

# The Oldtimers' Grapevine

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SUMMER EDITION

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## In Celebration Of...

by Dr. Norma Ellington-Twitty



How It Feels to Receive an Honorary Degree  
John R. Foulkes, Publisher/Executive Editor Emeritus

On May 21, 2022, the Reverend Dr. John Richard Foulkes, Sr., beloved Publisher/Executive Editor Emeritus of **The Oldtimers' Grapevine**, received an Honorary Doctor of Divinity Degree from Christian Theological Seminary (CTS) in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Dr. Leah Gunning Francis, CTS Vice President for Academic Affairs and Dean of the Faculty remarked, *"We are delighted to honor Rev. Dr. Foulkes, who has provided exemplary leadership to the church and the academy. We are ever grateful for Rev. Dr. Foulkes' life of service to the local church, the broader community, and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)."*

John, who epitomizes servant leadership, described being very touched by the CTS installation ceremony. He was introduced by Dick Hamm, who began his introduction with John's own description of his early life saying he lived in a family that was an *"oasis of love...in the midst of an environment that required excellence."*

Dick described John as a friend and an invaluable partner who helped him deal with his own racism and one who provided concrete insights for systemic change needed for the church to become the

antiracist, inclusive, and affirming body Christ calls it to be.

For ten years John and Dick worked together; with John serving as Associate General Minister and Vice President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and Administrative Secretary of the National Convocation and Dick serving as General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). John would add to both these titles: *"in the United States and Canada."* Together, John and Dick were a powerful force for individual and system change, on the denomination's difficult journey to become an antiracist and pro-reconciling church where all are treated fairly.

In his remarks, Dick acknowledged the loss of John's beloved wife, Marilyn L. Foulkes, in December 2021. He also indicated that the ceremony includes and honors her because John wore the stole Marilyn made for him, as well as other leaders of the National Convocation. And, as Dick proudly added, *"She made one for me."* John and Marilyn's friends, colleagues, and family members attended the ceremony; sharing their love, support, and evoking Marilyn's presence as well.

(continues on next page)



## Celebrating Dr. Foulkes... (Cont'd.)

Once Dick completed his introduction and presented John as a candidate for the honorary degree, CTS President, David M. Mellot, Ph.D., conferred the degree. John described his words as the "icing on the cake." Dr. Mellot stated, "On behalf of the Board of Trustees and by the authority vested in me, I hereby confer on you, Rev. Dr. John Richard Foulkes, Sr., the Doctor of Divinity Degree, with all the rights and privileges, responsibilities pertaining there to. We invest you with a hood for this degree. Congratulations."

John described being touched deeply by the tribute from Rev. Teresa "Terri" Hord Owens, General Minister and President, who sent a written tribute, which he cherishes. Her message said, in part: "Dr. Foulkes, you have offered the best of yourself in many ways... You have stood for truth and right when others would have preferred that you just take a seat. You have continued to pour into the lives of many, like myself, whose ministries are enriched and empowered because you have helped to educate us, equipping us with the power of history and self-worth. Your story now continues from this momentous milestone, reminding us all of your faithfulness to God, and your love for the church of Jesus Christ."

In talking with John about the significance of this honor from CTS, he used the word "awesome." For a person who has loved and served the church for most of his career and during retirement, John was humbled that the larger church saw his ministry as impactful and significant. Although John loves the church deeply, he also struggles with frustration and sadness when the church fails to measure up to its calling. The honor doesn't take away this struggle; however, it does help him realize the significance of his ministry and the importance of "doing what you can for Christ, for as long as you can" and letting the good Lord take care of those countless miles the church still has to go; before it can become the pro-reconciling, antiracist institution he and Dick sought to change so many years ago.

As an octogenarian, John continues in service to the church. His titles and connections to the denomination include: Secretary Emeritus of the National Convocation and Trustee Emeritus of the National Christian Missionary Convention's Black Disciples Endowment Fund. He now serves as Senior Consultant for GWD Ministries, a ministry designed to enable other Christian ministries in achieving their mission. John is a member of Light of the World Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

For the newly minted Doctor of Divinity, our prayer is that John's love of the church and its people continues to strengthen him and inspire us all to higher and higher levels of loving service.

On behalf of the Grapevine board, staff, and readership:

**We celebrate YOU - Reverend Dr. John Richard Foulkes, Sr.!**

### **OLDTIMERS' GRAPEVINE SEEKS NEW EDITOR**

With the retirement of Rev. Dr. John R. Foulkes, *The Oldtimers' Grapevine* Board of Directors is seeking a Managing Editor.

In its 31 years, the newsletter has been blessed to have had only three editors leading this ministry.

Applicants are encouraged to apply to the announcement below.

