brainstorming

—an event for all women in your church

AIM:

To build enthusiasm among the church's women about the possibility of new vision in women's ministry in their local church and in the denomination.

To allow them an opening format to be heard.

GET READY

Decorations/set-up: New things/new "school year."

Supplies/preparations:

- ◆ New crayons, pencils, or rulers
- ◆ New pennies
- ◆ New "shoes"—colorful shoelaces
- ◆ New "school clothes"—paper dolls
- ◆ New lunchbox—a new recipe
- ◆ Etc.—Be creative
- ◆ The Devotional Booklet—plan how you will distribute these
- ◆ Closing activity supplies (See G below.)
- ◆ Paper, pens/markers, scissors
- ◆ "Seed packets"
- ◆ Appropriate scene for planting—tree and ground
- ◆ Decide whether this event will be arranged around a meal—perhaps have dessert at the half-way point.

EVENT OUTLINE

A. Opening Prayer and Welcome
Read Scripture: Isaiah 43:5-7, 12-13, 18-21 and 44:3-5.

B. Ideas

- ▷ The new school year is exciting.
- ▷ The new school year is scary.

C. Show and Tell

How do teachers help children bring "home" and the past into this new experience?

- ▷ Show and Tell
- ▷ Review
- ▷ Skit: (Some of this could be shared music.)
 - ◆ Begin with pre-school "Show and Tell"—more than one.
 - ◆ Advance to first grade.
 - ◆ Then to "What I did this summer" essay.
 - ◆ Then move to a "review" faith story—youth or adult.
 - ◆ Then to a specifically WOC/women's ministries' faith story.

- ◆ Then have a faith story centered in something new God has called someone to do.

Possible break for refreshments or—if a meal was served—serve dessert here.

D. Address the new opportunity for women to evaluate the ministry of the women in the local church.

- ▷ New vision
- ▷ New study
- ▷ New work together
- ▷ New service
- ▷ New friends, sisters in faith
- ▷ New focus

E. Bible study on Isaiah 43:16-21 (See accompanying outline.)

F. Introduce devotional booklet and explain how your church will use this. Hand out copies if not already distributed.

G. Activity:

- ▷ Everyone “show and tell.”
 - ◆ Provide paper/scissors/markers for drawing on past experiences of faith/women’s work that was most meaningful. Provide a place to post these (a well-established “tree.”)
 - ◆ “Shopping list” for new things— Provide “Seed packets” to write down ideas for new things to do, new ways to support the church. Post as a fall “planting” for spring “beauty” (or provide paper “school supplies” for spring “graduation.”)

H. Dismiss with prayer.

ASSIGNMENT

Print each committee member a list from suggestions in Activity G.

BIBLE STUDY ON ISAIAH 43:16-21

Two background comments:

- ◆ In Isaiah, God speaks to His people, Israel, through the prophet Isaiah. Since the time of Jesus Christ, “God’s people” have been defined as the Church, “the body of Christ”, all believers.
- ◆ Most scholars divide Isaiah’s 66 chapters into two main portions, similar to the 66 books of our Bible: The first 39 chapters present God’s plan for the His people, His judgment on them and His history with them. Chapters 40-66 bring hope to His people that He will return them to the land and that He will provide a Savior to them. While all of these messages are evident within both parts, there is an overall hopefulness in the these 27 chapters.

Chapters 43 and 44 are in this latter portion of Isaiah, a portion focused on the restoration of God’s people. Take time to read through all of these chapters when possible. God reminds the Israelites, and believers today, of His love and ever-presence.

In relation to our plan for this event and this lesson, examine this scripture for the following:

- ❖ God’s show and tell throughout Isaiah—His faithfulness.
- ❖ God’s new thing—Our women are about to embark on “a new thing.”
- ❖ God draws His people, Israel’s descendants, from the four corners of the earth. We must draw from all of our women and call them to faithfulness.
- ❖ Today God draws people into His Church from many backgrounds:
 - ◆ Some have remained faithful from childhood.
 - ◆ Some have learned from their parents and grandparents.
 - ◆ Some heard the Gospel but it didn’t “stick” at the time.
 - ◆ Some are hearing of God for the first time.
 - ◆ Some have parents who forsook their faith and who will not support them now.
- ❖ From this diverse group God wanted to build a more faithful Israel: Today’s Body of Christ, the Church.
- ❖ We want God to use the women of this church to build a stronger and more faithful body of Christ, locally and denominationally.

Doing a New Thing

a Bible study for the Planning Team

AIMS: *To examine the Biblical roles of women
To see the positives in “newness”*

- A. Opening Prayer
- B. Allow time for everyone to review the input of the women from the Kick-off event
- ▷ Introductions: Why are you here?
 - ▷ In relation to the work of the women in our church, what are you feeling right now?
- C. Bible Study on Proverbs 31:10-31 & I Corinthians 12 (See accompanying outline)
- D. Preparing to do a new thing
- ▷ What does your church have currently?
 - ▷ It may be a great women’s organization that involves as many women as one can reasonably expect from your congregation—A real beauty of community—a butterfly
 - ▷ It may be a struggling women’s organization—wondering how to make itself better—a cocoon just waiting to become something wonderful
 - ▷ It may not exist at all but there is great potential—a caterpillar that is fascinating to watch but not at all what it can be in beauty and flight
 - ▷ Do you enjoy getting new shoes? Are they really comfortable right off the shelf? It takes a while to get used to them.
 - ▷ What does it take to do something new?
- E. The ARP Church in the 21st Century
- ▷ Not a rural community church in most cases
 - ▷ Spread far beyond the Carolinas and Georgia
 - ▷ Many mission churches/church plants
 - ▷ Local churches are not as inter-generational
 - ▷ Many women do not have nearby Christian parents or grandparents
 - ▷ Only about half of the existing churches have a women’s ministries program affiliated with the denominational women
- F. Brainstorming:
(Provide blackboard/whiteboard/flipchart and someone to record your thoughts)
- ▷ What new things do you want to see happen:
 - ◆ In your church?
 - ◆ Among your women?
 - ◆ As an ARP—in the denomination?
 - ▷ What would you most like to do?
 - ▷ What would you most like to support? How?
 - ▷ Begin to prioritize this list

