



**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT TO THE BOARD OF STEWARDS FOR
WEEK OF COMPASSION**

Fall 2019

Submitted by Vy Nguyen

Mission: As the relief, refugee, and development mission fund of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Week of Compassion works with partners to alleviate suffering throughout the world.

Vision: A world where God's people transform suffering into hope

Core Values:

- *CONNECTION*
Partner with individuals, congregations, and organizations to serve the needs of the world
- *INTEGRITY*
Honor the commitment to faithful stewardship, ensuring gifts entrusted to Week of Compassion are making the most impact
- *ACCOMPANIMENT*
Embody God's grace by committing to a long-term presence with communities in need

Introductions

There have been recent setbacks to the work that Week of Compassion has been doing all over the world for the last 7 decades. In September, I was in the Middle East visiting many of our partners who are responding to the refugee crises in Syria, Iraq, and Palestine and whose work has been impacted by geo-political conflict that exists within our world. Many of the refugees whom I met have been displaced since 1948 and still do not have anywhere to go. Back at home in the United States, the current Administration is considering the number of refugee resettlements for FY2020. The projected number of resettlements will be the lowest of all time, affecting not only the refugees coming into the United States, but also their lives for the next several decades as they continue to make homes in the camps. In addition, this past September, various storms formed in the Caribbean and turned into hurricanes that created serious impact in the Bahamas and threatened the gulf coast. Already, Hurricane Dorian has caused significant damage to the Bahamas and, as of this writing, hurricane season is not yet over. Meanwhile, as all of these challenges arose, the UN General Assembly had its meeting in New York to discuss climate change — a significant issue that the world is wrestling with, as we try to curb the impact of human pollution on the planet.

This is a busy time for Week of Compassion and our partners. All of these conflicts and disasters are connected, and the various crises in natural disasters, refugee resettlement, global migration, and development are all having a major impact on our work. The vision, mission, and core values of Week of Compassion continue to play a vital role in helping to make the world a better place for millions of families.

The mechanism by which we respond to these various disasters, specifically through our partners, continue to change while international support from global communities continue to dwindle. Week of Compassion continues to be in a unique and influential position to work with many of our partners to respond to the important issues of our time.

We have important work to do at this board meeting to ensure that Week of Compassion is in the best possible position to respond effectively to these crises. While many of our partners are struggling or continuing to go through rapid change, Week of Compassion remains strong and vibrant. Financially, we are strong and continue to provide critical support to our partners and their work. But more importantly, the vision and mission that the church has given to Week of Compassion is helping to shape the ecumenical landscape in many ways. The work that we will be doing at this meeting, internally and externally, will help this ministry continue to best respond to the many conflicts facing our world today.

During my recent visit to many refugee camps in the Middle East it was easy to lose hope. The situation surrounding the conflict in Syria is not getting any better, and the funding for our partners have limited their ability to be able to continue their work in critical ways. But our partners are very resourceful and are very committed to helping the people for the long term. In the midst of so much loss and pain, and in the midst of seeing how weary the elders in the camp are, I find hope in the way our partners minister and walk with the people who are displaced. Our partners have been doing this work in the Middle East for many decades, and they will continue to do this work on our behalf for many decades. They come to the camp regularly to check in on the people to make sure they have the things they need. Our partners don't overpromise, but are fully present as they listen to each individual's pain and struggle. Our

partners know the people in the camp by their names, and know the children when they don't show up. Our partners are incredible, and I am grateful that they are doing this work on behalf of our church.

Financial/Governance

The work of the Governance Committee has been ongoing, and the committee will make several recommendations at this meeting for a vote by the Board of Stewards. The relationship of the Board of Stewards with the Administrative Committee will be clearer as we live into the new structure of Week of Compassion. At the moment, whatever by-laws the Board of Stewards adopts will be submitted to the Administrative Committee for its blessing.