*The Oldtimers' Grapevine* newsletter, a nonprofit ministry, is seeking a Managing Editor to serve as the editor and administrator. The Oldtimers' Grapevine newsletter is a publication that seeks to minister to the needs of retirees and older adults affiliated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The newsletter is currently published three times per year. The position requires experience editing and publishing newsletters or similar periodicals. Applicants must also have administrative management experience. Applicants should understand and identify with the mission of the Oldtimers' Grapevine and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Information on the newsletter can be found using this link: [Oldtimers' Grapevine Info Sheets](https://bit.ly/3Rr4BtX) <https://bit.ly/3Rr4BtX>

The Position Description can be found at the following link: [Managing Editor - Position Description](https://bit.ly/3uJr0Jc) <https://bit.ly/3uJr0Jc>

The most recent issue of the newsletter can viewed here: [Oldtimers' Grapevine Newsletter - Spring Issue](https://bit.ly/3AQ3fmR) <https://bit.ly/3AQ3fmR>

This is not a full-time salaried position. Deadline for Applications is July 30, 2022. Resumes and any questions should be directed to:

Katherine Fox-Cunningham, Chairperson

OTG Search Committee

[oldtimersgrapevine1991@gmail.com](mailto:oldtimersgrapevine1991@gmail.com)

(844) 462-6246 Ext.700



## Letter From The Board President

# Together in Ministry - Let's Grow the Vine!

Dear Beloved Grapevine Readers,

The Grapevine Board recently had a successful planning retreat which reminded us why *The Oldtimers' Grapevine* is unique and worth preserving:

- More than a newsletter, it is a ministry of fellowship, connection, and Christian community for our beloved denomination retirees.
- Although for and about denomination retirees, it is an independent publication and not a part of the formal denomination structure or funding process.
- Per the founder and the Grapevine board: since its beginning 31 years ago, the Grapevine is fully supported and will continue to be supported by the free will donations of readers.
- It shines as a special beacon of light and a voice for African American disciples.
- It enables us to live out our oneness in Christ, as reflected in the diversity of its readership, newsletter content, board leadership, and editorial staff.

On one hand, many faithful readers and supporters appreciate the Grapevine's unique history and consider the ministry a **"treasured resource."** While on the other, we have discovered as a result of the recent Fund Drive, that there are new Grapevine readers and supporters who describe the Grapevine as a **"hidden treasure."**

### TREASURED RESOURCE OR HIDDEN TREASURE?

To some we are a treasured resource, while too many others view us as a hidden treasure. Is this a problem? Or is this an opportunity for the Grapevine to move boldly forward and share this treasured resource? Is this the moment to expand and enlarge the Grapevine family – to **Grow the Vine?** Is now the time to move from "hidden treasure" to "treasured resource" for congregation members, younger retirees, young people who don't know our history, as well as friends and family of current readers?

It is a ambitious assignment, but the board has decided it is worth the effort. By Growing the Vine, more members of the denomination will be blessed by this treasured resource and more supporters will have an opportunity to invest in the Grapevine's future. We have a rich 31 year legacy and now have an opportunity to create a bright and secure future for our beloved Grapevine by growing the Grapevine family, increasing our financial support of day-to-day operations, and expanding Newsletter content.

In order to succeed, we invite you, our faithful supporters to join us because **YOU Keep US Growing!** We look forward to hearing from you!

Your Sister In Christ,  
Dr. Norma Ellington-Twitty  
Board President

Together in ministry - Let's Grow the Vine!

Share a copy of the Grapevine with a prospective reader and share your personal testimony about what the Grapevine (and the denomination) mean to you. Encourage the new reader to support the publication with an Annual Fund gift, as you have done.

Make a generous Annual Fund donation in support of upgrading and modernizing Grapevine operations and ensuring the newsletter's production and efficient distribution.

Share your personal experiences with the Grapevine. Our stories can inspire, connect, and educate others, making our senior network a reality. In this issue, the "In Touch" James Brothers Retirement story is a good example of what we'd love to see more of in our articles.

**Why not share YOUR story?**

#### Contact us!

P.O. Box 441695  
Indianapolis, IN 46244  
oldtimers.grapevine@gmail.com

# Celebrating Aging and Continuing Service

## Eighty Eighty Plus Class of 2022

*They will still bear fruit in old age, they will stay fresh and green, proclaiming, "The Lord is upright; he is my Rock..."*  
-Psalm 92:14 (NIV)

As a ministry that promotes connection, fellowship, and Christian community for retirees, the Grapevine is all about celebrating servant leaders. For too many people in our youth oriented society, being over 80 is equated with decline, lowered capacity, and limited activity or usefulness. **"Eighty Eighty Plus"** was introduced in the 30th Anniversary February 2021 issue of the newsletter. The program counters this stereotype of aging by celebrating servant leaders, 80 years and older, who are actively involved in ministry at the local, regional, or national levels of the denomination. There were three octogenarians inducted into the 2021 Class: Ruth P. Hobbs, John R. Foulkes and Claude Maples.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, we are pleased to introduce four members of the 2022 Eighty Eighty Plus Class. The class is so large, we will introduce the remaining members in the Fall Issue of the Grapevine. By sharing class profiles, we hope to provide our readers with a positive image of aging gracefully and continuing in service, in His name. This picture of aging can inspire and provide a sense of connection with fellow seniors around the country many of whom are aging gracefully and serving with little fanfare or recognition. The Eighty Eighty Plus Recognition Program gives us all a chance to say, "Thank you" and "Well done faithful servant" to our beloved seniors: recognized and unrecognized.

