

LETTER FROM THE BOARD PRESIDENT

His LOVE Has Changed EVERYTHING...

"Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the Dayspring on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness...to guide our feet into the way of peace." Luke 1:78, 79 KJV

Dearly Beloved Grapevine Readers,

Typically my Letter to you flows from a place where the Holy Spirit literally puts words in my mouth and I send my article to the Publisher/Executive Editor in a timely manner. This particular Letter has been more difficult. I really had to dig deep and try to determine: What is my message? How do I reconcile the destructive effects of a worldwide pandemic and the continuing prospect of a nation divided?

Martin Luther King, Jr. said: *"Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."* Christmas reminds us that God so loved the world that he gave us his one and only son, Jesus Christ.

The light of the star of Bethlehem reminds us that baby Jesus is indeed the "light of the world;" the one who loved us so much that he sacrificed his life; so that those who believe in him would have life everlasting. How blessed we are as followers of Christ to know of his saving love at such a time as this.

When asked what is the most important commandment; Jesus answered: *"The most important one... Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself, There is no commandment greater than this."* Mark 12: 29-31 NRSV



The Love that is required of us now and as we move to overcome hate and division is a deep love, an intentional love, and an unconditional love that involves our whole heart. We are reminded in scripture:

"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you?...If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you?...But love your enemies, do good...Your reward will be great and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful." Luke 6: 32-36 NRSV

I understand now why the Holy Spirit had me dig deeper to complete this Letter. I do not want to receive the lesson the Holy Spirit was sending. I would much rather love those who are loveable; those who look and think like me; those who don't hate others. In a word — Why do I have to love those who are part of the problem? Why do I have to love my enemies? How do I love my enemies?

The agape love that God requires us to practice can only be achieved with the intervention of the Holy Spirit. Let us all pray that we can love as God would have us love - knowing as MLK states: *"Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that."* How powerful - how life changing this love can be in a world where darkness and hate prevail.

We the staff and board of Grapevine end the year praising God for his goodness and mercy. We thank God for you, our faithful readers. We thank you for your support of the Oldtimers' Grapevine Newsletter during this challenging year. We extend our love and condolences to those of you who have lost loved ones, particularly those who were victims of the pandemic that has plagued the world.

We the staff and board of the Grapevine stand in the light and love of Christmas and affirm the hope that the Dayspring will indeed guide our feet into the way of light, peace, and love. As we bask in the wonder of the Christmas story, we are assured that God will not only write our story: moreover, in his time and in his way, he will right our story. Let us faithfully walk in the light and love of Jesus Christ. Truly *“His LOVE Has Changed EVERYTHING .*

Your Sister in Christ,

Norma Ellington-Twitty, Ph.D.

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

Get ready for 2021 - we invite you to help us celebrate a milestone anniversary in February...Let us rejoice & be glad as we celebrate our storied past, our blessed present, and our bright future as the people of God...

CITY HOPE STL, HOMELESSNESS IS NOT HOPELESSNESS

By William Mauk

For some, living on the streets is a choice. It is a preferred lifestyle. It is the only way to feel safe. No one trying to control you, tell you what to do, or make you follow any rules, schedules, or safeguards. Of course, for others, it certainly isn't their choice. It is a situation. A tragedy. It is an unfair, unjustified, unresolved crisis. Some are uneducated. Some are highly educated or at least highly intelligent. Some are ill, and some have poor hygiene. Many are surprisingly healthy, and find ways to maintain their hygiene, stay reasonably clean, and do what they can to be presentable. While I don't claim to know a lot about my fellow citizens experiencing or at risk of being homeless, I am finally learning more. And I hope you will too.



This story begins with Destiny Family Church, a small congregation that meets in a building owned by Bridge of Hope. The members come from the community. Some are established home owners. Some come out of the vacant, abandoned buildings in the neighborhood to join in worship.¹ This humble but passionate ministry is led by Bishop Michael Robinson. And Pastor Mike has changed my life.

The year 2017 brought a particularly bitter winter, and the life for homeless individuals became extremely dangerous when the city forced closure of a major temporary shelter, the New Life Evangelical Center. The center had served approximately 200 homeless individuals each night, and was closed when the city determined it “continued to operate without proper city permits” (notwithstanding the new, expensive loft apartments going up in the same neighborhood.)

Pastor Mike's small congregation responded with compassion. The church asked to keep the Bridge of Hope building open, and then gathered blankets and cots to provide shelter for the homeless. Approximately 60-75 men and women lined the hallways in

cots and some slept on the concrete floor. Destiny Family Church saw to it that they were out of the cold, and had a warm dinner and breakfast each day. At the time, this was an “unauthorized” shelter, but when the city inspector showed up, rather than shut down the program, they arranged for additional cots. Prayers were answered.

The following year, Destiny hoped to move closer to the heart of the city, and found a most unusual partner to help make that happen. Pastor Mike met Nadida Amatullah-Matin and her husband Mohammed Matin. She was the head of the Women's March in St. Louis, and when they learned that Pastor Mike was looking for a location on the southside of the city, they offered space in their warehouse building. Christians and Muslims, working side by side, provided shelter for approximately 60-70 men, as well as a few women and children. They also applied for official status of “pop-up shelter” with the city of St. Louis.

The city inspected the facility, and after some negotiation, authorized the location as a temporary “pop-up” shelter subject to city regulations. Those regulations included not admitting anyone into the building until 7:00 p.m., and then only when the outside temperatures officially went below freezing, as determined by a city official. The regulations also required that the clients be moved out of the shelter by 6:30 a.m. each morning, and that the shelter be closed for the daytime hours. The primary advantage of the city authorization is, from the city's point of view, assurance that the facility meets at least minimal health standards... and from the shelter's standpoint, it also provides a legal right to remain open when nearby property owners express a concern that the shelter or its inhabitants puts them at risk. Volunteers, churches and other organizations scrambled all winter to provide meals, blankets, and paper products. Often it was the same individuals and groups providing the cash for heating the large warehouse room, and for other utilities and insurance. A major resource was another St. Louis

non-profit, the PotBangerz, under the direction of MamaCat, Cathy Daniels, who provided and cooked a good number of the hot meals served.

There were some bumps along the road, of course, but in retrospect, we see God's hand at work helping the officials of the City of St. Louis to learn about Pastor Mike's dedication and compassion. Mike was committed to offer more than a shelter, he offered his "guests" a temporary home. Those coming in the door received a friendly greeting, often by name, and were given a snack and assigned a bed immediately. Dry clothing was made available when needed. Prayer was offered before serving a hot dinner, although respectfully offered, acknowledging that some were of no or other faiths. Food alternatives recognized special needs of those who were diabetic, vegetarian, or of faiths that guided their eating habits.

Television, games, and conversation were available in the evenings, along with snacks, but many chose to go directly to a warm bed. If you have not given much thought to living on the street, perhaps you can't appreciate the value of a warm, secure place to sleep, where you know no one will bring you harm or steal your few possessions.

A warm breakfast and snacks were provided as guests were sent back out on the streets. As often as possible, 24-hour city bus passes were provided, which often proved a dry haven throughout the day. On cold, rainy or snowing days, the religious service offered in the mornings was a welcome way to stay indoors a while longer. As the city observed the ministry, and the pastor learned of the city's priorities, a bond began to build.