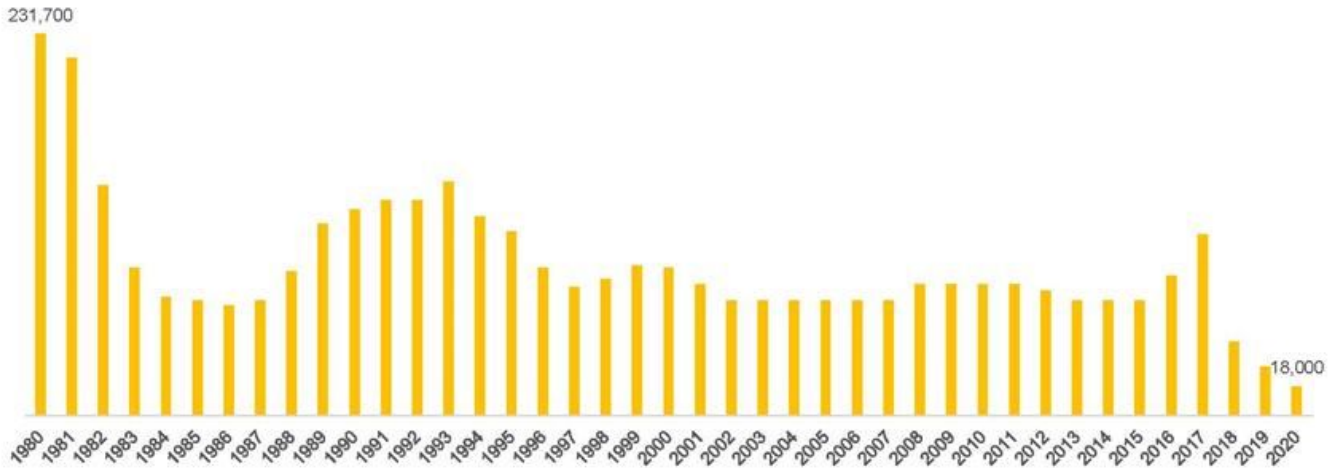
For FY2020, the Week of Compassion Finance Committee will have already submitted the draft budget to the administrative committee for consideration when the Week of Compassion Board of Stewards meets at the end of October. At this Week of Compassion board meeting, the proposed budget will be approved by the Week of Compassion board. This process is new to Week of Compassion, as in previous years the Week of Compassion Committee would submit the proposed budget to the Administrative Committee for approval.

In previous years, Week of Compassion provided \$149k annually to DOM for the Global Mission Interns program. In 2019, Week of Compassion halted this funding because DOM has not been able to fully expend the funds, as the program has not had enough participants for the past several years. DOM has been sitting on surplus Week of Compassion funds for the GMI program. At the end of 2018, this surplus fund at DOM was roughly \$200k. For 2020, DOM has requested no funding from Week of Compassion for the GMI program as they will use the remaining surplus. The GMI program is wonderful, but it has its challenges, including successfully recruiting volunteers to participate in the year-long program. The Week of Compassion Committee raised this concern to DOM at the spring of 2018 meeting and encouraged DOM to come up with a strategy to recruit more volunteers. A new strategy was implemented, but the number of volunteers has not increased much. The challenge around volunteer recruitment is not just tied to the GMI program; young adult programs in general, both within our own church and among our ecumenical partners, are on a decline. Week of Compassion should consider whether to continue providing funding for the GMI program after 2020, as the current model is not sustainable as a whole.

Refugee and Immigration

The number of people who are displaced continues to grow at an all-time high, while international countries continue to drastically reduce the number of refugees they will take in. In FY2019, which ended in September, the US resettled 30,000 refugees, the lowest in several decades. Just a week ago, the current administration set the FY 2020 Refugee Admissions Ceiling to an even lower number: 18,000. For nearly four decades, the average number of refugees admitted to the US each year has been 95,000.

Refugee Admissions Ceiling by Fiscal Year



After a virtual shutdown of the U.S. asylum system, this announcement comes as a tragic blow not only to vulnerable people fleeing violence and persecution, but also to this country’s humanitarian legacy. In addition, the President has issued an executive order allowing states and local governments to deny refugees already approved for travel from entering those states.

This new ceiling is no doubt having a tremendous impact on our partners such as CWS, who have been resettling refugees for decades and who have been closing refugee resettlement offices in the last few years. The refugee resettlement infrastructure built over many decades, where local churches partner with a resettlement office throughout the country, is starting to crumble. In our budget for 2020 we are providing a slight increase to CWS advocacy and grassroots mobilizing efforts in the areas of refugee and immigration work.

