Dear Disciples,

It’s been over a year now since we all had to pivot because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through it all, you have shown that you have the courage to imagine who we must be as a new church for a new world; you have given yourselves permission to change, and you have been courageously moving forward. In every expression of the church, we are being creative and fearless, forging new ways to do the ministry to which we’ve been called. I hope you’ll watch my State of the Church address, which I offered to the General Board in April, to hear about all the ways we are reimagining church as a covenant people in this time. See page 2 for an excerpt, and watch the address at disciples.org.

The Covenant Education curriculum, produced by the Governance Committee of the General Board, is now available for your use, and you can find it at https://disciples.org/our-identity/covenant-conversation/. We hope it will catalyze and energize your theological understanding of the importance of covenant to our life together as whole church.

In order to do this work together, we need your generosity to continue across the life of the church. June 24 will mark our 3rd annual DMF Day. Disciples Mission Fund makes it possible for the whole church to work together, doing far more than we could alone. DMF Day allows individuals to join with congregations in supporting Disciples’ ministries everywhere. Read more about how you can be part of DMF Day on page 6, and visit disciplesmissionfund.org to learn more.

Finally, join Disciples across the US and Canada for a Virtual Gathering on August 7, 2021, as we learn and worship together for one day in digital space. You want to be online and be a part as the whole church gathers to affirm that NOTHING in all creation can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus! I can’t wait to “see” you there!

Rev. Teresa “Terri” Hord Owens
General Minister and President
On April 10, 2021, during the gathering of the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Rev. Terri Hord Owens presented the State of the Church address. In her remarks she highlighted the way pastors, regions, and congregations have pivoted their work because of the pandemic. General ministries have innovated and worked together to support congregations and pastors across the United States and Canada as well as our global partners. To see all the ways the church has worked to connect and innovate watch the full State of the Church address or read the highlights provided on pages 3-5.

The Office of the General Minister and President has been focusing on communications and connections across our church during this time of pandemic and physical separation. The OGMP has developed weekly videos with Rev. Teresa “Terri” Hord Owens called *Imagine with Me* in which she hosts guests who join in the conversation about who we are as a church. *Imagine with Me* premieres most Fridays on each of our social media platforms. In addition, The OGMP hosts weekly prayer time on Wednesday with the General Minister and President on Facebook.

The OGMP held a series of conversations this year called “Love Is an Action Word” available to view on YouTube, hearing from voices across our church - from the Center for Indigenous Ministries to NAPAD and our Asian and Pacific Islander communities; the National Convocation, our African-American communities; Obra Hispana, our Hispanic communities; AllianceQ, our LGBTQI communities - hearing from all of these voices about the injustice and racism that they experience on an ongoing basis. As General Minister and President Rev. Terri Hord Owens said in her address “Church, we still have work to do to be the church that we say we are.”

Rev. Owens highlighted four areas in which the church is reimagining how to be the church in this new era.

**COVENANT**
We understand ourselves as a covenant people, and need to reimagine how that impacts how we do ministry together.

**STORY**
There are so many contexts and backgrounds and histories that make up our movement for wholeness. We are called to learn our stories, particularity while agreeing on the universal nature of our shared values and our shared narrative.

**TOOLS**
We need better tools in order to do our work together, not just technological tools but ways of being with one another, ways of dealing with difficult and often polarizing and divisive issues, developing the capacity and competency to be in an ongoing state of transformation as we face the challenges that are ahead.

**PRACTICE**
We need to develop ourselves spiritually, engage in spiritual practice as a part of who we are. We are Christians. We are Disciples of Christ. Our engagement with our sacred texts and with spiritual disciplines of prayer and meditation, however you connect yourself to the holy. We need to have those capacities as well. It must undergird everything else that we do.

