



Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
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# COVENANT

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

*Journal*



## Mission First



### General Board celebrates successes of pilot project

**“The Mission First! pilot showed us the power of connection and the analysis gave us clarity about action,” said Moderator Sue Morris. “Not only did we learn about the great work being done across the life of the Church, but we also learned that there is a craving for connection.”**

Beginning with an idea in 2014 and extending through the 2017 General Assembly, the Mission First! pilot project was a broad experiment. One portion was a different way of doing business for the General Board. Another facet included a grass roots listening component known as Mission Gatherings. During the pilot period the Administrative Committee served as a governing board and a Mission Council was called together to hear the data from more than 80 Mission Gatherings that involved more than

2,600 Disciples from across the United States and Canada.

The 2018 meeting of the General Board in Newton, IA, devoted a large amount of time to the evaluation of the pilot project and what can be learned from the effort.

“I think the discussion provided us with a clear way forward for the next biennium,” said Moderator Elect Belva Brown Jordan, also chair of the Mission First! executive team. “Mission First! led us back to the existing structures to empower them to do the work they were designed to do.”

The Standing Rules of the General Board provide for several committees, three of which will be key in moving forward now that the pilot is concluded. First, the Governance Committee will be taking the recommendations of the General Board and what was learned during the pilot to consider whether adjustments to the rules and/or The Design are needed. Second, the Mission Finance Committee will be meeting regularly to examine how we fund our shared mission across the life of the Church in regions and general ministries. And third, the data from the Mission Gatherings will be shared with the General Minister and President’s Vision Advisory Committee for further analysis.

## SAVE THE DATE

JULY 20-24, 2019 • Des Moines, IA

GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY  
2019



Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
in the United States and Canada



There was general agreement that the Mission Gatherings across the life of the Church were a point of joy in celebrating the mission that is occurring throughout the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The connection among those who were able to spend several hours together in person was extremely valuable according to many on the General Board. Several suggested that gatherings be scheduled every several years to continue that sense of connection. The work was also inspiration for a planned Mission Fest at the 2019 General Assembly in Des Moines.

The General Board voted to conclude the Mission First! pilot project and in its business item specifically tasked the Governance Committee to submit recommendations useful for the development of the life, mission, work and organization of the Church and tasked the Mission Finance Committee of the General Board to live into its work to ensure adequate resources for all the work of the of the Church. Both groups are due to have a report for the Administrative Committee in late October.

**Governance Committee:** Ben Bohren, N-CAL/NEV, Higher Education & Leadership Ministry; Nadine Burton\*, GRR, Regional Minister; Jeffrey Champeau, OK, OK; Pat Donahoo, IN, Disciples Women; Teresa Dulyea-Parker\*, IL/WI, Regional Minister; Shannon Dycus, IN, National Convocation; Jennifer Garbin, Canada, Regional Minister; Charisse Gillett, KY, Higher Education; Cheryl Jackson, IL/WI, General Nominating Committee; Archie Jenkins, GA, Disciples of Christ Historical Society; Chung Seong Kim\*, IN, Racial and Ethnic Ministry Executive; William Lee, VA, Pension Fund; Rogelio Martinez, PSW, Central Pastoral Office for Hispanic Ministries; Thomas Mason, NE, Nebraska; Rick Reisinger, IN, General Ministry President; Alison Ruari\*, OH, General Nominating Committee; Lori Tapia, IN, Racial and Ethnic Ministry Executive; Newell Williams, SW, General Commission on Ministry and Belva Brown Jordan\*, moderator elect of the General Assembly

From the Standing Rules of the General Board, Paragraph 6.2: Governance Committee - Submit recommendations useful for the development of the life, mission, work, and organization of Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

**Mission Finance Committee:** Greg Alexander\*, KY, Regional Minister; Tim Butler, UMW, General Nominating Committee; Gilberto Collazo\*, IN, General Ministry President; Norma Ellington-Twitty, MID-AM, MID-AM; Justin Floyd, GA, GA; Katie Hays, SW, General Nominating Committee; William Jennison, NW, National Benevolent Association; Gary Kidwell, IN, General Ministry President; Eula Nicola Pagdilao, PSW, General Nominating Committee; Jana Quisenberry, PA, PA; Bernice Rivera-Martinez\*, OR, General Nominating Committee; Tom Stephenson, OH, OH; Kaeli Sweigard, CAN, General Nominating Committee; Christal Williams, TN, Regional Minister and Sue Morris\*, moderator of the General Assembly.