ASSIGNMENTS

(Give concrete assignments at each meeting)

- ◆ *Are there things that your organization should be doing that you are not?*
- ◆ *What do young women seek in your church?*
- ◆ *What should they be seeking?*
(These may have the same answer)
- ◆ *What are the demographics of your women? Age, income, marital status, working or at home, active or inactive in Sunday School or Bible study, etc.*
- ◆ *Find and examine your church’s vision/purpose statement or ask your pastor what he thinks it is.*
- ◆ *Examine the Vision Statement of ARP Women’s Ministries.*

BIBLE STUDY ON PROVERBS 31 AND 1 CORINTHIANS 12

The analogy: what the Prov. 31 woman is to the home, the women can be to the local church—a helper who completes the whole of the church

- ❖ Just as every family is different every church—family of faith—is different and has different growth needs and service opportunities—Example: How I minister in my home is different from how you minister in your home. How women minister in this church will be different from how women minister in another church with a different vision or priority
- ❖ Without the meaningful use of the gifts of the women, the gifts of ½ the adults in the congregation are not being utilized to their fullest potential
- ❖ The purpose and gifts of the women are discerned in the community of faith
- ❖ Women meeting together help unify this aspect of the local church and help each other discern gifts
- ❖ As leaders your job will be to examine these gifts and the purpose of your church so that the local body of Christ is unified and built up by your spiritual growth and service

Moving Ahead by Looking Back

a Bible study for the Planning Team

AIM: *To look at the existing women's group (if there is one) and see what should be maintained and what should be eliminated OR To examine women's ministries in a new situation and see how women are currently serving*

- A. Opening prayer
- B. Read aloud but do not answer these questions: *(Post these so everyone can see them)*
 - ▷ What do you hear the women say most often when women's work is brought up? Positively and negatively.
 - ▷ What is the relationship between:
 - ◆ the Pastor(s) and the women?
 - ◆ the Session and the women?
 - ◆ the Diaconate and the women?
 - ▷ Is your group task-oriented, theology-oriented, or person-oriented?
 - ▷ As you examine "women's work" in this church:
 - ◆ What is the attitude of the older women?
 - ◆ What is the attitude of the really active women?
 - ◆ What is the attitude of the inactive women?
 - ◆ What is the attitude of newcomers or the younger women?
 - ▷ Where does the money go? Do you know?
 - ▷ What is working well? What is not working at all?
 - ▷ What would you like to change?
 - ▷ What would you like to delete?
 - ▷ What would you like to add?
- C. Bible Study on Titus 2. (See accompanying outline.)
- D. Answer the above questions (B.)
Now consider:
 - ▷ Teaching Christian parenting skills.
Where are women learning their parenting skills today?
 - ▷ Special projects
 - ▷ Retreats
 - ▷ Service "duties" within your church.
Are they best served by the women or by another group?
 - ▷ Bible studies and Circles
 - ▷ Outreach
 - ▷ World missions
 - ▷ Mission churches (church planting)
- E. How will these ideas affect:
 - ▷ **Each** individual woman in your church?
 - ▷ Families?
 - ▷ Local church activities and finances?
 - ▷ Denominational commitments?

ASSIGNMENTS

- ◆ *Listen to your church staff.*
- ◆ *Examine how this meeting's results match those vision/purpose statements you found or discerned.*

BIBLE STUDY ON TITUS 2

Look at the history of denominational women's work to see why we have our current structure.

The following resources will give further information on this work.

- ◆ Ruble, Randall T., ed. *The Bicentennial History of the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church 1950-2003*. Grand Rapids, MI: McNaughton & Gunn. 2003.
- ◆ Skelton, Alice H., ed. *Woman's Work in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church*. Greenville, SC: Associate Reformed Presbyterian Center. 1979.

Below is a time line of the work of the women taken, primarily, from those sources:

Nov. 1, 1782

Philadelphia, Pa.: Associate Reformed Synod formed.

1818 Old Steel Creek Church, Mecklenburg County, N.C.: First local women's organization formed for Home Mission Service

1871 Kings' Creek, S.C.: Ladies' Missionary Society formed. Winnsboro, S.C.: Women's Benevolence Society formed.

Next 25 years

75+ churches formed women's organizations. Usually for missions/often young people combined.

1898 Woman's work formally recognized by Synod. First General Superintendent: Miss Mattie Boyce.

1900 First report on women's work included in *Minutes of Synod*.

1907 Second Presbyterial formed.

1909 First and Arkansas Presbyterials formed.

1910 Tennessee-Alabama Presbyterial formed.

Nov. 12, 1915

Due West, SC: denomination-wide Woman's Synodical Missionary Union formed

1917 Junior Christian Union placed under WSMU.

1918 Established monthly publication: *Associate Reformed Presbyterian Journal of Missions*.

1918 Secretaries of causes were established: junior, intermediate, educational, foreign missions, home missions, and orphanage.

1919 WSMU Junior Secretary became first salaried employee.

1919 Established Standards of Excellence for WSMU.

1920 Asked by Synod to take all responsibility for Junior and Intermediate Christian Unions.

1920 Asked Presbyterials to become part of WSMU.

1920s Chairmen of Synod's Foreign Missions and Home Missions Boards are asked to be ex-officio members of the WSMU. Took on support of Miss Macie Stevenson, missionary to Mexico. Junior Christian Union leaders now selected by women for approval by Session.

1921 District women's conferences begun.

1922 Began holding annual meeting at Bonclarken, denominational assembly grounds.

1925 July designated Jubilee Birthday Month: 50th anniversary of foreign mission work

1925 Synod voted to allow WSMU president to personally give report to Synod

1926 1st time President addressed Synod.

