

**NATIONAL CONVOCATION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH  
(DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA**

**VIRTUAL BOARD OF TRUSTEE MEETING  
DECEMBER 2-4, 2020**

**ADMINISTRATIVE SECRETARY'S REPORT**

**Rev. Dr. Timothy M. James**

To President Irie Session, General Minister and President Terri Hord Owens,  
Officers, and Members of the Board of Trustees,

We praise God for the opportunity to give what is now my seventeenth Administrative Secretary's Report to the Annual Meeting of the Board of Trustees of the National Convocation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). These years have been eventful, and in some ways historic. I am humbled and grateful to know that the National Convocation is stronger than it was seventeen years ago. We, as a Board, have built upon the work and wisdom of Administrative Secretaries and Board Members who have served before us. We are the National Convocation, the African American expression of faith in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). We are the forum for the discussion of pertinent issues and concerns related to the Black community and the Black Church.

Since we were together last in our Virtual Business Session this past August, we have continued to work remotely, meet virtually and utilize various social media platforms to do ministry and the work of the National Convocation. We can truly thank our Ministry Associate, Brenda Rossy, for providing the technical and media service to make our meetings happen. We know what it means to be zoomed out, weary of webinars, and tired of doodle polls to plan another meeting. But, for many of us and our congregations, this has been a good thing. When I talk with some of our pastors and lay members, they tell me, "it has been different", many of us had to step up and use technology, we have increased our outreach, and the Lord has blessed us with good offerings on line and in the mail. This has been most encouraging. The pandemic may have given cause to close church doors but it has not put stopped our mission and ministry.

We offer thanks Jackie Compton Bunch and our past president, Don Gillett, along with those who helped to complete the Amendments the Articles of Operation. This has been a ten-year project which makes its completion significant. We express gratitude to Dr. R. Wayne Calhoun for his leadership and endurance in the development of our Strategic Plan. This fine effort allows us to focus on the mission and purpose of the National Convocation. We are glad and relieved to welcome Sister Belinda King to our Board of Trustees and Executive Committee. She has volunteered to serve as Treasurer of the Board. She comes with professional financial experience and broader church leadership.

It has been my honor to work with our Merger Staff who are housed in Disciples Home Missions. Presently, Sheila Spencer, former Director of Christian Education and Faith Formation, is serving as Interim President of Disciples Homeland Missions. Chesla Nickelson, Program Director for Disciples Women, will conclude her service with us to start a new ministry in Richmond, Virginia. We wish her well and much success in her endeavors. R. Wayne Calhoun, Director of Evangelism and Congregational Transformation, has been a colleague who is a stabilizing force for our Board as well as a ready reference when it comes to congregational information, National Convocation personalities and historical events. God bless you it has been a pleasure.

I would encourage the National Convocation to maintain the strong relationship we have forged with the North American Pacific Asian Disciples and Obra Hispana. Begin now to seek the blessing God has prepared for us in Ft. Worth, Texas, July 20-23, 2022, at the 2022 EXPERIENCE, IT'S REAL!! We have enjoyed effective partnership with the General Ministries, the College of Regional Ministers and sharing a seat at the various tables of leadership across the life of the Church. The National Convocation is indeed grateful to Dwayne Bell and the Greenwood Cemetery for their continued support in providing our Bookkeeping and auditing services through African American firms in Nashville, TN.

It has been my privilege to write articles, raise justice issues, offer inspirational messages, and words of encouragement through our social media platforms for the constituents to the National Convocation and persons across the life of the church. This was vital and necessary as we are living with three pandemics: the corona virus, systemic racism and poverty.

I thank God and our Board of Trustees for the accomplishments we have experienced over these past seventeen years:

1. The Amendments to the Articles of Operation
2. The National Convocation establishing a social media presence.
3. Fortunate to receive a percentage of Disciples Mission Fund distributions
4. A noticeable increase in financial support from members of the Board
5. Republishing and selling of our story, *JOURNEY TOWARD WHOLENESS* by Brenda Cardwell and William Fox, Sr.
6. Provided vital presence and participation in the Pro-Reconciling/Anti-Racism initiative of the Christian Church.
7. Proud to be a part of the growth of the Greenwood Cemetery of Nashville, Incorporated from one site to three.

We give thanks also for the achievements with the Biennial Session:

1. Consistent increases in paid registrations
2. Consistent offering of vital, needed and relevant workshops and Christian Education resources through our Pre-Event and the African American School of Faith and Life
3. Consistent selling out of the booth spaces in the Exhibit Area
4. Consistency in ticket sales for meal functions and Pre-Convocation activities
5. Successful collaborations of the area Regional Ministry and the Local Arrangements Committee hosting the Biennial Session

Although we do not take credit, but it has been wonderful to witness the face of the leadership of the church look like the face of American people. We certainly praise God for the Rev. Terri Hord Owens, the first African American General Minister and President. We also thank God for Julia Brown Karimu, President Division of Overseas Ministries; Chris Dorsey, President Higher Education and Leadership Ministries; and Sheila Spencer, Interim President, Disciples Home Missions. We also Recognize Rev. Paul Tche', President, Council on Christian Unity/nka/Christian Unity and Interfaith Ministries.