From the Standing Rules of the General Board, Paragraph 6.3: Mission Finance Committee - The Mission Finance Committee's primary purpose is to ensure adequate resources for organizations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

**GMP's Vision Advisory Committee:** Shanell Bowden\*, IL/WI, General Nominating Committee; Darla Goodrich, IN, Council on Christian Unity; Michael Hamm, N-CAL/NV, N-CAL/NV; Clyde Hunt, TN, TN; Julia Brown Karimu\*, IN, General Ministry President; Andy Mangum, SW, Regional Minister; Sandy Messick, NW, Regional Minister; Kathleen Kline Moore, CAP AREA, CAP AREA; Paul Tche\*, IN, General Ministry President; Karen Georgia Thompson, OH, Ecumenical Representative; Christopher (Chris) Wilson, SW, Christian Board of Publication.

From the Standing Rules of the General Board, Paragraph 6.8: General Minister and President's Vision Advisory Committee - The General Minister and President's Vision Advisory Committee's primary purpose is to advise the General Minister and President on matters related to the mission, vision, and identity of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

\* indicates involvement in some phase of the Mission First! pilot

## General Minister and President presents vision and goals to General Board



**"We need connection,"** said General Minister and President Teresa "Terri" Hord Owens. **"We need connection to God, to who we are as Disciples, and to our community."**

Hord Owens laid out her vision for the Church to renew its connection to God with an emphasis on the foundation of Biblical literacy. "We just don't know the Book like we should," she said. "Spiritual disciplines, theological grounding in mission and justice and that deep spirituality that undergirds the commitment to justice are all essential to the life of our Church together."

"For me, the Gospel and sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ is deeply intertwined with the work of justice and advocating for the vulnerable. The Gospel is what compels us to do the work of justice. Love is shown by treating me the way God treats me."

The 2019 General Assembly theme, "Abide in Me", (John 15:1-5) is a first step to calling the whole Church to deeper spirituality, Biblical literacy, and a deep commitment to live out justice. "Jesus is clear in this text: 'apart from me, you can do nothing.'

"Connection to who we are as Disciples is also essential. Disciples are a unique expression of God's Church and

we have much to share with the world," she said. "We can set the example through our mission, our engagement in covenantal accountability and the way we live into the gift of unity, respectfully engaging one another despite differences and disagreements."

And that connection to God and one another extends to the communities where we live and work. We are called to evangelism (sharing the Gospel), mission (living the Gospel) and justice (transformation according to the Gospel.)

One way this connection is already being given form is by her support of several ecumenical and interfaith initiatives including the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call to Moral Revival which was lifted up at the 2017 General Assembly, and the National Council of Churches' Act Against Racism initiative launched in April.

In addition to these tenets of connection, Hord Owens has some administrative objectives she will be tackling over the next few years. These include consistent human resources policies across the life of the Church, ensuring that we are a "safe and just employer of both clergy and laity." A new communications strategy will enable the Church to leverage current and emerging technologies, and be in touch with how younger generations now communicate. A data warehouse initiative is planned to make Yearbook data available online, along with a new clergy and lay leadership database to identify, connect and help develop leaders throughout the life of the Church.

### Signs of new life and growth

Even though the Iowa winter did not want to let go, the General Board meeting was full of signs of spring and resurrection. The general ministries and regions shared their verbal reports in detail with small groups and the highlights were shared with the whole board in a joy-infused session. Included in those notes were:

- Disciples of Christ Historical Society is moved and settling into its home in Bethany, West Virginia, and taking advantage of partnerships with Bethany College next door.
- There are 54 ministerial candidates under care in the Illinois/Wisconsin region including apprentice track, commissioned, extended commissioned and for ordination.
- In Glendale, AZ, a 103-year-old church is finding new ministry for its building and continuing a legacy of community involvement by opening an outreach center.
- The Montana and Northwest regions are joining strengths in partnership and West Virginia and Pennsylvania regions are celebrating their shared ministries.
- The National Benevolent Association's XPLO program is in its fourth year and has nurtured 75 residents impacting communities coast to coast.
- Both the Central Office for Hispanic Ministries and North American Pacific/Asian Disciples reported better financial positions over the past year.
- Disciples Church Extension Fund reports their best year in a decade. After delaying facilities improvement and maintenance during recession years, it is clear that many Disciples congregations are feeling confident again.