

**General Assembly  
of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
Including the Office of  
General Minister and President**

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada  
1099 N. Meridian Street, Suite 700, Indianapolis, Indiana 46204  
Telephone (317) 635-3100  
*Sharon E. Watkins, General Minister and President*

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***We are Disciples of Christ***, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world.  
*As part of the one body of Christ, we welcome all to the Lord's Table  
as God has welcomed us.*

**Our Vision** is to be a faithful and growing church that demonstrates true community, deep Christian spirituality and a passion for justice. *Micah 6:8*

**Our Mission** is to be and share the good news of Jesus Christ, witnessing, loving and serving, from our doorsteps to the ends of the earth. *Acts 2:8*

**Our Imperative** is to strengthen congregations for this mission

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*Called by God's covenant of love, the **Office of General Minister and President** convenes the church in mutual accountability for witness and service.*

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Follow-up from the 2015 General Assembly and planning for Mission First! occupied OGMP attention in the second half of 2015.

The Mission First! Implementation Team, chaired by Lonora Graves of Northern California/Nevada, has been meeting monthly by conference call after June and July face to face meetings. The focus has been on designing and organizing Mission Gatherings across the life of the Church for 2016 and organizing prayer support for Mission First! The OGMP has entered into a contract with Phil Bergey of Design Group International, to serve as consultant to the Mission First! process.

The General Assembly assigned three task forces to be organized: Church-wide process for prayerful dialogue and action on religious, ethical and social issues (GA-1524); Review of General Assembly model in 2019 and beyond (GA-1532); Task force for updated guidelines on site selection (GA-1537). These processes will involve OGMP staff in varying degrees.

An Item for Reflection and Research was adopted at GA 2015: A Call to End Solitary Confinement (GA-1525). The necessary follow-up will take place through the education planning for GA 2017 with regular reports coming to the Administrative Committee.

The 2015-17 Moderator Team met with the OGMP Senior Staff on retreat in southern California in August and announced with anticipation a theme for GA 2017 – “One!” The theme scripture will be John 17: 20-21. <sup>20</sup> *“I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, <sup>21</sup> that they may all be one. As you... are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.”*

The moderator team led by Tony Rodriguez has begun preparations to launch the general minister and president search process in fall 2015. The first step will be the selection of the search committee who will begin their work following their approval by the general board in November. (For more information on the GMP search process, see the STANDING RULES FOR THE GENERAL BOARD – Adopted by General Board 1970, Revised ... 2015. Section 8.)

Disciples Mission Fund giving continues its decline at about three percent per year as our church ages and decreases in membership. OGMP has compensated for the loss of income by expanding treasury services, contracting with Christian Church Services to manage the relationship to the Indianapolis building, and budgeting an increased amount of salary to the General Assembly budget. The merger of Church Finance Council into the General Assembly/OGMP has also been an additional source of income to the office along with additional responsibilities. Compared to a decade ago, the OGMP is on secure financial footing. As the Office is not allowed to fund-raise, however, keeping the budget balanced in the next years will continue to be a challenge.

In November 2015, GMP Sharon Watkins will be installed as Chair of the Board of the National Council of Churches. She continues her work as program chair of the World Council of Churches Central Committee.

Advocacy work along with ecumenical partners has focused on issues around care for creation, reducing poverty and ending hunger by the year 2030 and addressing the Syrian refugee crisis. Advocacy has taken the form of GMP signatures on letters and attendance at events in Washington, DC and New York, especially around the time of Pope Francis’ visit to the United States.

### **General Assembly – Sharon Coleman, Assistant Vice President for Operations**

The 2015 Columbus General Assembly is in the books. We received evaluations from 14% of the participants. Evaluations of the logistics, program, education, worship and preaching were all above average. The confusion with the mailing of the paper docket resulted in this item receiving the lowest rating on the survey. The chapel, Chi Rho XP-erience, all assembly dinner, convention center layout and usage, and nightly worship services received the highest ratings.

We will continue to evaluate whether the destination matters, since we did not achieve our registration goals being in the heart of our membership. The stats for our attendees are listed below. The local arrangements committee led by John and Charlette Allred, was one of

the best in recent years; however, the region was not able to register 10 percent of their participating membership. Of those registered, only 403 were from Ohio. This number is up from the 235 locals registered in Florida and still down from 425 in Nashville and more than 900 in Indianapolis.

The final finances will be covered in the report from the Finance Committee. The staff closely monitored the budget and began making cuts when we realized that we were not on pace to meet our registration goals. We are hopeful that these efforts resulted in a break-even budget.

### **The 2015 General Assembly in stats**

Overall Attendance – 3,795

Youth - 270

Children - school-age 90; pre-school 36

First time attendees - 997

Clergy – 1,562

Women – 2,028

Men – 1,767

Number of ticketed meals - 41

Local attendee – 403

CEU Applicants - 155

Race/Ethnicity

[African-American](#) 414

[Asian](#) 113

[Haitian](#) 9

[Hispanic/Latino](#) 120

[Native-American/Alaskan Native](#) 22

[None of these choices apply](#) 51

### **Communication Ministries – Cherilyn Williams, Assistant Vice President for Marketing and Communication**

General Assembly (GA) 2015 activities during the late spring and summer.

