



The Disciples'

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Advocate

Calling all Disciples to put Mission First!

by Cherilyn Williams, Office of the General Minister and President

The question is not whether the church is dying, but whether it is giving its life for the world. – Fred Craddock

“God is on a mission of love to save the world. When God calls people into that mission, I want Disciples to be present and accounted for, don’t you?” said General Minister and President Sharon Watkins. “I want the world to be a better place because we are here. More like the kingdom of God because we walk the way of Jesus.”

In her address to the 2015 General Assembly, Watkins continued, “We’re having to figure out - what can we take with us into this new territory? What do we have to leave behind – what do we invent new to meet new challenges?”

“For us to really make a difference out here in this new landscape for mission we need some new wine skins. We need to focus on God’s mission... and find new life.”

Mission First! is about all these

We Care What You Think!

The Disciples’ Advocate is produced three times a year by Disciples Home Missions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). It includes articles and photos submitted by Disciples congregations, regions, general ministries and organizations that are related to the Disciples.

The intended mission of The Advocate is to serve the whole church. We hope you will take a

few moments to let us know how we are doing. What you like and don’t like. What you would like to see included in the future. Your thoughts and suggestions are important to us.



There are four steps toward implementing this pilot program approved by the General Board for 2015-17. They include input, identify, implement and impact.

Input – Mission Gatherings

Every Disciple who wants to be involved in Mission First! can participate in a Mission Gathering. At Mission Gatherings participants will share wisdom, make connections and be inspired by what God is already doing among Disciples. Gatherings will be in regions and in racial/ethnic communities and in youth camps and conferences, in meetings of Disciples Women and other places where people want them. (Sign up at <http://missionfirst.disciples.org>.)

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Have you considered making a gift to



in your will?

If so, please contact Rev. Ron Degges

at (317) 713-2684.

A Word or Two from Ron Degges

Back in 2009, the Disciples Home Missions Board of Directors at the request of the Public Relations and Development Committee, voted to change the DHM Logo from this:



To this:



What was once a completely bordered logo with a thick black wall became a lined, open bordered logo with a hand bearing the chalice facing out to the world. For seven years now, this logo has represented more than just institutional maintenance. It represents a Disciples institution and General Ministry with a heart for hands on mission.

Mission is nothing new for those of us who call ourselves Disciples. Mission has been at the heart of our movement ever since its beginning. The second Great Awakening was a call to action and mission that grew out of a rekindled relationship with Jesus. Throughout our history our devotion to Jesus and to mission have been so intertwined, that you cannot have one without the other.

So now you have it: Mission First is not for our church alone, but with our hand wide open and directed out to the world God loves without fail. A mission that is

primarily centered on the love of God and God's son, Jesus, for all creation. A love that cannot be boxed or bordered, only shared liberally with all.

While I was in the Middle East with a coalition of denominational executives from the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), I took a picture of a wall and border that has grown over the past to separate Palestinians and Israelis from one another, blocking people



from going home, and maintaining a fifty-year-old state of occupation.

The words on that wall are words that may very well be directed to all churches and faith communities, and every government: "... Tear down this wall!" Let's be about knocking down those barriers that separate us from one another as we provide hands on mission to a hurting world.

*Knock, knock, knocking-ly yours,
Ron*



Rev. Ronald J. Degges

In the Mail

Millie and I are fortunate to have had three home Disciples Churches in our background. Our mothers taught Sunday School in the church in Holliday's Cove, W.Va. Alexander Campbell helped organize the congregation in the 1830s while laying the groundwork for the founding of Bethany College in 1840. Millie and I were fortunate to attend summer youth conferences on the Bethany campus during the 1940s. One of our conference leaders was Rev. Willis Sliter from New Martinsville, WV.

Following my graduation from Bethany in 1949 and our wedding in the Weirton (formerly called Holliday's Cove Christian Church) in 1952, we started our married life together in a third floor apartment rented from the Potts family in New Martinsville.

I was working as a chemist in a local plant on the Ohio River. We placed our membership in the New Martinsville church. Willis Sliter was still the Pastor. He and his wife Daisy were childless.

I sang tenor in the choir and eventually took over as choir director. Joel Potts was a member of the congregation. In 1960 Millie and I with our three hillbilly sons relocated to Burbank, Calif. In the ensuing years we visited both of the West Virginia congregations and ran into Joel Potts at the General Assembly in Pittsburgh in 1997 or thereabouts.

We were pleased to read of the recognition that has been bestowed on him.

Sam L. Engel, Sr.

In the Mail

God is doing a new thing ...

Real Faith Christian Church, Clarksdale, MS, worshiped for the first time in their new sanctuary on April 5, 2015, thanks to a multitude of partners, including all the donors who gave generously to this project and all the volunteers who donated their time and labor.

Thank you for making this day possible!

See story on page 14.



We thank our God for every remembrance of you, and appreciate so much your remembrance of us with your gift to Southwest Good Samaritan Ministries (SWGSM) in the amount of \$2,000 towards the refugee food needs.

You are such an encouragement to our ministry. Your prayers and monetary support allow us to serve hundreds of displaced individuals and "the poorest of the poor" in this part of the country each year. This letter will serve as your receipt for your gracious gift.

As the Lenten begins, all those who serve SWGSM seek to prepare in the best way for a glorious resurrection Sunday – through service and love to God's children.

May your gift be returned to you in the form of God's abundant blessings!

In God's Service

*F. Feliberto Pereira
Director, SWGSM
Los Fresnos, Texas*



Bags for mission -- The youth group from New Pleasant Baptist Church in Gaffney, South Carolina, made tote bags out of old t-shirts. The bags will be distributed to Mission sites where Disciples Volunteering work across the United States and Canada in the aftermath of a natural disaster like a hurricane, earthquake or tornado.

Photo right: Casa Betel Orphanage leaders receiving donations at SWGSM. From left: Rosie, Lorena and Victor. Photo provided by SWGSM.



Photo right: Cuban Refugees Joandra and her 3-year-old son Carlos. Photo provided by SWGSM.



Photo left: Cuban Refugees, from left: Idael, Yurki and Ramon. Photo provided by SWGSM.



Photo left: Group of Cuban Refugees first time visit to Social Security Administration Building. Photo provided by SWGSM.

Working Together: Will You Be Part of the “&”?

Those who attended General Assembly with us this summer may have encountered or entered conversations about what it means to be an “&”. You may have seen this symbol in our newsletter or on the new Family & Children’s website (www.docfamiliesandchildren.org). But just what is this “and” talk all about?

For many months now, Family & Children’s Ministries has been working to reconcile and understand the harm that has been caused in some of our churches by age-segregated ministry. We have been in conversation with many voices within the diversity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) community and beyond. These conversations are moving us away from the silos that separate us to the gospel that unites us. Just as each person has various gifts, each person’s ministry is much more than a single title or interest.

Which brings us to the question: Are YOU an “&”?

Within any church or ministry, you will

find those working with families, children, youth, and young adults working together and in many different ways. We are not “either/or.” Instead, we are a ministry of “&’s.”

“I do this, and...”

“You do this, and...”

“We do this, and...”

We can’t support teens without supporting parents. We can’t support parents without understanding the needs of their elderly parents. We can’t support children without giving them adults to guide them. We can’t support God’s call without working to reconcile across harmful lines of broken relationships and divisions. We can’t limit the image of “family” to fit into a box that limits God’s community.

Many times when people hear “Family and Children’s Ministries” they have a very specific, non-realistic assumption of this ministry. They forget to ask, “What IS a family?” This question alone begins a conversation that is crucial in serving God’s

Continued on page 24. See Family and Children.

Have You Heard the Bells Ringin’

The chimes are ringing once again at Central Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Dallas, Texas. And how sweet the sound!



For more than five centuries, the carillon ringing from a bell tower has been a voice for the hopes, aspirations and joys of mankind.

Carillons (a set of stationary bells hung in a tower and sounded by manual or pedal action, or by machinery) evolved in the lowlands of Holland, Belgium and northern France.

Having impressive sounding carillons in the town’s churches was a status symbol. The town carillonneur played on market days and holidays. It was said that good bells and good schools were the sign of a well-run city.

In 1935, George Schulmerich invented the electronic carillon. He discovered that

tiny rods of cast bronze struck with miniature hammers produced pure bell tones and that these sounds could be amplified electronically resulting in a rich, sonorous tone. He called his invention carillon bells.

Soon after this discovery, Schulmerich electronic carillons were being installed by churches and communities across the country, implementing the rich tone of the finest cast bronze bells at a fraction of the cost.

Central Christian Church is the oldest continuously operating Protestant church in the city of Dallas, founded in 1863, but the building at its current location at 4711 Westside Drive was erected in 1953, during the popularity of the installation of the Schulmerich carillon.

A Schulmerich electronic carillon was installed when the Westside Drive church was built. Though the original carillon has long since stopped working, the console that housed the rods and hammers is still in the church today.

In the 1980s, Central member Martha

Continued on page 5. See Bells.



New Ventures in YYAM

DHM launched new ventures in YYAM (Youth and Young Adult Ministries) this year. With Randy Kuss serving in a new DHM position as Coordinator of Youth & Young Adult Consulting Services several things happened this Spring and Summer.

- Disciples Youth Leaders gathered in March at the Progressive Youth Ministry Event in Chicago for networking, event updates, resourcing each other, and beginning to build a new YYAM Consultant Pool, and, of course, to break bread in the form of Chicago deep dish pizza.
- A Disciples Team is working in partnership with a UCC team toward a North American Youth Event to be held in Orlando, July 26 to 30, 2016 (See ad on page 36).
- Young Adult Commission and General Youth Council received additional support for resources and connections for their General Assembly plans.
- DHM partnered with the Disciples Youth Ministry Network (DYMN) to provide support to Disciples Youth Ministry Leaders at General Assembly and enlisted DYMN help in building the YYAM Consultant Pool.
- As hinted above, DHM began a new approach to Youth and Young Adult

Ministries, assembling a diverse Consultant Pool of leaders who bring a wide range of gifts, experiences, and skills to offer to congregations and regions. As we continue to build this pool, we are letting the word out and inviting congregations and regions to contact DHM with specific needs in Youth and/or Young Adult Ministries – for training or assessment, a retreat leader or speaker, and so on. We search our pool to see if a connection can be made with a consultant to help with that particular need. Where it fits, DHM will cover transportation to get that consultant to the congregation or region while they in turn cover housing, meals and stipend. We are well on the way with this new approach with consultant support lined up for upcoming Youth or Young Adult Ministry events and assessments in Florida, Southwest and Oklahoma Regions!

- If you are seeking youth or young adult consultant contact Kelly Harris at: kharris@dhm.disciples.org.

Randy Kuss
Coordinator of Youth & Young Adult
Consulting Services

Bells *Continued from page 4.*

McClain donated money to have the chimes replaced, but those too stopped ringing about a decade ago.

This summer, the chimes were again replaced. This time, the carillon is an even more modernized version. It is a computer and an amplifier. But the result is the same — a voice for the hopes, aspirations and joys of mankind.

The chimes ring on the hour and they play a hymn at noon and at 6 in the evening. The current song being played is "Amazing Grace." Neighbors have already called the church office to declare how great it is to

once again hear the chimes.

If you would like to hear the chimes, visit the church grounds (there are picnic tables for sitting), stop by the dog park out back (there are benches and shade trees) or sit a spell in the prayer garden. Or, join Central for Sunday worship at 11 a.m. All are welcome.

4711 Westside Dr.
Dallas, Texas
www.ccdt.org



An Oklahoma Disciples Chaplain's Odyssey

When young Paul Fritts was a boy growing up in Sand Springs, Okla., he was the youngest of four boys with parents who devotedly attended and loved First Christian Church. His mother taught Sunday School, and Mrs. Thelma Pruitt, who had watched the nursery when Paul was a child, confidently predicted that he would one day be a preacher--and so it was to be. He helped his mom count the offering (she was treasurer) at the table each week, and he loved taking part in every activity the church offered--summer camp, youth group, ushering, lighting candles--even preaching.

After attending Phillips University with a degree in Psychology (and winning the Senior Psychology Prize), Paul married the love of his life, Karen, and then he was awarded a full scholarship to the Seminary at Phillips (even though he had not majored in religion!). While in seminary he served several different student churches, and after ordination, Paul pastored three different churches before realizing that he was being called to Army chaplaincy.

It began for him in the Oklahoma National Guard, but less than two years later came 9/11, and his life and Karen's changed forever, as he was deployed to the Iraqi Theater with his unit. Not long after, he asked Karen if she thought it would be okay to make that a career--to which she responded: "What took you so long?"

After moving his growing family to Fort Carson, Colo., Paul served a second deployment in Iraq, in a region that now is under the control of ISIS. His time of working with soldiers in a combat zone was one of the richest experiences of his ministry, as he was able to connect with people of all ages and bring the love of God to folks far from their home.

From there, he moved to Charlottesville, Va., for duty with an Army Intelligence Brigade (also serving the Army JAG School

as their unofficial chaplain). After further Army schooling, Paul was sent to be a chaplain in Pisa, Italy at Camp Darby--an assignment he calls one of the highlights of his life and chaplaincy. He was then selected to attend Yale Divinity School to receive a degree in Ethics. Paul is currently teaching ethics to young officers in the Army Finance and Adjutant General Schools, where future leaders are preparing to run the Army's administrative, personnel, and finance operations. The School is located at Fort Jackson, S.C.

