

## 2020 Board of Episcopal Church Women

It is an understatement to say 2020 has been a challenging year! The adversity of the pandemic has brought the women of the Diocese of Missouri closer as we looked out for the needs of our communities. The ECW Board had to pivot from previous scheduled activities to immerse ourselves into our mission statement – helping the women of our diocese to combine energies to take care of the community in myriad objectives.

Where others have been paralyzed by rules of social distancing, the women of the Diocese of Missouri have stepped up and stepped out to connect with others suffering through this daunting time. In serving, we have built friendships and collaborated to ease the burdens and losses we all feel.

As we prayed for the victims of COVID-19 and the people caring for them, we responded to pleas from various churches in our diocese to sew masks for support staff at local hospitals, for our parishes and for those in economically challenged communities in the St. Louis Metro area. The women in the Diocese of Missouri were generous of their time, talent and money, helping where and how they are able. It was amazing to watch the creative ingenuity at work as women solved logistics and streamlined procedures to keep everyone safe while implementing this ministry. The abundance of sharing of resources and knowledge impressed and humbled the ECW Board. We are honored to be part of this awesome team.

There were many pick-up ministries born of necessity centered around feeding people who have been without homes for a while and those facing hard times due to sudden unemployment. There are people on the streets now, who until recently, helped those who had no shelter. The women in the Diocese of Missouri took to the streets bringing food and fed people from the doors of their churches.

While we have not been able to meet in person, we are finding ways to connect like we never have before. Who knew Zoom, rather than a word for how fast you can go, would become such a big part of our lives! Zoom *Connections* Events have offered opportunities way beyond what we could image - where we connect with our individual parishes and throughout the diocese. The purpose of a *Connections* Event is to bring women from all across the Diocese of Missouri to hear a speaker on current events and have breakout sessions afterwards to share our different perspectives on the subject. An additional benefit to meeting virtually, is the addition of participation by women of regional (Province V) and the National ECW. Due to the popularity of *Connections Events*, the ECW Board will continue this program as a regular every other month activity. locating speakers and paying them a small stipend.

The ECW Board decided we were not going to let a pandemic ruin our honoring the women of the diocese who represent UTO in their individual parishes with a UTO Gratitude Luncheon in August. Utilizing an idea from the diocesan staff luncheon, we ordered lunches for the women we were honoring, had the lunches delivered to their homes and we met together on Zoom

with The Rev. Canon Heather Melton, the staff officer from the Presiding Bishop's office, who thanked each of the women involved. We hope to make this a yearly event.

Recently, The ECW Board held our Annual Meeting & Retreat, *Strong Women: Ancient & Modern*, with The Rev. Beth Scriven, as the retreat leader. Little did we know in January when we began planning this event, how the women chosen as role models for the retreat would reflect how the women from the Diocese of Missouri have stepped up in this challenging time as faithful, fierce and determined. Those three words spoken by The Rt. Rev. Deon Johnson, our new bishop, are our reminder to remember the women who raised us and inspire the women following us.

This retreat also featured three ministries for which we encouraged the women attending to pray, volunteer and support monetarily. **Laundry of Love**, a collaborative ministry of Trinity – St. Charles and Transfiguration- Lake St. Louis that provide necessities in laundering clothes for economically challenged individuals in the St. Charles area. We also featured a new ministry, **Person to Person Street Ministry** – an intentional relationship- building ministry that feeds and clothes those unhoused on the streets of downtown St. Louis. This is also a collaborative ministry including the parishes of St. John's-Tower Grove, Sts. Michael & George-Clayton, St. Mark's-Carondelet, Grace-Kirkwood and the Community of Hope. The ECW Board also sponsors **All Among Us**, a women's care center. providing two- year recovery program, serving women as a safe place to escape generational poverty and the trauma involved in recovery with love, dignity and respect.

Taking the time last year to refine our mission, create a more accurate budget, and connect with the women from our parishes gave us a solid base to launch these new programs and projects. Actively asking and listening to what God calling us to do will continue to shape how we use our energy and capital.

The budget of the ECW Board took a real hit with the downturn in the economy, but we were able to reallocate expenses for travel to fund the virtual programs we are now offering. We will need to find ways to increase our income to meet our obligations, if we are to keep expanding programs. Actually, this is a good problem to solve, as it means we are growing into our mission statement.

All ECW Board Meetings for the near future will be on Zoom to encourage the necessary social distancing at this time and allow women from all over the diocese to serve on this Board. Every woman in the Diocese of Missouri is welcome and encouraged to attend these meetings, dates and times are listed on the ministry feature of the diocesan website.

Respectfully submitted,

Deborah Caby, President  
ECW Board, Diocese of Missouri