Relief

In recent years, Week of Compassion has been more hands-on with our approach to relief work in the United States and Canada. As many of our partners, especially our primary partner through CWS, continues to go through transitions, there have been more opportunities for Week of Compassion to engage with new partners and strategically help in areas of long-term recovery. Rev. Caroline Hamilton-Arnold is the lead person in working with local churches, regions, ecumenical partners, and disaster organizations to help us respond in times of disaster. In addition, Rev. Caroline Hamilton-Arnold has shown great leadership in ecumenical settings, helping Week of Compassion to play a more crucial role in disaster work. She is currently the Chair of the Community Preparedness Committee of National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster. More recently, she is serving as Vice Chair of the Development and Humanitarian Assistance Advisory Group for Church World Service, an ecumenical

EVENT*	Location(s)	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Wildfires	Lake County, CA		█			
Tornado	Rowlett, TX		█	█		
Water Crisis	Flint, MI		█	█		
Flooding	South Carolina		█	█		
Tornadoes	Ottawa and Naplate, Illinois		█			
Flooding	West Virginia		█	█		
Flooding	Louisiana		█	█	█	
Flooding	Texas		█	█	█	
Hurricane Matthew	North Carolina		█	█	█	

table that promotes CWS member communion partnership, communication and collaboration with CWS/DHA and the sharing of expertise to further CWS/DHA's work and mission, especially around disaster response and humanitarian assistance. Domestic disaster work will continue to play a vital role in the next several years as we work to strengthen our response and our partners response. Below is a list of our ongoing responses and new responses since our last meeting.

Ongoing Domestic Disaster Responses:

Hurricane Matthew (event: Oct. 2016): Sustained long-term response continues through financial support of Volusia Interfaiths/Agencies Networking in Disaster. VIND has almost completed their Hurricane Matthew response, not counting the number of cases that were secondarily affected by Hurricane Irma in 2017, which have been rolled forward into their Irma response.

Hurricane Harvey (Aug. 2017): Long-term recovery is ongoing in Texas. The Disciples Volunteering mission station in Texas City continues receiving volunteers to work on cases received through the church and through Galveston Recovers. Since the spring meeting, approximately 130 volunteers have worked on Hurricane Recovery through the mission station. Through our collaboration, Reach Beyond Mission hosted teams during 3 weeks, where youth did recovery work as well as hands-on education about creation care and climate justice. Rev. Caroline Hamilton-Arnold was able to meet with and lead educational sessions for two of the three groups. This fall, we funded a sizable grant in support of the West End New Home Program in Wharton County. This program seeks to rebuild homes, especially for folks required to relocate due to repeat flooding, while also maintaining community cohesion and contributing to a larger vision of revitalization in the town of Wharton. A potential partnership remains on the horizon in Jefferson County with Southeast Texas Community Development Corporation (SETCDC) and the United Church of Christ. SET CDC, which has a long history in the county, is a non-profit organization that operates low-income housing in Beaumont and Port Arthur. In partnership with UCC Disaster Ministries, they are rehabbing housing units to be rented low-income residents displaced by Harvey. We have also begun preliminary conversations with a legal aid organization to help provide disaster-related legal services in rural parts of the Harvey recovery zone.

Hurricane Irma, Florida (Sept. 2017): Our primary avenue of response is VIND (see Hurricane Matthew above). We are also exploring a potential partnership with the Immokalee Fair Housing Alliance, a new 501c3 that is working to build affordable housing units, specifically targeting the needs of migrant farm workers in the area, who lost their homes in the hurricane and have few other housing opportunities. Disciples have longstanding relationships with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (founding members and represented on the board of IFHA) through Refugee and Immigration Ministries. Our partners at United Church of Christ Disaster Ministries also have a representative on the IFHA Board of Directors.

Hurricanes Irma and Maria, Puerto Rico (Sept. 2017): We continue support of the community energy program of Global Ministries bi-lateral partner, AMANESER 2025 (see spring report). Home repairs continue through the Programa Edifiquemos of the Iglesia Cristiana (Discipulos de Cristo). Over the summer and early fall, approximately 70 volunteers participated, and we have begun registering groups for the spring. For many of the homes repaired to date, the majority of materials were provided through

the Federal VALOR program and by the homeowners. As that program has concluded, the material expenses of the program will increase sharply going forward.

Marshalltown, IA (July 2018): We continue in conversation with Central Christian Church. Unfortunately, decisions by some local leaders have curtailed volunteer efforts, which has made involvement challenging.