1928 Appointed Bonclarken Conference Committee.

1947 Intermediate Christian Union conferences begun.

1950 "Missionary" is removed from the name.

1950 Synod agreed to place WSU members on their boards.

1950 Bonclarken conference is now one week long.

1960 Synod moves Junior and Intermediate Christian Unions under its newly-formed Board of Christian Education.

1960 Synod's Central Committee formed. WSU president is part of this board.

Aug 9, 1970

WSU opens its own building at Bonclarken.

1970 Bonclarken Gift Shop begun as WSU fundraiser.

1973-1975

Synod's publications all become one: WSU, Christian Education and denominational combined.

1975 Synod's Executive Board is formed with WSU president included.

Early 1990s

WSU survey done to find out what changes needed to be implemented in the WSU to make it a more viable organization in today's world.

Late 1990s

WSU Task Force formed to examine why younger women are not becoming active in local WOCs or the WSU.

2002 WSU Task Force formed to evaluate and recommend reorganization of the WSU as a whole organization to enhance its ministry

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Generally, faithful women in community-based churches sought an outlet for service to missions both at home and abroad. They formed local societies to organize this service. Often their work included providing the youth programs in the local churches.

- ❖ How has that initial call to service in missions and to youth changed?
- ❖ What does this passage from Titus say about what we need to be doing today?

Ultimately: Each woman needs to be trained and allowed to "glorify God and enjoy Him forever.

Seeing the Road Ahead

a Bible study for the Planning Team

AIM: *To see the women's work as a building block in the make-up of the local church's ministry*

- A. Going to a new place:
 - ▷ Whom do you ask for directions?
 - ▷ If traveling with someone who's never been there before, do you listen to their directions? Why or Why not?
 - ▷ What do you do if you get lost?
 - ▷ Where do you focus? On the road or on the windshield?
 - ▷ Do you have to understand the directions completely, visually see the road, before you take off?
 - ▷ Whose road is it anyway?
- B. Bible Study on Proverbs 3:1-6 and John 14:1-6--see accompanying outline
- C. What is this church's mission and long-range plan?
 - ▷ What unique gifts do our women have to bring to the forefront?
 - ▷ What parts of this vision might be uniquely the women's?
 - ▷ What parts should be shared more fully, handed off to someone else, or let go entirely?
 - ▷ How does this define direction/vision for our women?
 - ▷ What does this mean financially in our church?
 - ▷ How does ARP Women's Ministries fit our picture:
 - ◆ As a resource?
 - ◆ As a recipient of our support (prayer, participation, and offerings) and service?
 - ◆ Do we understand the need to support denominational projects and the operating expenses of ARP Women's Ministries?
- D. Let's thoroughly look at the models we've been given (Appendices A and B).
 - ▷ What do we need to do directly to more effectively encourage tithing and giving offerings through our local church, thus building it up not only financially but also spiritually?

ASSIGNMENTS

- ◆ *Take your ideas to the staff (and any elders on whom you rely for guidance)—give them time to examine and give input.*
- ◆ *Spend some time reviewing the answers you've given to all the questions of these three meetings.*
- ◆ *Each member build a model for your organization (for discussion at the next meeting.)*
- ◆ *Develop a Vision Statement and some Goals for your group.*

BIBLE STUDY ON PROVERBS 3:1-6 AND JOHN 14:1-6

- ❖ Who provides our road map?
- ❖ Whom do we ask for directions?
- ❖ Whom do we want guiding each woman of our church family?
- ❖ How will that impact her relationships? Family, work, leisure
- ❖ Whom do we want guiding our organization?
- ❖ Do we have to understand it all right now? Why or why not?

Notes:

Building Up the Body of Christ

a Bible study for the Planning Team

AIM: *To prepare a plan to present to the pastor and Session for women's ministry in this church.*

A. Recipe story (*from workshop for York County churches, November 2004*):

This process and ARP Women's Ministries are something new.

Consider it a new recipe.

But a recipe is just so much paper until we gather the ingredients and make the dish.

It may even look good coming out of the oven. But we have to take the first bite—

*to know how it turned out,
for it to nourish us,
for true enjoyment.*

It may have looked or tasted great in someone else's house—

but not be quite right at home.

Our sources for ingredients and oven temperatures vary.

I have a friend who has to adjust all baking recipes for the high altitude of the Western North Carolina mountains.

It may not be exactly right as it is for our family.

I grew up making my mom's recipe for spaghetti sauce. We had spaghetti one night a week for as far back as I can remember.

One of the great things about making this was smelling the onions simmering as they were dumped into the pan.

I still love spaghetti and use that recipe **EXCEPT—**

my husband is allergic to fresh onions.

I can get away with dried onions in cooking but nothing more.

To our son, this *IS* the family recipe—*HIS* mom's recipe.

He loves it and makes it for himself and his wife.

If I cook for John's side of the family it has to have *NO* onions, dried, onion powder, anything—for his father is even more allergic.

I could have refused to make the recipe at all if I couldn't use exactly what Mom used.

I could have chosen to only have spaghetti when John wasn't around.

I could have chosen to only eat it at my Mom's house.

Not only would I have missed this treat, but John and Jeremy would have missed out on what is one of our favorite family meals.

If you knew how picky Jeremy is to feed...

I hope you get the point.

So we may have to adjust the recipe

AND we may take the same recipe, use it for awhile, and tweak it some over time to improve it.

The new organization provides some direction, but primarily leaves you to develop your local church organization to meet the needs of your family—the church family.

The recipe you have now may be working just fine—

It may simply need tweaking

It may need major adjustments

It may not be what your family, the local church, needs at all

- ▷ Post Vision Statements and Purposes/
Goals of ARP Women’s Ministries
- B. Bible Study on Ephesians 4:7-16, 29-32—
see accompanying outline.
NOTE: Keep Ephesians 4:29 always at the
forefront during discussion—Why are we
here?
- C. Hear the input from staff and officers.
- D. Come up with a rough draft for:
 - ▷ Vision Statement
 - ▷ Goals
 - ▷ Model organization
 - ▷ Financial plan

- ▷ All-church events the women wish to
especially promote (consider Jubilee
Birthday, specific prayer events, etc.)
- ▷ Denominational connections
- E. Finalize your list of things to hand off,
delete, work through with others more
closely.