This progress has been most noticeable in the role of our Regional Ministers. I have always been appreciative of this progress:

1. LaTaunya Bynum, Christian Church of Northern California-Nevada
2. Joan Bell-Haynes, Central Rocky Mountain Region Christian Church
3. Denise Bell, Christian Church in Georgia
4. Nadine Burton, Great River Region of the Christian Church
5. Bishop Valerie Melvin, Christian Church (disciples of Christ) in North Carolina
6. Eugene James, Christian Church Michigan Region; Christian Church in Ohio – Districts 1, 2, 3, and 6
7. Dara Cobb Lewis, Christian Church in South Carolina
8. Christal Williams, The Christian Church in Tennessee

We also acknowledge the leadership of Richie Sanchez serving the Christian Church Pacific South West Region. All the praise belongs to God.

It has been my honor to serve you these past seventeen years. To have served at a time such as this has been a most meaningful part of my life. To have come from a Christian home to participate in the larger body of the Christian faith has been both humbling and uplifting. When Joyce and I came to Indianapolis, Indiana from Cleveland, Ohio we knew that it was a leap of faith. Through it all God has kept us and never left us. For, after all that we have been through, we still have joy.

## MEETINGS AND ENGAGEMENTS

- 1/13-14/2020 General Commission on the Ministry, Indianapolis, IN
- 1/16-18 PPA – General Assembly Planning, Louisville, KY
- 1/22-24 Special Meeting, Texas Christian University and Christian Church in the South West – 2020 EXPERIENCE IT'S REAL!
- 2/18 General Cabinet (bi-monthly)
- 2/21-25 Administrative Committee and General Board, Indianapolis, IN
- 2/26-27 College of Regional Ministers
- 2/27 Black Disciples Endowment Fund, Conference Call (four meetings in year)
- 3/9-12 Black Ministers Retreat, Nashville, TN
  
- 3/30 Conference Call with Ohio Black Pastors – “The Response of the Christian Church to the Corona Virus Pandemic”
- 3/31 2020 EXPERIENCE Executive Team, Lori Tapia, Chung Seong Kim, Brenda Ross and Timothy James, Weekly Zoom meetings through the Spring
- 4/4 Disciples General Ministry Interview for Light of the World Christian Church hosted by Interim Senior Pastor, R. Jenae Pitts Murdock featuring Rev. Julia Brown Karimu, Rev. April Johnson and Rev. Dr. Timothy James
- 4/6 Prayer Line Conference Call Leader, for Light of the World Christian Church at 7:00 am, twice a month.
- 4/24 Disciples Home Mission Zoom Board Meeting (four meetings this year)
- 5/4 Congressional Black Caucus Conference Call
- 5/4 Poor Peoples Campaign Conference Call
- 5/6 Executive Committee of the National Convocation
- 5/7 Poor Peoples Campaign Prophetic Call
- 5/16 Culver-Stockton College Zoom Committee and Board Meetings (five meetings this Spring and Fall)
- 5/21-23 Transforming Community Conversation, Sponsored by Reconciliation Ministries with focus to change the racist narrative that persists in the nation.
- 6/3-4 Greenwood Cemetery of Nashville Zoom Board Meeting
- 6/7 Preached for Conference Call Worship Service, Abyssinia Outreach Ministries of Gary Indiana (again 11/8/20)
- 6/15 National Convocation Called Board Meeting

6/20 Virtual Participation in the Poor Peoples Campaign March on Washington, it was reported that two million people shared on the various social media platforms for this event.

6/29 National Convocation African American Disciples Clergy Prayer Meeting organizational meeting

7/7 First Tuesday African American Clergy Prayer Meeting commences

7/18 Virtual Invocation, Recorded for worship at Brookhaven Christian Church, Marietta, GA

8/2 Zoom Adult Forum with First Christian Churches Bloomington and Bedford, IN the discussion – “Racism in the Stone Campbell Movement”

8/7 Administrative Committee of General Board Zoom Meeting

8/13 Churches Uniting In Christ Zoom Call Meeting (three meetings this year)

8/15 26<sup>th</sup> BIENNIAL SESSION VIRTUAL BUSINESS SESSION

8/19 National Convocation Board Orientation for new members and officers

8/27 Love Is an Action Word/Town Hall Panel – NAPAD

9/13 Virtual Sermon recorded for Webster Groves Christian Church celebrating 120<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and Memorial Christian Church recognizing the ministry of Rev. Margie Pride, St. Louis, MO

9/22 Merger Staff Zoom Call Meeting (normally 4-6 times per year)

9/23 Met with Randy Kuss (DOC), Trayce Potter (UCC), Lori Tapia, Chung Seong Kim and Timothy James – To discuss the General Youth Council and the lack of diversity involvement.

9/24 Love Is an Action Word/Town Hall – National Convocation with panelists Irie Session, Cherisna Jean-Marie, Antonio Redd and Timothy James

10/14 National Convocation Board planning meeting

10/19 Division of Overseas Ministry Resource and Development Committee

10/19 Finance Committee of General Board

11/7 DOM/CGM Board Meeting

11/20 DHM Board Meeting