

Diocese of Missouri  
ECW Board Report 2021

This has been the year of the endless pandemic. As I look back at the last three years as the ECW Board President, I realized half my time with this Board was spent trying to cope with the changing tides of our world. Yet not only did we survive, but we thrived, as we witnessed all the wonderful ways women of our diocese took others by the hand (gloved, at times) and let Jesus' Goodness be reflected by their actions. Sometimes we were allowed to participate, but most of all, we cheered them on and supported their ministries highlighting their work as examples of "Loving Your Neighbor."

I wonder if we needed a pandemic or disaster to finally make the changes in our lives considering what is really important and do what God has asked us to do. Because we have had loss, we gained compassion. When grocery shopping became a reason to suit up to protect ourselves, we began to see how many in the world suffer under harsh regimes. We suffered the loss of jobs, income and the very mobility that kept us so busy we could not recognize our neighbor, much less reach out. This has been a reset in our homes, jobs, churches and social circles, and ultimately our view of the world and the definition of who is our neighbor has changed.

How do we lift each other up and look at our blessings rather than our troubles? We are only 18 months into Job's troubles or the 40 years to the Promised Land pilgrimage! One of the fastest ways to forget our troubles is to help one another. That, my friends, is exactly what the women of this diocese are doing!

When someone is hungry the women feed them—sometimes several churches combining land, resources and gathering for worship. Or they feed those coming to them outside their church doors. When they heard of thirst, the women of St. Barnabas raised money to dig a well. They formed friendships and offered support to those who are grieving or have lost hope. St. Francis played music for the community to enjoy and found a way to connect with their neighborhood. The women in this diocese are living out the Gospel in their everyday lives.

2021 has been a time of challenges for the ECW Board, as many tired of Zoom meetings and were hungry to meet in person. The love of neighbor has made us more cautious in our return to in-person events, yet we are connecting with those who live outside the metro area, as they are our sisters, too. 2022 will have us moving into a more hybrid model of in person events along with continued virtual events.

We have expanded our Board to include those outside the metro area and some who are younger and still working. This, in itself, is a huge accomplishment, as it shows we are thriving and meeting the needs of the women we serve. Their energy serves as a refining fire and has our imagination focusing on three pillars of the new ECW model of spirituality, sisterhood and mission.

Continued Connections events had us meeting to worship online with St. Paul's—Carondelet during Advent, with the Voices of The Nativity program inviting women from different congregations to lend their voices in this story; checking in our mental health needs with Care & Counseling of St. Louis; studying women of the Bible with celebrated author The Rev. Lindsay Hardin Freeman; and defining and creating our own Sabbath rituals with our own ECW Chaplain, Christy Henke Ratliff. We also held the Annual Meeting & Retreat with The Rev. Canon Whitney Rice on October 9, 2021. The Diocesan ECW Board also sponsored the second annual UTO Luncheon in June, celebrating the women in our parishes who do the actual work of gathering funds for grants from the National United Thank Offering group.

As we connected with the women of our diocese, we also went inward as a group and began the transition to a new ECW Board by recruiting new members, making needed changes in our bylaws that the women of the diocese approved at the Annual Meeting, conducting an audit of our finances, and providing accountability to the women of our diocese with sound business practices and a balanced budget.

The new Episcopal Church Women Board representing the women in the Diocese of Missouri has Sharon Muesch from Christ Church—Rolla as President, Susan Goen from St. Mark'—St. Louis as Vice President and communications chair, Ginger Simmons of St. Stephen's—Ferguson as Secretary and temporary Treasurer, Christy Henke Ratliff of St. Timothy's as Chaplain and member-at-large, Kay Fletcher of St. Martin's as Scholarship Chair, Jeanne King of St. Martin's as UTO Coordinator, and members-at-large Kathleen Mc Donald (St. Francis—Eureka), Laura Rose (CCC), Laura Mabry (All Saint's/Ascension) and Karen Watts (St. Paul's—Carondelet). Thanks be to God for their awareness that representation equals service to each woman in this diocese.

Plans for the coming year have them first focusing on finding the women in our diocese whose dedication to honoring God by not only their church work, but also their secular work in the community, stands out as deserving of recognition at a luncheon of thankfulness in the Spring. At this luncheon, one woman will be announced as the Distinguished Woman, who will join those members of the ECW Board attending the ECW Triennial meeting in Baltimore, where she will be honored formally by the National ECW Board. The new ECW Board will continue with virtual Connections events and begin to offer in-person events as well, in compliance with the Diocese of Missouri recommendations.

For further information, please contact Sharon Meusch, your new ECW Board President, at [mueschsharon@gmail.com](mailto:mueschsharon@gmail.com) or 573-368-6538.

Respectfully submitted,  
Deborah Caby, past-president, ECW Board, Diocese of Missouri