

## **INTERIM DHM PRESIDENT'S REPORT**

### **NATIONAL CONVOCATION BIENNIAL SESSION**

**July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2020**

Things have been different this season, in that we've had to do things we've never had to do. Yet what remains the same is this reason: The Church and love of Christ will always come through. We may not be physically worshipping with one another. Yet spiritually we are together and connected to each other. The DHM Community has had to make several adjustments. The multiple pandemics of COVID 19 and systemic racism have brought challenges and changes. But it has also been an opportunity for Disciples Home Missions to be creative and continue to connect people to the life changing love of God.

Since March 17<sup>th</sup>, the Indianapolis Office Staff of Disciples Home Missions has been working remotely. Yet during multiple transitions, the ministries of Disciples Home Missions continue to find ways to serve the Church. Here are just a few examples:

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. Workshop featured included:

- Re-imagining and Re-membering Christian Education and Spiritual Development-
- Helping Preachers find their Preaching Model Voice
- Bi-Vocational Ministry- "Sign of the Times: The Way We've Always Done Ministry
- Selah Circles: Being Whole While Doing Ministry-

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.

One of the priorities is to develop the process to create the Search for Merger Staff//Director of Christian Education. The process will include representatives from leadership of National Convocation and Disciples Home Missions.

Disciples Home Missions is committed to being a Pro-Reconciling/Anti-Racist Ministry. Having deepened our understanding of systemic racism, Christ compels us to advocate for justice, fairness and equality within Disciples Home Missions and our world.

We are grateful for the ministry of Disciples Women, with Rev Dr. Pat Donahoo and Rev Chesla Nickelson, who are always on the forefront of ministry and advocacy. Rev. Chesla is facilitator for Disciples Women's 2020 Bible Study and the theme is "Hope, Healing and Wholeness" This study

resource is especially fitting for the current times and has been a blessing to many. Rev. Chesla Nickelson, Merger Staff has been instrumental in creating Monday Moment reflections written by IDWM Executive Committee Members offer inspiration and connection.

This year 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.

Our Disciples Chaplains continue to be part of those on the frontlines and our essential workers. Disciples Chaplains serve in a variety of areas: Hospitals, Prisons, Military and Nursing Facilities.

This season has called our congregations to enter virtual communities. Ministries Across Generations has provided a wealth of resources. There are resources to celebrate 2020 Graduates, Virtual Mission trip experiences, Virtual Vacation Bible School Resources and more. There are weekly discussion groups for youth and young adult leaders. Each Sunday there is a Virtual Worship and Wonder experience online. They also include resources for adults whose children are home for an extended time. There are helpful resources and information.

Our ministry continues to reach out to those who are among the most vulnerable during this season. This includes our Immigrant Sisters and Brothers in Christ. Rev. Dr. Sharon Stanley Rea, Director of Refugee and Immigration Ministries collaborates with ministries for Monday Morning DACA prayers each Monday until the Supreme Court Justices release their decision soon on DACA. The Collaboration with Refugee and Immigration Ministries, Valerie Bejar, Specialist in Immigration Responses, the Pastoral Office for Hispanic Ministries and Capital Region presents IWOBS – Weekly Bible Studies led by Immigrants. This is an innovative way to interact with scriptures from a lens based on immigrant context. We were blessed to call Natalie Teague, her passion and commitment to this ministry was clear to all of us on the Interview Committee. After her two-week session with Tana, she has poured herself into this call.

COVID 19 has impacted Spring and summer events that have been cancelled. The decisions were based in love and for what is best for the people.

During this time, I have been intentional to connect and encourage staff. 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 in the midst of the pandemic.

We continue to navigate this new normal. Grateful for staff who have made the adjustments for this season. I have shared just a glimpse into the multiple ways that the Ministries of Disciples Home Missions have been serving the community amid this season.

Blessed to be a blessing to you

Rev. Sheila P. Spencer

Interim President – Disciples Home Missions