Over the years Paul has logged many thousands of miles in serving the church in local settings, regional camps, small towns, and big cities. He has ministered on three different continents in peace and war, but always with the sure knowledge that there is no greater privilege than to serve God's people wherever they are. Along the way, his children Sam and Kathryn have moved with them as both "Preacher's Kids" and "Army Brats" and known the blessing of new surroundings and the sadness of leaving old friends.

As Paul looks forward to yet another move, he can also reflect back on the days when a young Army Reserve lieutenant felt the call to minister in uniform. Now a senior major in the Chaplain Corps, Paul prays that other Disciples of Christ clergy will also hear the call to serve as chaplains, because he believes that no one is better suited than Disciples ministers to serve a diverse population in a remarkably pluralistic setting.

It all began in that little church in Sand Springs where Paul gave his life to Christ and was baptized all those years ago. He may have become a world traveler, but Paul will always call Oklahoma home, because he learned all that he holds dear in Sand Springs among people who love God and love him still.

Rev. Steven Doan, Chaplains' Endorsement Officer, Disciples Home Missions



Paul and Karen Fritts



Paul Fritts



Hands-on Self Care

For each lay-church-member, congregational-pastor, chaplain, and pastoral-counselor, a faithful Christian-life is not about martyrdom. Rather it is about finding a way to live generously, but with sacred balance, amidst one's vocation, community involvement, family life and leisure as a full-time child of God. We must always be mindful to live in ways so that the faithfulness to which we are called might be sustainable and transforming for those we are called to serve, and ourselves.

It is hoped each clergy-person reading this article might recognize the wisdom found herein, as it lifts up what is too-often sacrificed to hectic lives of ministry. As a holistic guide, though, the ideas shared below are as much for the lay-members of the church who should also value the importance of living well. Such practices

are activities through which to begin claiming transformation for the development of your own wellness, for the sake of a life in transforming mission.

Here are just a few practices (along with an occasional example or two) contributed by a variety of clergy who say such has led to a more-empowering sense of wellness and vitality:

- Getting enough rest
- Eating well
- Time with family
- Regular and adequate exercise
- Getting away for vacation
- Get together with others (clergy and laity groups) for support in prayer & discernment
- Making pilgrimage (not a vacation,

Continued on page 12. See Self Care.

An Ecological Conversion

Our family delighted in God's creation as we served in Monteverde, Costa Rica as Global Ministries Volunteers. We met neighbors like Howler Monkeys, Three Wattle Bell Birds, Sloths and Toucans. We learned their names and voices, watched and listened to them with awe. There were human neighbors who also inspired us. As we listened to cab drivers, hotel owners, tropical biologists, bakers, coffee farmers, teachers, from faith backgrounds as varied as Catholic, Quaker and Disciples of Christ we often heard sad words:

- Our water wells dried up
- The frogs aren't around here anymore
- Our forest orchids are dying
- This is a cloud forest! Where are the clouds?

In Monteverde we heard about the negative impacts of a changing climate. Climate change in Monteverde is not a liberal, conservative, rich or poor issue; it is everybody's issue. Our time there shifted the way we saw our relationships. In Costa Rica our relationship to and dependence on nature, other people and God was deepened as we were entangled in the beauty of the cloudforest.

Sharon Watkins reminds us in the video "Holy Ground" that caring for creation is central to our faith. (www.discipleshomemissions.org/dhm/dhm-ministries/environment)

Pope Francis's powerful Encyclical "Praise Be" also proclaims creation care to be central to the faith:

"All Christians need an 'ecological conversion', whereby the effects of their encounter with Jesus Christ become evident in their relationship with the world around them."

Green Chalice churches are leaders on behalf of creation by planting gardens, installing solar panels, writing to congress-people, and are sending their youth groups into the oceans and creeks to relish and protect nature. Through our partnership with Blessed Tomorrow, we have joined a growing global movement of faithful people in caring for creation. Join us and tell us how you are living out your faith. www.GreenChalice.org.

Rev. Scott Hardin-Nieri, Green Chalice Disciples Home Missions



Scott Hardin-Nieri and family in Monteverde Cloudforest Reserve



A student at the Cloudforest School in Costa Rica



Share our Abundant Resources

A semi-trailer filled with 42,000 pounds of white potatoes were transported from an Ohio farm to Fourth Avenue Christian Church during the General Assembly in Columbus. Seventy-five servants were there to unload and break-down fifty pound bags, then sort, reload, bless and send the potatoes out to more than two dozen area food banks and pantries. This special delivery provided potatoes to thousands of people in the Columbus area. Disciples Volunteering, the General Assembly Local Missions Planning Team, and Society of St. Andrew, a mission partner of Disciples Volunteering, organized the event.

Along with the food drop, mission opportunities

at General Assembly saw nearly 250 General Assembly attendees serve for two days with a Habitat for Humanity ReStore, knit 150 scarves for distribution to people living on the streets or in transition through a Columbus shelter, and give 80 units of blood through the Red Cross. Disciples Volunteering gives thanks for all who answered the call, and those who worked behind the scenes to make it possible, to Get Dirty for Jesus!

Josh Baird

Disciples Volunteering

Disciples Home Missions



Sleeping Mats for People who are Homeless

The General Youth Council and Disciples Women partnered on a sleeping mat project at General Assembly in Columbus, Ohio, to provide some comfort and protection for people who are homeless. Thousands of plastic bags were collected, cut into strips, tied and rolled into balls of 'plarn', then crocheted into mats and pillows which provide a barrier from the damp ground. It takes between 500 and 700 bags to make one mat. With this partnership 13 mats were completed along with a number of pillows. These were donated to Open Shelter in Columbus. Their director spoke to the youth on Wednesday morning and was very appreciative. He explained that it is a project that makes a difference.

Women's groups, individuals, and other interested groups left GA with extra 'plarn' and some partial mats to be completed as well as with the inspiration to continue this hands-on project.

This video gives you all the instructions you need: <https://youtu.be/BiUC0iDQtkA>



Peace Cranes

Inspired by the image of "Soar!" and the Japanese legend of the peace crane, Disciples Women challenged the church with a goal of 1,000 cranes with 1,000 prayers by the end of GA 2015. Many groups including women's regional groups, women's executive teams, regional moderators, regional ministers, general ministry staff, youth, camps, peace interns, attendees to pastors' conference, attendees to Black Ministers' Retreat, DHM board, visitors to Disciples Center open house, Disciples Women's Leadership Council, Seminarians, and the General Board wrote prayers on paper and folded them into cranes that resided at the Disciples Center in a clear pillar. Following a human trafficking workshop for the youth by Disciples Women's Executive Director the youth were assisted in folding cranes that included their prayers as well. Several Disciples women provided coaching for the crane folding.



The total cranes at GA exceeded 2,000 and were prayed over at the Disciples Women luncheon. They were also displayed during GA Wednesday evening closing worship. Some cranes were also placed on the communion table and some were flown overhead during the processional.

In the interest of being earth friendly, table decorations and butterflies supplied to all attendees of Disciples Women were origami fashioned for that event so that everything was recyclable.

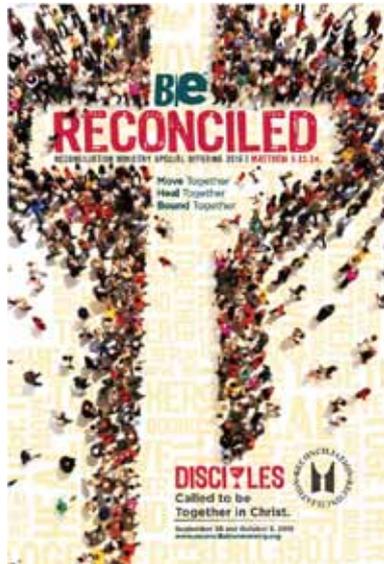


Why Have a Reconciliation Ministry Offering?

This past June, nine men and women were killed in Bible study at Mother Emanuel AME church. These nine African American faithful, including pastors and laypersons, had welcomed the white stranger into their midst. But he was intent on death.

This heinous act catapults our efforts to eradicate racism and racial tension not only for our current generation but also for future generations. General Minister and President Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins, in a letter to all Disciples congregations, encouraged all Disciples congregations to join the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Churches Uniting in Christ, the National Council of Churches in a call to a day of Confession, Repentance and Commitment to End Racism. You can read the letter at: disciples.org/general/end-racism-sunday-sept-6-a-letter-from-disciple-leaders, and find resources on the Reconciliation Ministry website at: www.reconciliationministry.org.

Offering every year to fund our Church's mission imperative to become a pro-reconciling and anti-racist church utilizing the tools experiential education (training), inclusive worship and intentional dialogue.



Our efforts to promote healing, relationship and restoration in the whole family of God are enlivened by funds from this offering providing for programs of leadership development, curriculum for dialogue and learning, and partnerships within the Church and our communities. The year 2015 has catapulted the conversation about human brokenness evidenced in the sin of racism and perpetuated in our institutional structures and systems. Your generous

giving to Reconciliation Ministry is transforming lives and strengthening Christ's witness in the world that we love one another, even as Christ continues to love us!

The poem below was written by Clay Harrison, a member of Olive Branch Christian Church in Williamsburg, Va.



Reconciliation Ministry has a special of-

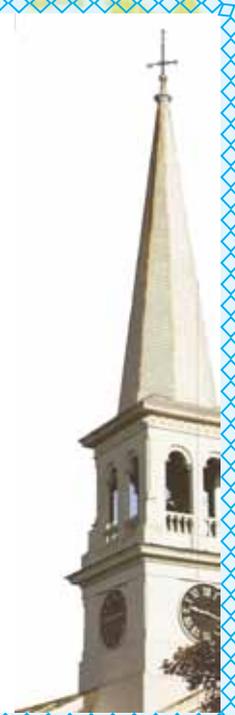
A Time to Mourn

In memory of: Revs. Clementa Pinckney, Daniel Simmons, Sharonda Singleton, DePayne Middleton, Doctor and Susie Jackson, Ethel Lance, Myra Thompson, Tywanza Sanders, Cythia Hurd

*Innocent blood has been spilled
at "Mother Emanuel,"
An AME church in Charleston
that history knows well.
Racism reared it's ugly head
and left nine people dead,
Nine Bibles fallen to the floor
with bloodstains turning red.
Hearts and souls have been broken --
this is a time to mourn.
Countless prayers are being spoken
for the grief we have borne.
The killer is in custody,
no remorse on his face,*

*And yet he has been forgiven
with dignity and grace.
Hate has lost another battle --
nine saints have gone above.
God has wrapped his arms around them
and welcomed them with love.
An Evil has been overcome --
A Healing has begun.
As we grow in faith together,
God bless us everyone!*

*Clay Harrison
Olive Branch Christian Church
Williamsburg, Virginia
June 21, 2015*



First Christian Church and Community Gathers to Pray for Man Shot by Son

The community in Reidsville, N. C., gathered at First Christian Church, on Saturday, July 25, to pray for 76-year-old James Johnson, a funeral home owner, who was recently shot and injured by his son.

The shooting was reported at the Johnson and Son Funeral Home in Reidsville on Friday, July 24.

Garcia Johnson allegedly shot James Johnson while inside the funeral home. After the shooting, he allegedly left the scene. He was arrested after turning himself in later that day.

First Christian Church posted videos of their prayer meeting to their Facebook. You can view them at: www.facebook.com/FCCReidsvilleNC



The Rev. Valerie Melvin, pastor of the congregation, wrote this thank you to the community.

"I wish to express my gratitude to the clergy, churches, city officials, and our community, who were present for the Community Prayer, covering the Johnson Funeral Home Family and our city this past Saturday. It is moments like this, when agendas fade

and unity is experienced. The Church is emphatically and unapologetically *One Unified Body*, regardless of denominational platform. Unity is what we witnessed through prayer and music, while walking hand-in-hand to the funeral home.

Because evil is pervasive and it spares no corner of the world, our community was impacted with sadness, and some were fearful. Minds began to ponder: *if the community landmarks of love and care such as funeral homes and churches are not safe, where can we find refuge? Heaven's resounding answer:*

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled,

though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah. There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High. God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early... The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

(Psalm 46: 1b-5 & 7 KIV)

After such a tragedy, the journey to wholeness for this family and community is now underway, but prayer must remain a vital part of the journey. I am also hopeful, that we keep in touch with one another as clergy, churches, and community. With our busy schedules, finding the time to remain socially and spiritually engaged, will enable 'the ties that bind us' to be forever strengthened.

We love you and pray God's best for you in all things, First Christian Church stands ready as your sister church when you should need us!

*Bishop Valerie Melvin
First Christian Church
Reidsville, N.C.*

Valerie is also a member of the DHM board of directors



Valerie Melvin



Council on Christian Unity Names President-elect

The Rev. Seung Un (Paul) Tche has been named President-elect of the Council on Christian Unity (CCU). He began his service on September 1, and is working alongside current president, the Rev. Robert Welsh, until his retirement in 2016. In making this announcement, the Rev. Kory Wilcoxson, chair of the Search Committee and the CCU Board, shared, "We had several excellent candidates for the position, but it was clear to us that Paul was the right person for the job. The committee was impressed with his gift of relationship-building, his authenticity, and his personal experience in the work for Christian unity. The Board looks forward to working with Paul as we help CCU move into its next chapter of leadership."

