**Summary Report of Wesleyan Holiness Women Clergy Congress 2017**

**By Dr. Ronald V. Duncan**

The Wesleyan Holiness Women Clergy Congress convened in Atlanta, Georgia, February 23-24, 2017. The purpose of the congress was to evaluate the past conferences conducted by WHWC and discuss the relevance of WHWC and the future look of the conferences. The conferences have been held every two years for the past twenty-five years.

The gathered delegates represented the Free Methodist, the Wesleyans, the Nazarenes, the Church of God and the Brethren in Christ. The format of the event flowed from two general sessions(presentations by Dr. Joanne Lyon and Dr. Cheryl Sanders), vocational focus groups, four track sessions, and debriefings from the above. The vocational groups were pastors, educators, and judicatory personnel. All vocational groups addressed the same four questions. The questions were:

 1. What are the unique challenges/issues for women in your area of ministry? For men who support women in your area of ministry?;

 2.Are there different challenges/issues/barriers for women hoping to “break in” to your area of ministry? What are they?;

 3. What are the sources of support for women in your area of ministry?;

 4. What are some ways you think(or hope) that the WHWC organization cold support women currently in, or interested in entering, your area of ministry?

The four track groups were: Challenges and opportunities for women in ministry today; teaching gender equality in our churches; diversity and women in ministry; and The WHWC-Its Mission, Role, and Future.

The feedback from all the groupings was presented and given to the Board of WHWC and the Planning Committee of the Conferences. It was affirmed the conferences are of value and need to continue with some modifications. Numerous ideas emerged from the groups that will be processed by both board and planning committee for the April 12-15, 2018 conference at the YMCA of the Rockies at Estes Park Colorado.

The take aways for me from the Congress were these(official minutes will come from the WHWC):

1. The status and progression of women clergy in our tribes have improved over the last twenty-five years, but there is still much to be done.
2. There is still a disconnect from the official stance on women clergy and the praxis within the local church and church structures.
3. The need for role models and advocates continues.
4. Networking for women clergy is essential and extremely valuable.

Areas being considered by WHWC and Planning Committee for Conference:

1. Revitalized mission and vision statements;
2. Effective name for WHWC;
3. Content for the next Conference;
4. How to increase revenue to increase ministry opportunities?

I am sure the lists which emerged from the congress was much longer and more extensive than my lists, therefore, the official minutes will provide a more complete picture.

The relationship between GWA and WHWC needs additional dialogue and reflection among the leadership. At some appropriate point in the future when WHWC has concluded their own evaluation and sketched out their plans, it would seem appropriate to have a dialogue with GWA covenant members. As we journey together, we can affirm the joy of serving in the kingdom of God and supporting servants within the kingdom.

It was a privilege to represent GWA at this congress and the dialogue was enriching and supportive. Thanks to the leadership and all who made this possible.

Grace and Peace,

Ron