It was about October 1st, 2019, when Pastor Mike called me and a few of my friends to say that he had located a different building that he hoped to use as a shelter for the coming winter. This was a small, neglected church building with a basement meeting hall that a pastor friend purchased for the sum of \$65. The building would be rent free for the winter, provided Pastor Mike and his team of stewards eradicated some of the mold and made the repairs necessary for the building to pass city codes. A team started removing moldy drywall and ceilings, rehanging doors, cleaning and fixing, working night and day. By the 15th, the cold had arrived, a temporary city permit had been obtained, and nearly 60 men and women were given shelter.

It was sometime during this season that Pastor Mike began discussions with another human dynamo, Miss Jennifer Turner, a volunteer whose passion for the homeless equaled his own. Jennifer is owner and CEO of Turner Business Solutions, which among other services, helps not-for-profit organizations properly file for 501(c)(3) status.



Together they took the necessary steps and obtained a 501 (c)(3) incorporated as City Hope STL. And that was the start of what has since become...in a matter of 12 months...perhaps one of the largest minority-owned non-profits in the city of St. Louis!

One of the largest, minority owned non-profits in St. Louis...an exaggeration? Perhaps not. Within weeks of opening the first building, City Hope STL opened three more pop-up shelter locations. Various volunteers, congregations, and organizations continue to provide meals, clothing, blankets, and personal needs. Many more support the program with their generous and regular financial contributions. Approximately 125 people enjoyed the warm embrace and love of City Hope STL on a nightly basis.

Over the course of the winter, and the covid-tainted spring of 2020, the City Hope STL umbrella spread to provide shelter in six locations, including an historic building in the heart of the city formerly known as Karen's House. The three-story, former convent, has housed homeless and transitional services for years, but the funds-strapped volunteers that managed it pleaded for someone to assume the building and their ministry. The "Hope House" is now being renovated to expand City Hope's transitional programs, helping more individuals move towards employment and consistent housing.

Leaping to the present, on September 11, 2020, City Hope STL opened their headquarters with an official ribbon cutting, attended by St. Louis Mayor Lyda Krewson. This was only the 1st year anniversary of City Hope obtaining their 501(c)(3).



At the ceremony, Pastor Robinson stated "We are in the business of treating our unhoused community members with love, dignity and respect. We want to make sure that is the focal point of how we do shelter care — with love, dignity and respect to ensure that those who come through our doors feel that when they leave. It's one of the most important things to us as an agency."²

Mayor Krewson praised the program, "You have just responded to the needs of our unhoused population in such a fabulous way," she said to Robinson and his staff. "And we so, so, so appreciate that. But when COVID-19 hit... many of our homeless service providers had to lower their populations so that they could socially distance, so they could keep everybody safe. And so that put us in a situation of very quickly having to find additional services so that we would not have people on the street, and you were so, so important in that."***

On October 1st, City Hope STL was asked by the city to assume the official management of Biddle House,

the city's only year-round program for the homeless. Biddle House provides housing and wrap around services including counseling and vocation training. During the covid epidemic, the facility cares for approximately 125 individuals, but could expand to as many as 300, including temporary winter shelter, once the covid precautions are lifted.



As reported by the St. Louis American, “He said social distancing restrictions have affected how many people they can serve among their seven shelters, which will soon increase to eight in October when City Hope becomes the managing agency of St. Louis’ Biddle House homeless shelter, in turn making the Black-owned organization the largest such agency in the region.”

“City Hope has been a great partner of ours for a while,” Krewson told The St. Louis American. “So, when we went out for bids on the Biddle House, we felt fortunate that they were willing to step in and really take care of operating that facility for the benefit of the men who stay there.”

In a single year, City Hope STL has grown from a volunteer work night and day ministry, to a staff of more than 85 full time employees, and a team of more than 75 volunteers. And when the Covid-19 virus is under control, they expect to be able to significantly increase the number of people served, and continue to recruit employees.

City Hope STL provides shelter for the homeless, transitional housing, life skills training, counseling, and assistance in finding medical, mental and emotional care. Turner says another program is in the planning, Hope Works, a work development program, which will include a car wash and a restaurant. It's no surprise that City Hope STL is also making a name change, to City Hope International, forming new partnerships with program start-ups in East St. Louis, Cincinnati, and as far away as Kenya.

Years ago, I wrote a film for the National Benevolent Association titled “We Can Make A Difference.” It spoke to the optimism that drives a non-profit to expect God to meet them and carry them forward be-

yond their wildest dreams. City Hope STL is such a program. Pastor Michael Robinson and CFO Jennifer Turner are such dreamers. Their faith and their commitment is clearly stated on their website:

“We believe in loving people by providing them with the resources that they need to move forward with their lives. As we grow, we are continuously working to create new programs and resources that will empower our community and help each person to achieve success. We are not just a shelter for the homeless. We are so much more! We are dedicated to helping people achieve stability, clean safe housing, healthy meals, employment opportunities, mentorship, and so much more!

City Hope STL is a 501(c)(3), and welcomes volunteers and community support, donations, and asks for your continued prayers, not only for their ministry, but for the staff and the people they serve.

THE POWER OF LAUGHTER

Norma Ellington-Twitty, Ph.D.

As serious as the issues of the world might be - it is always good to smile. laugh, and not take ourselves too seriously. Leading benefits of laughter include stress reduction, strengthens social connections and the release of your body's “feel good” chemical, endorphins.

Laughter is contagious and can make others feel better. So enjoy a good laugh often.

A Prayer For Those Growing Older

by Anonymous

Lord, Thou knowest that I am growing older. Keep me from becoming talkative and possessed with the idea that I must express myself on every subject. Release me from the craving to straighten out everyone's affairs. Keep me from the recital of endless detail. Give me wings to get to the point. Seal my lips when I am inclined to tell of my aches and pains; they are increasing with the year and my love to speak of them grows sweeter as time goes by...

Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally I may be wrong. Make me thoughtful but not nosey; helpful but not bossy. With my vast store of wisdom and experience it does seem a pity not to use it all. But thou knowest, Lord, that I want a few friends at the end.

Amen

DISCIPLES AND UCC LEADERS ISSUE A MESSAGE AND CALL IN RESPONSE TO THE "CRY FOR HOPE"

BY MIDDLE EAST & EUROPE - GLOBAL MINISTRIES ON JULY 01, 2020

In response to Cry for Hope, the urgent call to end the oppression of the Palestinian people issued by Kairos Palestine and Global Kairos for Justice, the General Ministers and Presidents of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ, as well as the Co-Executives of Global Ministries, have released a "Message and Call in Response to the Kairos Palestine Cry for Hope. The Rev. Teresa Hord Owens and the Rev. Dr. John Dorhauer, General Ministers and Presidents of the Disciples and UCC, respectively, and the Rev. Dr. Julia Brown Karimu and the Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, Co-Executives of Global Ministries, having received the Cry for Hope, have taken the opportunity to reach out to members of the two churches. In their message, they offer ways that the Cry for Hope can be studied and acted on by church members. They also reiterate their strong opposition to anticipated Israeli efforts to annex parts of the occupied West Bank, and to occupation.



express solidarity with us, global politics and maneuvering continue, perhaps hoping for the shadow of these

"distractions." One such example is the anticipated effort by the Israeli government, led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, to formally annex significant parts of the West Bank—recognized as occupied Palestinian lands—beginning as early as this month. Israeli de jure annexation of these lands is illegal under international law, but has had the support of the current U.S. Administration as articulated in President Trump's "Peace to Prosperity" proposal, which we have criticized, along with other policy shifts by this Administration regarding Israel/Palestine since 2017.