Paul has extensive experience in the ecumenical world and a passion for unity across denominations and faiths. He recently completed a six-year term on the CCU Board, including two years as chair, so he is intimately familiar with the purpose and vision of CCU.

He has been serving as pastor of White

Oak Pond Christian Church in Richmond, Ky., since August 2013. He previously served churches in Louisville and Lexington, Ky. Tche, a first-generation immigrant from South Korea, received his Bachelor and Master of Arts in South Korea, and earned his Master of Divinity from Brite Divinity School in Texas.



Seung Un (Paul) Tche

In addition to his work with Disciples, Tche is currently the co-president of the Korean American Ecumenical Network, a consortium of five denominations working for peace on the Korean Peninsula. He has also served as a Disciples representative for the World Council of Churches Ecumenical Consultation on Peace, Justice, and Reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula, and the 10th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Busan, South Korea, in 2013.

Self-Care *Continued from page 7.*

- but an intentionally spiritually intimate engagement with another community, culture and/or place)
- Centering prayer (forms include Thomas Keating, or Mindfulness Practice)
- Time with friends for dinner
- Cloister time (reading, gardening, photography, prayer)
- Creative engagement with artistic expression (singing, dancing, playing a musical instrument)
- Contemplative scripture reading (Lectio Divina, "Dwelling In The Word")
- Discernment in decision-making (Ignatius Exercise)
- Sabbath-keeping (no, Sunday is not the place/time for most-clergy to keep Sabbath)
- Learning to graciously say "no"
- Keeping silent (always, or even usually, "getting a word in edgewise" is not the most-helpful practice)

- Creation Stewardship (community gardens, stream restoration, litter patrol, congregational participation in Green Chalice program)

Through what regular and disciplined practices have you found your own life centered in ministry? Toward what additional activities on the list above may God be calling you? How will you make room in your life for a collective body of these other kinds of practice? Do you need to let go of some other busyness or activity in order to make room for such practice? Is anything getting in your way of practicing a balanced life in ministry, and/or participation in the life of the church community? If you have questions, or would like more information, about any of the items mentioned above, you are invited to call Warren Lynn at (317) 317-2652 or e-mail wlynn@dhm.disciples.org in the Office of Christian Vocations.

Warren Lynn, Christian Vocations
Disciples Home Missions



The Passionate Pew People

Though passion and desire for a cup of coffee or a midday snooze fueled the minds of most attending General Assembly, I can attest to several encounters with people so devoted and passionate about their work that I was able to leave with a renewed perspective on how to take advantage of my oh-so-pivotal next few years of life. My first mind blowing encounter occurred with Nancy Fowler, a fellow Disciple residing in San Diego, who helped me become aware of organizations like Disciples Peace Fellowship that travel to Israel/Palestine in order to help advocate for nonviolence and bear against war. I am painfully close to beginning my senior year of high school, and though I am not totally sure of my plans following this year (who does?), I do know that I want to get involved in something that I firmly believe in, such as social/political justice, and that I want to help people. After Nancy and I's hour of conversation, she commented seeing lots of passion within me

and said she believes I will make a difference in this world; her kind words continue to resonate and inspire me to this day.

And there are others: Waltrina Middleton, leading a workshop on the topic Black Lives Matter, brought to my attention that my comfort level is actually more of a pivot point for action; a commitment to truth and justice; a point that makes me become color brave instead of color blind. Bruce Barkhauer, head honcho for Faith and Giving, made me eager to resemble his kind of love and passion for the church after explaining the importance of committing to growing in one's generosity. All of these short but impactful encounters helped me finalize my beliefs that as a child of God, I am to live, love, work, and serve others just as He has prepared us to do- but doing so PASSIONATELY.

Avery Claire Bennett
Member, General Youth Council

GA Reflections by General Youth Council

"For where two or three gather in my name, there I am with them." Matthew 18:20. This year in Ohio was my second General Assembly as a youth, and my first as a member of the General Youth Council. Though it was not my first rodeo, the sheer amount of Disciples who attended was enough to fill my heart with joy. While there are dozens of reasons to fall

in love with the GA experience, the one that leaves me awestruck time and time again is the relationships, new and old, that are strengthened ten fold with every passing hour. As a part of the youth programming, there were afternoon workshops based upon a speaker's faith testimony. The attending youth were then presented with the chance to share their own faith stories in small groups. One testimony in particular resonated with a large group of youth from all over the continent. This testimony

was entitled "Overcoming Childhood Obstacles," and when presented with the opportunity to share, these individuals delved deep into their hearts and uncovered their most difficult struggles with problems such as depression, drugs, abuse, poverty, and so much more. Even though the majority of them had just met, they didn't hesitate to make themselves vulnerable and to care unconditionally for one another. They were able to bond through their own resurrection stories and they loved each other as God loves each of us. To me, this is what assembly is all about. It isn't all about business meetings or learning tracts, but rather loving on each other the way Jesus does. We grant each other unearned grace, mercy, compassion, respect, and so much love for no reason other than our deeply rooted love of Christ. Thank you for your support of the youth which made this possible.

Chelsea Martin
Vice-Moderator, General Youth Council



DHM - Hands on Mission - Real Faith

Real Faith Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) was in the middle of a major building campaign when disaster hit. The once thriving congregation was a pillar in the city of Clarksdale, Mississippi. In 2009, the congregation was in the process of adding onto the current 98-year-old structure that included a gym and fellowship hall for community use, narthex, a new sanctuary, classrooms and media room. However, due to a stream of unfortunate events caused by people who didn't have the church's interest at heart, including problems with the construction project that were beyond the congregation's control, the building project was put on hold indefinitely.



Pastor Cedric Clayton in the new sanctuary!

At General Assembly in Orlando, Florida in 2013, Rick Reisinger, President of Disciples Church Extension Fund [DCEF], Ronald Degges, President of Disciples Home Missions [DHM], and Joshua Baird [Director of Disciples Volunteering] sat together to discuss what it would look like to gather folk from across ministry lines to help the Real Faith congregation complete its thwarted building project using long-term Disciples Volunteers and volunteer support teams from across the United States and Canada.

After General Assembly 2013, a site visit was planned and the principals from DHM and DCEF visited the site of Real Faith Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Clarksdale, Miss., assessed the situation, and began to develop a plan to help the congregation bring to completion its building project. Over the next 18 to 24 months, Disciples Home Missions, Disciples Church Extension Fund, Disciples Volunteering, Disciples Women, the Great River Region, Reconciliation Ministry, Week of Compassion, National Convocation, and Hope Partnership have helped this congregation

bounce back from their disaster. On Easter Sunday 2015, the Real Faith congregation dedicated its brand new facility to the glory of God. Just look at what can happen when we work together in the life of this church and focus on strengthening congregations for mission.

Rev. Ronald J. Degges, President of Disciples Home Missions, and Rev. Joshua Baird, Director of Disciples Volunteering, visited Real Faith Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) on Pentecost Sunday 2015, to dedicate a hand-made cross created by long-term volunteers, Mike and Julie Robinson. The Robinsons relocated to Clarksdale and dedicated 18 months of their life to see this project through to completion. The Worship

Service at Real Faith on Pentecost Sunday brought the project officially to a close. Now, Real Faith holds two Sunday morning worship services with a packed house at each service and educational and community service ministries throughout the work week. It is a congregation on the go!



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Real Faith
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Julie Robinson



Sheila Spencer & Chesla Nickelson



Mike Robinson & Steve Houston



Regenia Smith



Pat Donahoo



Josh Baird & Mike Robinson



Jeff Engle



Dave Engle



Ron Degges



Kathy Watts, Sharon, Brenda Tyler & Wilma Shuffitt



Steve Houston



Sheila Spencer & Chesla Nickelson



Ron Degges speaks to group of volunteers



Regenia Smith & Kathy Watts



Wilma Shuffitt



Tim James, Pat Donahoo & Kathy Watts



Brenda Tyler

DHM Staff Join Delegation to Middle East

Over the course of two weeks, a dozen leaders from both the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ visited with 20 partner organizations in the Middle East. The Rev. Ron Degges, President of Disciples Home Mission; and the Rev. Patricia Donahoo, Executive Director of Disciples Women were among the participants.

Other were: Jon Barnes, Executive for Mission Education, Global Ministries; Chris Dorsey, President, Higher Education and Leadership Ministries, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); J. Bennett Guess, Executive Minister, Local Church Ministries, United Church of Christ; Peter Makari, Executive for the Europe and the Middle East, Global Ministries; Katie McCloskey, Director, Social Responsibility, United Church Funds; James Moos, Co-Executive of Global Ministries and Executive Minister, Wider Church Ministries, UCC; Sharon Moos; Anthony Moujaes, United Church News; Mary Schaller Blaufuss, Team Leader, Global Sharing of Resources, United Church of Christ; Paul Tche, Moderator-Elect, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); and Bernard Wilson, Chair, United Church of Christ Board.

The trip, from April 26 through May 8, took the Global Ministries delegation through Jordan, Israel-Palestine, Egypt and Lebanon. While there, the delegation visited with partners in each country and

toured the Biblical sites of Christ's ministry, his birth in Bethlehem, his baptism in the Jordan river, his betrayal at Gethsemane, and his resurrection in Golgotha (Calvary).

The trip was also to set the groundwork for the Middle East Initiative, which was launched for the UCC at General Synod in June and the Disciples at General Assembly in July. The idea is to offer congregations and members from both denominations an opportunity to learn, advocate and witness with partners the issues the region faces. Disciples and UCC members can also gain a greater understanding and familiarity of the Middle East, and the legacy of Christian presence in the region.

Through the initiative, Global Ministries will emphasize the partnerships in nine countries: Armenia, Egypt, Israel-Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Syria and Turkey. There will be giving opportunities to support refugees and migrants, education programs, healthcare programs, justice and peacemaking efforts, and the Christian presence and witness there.

Continued on page 34. See Reflections.

Christmound Executive Director Announces Retirement

Christmound's Executive Director, Michael Murphy, announced his retirement at the April 2015, meeting of the Christmound Council and Administrative Board. Murphy intends to retire in early July 2016, after more than 18 years as Christmound's Director.

During his tenure, Murphy has led Christmound through two successful major capital campaigns, including the construction of a modern dining facility and the remodeling of conference meeting spaces, as well as continuing to upgrade housing in the hotel and camp areas. His leadership has also led to the "greening" of Christmound, which includes placing 400 acres of wilder-

ness area under a conservation easement with the North Carolina Clean Water Trust Fund and the Southern Appalachian Highlands Conservancy. Christmound was also designated a Disciples of Christ "Green Chalice" facility by the denomination. He also led the Board of Directors in making a decision to establish Camp Lakey Gap for people on the autism spectrum, an ongoing summer camp program.



Michael Murphy



Promoting Recovery from Mental Health Challenges¹

Facts about Mental Health Challenges:

Mental health challenges vs mental illness.

I choose to use the term mental health challenge for a couple of reasons. First, not everyone will admit to having a mental illness, but they may admit to having a mental health challenge. Also, mental illness sounds like the problem is all in a person's head and it isn't.

One in every five adults is affected by a mental health challenge.

Mental health challenges can affect anyone regardless of race, gender, education, religion, age, intelligence or income². One in five people is affected in any given year³. Some people say that 1 in 2 people will have a mental health challenge sometime in their life. Approximately 1 in 25 adults experiences a serious mental health challenge in a given year that substantially interferes with or limits one or more major life activities⁴.

Mental health challenges are medical conditions.

Scientific understanding of neurological conditions and mental health challenges has advanced through research. Today we understand that mental health challenges have a biological basis. They are brain disorders associated with changes in the brain's structure, chemistry and function, which in turn affects how we think, feel and act.⁵

Treatment works and recovery is probable.

There is no cure for mental health challenges, but recovery is not only possible but also probable⁶. Recovery is a journey not a destination. With a combination of appropriate medication, therapy, education and support, 70-90% of us with serious mental health challenges have significant reduction of symptoms and improved quality of life. Each of us needs to be treated as if we can recover because recovery is possible for each of us.

Hope is crucial.

You cannot predict who will recover based on how serious the challenge is, how long we have had it or when it began. The only predictor of recovery is having hope⁷ because, without hope, we may give up and not try anything to make our life better. You can be confident in having hope in

recovery even if it seems hopeless because, according to the National Empowerment Center, we can recover from a mental health challenge regardless of what disorder we have, when it began or how long we have had it.⁸



Stigma prevents many of us from seeking treatment.

Approximately 60 percent of adults⁹ and almost one-half of youth ages 8 to 15¹⁰ with a mental health challenge received no mental health services in the previous year. Sometimes services are not available or affordable, but, often, we avoid treatment because of the fear of stigma.

Most people with mental health challenges are not violent.

The most common form of violence by those of us who have a mental health challenge is violence against ourselves. If we have a serious mental health challenge then we are far more likely to be victims of violent crime than perpetrators of it¹¹.

People of faith in Bible were depressed.