For the full State of the Church watch at [https://disciples.org/general-ministries/2021-state-of-the-church/](https://disciples.org/general-ministries/2021-state-of-the-church/)
**REGIONS**

- **Alabama-Northwest Florida** – Celebrating 25-year ministry of Regional Minister John Mobley; using tech to continue anti-racism training; request for prayerful support for congregational transformation

- **Arizona** – Celebration of balanced budget making more stable and sustainable using mission to make decisions; support with prayer particularly around language and diversity of culture

- **California (Northern)/Nevada** – Celebration of some success dealing with anxiety and trauma, and continued budgetary health; supporting congregations with frequent communication about resources

- **Canada** – Celebrating six new congregations out of 19 total; working on building the beloved community with lay leader program; praying to put fear aside and work on deepening relationships

- **Capital Area** – Living in a time of transition in leadership and reconsidering camping programs

- **Central Rocky Mountain Region** – Experiencing the “best of times and worst of times” with grants given for tech and a four-week spiritual retreat online on Isaiah; prayers for support of aging congregations in discernment

- **Florida** – Celebration of congregations’ ingenuity during pandemic; support through continued general ministry partnerships, and prayers for region that momentum continues

- **Georgia** – Celebration included coming together to call for justice in light of events in the state and drawing nearer with corporate prayer; prayerful support requested

- **Greater Kansas City** – Celebrating a tri-regional partnership with Kansas and Nebraska and new connections within the region like congregational elders connecting; requesting support with prayerful accountability

- **Great River Region** – Celebrating future story work and solidifying mission/vision; also celebrating creation of a Dwight Bailey Institute of Learning; support needed in resourcing regional ministries

- **Illinois/Wisconsin** – Celebrating attention to racial injustice, even providing signs for congregations to share (Love lives here); support needed for congregational ministers serving with very low wages and prayers for potential in the partnership with Michigan

- **Indiana** – Celebrating connection across distance for board chairs, treasurers, and elder chairs, and the Flourish program supporting clergy; support needed for camping program with reduced or no income for the second year

- **Kentucky** – Celebrating anti-racism training with Episcopal curriculum and willingness to do church in new ways; supporting prayer needed so that hope and excitement will overwhelm anxiety, particularly with a new regional minister likely to come from outside the current staff

- **Michigan** – Celebration of partnership talks with Illinois/Wisconsin on staffing; support with prayer, encouragement, and advice

- **MidAmerica** – Celebrating 5 years of co-equal regional ministers and the Connecting Grounds new church plant that includes social services; support sought through new church start ideas and help of quality contract staff

- **Nebraska** – Celebration of visioning process and creative thinking toward adaptive life; support needed for self-care and sharing learning

- **North Carolina** – Celebrating Barton College rural ministry program partnership and a new congregation planted during pandemic made up incarcerated persons; support with prayer

- **Northeastern** – Celebrating rebuilding trust and increases in giving; support the region by continuing to build infrastructure of data and technology

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**Highlights from reports to the 2021 General Board meeting**

One of the points of accountability in the covenantal relationship between the expressions of the church is reporting to the General Board. Both regions and general ministries submit reports to the full body and discuss them with a small group of board members. Small groups were asked to identify celebrations from each ministry as well as opportunities for prayer and support. Following are some of the highlights from the reports.
• **Northern Lights** – Celebrating this new iteration of regional ministry and development of Barnabas Grants for laity during the pandemic, and the technology connecting the region; support with continued prayer as they navigate the creation of the region and its new stories

• **Ohio** – Celebrating their new regional minister, Allen Harris, as well as the four other regional ministers (Eugene James, Thad Allen, Rick Spleth, and Dean Phelps) and elders, administrator, and moderators that helped region through transition; support needed through prayer and grace to start anew with their new story

• **Oklahoma** – Celebrating a grief care program in partnership with United Methodists; support of prayers for the future are welcome

• **Oregon/SW Idaho** – Celebrating 20 years of service for the regional co-ministers, Doug and Cathy Myers Wirt; support needed for region to re-emerge into public together in spite of tech and language issues among 44 churches

• **Pacific Southwest Region** – Celebrating the InsideOut program assisting congregations to worship online and celebrating the Disciples Ministry Center coming into being; prayerful support needed for pastors

• **Pennsylvania** – Celebration of reworking governing documents and the affordable housing units in the region; support by endowing the camp

• **South Carolina** – Celebration the call of Rev. Dr. Dara Cobb Lewis as regional minister and the hopefulness in the region about racial unity; support with prayer and pray for funding for ministry God is calling them to and their partnership conversations with North Carolina and Georgia

• **Southwest** – Celebration of six initiatives that now shape the mission of the region and the education processes for pastoral leadership; prayers for connection across the region

• **Tennessee** – Celebration of accountability, hope and calling more commissioned ministers; support the region by breaking down silos and lifting up covenant