Carr Fire, Shasta County, CA (July/Aug 2018): Since the May report, the Community Recovery Team has hired a volunteer coordinator and established procedures for receiving volunteers. First Christian Church, Redding is one of the host sites for volunteer teams. We have provided assistance funds directly to FCCR and through the CRT. While the organization that raised red flags (mentioned in the May report) continues to be active in the area, the CRT has established independent procedures for volunteers and funding, which has opened up possibilities for our continued support.

Hurricane Florence (Sept. 2018): Camp Caroline has officially launched as a volunteer host site in coordination with the Pamlico County Recovery Coalition. The mental and emotional health retreat/workshop for clergy (collaborative effort with NBA and the Regional Disaster Response Team), was scheduled for May, but was cancelled due to lack of response from local clergy. It has not been rescheduled as of the writing of this report. We are in conversation with the Regional Disaster Response Team about preparedness training.

Hurricane Michael (Oct. 2018): The Disaster Recovery Support Initiative, by invitation of Georgia VOAD, provided consultation for long-term recovery and Long-Term Recovery Group development in affected counties in Southwest Georgia (see DRSI in long-range projects). In the Florida Panhandle, we are developing a relationship with the Bay County LTRG, Rebuild Bay County, as well as with an ecumenical repair/rebuild site for volunteers, which includes Presbyterian Disaster Assistance and UCC Disaster Ministries.

Camp Fire, Butte County, CA (Nov. 2018): FCC Paradise continues to meet at FCC Chico, though they are hoping to move back to their building soon. FCC Chico is still involved with the Chico ministerial alliance's program for long-term emotional and spiritual care through the facilitation of grief support groups. We have provided a first round of funding for that project and will consider additional funding in the future. Debris removal in the burn area is progressing, so opportunities for rebuild support will be increasing in the coming months.

Taylorville, IL tornado (Dec. 2018): We are supporting Davis Memorial Christian Church, as they continue working through the LTRG and a local organization called Missions for Taylorville (which focused on home repairs for elderly and disabled residents prior to the tornado).

Midwest flooding (March 2019): In Nebraska, we are still working with the Regional Office to connect congregations with long-term recovery efforts. During the clean-up, our partners at IOCC housed volunteers at FCC Omaha. We are partnering with Sarpy County Housing Affordability Task Force through grants and congregational connections to address affordable housing issues compounded by

the flooding. In Missouri, we are in conversation with FCC Mound City to provide support for long-term recovery. A challenge for the area is that several of the counties had additional flooding later in the summer. The later flooding received a federal disaster declaration with FEMA Individual Assistance (IA), many of the areas flooded in March did not qualify for IA. We are also in touch with Neosho First Christian Church, where the pastor, Al Gritten, is serving as the LTRG Chair.

New Responses:

Missouri Tornadoes (May 2019): An outbreak of tornadoes caused damage across the state. We provided solidarity grants through several congregations. Community Christian Church in Jefferson City had significant damage to their building. First Christian Church, Jefferson City ramped up services through their food pantry, and First Christian Church, Eldon was involved in a range of relief efforts through the Ministerial Alliance. We are continuing to explore opportunities for supporting long-term recovery in both locations. First Christian Church Jefferson City is especially interested in projects that will address the affordable housing shortage exacerbated by the tornado.

Ohio Tornadoes (May 2019): Several tornadoes occurred across Ohio, including multiple around Dayton. In addition to multiple Solidarity grants, we are in touch with our partners at United Church of Christ Disaster Ministries, ecumenical partners through NVOAD, and the long-term recovery group for the Dayton area.

Oklahoma Flooding and Tornadoes (May 2019): Severe storms across Oklahoma spawned several tornadoes and caused flooding in multiple municipalities. We provided Solidarity grants to congregations and households. We are supporting First Christian Church, El Reno as they connect with their local long-term recovery group.

Additional Midwest Flooding (June/July 2019): Sustained rains caused additional flooding across the Midwest, including in Missouri and South-Central Nebraska. In addition to the support ongoing from the spring storms, we are connecting with the heartland disaster recovery group near Grand Island Nebraska. Through a brief DRSI deployment, we supported the group's development. We have also provided a support grant and are working with the Nebraska region to coordinate volunteers with the LTRG.

Hurricane Dorian (Aug/Sept. 2019): Dorian's track was farther east than originally predicted, and the damage was far less severe than anticipated. We are in touch with partners in the Eastern counties of North Carolina to provide assistance, if needed; at this time they have not identified any new needs.

