

REMEMBERING REV. DR. BILLYE BRIDGES



It naturally goes without saying that we here in Indianapolis, at the Disciples Center in general and the National Convocation office in particular, are still grieving and missing our beloved Billye Bridges. Now that she has transitioned into the eternal realm, we realize how vast her work and leadership was throughout the church. This is ever so true, especially, as we are making preparations for the 22nd Biennial Session of the National Convocation, July 26-29, 2012 in Houston, Texas. Billye Bridges played a vital part in the planning for the Pre-Event Lay and Clergy Institute along with the Institute for Faith and Life during the Biennial Session. It is our hope and endeavor to honor Billye Bridges with an exciting and provocative Christian Education component for our Biennial Session in Houston, TX this summer.

There were several statements that I wanted to share with you regarding the memory of Billye Bridges. These statements were not solicited, but I thought would be good to share. She was well thought of and remembered by those whose paths she crossed.

Doris Speaks shared a phone call from a gentleman who only met Billye on the phone but was moved at the newspaper obituary to pay last respects. In a written note to me, Doris wrote: ***Dr. James, Jack Ernsting of Caldwell Travel*** phoned. He said Dr. Billye Bridges' home going service was the most glorious service he had ever experienced. He and his wife held hands and wept. His wife was equally impressed with the service.

Jack said that you gave an awesome word. He also said that you are a little shorter than he had imagined. Doris.

Rev. Dr. Don and Linda Shelton of Bakersfield, California wrote to the family:

Dear Family:

We were saddened to learn of the "Going Home" of Billye Bridges. I had the pleasure of serving the church with Billye through the ministries of Disciple Home Mission. She was the epitome of a humble leader. She helped numerous people on the staff at Disciples Home Missions

throughout the years with the sacrifice of her time by working overtime to see that the Body of Christ received the best ministries possible.

Disciple Home Mission is a better place because of her. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is more effective because of her servant role so ably filled. I was and continue to be more effective in ministry because of her influence in my life.

We thank you, Ron Degges, the National Convocation, and Disciples Home Mission for all you have done to support Billye in these final days.
In Christ, Don and Linda Shelton

Sister Lonnie Graves, from California and former co-worker shared these words:

Greetings to you all, in the matchless name of Jesus Christ.

I am sorry I am not able to physically join you in the celebration of the life of Billye Bridges, but I am indeed there in spirit.

It was on that day, only a week ago, I held her hand, soft and warm, and we in the room clustered and prayed, and when our offered prayers were complete, a barely audible voice followed my "amen" with her own "amen". I left that room, not knowing, that before the sun would rise again, I would get the call, which I was not prepared for, that Sister Billye Bridges had crossed from this world into the one of glory, the one that Jesus Christ has prepared for us all.

Here on earth we joyfully receive the Ecclesiastes 3:4 phrase, "There is a time to be born", but in our humanness we are challenged to joyfully receive the rest of the same verse, that there is "...a time to die." As we relinquish our most precious sister to God, the rest of the third chapter of Ecclesiastes became alive for me, as my own tears and yours offers us that time to cry and to mourn, and in Matthew 5:4 we are also reminded that those who mourn are blessed. Remember however, this too is only for a season.

Over the time I was on staff at DHM, we spent uncountable hours together as we prepared for, attended and participated in events, traveled, supported each other and worshipped. Through all of our time together, an immediate reflective memory reminds me of the many times I would pass by Billye's office, often after hours, to find her with the Bible open under her reading light. Billye believed in the truth of the WORD through Jesus Christ, and that was her first directive in her many dedicated years in Christian education.

Billye's life was indeed, salt and light and as it is written in Matthew 5:16, "*In the same way, you should be a light for other people. Live so that they will see the good things you do and will praise your Father in heaven.*" We all witnessed Billye Bridges truly live out this instruction. We all will miss Sister Billye, but we can honor her life by growing in our own Christian Education (which was her passion) and living our lives that we too can be a light for others, that they also will learn to praise our Father in heaven.

May God's blessings be with all of the family and friends of Billye P. Bridges.

Most respectfully, Lonnie Graves.

**COMMISSERATIONS IN MEMORY OF
REV. DR. BILLYE PINKSTON BRIDGES**
February 25, 2012

The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the strength of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalm 27: 1)

To the bereaved family of Billye Pinkston Bridges, this precious family, Mo-dear, Bro. Floyd Bridges, the Light of the World Christian Church, Bishop T. Garrott and Beverly Benjamin, Pastor David and Hope Hampton, our General Minister and President, Sharon E. Watkins, Disciples Home Missions President, Ronald Degges, National Convocation President, Dale Braxton, Regional Minister and President, Richard Spleth and to all of God's children and those who love the Lord;

How do you say goodbye to a true soldier of the Cross and a follower of Jesus Christ? How do you bid farewell to one who has been so loyal, loving and committed to the success and progress of Light of the World Christian Church and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)? All of the time I have known Sister Billye Bridges, she was a hard worker in this congregation and the General Office of the Christian Church. Sister Billye served sixteen years as Dean of the Institute of African American Faith and Life with the National Convocation and Director of Christian Education for Disciples Home Missions. As a member of the Merger Staff, she was exemplary in her commitment to Christian Education in our African American congregations and the entire denomination. She was known to put in long hours and was a stickler to details and demanded nothing less than excellence. In my first year as Administrative Secretary, her leadership, advice and counsel was crucial to the implementation of the 18th Biennial Session of the National Convocation here in Indianapolis.

How do you say so long, to a sister who loved her African American heritage so much that she helped to educate our denomination on the value and contributions of African American Disciples? She created and revised education resources and brochures such as Juneteenth, Kwanzaa, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Laity Sunday, and Black Disciples Who Made a Difference #'s 1,2,& 3. These same skills and expertise were shared with the Christian Board of Publication, educating the broader church with the "You Are Called...Series", and Disciples Thumbnail Sketches. She was on the cutting edge of new movements in the life of the church providing the Christian Education component to enhance its effectiveness. Sister Billye had love for all of God's children demonstrated by her involvement with the Public Education and Literacy Committee and other committees of the National Council of Churches and other ecumenical organizations.

How do you say goodbye to such a wonderful woman of God? Well, you don't, rather you say, "good night Sister Billye Bridges, and we'll see you in the morning." Yes, in that great getting up morning, when the great trumpet sounds and when the Lord appears to all who love Him. Until then, we will keep the legacy of the Pre-Convocation Leadership Institute and the African American School of Faith and Life vital, critical, and intense as we make preparations for the

22nd Biennial Session of the National Convocation. John said, in Revelation 14:13, “Then I heard a voice from heaven say, ‘Write; Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘they will rest from their labor, for their deeds will follow them.’” Good night, Sister Billye Bridges, you may rest from your labors. You have set the pattern and laid the plan, your deeds we will follow. We are sad today, “...Yet, We Will Rejoice in the Lord, We will be joyful in God our Savior!”

Respectfully,
Timothy M. James, Administrative Secretary, National Convocation
Dale Braxton, President