Let us be clear: we reiterate our opposition to Israeli annexation of occupied Palestinian lands and have spoken ecumenically against that, calling on the U.S. Congress "to wield its power of the purse and not allow any United States funds provided to Israel to be used for the recognition, facilitation or support of annexation, or for denial of Palestinian rights and violation of international law, including continuing occupation." We also acknowledge that such Israeli de jure annexation would be devastating to any hopes for peace with justice between Israelis and Palestinians while also an extension of decades of de facto Israeli annexation of Palestinian lands. In addition, we continue to work against Israel's continued blockade of Gaza and its denial of rights of Palestinian refugees, and are deeply troubled by its 2018 basic law identifying the country as "the nation state of the Jewish people," which openly discriminates against Israel's one-fifth Palestinian Christian and Muslim population.

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ, with mission engagement in the Middle East of more than 170 years, have been consistent supporters of peace with justice between Israelis and Palestinians through our advocacy, informed by partnership relations, the presence of mission co-

The full text of their message follows below:

Beloved family of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ,

Greetings in the name of our Savior, Jesus Christ! We write at a challenging time for us here in North America—and around the world. The struggle for racial justice in the U.S. has found new strength, tragically impelled by the horrific accounts of the unjustified treatment of Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and Raychard Brooks leading to their deaths—evidence of the persistent and sustained racism that we deplore in the strongest terms. We are also in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to staggering numbers of infection and death in North America and around the world, while also revealing the gross inequalities and "pre-existing conditions" of poverty, discrimination, and oppression which result in greater vulnerability to the virus.

In this wider context, even as partners, including Palestinian Christians from Kairos Palestine, recognize their connections to the struggle for racial justice and

workers, and General Assembly and General Synod policies.

Just over a decade ago, Palestinian Christians and leaders took the bold step of declaring a kairos moment with the issuance of “A Moment of Truth: A Cry of Faith, Hope, and Love from the Heart of Palestinian Suffering.” That document has been seminal for Disciples and UCC members in understanding a Palestinian Christian perspective and in taking appropriate action in support of our siblings there.

Today, we receive with our hearts and souls a new plea called, “Cry for Hope: A Decisive Call for Action,” issued by our partner, Kairos Palestine, and its associated global network, Global Kairos for Justice. This “Cry for Hope” outlines the current context in Israel/Palestine and calls Christians and churches around the world “to engage in a process of study, reflection and confession concerning the historic and systemic deprivation of the rights of the Palestinian people and the use of the Bible by many to justify and support this oppression.” It states very clearly, “We cannot serve God while remaining silent about the oppression of the Palestinians.” The letter continues, challenging the global Christian community to take bold, faithful, and resolute actions “to formally reject the oppression of the Palestinian people and any use of the Bible to justify this injustice,” enumerating seven specific such actions. The Disciples and UCC, as advocates for peace with justice, have engaged several of these already as denominations, and many of our members are involved directly. We confess that we have not done enough to end Palestinian oppression without accountability or to change our countries’ policies that enable Israel to continue to violate international laws with impunity.

We therefore commend to you, as faithful members of our churches and people committed to God’s vision of peace and justice in the world, this new letter, this “Cry for Hope.” We urge you to read and study the “Cry for Hope,” as well as the original Kairos Palestine “Moment of Truth” (2009) document, individually and in your congregations, and discern ways to engage the specific action areas. This may include the calls to:

- Explore both the current realities Palestinians experience and the theologies that have supported their oppression, offering “theologies that prophetically call for an inclusive vision of the land for Israelis and Palestinians, affirming that the creator God is a God of love, mercy and justice.”

- Learn how to support non-violent resistance to “occupation, dispossession, and abrogation of [Palestinians]’ fundamental rights, including supporting the right to use economic measures, advocating with the US government and state governments as appropriate, and exercising responsibility in stewardship of investments and purchases.
- Become involved in interreligious dialogue and coalitions to support peace with justice for Israelis and Palestinians, as well as in all circumstances, including here in North America, and work against racism and discrimination in all their forms, including anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim acts and speech.
- “Come and see” the land often called “holy” to visit the places of our faith story, and to encounter our partner churches and organizations while there to learn about the current reality. Global Ministries staff is prepared to assist in making those encounters possible, when travel again is possible.

You may also wish to consider affixing your name as a supporter of this call.

As the authors of the “Cry for Hope” conclude, “we embrace our membership in the community of the broken bread, the church fulfilling its mission to bring the good news of God’s gift of love, mercy, compassion, and abundant life for all.” This embrace means committing to work for peace and justice where they are lacking, and to demonstrate the good news in all that we do.

In Christ,

Rev. Teresa Hord Owens, General Minister and President Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Rev. Dr. John Dorhauer, General Minister and President United Church of Christ

Rev. Dr. Karen Georgia Thompson, Associate General Minister President Wider Church Ministries, UCC Co-Executive, Global Ministries

Rev. Dr. Julia Brown Karimu, Division of Overseas Ministries, Disciples Co-Executive, Global Ministries

JULY 4, 2020
AN AFRICAN AMERICAN PERSPECTIVE



“So, if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.” John 8: 36 (NRSV)

Who would have thought the year 2020 would turn out to be the year it has been? I heard it said, “I want to send this year back, have it cleaned up, and rebooted because it has virus.” We do not have the luxury to send the year

back or turn back the hands of time. We must keep going on. At mid-year, we can look back and see the impact of the COVID-19 on the world and particularly the United States. We, the wealthiest and most resourceful nation, yet we lead the world in cases of infections and deaths. We have seen the sleeping giant for justice awakened by the murder of George Floyd to reinforce the truth that **BLACK LIVES MATTER!** Protests continue across the country calling for an end to systemic and institutional racism. There is a genuine spirit for change and transformation that is alive and active. We must be faithful in these times to serve, because when the marching stops the work does not.

As I contemplate the celebration of America’s Independence Day, I have second thoughts. To get an African American perspective on this year’s holiday, I thought I might consult my predecessor, John R. Foulkes, or church historians Lawrence Burnley or Brenda Cardwell, or even one of our past National Convocation Board presidents. But due to the time constraints of this publication and the summer solstice having already passed, I consulted the man in the mirror. So, I share my thoughts in this article.

The events of 2020 have helped raise the awareness of the nation to an atrocity of a horrible race riot in Tulsa, Oklahoma in June of 1921. It also has served to highlight the observance of Juneteenth, the day in 1865 when the slaves in Texas were freed, two and one-half years after President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation. Obviously, for me a minister, serving the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), I emphasize the importance of our initiative to truly be an Anti-Racist/Pro-Reconciling church.

In my contemplation of this year’s Independence Day celebration, I read the works one of our ancestors,

Frederick Douglass, escaped slave, fiery abolitionist and preacher. He was asked to deliver an oration to an august crowd on “What, to the Slave, is the Fourth of July”. This speech was given July 5, 1852, slavery was nationalized, and fugitive slave laws were enforced in the north and the south. Douglass was clear to point out the Star Spangled Banner and American Christianity shared the same spirit of oppression of the slave. He strongly articulated, “For black men there are neither law, justice, humanity nor religion.” This mindset of white supremacy and black inferiority was a part of America’s legislation and America’s religion. He went on to say, “The American church is guilty, when viewed in connection with what it is doing to uphold slavery; but it is superlatively guilty when viewed in connection with its ability to abolish slavery.” Preston Taylor, founder of the National Christian Missionary Convention, sought to end the heresy looming over the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) as a segregated church. Martin Luther King, Jr. in his “Letter from the Birmingham Jail”, admonished white preachers and white Christians not to condemn his actions while they sat silent and complicit with the systems that denied civil rights and human rights to African Americans.