Tropical Storm Imelda (Sept. 2019): After a very rapid development in the Gulf of Mexico, Imelda made landfall in southeast Texas as a Tropical Storm on Sept. 17. It lingered over the region for several days, dropping record-breaking amounts of rain--over 40 inches in some areas. The most severe effects were east of Houston in Liberty, Jefferson, Chambers, and Orange Counties. Approximately two dozen Disciples households and two churches reported damage. We worked with First Christian Church, Beaumont to coordinate with the county recovery team to distribute cleanup supplies. Several CWS

partners in the area responding to Hurricane Harvey were severely affected; we will continue to be in communication with CWS about their emerging needs.

LONG-RANGE PROJECTS:

Disaster Recovery Support Initiative: DRSI is a collaborative initiative between Week of Compassion, Disciples Volunteering, UCC Disaster Ministries and Brethren Disaster Ministries. The Disaster Recovery Support Initiative (DRSI) models, supports, mentors, and encourages the development of local Long-Term Recovery Groups through the sustained on-site presence of a recovery specialist. Rachel Larratt, the current DRSI employee, completed short deployments this summer to Southwest Georgia and Central Nebraska. Following Hurricane Dorian in September, Rachel represented CWS as part of an ACT Alliance Assessment Team in The Bahamas. We formalized an agreement with CWS in August for DRSI to be folded into the CWS Domestic Disaster Program. CWS continues to seek funding to sustain and expand DRSI.

Disaster Preparedness: Rev. Caroline Hamilton-Arnold continues to expand the resources and offerings for encouraging disaster preparedness among Disciples congregations. In September, Josh Baird of Disciples Volunteering (remotely) and Rev. Hamilton-Arnold (in person) led a workshop with the Alabama/NW Florida Disciples. Following the training, a Regional representative will work with congregations one-on-one to help develop disaster preparedness and response plans. The congregational guide for disaster preparedness and response (referenced in my spring report) is now available as a downloadable PDF on our website.

Sustainable Development

As I continue to travel to many places, I see the ways in which our support in the area of sustainable development is making a significant impact. For example, the support we provided last year in Cambodia to families who needed access to clean water continues to help them, even as in many parts of the world it becomes more challenging for families to find clean water. On my recent trip to the Middle East with Global Ministries, I met with the director of the young adult interfaith program that we have been supporting over the last several years. The young adults come from Muslim, Christian, and Jewish backgrounds and discuss important issues that they deal with on a regular basis in the Middle East. Many of the young adults have played an important role in shaping their community in civic and governmental arenas. Our support in sustainable development through the young adult interfaith program continues to have important impacts on their communities.

Moving forward, it is important that Week of Compassion support conflict resolution and peace-building. In many parts of the world, funding for this specific work is sorely needed, yet it is becoming more difficult to find partners who are willing to continue supporting this work. This is especially true in the Middle East, where many of our partners are doing amazing work but struggling to acquire funding that doesn't fall in the areas of "disaster" or "sustainable development." The work of peace-building is critical, however, for preventing displacement and enabling sustainable development. Past progress in sustainable development has been curtailed by human-caused and geopolitical conflict

and unrest. This is a budget item that have been created for Week of Compassion for 2020 so we can track how much we support peace-building and conflict resolution.

Communications and Marketing

Rev. Erin Wathen joined Week of Compassion in January of this year as our Associate Director for Communications, Marketing and Development. We have taken great efforts in improving our communications and marketing work, enabling us to better reach our congregations.

Rebranding

Since the last Board Meeting, Week of Compassion has officially launched a new logo and website. Much of Rev. Wathen’s time in May and June was devoted to transitioning to the new logo on all of our platforms and print materials; and also developing content and working with designers for the new website. We launched both the logo and the website with a letter celebrating 75 years of ministry, sharing this new look for a new season.

We made clear in our communications about the new image that we were not shifting our mission focus; on the contrary, we are building on a long tradition in order to grow our reach even more.