### EIGHTY EIGHTY PLUS 2022 CLASS PROFILES



#### **Jacquelyn G. Dyer, St. Louis, Missouri**

She celebrated her 90th birthday on June 13, 2022 with friends. After watching "The Lion King" play, she enjoyed a birthday party she described as one of the best birthday celebrations ever. If this sounds like an ambitious day for a nonagenarian - please meet Jacquelyn G. Dyer, who leads an active life when it comes to both recreation and Christian service!

Grapevine board member and fellow church member, Patricia Clark, described her reason for referring Ms. Dyer: *"Her service spirit. Her faithfulness in committing to a wide variety of ministries in the church and community, even though she was approaching 90. Even during the Covid years, Jackie continued 'in-person service' at the church. She faithfully checked folks in for the Lighthouse Luncheons that the church distributed on Wednesday and Friday. She showed no fear of getting Covid."*

Ms. Dyer has been an active member of Centennial Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), St. Louis, Missouri, for more than 35 years. She serves on the Executive Board and chairs the Outreach and Scholarship Committees. She facilitates the annual back-to-school community party and has served as coordinator of the congregation's Health Ministry for more than 20 years. For ten years she has served as church liaison to the Alzheimer's Association. Ms. Dyer is an usher and sings tenor in the Gospel Choir. Pastor Derrick Perkins is inspired by her energy, her commitment to supporting the underserved, and her openness to "do a new thing."

Ms. Dyer proudly shared that she has been a member of the Phyllis Wheatly YWCA Administration Committee for 50 years; the only remaining committee of its kind in the "Y" system. She confided, *"They don't know what to do with us."*

A retired educator, Ms. Dyer was certified in Special Education, Gifted Education, and Education Administration. She also served as a consultant to new teachers. She was honored for her service to Local 420 of the Teachers Union and named Teacher of the Year, St. Louis Public Schools. She was also recognized as a 60-year member of the Delta Sigma Theta, Inc. sorority.

Jackie names her mother, grandmother, and father as the greatest influences on her life as a Christian. To encourage our readers she advises: *"Take care of your health, enjoy your friends, be kind to others and by all means stay informed and involved and try to have an understanding heart. Show your gratitude to God daily."*



#### **Elder Brenda Clark Mikota, Portland, Oregon**

It is often said that family is everything. And when a younger sibling looks up to a big sister with sincere admiration and appreciation because of who she is and what she does, it's a beautiful sight to behold. This is the mental picture you get when Patricia Clark talks about her big sister, Brenda Clark Mikota. You see, Patricia nominated Brenda to be honored and included in the 2022 class of Eighty Eighty Plus.

Patricia raved about Brenda and the fact that she is an outstanding musician who, at the age of 14, was already playing the piano for her local Disciples of Christ home church and a Catholic church in the Cleveland, Ohio area. As a classically trained pianist, Brenda can read music and she is blessed to play by ear as well. As the Clark sisters grew up, their father insisted the family support Brenda's every program/recital with great love, pride, and enthusiasm.

Rev. Cynthia McBride of First Christian Church in Portland, Oregon was happy to offer tidbits of glowing information about Brenda as a church member, elder, board member, weekly volunteer, choir member, bell choir member, and leader of the Anti-Racism/Pro-Reconciliation Program for the region. She added that, *"Brenda is a wonderful blessing and a bright light to First Christian Church."*

Brenda earned a Bachelor of Science degree in music and was certified to teach K-12. Her career choice, however, was at Ohio Bell Telephone Company where she became a department manager.

Brenda's greatest joy in life comes in looking at bodies of water, including waterfalls, rivers, streams, creeks, and fountains. Each morning as she awakens, she thanks God for another day to be of service. She is a very active lady who does a lot for her church and she still has found time to take part in and be awarded recognition in AARP, Urban League, and Meals on Wheels. She loves finding time to play the piano, travel, read humorous romance novels, listen to live music, and be fit.

Brenda credits her faithful Disciple mother for being the major influence in her life. Romans 12 reminds Brenda of how to be of service and how to relate to herself and to others. To encourage Grapevine readers, Brenda says, *"Take care of your health. Body and mind are important. If you do not take care, you will be able to do nothing else."*

*(Class of 2022 Profiles continue on next page)*

## Class Profiles... (Cont'd.)



### Norweida Spencer, Shreveport, Louisiana

We all look forward to retiring from our job at the appointed time; however Norweida A. Rayford Spencer, faithful board member, reminds us that when retirement occurs, *"You don't get to retire as a Christian."* This is not just a slogan for her. Christian service is a call to action - a way of life, a lifetime of her sharing her love for Christ, family, and the people of God. According to Norweida, *"I believe that I was*

*created to be in right relationship with God and service to others."*

Although Norweida takes pride in her past accomplishments, and she has an extensive record of service to the denomination at all levels, the most important thing to her now is finding new opportunities for service. She is a member of Central Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Shreveport, Louisiana. She recently moved from a lifetime in Jackson, Mississippi where she was an active member of United Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for 56 years.