ASSIGNMENTS

- ◆ *Split up those rough drafts so they can be refined
for presentation to the women, to the pastor and
staff, to the elders and deacons.*
- ◆ *Prepare your part in the next Event.*

BIBLE STUDY ON EPHESIANS 4: 7-16, 29-32

Introduce the idea of the groups/committees
within a local church being similar to individu-
als within the body of Christ.

- ❖ Discuss the passage as a whole
 - ◆ Christ’s grace
 - ◆ Gifts and service
 - ◆ Unity
 - ◆ Truth
 - ◆ Love
- ❖ Application
 - ◆ What is God’s purpose for the
church?
 - ◆ What is the mission or purpose of
this particular church?
 - ◆ How does the women’s organiza-
tion fit into that mission?
 1. Do its activities help or hinder?
 2. Where are its gifts focused?
 3. What committees, staff posi-
tions, etc. are being duplicated
in this organization?
 4. What is it uniquely capable of
doing and how?
 5. How will these ideas build up
the body of Christ?
 - locally?
 - denominationally?
 - within the community?

Close with Ephesians 3:14-21, Paul’s prayer
for them, and/or John 17:22-23, Jesus’ prayer
for unity.

Be Still! (Waiting and Watching)

an event for all the women of your church

AIMS: *To pray and worship
To see what has been done so far*

Note: This event contains a devotional and guest speaker rather than a Bible study

GET READY

Decorations/set-up: *New Year's Eve party format (Consider "New Year" type decorations—gold and glitter.)*

Supplies/preparations:

- ◆ *Decorations should include Christian symbols. Each table could have a large Trinity symbol such as the three circles intertwined.*
- ◆ *Markers and slips of paper or other symbol cut-outs*
- ◆ *Tape or glue sticks*
- ◆ *Possibly cut-outs of woman, house, church combined in some way with new Vision statement and goals/purposes printed on them.*
- ◆ *To take home: Praying Hands with list of **specific** prayer concerns that have arisen as your Planning Team has been at work.*
- ◆ *Decide on the refreshments or meal to accompany this event.*

EVENT OUTLINE:

- A. Opening prayer
- B. Opening activity:
 - ▷ Have the women at each table name attributes or names for God in all three Persons. Write them on slips of paper provided and stick them onto the large Trinity symbol at their table.
 - ▷ Encourage the women to examine each table's results when you take a break.
- C. Devotional on Jeremiah 29:11-13. Prepare this with one of your own women leading OR *you might ask your pastor to do this—bringing his presence into the midst of the women more clearly*
Music—based on the attributes of God.
- D. Present the highlights of your new plan—emphasizing it is in the draft stage. Give them a date when they will see the completed version so they can be prepared to vote knowledgeably.
- E. Speaker: Someone from ARP Women's Ministries to talk about the new organization and its direction. This will help you clarify whether or not you are thinking along the same lines as the denominational organization and see what resources are available or will be available to help your organization prosper. *(You might try to send the speaker your plans ahead of time so that she can review them and address them in her talk.)*
 - ▷ Allow each table time to jot down questions or have a question and answer session.

***Take a break at this point
or prior to the speaker.***
- F. Ask the following question for table discussion: (try to encourage each woman to answer—on paper first)
 - ▷ In relation to your place in this church or women's organization, do you feel you are:
 - ◆ Burned-out,
 - ◆ Rusted-out,
OR
 - ◆ Well-oiled?

G. Music and directed prayer for the future of your group and for each woman's commitment to it and her part in it.

H. Closing (music?)

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ASSIGNMENTS

Have recorder get feedback from this meeting to each member of the planning team.

The Nitty Gritty

a Bible study for the Planning Team

AIMS: *To build a constitution/by-laws, as necessary, to support the changes being made.
To consider a time-line/plan for building the organization.*

- A. Opening prayer and discussion.
 - ▷ What was the feedback from the previous women's event?
 - ▷ What did you hear from the speaker to which you should react?
- B. Bible Study on 1 Peter 4:7-11 and Exodus 18:13-23. (See accompanying outline.)
- C. Constitution and By-laws
 - ▷ Examine your existing constitution and by-laws.
 - ▷ Will they meet your current vision for women's ministry?
 - ▷ What needs to be changed? Do you need to start over?
 - ▷ How are you going to choose your leadership?
 - ▷ Who will handle finances and what checks and balances will you put into place?
 - ▷ How do you define membership?
- D. Financial Planning
 - ▷ Do you understand the ideas presented in the new ARP Women's Ministries?
 - ▷ What do the changes mean to the financial plan for the women?
 - ◆ Tithes should go to the local church to support its ministries.
 - ◆ You need to work with the local church's planning team to figure out the best way to continue support of agencies in the denomination that will no longer receive your direct offerings.
- E. Time-line
 - ▷ These documents will need to receive the approval of:
 - ◆ your existing women's board (if you have one)
 - ◆ the pastor and Session
 - ◆ the deacons for the financial plan (if they are involved)
 - ◆ the entire women's organization.
 - ▷ A nominating committee may need to be named.
 - ▷ An election may need to be held.
 - ▷ Leadership training needs to be scheduled.

If you need a starting point you might look at the Constitution and By-laws of ARP Women's Ministries.

You must abide by your EXISTING documents until a new one is officially put into place.

- ▷ All of this needs to be placed on the church calendar.
 - ▷ How are you going to educate your women to the benefits of this change?
- F. List specific prayer concerns related to these changes and documents. Pray together.