One of the tools available to us to meet this growing need is social media. Our capacity to reach diverse demographics of people across a broad geographical area is greater than ever. Since beginning this role in January, Rev. Wathen has been intentional about boosting our social media presence and makes it a practice to post on Twitter and Facebook at least once a day, five days a week--often more, if there is pressing information to share. She has also taken the initiative to start a new Instagram account to try and connect with a younger demographic of followers. Though our post there are less frequent than on other platforms, we are growing a presence there as well. As of August 30, our social media following is:

Platform	Followers	Increase of:
Instagram	201	201
Twitter	1965	115
Facebook	7,198	(approx) 600

We anticipate that Facebook will remain our most active and engaging platform, as it is most conducive to sharing narrative content and because it is the platform that congregations most use in their own communications. Our goals for our platform growth in 2020 are to double our Instagram following; to reach at least 2,000 on Twitter; and to reach at least 7500 on Facebook. Rev. Wathen is helping us with this goal through consistent posting and intentional engagement each week. In addition, we are also monitoring our analytics to see what kinds of posts get the most traffic and visibility. While our highest post engagements come when there has been a recent disaster, Rev. Wathen is working to share more content about our development work and refugee and immigration ministry as well. Additional posts

include those that are just conversational or are related to something happening in the life of the church (i.e., celebrating congregation anniversaries and Friday posts connected with Sunday's lectionary text).

Sharing consistent content means that we will have even more engagement in times that call for focused disaster response, when we need visibility the most. In this way, social media is both an advocacy and education tool, as well as an engine to drive attention and resources to Week of Compassion's ministry.

Moving forward on the website, we are also working to keep content updated, relevant, and easily accessible. We have been intentional about placing the 'donate' button prominently on every page of the website--so every visit to our site is an invitation to give.

Outside of website development and finalizing all print materials with the new logo and updated content, much of the summer was devoted to preparation for our presence at General Assembly. Thanks to our Board Members who served in staffing the booth, preparing for our Week of Compassion gatherings, and helping to promote our ministry throughout the Assembly.

In addition to our Tuesday night banquet at General Assembly--for which we had an attendance of over 300 people--we also hosted a special reception at Assembly for our Circle of Compassion congregations and our endowment supporters. This was the first gathering of its kind. We had about 50 people attend, and it was a good time for some of our strongest supporters to meet staff and board members and hear an update from our ED. Staff agreed this was a worthwhile event, and we are making plans to do it again in 2021.

In addition to promoting Week of Compassion's brand, Rev. Wathen has been working with our general ministry colleagues in coordinating and helping to promote other ministries to the entire church. She has especially been working with Rev. Sharon Stanley-Rea in the area of communications and promotion on refugee related issues.

Fundraising and Development

We have celebrated the addition of two new congregations to the Circle of Compassion, and Rev. Wathen is working on implementing Promotion and Recognition plans for both the Circle and our general endowment giving. This is a priority for our ministry right now. As trends shift in church attendance--and, by extension, church giving-- Week of Compassion needs to be prepared to fund our future mission in ways beyond the annual special offering and other congregational gifts. While those gifts remain critical to our ministry, endowment gifts provide a steady stream of income that we can depend upon moving forward. At the end of 2018, the return on the endowment represented 20% of our unrestricted funds.

Development Goals:

We currently have 54 congregations listed in the Circle of Compassion. One of our primary development goals is to add at least 10 more churches to that number by summer of 2020. Rev. Wathen is working with the development committee to think about how we make these connections, and what resources and information would best enable churches to make this long-term commitment to Week of Compassion.

Concurrently, she is also focusing on putting consistent donor recognition practices in place and building relationships with named endowment supporters, recurring online givers, and others that support this ministry in critical ways. In addition to a Development and Recognition plan, we are creating a giving calendar, scheduling donor contacts and communications throughout the year. Between visits, phone calls, handwritten notes and other mailings, we want to make sure that every supporter has multiple intentional “touches” throughout the year. Sustaining these connections and creating new ones is our best path forward to build long-term support for Week of Compassion, and make the most of the resources that have been so generously shared with us.

The biggest unrestricted gift is from our congregational giving through the annual special offering. Rev. Wathen has been working with the One Great Hour of Sharing table to develop the special offering materials for 2020, which will go to print in the fall. Our theme for February 2020 is “Invest in Futures,” and we will begin promotion of the theme and dates soon. (At the same time, the OGHS ecumenical group is beginning plans for the 2021 theme and focus). This year, we are choosing to put fewer materials in the printed resource guide, making use of our new website to easily share supplemental materials. This will serve the dual purpose of saving on costs while also driving more traffic to our new website.