Elijah the prophet was so depressed that he was suicidal and God did not tell him to have more faith or to snap out of it. God sent an angel to help him and God spoke to him in a quiet voice¹². Jeremiah was referred to as the "weeping prophet" - the book of Lamentations is full of his laments. David experienced depression as evidenced by some of his psalms¹³. Jesus is even described

i. ¹ excerpted from unpublished Journey toward Wholeness by Mary Alice Do

ii. ² www.psyweb.com/mdisord/jsp/gendepress.jsp

iii. ³ www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/prevalence/any-mental-illness-ami-among-adults.shtml

iv. ⁴ Ibid

v. ⁵ www.alliancebhc.org/document-library/mental-health-awareness-presentation1-pdf

vi. ⁶ www.nami.org/content/navigationmenu/find_support/consumer_support/recovery.htm

vii. ⁷ www.mhrecovery.com/definition.htm

viii. ⁸ www.power2u.org/articles/recovery/people_can.html

ix. ⁹ www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-By-the-Numbers

x. ¹⁰ www.nimh.nih.gov/health/statistics/prevalence/use-of-mental-health-services-and-treatment-among-children.shtml

xi. ¹¹ www.mentalhealth.gov/basics/myths-facts/

xii. ¹² 1 Kings 19:1-16

xiii. ¹³ Psalm 6

Commissioning of Mission Personnel

One of the highlights of General Assembly is the commissioning of mission personnel who will be serving with Global Ministries partners around the world.

This assembly we celebrated the new and renewed ministries of nine individuals - Anne Gregory, Monica Liddle, Tom Liddle, Ben Lyvers, Rebecca Owen, Tyler Reeve, Christian Watkins, Sarah Williams, and Jeff Wright. We also recognized the completed service of Carmelo Alvarez, Joel Cooper, and Gary Luallin.

Rev. Anne Gregory serves with the Church of Christ in Thailand. The child of missionaries, she has deep roots in Thailand and assists the national office in communica-



tions and translation work. Her placement is made possible through the special gifts of individuals, congregations, and regions.

Dr. Monica and Rev. Tom Liddle, members of Peace United Church of Christ in Duluth, Minn., have been called to serve with the Protestant Church in East Timor. Monica will be serving with Clinic Emmanuel in Los Palos and Tom will be as-

sisting the small denomination with leadership development in rural congregations. They served previously in East Timor from 2009-2012. Their placement is made possible through the special gifts of individuals, congregations, and regions.

Continued on page 23. See Commissioning.

DOM names Executive for Mission Education and Interpretation

The Division of Overseas Ministries is delighted to announce the appointment of Tom Morse as Executive for Mission Education and Interpretation. Tom has worked with DOM/Global Ministries since 2007, serving 5 years in China with the Amity Foundation and Drum Tower Hospital in Nanjing before working as program associate for Resource Development.

In his previous position, Tom worked closely with colleagues to redesign the Global Ministries website and weekly updates to strengthen online giving and engagement. He was also involved with the creation of the READY and REACH curriculums and led the fund raising efforts for the appointment of Anne Gregory to Thailand.

"I am so grateful for the opportunities I have had to participate in God's Mission through Global Ministries," he said, "And I look forward to continuing that journey in this new capacity."

Tom brings with him a passion for justice, human rights, and mission history, and is a self-described nerd.

"The internet gives us so many opportunities to engage more deeply in relationships internationally and domestically." He

shared, "I look forward to working with colleagues to provide new ways of connecting Disciples and UCC congregations in the exciting ministries of international partners."

Tom is a member of Central Christian Church in Indianapolis, Indiana. He is currently working on a Master's degree in Philanthropic Studies at the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy. Tom met his wife Lynnea while serving in China, and they are expecting a baby girl this August.



Tom Morse

"I look forward to continuing my work among the amazing people at Global Ministries. I feel privileged to work side-by-side with individuals who are not only committed to the work, but are committed to the many partnerships that have been nurtured around the world."

Tom began his work as the Mission Education and Interpretation Executive on June 22, 2015 in the Indianapolis office.



Global Ministries Announces New Staff

Global Ministries is delighted to announce the selection of Kelsey Cameron as Program Associate for Resource Development. Kelsey has experience in grant management, event fundraising, and magazine publication and sales.



Kelsey Cameron

In her previous position at the Elkhart County Community Foundation, Kelsey worked closely with her colleagues in the grant department to review grant proposals and progress reports. She also has served as the Special Events Coordinator at The

Stanley Clark School in South Bend, Ind. In this role she organized the school's largest, annual fundraising dinner gala, and led the efforts in obtaining corporate sponsorships and advertisers.

"I am grateful for this opportunity to be a part of Global Ministries," she said. "And I look forward to working alongside so many talented and passionate individuals committed to God's global mission."

Kelsey has recently moved from Goshen, Ind., to the Indianapolis area. She has a Master's degree in Public Affairs, with a concentration in Nonprofit Policy and Administration from Indiana University in South Bend, and has had the opportunity to travel and volunteer in Peru, the Philippines, and India.

"I am thrilled to join an organization fully committed to true relationships," she shared. "I know I will learn continuously about God's nature and mission as I work alongside my co-workers and so many respected international partners. I also look forward to being a resource for churches and individuals on how to engage in life-giving opportunities through Global Ministries."

Kelsey began her work as Program Associate for Resource Development on July 8, 2015 in the Indianapolis office.

Disciples Men Meet at General Assembly

Disciples Men gathered for lunch at the General Assembly in Columbus, Ohio, on July 22, 2015. Rev. Thaddaeus Allen, Regional Minister and President of the



Thaddaeus Allen

Christian Church in West Virginia and Pennsylvania, shared many stories of the Disciples Men who had a powerful impact on his life. He challenged all those present to have this kind of relationship with one another and especially the new generation of

Disciples Men following in our footsteps.

Joel Potts III received the Lifetime Membership Award for his thirty plus years of Disciples Men's Ministry at all manifestations of the church: Local, Regional, and General. In his time of working in Disciples Men Ministry, Joel has served as a Regional

committee member and as president of the Regional Disciples Men's work. He currently serves as the Coordinator of Men's Ministries for the Christian Church in West Virginia. Joel has also served as a member of the General Conference Disciples Men Executive Committee.



Joel Potts III

In other business, Arnold Hayes of the National Convocation, Rennie Crawford of Ohio, and Ken Marston of Kansas were newly elected to the Executive Committee of the General Conference Disciples Men. Rev. David Grandgeorge of Guyton, Ga., was appointed as Pastoral-Counselor replacing Rev. Arnold Nelson.

Time for a Shift: Transforming a New Generation of Disciples at Black Ministers Retreat 2015

The 41st Annual Black Ministers Retreat was held this past March in Montgomery, Ala., coinciding with the 50th anniversary of the historic Selma-to-Montgomery march. The retreat theme "Time for a Shift: Transforming a New Generation of Disciples" focused on the text Deuteronomy 31: 1-8, 14-30 and featured tag team preaching each evening. Workshops and presentations were also given on a variety of subjects including transformation, race, democracy, family & children's ministry, and HIV ministry. On the second day of the retreat participants were invited on a tour of the area (graciously hosted by the AL-NW FL Convocation and Black Disciples Endowment Fund) to retrace the march of 1965 and walk across the Edmund Pettus bridge in Selma. (See below for Rev. Mari-



Worship at the Black Minister's Retreat

lyn Fiddmont's reflections on this moving experience).

The Office of Black Ministries extends many thanks and appreciation to First Christian Church Montgomery who provided the retreat venue and went above and beyond to make the event go smoothly. We also extend thanks to our attendees who not only made the event a joyful and renewing experience, but also the best attended BMR in recent memory. We look forward to seeing you in Jackson, Miss., for our next gathering, March 8-10, 2016! See our website for more information www.discipleshomemissions.org/black-ministers-retreat.

Office of Black Ministers
Disciples Home Missions

There is a River: Reflections of the Journey

*Shall we gather at the river
The beautiful, the beautiful river,
Gather with the saints at the river,
That flows by the throne of God
— Robert Lowery 1864*

There were certain aspects of the tour to Selma that I had anticipated and they were not a disappointment. I was particularly moved by the tour of the Lowndes County Civil Rights Museum which was about midway on the road between Montgomery and Selma. There was a short documentary of the march and featured some of the participants. We were all spellbound by it. As we continued the drive, at the edge of the bridge, I wasn't surprised to be greeted by an enormous billboard featuring a charging Confederate soldier on horseback, with sword drawn defending the honor of the land. The inscription was to "visit Selma and the historic sites of the War Between the States." Then we were there; driving across

the bridge. I took photos of the sign as we drove across that place that had captured the attention of the country and much of the world 50 years ago.

My husband, Norman and I found a place to park our car and begin to walk toward the bridge. We were joining other participants of the Black Minister's Retreat and I wasn't prepared and was surprised that I was hesitant, almost reluctant to step on the bridge. It was a somber and emotional moment for us as we approached. At the foot of the bridge, I removed my shoes, not entirely certain why, but very aware that it was a sacred space. I began to gather rocks of remembrance along the sidewalk and path of the bridge before we began to walk across. A small group of us gathered



Continued on page 35. See River.



Irie Session



Rev. Timothy James

2015 DPF Peace Interns

The 2015 Disciples Peace Fellowship Peace interns are: Briana Black, Celia Thomason, and Will O'Brien.

Briana Black is an International Studies major at the University of Wyoming, where she is currently a senior. She is a member of First Christian Church in Casper, Wyo. Briana served on the Executive Council of Youth for the Central Rocky Mountain Region, has participated in the International Affairs Seminar, International Justice Mission Club (a student advocacy group at her university) and has studied and done mission abroad in Spain and Guatemala. She is currently working in the US Senate Office of Wyoming Senator John Barrasso in Washington, D.C.



Briana Black

Celia Thomason is in her fourth year at Texas Christian University, majoring in Early Childhood Education with an emphasis in Special Education. Originally from the Alabama Northwest Florida region, Celia is a lifelong Disciple and grew up in First Christian Church in Huntsville, Ala. She is now a member of Madison Christian Church

in Madison, Ala. She has worked as the Children's Director at Ridgela Christian Church in Fort Worth, Texas and has worked at Christmount Camp for three summers, both as a counselor and as an activities director for Camp Lakey Gap, a camp for people with autism.



Celia Thomason

William O'Brien is a junior at the University of Rochester, where he majors in religion and minors in Arabic and music. He is a co-founder of Men Opposing Violence Everywhere (MOVE) a group on Rochester's campus targeted at men to increase awareness about sexual assault and has also volunteered at the M.K. Gandhi Institute for Nonviolence. He is currently studying abroad in Morocco. Originally from Missouri, William



William O'Brien

is a member of Union Avenue Christian Church in St. Louis.

Ministry Scholarships Announced for 2015/16 Academic Year

Forty-three graduate theological students, and one clergy spouse, have been approved by Disciples Home Missions to receive financial support for their educational pursuits in the 2015-2016 academic year. Total awards for this coming year's scholarships will amount to \$88,000.

Student recipients will each receive a \$2,000 award. All awards are sent directly to the students to help them pay for their education and related expenses.

As a part of Disciples Home Missions' (DHM) work to help prepare more Disciples for lives of vocational ministry within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), an important requirement for students seeking financial help through DHM's scholarship program is that they are in an "Under Care" relationship with a regional Commission

on Ministry, or actively in the process of coming Under Care.

DHM will begin accepting new applications for the 2016/17 round of scholarship awards beginning in January 2016. Disciples of Christ students preparing for ministry who want to apply to DHM for future scholarship aid to help defray ministry education costs should contact DHM for further information. Students seeking information about coming Under Care within the regional church should contact their regional minister. A student's home pastor or DHM staff person in the office of Search and Call can provide contact information.

To see what scholarships are available, visit,

www.discipleshomemissions.org/dhm/clergy/scholarships.

Church in Fayetteville Observed 65th Anniversary

To research the history of some churches, you have to endure dusty archives and thumb through musty books with faded pages.

But not at First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) on Fort Bragg Road in Fayetteville, N.C. There you can sit in a room and have a lively chat with five women who have been around since the congregation's earliest days.

The church marked its 65th anniversary and five matriarchs of the congregation gathered in the church offices recently to talk about their history.

Three of the five, founding member Eleanor Manning, Ruby Flanary and Shirley Tharrington,

are in their 90s. The youngsters in the group, both in their 80s, are Helen Tucker and Mary Morgan.

Manning said the church began in 1950 when 17 or 18 people met at the Prince Charles Hotel downtown to decide to start First Christian Church. From there they held meetings at the Fayetteville YMCA, then Breece's Banquet Hall.

They finally purchased property on Fort Bragg Road that at the time was occupied by an old two-story house. It was converted into a sanctuary and classrooms for the children.

Eventually, the house was replaced by the current sanctuary, which was finished in 1957, and additional classroom and office space that was completed in 1989.

Morgan was anything but subtle as to how the church has survived so many years. "We worked our tails off," she said. "We didn't have time to argue. We didn't have time to fight. All we had time to do was get in here and work and work and work.

Whatever needed to be done, we did it."

One thing that has kept the church going, and has caused it to have a worldwide reach, is the close association it's had with the military through the years. "We had a lot of service people coming in," said Manning, who noted in the church's early years young men were still being drafted into the military and gravitated from Fort Bragg and old Pope

Air Force Base to the congregation on Fort Bragg Road.

"We have people all over the world that were at Fort Bragg and Pope that came here," Tucker said.

Another reason for the church's continued success is diversity. "We call ourselves a church

for all people," Tucker said. "We were one of the first in Fayetteville to start integrating, and we still have all nationalities."

One of the special practices of all First Christian Churches is the weekly observance of the Lord's Supper.

Tucker said the weekly Communion is all about one verse to her, I Corinthians 11:24, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me."

