



A report on the General Board meeting

General Minister and President's State of the Church address



Rev. Terri Hord Owens
General Minister and President

On Saturday evening of the General Board meeting in Indianapolis, Rev. Teresa "Terri" Hord Owens set the tone for the meeting with a look both around the Church and forward into the future.

"I wish all of you could see the Church the way I have been able to see the Church these past 18 months. I have seen a beautiful diversity and passion for mission across the United States and Canada," she said.

Owens went on to talk about the beauty of this past biennium as the Church begins to revisit the significance of the Design and

Merger Agreement implemented 50 years ago. Previously unknown stories are emerging as the Disciples of Christ Historical Society prepares for the celebration at the 2019 General Assembly via video, book and workshops.

"We found out that initially leaders of the new denomination wanted to implement a process of theological reflection woven into the life of the Church. That didn't happen, but we can reclaim that spirit now."

Owens also touched on the 2020 Vision, recognizing that much of what is outlined in its four priorities has seeped in to become very much a part of who the Disciples have grown to be. We have continued to work on anti-racism initiatives, even going so far as to audit our governing documents. We have planted more than 1,000 Christian communities, and, while some have not become sustainable, the Church has adopted planting as an important emphasis of our life together that will continue. Congregations that existed before 2001 are growing and changing to connect to their communities and find new ways to engage in mission which leads to transformation. And nearly every general and regional ministry has leadership development as part of its work, from Higher Education and Leadership Ministries to Disciples Women.

And she continued to share more recent efforts. Financial wellness and literacy programs for clergy and congregations are being piloted in regions and seminaries and supported by general ministries. Entrepreneurial partnerships are springing up between general ministries and other expressions of the Church to bring God's love to the world. Grassroots efforts from across the life of the Church are finding one another and joining forces for justice and advocacy. We're learning to repurpose resources to serve God's people in new ways.

Owens reported that over the past 18 months she has been working closely with the moderator team - Sue Morris, Belva Brown Jordan, Beau Underwood and Tim Lee - to identify objectives for the Church.

- Spiritual development and formation including development of resources for Christian education and spiritual formation in collaboration with other expressions of the Church that would be suitable for diverse generational, ethnic and theological groups.
- Communication improvements to strengthen Disciples connections and identity

- Continuation of the work of the Mission Finance Committee of the General Board on imagining a new way of funding our shared ministry
- Continuation of the work of the Governance Committee as it seeks to refresh and encourage the spirit of reflection intended by the authors of the Design and Merger agreements.
- An increased emphasis on gathering data Church-wide to make data-smart decisions and plan strategic directions
- An evaluation of how we can enhance Reconciliation Ministry, making it a priority and moving beyond training
- Institution of an endowment fund for the Office of General Minister and President to stabilize funding for the work of leading the Church

"We are closing in on 2020, so it is time to take stock of where we are and where we are going. I have confidence that this Church still has much to do to make sure Jesus is known in the world."

Highlights from general ministry, regional reports

Small groups of general board members met to review resolutions, general ministry and regional ministry reports. Some of the joys those groups reported to the full board are included below.

Division of Overseas Ministries/Global Ministries (*Global Ministries is the partnership with the United Church of Christ.*) - Ramping up for a Southern Asia Initiative kick off at the General Synod and General Assembly - "Together in Hope" - focusing on Bangladesh, East Timor, India, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka; appointing mission co-workers in response to requests from overseas partner churches; individuals formerly known as "missionaries" will be known as mission coworkers in order to better reflect mutuality and accompaniment

Church Extension Financial and Missional Resources (*This is the umbrella organization for Disciples Church Extension Fund, Hope Partnership for Missional Transformation, and New Church Ministries*) - Disciples Church Extension Fund provided a record amount of loans - \$21 million in 2018; Hope Partnership for Missional Transformation is working with a number of congregations with "too much building" for current needs; New Church Ministries achieved the goal of 1004 faith communities in communication or established since 2001.

North American Pacific/Asian Disciples (NAPAD) - More than 100 congregations with 18 linguistic groups and a young demographic; working on boundary trainings for clergy in their first language as well as new church starts.

Higher Education and Leadership Ministries (HELM) - Welcoming Tougaloo College (Mississippi) to Disciples-related undergraduate schools, now totaling 15, most of which are reporting increased enrollment; HELM Leadership Fellows program added a Global Awareness international trip to learn from mission partners in other countries.