• **Upper Midwest** – Celebration of new regional minister Rev. Josh Patty’s energy, as well as the engagement of 550 kids in virtual camp in 2020; support through timely information from general ministries

• **Virginia** – Celebration of increased connection in the region; support with support and care for those who are hurting

• **West Virginia** – Celebrating strength of the region in supporting one another; support the region to continue with anti-racism work

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National Benevolent Association helped ministry partners with COVID-19 relief grants.
GENERAL MINISTRIES

• Central Pastoral Office for Hispanic Ministries (Obra Hispana) – Celebrating the fruits of relationship building, ending budget year in the black, and increased participation in spite of the pandemic, often through Contigo program; support DMF to support all ministries and pray for and partner with Hispanic ministries

• Chalice Press – Celebrating their catalog already had many resources for racial discussions last year and that CP is one of two formally open and affirming ministries; support by buying directly from CP or buy local

• Christian Church Foundation – Celebrating social witness and good investment numbers; support with prayer as they are mourning loss of beloved board members

• Christian Unity and Interfaith Ministry – Celebration of name change last year born out of desire to work toward unity; support by reaching out to full communion partners near you

• Disciples Church Extension Fund – Celebrating the ministry surpassed 1 billion in loan approvals and reported 1,100 church plants that reflect wide diversity; support from whole church to spread the word that DCEF is available to help

• Disciples Home Missions – Celebration of chaplain support; Ministries Across Generations offerings online; Disciples Men’s Jesus Way materials; General Youth Council working with racial/ethnic ministries; and interactive map for online worship; support with prayer for staff and families

• Disciples of Christ Historical Society – Celebrating board approval for a conference on white supremacy for the Kilpatrick lecture in March 2022

• Disciples Women – Celebrating the future orientation of the group; support by praying for ODW president through the staff transitions

• Global Ministries – Celebrating the ministry of Rev. Julia Brown Karimu (retiring Dec. 2021) and expanded opportunities for connection around the world with technology of pandemic; support the ministry by continuing to raise awareness of the impact GM has on the church and the world

• Higher Education and Leadership Ministries – Celebrating the chaplaincy network among college/university chaplains; support of HELM by helping them find the seminarians

• National Benevolent Association – Celebrating social entrepreneurs; support by connecting local social service groups with NBA and with prayer for social service folks and staff

• National Convocation – Celebrating changing the culture around NC - it is not an event, but an active organization all year round; support the events with participation and prayer

• North American Pacific/Asian Disciples – Celebrating new church plants including one in North Dakota (only DoC in state); support via prayer and working against the anti-Asian hate occurring

• Pension Fund – Celebrating high assets and 125th year as well as record enrollments; looking at diversity, equity and inclusion; support with pastors and other eligible employees to be members

Week of Compassion continued to respond to natural disasters.

Global Ministries worked with local mission partners to meet the needs in their communities during the pandemic.
Tell us your DMF story!
How has DMF made an impact on your congregation or your life? Share it on social media with #DMFDoesThat or send your story to news@disciples.org.

Make your gift at disciplesmissionfund.org/dmfday
A COVENANT CONVERSATION
journeys through interactive conversation towards faithfully living into covenant as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Five guided sessions will take participants into a deeper reflection of what it truly means to live in covenantal relationship with each other, with the church, and with God.

This curriculum features:
• five sessions, each with carefully articulated learning goals
• a short video, followed by questions for consideration and conversation
• versatile materials that can be used in a variety of settings, both virtual or in-person, in small groups or large gatherings
• links to transcripts in Spanish and English
• discussion questions for each session, and a full bibliography

Digital and print-ready formats of A Covenant Conversation are available at https://disciples.org/our-identity/covenant-conversation/
IMAGINE NEW WAYS OF GATHERING AS CHURCH

DISCIPLES VIRTUAL GATHERING

Saturday, August 7, 2021

CAN SEPARATE US FROM THE LOVE OF GOD
ROMANS 8:31-39

#DisciplesConnect2021

https://disciples.org/2021-virtual-gathering/

SCHEDULE

Welcome and Gathering
11:00am ET/8:00am PT

Bible Study
11:15am ET/8:15am PT

Workshops
Session 1:
2:00pm – 3:15 pm ET/11:00am – 12:15 PT
Session 2:
3:30pm – 4:45 ET/12:30pm – 1:45 PT

Worship
6:30pm ET/3:30pm PT