Manning, who recently received Methodist's University's University Medallion in recognition of her charity work, said the aims of the church remain the same after 65 years.

"Our hopes are always to grow and reach out to more people and do more missions," she said. "We just want to help everyone we can that needs help."



First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is observed its 65th anniversary. Ruby Flanary, left, Helen Tucker, Shirley Tharrington, Mary Morgan and Eleanor Manning were part of the original congregation of the church. Photo by: Andrew Craft, staff with the The Fayetteville Observer, www.fayobserver.com.

Written by:
Earl Vaughan Jr., Staff Writer, Fayetteville Observer, www.fayobserver.com



Mission First *Continued from page 1.*

Identify – Mission Council

The Mission Council is a new representative body that will identify trends in God's call to mission for Disciples today. The Mission Council will base its work on the wealth of input from Mission Gatherings, will compile and pray over it to help us focus on our engagement in God's mission. The Mission Council will ask, where is God calling us, this movement for wholeness, with a mission to be and to share the good news of Jesus Christ?

Implement – Ministries

Mission First! brings an expectation that ministries—general, regional, congregational, higher education and others—will plan together what we hope to accomplish and how we are going to accomplish it. Mission First! is implementation through collaboration. Mission First! provides a framework for Disciples in all three expressions—general, regional, local—to work together on strategies to implement outcomes in mission.

Implementation also involves a second new body, tentatively called the Governance Board. This part of the new structural wine-skin will be responsible for the governance-like duties currently spread across both the Administrative Committee and the General Board.

Commissioning *Continued from page 18.*

Ben Lyvers, a member of First Christian Church in Bardstown, Ky., will be serving as a Long Term Volunteer with the Church of North India at Tilda Hospital in Chhattisgarh. Tilda hospital serves over 10,000 patients each year, and continues to expand health care options for those who would otherwise be cut off from access.

Rebecca Owen, a member of United Christian Church in Austin, Texas, will be serving with a yet to be determined partner in Africa as a Global Mission Intern. Rebecca Owen recently graduated from Chapman University with a background in sociology.

Tyler Reeve, a member of Central Christian church in Marion, Ohio, serves with the Evangelical Church in Morocco. As a Global Mission Intern, he works with ministries that provide assistance for immigrants and refugees, and provides assistance with com-

Once the ministries have outlined their strategy for implementation, the Governance Board will hold them accountable in covenant. It will be a covenantal accountability based on mutual agreements.

Impact – Making a difference

Mission First! is about Disciples actually being a movement for wholeness, being and sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ from our doorsteps to the ends of the earth, giving our life for the world. Disciples Women gives us an example of this kind of laser focus through the emphasis on human trafficking. The clear, focused call to action has energized their ministry and purpose.

How to begin

It starts with each one of us looking at ourselves and embracing the challenge. As a follower of Christ, I will make a difference.

I will make the time to participate in a Mission Gathering.

I will collaborate in the action that follows.

I will share in God's mission of love.

I will expect the unexpected.

When you add up all the "I's," those "I's" together become "we" - a movement focused on being part of God's mission of love for this world—a movement for wholeness in the name of Christ, giving our lives for the world!

munications and translation.

Rev. Christian Watkins, a member of First Christian Church in Erie, Kans., will be serving as a Long Term Volunteer with the Istanbul Interparish Migrant Program (IIMP) in Turkey. She will be helping with the registration and delivery of assistance for migrants and refugees, as well as assisting with IIMP communications.

Sarah Williams, a member of Saguaro Christian Church in Tucson, Ariz., will be serving with the Church of North India at Christian Hospital Mungeli. Her capacity as an X-Ray technician will allow the hospital to expand services to a greater number of patients.

Reverend Jeff Wright, member of Heart of the Rockies Christian Church in Fort Collins, Colo., as a Long Term Volunteer with Kairos Palestine. He will be assisting with research, writing, and interpretation capacity.



Family and Children *Continued from page 4.*

people in lifelong faith formative ways.

Studies have shown we best serve our children in their faith if we include them alongside their family (in all of its forms, ages, and complexities) when teaching and talking about God. To be intentionally intergenerational is a difficult task for those leading the church. It means that we have to collaborate, work together, and move away from our segregated silos. What does it mean to bring all ages in the church together for a lifelong experience of faith? Can we create intentional ways for all voices at all ages to be leaders — together? What does it mean for each member of the church to be part of the “&”?

Below are a variety of questions on specific pieces of this larger conversation that may challenge how you view Family & Children's Ministries. These questions do not necessarily reflect our personal thoughts, but represent points of view and observations we have heard as we discern the paradigm shift taking place in Family & Children's Ministries throughout the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and beyond. We encourage you to join in the discussion with your churches, ministries, groups, (and with us):

Why do we (the local church) pay a Senior Minister who focuses on adults more than an Associate or Youth Minister who focuses on youth and children? Does the Senior/Associate's model work?

- Doesn't Children Worship & Wonder remove kids from worship in a way that segregates? Is this a negative?
- Is Children Worship & Wonder just for children?
- Grandparents are becoming the primary caregivers for many children. How does this change our ministries?
- Church camp is primarily for white people. Why do people feel this way?
- Is Technology/Sports/Etc. “killing” or “saving” the church?
- Is Children's Time the only time

during worship meant for children?

- We invite everyone to the table, except kids. Is this the way it should be? If so, why?
- Is “Christian Education” different than “lifelong Faith Formation”?
- Does intergenerational faith really work for everyone's needs?
- When we ask different people what defines a “youth”, a “child”, a “young adult”, an “elder” why are there so many different answers? Is there a “right” definition for these?



Attendees at General Assembly 2015 signed on to be part of the “&”.

This discussion is just the beginning. Our team continues to spend time in conversation on these topics and many more as we try to shift the image of what it means for our ministry to work across all generations and cultures. We want to represent the “family” of Christ in all its beautiful forms. We have a lot of work to do, but being intentional parts of the “&” allows all of us to move outside the boxes we have created into the world God calls us to serve. Will you be a part of this “&”? We need your voice. We are not the church without YOU.

Rev. Olivia Stewart

ostewart@dhm.disciples.org &

Rev. Dr. Olivia Bryan Updegrove

obupdegrove@dhm.disciples.org

Ministers of Family & Children's Ministries

Disciples Home Missions

Follow the conversation in the Blogs section of our website (www.docfamiliesandchildren.org) or in our bi-monthly newsletter (look for the sign up box at the top of our site).

You can also find us on

Facebook: Disciples Care for Children Group

Pinterest: @disciplesfcm

YouTube: Search “Families and Children DHM”

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www.discipleshomemissions.org/black-ministers-retreat



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Hearing All Voices

Sacred Hoop Native American Ministry has quite a mission field—over 500 Sovereign Nations in the United States, plus the First Nations in Canada. We are not focusing on history and the settling of these nations by others; rather, we are working to provide hope for people who daily face powerful discriminations, whose choices in living are limited by powerful government policies more than any other people in North America. We are focusing on helping prevent events like the six youth (ages 9-13) who committed suicide during the first few months of this year in the Pine Ridge reservation because of racial discrimination. We are called to focus on improving the possibilities and lifestyles for all of those whose freedom is limited by laws begun centuries ago—those who are still facing extreme poverty, hopelessness, and seeing no way out of the misery of their communities. We are called to work for justice and equality for those who have



been ignored by most ministries for the past 100 years.

Sacred Hoop NAM is working respectfully to begin a new ministry as Native Americans and caring others who seek to give voice to those previously heard only as translations filtered through predominant culture. Those translating 'other' voices felt they knew best for Native Americans though they had no concept of the true foundation of Native American theology. It is time for the true Native voices to be heard with respect and honor. It is time to work with the people who have been hurt and ignored longer than anyone else on this continent; it is time to work with them to overcome the drastic suicides, extreme poverty, alcoholism, lack of education, drug abuse, health issues, and the rampant racism that drives all of these horrors.

Sacred Hoop NAM is reaching out to

Continued on page 32. See Voices.

National Convocation 24th Biennial Session



July 21-24, 2016
Kansas City, Missouri

Hindsight • Insight • Foresight
Habakkuk 2:2



Registration opens August 1, 2015
www.nationalconvocation.org



Help Meet Refugee Emergency Needs

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is requested to resettle 8% of All refugees who enter through Church World Service (CWS) offices, and Disciples have assisted in resettling more than 40,000 refugees through CWS since the end of World War II.

To do that, we partner with the 34 CWS refugee affiliate offices around the U.S. In recent months, our highest refugee arrival numbers have entered through our five CWS partner offices in Texas. Also, our North Carolina, Kentucky, California, Virginia, Indiana, New York, Ohio, Arizona, and Georgia offices have received significant numbers as well. Disciples have especially worked recently with refugee cultures from Iraq, Burma, Afghanistan, Somalia, Bhutan, Syria, and the Congo.

A large percentage of this fiscal year's congressionally approved refugee arrivals entered during the months of August and September.

Can your church help meet these emergency refugee needs?

Churches within 50 miles of our CWS offices in Harrisonburg & Richmond, Va.; Dallas & Austin, Texas; Sacramento, Calif.; Indianapolis, Ind.; Omaha, Neb.; Portland,

Ore.; Minneapolis, Minn.; and Lancaster, Pa., are urged to contact our office if you are open to assisting any families.

To help families, you are invited to:

- Pick 3 for Refugees! That is, you are asked to select at least **THREE** ways that your church might assist a family. It's a simple way to share your hospitality! (www.discipleshomemissions.org/Pick-3-for-Refugees.pdf)

- Churches within the 50 mile radius area of any of the other CWS affiliate offices are also asked to contact our office about how you can help sponsor or assist with other needs! (<http://www.discipleshomemissions.org/CWS-Affiliate-Map.pdf>)
- And, ALL churches are invited to participate as regions, congregations, and youth or other groups in compiling Refugee Hospitality Kits. (www.discipleshomemissions.org/Refugee-Hospitality-Kits.pdf) for more information, and call our office so we can assist in working out where and how to deliver them to meet your closest refugee needs!



Wendy's: "Tear down the wall!"

When leaders of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) learned that 2015 General Assembly was to take place in Wendy's hometown of Columbus, Ohio, they wasted no time planning a demonstration at a local Wendy's restaurant. Compelled by their deep values of justice and long history of standing with farmworkers since the days of Taco Bell till now.

When the long-awaited day of the protest arrived on Sunday, July 19, during the General Assembly, a menacing forecast of flash floods and lightening threatened to call it off. But just moments before the action was scheduled to begin, the sun broke through and Disciples poured out before a newly-opened downtown Wendy's, over one hundred strong. Participants had learned of the demonstration from the

enter the store to deliver a letter signed by dozens of Disciples exhorting Wendy's to recognize their "moral responsibility to ensure human well-being" and join



Photo by Lynnette. Li, NAPAD

many groups sponsoring the action: Disciples Refugee and Immigration Ministries, Disciples Justice Action Network, North American Pacific Asian Disciples, Disciples Peace Fellowship, the InterReligious Task Force on Central America and Columbia, Ohio Fair Food, the Central Ohio Worker Center and Ohio State University Student/Farmworker Alliance – there to remind Wendy's that the ongoing national student boycott of Wendy's is only building momentum at its origin campus of OSU.

In what was for a majority of participants their first time taking action of this kind, the Disciples peacefully marched, chanted, and carried signs urging Wendy's to end their silence in the face of the Coalition's two-and-a-half year call to join the Fair Food Program: "Walk humbly, Love mercy, Do justice!" "God is fair. Are you, Wendy's?"

But the harmonious tone of the demonstration took a sharp turn as a group of Disciples clergy and youth, led by CIW's Julia de la Cruz, attempted to



Photo provided by Alliance for Fair Food

the CIW's Fair Food Program. Before the delegation could set foot in the store, the Wendy's management began pushing them back in an unexpected physical altercation, yelling and cursing as they forced the double doors shut, calling police onto the scene soon thereafter.

Taken aback by the sudden aggression, the Disciples linked arms and broke into song, holding their letter up against the door pane. They understood that the tension was not with those working at Wendy's stores, who face their own struggles for justice in the workplace, but with corporate decision makers, who despite working a mere fifteen miles away, had chosen not to send a corporate representative to speak directly with farmworkers and their allies, but rather hide behind this store.

As this most recent iteration of the harsh rebuff from Wendy's corporation toward farmworkers sunk



Photo provided by Alliance for Fair Food

into the minds of each attendee, Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea recalled a story from the Disciples tradition that captured the spirit of the moment. In Joshua 6, she shared, it's told that the Hebrew people were able to tear down a city wall by doing nothing more than following their faith and marching persistently around the massive wall for seven days. Stanley-Rea drew the parallel to the barrier Wendy's has erected in order to ignore the rights of farmworkers: "And I pray with you that together through all of the parts of the Disciples of Christ that are represented here, we will continue working here to tear down the wall!" She led the refrain over and over, all one hundred chanting with her: "Tear down the wall down! Tear down the wall!"

All in all, it was an incredibly powerful evening, charged with electric energy and resolve made only stronger by the jarring turn of events. Julia de la Cruz closed out the action with these words: "We are not unaccustomed to Wendy's closing the door on us and refusing to let us enter. But our struggle is never to become discouraged, but to increase our energy and commitment as we fight for justice, justice for all farmworkers. We will keep fighting. The Disciples of Christ have supported us for so many years, and the struggle continues. Before long, Wendy's will have to join the Fair Food Program."



