

Rev. Sheila P. Spencer –

2020 Report Update

Merger Staff Director of Christian Education/Faith Formation

DHM Interim President

Report for 2020

Greetings to the National Convocation Board:

This report shares some of the resources, connections, work and travel that has been connected to the African American Disciples community.

Much time was devoted to the Educational Component of the 2020 Experience. This was done in consultation with representatives from Obra Hispana and NAPAD. Even though we did not hold the event, the relationships that were connected are invaluable. We were intentional to ensure that there were workshops that would address the issues that address our collective communities. The ministries of DHM were connected and prepared to be involved with the 2020 Experience. The 2020 Experience was also originally scheduled this summer. This was a collaboration between NAPAD, Obra Hispana and National Convocation. Merger Staff, Rev. Dr. R Wayne Calhoun, Rev Chesla Nickelson and Rev Sheila Spencer are an important part of this process. The Education Committee was formed to create workshops for this historic event. Many of the workshops included leadership by Disciples Home Missions Staff including Disciples Volunteering, Green Chalice, Disciples Women and others. The event has been postponed to 2022. However, the National Convocation is planning a virtual gathering this summer to conduct business. Merger Staff is a part of this planning. We believe this virtual gathering will set the template for future gatherings.

Resources include: Coordinating resources for Advent and Lent, contracted writer for Week of the Laity, Juneteenth, Kwanzaa and African American History Resources. Promotion of African American Disciples Who Make a Difference. Updating resources on Elders and leadership.

Travel/Correspondence/Connections:.

Oklahoma City, OK – IMBUED Leadership Experience -This was hosted by Wildewood Christian Church and included participants from African American Churches in the Oklahoma Region. The Leadership training took place Friday – Saturday. I was able to preach on the following Sunday the retreat included gift assessment and opportunity for multi-generational dialogue and discussion. This experience inspired one of the young adults to interview the seniors in the congregation and community. There is power in the story.

Arlington, VA - Samuel Proctor Clergy and Lay Leadership Summit that addressed areas of concern that affect the African American Community – Met with Disciples Ministers and networked with Education Resources.

Nashville, TN -The Black Ministers Retreat was held this March in Nashville, TN under the leadership of Rev. Dr. William Lee and the BMR Leadership team. It was sponsored by Office of Black Ministries and

Disciples Home Missions. The theme was “Be Bold” based on 2 Timothy 1:1-7. Presenters and Preachers included Rev. Dr. Yolanda Norton, Rev. Dr Stacey Spencer, and Rev. R. Janae Pitts Murdock. The theme “Be Bold” was preparing our Clergy in more ways than one.

DHM Staff has been working remotely since March 17, 2020 the week after BMR. This is a new season, but it serves as a reminder that the Church is not confined to a physical place or space. We the people are the church, and we occupy each space. I had numerous events that were scheduled, but all cancelled due to the pandemic. However, this has also given the opportunity for more creativity.

Since March, I have represented DHM in weekly COVID 19 task Force Meetings. This includes reps from the General Ministries and from the Regional Ministers. We share updates on the resources offered by our ministries during this time. DHM has contributed to many of the ministries and resources offered on the Disciples Response to the COVID 10 pandemic. One of the committees that has come out of this team has been a committee to find ways to address and support Clergy who are pastoring amid the pandemic. We are working on compiling list of resources to provide support.

I serve on the Scholarship Committee was able to offer extra funds to 2020-2021 scholarship recipients. During COVID 19, we know that students are facing additional and unexpected hardship, we are grateful that they will have these additional funds in the upcoming fall semester.

The Black Leadership Project Grant awarded grants to several projects designed to provide leadership for African American Clergy and Lay communities. Projects include a Church Wide Leadership Development conference, a project that connects a church with local community, Projects that address HIV in African American community and other projects that will impact the African American community.

I was able to create and co-facilitate “Make The Leap: A Training for Facilitators and Instructors”. This was developed for Bible Study and Small Group Leaders. The five week virtual session included the call/traits of the teacher, Learning Styles, The Art of Asking Questions, Purposeful Planning and Technology Tips. This training is setting the template for gatherings in the future. We have invested in GoTo Meeting and GoTo Webinar. Virtual trainings and sessions will actually open up the door for more interaction.

National Council Churches Christian Ed., Ecumenical Faith Formation, and Leadership Development Convening Table Member Working on creating stories on how spiritual practices guide or equip individuals, denominations/communities, congregations, or other faith-based communities toward Spirit-led acts of justice. The goals of our Convening Table are Christian education (developing resources for teaching and Christian formation), ecumenical faith formation (focus on the spiritual practices and discipleship across our traditions), and leadership development (demonstrating how deepening spiritual practices are an important part of faithful leadership in our churches, communities, and beyond). We meet virtually on a regular basis to connect and share sources.

One of the priorities has been connecting with leadership from DHM and Convocation. We had time to connect to discuss job duties for the Education Director Merger Staff Position. It was decided, that in light of our current remote working status, which we believe will continue into the next year, that this position would be deployed. This will also offer and open up more applicants. The goal is to have it listed and the person would be in place first part of year. Even though we are in the midst of pandemic,

there are challenges and opportunities, one of the opportunities is that we can find ways to be more creative in reaching out to our groups and ministries.

My prayer is that in the midst of the changes, we are intentional about self care for ourselves, our clergy and communities.

Blessed to be a blessing to you,
Rev. Sheila P. Spencer