Norweida's move to her new home resulted from a love story that culminated in marriage. Her brief membership at Central *"has allowed me to serve as Program Chair, Worship Leader, Elder, Substitute Sunday School teacher and CWF President."* Quite a record for a "new" member!

Norweida's spiritual journey has been greatly influenced by Philippians 4:13 (KJV) *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."* Two strong women have been the greatest influence in her Christian journey. Mrs. Esther Taylor Rayford, her mother, whom she describes as, *"A hard working, well educated Christian LADY who required my best in all things. I admired her struggle to accomplish great things in spite of race, age, and the fact she had a family while she finished college."* Norweida also credits Mrs. Ruth Powell Hobbs, Grapevine Board Member, Emerita, for her mentorship. She challenged Norweida to follow in her footsteps and forge new pathways of service.

In addition to Christian service, Norweida enjoys recreational activities such as cooking, crafting, sudoku puzzles, singing, reading, painting by number, and visiting with friends by phone. A favorite vacation is cruising. She describes her greatest joy: *"Aside from waking up each day, my family brings me great joy."*

As a Grapevine board member, Norweida is a pleasure to work with and to know. She brings the joy and love of Christ to the table, along with her expertise, humility, humor, and an openness of ear and heart to what others have to say. When needing someone to help with a project, Norweida is always ready with a smile and a "yes!"

Parting words to encourage our readers: *"If you are still breathing, God ain't through with you."* An accomplished educator, Norweida knows "ain't" is poor grammar, but she just thinks it *"sounds better to say ain't."* We told you she had a sense of humor.



### Leon Whitney, Ellisville, Missouri

Leon Whitney describes his parents as having the greatest influence on his Christian journey: *"They were both very active in our home church and they made sure I was too!"* The following profile will indicate that their efforts were not in vain, for Leon Whitney has lived his life serving the church at all levels of the denomination.

Leon is a member of Community Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), in Manchester, Missouri, a suburb of St. Louis. He has served in numerous positions over the years, including elder, worship leader, and manager of the Core Leadership Team. His Pastor, Rev. Jacob Thorne captures the essence of Leon: *"He loves his faith, family, and church."*

Leon served for 30 years at the National Benevolent Association, the social and health service general unit of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). He moved from Director of Budgets of Central Office Accounting; to Assistant Treasurer; to Treasurer; and then Vice President and Chief Financial Officer.

One striking example of Leon showing his love for friends and colleagues is his hosting of reunions for NBA retirees and employees, after his retirement in 2001. He quietly organizes behind the scenes, often minimizing the complexity of pulling off such an event. When thanked for his thoughtfulness and generosity; he minimizes his role and always puts an emphasis on the result: *"how wonderful it is to see old friends and connect with them again."*

Leon served over six years on the Mid-America Regional Board, where he was a member of numerous committees and the foundation. For the past three years, he has served on the Hylton Point Apartments II Board of Directors. He was a part of the application process for the facility with Housing and Urban Development (HUD) over 20 years ago.

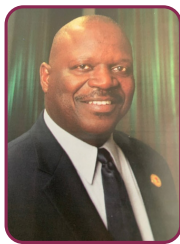
Concern for the well being of children, families, and older adults does not wane and faithful service continues as Leon ages gracefully. Now that he is an octogenarian, Leon states, *"As I grow older, I find I am less able physically to do things. However, I find calling and texting others, or meeting them in person, just checking on how they're doing, gets positive responses."* The ministry of presence and hospitality are very significant and affirming, particularly in these times of Covid and the isolation that can come with afflictions often associated with aging.

Leon's favorite scripture is Luke 11, The Lord's Prayer. His greatest joy: *"Having my wife close at my side!"* He and Linda have been happily married for 63 years. They are proud parents of two married daughters and have five adult grandchildren. He unwinds by fishing, playing golf, and traveling. He and Linda have been to all 50 states. His recipe for graceful, healthy, happy aging: *"Regular church attendance, eating out with friends, participating in church activities, volunteering, and eating ice cream! Live life fully!"*

Thanks be to God for the gift of  
Jacqueline G. Dyer, Elder Brenda Clark Mikota,  
Norweida A. Rayford Spencer, and Leon Whitney.  
**Congratulations on being a part of the Eighty Eighty Plus Class of 2022!**



## The James Brothers in Retirement



**TIMOTHY JAMES**

I want to thank The Oldtimers' Grapevine, Board of Directors and editors for the opportunity to share my story.

I retired from the Office of the General Minister and President, serving as Associate General and Administrative

Secretary of the National Convocation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, on December 31, 2020. Life since then has been one filled with many adjustments.

I did not realize just how structured and rigid my time and schedule had been until retirement. This was something which was made more noticeable, having retired during the lockdown quarantine period of the pandemic. I was excited and glad for Joyce and me to have more time with our youngest grandchildren, Clevelynn and Deyton, over in Dayton, Ohio. Having gotten our vaccinations and boosters, we are more comfortable in making visits with family and friends.

We are beginning to have a few opportunities for in-person worship at our home church, Light of the World Christian Church, where our newly installed pastor is the Rev. Janae Pitts-Murdock.