Photos by Lynnette Li, NAPAD

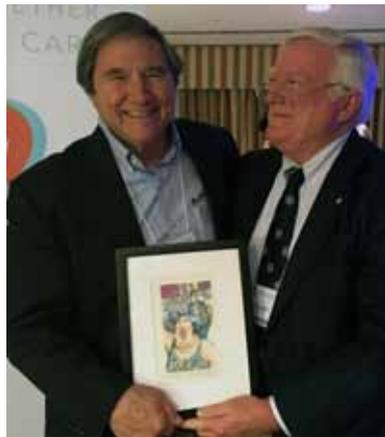


Photo provided by Alliance for Fair Food



Disciples Chaplains Retreat met prior to the General Assembly in Columbus, Ohio. From left: Steve Doan, Ron Degges, and Anne Marie Moyars.

Photo right: DHM Board of Directors meeting prior to General Assembly in Columbus. From left: Lee Parker, Alan Hilberg, Ron Degges, Richie Sanchez, and David Geenen. The outgoing members were presented with stoles as a gift of appreciation.



Celebrating Ford Rowan's work as Minister of Human Rights for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in a partnership ministry between Disciples Home Missions and the Disciples Center for Public Witness.



Photo left: The Association of Professional Counselors at the APC Conference Breakfast in Louisville, Ky., in June.



Disciples Center for Public Witness at its Board of Governor's meeting at National City Christian Church in Washington, D.C.



Sharon Watkins, General Minister and President, speaking to Disciples pastors and lay leaders at the "Other" seminary luncheon at General Assembly.



DHM Board of Directors and staff in the Disciples Center Chapel during the Fall 2014 DHM Board Meeting in Indianapolis.

Hands On Music:

ADM Lifts up Disciples Music Across the Church

Founded in 1961 at Texas Christian University by a concerned group of university professors, ministers of music, college deans, and church musicians, the Association of Disciple Musicians (ADM) has, through a fifty-four year history, functioned under its original purpose of increasing the effectiveness of church musicians in their mission to serve the Church.

The term "church musician" includes all persons who lead or participate in church music by vocation or as a volunteer. Disciples musicians fill the range from full-time Directors of Music to occasional choral members, staff organists and pianists, bell-choir members volunteer instrumentalists, and more.



ADM seeks to empower the lives of anyone participating in the musical life of the church. Specific objectives include:

- Evaluating and improving the standard of music, and its use within the total life of the Church,
- Maintaining an organization which promotes fellowship, the exchanging of ideas, and initiates conferences for study and inspiration among church musicians,
- Promoting and studying the relationship of music to worship, education, and other aspects of church life,
- Contributing to the development of a close-working-relationship among musicians, clergy, and the laity.

The annual conferences of ADM reflect continued

emphasis on educational excellence through the leadership of nationally recognized clinicians and option leaders with expertise in worship, choral activities, organ and/or piano, handbells, and various emerging worship styles. Attendees always have time to renew old acquaintances and make new ones while sharing ideas and interests during seminars, daily meals, small-group meetings,

and fun activities. ADM strives to address any and all needs that attendees bring from their churches and provide an atmosphere of spirituality, learning, sharing, and congeniality. Attendees often feel like ADM conferences are the



best of a balance between a fun adult summer camp for church musicians, and a highly creative and professional continuing education experience that can increase the competencies of any musician regardless of their current level of accomplishment.

We invite you to check out the website for The Association of Disciple Musicians at: www.adm-doc.org. It contains a wealth of information, including membership, conference details and registration, newsletters, and what ADM is. Believing that a picture is worth a thousand words, those here will give you a look at the 2015 Conference held on the campus of William Jewell College in Liberty, Mo. Next summer's conference will be held at Evansville University in Evansville, Ind., from July 17 to 22.

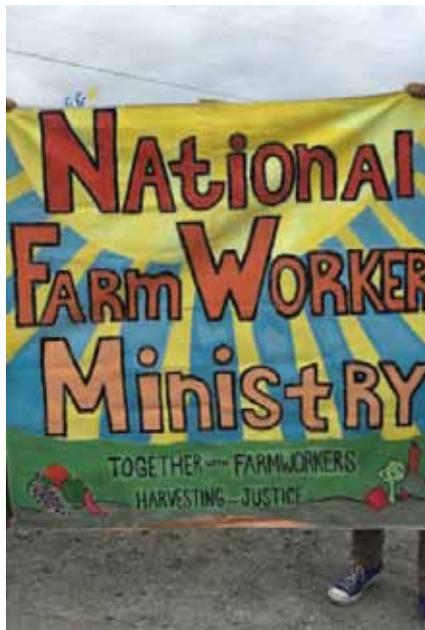


NFWM Board Members Support Berry Workers

In early July, the National Farm Worker Ministry held its Board meeting in Bellingham, Wash., on the campus of Western Washington University. Board members include representatives from over a dozen denominations, and Refugee & Immigration Ministries' Director, Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley-Rea, serves as our Disciples representative on the Board. The board meets twice per year, always near locations that allow for close partnerships and relationship building with communities of farm workers and their struggles. The July meeting linked together with the "Familias Unidas Por La Justicia," which supports the berry workers of Washington state. While at the meeting, members joined workers in a march asking Sakuma Berry Farms for wage increases for the berry workers. The workers are asking partners to hold off from purchases of Sakuma Berry

Farms products (including Driscoll berries and Haagen Daz strawberry ice cream) until their goal for a new, fairer contract is reached. Contact the RIM office for how YOU can help support berry workers and other farm worker campaigns for worker justice!! Call Sharon at: 202-957-7826, or e-mail: sstanley@dhm.disciples.org.

*Sharon Stanley-Rea
Disciples Home Missions*



Voices *Continued from page 26.*

help those in need—on reservations, and dispersed among other despairing areas, urban, suburban, and rural. There are many who have lost their own connections to their traditions and communities because of the fear of even admitting they are Native American—better to be alone, lost but alive than to be dead! Yes, it has been that bad, and still is in many places. Today is the time to become aware of the deficiencies of our present religious system, and openly listen to and learn from these silent ones in our midst who have much to teach about faith. The present predominant paradigm of life appears to many of us as one of selfishness, greed, and ignorance of the real world around us; the basic Native paradigm of life honors the Holy Spirit in the wind, the earth,

the water, the sky, all of Nature including ourselves, and it is incomprehensible why so many seek greater separation with more machines, more technology, more control over God's world rather than honoring the Creator.

Sacred Hoop NAM is a new voice representing an older, more basic voice of justice, honor, and respect in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). A few of us feel it is time for these voices to be listened to again, as a denomination.

Thank you,

*Rev. Marty McCutchen
Member: Sacred Hoop NAM Council
SacredHoopNAM.org*



Seminarians Conference Offers Ministerial Opportunities

The Seminarians Conference took place on March 12-15, 2015 in Nashville, Tenn.

Collaborating with various ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Higher Education & Leadership Ministries (HELM) organized the biennial gathering of Disciples seminarians and Disciples leaders for fellowship, worship, and networking.

The Center for Faith and Giving, National Benevolent Association, The Pension Fund, and Hope Partnership offered workshops inviting students to deeper engagement and understanding of each particular ministry. Additionally, many general ministries hosted sessions to foster relationships and learn about ministerial opportunities.

Will Brown, a graduate of Brite Divinity School and

current Pastor of First Christian Church in Red Oaks, Iowa, says, "the Disciples Seminarians Conference is a superb opportunity to learn about the depth and breadth of Disciple's passion for doing ministry in our fragmented world, with hands on opportunities with the leaders of this movement we call a denomination."

The Seminarians Conference currently takes place every two years. The conference is open to all Disciples students after completing one year of a Masters of Divinity program at any accredited graduate institution. Visit www.helmdisciples.org or sign up for our newsletter for up-to-date information on future conferences and other news and updates from HELM.



Reflections on the Middle East *Continued from page 16.*

Thousands of miles away, in the Middle East, our United Church of Christ and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) delegation heard words from our sisters and brothers in the Coptic Christian community in Cairo, Egypt. They stand in ecumenical solidarity with other faith partners and NGO's, like the Coptic Evangelical Organization for Social Services (CEOSS) with whom we visited on day seven, the Evangelical (Presbyterian) Theological Seminary and the Coptic Orthodox Bishopric for Public, Ecumenical, and Social Services (BLESS), with whom they visited on day eight. Each church and organization works in partnership with one another to move the proverbial needle forward toward the emergence of a new Egypt.

The message is one of improving the quality of life and opportunity for the poor, marginalized, women, children, people with disabilities, and others in need of support. The message is a call to be a faithful voice that is inclusive and empowering, always advocating for a more just society for all. Dr. Atef Gendy, President of the Evangelical Theological Seminary and Professor of New Testament Studies, said that the role of the seminary is to prepare leaders for the church in Egypt, the Middle East, and Arab congregations in the west. He detailed the numerical decline of Christian populations in Iraq, Palestine, Syria, and Egypt, and said the seminary is working to reverse these trends. The seminary has a total of about 340 students and has re-envisioned itself as both a Christian campus community as well as a distance learning community, using current technology to spread the message of the gospel. Dr. Gendy said, "We have a revival of the church these days as the

church goes out to the world."

From the Seminary, your delegation walked to the Coptic Orthodox of Cairo, Egypt, and learned about "BLESS," the Bishopric of Public, Ecumenical & Social Services, which is the diaconal and development arm of the Coptic Church. BLESS reaches out to all people with God's love, restoring human dignity through social justice and helping create sustainable communities that create a better way of life. His Grace, Bishop Youannes, the General Bishop of Public and Social Services, hosted a gathering of the Middle East delegation at the Cathedral, carefully explaining in detail the work of BLESS and the positive impact it has on individuals and communities throughout Egypt. We were each gifted with the BLESS Development Manual, selected writing of Bishop Youannes, and a beautiful Coptic Orthodox Cross.

As we ended our visit to the Middle East, each of us brought back first hand experiences that have shaped our understanding of the Middle East, broadened our theological perspectives, and touched our souls. Those whom we have met are like us, only more so. We share a common human lot. We also share an extraordinary future potential. This potential is all tied up in our hope for a better tomorrow.

*Rev. Ronald J. Degges, President
Disciples Home Missions*



Group shot of the delegation.



Ron Degges at the weeping wall.



The weeping wall.



River *Continued from page 20.*

in prayer before we began our own crossing. It is fair to say that the pavement was watered with the tears of this modern group of sojourners. Once we had reached the apex of the bridge, we peered over the side and said with wide-eyed wonder, "there's a river." It would seem obvious in light of the fact that there is the famed bridge, but somehow, in our collective wisdom, we had forgotten that there could have been, SHOULD have been a river. More amusing was that no one in the group knew the name of the river but we were all acutely aware of the name of the bridge.

We returned to our car and the buses departed back to Montgomery. Norman and I asked some of the folks who were preparing for the weekend activities, including a visit of President Barack Obama, where the church, Brown Chapel A.M.E. was located. They gave us precise directions and we drove there to see it and take photos. Shocked may be the best

way to describe that part of the journey when we realized how far the unarmed walkers had been beaten, brutalized, driven, attacked, and under siege by a group of conveniently deputized "lawmen." We had never known that distance and the extent of the horror that continued once they retreated to the church.

Crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge, walking on it, driving through the community and back to Montgomery had a profound impact on me. I am a child of the 60's, and the Civil Rights Movement was the evening education in my home. It took some time before I could process what had been revealed to me in that historical moment. The Edmund Pettus Bridge, known historically as the site of "Blood

Sunday," became the Throne of God. The Bridge had been washed with the tears, the blood, and teargas of that day; God made it a statement for the days to come.

Only God has the unique ability to absorb the horror of the moment and turn it into a victory for the ages. That is what happened on that bridge. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said that as we walk the "God of the universe walks with us." God did just that; laced up the boots of righteousness and justice and walked us into a new era. The Throne of God is present when humanity, broken, bent, and oppressed reaches for the hem of heaven and

pulls itself upright to stand with dignity. It occurs when lives and hearts are bound together in a single purpose and intent to bring forth the best for all people. It is a place of fearless unity, unwavering hope, and unapologetic belief that there is a more excellent way. It is the place in which peace pierces the heart of hatred and declares we are better than this. There is a Balm in Gilead in that place that soothes the wounds of the violent onslaught of words,

and hands, and weapons.

The throne of God comes to us when the sharecropper, the preacher, the teacher, the powerful, and the powerless, the educated and the illiterate, the old and the young, the dis-enfranchised and marginalized find a common voice and raise it to heaven. There is the place where heaven kisses the feet of the lowly and cast out and cast away and says; "walk and we do walk with you." We are reminded that the "arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice" and I say if you follow that arc, it leads to the Throne of God.

As one on the journey, I became aware of how sacred the Edmund Pettus Bridge is; not for the blood that flowed but the power of God that prevailed. There the saints had walked for and with those of us yet to come and there is a river that flows. There is a river that flows by the Throne of God.

Rev. Marilyn S. Fiddmont, Vice President, Southwest Zone Christian Church Foundation, Spring, Texas

This article appeared in the March 2015 issue of the Oldtimers' Grapevine, a free publication that seeks to connect "seasoned pilgrims" of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). For information, contact oldtimers.grapevine@gmail.com or (317) 545-9335.