I thank God for the circumstances that have brought us to this place. Although they are not the prettiest and most pleasant, these circumstances have created so many perfect storms for resistance, advocacy and change. When the marching stops the work does not. Let us be fully committed to be a model church endeavoring to be Anti-Racist and Pro-Reconciling. Francis Scott Key’s words, “the land of the free and the home of the brave” did not apply to Black people. But Jesus said, “So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.” (John 8: 36). Let us be about the work to expose and dismantle racism in its many forms and manifestations. We can make America and the world a better place to live for our children. I will celebrate July 4, 2020 in the spirit of anticipation and hope of what America may become. I will celebrate with faith in God, hope in Jesus Christ and with the love of the Holy Spirit working in me and through me. May we be the movement for wholeness in this fragmented world? My faith tells me that the best is yet to come.

(Simmons and Thomas, editors; **PREACHING WITH SACRED FIRE**, An Anthology of African Sermons 1750 – to the Present; Frederick Douglass, “What, to the Slave, is the Fourth of July”, p.137-160; W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2010.)

Timothy James

REV. TERRI HORD OWENS RECEIVES THE NATIONAL CONVOCAATION'S AFFRERICAN AMERICAN LIBERATION AWARD!!

The National Convocation's African American Liberation Award is presented to persons who are strategic and instrumental in opening doors of opportunity and empowerment of African Americans and other oppressed people. The presentation to our Rev. Terri Hord Owens, our General Minister and President reads:

"For Your Bold Leadership In These Times of Uncertainty, Unashamedly Black and Unapologeti-



cally Christian Teaching the Church to Pray With Specificity and Confidence."

Congratulations and may God grant you grace to carry on.

Timothy M. James, Administrative Secretary

Irie Session, President

Donald Gillett, II, Past President

PILGRIMAGE CHRISTIAN CHURCH 33RD HOMECOMING AND ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Would you believe its been 33 years? Well it certainly has and "We've Come A Mighty Long Way". It is truly by the grace of God and the generosity of so many including many of you that we have made it 33 years.

We are so grateful and as usual we want to say thank you to God and to you. Usually we spend an entire week saying thank you but this year because of Covid 19, we decided to take the entire month of November and have opening services Virtually on Sunday November 1 and every Friday Night in November.

Rev. Dr. Delores Carpenter opened up on Sunday and we had a glorious time!! Our preachers for each Friday were The Rev. Lois Artis, The Rev. Ronald Smith, The Rev. Ken Booker Langston and The Rev. Marilyn Fiddmont.

The theme for the month was "We've Come A Long Way" and we are expecting God to continue to take us a mighty long way. Our goal for the month is \$5,000 dollars or multiples of 33. We hope that you will help us achieve that goal.

CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) NEW VISION; NEW DEVOTIONAL CONNECTS DISCIPLES IN A NEW VISION FOR THE CHURCH



Wellsprings of Hope: Prayers for a Prophetic New Vision for Disciples, is a collection of 52 weekly reflections on Isaiah 35, the hallowed passage about finding new life, new faith, and new prophetic vision in challenging places and spaces. This new devotional, available early October, will walk you and your congregation alongside other Disciples congregations toward a new vision for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Written by leaders of the Disciples general ministries including Disciples Home Missions and edited by Old Testament scholar Rick Lowery, *Wellsprings of Hope* speaks of finding water in the desert, strength and transformation through our

faith, and the journey God calls us to undertake as we see a new way of being Disciples

“The apostles gathered around Jesus and told him about all the things they had done and taught. Crowds of people were coming and going so that Jesus and his followers did not even have time to eat. He said to them, “Come away by yourselves, and we will go to a lonely place to get some rest.” (Mark 6:30-31)

During a conversation with a colleague, she shared how she had taken her first vacation days since March and I completely understood. We both talked about the new norm of virtual meetings, remote offices and other changes has added more to already busy schedules. Meetings increase and when you’re in a ministry of serving, rest isn’t always on the menu. I shared that sometimes there may be a piece within us that takes pride in all that they are able to cram into a day. We’re in the midst of multiple pandemics and with that comes a different sense of exhaustion. But I was grateful that she recognized the need to recharge and the conversation was also a reminder for me to do the same.

Jesus taught, preached, healed and was accompanied by a group of disciples with unique personalities and perspectives. In the midst of it all, Jesus took the time to rest and made sure that it was modeled for the disciples. After they shared about the ministries, the Zoom meetings, the rallies, the virtual summits, the consultations and pastoral visits, Jesus said, “Let’s get away and get some rest.” If Jesus intentionally found time to create moments of rest can we do the same?

When we find moments of rest, we are recharged to continue the call. My prayer is that we find ways to make it a regular rhythm in our lives. Start small, even if it is a few moments a day. Ask a friend or partner to keep you accountable. Read Mark 6:30-31 to remind you that Jesus recognized the need to find time after all of the work, to step away (However that looks for you) and rest.

Learning the rhythm of rest.

Rev. Sheila P Spencer

BLACK-AMERICAN VERSUS BEING BLACK IN AMERICA

By Damon I. Watts

When I wake up at my mom’s, the first thing that catches my eyes every morning is this picture. For me, it makes me debate in my head what it means to be a Black-American versus being black in America.

Everybody should be conscious of what is going on around the country. To paraphrase Gil-Scott Heron, the new word to have is rebellion; and while Nat Turner might have been the good guy, I want my fellow disillusioned youths to know what that means.

Rebellion means more funds to militarize the police force, and more reasons to call on the national guard to further restrict your rights. Rebellion means for every measly dollar of property damage done during riots in the cities we call home, another public



official either apathetic or openly hostile to our cause gets a seat in government.

Rebellion in this country has always meant bloodshed

2:1 against us.

You’re probably thinking, “Watts, what’s your point?” What are we fighting for, not being gunned down or killed like dogs in the street? That’s not a civil right. It’s a God-given human right. In this country, it’s not the guns killing us en masse; it’s

the butter. The systemic neglect and social apathy for our people over generations are embodied by deaths at the hands of law enforcement, but it’s only one fatal symptom. The Art of War is about misdirection. It is not only the big explosion of the gunshot or gas

Why not manifest this encyclopedia of trauma and rights violations into a minority-owned and administered city-state?

What do we have to lose by constructing and protecting a genuinely safe place for black and brown Americans? Assembling our physical niche and political coalition might be people of colors last chance at overturning generational curses within our communities.

Today the majority complains of minor grievances committed by a few disenfranchised members of a much larger neglected community. However, who petitioned on our behalf for us when their armies burned down Prophetstown or their mobs destroyed the Greenwood District in Tulsa? Where were their tears after countless massacres, forced relocations, or government-sanctioned legal regimes aimed at destabilizing our communities? As chaotic as these events might seem today in an already turbulent election year, this moment is both metaphorically and literally the Calm Before the Storm.

Rather than destroy material things that were never made for us or waiting to reform an irreparable system, let's build our better America today. You see, the things I admire most about those Buffalo Soldiers: courage, class, drive, determination, sacrifice, and vision represent the best of what it means to be an American. Instead of another failed rebellion, let's fight for the first real American Revolution.

Most days after I look at that picture in the morning, I reach into my wallet and study a little card with the Serenity Prayer. "God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference." We can't change our traumatic history, but we must have the courage to transform this movement into something that will transcend both space-time; as well as, the wisdom to redefine a new American dream, reclaim our people's pride, and reward our efforts in the endeavor towards restorative justice.



