

Umoja - Unity-Oneness-Harmony

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

Summer 2013

"Declaring Christ the King; Letting True Worship Ring"

To say that Minister Sheila Spencer represented the Office of Disciples Women well, is actually an understatement. She is the epitome of class and distinction, but more importantly, she works from her *soul* which she keeps calmly balanced through constant refreshing. Even here, in Newport News, Virginia, where the weather was perfect and the spiritual atmosphere was ripe for impact, Sheila was calmly balanced and focused on her assignment, which was to strengthen fellowship and broaden the lanes of access between sisters with the same last name...*Disciples of Christ!*



Her presentation of each area of ministry within the Disciples Women's unit, extended a loving invitation to *come and see*. Sheila styled the Woman-to-Woman Worldwide journey as a missional celebration of Jesus' love throughout the world. Her teaching style embedded a story from one of her Congo trips into our hearts, and was repeated time and time again, during the convention.

It seems that once, when Sheila visited the Congo, a 16-year-old excitingly explained why his church danced and celebrated for 45 minutes during the

offering. It was because of the vast blessings that God afforded them. Offering is a true part of worship, not just throwing God a dollar. This teenager testified, "*God who gives us everything, gives us an opportunity to give back to God.*" He concluded by exclaiming, "*if our offering takes 45 minutes, surely in America, as wealthy as you are, your offering must take two hours.*" The lesson

Minister Spencer learned at that moment from a youth, became her launch pad for a convention-wide exercise about learning from one another. We discovered that in the work of missions, most often, we receive far more from others than we give. Additionally, we were reminded that true leaders are developed by pouring into others, and exercising the wisdom to have someone else pour into them.

The Human Trafficking service project and the 2014 Quadrennial were also a part of her powerful presentation. We left this convention thankful to God for Sheila's

reminders of our responsibility to endeavor to keep the unity among us as sisters, in the bond of peace!

Rev. Valerie J. Melvin, Associate Regional Minister-CC (DOC) in NC

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Minister Sheila Spencer (left) pictured with Minister Marilyn Williams (right), and Elder Claudia Pearson (center) -President of the General Board of Missions during the opening night of their convention in Newport News, Virginia (May 2013)

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

Are we there yet? Are we done yet? Have you asked yourself these questions lately? Well I have.

The theme for the 2013 General Assembly was “Lord teach us to pray”. Often times in my life when those questions comes to mind, *Are we there yet? Are we done yet?* I pray, that’s the only thing that gets me to an answer. As we approach the end of one major event we find ourselves approaching yet the beginning of another, 2014 holds major events for us as Disciples Women.

We begin with *I See You*, and upon approaching these events we must “Be still and know”, recognizing that our approach and landing must be spirit filled. When God is in the midst of it all, great things will happen. God rewards us openly when we go to him in secret prayer. When we set aside time of meditation to and for him, prayers are answered.

My rock from my book club *Ebony Pages* was salt. We choose a rock as a part of our joy and concern segment following the discussion of the book of the month. It’s our old fashion prayer meeting. From a bag of rocks we pick a new one every month and meditate on the word written on it until our next meeting. Through digesting on the word salt, I found that salt is essential for life, the oldest preservative there is and a means of survival; the body needs salt, and just like any other necessity, too much can harm you. So as we approach the end of these summer days, teach us to pray oh Lord and help us to be still and know that you are God; you are the Rock of our salvation and that this life and breath we have is not our own, but a gift from you.

In serving you, I pray that God uses me as His salt and His light. As we move forward together, let us pray together:



Guide me, O thou great Jehovah, pilgrim through this barren land.

I am weak, but thou art mighty; hold me with thy powerful hand.

Bread of heaven, bread of heaven, feed me till I want no more;

Open now the crystal fountain, whence the healing stream doth flow; let the fire and cloudy pillar lead me all my journey through.

Strong deliverer, strong deliverer, be thou still my strength and shield;

When I tread the verge of Jordan, bid my anxious fears subside; death of death and hell's destruction, land me safe on Canaan's side.

Songs of praises, songs of praises, I will ever give to thee.

Serving You,

Marilyn

President

National Convocation Disciples Women

General Assembly 2013 - In Pictures

Women of the National Convocation were active participants at this year's General Assembly.

Around the table at meals and after sessions;



General Assembly 2013—in pictures

In business sessions and worship;



General Assembly 2013 - In Pictures

And everywhere in between.



Woman-to-Woman Worldwide 2012 ~ China

By Tanya J. Tyler

In November 2012, 14 Disciples women from across the country – Kentucky, Texas, California, Oregon, Florida, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, North Carolina, Virginia, Georgia – were privileged to participate in a Woman-to-Woman Worldwide journey to China.

Woman-to-Woman Worldwide is sponsored by the International Disciples Women's Ministries and administered by the staff of Disciples Women in conjunction with Global Ministries. Woman-to-Woman Worldwide responds to the call for church women to experience solidarity with one another, to affirm the unity of the church in Jesus Christ and to join the common struggle for justice and peace in the world today. These international, ecumenical and personal experiences encourage faithful women to see the world through new eyes, to learn about their counterparts and get a feel for their experiences and build empathy with them. Previous trips have been to the Republic of the Congo, Turkey, Venezuela and Colombia, Israel and Palestine, and Bosnia and Croatia.

The China travelers ranged in age from late 20s to early 60s. They were lay women and clergy. They were Caucasian, Hispanic, African American, Chinese and Korean. The itinerary included Shanghai, Beijing, Nanjing, Xi'an, Zhengzhou and Zhoukou.