When I am asked, "How is retirement?," I find myself answering, "I have retired to work for my wife." About four years ago, Joyce and her brothers invested in a Hawaii shave ice food trailer which operates in Cleveland, Ohio. Then, during spring break 2019, just before Joyce retired from education, we invested in another shave ice trailer in Dayton, Ohio. So, during festival seasons, carnivals, food fairs, and special events we prepare product and supplies in Fishers and deliver them to the sites for distribution.

This has been a work in progress and the progress is appreciated as God helps us to get better and better at what we do. A local Dayton school has reached out to us to assist them in incentive days for their students and faculty. (For their achievement, students are rewarded refreshments or a treat.)

Although the pandemic continues, I have maintained connection to the church. At Light of the World Christian Church, I share with the ministerial team in leading a Prayer Line Meditation, at 7:00am, every other Tuesday, every other month. This has proven to be most rewarding and beneficial to those who participate by dialing in. I have had several opportunities to preach virtually and in-person for special Sundays, revivals, morning worship, and funerals for family and friends. I also sang with the virtual choir for the Indiana region. I am keeping my standing active by sharing in Healthy Boundaries ministry training and anti-racism workshops.

Looking ahead in retirement, I anticipate more travel and actual vacation time together with Joyce.

-Timothy James



**TITUS JAMES**

The retirement life for Titus James has begun! Actually, it started August 31, 2020. I am still residing in Wichita, Kansas and adjusting to a different pace of life. My wife, Avalene and I came to Wichita in August 1979.

Fresh out of seminary, having been married for one year, our adventure in ministry began and little did we know that it would last for 42 years at North Heights Christian Church.

Retirement has allowed me to change my ministerial engagement status. It is now a lot less involved. It is good to be at ease in Zion. I say that because I am living on the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living. I find such great joy and peace just resting in God. The Lord not only is a hiding place but a resting place as well. I urge all to lean on the everlasting arms of Jesus when you find it hard to stand.

Being retired and having an empty schedule it is a time to be open to new adventures. Even at our age, it is always good to try something new. We may go to places to eat we haven't tried before and of course, traveling is in order as the world comes back to some sort of normalcy. In the meantime, I like to visit different churches on Sundays. I also help out if needed in many pulpits when asked. I am available for special events, weddings, and funerals, too.

I thank God for longevity with good health and preparation. Life is good in retirement thanks to wise counsel and planning. Retirement is activated but the ministry of the gospel is not dead, nor has it stopped. The call is still real on my life and in my heart and I still love to preach and sing. I was called to preach in 1974 and I am still answering: "Hello, Lord is that you? What would you have me to do?"

-Rev. Titus H. James



**EUGENE JAMES**

I had heard from friends how much they enjoyed their retirement; they highly recommended it. When I made the decision to retire, I didn't give much thought as to what I would be doing but I was looking forward to it.

As the time drew near, I was advised by several people to be sure that I found something to do with my time. I have since had a couple of people share how they had friends who had retired and were not doing much of anything. I also heard stories of persons who retired, stopped being active, and soon died. I got the message.

I am blessed to be in good health and I'm able to convince people that I'm in my right mind --most of the time. I don't take that for granted. Over the past couple of years, several of my contemporaries have died, including some who were younger than I am. I'm so grateful to God to still be in the "land of the living" and I thank him every morning.

One thing that has been very beneficial to my being healthy is regular exercise. Monday through Friday I go to the gym to begin my day. Now that I'm retired, I get there at 8:30am rather than at 6:30 when I was still working. I enjoy being able to take my time and not be concerned about keeping up with a schedule. I was pleased when my doctor told me with a smile that there wasn't anything he could fuss at me about. Having spent more than thirty years promoting preventive health care in my secular job, I understand how important it is to have a good primary care physician and I have one of the best. To God be the glory!

Our Regional Minister has given me the task of organizing a fellowship group of the retired ministers in the region. With the help of two amazing colleagues, I have begun that endeavor. I have had the opportunity to do some supply preaching and I have also conducted several funerals. It has been a blessing to be available in a time of need.

My Zoom retirement party was simply awesome. I was thrilled that so many of my friends and colleagues from across the country took the time to join in and share their thoughts and congratulations. More than a few tears of joy were shed. The committee did an outstanding job of putting it all together and I will be eternally grateful to them.

It's been six months and I truly am enjoying the blessings of retirement.

-Eugene James

**Many thanks to the James brothers for sharing their retirement stories!**

**To share YOUR STORY with Grapevine readers, contact us at [oldtimers.grapevine@gmail.com](mailto:oldtimers.grapevine@gmail.com)**



### **A CHILD LOVING TO LEARN**

by May Reed, Grapevine Poet Laureate

I keep thinking, wondering about things  
Of the world. My thoughts started  
Sprouting when I was but a little girl.  
Now, about those 26 letters  
They called ABC's, struck and stuck with me,  
Showed me learning was the key.  
I tried to use every one each day.  
I'd print the different letters and ask  
Mom - what did they say.  
She'd laugh and tell me "Turn that d the  
Other way for I had written dird,  
Not bird one day. I loved to hear the  
Chirping ringing; Mom would always  
Smile. "You're chirping when  
You sing too,  
And when you sing the pigeons  
Listen and coo, for God has put  
Music in your heart, music  
To sing and to others impart."

