

Disciples Women's Leadership Council
Merger Staff Report
January 31, 2021
Rev. Chesla T. Nickelson

Disciples Women's Ministries is a conduit for diverse connections empowering each woman to find her voice and live out her call.

We seek to live out our purpose, our call and our mission as Disciples Women through the commands found in Micah 6:8

To act justly

To love mercy and

To walk humbly with our God

AND

The National Convocation Disciples Women are called by God, to serve our community and the world, to bring comfort to the suffering, encourage the struggling and empower the striving.

Just Women

The 2021 *Just Women* Bible study, "Power and Possibilities" will have 8 lessons by various writers, including Disciples Women staff. The writers are Delesslyn Kennebrew, Katy Valentine, Selys Rivera, Pat Donahue and Chesla Nickelson. Additionally, there is a Woman in Mission article about an Indianapolis based activist written by Tanya Tyler. The study closes with a dynamic poem written by Glenda Harper. Taking into account the feedback from the Bible Study testers, each lesson is shorter (1000 – 1200 words instead of 2500 – 3000 words) and there will be more focus on life application. Additionally, in place of the "Suggestions for Leaders" we have a short "Reflection and Action" section following each study that allows for conversation and steps forward as individuals or as a group.

The editor, Kathy McDowell resigned. We are grateful for the gifts and time she shared with us. We are also grateful for the numerous ways our former designer, Rev. LaShaundra Smith improved the look and feel of the Bible study as our skillful and passionate designer. Rev. Leah Jackson, a current member of the *Just Women* team is now the editor of this new version of the *Just Women* Bible Study. Ministry associate Regenia Smith is our new designer, she has done a marvelous job learning a whole new system and skillset. These changes have saved a significant amount of money and will hopefully be more beneficial and user friendly to our readers.

Newsletter

#DWConnect is our quarterly newsletter sent through constant contact. It is also posted on the Disciples Women website and across social media. This allows us to share information and stay connected. If you have anything you want shared with the Disciples Women community, or if you have not received #DWConnect please send your information to odw@dhm.disciples.org

Wisdom of Women Videos

To celebrate Women's History Month, in March 2021 Disciples Women will post new videos featuring Disciples Women who have made history. There is much to learn from the life, ministry and wisdom of Rev. Dr. Delores Carpenter, a minister, professor, and creator of the African American Heritage Hymnal and Joann Kagiwada, an activist, an attorney and the former Director of International Affairs with Disciples of Christ.

Working Virtually

While many events were cancelled some chose to convert their events into virtual ones. Both Pat and I have been keynotes or done workshops for several meetings. We have also made videos that can be found on our website, YouTube Channel and Facebook page. Telephone conversations or consultations with various people and groups also became a part of adapting working virtually.

Virtual LAP

With Megan Lowe, a Disciples Women's leader in Tennessee leading the charge, we had a dynamic first virtual LAP. Over two Saturdays, Wanona Rogers Redd and I facilitated LAP training with a diverse group of African American Disciples women residing in Tennessee. As the world changes and more things are required to be done virtually, I am sure this training will continue to grow and evolve.

Young Leaders Project

Young Leaders Project is essentially a conversation guide and leader development program specifically for people ages 13 -18. It can be used as retreat resource over a long weekend or as a weekly study. With nine separate sections from covering topics such as body agency, DOC.

Woman to Woman Worldwide

Though applications had been accepted, and a delegation chosen, the 2020 Woman to Woman Worldwide Journey to Southern Asia was canceled. At this point we are not sure when it will be safe and wise to have the next Woman to Woman journey.

Derailed Sabbatical

The plan was to be on sabbatical March 13 – June 13, 2020. I was scheduled and registered to attend four weeks of Spanish Language School in Barcelona, with the help of the Black Leadership Project Grant and the Disciples Women Endowment Fund. As a result of COVID 19, I was unable to travel and ended my sabbatical early with the agreement to continue my sabbatical when it is safe to travel internationally again. The school has not issued a refund but

said I can attend anytime it is safe and I can stay for up to two additional weeks at no extra cost. The airline gave me an airline credit to be used by the end of 2022.

Transition

When I accepted the call to serve as Program Director and Merger Staff with Disciples Women and National Convocation, I was working with a local family counseling agency pursuing licensure as a Marriage and Family Therapist. In less than a week, I turned in my badge to the agency and received a plane ticket to my first Disciples Women's assignment. It was an unimaginable swift and glorious transition that only God could have orchestrated.

After much prayer, I have discerned God is calling me to transition again. The time has come for me to, in the words of Katie G. Cannon, "do the work my soul must have." I will be focusing my time on counseling and sexuality education as spiritual development. January 31, 2021, will be my last day on staff with Disciples Women and National Convocation.

My time here has been full of blessings. I have had the opportunity to share my gifts and experience the endless talents you all have shared with me. I am grateful to have had the divine privilege to serve an amazing God with amazing people like you. Disciples Women and National Convocation are powerful ministries whose work I will continue to support as I take the love and lessons I received into all my future endeavors.

In love and liberation,

Rev. Chesla T. Nickelson

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