The leaders were Rev. Dr. Pat Donahoo, executive director of Disciples Women with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and Rev. Dr. Xiaoling Zhu, area executive for East Asia and the Pacific, Common Global Ministries Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ. Xiaoling is a native of China and had been a farmer once. He knew so many different people and his connections allowed the group to visit a wide range of institutions and meet an interesting assortment of people.

The women learned about the Christian Church in China. Christianity first came to China in 635 A.D. Later, when Protestant Christianity arrived in China

in the 19th century, it was associated with colonialism and regarded as a "foreign religion." Once thought of as a "poisonous opium," Christianity is now "a positive force to create a harmonious society." The Protestant Christian Church in China today is organized under the "three-self" principles – self-support, self-government and self-propagation. The Chinese Christian Church is ecumenical or, rather, non-denominational. The church was eliminated during the cultural revolution from 1966-1976, but in 1979, a policy of religious freedom was implemented in China, and church life resumed. According to the National Committee of the Three-Self Patriotic Movement of the Protestant Churches in China and the China Christian Council, the China Christian Church has more than 23,000,000 members – just over 1 percent of the population with about 70 percent in the rural areas; 56,000 churches and meeting points; 38,000 pastoral personnel; 150,000 preachers and lay workers; and 21 theological seminaries and Bible schools with 2,500 students. And half the pastors and a majority of the seminary students are women. There is one national seminary that grants a master of divinity degree, five regional seminaries and 15 provincial-level seminaries and Bible schools, as well as training centers. The church in China is growing so fast seminaries can't keep up with the demand.

The women visited Nanjing Union Theological Seminary, which was founded in 1952 and has more than 2,000 graduates – pastors, church leaders and seminarians. There are 360 students on campus currently, and they hope to get up to 500. The seminary offers three degrees: a four-year undergrad, a three-year master of divinity and a three-year master of ministry. The delegates also visited Shanxi Bible School, one of the provincial training centers. In the rural areas, seminary students also learn about agriculture in addition to theology so they can help the people in their churches.

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Celebrating Women of Faith and Vision ~ by Sheila Spencer

“For I am going to do a brand new thing. See, I have already begun! Don’t you see it?” Isaiah 43: 19 (Living Bible)



(left to right) Dr. JoAnn Bynum, Carol Warsaw, Dr. Lisa Turnstall

Carol Warsaw, the Co-Moderator for the Disciples Women of the Pacific Southwest Region, had a dream. She envisioned gathering together an intergenerational group of African American Disciples Women for relationship building, fellowship, sharing history of Disciples Women by honoring the sheroes who had a major role in impacting the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Along with support from a regional grant, her vision became a reality. She called together a planning committee to bring the vision to life. During Mother’s Day weekend, on Saturday May 11, nearly 60 women ranging from age 16 – 83 gathered at United Christian Church in Los Angeles from 1:00 to 4:00 pm. The afternoon began by breaking bread together and worship. Charlotte Harris prepared and presented an

extensive history of Disciples Women and highlighted the lives of Carmella Barnes and Janice Newborn. The gathering was blessed by the presence of Janice Newborn. Janis Brown, another shero, surprised the group and brought Janice Newborn to the event. She was honored and was able to see the impact of her life and ministry. The day concluded with Sheila Spencer facilitating an Intergenerational Conversation that gave women from different generations the opportunity to share what they appreciated about each other and what they wanted the other generations to understand about them. Carol Warsaw shared, ***“It was a blessing to hear how each generation spoke candidly about how they felt. We don’t hear it enough and it was powerful”***



Janice Newborn

The results? Women were inspired to use their gifts. The very next weekend, several of the young women attended a leadership meeting for Women’s Regional Commission and gave invaluable input. They’re excited about the ministry and in the words of one of the women, ***“I know I have to do what God calls – and I have support.”*** This is another example of how God can birth visions and transform lives.

We Are Disciples Women!

China (continued from page 6)

The women worshipped at Dongxiang Lane Church in Xi’an. Built in 1909 by British missionaries, it is one of four existing churches in Xi’an. The church was occupied by a factory during the cultural revolution. Part of it was reopened in 1984. It has more than 2,000 members; one pastor, Rev. Chen; an assistant pastor, Elder Ma; and five evangelists.

Tanya J. Tyler, who lives in Lexington, Ky., is an ordained minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). She serves as pastor of Chalice Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), a new church start in London, Ky.

Due to space restrictions, this article will be continued in the Fall 2013 issue.

2012-2014 Officers of the
National Convocation Disciples Women



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	Open (Disciples Women)

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Connection Section

Did you know Disciples Women now have an *e-commerce option* available? Now you can purchase study resource materials online: *Just Women* subscriptions, *Wisdom of Women* and more. Go to 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 DW
- Quadrennial Assembly

Watch our videos on YouTube.com/
DisciplesWomenDOC

www.disciples.org/convo

Celebrating a Double First

June 9, 2013—Lashaundra Smith with her family, friends and congregants celebrated the ceremony officiating her role as pastor for First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Gulfport, Mississippi ~

*first African-American pastor
and first woman pastor
for this congregation*



Rev. Barbara Jones,
Rev. Lashaundra Smith

Min. Sheila Spencer, Rev.
Lashaundra Smith, Rev. Ann
Pickett-Parker, and Lady Patrice
Green.

Yearly Calendar Notes:

- 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:

- June 25 to 29, 2014** **Quadrennial Assembly**
Atlanta, Georgia
July 24 to 27, 2014 **23rd Biennial Session**
Columbus, Ohio