ASSIGNMENTS

- ◆ *Take the list home for individual prayer.*
- ◆ *Prepare these documents for presentation—split up this work.*
- ◆ *Schedule the meetings necessary for refinement—especially with your pastor and whomever is your financial contact.*

BIBLE STUDY ON 1 PETER 4:7-11 AND EXODUS 18:13-23

- ❖ Ask the following questions about both passages as you study each one: *(Possibly break up into 2 groups allowing each one time with one passage and to report back to the whole group.)*
- ❖ What is the context of this passage?
 - ◆ What is the main point of this interchange?
 - ◆ What does it teach to the local church?
 - about the first step?
 - about service?
 - about attitude?
 - ◆ How does this impact the work you are doing as a Planning Team?
 - ◆ How does it impact the ministry of women in your church?

Prayer and Refinement

a Bible study for the Planning Team

AIMS: *To prayerfully consider the work that has been done.
To prepare for the final presentation to the women for their support and vote.*

- A. Worship God—Pray His attributes and names.
- B. As you feel led, pray one word prayers for the tasks before you—i.e. “Harmony,” “Clarity,” “Understanding,” etc.
- C. Invite the pastor for his input if you think it would be helpful.
- D. Bible Study on Psalm 121 and Romans 12 (See accompanying outline.)
- E. Review all that you have done in an orderly manner.
 - ▷ Is the wording clear?
 - ▷ Are all the needs of your women addressed?
 - ▷ Are you building up your church?
 - ▷ Are you building up the ARP Church as a denomination?
- F. Are you building up the community of ARP Women?
- F. What do you need to provide to those planning the *Send-off Celebration*?
 - ▷ Hand-outs
 - ▷ Visual aids/presentations
 - ▷ Time needed/format
 - ▷ Other?
- G. Let it go
 - ▷ Again, go to prayer and place this work in God’s hands.
 - ▷ Close by reading together Psalm 121.

ASSIGNMENTS

- ◆ Carry out those meetings that need to take place.
- ◆ Clarify who is doing what at the **Send-off Celebration**.

BIBLE STUDY ON PSALM 121 AND ROMANS 12

- ❖ Psalm 121: What do you learn about God and His character in this Psalm?
 - ◆ How do the words found here apply to you at this time?
 - ◆ What comfort do you find in them?
- ❖ Romans 12: What phrase or verse stands out to you? Why?
 - ◆ What does this have to do with this stage of the work you are doing?
 - ◆ What guidance do you find?
 - ◆ What warnings do you find?
 - ◆ What comfort do you find?
 - ◆ What prayers do you need to pray to live out this passage’s impact on you?

121
121
121
121

Notes:

Send-off Celebration—The New Generation

an event for all of the women of your church

AIM:

To draw as many women as possible from the congregation into excitement about and support of the direction the women's ministry of this church is going.

GET READY

Decorations/set-up: A Baby Shower (or Bon Voyage Party) atmosphere.

Supplies/preparations:

- ◆ Handouts of new organization as needed.
- ◆ Cut-outs of presents
- ◆ Markers or pens/pencils
- ◆ Decide on refreshments

Depending on your existing constitution and the time-line you have developed you may be voting on these issues or you may just be presenting them for a future vote. The main objective is to build enthusiasm and commitment.

EVENT OUTLINE:

- A. What will we name the baby?
 - ▷ Present the name if it is changing or celebrate the existing name.
 - ▷ Read Proverbs 31:10-31—see accompanying notes.
 - ▷ Have someone do a devotional based on this passage.
- B. Have you seen the ultrasound yet?
 - ▷ Share the new organizational structure
- C. The Gifts: Providing for the Baby
 - ▷ The organization's vision for building up the church.
 - ▷ The women's unique gifts and responsibilities.
 - ▷ The financial plan.
 - ▷ Support for the "parents"—the board or leadership team.
- D. Recognize caring for the baby is not always pretty. Sometimes it's downright messy! But there's always a way to clean up.
 - ▷ Proverbs 3:5-6
 - ▷ Present the time-line of transition
- E. Nurture the baby—"Train a child in the way (s)he should go..." (Prov. 22:6)
 - ▷ Emphasize the uniqueness of this church's women's ministry
 - ▷ Focus on God's plan for this church and for the women within the congregation
 - ▷ Using "present" cut-outs—
 - ◆ allow the women to make a commitment to this new vision—in general or with specific time, talents, resources
- F. Celebrate this church!
 - ▷ Enjoy singing together or a special musical presentation
- G. Pray for a safe delivery!

(A wonderful selection of music for this time is the choral anthem: Many Gifts, One Spirit)

9
NINE

NOTES TO CONSIDER ON PROVERBS 31

EXCERPTED from President's report to Catawba Presbyterial Union, August, 2002.

Let's put this in a biblical context—"The Proverbs 31 Woman."

Does that phrase strike pride, a sense of accomplishment, vision *or* fear, humility, uncertainty in your heart? If most of you are like me the latter emotions are more likely.

I know that I will never fulfill all that is entailed in becoming such a paragon of the faith—most of the time I know that I will never even come close.

However, I want to talk about these virtues in light of our Christian family—the church.

I realized how our WOCs in the local churches can and do fulfill the role of the Proverbs 31 woman in the local church family.

.....

*A wife of noble character who can find?
She is worth far more than rubies.
Her husband has full confidence in her
and lacks nothing of value.*

Isn't this how we would like our work to be valued?

- ❖ Because women continue to contribute, our churches know they can count on us:
 - ◆ to support our Jubilee Birthday ladies
 - ◆ to send our youth to conferences and camps
 - ◆ to assist in all areas of denominational ministry.

*She selects wool and flax and
works with eager hands.
She is like the merchant ships,
bringing her food from afar.
She gets up while it is still dark;
she provides food for her family and
portions for her servant girls.*

- ❖ Our women come up with new and creative ways to promote and educate the various ministries of our churches.
 - ◆ We use our hands to provide food and shelter for the homeless.

