

Umoja - Unity-Oneness-Harmony

A Newsletter produced by Disciples Women of the National Convocation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Spring 2013

The Spiral Staircase by Sheila Spencer

"Faith is taking the first step even though you cannot see the whole staircase." Rev Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

As a child, spiral staircases fascinated me. There was a sense of anticipation and excitement with taking the first step. The steps would take me on a winding journey with twists and turns. It was always about the process of taking the steps more than reaching the destination. The experience could never be rushed; it was truly one step at a time. It was about the journey.

Five years ago, with a similar anticipation and excitement, I took my first step of an exciting journey. When I accepted the call to be Program Director/Merger Staff for Disciples Women's Ministries, I began a winding journey with life changing twists and incredible turns. It has always been about the amazing experiences and unforgettable people that I met during these past five years. Christ taught me to savor each step of the journey and I learned that some of my most unforgettable encounters happened when I wasn't even ex-

pecting them. But the journey began when I took the first step. There have been times when I have been so grateful and want to thank the Sheila from five years ago who took the courage of that tentative first step – pure joy.

Five years later, my sisters, I am preparing to take another first step. I was offered and have accepted the call to be the Director of Christian Education/Faith Formation. It is an honor to step into the position of my mentor, Dr. Billye P. Bridges. There is a great sense of anticipation and I trust God for this new journey. This is also a Merger Staff Position – which means I remain aligned and involved in National Convocation Ministry and serve as a resource to African American congregations and communities. I am still available for workshops, and speaking when my schedule allows.

I am *always* a National Convocation Disciples Woman!

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Some of the reasons I love my calling



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The purpose of Disciples Women is to provide opportunities for spiritual growth, enrichment, education and creative ministries to enable women to develop a sense of personal responsibility for the whole mission of the church of Jesus Christ and to provide a channel through which women in the congregation and the regional Women's Ministries in the United States and Canada may be joined in fellowship and find means for effective participation in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Message from our President

Hello my Sisters,

What a historical time for us as country and church. God is faithful. What he promises, he will deliver, not in our time but in his. Good news from National Convocation Board Meeting in Dec 2012, a proposal was presented concerning our representation of both President and VP at the Board Meeting prior to a Biennial session, when either President or VP is not presently serving on the board. This was unanimously passed. Which means; we can begin sending our \$52 annual assessment earmark as Travel fund for Disciples Women. Remember it's only \$1 a week, and can be paid any time during the year. Checks payable to National Convocation with Travel Fund for Disciples Women in memo line. Mail to: **National Convocation P.O. Box 1986 Indianapolis, IN 46206**. This funds meals; lodging and transportation for our president elect to attend the Board Meeting prior to the Biennial session. This fund will also enable representation to regional events, such as MCMC, PDC,

TCMF, KCMC, Church of Christ (Disciples of Christ) etc., even funerals where representation is required. Be mindful that the makeup of our officers allows us to have representation in most regions. Also remember these are volunteer positions serving the Church and You. Praise the Lord our God!

I recently returned from DW Council (Staff Fellowship), a meeting where, disciples women regional staff, state, and convention presidents come together to discuss and ignite ideas to better service the church. What an awesome time. This event was held in Atlanta, GA. Plans have begun for our 22nd Biennial session in Columbus, Ohio, with the theme "Be Still and Know" As we continue to rejoice in God our creator and sustainer, let us begin worshipful work for the Church in our giving, doing and continue praise.

*Serving You,
Marilyn*



The Spiral Staircase (cont'd from page 1)

National Convocation Disciples Women's Ministry President and Vice President – Marilyn Williams and Wanona Redd and I have been in constant contact. We are preparing an awesome 2013 – 2014 year.

Umoja will continue to be published and keep you informed and inspired.

Let's pray, before the official search process for Program Director begins, that God prepare another sister who will willingly take the first step of an incredible journey.

In the words of one of my heroes, Maya Angelou – *Wouldn't Take Nothing for my Journey Now.*

I love each and every one of you more than you will ever know. Your presence, prayers, joy, laughter and trust is one of God's best gifts to me. Our relationship will continue because I need you because we are a part of God's body. You are important and priceless to me, I need you to survive.

*Blessed and humbled
and honored to be
your sister in Christ
and to serve you,
Sheila P. Spencer*



General Assembly 2013 - Calling Disciples Women

Are you going to General Assembly 2013? Do you know someone who is going? Do you want to be part of the growing tide of Disciples Women making new friends at GA?

General Assembly leadership has asked Disciples Women to serve as hosts at **Educational Workshops**. You will be able to host at the workshops you are attending. You will receive training the day of the event, in advance of the sessions' start. You will receive an identifying ribbon for your badge. No public speaking is required.

There needs to be two hosts at each workshop. One will assist the speaker with basics, i.e. water, room temperature. The other will be at the door to scan attendees' badges for Continuing Education Credits (in and out scans). No public speaking is required.

- **Sunday** afternoon-only sessions have 30 openings
- **Monday** morning-only sessions have 60 openings
- **Tuesday** morning-only sessions have 80 openings.

Women's Luncheon — **Wednesday**. There is a need for 60 table hosts. You will set-up resources and welcome guests to your table, offering them your hospitality.

Women's Boutique in the Exhibit Hall ~ *daily*,

where you can register early for QA 2014 to take advantage of the *discount* and *free* tee-shirt and where you will be purchasing the new pre-event tote bag ~ can use some volunteers to assist in general ways around the boutique. Stop by to shop. Stay to help your friends.