National Benevolent Association (NBA) - Celebrating the awarding of Mission & Ministry Grants to 20 ministries - congregations and Disciples-related Health and Social Service nonprofits who serve older adults and



children at-risk. The grants totaled \$157,900 and the grantees were located across 13 regions.

Disciples Home Missions (DHM) - New program, the Leadership Initiative Team (LIT), a collective of diverse gifted and skilled leaders from a cross section of ministry professions - LIT listens to discover leader development needs and provides or designs resources to address those needs in their context; Disciples Home Missions announced the staffing positions of Disciples Men Director, Rev. Greg Alexander and Associate Director, Rev. Alex Ruth.

Christian Church Foundation (CCF) - Initiated the Sarah Lou Bostick Select Fund, an investment fund with select social screens; Reported study that indicated individual Disciples are more generous per-capita and adjusted for inflation than they were in the 1980s.

Council on Christian Unity (CCU) - Introduced a curriculum on multi-faith studies; Working on full communion agreement with United Church of Canada (GA-1922).

Pension Fund (PF) - Expanding Ministerial Relief Assistance to include several new programs as we approach the 125th Anniversary.

Central Pastoral Office for Hispanic Ministries (CPOHM or Obra Hispana/OH) - Strengthening connection with ninth convencion; focusing on young adult leadership in partnership with NBA and HELM.

National Convocation (NC) - Working on joint assembly July 22-25, 2020 with NAPAD and CPOHM; promoting the history book *Journey Toward Wholeness* to educate Disciples about the Merger Agreement.

Disciples of Christ Historical Society (DCHS) - Finances are stable and budget balanced; celebrating 50 years of the Merger Agreement and Design at 2019 General Assembly with book, workshops and other activities.

Disciples Women (DW) - Effective partnerships sharing staff with HELM and DOM; executive, program directors and president of International Disciples Women Ministries invited to the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in March of 2019.

Christian Board of Publication/Chalice Press (CBP/CP) - New partner vendor for distribution to wider audience; partnerships with Bethany Fellows and DCHS for content.

Regions

Alabama/NW Florida - great turnout of volunteers for National Convocation's biennial session in summer of 2018; more diverse congregations with first Chuukese (NAPAD) and new Hispanic congregations.

Arizona - celebrating church and creative ministry grants made possible by legacy giving; almost 30 Latinx students for Lexington Theological Seminary's programs in Spanish.

Canada - using differences as a source of strength while working to move region in unified direction.

Capital Area - extensive and successful social media ministry, connecting congregations, clergy, and lay leaders across the diverse Region; experiencing some financial challenges but working with peers and other expressions of the Church to address.

Central Rocky Mountain - celebrating one new church plant in Thornton, CO, and the rebuilding of the ministries of new church, church revitalization and reconciliation teams.

Florida - Disciples Mission Fund giving is up and the region is debt free.

Georgia - completed a new mission and vision process (LIFT: love, inspire, focus on Christ, transform communities) and adopted two partnerships - with NBA for the Georgia Mental Health initiative the other with DHM for the LIFT initiative to increase ministry capacity; and paid off camp mortgage

Great River - renewing relationships across the region; experimenting with technology and momentum around our future story and strategic goals approved during regional assembly.

Greater Kansas City - using more video storytelling to share connections and ministry ideas; working to promote faith rooted justice work.

Illinois/Wisconsin - added new staff for communications; partnering with United Church of Christ to provide a school for ministry.

Indiana - celebrating a decade of partnership with Democratic Republic of Congo and starting new relationship with Mexico; sale of camp ground at higher price than expected will fund faith formation grants...and an emphasis on personal finances and congregational stewardship has increased DMF.

Kansas - three co-regional ministers for two years now; have had 25 clergy and lay leaders go through leadership development training thus far and are pleased that a similar number have enrolled in KS Leadership Center training in 2019.

Kentucky - regional minister (Greg Alexander) retiring after 27 years on staff, 15 as regional minister; success with pastor-peer learning communities.

Michigan - improving communications; moved camp management to a contractor

MidAmerica - vibrant camping ministry that welcomed 840+ campers because everyone can go due to robust scholarship program; four rural church summits on best practices and mutual support were successful.

Montana - celebrating the new region to be formed with members of the Northwest region; hosting a Winter Talk on Native American issues and the Christian Doctrine of Discovery.

Nebraska - finances are good; 42 congregations and a new one on the way.

Northeastern - increased DMF giving by 55 percent; establishing an endowment for the region.

Northern California/Nevada - recent staff transitions; annual gathering will focus on visioning and innovative ministry models

Northwest - anticipating formation of a new region with the members of the Montana region; began requiring anti-racism training for active clergy with standing.