- ◆ We decorate and cook for meals which celebrate Erskine College and World Missions.
- ◆ We send encouragement, medical supplies, and short term help to the mission fields.
- ◆ We pray for & support mission churches throughout our presbytery
- ◆ We host such things as mother-daughter teas and fall festivals to involve the entire church family.
- ◆ One church provided both physical and spiritual food by sending their college students Valentine goodies packaged with Bible promises.

*She considers a field and buys it;
out of her earnings she plants a vineyard.
She sets about her work vigorously;
her arms are strong for her tasks.*

- ❖ One church quickly adapted a planned youth overnighter to deal with the events of Sept. 11—ministering uniquely to their needs just a few days afterward. We have remained steadfast in faith and prayer in the face of this national tragedy.

*She sees that her trading is profitable,
and her lamp does not go out at night.
In her hand she holds the distaff
and grasps the spindle with her fingers.*
- ❖ We have fund raisers for youth mission trips and to provide funds for our individual churches' building needs.
- ❖ We paint and clean and garden in our churches and in the homes of members when needed.
- ❖ We provide crafts, needlework, and goodies for Bonclarken's gift shop.

*She opens her arms to the poor and
extends her hands to the needy.*

- ❖ We drive for Meals on Wheels.
- ❖ We supply support for shelters for the homeless and abused.

- ❖ We provide after school assistance for children in disadvantaged neighborhoods.

*When it snows, she has no fear
for her household;
for all of them are clothed in scarlet.
She makes coverings for her bed;
she is clothed in fine linen and purple.*

- ❖ We host showers to provide infant layettes support their adoptive services.
- ❖ We raise money when hymnals and choir robes are needed.

*Her husband is respected at the city gate,
where he takes his seat
among the elders of the land.*

- ❖ Our women serve as hostesses for the meetings of Catawba Presbytery and serve on many committees of the presbytery and the Synod.

*She makes linen garments and sells them,
and supplies the merchants with sashes.
She is clothed with dignity;
she can laugh at the days to come.*

- ❖ In our circles, Bible studies, and WOC activities we teach younger women and new Christians that they are not alone. Someone somewhere has experienced just what they are experiencing and can offer encouragement and, yes, laughter as we travel through this time together.

*She speaks with wisdom,
and faithful instruction is on her tongue.*

- ❖ Look at the women who are active in your WOC.
 - ◆ These are the women who are mentoring young Christians;
 - ◆ These women teach many of our Sunday School classes and lead our youth groups and choirs.
 - ◆ These are the women who will train the women of tomorrow to grow spiritually and serve God faithfully.

- ◆ We share with newcomers our church's activities and resources.

*She watches over the affairs of her household
and does not eat the bread of idleness.*

- ◆ We provide condolence meals or receptions for the bereaved.
- ◆ We provide for the celebrations of achievement and milestones in our church families
- ◆ We say "yes" when asked to serve as officers or board members or on church committees.
- ◆ We adopt our young people as prayer pals and affirm them with get-to-know-you bulletin boards and notes of encouragement.

*Her children arise and call her blessed;
her husband also, and he praises her:*

- ◆ Besides supporting our youth and children, we promote Erskine College and Seminary.

As this great institute of learning focuses more on its impact as a Christian college we need to pray faithfully-- for the enemy will not rest when Christian leaders are being developed.

*"Many women do noble things,
but you surpass them all."*

*Charm is deceptive, and beauty is fleeting;
but a woman who fears the Lord
is to be praised.*

*Give her the reward she has earned,
and let her works bring her praise
at the city gate.*

