

Christian Ministries Scholarship Fund History

From 1945 through 1948, in the light of national and foreign needs for ministers and missionaries, the Christian Women's Fellowship (CWF) of the Christian Churches in Missouri began an active concern for the education of persons for the Christian Ministry.

The Christian Women's Fellowship in Missouri has long had a concern for Christian Higher Education. Before their concern for post-war seminary education, Missouri's CWF had contributed to undergraduate Scholarship Loan Funds of four Missouri undergraduate Disciples colleges, for the benefit of those planning to go into some form of Christian service. These colleges were: Christian College in Columbia, (now Columbia College and co-educational) Culver-Stockton College in Canton, Drury College in Springfield, and William Woods in Fulton.

In 1948 the CWF discontinued their contributions to these undergraduate loan funds and the Christian Service Gift Fund (CSGF) was born.

By the summer of 1949 this fund for seminary education had grown to \$3,384, having received just over \$1,000 that year from the Christian Women's Fellowship groups in Missouri. The years 1949 through 1953 were years of slow beginnings. Only three grants were made amounting to \$1,025.

Gradually over the next few years as funds increased so did the number of grants approved. Mrs. Seth Slaughter of Columbia became the first chairman. A committee of three women was appointed by the state Christian Women's Fellowship. Each year one new member was appointed so that, on a rotating basis members served for three years, one being replaced by the new appointee beginning her three-year term of service each year. This remained the structure of the committee until 1966 when it was recommended that both a seminary dean named by the CSGF Committee and the Chairman of the Committee on the Ministry of the Christian Church in Missouri become ex-officio members of the state committee. At the same CWF board meeting when the CSGF committee asked for the expansion of the committee to include two men they also asked to have the name changed from Christian Service Gift Fund to Christian Seminary Gift Fund, keeping the same initials for brevity but limiting the grants to students of Seminaries. This action was granted by the Missouri Christian Women's Fellowship Cabinet on February 23, 1966.

Since the very beginning there has been a constant reexamination of procedures and of application forms employed, so that the very best use of this fund might be made. The original

purpose of the fund, concerning the needs both of the churches and of their future ministers, has been kept constantly in view.

At one time grants were restricted to students who had lived in Missouri for at least five years. Another rule was that they were to return to serve in Christian leadership in Missouri. There is an agreement that if the recipient changes his/her field from full time Christian work he will repay the amount of the grant. If he/she remains in full time Christian leadership the grant is an outright gift.

By vote of the State Assembly in 1969, the CSGF Committee has been expanded to provide grants for the undergraduate students preparing for fulltime Christian service. Consequently, the original name "Christian Service Gift Fund" was restored. There, the committee structure has been enlarged to include a representative of undergraduate schools and a layman. The committee is responsible to the State Board, and is selected in the following manner: Three women recommended by the State CWF Cabinet; three men (including the Chairman of the Department of Ministry, a representative of undergraduate schools, and a layman) are recommended by the Department of Ministry.

There has been an upward trend in contributions. Gifts had been above \$4,000 annually since 1961. As of 1969, resources were expanded to include monies from the local church. This fund is now a total church responsibility, not CWF only but many churches contribute only through the CWF budget.

Twice each year the committee studies the applications, the needs and listed resources. Grants are made to fit those needs according to the funds available in CSGF accounts. These grants are provided to young women as well as men, and all variants of Christian vocations.

Missouri is the only Region among the Disciples of Christ to have such a program to help train Christian leaders.

History is an important tool of the church. Thanks to the patient research. Dr. Herbert Loring, Professor of Church History at Missouri school of Religion in Columbia has written the history of this fund from 1945-1969.

As a way to increase funds for CSGF during the 1980s, information was made available about how individuals could choose to give to CSGF as a Memorial Gift. Such gifts would be acknowledged by the regional office. Information for the Christian Service Gift Fund Memorial Gift should include who the gift was given by, the person given in memory of and the information including address to whom the acknowledgement to be sent. The name of the

fund was changed to “Christian Ministries Scholarship Fund” (CMSF) to more clearly tell what and whom the funds are for. This was approved by the Regional CWF Cabinet in August, 1989.

An Endowment Fund for the Christian Ministries Scholarship Fund was established with Christian Church Foundation. The fund has grown through the years due to generous donations to the Endowment Fund. The interest from the Endowment Fund along with contributions given throughout the year by individuals, Disciples Women groups, and congregations are used to award scholarships to applicants.

Since the 1990’s the CMSF is administered by a committee established by the Disciples Women’s Ministries (DWM) Cabinet of the Christian Church of Mid-America which includes the following:

1. Chairperson (immediate past president of the DWM Cabinet)
2. Mid-America Ministry Team Representative where Disciples Women are housed
3. Current DWM President
4. Layperson (3 year term – male or female)
5. DWM Cabinet member (3 year term)
6. DWM Staff person
7. Seminary representative (Male or female)
8. Chairperson or other representative of the CCMA Regional Commission on the Order of Ministry

Meetings will be held by conference call once a year. Application material is sent to committee members in advance of the meeting from the Christian Church Mid-America Office where the Disciples Women’s Ministry of Mid-America is housed along with a statement of the amount of money available for distribution.

July 27, 2013 the Disciples Women’s Ministries Regional Cabinet voted to provide financial assistance for those preparing for Christian Ministries in seminary, undergraduate education and in specialize programs (approved by the Order of the Commission of Ministry of the Christian Church of Mid-America).

Information about the Christian Ministries Scholarship Fund is available on the Mid-America Website at: www.mid-america-disciples.org; click on ‘Disciples Women’ then click on ‘opportunities’. CMSF information is also available at the Northeast Area Office where the Disciples Women’s Ministries is housed. 2700 E. Nifong Blvd., P.O. Box 10230; Columbia, MO 65205-4003; Phone: 573-442-5815; Fax: 573-442-1925; e-mail: office@nearea.org.