Attendee of the Black Minister's Retreat, journeyed to the Edmund Pettus Bridge.



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Family & Children's Ministries E-newsletter -- bimonthly e-newsletter. Sign up at: <http://eepurl.com/QwcwX> or www.discipleshomemissions.org/?p=15674

Archive of past issues: <http://us3.campaign-archive2.com/home/?u=aa757cb990bd7a0f77ade17d1&id=7a1d1af859>.

Green Chalice News -- monthly creation care e-newsletter. Sign up at: www.discipleshomemissions.org/receive-green-chalice-news/.

Immigration Legal Updates -- Disciples Immigration Legal Counsel provides timely updates on changes to immigration law and policies that impact Disciples congregations and families. Sign up at: disciplesimmigration.org.

Just Women magazine -- quarterly-issued resource material for Christian women is published by Disciples Women's Ministries. Place your subscription or have individual copies delivered to your door. Contact JustWomen@dhm.disciples.org.

News and Notes -- monthly newsletter that is sent out to Disciples Chaplains. Visit: www.discipleshomemissions.org/chaplainsnewsnotes/ or contact Anne Marie Moyars at: amoyars@dhm.disciples.org.

Rapid Response -- periodic updates about actions you can take in response to legislative action. Sign up at: www.discipleshomemissions.org/dhm/justice/rapid-response/.

Refugee & Immigration Wrap -- periodic updates about what is happening around immigration issues, refugee resettlement and Farm Worker Ministry. Sign up at: <http://www.formstack.com/forms/?1481425-c0NazlxyzU>

The Well-Fed Spirit -- Visit: www.wellfedspirit.org.

The Voice of Disciples Men -- e-newsletter from the Disciples Men. Sign up by contacting Kelly Harris at kharris@dhm.disciples.org.

Umoja -- newsletter *Umoja*, which translates to Unity-Oneness-Harmony, is created by and produced for the Disciples Women of the National Convocation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and edited by the Disciples Women program staff and merger staff position. Visit: www.discipleshomemissions.org/dhm/disciples-women-newsletters/ or contact: odw@dhm.disciples.org.



DHM Partners with the Religious Institute . . .

... and other faith communities like the Unitarian Universalist Association, the Fellowship of Churches, the United Methodist Church, and others to create what is known as The Sexually Safer Best Practice Congregation Initiative that can be found at: www.religioustheology.org/safer-congregations.

This new resource includes information about the 18 best practices (14 for small congregations), templates for congregations to adapt, links for more information, and a self assessment form for congregations to use. It also includes an on-line automated submission form for congregations to use to apply

for the Best Practice Seal if they meet three quarters of the relevant criteria.

We encourage all congregational pastors and lay leaders to learn more about sexually safer best practices for congregations, to apply for the self assessment, and to earn the Best Practice Seal. Those who attend your congregation will have confidence that sexually safer boundaries are honored in an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust.



Mental Health *Continued from page 17.*

as a “man of sorrows”¹⁴. God did not criticize Jesus for being depressed but sent an angel to comfort him in the garden¹⁵. On the cross, Jesus thought God had abandoned him¹⁶. I do not believe Jesus lacked faith nor do I believe God abandoned him although he may have felt abandoned. Mental health challenges are not due to a lack of faith or weakness of character.

Promoting Your Own Recovery:

Remember your life is important.

Sometimes you may think that others would be better off without you. They won't be. If you are having suicidal thoughts or are in emotional distress, contact your mental health professional immediately. If you cannot get in touch with them then call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-Talk which is a 24-hour, toll-free, confidential suicide prevention hotline.

Hold on to your dreams.

Sort out what is most important in your life. Have something to hope and strive for. Your dreams may change, but keep dreaming. Set goals for yourself. Where do you want to end up, what do you want to do? And don't sell yourself short. You have a mental health challenge, but that doesn't mean your life is at its end. Keep dreaming and working toward those dreams. Many people who have a mental health challenge have enriched

the world: Michelangelo, Isaac Newton, Winston Churchill, Abraham Lincoln, Ludwig van Beethoven, Leo Tolstoy, Vincent van Gogh, Robin Williams, and the list goes on and on.

Remember that everybody's path to recovery is different.

Just as everyone is affected differently by their challenge, so everyone's recovery is different. Don't compare your recovery to someone else's. We are all unique.

Don't try to do it alone.

Allow supportive people to know how they can support you. Create for yourself a recovery team comprised of psychiatric professionals; natural supports like family, friends, pets, and clergy. “Family” may mean friends you think of as family.

Find a psychiatrist.

Find a psychiatrist or psychiatric nurse practitioner who knows about medication and believes in recovery. A family doctor may not have the needed

expertise. Talk to your family doctor, but ask for a referral especially if the medications your doctor has prescribed are not working.

Contact the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

NAMI is a good place to start to find support and information. The NAMI website has suggestions on finding a mental health professional and therapist. It also discusses when you should disclose you have a challenge and to whom. At www.nami.org you can also find support and educational groups in your locale as well as information on mental health challenges.

Learn about your diagnosis.

Learn about it but don't assume that the diagnosis defines you. Everyone is unique. Remember this. You can learn about your diagnosis at www.nami.org.

Learn about your medications.

Know what your medications are supposed to do so you can let your doctor know if they are working or if you are having side effects. Pharmaceutical companies need to report every possible side effect – some are quite rare and you probably don't need to be concerned about every side effect. If you are concerned about a particular side effect, talk with your doctor.

Take your medication as prescribed.

Some medications take six weeks to be effective so don't give up and change how you are taking them. Waiting can be frustrating and an exercise in patience, but it has to be done. If your meds are not working, let your doctor know. Don't just stop taking them without your doctor's guidance as some meds should not be stopped suddenly. If your meds aren't working, your doctor may want to increase the dosage, add another med or change your meds completely. Cooperate with your doctor but find out again when you should see results and then let the doctor know if the new meds are working.

Have a Wellness Recovery Action Plan.

A WRAP can help you stay as well as possible. Mary Ellen Copeland, PhD, who has a mental health challenge herself, developed the WRAP which can help you identify your early warning signs, crisis signs and develop plans to stay as well as possible. Share your plan with your supporters. My plan has kept me out of the hospital and enabled me to remain pretty stable and live my life. You can access a WRAP plan at www.mentalhealthrecovery.com.

i. ¹⁴ Isaiah 53:3-4

ii. ¹⁵ Luke 22:41-44

iii. ¹⁶ Matthew 27:46

Continued on page 39. See Mental Health.



Mental Health *Continued from page 38.*

Eat right and exercise.

People with a mental health challenge, on average, die ten years before the general population¹⁷ so take care of your physical needs. Eat nutritious food and find an exercise you enjoy. Eating right and exercising will also benefit your recovery. I recognize that this is sometimes really difficult to do so don't beat yourself up if you can't do it right away, but keep exercising and eating nutritious food as goals to work on when you are ready.



How Supporters Can Promote Another's Recovery:

Don't try to do it all alone.

As a relative of someone with a mental health challenge, you may feel alone, but you are not alone nor are you without resources. The National Alliance on Mental Illness is a large grass-roots organization originally formed by family members. Their website, www.nami.org, has useful information. They have local chapters, an educational program called *Family to Family*, and support groups for family members.

Be hopeful.

Remember that hope is crucial for recovery. It is the one predictor of recovery but it is sometimes difficult to have. Hold hope for us when we can't have hope ourselves.

Be a friend.

Provide companionship and compassion. Invite us out for coffee or to do something fun. Pray for our family members and us. Point out successes no matter how small. Please don't tell us to just be more positive or have more faith. I find comfort and encouragement from supporters who don't blame me but listen nonjudgmentally, invite me to do nourishing activities, urge me to continue my journey of recovery and/or believe I can recover and contribute to the world. I want you to know that I experience these supporters as no less than God's presence with me.

Support but don't care take.

You do not need to solve our problems, but you can ask how you can help – maybe we need food brought over or a ride somewhere. We often need to be supported in our efforts to recover, but we

can't be caretaken or protected into recovery. Essential parts of recovery are us taking our own risks, setting our own goals and path, being allowed to make mistakes, and learning our own lessons. The appeals of dependency and being taken care of can derail a recovery, as can being too frightened or traumatized to take risks¹⁸. If you would like to help us with something, ask us what you could do to help.

Be an inspiration.

Share your story. Has a mental health challenge affected you or your family in some way? Your story may inspire us to seek treatment or have hope.

Watch your language.

Pay attention to the words you use and avoid stigmatizing labels. Never refer to us as "crazy," "psycho," "lunatic" or "mental." Also, do not refer to us as "the mentally ill," "the bipolar," or "the schizophrenic." We are people with a disorder. We are also brothers, sisters, parents, spouses, and so much more. Be aware that many of us work successfully.

Learn the facts.

Educate yourself about the various mental health challenges. Attend a lecture or class or use the Internet. Good places to start include the National Alliance on Mental Illness, www.nami.org, and the National Institute of Mental Health, www.nimh.nih.gov.

Attend a Mental Health First Aid training.

Attend a *Mental Health First Aid* training which is a national program that teaches people the signs of addiction and mental health challenges, a 5-step action plan to assess a situation and help, the impact of mental and substance use disorders, and local resources so people know where to turn for help. For more information, go to www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org.



Attend an ASIST training.

ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training), teaches participants to intervene and help prevent the immediate risk of suicide. You can find an ASIST training at www.livingworks.net/programs/asist.

Be a "stigma buster".

Challenge negative attitudes toward mental health challenges among your friends and acquaintances and in the media. Learn the facts so you can share them with others.

i. ¹⁷ www.nimh.nih.gov/about/director/2015/mortality-and-mental-disorders.shtm

ii. ¹⁸ www.t-mha.org/media/pdf/rr/WedsAM.pdf

The Black Leadership Project Grant

The Black Leadership Project Grant Funds are granted to applicants whose projects develop, nurture, and strengthen church leadership in African American congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). One of the 2014 recipients was the D-N-A Experience, submitted by Rev. Monique Crain Spells and her planning team. Here is an excerpt from her reflections on the experience.

D-N-A Experience

SAYING YES TO GOD'S PLAN FOR YOU

DAY ONE: An Evening with Dr. Renita Weems at CTS

On Friday, March 20, 2015, over 125 community members gathered in Christian Theological Seminary's historic Sweeney Chapel to welcome and hear from the renowned Dr. Renita Weems.



Dr. Renita Weems

Dr. Weems led us on a journey from her beginnings in corporate America at Meryll Lynch to her years at Princeton as the first African American completing a Ph.D. in Old Testament. She shared the internal strife of juggling the importance of womanist conversation while remaining connected to a spiritual, yet oppressive black church. We were engaged, uplifted, and charged to move forward in faith. We were challenged to forgive the Judas of our past that

ran from God and live into the Peter who accepts Christ's redeeming forgiveness. She declared our paths may change over time, but God is with us always. After she finished speaking, the team collected handwritten dreams and visions from the 125 gathered presenting them as an offering to be prayed over in the center of the Chapel. Seminarians led that prayer over the offering of visions.

DAY TWO: Vision Casting & Action Planning with Dr. Frank Thomas

At 8:15 AM the Chapel was open for meditation and devotion around discernment. Scripture was read and some prayed silently before heading down to breakfast. We had 25 registered participants and seven team members to attend. The day of personal work began with prayer and worship led by John Ray. Each participant received a copy of Dr. Thomas' "The Choice" book and workbook to aid in their process of discernment. Breakfast and lunch was provided to attendees. Frank Thomas gave an honest and extraordinary testimony about his journey. Afterwards, we were led in breakout sessions. The disclosure and feedback shared with one another was rich. The Spirit created safe space to dream out loud, name and cast down fear.

To close, each participant lit a candle for the vision and we ended in prayer. Since the program, we have received emails and cards of thanks for The D-N-A Experience. People are looking forward to a Part III

For more information on the Black Leadership Project Grant, visit us at www.discipleshomemissions.org/black-leadership-projects-grant



2015 Christian Unity Gathering Brings Inspiration, Focus, Spectacle

WASHINGTON--The National Council of Churches held its second annual Christian Unity Gathering, May 7-9, in Washington, D.C., with over 200 Christian leaders, scholars, activists, and ecumenists present from across the United States to focus on the NCC's priority of interfaith peacemaking.

The NCC pursues two main areas in its ecumenical work: to build interfaith relations with an emphasis on peacemaking, and to end mass incarceration.

Leymah Gbowee, the Liberian Nobel Peace Prize winner, keynoted the Gathering. She shared the powerful story of a mass movement of Christian and Muslims known as Women of Liberia Mass Action for Peace that helped end the Liberian civil war which resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people. Ms. Gbowee stood at the Gathering as a remarkably clear voice for women across the globe. "Do one good thing every day that everyone else is scared to do," Gbowee proclaimed. "It is time for the Church to be crazy... like Jesus was in the Temple."

On the evening of May 7, more than 2,500 people gathered at the Washington National Cathedral for a moving worship service sponsored by the NCC commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians

and His Holiness Aram I, Catholicos of the Great House of Cilicia spoke. The homily was delivered by Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit, general secretary of the World Council of Churches.

Also in attendance were US Vice President Joe Biden; His Excellency Serzh Sargsyan, President of the Republic of Armenia; and His Holiness Ignatius Aphrem II, Patriarch of Antioch and All the East, Supreme Head of the Syriac Orthodox Church.