Written Tuesday, May 24, 2022

### **LIFE, INDEED, IS A CLASSROOM**

The world with all its space and plenty, houses many, empty souls whose hate and envy of their brother has emptied them of compassion and understanding. They have no joy. Their laughter is bitter and loathsome. Their vision is dulled. Their words hold no hope. Their feelings are seared. Their direction is distorted. Both their yesterdays and tomorrows hold evil thoughts and many have perished within themselves and only await their physical announcement for burial. The world plunders and bustles about, trying to succeed and outdo one another. Harmony is at an all-time low, while the rich ravage the purse of the commoner. Our first murderer, Cain, seems to have stained the souls of mankind. Hate and envy is a terrible affliction which many suffer with.

We struggle to possess and capture what we think are all the best things in life. But surely some must know "The Best Things in Life are Free." Like your next breath, a smile, the smell of flowers, laughter, love, hugs, memory and so much, much more. One cannot afford to hate anyone for we would have to hate ourselves and this we must not do. But I fear that often-time this is where much of the hatred derives from; the fearful and dissatisfied. The angry soul who rejects and despises oneself. Anger and hate are destructive, demeaning. They debilitate. When we lack the common sense-ability to control our anger or any of our emotions we become a liability to ourselves and subsequently, to others. How I wish and pray the world could just get along. I've encountered quite a bit of ugly in my lifetime but there is something inside me so strong that I know I can make it; that keeps me. And that, THAT something is JESUS. Remembering the little prayer "If I should die before I wake" makes me consider even more the one I later read "IF WE SHOULD WAKE BEFORE WE DIE." May it be so!

**BOOKER T. WASHINGTON, 1858-1915:** He was a popular leader in his day among Negroes and the Caucasians. Taking leadership in 1881 of Tuskegee Institute, he had become famous for his advocacy of industrial training aimed at making the African Americans to be competitive in the work force. He stated in his famous Atlanta address of 1895: "In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress." Annie Tuggle, a disciple, urged members of the church to emulate Washington's persistence and courage, and to also support the Silver Point Christian Institute of Silver Point, TN. which had been est. for Negroes in 1907 by our sister church, the Jackson Street Church of Christ, Nashville, TN.

### **JUST A MITE OF MIRTH**

A father reading to his child the old Fairy Tale of "Goldilocks and the Three Bears" was surprised at the response when he read of how Goldilocks had entered the home of the three bears when no one was home, helped herself to a bowl of porridge, sat in and broke the small one's chair, and even laid down and took a nap. The child exclaimed "**They should have booked and arrested her for illegal entry.**"  
[My how kids' thoughts have changed.]

## Guest Columnist

**Rick Lowery, President  
Disciples of Christ Historical Society**



## Poetry

### Living in the Middle

by Cynthia Hibbler

My home has blue uneven shutters,  
A sparkling stained-glass cross  
hangs on a pane of glass.  
The façade of the second level is a rustic pink  
with low-cast iron, metal bars  
covering the windows on the first floor  
to keep me within to see everything,  
to keep everyone outside  
to see nothing.  
My neighbors are gone  
They moved away months ago  
leaving me soundless, noiseless, smell-less,  
hello-less.  
When Mr. Ludlow, to my left,  
moved away  
he gave me his window flower boxes with  
content trumpeting petunias of  
perfect pink,  
valor violet and patriotic red.  
Then he went to an assisted living apartment,  
“No plants allowed” he said.  
I said goodbye to Mrs. Shallow  
as she held Lucy close to her  
tear-streaked cheek  
to smell the freshly licked coat  
before going to live with her daughter,  
“No cats allowed.”  
The wistful trumpets play limp music  
during the long sweaty summer days  
before the sun scrapes its way across  
the humid sky,  
into the languid night as Lucy  
cries sadly, living in the middle,  
or into the placid night,  
Lucy washes her paws,  
living in the middle.

Written 5-26-19



Disciples and our “cousins” from the other Stone-Campbell church traditions gathered March 18-19, 2022 at Phillips Theological Seminary in Tulsa, Oklahoma for the Disciples of Christ Historical Society Kirkpatrick Academic Conference, “Visions of Wholeness; Systematic Racism, Antiracism, and Reconciliation in Our Shared History and Tradition.” The links to the videos of the presentation are now posted

on the [Tulsa Conference link](#) on the [DCHS website](#).

More than 250 people participated in-person and online via livestream in this historic conference that brought together scholars and church leaders for scholarly discussion of how the sinful ideology of white supremacy has had an impact on Disciples and the broader Stone-Campbell tradition and how, from the earliest days of our movement, many of us have sought to resist and overcome it.

Phillips Theological Seminary President Nancy Pittman, Reconciliation Minister April Johnson, and I opened the conference. We heard outstanding papers from leading scholars of Disciples and Stone-Campbell history and practice and discussed the impact of Disciples/Stone-Campbell missionary activities on indigenous peoples as the movement expanded westward across the North American continent. We told stories of African American, Hispanic, and Asian Disciples and analyzed the impact of systemic racism on their communities through more than two centuries of our history. We asked what this all means for our work and witness today and into the future.