The digital social justice assembly sponsored by the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call to Moral Revival attracted over 2.5 million Facebook viewers this weekend and resulted in nearly 300,000 letters sent to governors and members of Congress to support a newly released, multi-issue justice platform.

These viewer numbers of the digital Mass Poor People's Assembly and Moral March on Washington on Saturday and Sunday don't include MSNBC's broadcast on YouTube; listeners who tuned in on radio; media outlets that broadcast the program from their online platforms or C-SPAN.

The assembly aired twice on Saturday and once on Sunday.

In addition, 300,000 letters were sent to governors and members of Congress, demanding that they support

the Poor People's Moral Justice Jubilee Policy Platform, released Saturday.

That platform is a sweeping, transformational response to the needs and demands of poor and low-income people in this country. The platform articulates the campaign's policy and legislative priorities around voting rights, police violence, indigenous rights, immigrant rights, education, welfare, jobs, education, housing, water, war, wealth inequality and more.

"We have been investing in punishing the poor; we must now invest in the welfare of all," the letter reads. "When we lift from the bottom, everybody rises."

The assembly — which was held online rather than in person because of COVID-19— was a cementing of a powerful social justice movement for this country,

bringing together people of all races, faiths and sexual orientation to change the government's death-dealing policies to policies of life and to exercise voting power around an agenda based on our deepest moral values.

It focused on the 140 million poor and low-income people in the U.S., or 43% of the country. Some 700 people die each day from poverty, or 250,000 people a year. And those numbers were the reality in the U.S. before the COVID-19 pandemic.

These are people whose votes can change the political calculus of this nation if they cast their ballots. For that to happen, they must hear from politicians who break from the typical narrative where Republicans racialize poverty and Democrats run from the subject.

"Each of you must know that this might be the reason that you were born," Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II, co-chair of the Poor People's Campaign, said during the assembly. "Now might be the moment when you are

called into being. You have waited long for this moment. The ancestors have waited long for this moment. In this fateful hour, your time has finally come."

The Poor People's Campaign centers its demands around the five interlocking injustices of systemic racism, systemic poverty, ecological devastation, the war economy and militarism and a distorted moral narrative of religious nationalism.

"We are gathered today to call for a radical redistribution of political and economic power, a revolution of moral values to demonstrate the power of poor and impacted people banding together, demanding that this country change for the better," Rev. Dr. Liz Theoharis, a campaign co-chair, said during the program.

The campaign is sponsored by Repairers of the Breach, based in Goldsboro, North Carolina, whose president is Rev. Barber, and the Kairos Center for Religions, Rights and Social Justice in New York City, whose director is Rev. Theoharis.

ABOUT OUR PRINCIPLES OUR DEMANDS, Executive Summary

We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish justice, ensure domestic tranquility, provide for the common defense, promote the general welfare, and secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States. (Preamble to the U.S. Constitution)

No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law, nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws. (14th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution)

Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless. What will you do on the day of reckoning, when disaster comes from afar? To whom will you run for help? Where will you leave your riches? (Isaiah 10:1)

From Alaska to Arkansas, the Carolinas to California, Mississippi to Maine, Kansas to Kentucky, the Bronx to the Border, Appalachian hollers to Apache sacred lands, people are coming together to organize their moral outrage against systemic racism, poverty, ecological devastation, militarism and the war economy and the false narrative of religious nationalism into a powerful moral fusion movement. There are 140 million people who are poor and struggling against these injustices in the richest country in the world. A society sick with these interlocking injustices needs a voice rooted in our deepest Constitutional and moral values to remind us of who we are and who we must be.

We know that poverty and inequality kill 250,000 people every year in American and it is still not frontpage news. Alongside these unseen deaths, we have seen more than 130,000 deaths from the novel coronavirus. We have also witnessed the brutal murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, Ahmaud Arbery, Rayshard Brooks and untold others at the hands of state violence. For every day that we choose not to address the five interlocking injustices, there is a death measurement.

In 2018, the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for Moral Revival set forth a comprehensive Moral Agenda based on the needs and demands of the 140 million. For years we have been shifting the narrative and building power among the poor to create a compelling moral force for broad and bold systemic change. On June 20, 2020, millions of people tuned into the [Mass Poor People's Digital Assembly and March on Washington](#) to hear the reality facing the 140 million. Hundreds of thousands of people took action and forwarded these moral policy priorities to Congress and their state governors.

We now launch a Moral Policy Agenda to Heal America: The Poor People's Jubilee Platform. This platform proclaims that moral policy is also economically sound policy, because the 140 million are not only the hope of the poor. The least of these, who are, in actuality, most of us, can lead this country out of the pain we have been suffering. The rejected are leading a moral and economic revival to save the heart and soul of this nation.

Forward together, not one step back!

POET'S CORNER by May F. Reed

A LITTLE GIRL'S THOTS

Its the little girl inside of me that you often
Sometimes see. The little girl inside of me
That shares those kindly smiles of glee.
Its the little girl inside my soul that wonders,
Sings, and bows. The little girl who resides
In me gives most unaware styles.
And one Christmas day shared her speech in
A child's blessed way:

"I'm not too very, very tall, I'm not so big you see,
But Mama says I talk and laugh enough for
Two or three. I wonder if my Daddy
will think of me this way; and presents bring
for two or three when it comes
Christmas Day."

This Christmas twil be most different, most
different than before. But we won't fret or let
old Corona-virus darken our spiritual door.
We'll sing, and pray, and share God's grace this
day; for I think this is what the Lord would
Have 'Us' do and say. And blessings from
Our house to yourn. We'll Sing Hallelujah's for
Our Christ the Savior is Born.

May Reed

Written November 14,
2020



LIFE IS A CLASSROOM

Everyone ought to have
something they truly love
to do that is uplifting,
good, wholesome, fun,
worth while, helpful, ben-
eficial, good and so on,
and so forth, and shoo be
doo be doo -- but too
often this just isn't the
case. Too often we short

change ourselves, but we don't have to. A song I love
to sing goes like this: "I've had my share of life's ups
and downs, oh – but God's been good to me, and the
downs have been few. You might say I've been lucky
– for there's never been a time in my life when He
didn't see me through." The song ends by saying
"Jesus is the best thing that ever happened to me." If
-and-when we come to the realization that Jesus truly

is the best thing to have happened to every one of us
– the classroom of life will then begin to manifest
newness of life that we never before could ever Have
imagined. If reading the Bible is something you don't
or seldom do, it is something that ought to be added
to your daily routine of **Things To Do**: Patience, hu-
mility, integrity, insight and more can be yours, but
which without God's Word may never be made aware
of in one's heart/mind. The Word says "by their
fruits you shall know them." (Matt. 7:20) "The fruit of
the spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness,
goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.
Against such there is no law." (Gal. 5:22-23) OPEN
THE BOOK, open your heart, your mind. Open your
world to a better, bigger, bolder, kinder, lovelier, hap-
pier and harmonious life. PRAY, READ, THEN PRAY
SOME MORE.

A BRAVE FOOL

A rural Postal Carrier in England, who covered his
route on foot, always cut through the fields from one
village to the next. One day he was seen climbing a
fence and starting for the far side of a large field,
when an enormous bull charged toward him. By the
time he reached the fence on the far side, the bull
was at his heels. The postman hurled his bag across
the fence, then threw himself over the rails, landing
in a heap on the ground just out of reach of the ani-
mal. He laid still for a few moments, trembling - cold
sweat on his brow, his eyes closed, he uttered moans.
The stranger who had witnessed the excitement,
called out, "HE ALMOST GOT YOU THAT TIME!"
"RIGHT" replied the postman. "HE ALMOST GETS ME
EVERY TIME." *Otto Herliger*



"...GOLD, FRANKINCENSE AND MYRRH?... I BET HE REALLY
WANTED A PUPPY."