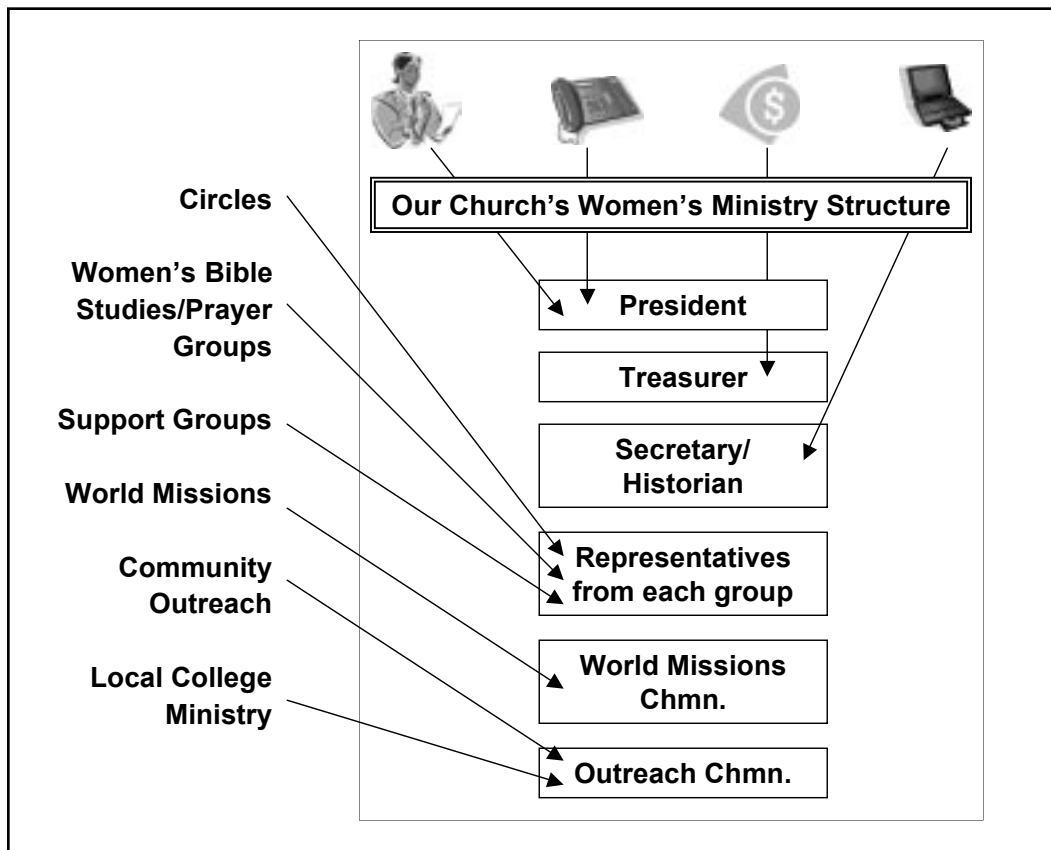
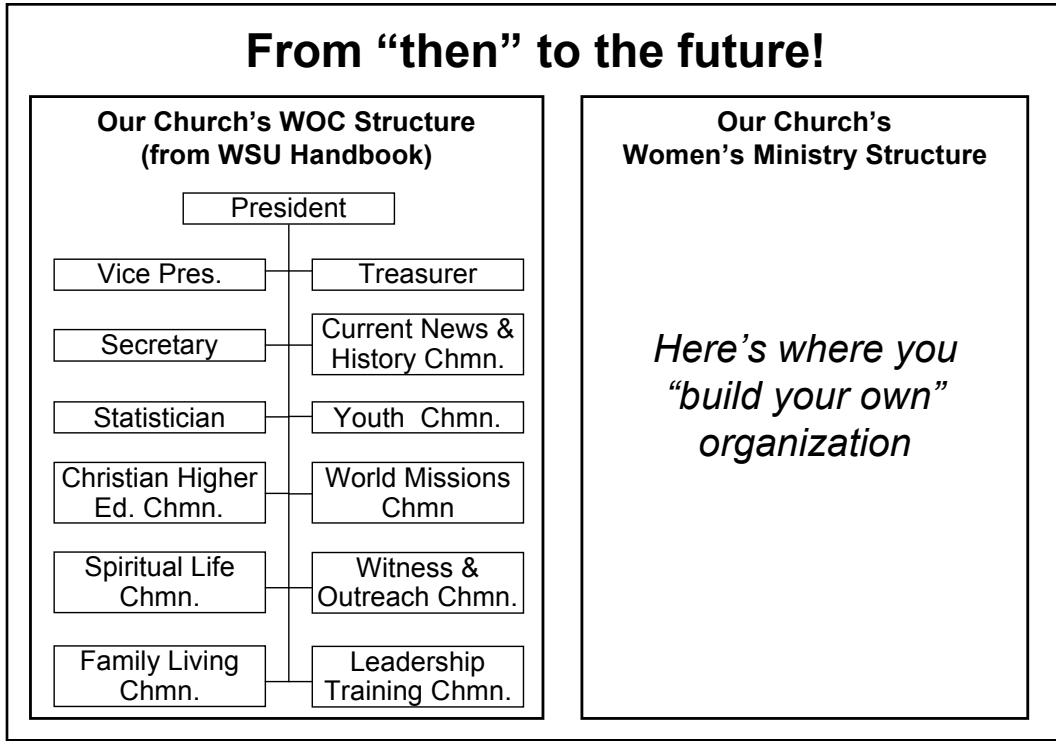
- ❖ Does your church family look to the WOC with eager expectation of helpfulness and as a source of wisdom and ideas?
- ❖ Do your teens look forward to the day when they can become part of a "circle"?
- ❖ Or does your church family roll its eyes when the words "circle" or "women of the church" are said?