To follow up on this powerful and historic gathering, we are publishing, in collaboration with our partner Chalice Press, a book centered on the presentations in Tulsa and containing study questions for use in college and seminary classes and in congregational, regional, and other educational settings. The book will be available for purchase from Chalice in electronic and print versions in plenty of time for General Assembly in 2023.

In the meantime, be sure to utilize the wide variety of resources we have made available including past issues of *The Oldtimers' Grapevine* on the Historical Society's [Digital Commons website](#).

We have the world's premier collection of African American Disciples materials digitized and loaded onto that page.

Also check out the ever-growing number of articles in the [Journal of Discipliana](#) our online peer-reviewed scholarly journal devoted to Disciples and Stone-Campbell history and practice and our [Disciples History Podcast](#) featuring interviews with leading Disciples and Stone-Campbell church leaders and scholars.

I am retiring very soon, and my successor will take the helm of ministry committed to telling the whole story of our church, especially the powerful, inspiring stories of historically underrepresented communities who have so often made contributions that far outweigh their representation in the “official” structures of power.

The strong relationship between the Historical Society and *The Oldtimers' Grapevine* is one of the things about my time as Historical Society President that make me especially proud. As I officially become an “Oldtimer” myself, I know that strong bond will continue. Keep up the great work, dear friends. I continue to hold you in prayers!





**Our Donors**  
*Thank you for your generosity!*

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**A Thankful Heart**

**The Oldtimers' Grapevine** continues to give thanks for its supporters who responded to the **I Love the Grapevine Fund Drive**.

We are blessed with a strong and dedicated board, and we are happy to report that 100% of the leadership gave a personal gift to the Drive. The board was instrumental in helping to secure 54 new donors! These additional resources will help grow the endowment fund which will add additional interest income to our annual operations.

**We now turn our focus to securing annual ongoing contributions to help secure a new managing editor and update the technology needed to produce a stellar newsletter.**

This newsletter is not just a nice, newsy way to stay in touch with other retired friends of the church. It is a way to safeguard the history of the rich traditions represented by Disciples African American churches, leaders, and members. Each newsletter memorializes activities, stories, and announcements. We are preserving our past, while celebrating our present, and looking toward the future with hope.

**Let us celebrate *The Oldtimers' Grapevine* and its founders for their vision 31 years ago.  
Let us continue to celebrate it with our continuing support.**

Thank you, and blessings!  
In Christ,  
Kirby Gould  
Chair, Development Committee

## Jean Ann Jefferson Brown 1955-2022



Jean Ann Jefferson Brown was the daughter of the late Benjamin and Viola Gailliard Jefferson. Born on June 25, 1955 in Cross, South Carolina, she departed this life for a place of eternal rest on June 15, 2022. Celebration of Life services were held on June 25, 2022 at New Way Church House of Ministries in Holly Hill, SC.

Mrs. Brown grew up in Cross and graduated from Cross High School 1975. She went on to attend Voorhees College in Denmark, SC where she sang with the college choir and pledged Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc.

Employment for Mrs. Brown included being an early childhood educator at the Cross Childhood Development Center. She was a Senior Program Coordinator, Summer Feeding Program Coordinator, and Bread of Life Foundation Food Program Advisor.

For the past four years, Mrs. Brown served as President of the Ministers' Wives Husbands Fellowship of the National Convocation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). She served on the National Convocation Board, Ministers Wives and Spouses Organization in South Carolina, and numerous other organizations.

She accepted Christ as her personal savior at an early age and was a member of Poplar Hill Christian Church where she served in the choir. She was a director of the JC Fowler Sunbeam Choir, Director of the Poplar Hill Young Adult Choir, and served in many other capacities at the church.

She married Melvin Brown in 1978 and the couple was blessed with three lovely daughters: Kinese Brown, Felicia Brown, and Shequina McKelvey.

Mrs. Brown was a faithful and committed caretaker in the Poplar Hill community where she touched the lives of many people. She was a loving, caring, and supportive wife, mother, sister, and grandmother. A mentor and good friend to many, she will be truly missed.

She is preceded in death by her parents, her grandson Tyquan, and four siblings: John Jefferson, Bennie Lee Jefferson, Letha A. Jefferson and Rena Mae Hardmon. She leaves to cherish sweet memories: her husband, Bishop Melvin Brown, her children, a host of relatives and extended family members, and two special sisters: Marilyn (Devond) Fladger and Robin (Tommy) Dantzler.

## William J. Nottingham 1927-2022



William J. Nottingham was born November 22 1927, in Sharon, Pennsylvania, the only child of Jess and Alice Nottingham. He moved to eternal rest on June 3, 2022 in Littleton, Colorado.

He attended Bethany College in West Virginia as a pre-ministerial student, graduating in 1949, where he met Patricia Anne Clutts from New Jersey. They were married on February 1, 1949.

He pastored Canoe Camp and Covington, Pennsylvania churches before attending Union Theological Seminary in New York (1951-1953), studying with some of the most important theologians of the era like Reinhold Niebhuur and Paul Tillich.