FROM CYNTHIA'S PEN By Cynhia Hibbler

"Twas Sunday, Christmas Day"

by Cynthia Hibbler 2019 (Final edit)

Another rendition of the great classic "Twas the Night Before Christmas" by Clement Clark Moore, published in 1823

Twas Sunday, the Twenty-Fifth of December, Christmas Day,

White snowflakes were sailing in a sky of dark gray.
Not a creature was stirring throughout the house,
Not even a little brown Christmas calendar mouse.
Husband was getting ready to retrieve the church van,
To pick up Tony and Amy as quickly as he can.
The Santa stockings and candy cane trimmings were not

On the fireplace mantle with a mini Grandfather clock.
Neither Hallmark ornaments on a DIY ladder Christmas tree,

Or the aroma of sweet potato pie and *O Come Ye Faithful* music to be.

Our adult daughters were asleep in their adult homes,
in their adult size beds,

Do they remember tossing snowmen wrapping paper looking for pink sleds?

Husband's bumpy movements and kiss woke me up from a long winter's nap,

Jumping up quickly, I put my *Bring to the King* gift in a church envelope. Snap!!!

It was placed in my purse while decaf coffee and a breakfast meal was prepared,

For a brief moment, with moist eyes of thanksgiving, at a cream wall I stared.

It swelled with grandparents, mom, dad, sister gone, joyful Christmas past,

Twenty-Fifth days full of laughter, cracking nuts, and molten pine fragrant wax.

Then out on the circular driveway there arose sounds of *clip clop clip clop* clatter,
Lifting a blind leaf, looking around I ask "What is that noise? What is the matter?"

Through the light snow fall, I saw the announcing radiant light of a Chosen Star,
The celestial wonder revealed Star Gazers with camels that have traveled from afar.

The camels wore majestic cloth and were laden with gold, frankincense and myrrh,

A Magi peeked at me through a dining room window wearing rare jewels and real fur.

I ran to open the door, he said to me in my colorful African 'kerchief,
"Come with us. Need not worry. Your warm cozy house will keep".

With great anticipation I stepped out on the glistening snow covered porch,
I knew something was going to change the heaven and earth's course.

Humbly I bow to the kings who represented the nations

"Come with us on a journey to celebrate the Lord of lords, King of kings, birth"

In reply I said "I am not worthy to see a Prime Minister, a Queen or a Newborn King,
No proper clothes to wear or a proper gift to give, not one acceptable thing"

The heavy moon shed a light of encouragement on me and said "Go with them"

I was given an elegant warm robe and mittens with white faux fur trim,

Then quickly I grabbed an Amazon box from the doorway with a gallant whim.

I joined the procession with an ornate African designer hat and silver flashing UGG,

"Amazing! They are the right shoe size! Thank you" I said. I felt grateful and snug.

The long strides of the camels followed the star to take us from the cold Indiana morn,

To Bethlehem, a warmer place where a long awaited, spoken of old, baby was born.

The heavy moon swath a son and his family with tender light in a safe dry barn,

His temporary home with animals did not have stringed popcorn or bells to adorn.

The Wise Men stepped forward to give precious gifts to Jesus the newborn King of kings,
Angels sung heavenly songs as they fluttered pleasant air into the barn with their wings.

Smiling at Jesus, I walked forward to greet him with a brown amused cardboard box,

Inside was a hummingbird feeder, clear sugar water and a white finch seed sock.

His gifts were assembled and hung on a shepherd staff next to his bed, a manager,



Hummingbirds and Yellow Finches came to sip and eat without fear or danger.
 They danced around Jesus the Mighty King of Forever, the lowly Christ Child,
 The babe's joy was full of spittle and wiggly giggles:
 The Holy One meek and mild.
 The birds swirled around Him from the ceiling to the floor in a want to win, competitive race,
 A grin appeared under His rosy cheeks, curly wisps of hair waved above his cute round face.

Jesus' happy swatting arms and waving legs gave way to a whimper, an exhausted cry,
 Mary whispered "Sweet Jesus is hungry and he is sleepy too. It is time to say goodbye"
 I began to sing a lullaby to her baby, "*Silent Night Holy Night*", softly and bright,
 Mounting a camel it whisked me away to my still asleep porch blanketed in white.
 Much to my surprise Michele, my neighbor, had given me a gorgeous floral Christmas *Posh Pot*,
 Filled with evergreen branches and decorations, found in prestigious magazines. Well sought.
 Through the door I walked. There were no gold garland or blinking lights in the house,
 "I have seen the Holy Baby Boy and sang with the angelic choir little calendar mouse!"

Aloud I spoke wearing my familiar frumpy blue gingham house robe and worn slippers of red,
 A simply African motif kerchief was wrapped around the burnt red twisty braids on my head.

Silent Night Holy Night, round yon virgin Mother and Child, I sang next to the hearth,
 of the earth,

While splashing water, *Go Tell It on the Mountain... Ev'rywhere* music was in my lifted heart.

Festive red and green clothes embraced my body humming *Joy to the World, O Holy Night*,
 I sang *The First Noel* gathering my coat, keys and purse to attend church. All was just right.

"Merry Christmas" rung out the Wise Men and the helpful heavy moon on that perfect day,
 "Jesus has come to bring joy, peace, forgiveness of sin, to wipe every tear and sorrow away"

"Merry Christmas" I bellowed to everyone as I drove to church on that precious Holy morn,

"And

I have More Great News! Jesus has come to live in us.

Jubilance is here! Be not sad or forlorn.

The Son of God, Savior of the World, is born!"

Citing

"Twas the Night Before Christmas", Clement Clark Moore 1823
 Poetry Foundation 2020

www.poetryfoundation.org

LET'S STRETCH

by

Ruth P. Hobbs,

Grapevine Board Member Emerita October 2020

Whenever we plan an active exercise program, it is advisable to stretch a bit: to warm up as we prepare for a productive work-out.

The following STRETCH acrostic can prepare us and warm us up for a productive day as we become more and more like Christ in the midst of all the challenges of 2020...

S how your love through actions;
T rust in the Lord, and he will take care of you;
R emember each day may not be pleasant;
E ach day is designed by you:
T eaching goes a long way through actions;
C ultivate a habit of kindness; and
H old to God's unchanging hand.

CONGRATULATIONS JAIDEN HUGHES



Congratulations to 16 year old Jaiden Hughes on his first solo flight as an aircraft pilot. Jaiden is a member of Light of the World Christian Church, and a senior at Brebeuf High School, Indianapolis, Indiana. Let us pray for God to bless and protect Jaiden as he continues to grow as a Christian and progress in the field of aviation.

The Rev. Dr. Samuel Joseph Murray, former Airforce pilot and flight instructor, was Jaiden's coach.