Central to the Gathering was the work of the Council's four Convening Tables. Ample time was allotted to these tables to plan and further their work in pursuit of Christian unity, advocacy for justice, interfaith relations and collaboration, and Christian education and ecumenical formation.

Rev. Dr. Olav Fykse Tveit addressed the Gathering during several key moments in the Gathering. He also stressed the necessity of Christian unity on behalf of all humanity, because it is only in unity that the Christian churches can ultimately proclaim the fullness of the Gospel. "Let us talk of a Christian unity that serves a wider unity of all people, all creation, unity for the sake of the world," he proclaimed.

(Excerpt of article taken from http://nationalcouncilofchurches.us/news/2015-5_CUG.php)



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For approximately \$1.95 per copy we will ship your congregation copies of the Advocate. Place your congregation's bundle subscription order with Wilma Shuffitt at wshuffitt@dhm.disciples.org or call 317-713-2639.

Mental Health *Continued from page 39.*

How Communities of Faith Can Promote Recovery:

There are three major reasons why communities need to both promote recovery:

- many in the church are affected.
- stigma thrives in some churches.
- when we do seek help, “clergy, not mental health professionals, are the most common source of help sought in times of psychological distress”¹⁹.

Begin a conversation about mental health challenges.

Invite people who are interested in increasing awareness of mental health issues to meet and discuss what the church can do.

Integrate us into the community.

While some of us are just members in the church to which I belong, among the board, trustees, elders and deacons are some of us who either have had or currently have a mental health challenge. Others help out with dinners and in other ways. It is important for our recovery that we find a place, a niche, in the church community.

Have a Mental Health Sunday.

Have clergy speak about mental health challenges: what causes them, that they are no one's fault, that recovery is probable and how communities can be supportive. If there is a leader or leaders in the church who have experienced a mental health challenge, ask them to share their story. Or a relative could share what support would have helped them or their family. Have Mental Health Sunday either during May which is Mental Health Awareness Month or the second week of October which is Mental Health Awareness Week.

Use worship materials from UCC Mental Health Network.

There is liturgy, sermon starters, scriptural resources, sermon, reflections, suggested hymns, helpful hints, bulletin inserts and more. You can find this material at <http://mhn-ucc.blogspot.com/p/mental-health-sunday.html>

Have an In Our Own Voice presentation.

Contact your local chapter of the National Alliance of Mental Illness (NAMI) at www.nami.org and ask for an *In Our Own Voice* presentation which is a 90-minute presentation. Two people with a mental health challenge will share parts of their story as well as show a DVD. They will tell of their Dark Days, Acceptance, Treatment, Coping Skills, and

Successes and Hopes.

Include us in public prayers.

If you have a pastoral prayer during which you lift up people in worship, include a prayer for us and our families. Pray that we find support, treatment and recovery.

Provide information in print.

Include information in your newsletter and/or bulletin about mental health challenges, community resources we can access, and how members can be supportive of us.

Speak about mental health publicly several times a year.

Only 34% of religious leaders speak about mental health challenges more than once a year²⁰. We need to reduce the stigma of it and make it something which we talk about openly.

Learn about your local mental health system.

If there is a mental health system in your area, learn how to access it so referrals can be made. At the very least have a list of people to whom referrals can be made. Church leaders should not just make a referral; they need to continue to give support after the referral is made.

Have a resource library or a support group.

While resource libraries and support groups can be helpful, not all communities have the resources to have them. The most important thing is to bring mental health challenges out of the closet so we can ask for support and people will know how to give it.

Find resources online.

www.inmi.us (Interfaith Network on Mental Illness has videos and suggestions for making faith communities welcoming and supportive. It also has worship resources and the following links:

- www.mentalhealthministries.net Mental Health Ministries which provides educational resources to help erase stigma of mental health challenges in our faith communities.
- www.pathways2promise.org Pathways to Promise offers information on putting faith into mental health recovery. They have many resources available.

i. ¹⁹ www.baylor.edu/mediacommunications/news.php?action=story&story=53644

ii. ²⁰ www.lifewayresearch.com/2014/09/22/mental-illness-remains-taboo-topic-for-many-pastors/



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April 11-15, 2016 -- Milwaukee, WI

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July 11-16, 2016 -- Luther Seminary, St. Paul, MN

Mutilated Honduran Immigrants Ask for Audience with President

Early in the summer, while offering a prayer as part of a vigil to support Honduran refugees at the White House, the Rev. Sharon Stanley-Rea, Director of Refugee & Immigration Ministries, had the opportunity to meet 8 Honduran men who are all a part of a unique group. Each of them have lost one or more limbs after having been run over by, or having fallen from, the train referred to as “La Bestia” (“The Beast”) which many migrants ride on their journeys to escape violence. In the case of the men, their journeys had actually begun in Honduras — where they had experienced horrific violence, threats by gangs, economic hardship, and often extortion that led them to flee for their lives. Since arriving in the U.S., they have traveled throughout the country, ultimately coming to Washington, D.C. to deliver a message of hope for support from the U.S. that can help heal the root causes necessitating migrant movement from Honduras.

In partnership with National Day Laborer Organizing Network (NDLON), they held a Press Conference outside the White House as they attempted to deliver a letter requesting a meeting with President Barack



Obama, to talk about possible solutions to the tragedy of many of their compatriots.

“After thousands of kilometers to get to Washington while sleeping in cardboard boxes, across rivers in rafts, after a month and a half as prisoners, being treated as criminals there, we are finally here, hoping on getting to meet President Barack Obama,” expressed 29-year-old José Luis Hernández.

The letter asks Obama for a meeting in order to present him with the immigrants’ testimony and emphasize the need to help Honduras and improve the local opportunities in order to keep more young people from risking their lives by immigrating to the U.S. “Some things are impossible, like for example, having the legs and arms of my friends to grow again. But to prevent

Continued on next page. See Honduran Men.



Honduran Men *Continued from previous page.*

further mutilations, more deaths, more disappearances, and more sexual violence, that is possible," reads the letter, according to the Association of Disabled and Returned Immigrants (Amiredis), the organization for these migrants who lost limbs riding the cargo trains.

The caravan of immigrants left Honduras on February 25, taking a month to pass through Mexico and, when they arrived at the U.S. the immigration authorities intercepted them and took them to a detention center in the town of Pearsall, near San Antonio.

After 45 days in which they were "chained and humiliated," according to the letter, they managed to leave the center, thanks to a group of activists, and continued their journey to the White House.

After the prayer vigil at the White House, the men quickly expressed their interest in attending Disciples' churches. By the next week, they visited National City Christian Church, where they shared their migrant

stories, but also the stories of faith which have sustained them along the way. After the early service, one church member commented on how she'd just that week read "Enrique's Journey," Sonia Nazario's story of a Honduran boy's migrant journey—and

now she met the men at worship several days later! During the Hispanic service at NCC C, one of the men sang a powerful praise song in Spanish. Over the next several weeks, the men likewise attended worship and spoke at Uni-

versity Christian Church (see pictures) and at Shepherd Park Christian Church. After the University Church service, members engaged in conversation about the realities of migrant challenges, and learned of women and child migrants also currently being held in U.S. detention centers as they await their immigration hearings. During the hearings, the migrants must share their stories of threats and traumas, and if they meet rigorous criteria, they may be granted asylum.



The Honduran men gather around a "prayer cross" with members of University Christian Church in Hyattsville, Md.



Leaders from UCC share questions and conversations about migrant journeys with the Honduran men following worship

Disciples Continue to Seek End to Family Detention

On April 22, Disciples clergy, the Rev. Charles Kutz-Marks and the Rev. Lyndon Rogers from Austin joined with Disciples Women leader, the Rev. Lori Tapia from Gilbert, Ariz., and the Rev. Sharon Stanley-Rea, Director of Refugee & Immigration Ministries to help coordinate a prayer vigil for women and children being held in detention inside the South Texas Family Residential Center in Dilley, Texas. All of the women and children fled violence, like refugees, from the countries of Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador last year. Most are eligible for asylee status due to the violence they have faced—but are being held by private prison companies at high bond rates. Visit The RIM website at: www.discipleshomemissions.org/families-in-detention for background resources on family detention.

Before the afternoon Prayer Vigil with dozens of faith leaders, nearly 20 ecumenical faith partners joined in a morning meeting with Sister Kathleen Erickson, who was serving as Chaplain at the Dilley Center. (See photo right.) Faith leaders learned from her that “The children’s bibles and story books your churches are sending are like gold to the children and moms in the Center.” See our ongoing call for these resources, as the numbers of the kids and moms being held in detention unfortunately continue to grow. Visit: www.discipleshomemissions.org/Dilley-Spanish-Bibles-and-Books-KidsMoms-Updated-61215.pdf for details on how to give Bibles. Visit: www.discipleshomemissions.org/Angel-to-Angel-Project-DISCIPLES-Call-for-Letters-EnglishFINAL4815.pdf on how to write Angel to Angel letters to the children and moms.

In June Sister Kathleen Erickson spent time in Washington, D.C., to offer her testimony in both a Senate and a House briefing on family detention. Prior to leaving her position recently as Chaplain, she promised the women and children she cared for on a daily basis that she would share their stories with members of Congress.

Sister Kathleen also joined with Karen Lucas from the American Immigration Lawyers Association in sharing the sobering reality of family detention with our

nation’s leaders who could help push the Obama Administration to shut down family detention facilities to end this inhumane practice, as well as Congress’ existing 34,000 detention bed mandate. Dozens of faith leaders, including RIM’s Director, also met in May with Obama’s top immigration and faith-based officials to call for an end to the practice of family detention.



Federal Judge Dolly Gee has asked that the Obama administration release persons from and close the family detention centers. The Administration has until October 23rd to appeal this decision. PLEASE CONSIDER DOING THE FOLLOWING BEFORE OCTOBER 23RD:

1. Call the White House at 202-456-1111. Feel free to use this sample script: My name is _____ and I’m calling to encourage the Obama Administration to comply with Judge Gee’s Flores decision and to close the Dilley, Karnes and Berks family detention centers. There is simply no humane way to incarcerate families. The revival of family detention is a failed policy, and an appalling stain on the United States’ human rights record. I urge the Administration to allow this decision to stand, release women and children immediately, and close all family detention centers once and for all.

2. Email the White House through their website. Go to: www.whitehouse.gov/contact/submit-questions-and-comments and type in the script as above.

3. Send an email to Attorney General Lynch, Homeland Security Secretary Jeh Johnson, and President Obama, White House, together with many of our faith partners. All you have to do is sign on! Go to: <http://capwiz.com/pcusa/issues/alert/?alertid=67355626>

Ecumenical leaders, including four Disciples clergy and two church members, meet with the Chaplain at the South Texas Family Residential Center in Dilley, Texas last April.



Content Survey



Please let us know what you think.

Complete the content survey and return to Disciples Home Missions,
Attn: Wilma Shuffitt, PO Box 1986, Indianapolis, IN 46206-1986.

Or fill it out online by going to www.discipleshomemission.org.
Select Get Involved on the blue pull-down menus and select Advocate.

- 
1. Thinking back to the last issue of the Advocate that you read, what kind of story do you remember? (Check all that apply)
 - A. A story about the organization/ministry, such as an event, a change in staffing, or a program offered
 - B. A story about a congregation
 - _____ the building
 - _____ a new program
 - _____ a person
 - _____ a success
 - C. A story about an individual
 - _____ challenge overcome
 - _____ involvement
 - _____ local community or ministry
 2. If you were to refresh the content in the Advocate what would you add? Check all that apply.
 - A. More stories about how ministry/organization is fulfilling its mission
 - B. More links to other ministries
 - C. More links to resources?
 - a. What kind of resources? _____
 - D. More stories about congregations
 - E. More stories about individuals' contributions
 - F. More advice columns on specific issues
 - G. More ways to connect to Disciples ministries
 - H. Inspirational writings from Church leaders (reflections on biblical texts)
 - I. Issue-based writings from Church leaders (contemporary issues)
 - J. Other _____
 3. If you were to delete content in the Advocate, what would you discontinue? Check all that apply.
 - a. stories about how ministry/organization is fulfilling its mission
 - b. links to other ministries
 - c. links to resources?
 - i. What kind of resources?

 - d. stories about congregations
 - e. stories about individuals' contributions
 - f. advice columns on specific issues
 - g. ways to connect to Disciples ministries
 - h. Inspirational writings from Church leaders (reflections on biblical texts)
 - i. Issue-based writings from Church leaders (contemporary issues)
 - j. Other _____
 4. How often have you been able to use information/stories/news from the Advocate?
 - A. I see something I can use in every issue.
 - B. I see something I can use in about 75% of the issues.
 - C. I see something I can use in about half the issues.
 - D. I see something I can use in about a third of the issues.
 - E. I rarely see anything I can use.
 5. What is the biggest benefit you see in the Advocate?
 - A. It keeps me connected to the Disciples of Christ.
 - B. It keeps me connected to the ministry that publishes it.
 - C. It keeps me thinking about the Church beyond my congregation
 - D. None
 - E. Other _____
 6. In your opinion, what is the optimal number of times you would like to receive the Advocate? _____
 7. In your opinion, what is the best method of delivery of the Advocate?
 - A. Link in a Facebook post leading to a web version
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 - D. A PDF attachment to an e-mail
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 8. Demographic information
 - a. Age _____
 - b. Region _____
 - c. Size of local congregation _____
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