During that time, he also studied at Columbia University for his PhD in Christian Ethics. In 1954 he received a Fulbright Scholarship to Strasbourg, France where he began his research on the reformer, Martin Bucer.

Upon returning to the States, he was hired as Associate Minister at National City Christian Church, Washington D.C. In 1958, the young family left Washington to work as fraternal workers with a French Protestant service organization, CIMADE.

Prior to becoming President of the Division of Overseas Ministries (DOM) in 1984, Bill held a number of positions abroad. He hosted a visit by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. while working in Geneva, Switzerland in 1965. Bill served as Executive Secretary for Latin America at the headquarters of the Disciples Church in Indianapolis (1968) and Executive Secretary for East Asia and the Pacific (1976).

As DOM president, he led the church in discussion and decision regarding relationships in North Korea, Vietnam, Cuba, China, the former Soviet Union, and South Africa. Always an ecumenist, interested and open to the various branches of Christianity, including the Catholic and Orthodox churches, he was a living example of the prayer of Jesus: "May they all be One."

Bill retired in 1994 and taught as adjunct professor at Christian Theological Seminary for several years. For Bill Nottingham, retirement simply did not equate with slowing down, in fact, in this time he also taught courses in church history in the Congo and Nicaragua.

Minister, executive and president of global ministries, writer, linguist, musician, poet, activist, historian, husband, father, grandfather, and great grandfather, Dr. William J. Nottingham led a rare life. He gave of himself with energy and enthusiasm to all who knew him and to the cause of peace and justice in the world.

Bill is survived by his wife, Pat, four children, eight grandchildren and one great grandchild.

## Deloris Ruddock 1923-2021



Deloris Ruddock was born September 16, 1923 in Washington, D.C. to Lawrence and Vella Ruddock. Deloris quietly departed life on March 27, 2021 at Holy Cross Hospital, Silver Spring, Maryland. She graduated from Cardoza High School in 1943 and later became active in their Alumnae group.

In 1943, she enlisted in the Women's Army Corps of the U.S. Army, and was assigned as a Postal Clerk to the 6888th Central Postal Battalion, the only African American Women's Battalion to serve overseas in World War II. The *Six Triple Eight* was stationed in England and France where they were given six months to clear a backlog of over two years' worth of mail in the European Theater of Operations. Their unit motto was "No Mail, Low Morale!" Determined to raise morale, they cleared the backlogs of mail in three months.

In 2018, Deloris and four other surviving members of the unit, were recognized nationally at the dedication of a monument honoring the 6888th in Fort Leavenworth, KS.

Deloris used the G.I. Bill to attend The Traphagen School of Fashion in New York City. Finding there weren't many jobs in fashion, she went to work for Citicorp, then the First National City Bank of New York, and stayed for over 25 years. While living in NY, she met Harry Heldoorn and gave birth to her only child, Patricia.

After retiring, she picked up and drove herself to southern California, just because she always wanted to. There, she started a new career in retail, mostly with Neiman-Marcus, and made their Top Sales Club twice.

Deloris returned to D.C. to be near family. She became a faithful and active member of National City Christian Church, working in the Food Pantry and coordinating the Angel Tree at Christmas.

Deloris was predeceased by her sister last September. Left to cherish her loving memory is her daughter, Patricia Heldoorn. Her loss is also felt by her niece, two nephews, extended family, her many friends, and the organizations she was involved with and cherished.

# We're Still Counting On You!

2021: 13 + 37 + 61 = 111 (54 new donors)  
2022: ? + ? + ? = It's up to YOU!



Thanks to the generosity of our supporters, 2021 was our best fundraising year ever! Of 111 total donors, 13 supported both the Annual Fund and the I Love The Grapevine Fund Drive; 37 gave only to the Annual Fund; and 61 donors gave only to the Fund Drive. Of Fund Drive donors, 54 were new readers and supporters. We are affirmed and encouraged by your tangible expression of support and your recognition of the importance of building financial security for the Grapevine's bright future.

We invite YOU to help make 2022 a record setting year as well. As our Fund Drive closes, we are asking **former donors** to make a generous gift to the Annual Fund. We invite **new donors** to ensure a bright future for a ministry that is unique to the denomination by generously donating to the Annual Fund.

**Our goal is to have 150 donors in 2022.** Together we can do this. Your support is needed to underwrite the day-to-day operations of the Grapevine, enabling us to be a vital and growing grapevine of relationship, communication, and Christian community for our beloved retirees.

*Thanks in advance for your generosity!*

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You have my permission to list my name and honoree in an upcoming newsletter. (No dollar amount will be listed)

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Please make check payable to *The Oldtimers' Grapevine* and return this form with your check (attn: Norman Reed) to:  
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You may also contribute online via **Givelify**  
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*The 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. With roots in the National Christian Missionary Convention and the National Convocation; the Grapevine values its diversity in readership, newsletter content, board leadership, and editorial staff, always striving to reflect our oneness in Christ.

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**We can be contacted at:**

P.O. Box 441695  
Indianapolis, IN 46244  
oldtimers.grapevine@gmail.com