Oklahoma - excited about homegrown talent in ministry; working with Dominican Republic on water issues

Oregon/SW Idaho - women's ministry had a trilingual worship experience at one of their fall retreats; partnering with Disciples Seminary Foundation for a two-year certificate in ministry program taught in Spanish to train 32 commissioned ministers.

Pacific Southwest - youth immersion ministry focused on anti-racism and leadership in a multi-cultural context; introduced new program, ACTS 2, as support for congregations seeking support for transformation.

Pennsylvania - Camp Laurelview had successful camp season and successful fundraiser for camp beds; DMF giving is up.

South Carolina - Interim Regional Minister for Discernment Rev. Juan Rodriguez, will be helping region to prepare for the search and calling of a new regional minister

Southwest - restructuring region business to centralized model and single commission on ministry; retaining area presence for pastoral and programmatic activities

Tennessee - sold regional office building, working out of Alameda Christian Church, Nashville; budget turning around thanks to congregations and donors.

Upper Midwest - expanding youth education activities with participation in Standing Rock camp; many capital improvements at Christian Conference Center.

West Virginia - more than 120 attended the women's retreat; teamed up for clergy day at Buffalo Seminary with Pennsylvania region.

No reports were available for North Carolina, Ohio or Virginia.



Business Scheduled for the 2019 General Assembly

Please note:

***Operational, Policy and Organizational** items are those which establish policy, institute or revise structures, or procedures, authorize programs, approve directions or mandate actions. (Special Rules of Procedure for the General Assembly 2.2.1)

#Reports are summaries of ministries performed, plans for ministry, and audited financial statements of each general ministry, commission or other entity established or recognized by the General Assembly. (Special Rules of Procedure for the General Assembly 2.1.1)

***Sense-of-the-Assembly** items are an expression of the General Assembly [participants] concerning a moral, ethical or religious matter confronting the church, the nation or the world. Adoption of a resolution must represent agreement by a majority of an assembly's voting representatives that the conviction or view expressed is based on Christian insights and is a part of their witness to Jesus Christ. Resolutions are developed for the guidance of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in its program operation, for the consideration of the congregations and members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and for a Christian witness to the world. The text of a proposed resolution should be so phrased as not to bring into question the Christian commitment of those who do not agree. (Special Rules of Procedure for the General Assembly 2.5.1) *These resolutions speak TO the members, congregations, regions and general ministries, but not FOR them.*

You can find out more about how business comes to the assembly at disciples.org/ga/business. A full copy of the Special Rules of Procedure is available online in English, Spanish and Korean linked from the page hosting the Design of the Christian Church (disciples.org/our-identity/the-design/).

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GA-1917*: CREATION OF A NEW REGION IN MONTANA AND THE NORTHWEST (CHANGE IN REGIONAL BOUNDARIES) - The members of the Northwest and Montana regions are forming a new region to be known as Northern Lights.

GA-1918*: REPORT OF THE TIME AND PLACE COMMITTEE (2021) - The committee recommends Louisville, KY, for the General Assembly July 31-Aug. 4, 2021.

GA-1919*: REPORT OF THE TIME AND PLACE COMMITTEE (2023) - The committee recommends Memphis, TN, for the General Assembly July 8-12, 2023.

GA-1920#: REPORT ON 2017 GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTIONS - Updates on the following 2017 business items are included: 1720 Affirmation of Our Commitment to Responsible Investing; 1721 A Renewed Commitment to Reconciliation Ministry; 1722 Repudiation of the Christian Doctrine of Discovery: A Call to Education and Action and Support for Indigenous Voices in the Witness of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ); 1723 On Becoming Immigrant Welcoming Congregations; 1724 Resolution Concerning Carbon Neutrality; 1725 Recognition of the Region of Canada as a Traditionally Underrepresented Cultural Community; 1732 Stewardship as a Spiritual Discipline and Its Applications in the 21st Century; 1739 Concerning Executive Order 13780; 1730 Concerning Support for the "New Poor People's Campaign: National Call for Moral Revival"

GA-1921#: REPORT OF THE SOCIAL WITNESS TASK FORCE - The task force is exploring a new way to have conversations in the Church around issues that have previously been addressed through Sense-of-the-Assembly resolutions. The report of the group in 2017 (GA-1731) details some of the possible approaches. It will continue its work with the hope to bring a proposal to the 2021 assembly.