There are 230+ opportunities for Disciples Women, friends and family, to expand their experiences, memories and friendships at GA2013.

**Join us by emailing
odw@dhm.disciples.org
with your name & availability.**

Rest and refresh during the day, and then renew friendships during after sessions at **The Well**.

Saturday: Leader Apprentice Program & Enabler Programs

Sunday: Clergy Women & Seminarians

Monday: Woman-to-Woman Worldwide and Women's Action Web

Tuesday: Former DW Staff and ICWF/IDWM Executive Committee Members

QA 2014 in Atlanta, Georgia ~ June 25 to 29, 2014

While at **GA13**:

Visit the Women's Boutique in the Exhibit Hall for additional **early bird discount** registration & **free tee-shirt**

Stay up-to-date at www.quadrennial.org



Woman-to-Woman Worldwide 2012 ~ China



Rev. Dr. Christal L. Williams is second from the right in the front row in this group picture of the 2012 participants and a few of their closest friends in China.

Read *Just Women* study resource material to learn more about the journey.

The service project information and contact information to schedule a presentation are available at www.discipleswomen.org

Every year the Woman-to-Woman Worldwide experience offers its participants opportunities to be one with women from all over the globe. This distinctive opportunity calls Disciple Women in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada to leave their everyday lives and enter into a holy and significant place of relationship building, strategic learning and shared intentional listening.

It is true that the participants on this year's journey to China were from different walks of life: preachers, teachers, singers, accountants, authors, mothers, dental assistants, students, cake decorators and most importantly, women of God. We decided early on that the journey was about stepping in to a place that had been especially prepared for our growth and spiritual maturity and we were not disappointed. The Church in China is one of the fastest growing in the World and it is evident. As, we visited Bible Schools, Seminaries and Churches our hearts were deeply touched

by the hunger and thirst of Pastors, lay leadership and laity for deeper understanding of God's plan for the Church. Students left their homes, families, churches and livelihoods to answer the call of God on their lives. We were invited, firsthand to witness students preparing for their life's work in ministry.

Every where we went there were hundreds of students ready to follow what is called, "The Great Commission." *The Matthew 28:19 passage can truly be seen, touched and felt from the meeting rooms of Shanghai to the corners of Zhengkou and the shared around the tables of Beijing, China.*

Rev. Dr. Christal L. Williams

Associate Regional Minister

The Christian Church in Illinois and Wisconsin

JUST WOMEN
EMBRACING LIFE

Sister Share

On Saturday March 16, 2013, Wanona Redd of Virginia (insert), Eliza Cave, of South Carolina and Yvonne Artis Barnes of North Carolina all received Trailblazer awards for outstanding leadership and participation from their respective Region. This honor was bestowed upon them at the first Tri-State Retreat held in Black Mountain, North Carolina at the Christmount Assembly Conference Center. Two filled days of spiritual enrichment, fellowship and fun

Congratulations to these award-winning sisters!



Members of Piedmont District Convention
LAP Class reunited at Tri-State Retreat
in North Carolina.



2012-2014 Officers of the
National Convocation Disciples Women



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|--------------------------|--|
| President | Marilyn Williams (North Carolina) |
| 1st Vice President | Wanona Redd (Virginia) |
| 2nd Vice President | Pernella Shortie (Great River Region) |
| Immediate Past President | Pamela Dubose (Great River Region) |
| Member-at-Large | Karen Barrett (Northern California) |
| Member-at-Large | Lashaundra Smith (Great River Region) |
| Chaplain | Frankie Williams (Texas) |
| Secretary | Robyn Cushingberry (South Carolina) |
| Treasurer & Staff | Sheila Spencer (Disciples Women Staff) |

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Connection Section

Did you know Disciples Women now have an e-commerce options available? Now you can purchase study resource materials online: *Just Women* subscriptions, *Wisdom of Women* and more. Go to www.discipleswomen.org and grow as a Disciples woman!



Join us on Facebook:

Connect and engage in conversation with Disciples women from all over. Come, join our fan pages. Be a friend and tell a friend!

- *Disciples Women*
- *News from 2012 National Convocation*
- *Umoja Unity*
- *Just Women Magazine*



www.disciples.org/convo

Just Women study resource materials

Introduces the Spring 2013 issue Bible Study. *An Abiding Hope: The Presence of God in Exodus and Deuteronomy* is an ecumenical Bible study by Janice Catron. The books of Exodus and Deuteronomy invite us to remember that the central actor in the human experience—in our own lives and in the experiences described in Exodus and Deuteronomy—is God. Our God is the one who redeems, who brings liberty and fulfillment even when we do not deserve it, when we cannot redeem ourselves. We have the assurance of God's abiding presence as individuals and as a community of faith. This presence helps us see that God's redemption is more than a "saving from" harsh circumstances; it also is "saving to" the fullness of life God intends for humanity.

Join in this study with women from across the U.S. and in Canada. Secure your copy at www.discipleswomen.org at the online store link.

Yearly Deadlines:

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| March 15 - | Women's Endowment Fund application due |
| April 1 - | Woman-to-Woman Worldwide application due |
| October 15 - | Women's Endowment Fund application due |

Special Dates to Remember:

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| July 13 to 17, 2013 | General Assembly |
| July 14 / 5:00pm | National Convocation Heritage Dinner |
| June 25 to 29, 2014 | Quadrennial Assembly Atlanta, Georgia |
| July 24 to 27, 2014 | 23rd Biennial Session Columbus, Ohio |