FOR WHOM THE BELL TOLLS

REV. DWIGHT ELTON BAILEY



Dwight Elton Bailey was born on January 28, 1952 to Henry and Mary (Powell) Bailey in Wilson, North Carolina. He grew up in the Pentecostal Church and became a Christian while in elementary school. He graduated from Atlantic Christian College (now Barton College) in 1973 with majors in Religion and Philosophy. While there, he became in-

trigued with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the openness and welcome he found. Intending to pursue further study in philosophy, Dwight explored continuing his education at Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University. It was at Brite that he grew to love the Church and its mission to reach each generation and accepted his call to ministry. Completing his seminary work, he was ordained in the Southwest Region of the Christian Church (DOC) at Greenville Avenue Christian Church in Dallas, TX on July 25, 1976. Rev. Bailey lived a life of commitment to God's work in and outside of the church. He received further training at Xavier University Seminary in Cincinnati, OH focusing on teaching adults. Over the last four and a half decades, Rev. Bailey gave his life to serve for the building of the Kingdom. After an extended illness, God called His servant home to rest on Thursday morning, September 17, 2020.

Ministering through the local, Regional, and General expressions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) denomination, Rev. Bailey's was able to nurture God's people through campus ministries, pastoral and interim congregational ministry, the Disciples Anti-Racism/Pro-Reconciliation mission initiative, and ecumenical ministries. Rev. Bailey served congregations throughout Texas, Kansas, and Illinois. He also served at Ballard Community College in Lawrence, Kansas from 1977 to 1978, and Campus Ministry from 1985-1990 at United Ministries Higher Education in Austin, Texas (The University of Texas/Huston-Tillotson College Minority Ministry) and United Campus Minister for Illinois State University and Illinois Wesleyan University, 1979-1984.

Rev. Bailey served as Associate Regional Minister, Chicago Disciple Union, and Christian Church in Illinois/Wisconsin from 1991-2000 in a pastoral oversight role for the Chicago, Northern Illinois and Wisconsin churches. In 2000, he resigned from his position in Illinois/Wisconsin and moved back to Wilson, NC to care for his ailing mother. After his mother's death, Rev. Bailey returned to his home in River Forest (Chicago suburb) and became Co-Pastor at the Austin Boulevard Christian Church in Oak Park, IL, and later as Pastor until the congregation closed in December 2011. He did interim ministry at First Christian, Princeton, IL and Grace Community Church, Aurora, IL. In both places his presence brought healing and encouragement. He kindly gave each permission to change and to relate to their communities in transforming ways

CHADWICK BOSEMAN

Purpose crosses disciplines. Purpose is an essential element of you. It is the reason you are on the planet at this particular time in history. Whatever you choose as a career path, remember the struggles along the way are only meant to shape you for your purpose."



Chadwick Boseman was an accomplished actor and advocate who passed recently. His films include his portrayals of Jackie Robinson, Thurgood Marshall and James Brown. However, his best known role is probably his portrayal of the Black Panther from the Marvel film series. This was an excerpt from a commencement address given by Boseman at Howard University.

I am grateful for his life and legacy that extended beyond the screen into the community where he volunteered and served. These words reminded me of the importance of remembering our purpose on this planet at this particular time in history. In the midst of everything that is happening, we're still called to be

the Church and share the light of Christ in our community and world in tangible ways.

The recent issue of Constant Contact includes examples on how ministries are fulfilling their purpose. It includes an article on how New Covenant Christian Church hosted a CommUnity Day that ministered to over 175 local families. The Church donated food baskets, gift cards, household supplies and over 100 backpacks filled with school supplies. This project was one of the recipients of the 2020 DHM Black Leadership Project Grant.

We are grateful for the multiple and creative ways that the ministries of Disciples Home Missions are fulfilling their purpose at this particular time in our history. During his speech, Boseman quoted Jeremiah 29:11 – “For I know the plans that I have for you, says the Lord, plans for peace and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.” Let’s remember our purpose and encourage ourselves and each other in tangible ways.

Blessed to be a blessing to you,

Rev. Sheila P. Spencer

Interim President, Disciples Home Missions

DELBERT MURRAY CROCKER



Delbert Murray Crocker, age 81, of Nashville, IN passed away Thursday (09/03/2020). Born May 4, 1939 in Freeport, Nova Scotia, he was the son of Egbert and Evelyn (Finigan) Crocker. He received his Bachelors of Business Degree at Acadia University in Wolfville, NS, he studied Real Estate and Law at St.

Mary's University in Halifax, NS, and studied Non-profit Organizational Management at the University of Wisconsin. After college, Delbert worked for the Bank of Nova Scotia and Eastern Canada Savings and Loan.

In 1967, he moved to the United State and accepted a position with Church Extension in Indianapolis, IN. In his early years with Church Extension he led the staff in converting to a computer system to handle loans and investments. This work launched Discipeldata, Inc. where he became the Chief Executive

Officer and was eventually named President of Discipeldata, Inc in 1974. He retired on January 31, 2005.

After moving to Indianapolis he joined a few church congregations. He was a lead member of the chancel choirs in all the churches he attended, attesting to the fact that music played an important role in his life. In 2002, he became a member of the historic downtown Central Christian Church in Indianapolis and remained a member until his death. He worked in the free clothing ministry there as well as on building maintenance, and gladly accepted various leadership positions in the church. In addition, he was active in the Indianapolis community. Delbert served as president of the Indianapolis YMCA (Eastside Branch) and as a board member of Robin Run Village.

After retiring, he and his wife, Phyllis, built a home in Nashville, IN in 2006. While living in Nashville, Delbert continued to be active in his community serving as treasurer of the Brown County Habitat for Humanity, he was active with the Brown County Lions Club along with the Brown County Woodworkers Club.

THEO GIPSON

The Gipson-Calhoun family is deeply saddened by the passing of Theo Gipson of Houston, Texas a life-long Disciple and long-time member and Elder of both Bellaire and Bethany Christian Churches. Theo transitioned from this life at his home on Monday afternoon, October 26th. Theo was 94 years of age. Theo Gipson is survived by his spouse Rev. Virgie L. Calhoun Gipson, one surviving son, Ricky Gipson and three stepchildren, Warren W. Calhoun, Rev. Dr. R. Wayne Calhoun, Sr. and Dawn Y. Calhoun as well as several grandchildren and great grandchildren. The Gipson's are members of Bethany Christian Church in Houston, Texas. A memorial service for Theo will be held at Bethany Christian Church at a later date due to Corvid 19 concerns at this time.

REV. GILBERT GUIDRY, JR.



Gilbert Guidry Jr. was born to Leola and Gilbert Guidry Sr. on July 20, 1954 in Lafayette, Louisiana. Affectionately known as “June”, he was raised in Baton Rouge, LA along with his four siblings.

After graduating from Capitol High School in 1973, he joined the U.S. Army

where he served in Fort Hood, Texas, Korea and Fort Sill, Oklahoma. It was in Texas that he met his long-time wife Charlotte Guidry. The two married on April 26, 1975 and welcomed their first child Gilbert Guidry III while he was stationed in Korea in 1977.

Gilbert left the military in 1979 and the couple moved to Dallas, TX where he started work as a parts-man for several companies. It was at Cook Paint that he met Rev. Larry Stanley, his life-long friend and "Father in Gospel." After relinquishing to one of Rev. Stanley's many invites to visit his church, Gilbert and Charlotte were moved to join and re-establish their faith on their very first visit. Soon after he was called to ministry and preached his first sermon at Puget Street Christian Church. He also welcomed his second son Raymond Guidry during this time.

He went on to become Senior Pastor at Cedar Grove Christian Church in Rockwall, TX where the Guidry's welcomed their final child Brandon Guidry. He continued his ministry at two additional churches over the years: Bonnie View Christian Church in Dallas, TX and New Vision Christian Church in Fort Worth, TX. Over his ministry he counseled, comforted and mentored many as well as serving a stint as District II Texas Christian Missionary Fellowship (TCMF) President.