GA-1922*: RESOLUTION ON FULL COMMUNION BETWEEN THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA AND THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA - Both churches will pursue with intention ways of expressing the unity of the Church. This includes commitment to mutually recognizing ordained ministers of each partner church as truly ministers of word and sacrament, and ways of manifesting the common mission of witness and service.

GA-1923*: RECOMMENDED LANGUAGE FOR PREVENTION OF HARASSMENT FOR GENERAL MINISTRIES OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) - The General Assembly asks all General Ministries to revise and implement their Human Resources policies to meet the minimum standards drafted in the "Recommended Language" document.

GA-1924*: RESOLUTION TO CELEBRATE THE FORMATION OF NEW CONGREGATIONS AND CONTINUE THE COLLECTIVE COMMITMENT TO MAKE DISCIPLES - New Church Ministries asks that the formation of new congregations and faith communities continue to be a priority of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada beyond the year 2020 as we answer God's call to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

GA-1925*: ADDRESSING THE STATE OF GLOBAL FORCED MIGRATION - This resolution calls upon the members of the Church to engage the matter of global forced migration, to pray and learn about the current state of global forced migration and take action as God leads.

GA-1926*: SPIRIT OF ACTIVE LISTENING - The General Youth Council asks the General Assembly to call the Church to hear and listen to all voices present as we respect our brothers and sisters in faith, free of judgement and preconceived notions, recognizing and accepting our common humanity.

GA-1927*: CONCERNING THE REOPENING OF THE U.S. EMBASSY IN CUBA, ENDING THE U.S. EMBARGO AGAINST THE ISLAND, AND PROMOTING A CONSTRUCTIVE RELATION BETWEEN BOTH COUNTRIES - Disciples Women ask the General Assembly to speak to the Church regarding the normalization of the relationship between the United States and Cuba.

National Benevolent Association
of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

TRIVIA NIGHT:
Who Wants to Be the Smartest Disciple?
Sunday, July 21 * 8:45 p.m.
nbacares.org/trivia

YOUNG ADULT LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT:
Intersections and Intersectionality
Co-hosted by
CPOHM, HELM, and NBA
Monday, July 22 * 5:00 p.m.
ga.disciples.org

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GA-1928: A CALL TO SEE AND RESPOND TO THE CRISIS OF DOMESTIC AND INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE - This resolution encourages the Church across all its expressions to recognize its responsibility to help prevent domestic violence as it concerns the elderly, spouses, intimate partners, children, and others in the household and the church.

GA-1929: AN INVITATION TO EDUCATION FOR WELCOMING AND RECEIVING THE GIFTS OF TRANSGENDER AND GENDER-DIVERSE PEOPLE - The resolution invites all the expressions of the Church into a period of study and growth in understanding of the issues facing transgender and gender-diverse individuals and their families.

GA-1930: ON WOMEN AND JUST PEACEMAKING - The General Assembly is asked to recognize that all barriers to full equality contribute to a global culture that tolerates violence against women and gender minorities and diminishes their participation in shaping a more just world, and call on all leaders, within the church and within society, to help eliminate those barriers.

GA-1931: GENERAL NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT FOR OFFICERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY - The General Nominating Committee puts forward the names of Clyde E. Hunt, Jr., member of Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church, Memphis, as moderator elect; Rev. Stephanie Kendell of Park Avenue Christian Church, New York City, as first vice moderator; and Rev. Nestor Gomez of Salida, CO, as second vice moderator. Rev. Dr. Belva Brown Jordan will become moderator at the end of the General Assembly.

GA-1932: ACKNOWLEDGING THE COVENANTAL AFFILIATION OF TOUGALOO COLLEGE AND REAFFIRMING OUR COMMITMENT TO HIGHER EDUCATION - The General Assembly is asked to celebrate the history and heritage of Tougaloo College as a Disciples institution of higher education continuing in the tradition began by the Southern Christian Institute and fully living into its current mission of preparing its students to be lifelong learners who are committed to leadership and service in a global society.

Progress made by Governance, Mission Finance committees

The recently re-activated standing committees of the General Board met by conference call several times since the April 2018 board meeting in preparation for in-person meetings at the 2019 session in Indianapolis in February.

Governance: Subcommittees have been formed to explore facets such as the present context for ministry as well as the history and theology undergirding the Design. The group is planning to host a session at the 2019 General Assembly with guided discussion about the future of how we organize ourselves.

Mission Finance: The group has spent time examining the context of fundraising, the current promotion and participation in Disciples Mission Fund as well as language, messaging and tactics that could be used in the future.