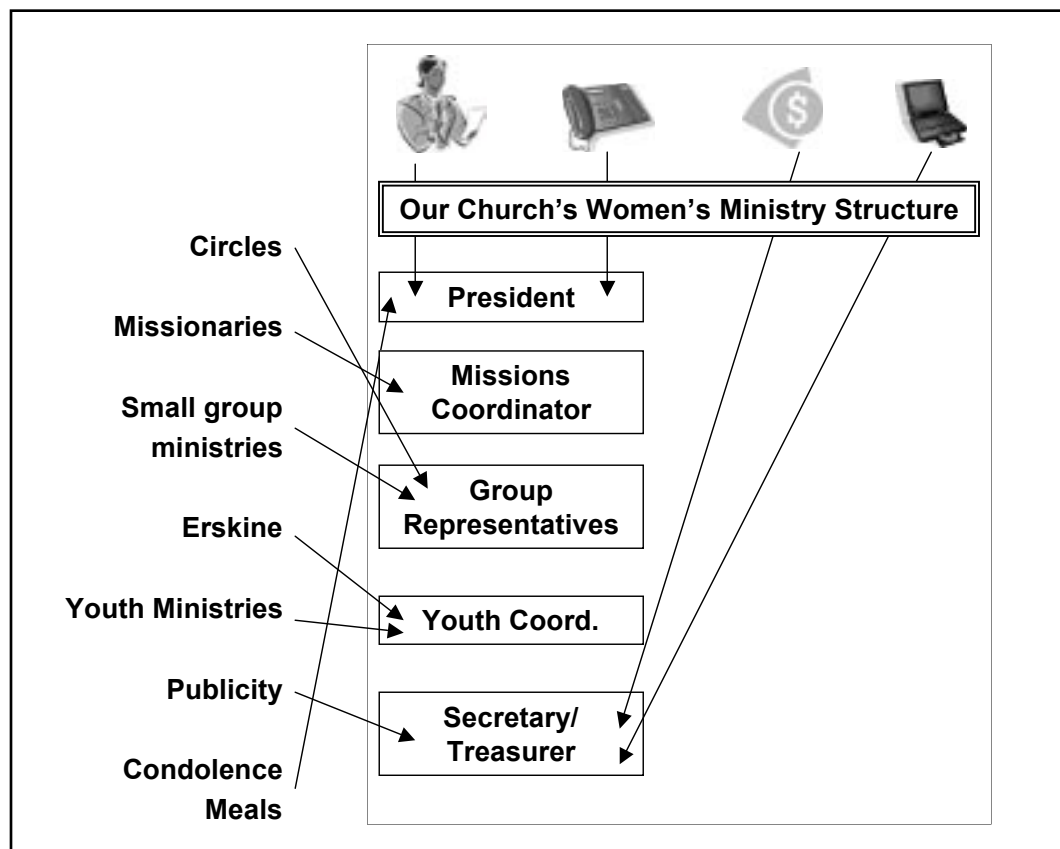
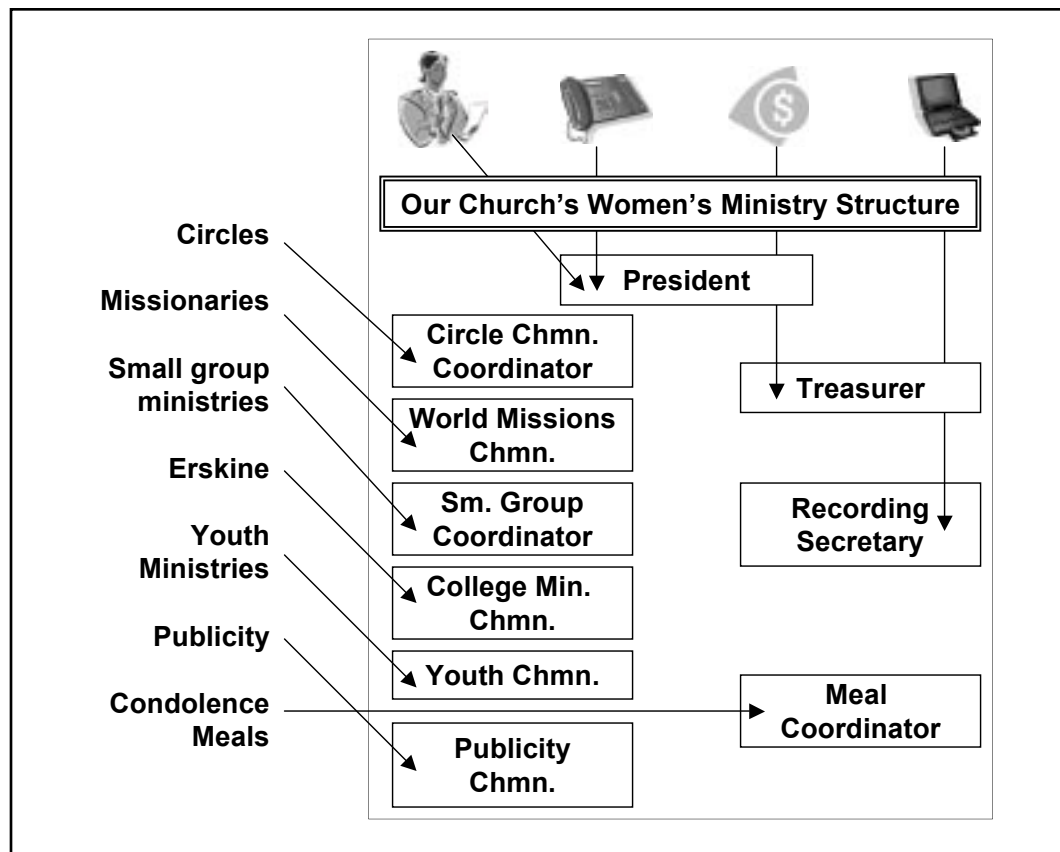
How can you adapt these ideas to your church?

APPENDIX A

Models for Building a “Whole New Thing”

Following are examples of how a women’s group might organize or restructure itself to better reflect its church’s needs. These are just to help you get started—it’s up to each group to decide what works best!





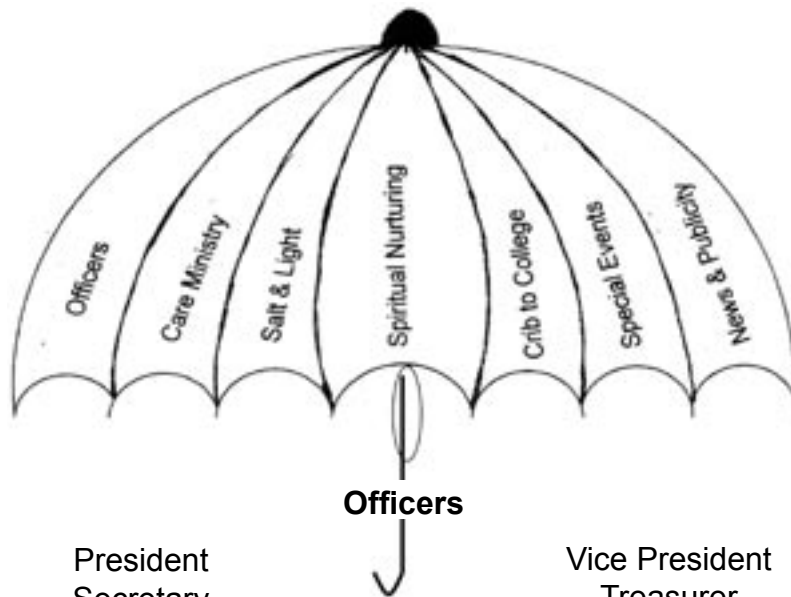
APPENDIX B

Examples of Customized Organizations

Following are more examples organizational structures that have been tailored to meet specific needs. Two are from churches that have either already organized or restructured in preparation for the transition to ARP Women's Ministries.



Ebenezer Women's Ministries



President
Secretary

Vice President
Treasurer

Spiritual Nurturing

Circles
Small Groups
Bible Studies
Library Ministry

Care Ministry

Bereavement
New Moms
Long Term Illness
Adopt a Member
Kitchen Committee

News and Publicity

Historian
Promotions (Bulletin Boards,
Bulletin Announcements, etc)
Memorials

Special Events

Retreat
Flowers - Calendar,
Special Meetings. Etc.
Lending Closet
New Member Events

Crib to College

Nursery
Children's Church
Early Childhood
Youth
College Students

Salt and Light

Community Outreach
ECHO
Neighborhood Outreach
Unchurched Women

Global Outreach