Outside of ministry, he enjoyed fishing (a past-time inherited from his father), watching sports and having a good time at family gatherings. He moved back to Baton Rouge in 2019 to be closer to his mother and siblings. He was called home to be with the Lord on Tuesday, September 29, 2020.

THE REV. DR. TOUSSAINT KING HILL, JR.



Dr. Toussaint King Hill, Jr. was born in Detroit, Michigan, the only child of Nella Mae Hill and Rev. Toussaint King Hill, Sr. A pastor, counselor, professional speaker, administrator and education specialist with extensive senior level advisory, organizational leadership, fund-

ing and graduate level teaching experience,

I loved Toussaint because my sister loved him, and it was so clear that he loved her. He meant a lot to so many, but he was my brother-in-love, as he always

called me sister-in-love.

I'll let her words speak...please keep our family in your prayers.

From Laurel Hord Hill:

He never wanted me, or anyone for that matter, to post a picture of him on Facebook. I'm not a frequent Facebook poster, but periodically, when I would see others post his photo, I would tell him and sometimes they got some "feedback." Lol.

But, today is different. My husband, the Rev. Dr. Toussaint King Hill, Jr. went to be with the Lord yesterday morning after a long battle with cancer. And so while he remains with me in my spirit and soul, he is no longer here to give me verbal feedback about this action and so I proceed.

The fact of the matter is we shared a deep and abiding love. Our souls connected so quickly when we met and we have had a beautiful, loving, fun and crazy life together. I thank God for giving me this life with him, for showing me that it was possible to have an amazing love filled with respect, honor, consistency and steadfastness of commitment. I thank God for giving me the strength of mind, body and spirit to support him in his cancer battle, the way HE wanted to be supported, which was in private. And, so, we ran that race together, we fought that battle hand-in-hand, and God permitted my name to literally be the last name he called out to and the last one to hear his final breath.

To God be the Glory. Great things HE has done.

SELLARS HOLLAND



Sellars Holland was born October 31, 1934, in Tallassee, Alabama, to Roosevelt and Eliza M. Holland. Mr. Holland passed away October 22, 2020, age 85. He was preceded in death by his loving wife Mary A. Holland. He leaves to cherish his memory his daughter Terri A.H. Hill (Martin), one brother Tucker Holland (Alfreda), one sister Glennie H. Sykes, one grandson Martin Hill, II, and a host of nieces, nephews, other relatives and many friends.

MARY LOU ANNA LINHARDT



Mary Lou Anna Linhardt, 94, died peacefully September 10, 2020 at Azalea Hills Assisted Living, Floyds Knobs, IN. She was born August 15, 1926 in Dale, IN. She was the daughter of John G. and Emma (Tormohlen) Linhardt.

Mary Lou graduated from Dale High School, class of 1944. Following graduation, she

moved to Indianapolis. She worked for many years at Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) headquarters in Indianapolis. She was a member of Irvington Presbyterian Church for over 70 years. She loved singing and music and was a band member at New Horizons Band until she was 90.

REV. DR. WILLIAM THOMAS, JR.



Rev. Dr. William "Bill" Thomas Jr. passed on Saturday, November 14, after battling a series of health issues. Bill most recently served as the Senior Pastor for Little White Chapel in Burbank and has been a beloved leader in the Pacific Southwest Region for over 35 years. Bill was born in Ohio and comes

from a long line of Disciples of Christ generations. His ministry began at the young age of 16, when he became the choir director and organist of his church in Woodland, Ohio. For decades, Bill continued to provide musical leadership for churches from New York to California, and served as a music leader for General Assemblies throughout the late 90s and 2000s.

Bill has been an integral part of the Pacific Southwest Region (PSWR) since 1986, when he became the organist for 30th Street Christian Church in Los Angeles. Shortly after that, he served as the Director of Music for Church of the Valley for over a decade be-

fore receiving a pastoral call from Little White Chapel. His leadership within the PSWR was not just limited to music, as he also served on the Regional Board and spearheaded a few of our recent Regional Assemblies/Gatherings. Bill is also widely known throughout the Claremont School of Theology community due to the years he spent in seminary and earning his doctorate degree.

Outside of church, Bill spent a number of years performing on Broadway before heading to Los Angeles, where he worked in the TV and film industry. He can be seen in the movie "Bruce Almighty" and in several episodes of "The Cosby Show."

Bill is survived by his husband Rev. Dr. Michael Kosik, who is the pastor of Church of the Valley and Little Brown Church.

JARVIS CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

The Clinton Foundation recently announced the recipients of the Clinton Global Initiative University (CGI U) COVID-19 Student Action Fund, providing \$100,000 to student projects to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. The Student Action Fund is funded by Founding Partner, Kevin Xu, and the colleges and universities that comprise the CGI University Network.

Working within the CGI U Commitment to Action model, this fund is geared towards 38 innovative social impact projects addressing the public health, economic, and societal impacts of the novel coronavirus — with commitments ranging from infectious disease monitoring and response systems; social enterprises; awareness and prevention campaigns; and other emergency response initiatives to providing immediate support for public health practitioners and other essential workers on the frontlines.

The fund provides \$100,000 in total to select students at universities around the world, with each grant awarded ranging up to \$5,000. The Action Fund was first announced by President Bill Clinton during the 2020 CGI U At Home virtual event, which featured conversations with national and international government and public health leaders. The 38 recipients of this award represent 12 countries and 29 institutions of higher learning. Jarvis Christian College was one of those institutions of higher learning receiving the grant.

THE OLDTIMERS' GRAPEVINE

Dear Friend and Reader of the Oldtimers' Grapevine:
The board and staff hope that you enjoy reading every edition of our newsletter. It is a labor of love by those who produce it, write for it, and the board that oversees its realization. We are forever grateful for the saints like Dr. William Fox and Oscar Haynes who worked tirelessly to make sure this free publication is available to anyone who desires to receive it. Of course, there is a cost to produce the Grapevine,

but ongoing donations from many faithful donors assure the Grapevine is available to all. The board and staff want to give you the opportunity to provide your own support—at whatever level—to make sure this important newsletter continues.

Would you please take a moment to consider a gift? And will you please let us know of other ways you might be willing to support the Grapevine? Thank you in advance!

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I have enclosed my donation \$15 _____ \$20 _____ \$25 _____ \$30 _____ Other _____

I hope to make this a: _____ monthly _____ quarterly _____ annual donation.

This gift is in memory of _____ in honor of _____.

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_____ I am interested in remembering the Oldtimers' Grapevine in my will or estate plan.

Please send this form and your donation to:

The Oldtimers' Grapevine, ATTN: Treasurer

PO Box 441695, Indianapolis, IN 46244

For inquiries please contact us at oldtimers.grapevine@gmail.com

The OLDTIMERS' GRAPEVINE

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OLDTIMERS' GRAPEVINE is a free print and electronic ministry published three times a year through tax exempt donations. The ministry networks Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) seasoned pilgrims by: 1) enhancement of communication and sharing of mutual experiences; 2) conveying a holistic view of aging and health; 3) being an advocate for seniors to become a supportive, loving and caring community; 4) giving honor and dignity to the lives of those included in "For Whom The Bell Tolls"; and 5) highlighting opportunities for the maintenance of a high quality life style and service in retirement. We are enabled by the vision of our founder and publisher/executive editor emeritus; and servants ordered as Board of Directors, administration and editorial staff.

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