- Post-General Board print publication sent to all congregations
- Weekly GA promotional e-mails to 8,000 past attendees and registrants
- Twitter and Facebook prayer prompts and other information
- Weekly mentions and/or features in *Disciples News Service* as well as bi-monthly *Disciples Together* pastor e-letters
- Supported registration efforts such as sale events, providing regional ministers with specialized promotional material
- Produced *Schedule at a Glance* publication; gathered media for web stream sponsors; provided on-site announcements; updated web site as business progressed

- Produced daily Disciples News Service (DNS) special editions during GA to highlight events and invite those off-site to web stream
- Wrote stories for 24-page *General Assembly News* printed and distributed to all congregations and 600+ special orders; also posted on [ga.disciples.org](http://ga.disciples.org)
- Worked with local arrangements volunteers to gain television and newspaper coverage of mission activities and Rev. Dr. William J. Barber II's message

### Other activities

- The Communicator Forum (communications staff from general ministries) continues to meet monthly to share calendars, set content for *Disciples Together* and, more recently, discuss an idea to collaborate on a cooperatively produced print publication. The forum has also welcomed a new member from NAPAD to the group.
- Mission First! publicity has been a focus - both for Mission Gatherings and a call to prayer that will envelope the effort. A microsite – [missionfirst.disciples.org](http://missionfirst.disciples.org) – is up and running with forms to sign up for a gathering and/or as a prayer partner. The Implementation Team will be providing prayer and action prompts to be shared. We have also added a Facebook group – Disciples Mission First!
- Communication Ministries continues to cooperate with Chalice Press on church-wide calendaring, sending monthly updates of meetings for the online calendar and gathering the material for the printed Annual Planning Guide.
- Staff have also cooperated with National Convocation and Reconciliation Ministry to update their web presence. We expect to freshen the look of [disciples.org](http://disciples.org) soon as well.
- Ongoing activities include monitoring social media, producing the weekly DNS news and the bi-monthly pastor e-letter, *Disciples Together*.

### Treasury Services – Todd Adams, Associate General Minister and Vice President; John Goebel, Assistant Vice President for Finance

OGMP Treasury Services' team of 6 continues to expand its accounting services. Currently, we have partnerships in providing integrated accounting with: (9) entities of OGMP, (6) ministries: Council on Christian Unity, Christian Church Services, National City Christian Church Foundation, College of Regional Ministers, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, and Central Pastoral Office for Hispanic Ministries, which started July 1<sup>st</sup> and (11) regions: Capital Area, Florida, Georgia, Greater Kansas City, Illinois-Wisconsin, Indiana, Upper Midwest, Kentucky, Northwest, 6 of 7 entities of Mid-America, and Pennsylvania.

Currently, OGMP TS has begun the process of a software upgrade to fully integrate all facets of the process thus enhancing services at no additional cost to our partners.

**Christian Church Services Report – Todd Adams, AGMVP**

OGMP continues managing the relationship with the building as a conduit for centralized services such as mail, phone and IT network operations, as well as maintenance and scheduling requests.

A New York-based investment group purchased the building in June. We are confident the upgrades and modernization projects will continue. While not without challenges (elevator capacity and parking), the space continues to function efficiently and effectively for our shared life together. The building manager is actively working to address both challenges.

Income from managing the building (credited to 00 – Admin), offsets the expenses of the receptionist desk as well as Executive staff time to manage the project.

Year Book and Directory  
Office of General Minister and President  
1099 N. Meridian Street, Suite 700  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204  
Howard E. Bowers, Editor  
hbowers@disciples.org

The Year Book and Directory provides the annual listing of ministries recognized as part of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The Year Book also maintains a listing of those congregations, regions, general ministries, and Disciples' related organizations and institutions and certifies to the Internal Revenue Service that they are capable of receiving tax deductible contributions.

Each year, the Disciples are augmented by new congregations recognized by their respective regions. So far in 2015, 19 new congregations were officially recognized. The following are the number of new congregations per region:

|                          |   |                   |   |
|--------------------------|---|-------------------|---|
| California-Nevada, North | 1 | Ohio              | 3 |
| Capital Area             | 1 | Oklahoma          | 2 |
| Central Rocky Mountain   | 1 | Pacific Southwest | 1 |
| Indiana                  |   | Pennsylvania      | 2 |
| Michigan                 | 1 | Southwest         | 3 |
| North Carolina           | 1 | Upper Midwest     | 1 |
| Northwest                | 1 |                   |   |

The Year Book also works with regions to maintain an accurate listing of congregations by acknowledging congregational losses in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). To date in 2015, 122 congregations were removed from the official list of congregations: 61 congregations were listed as closed, 31 congregations withdrew, 21 congregations had the region withdraw recognition of their status, 7 congregation were removed through the process outlined in GA 9516, one congregation was found to be a duplicate of a previously listed congregation.

Of those congregational losses, 51 were formation congregations: 19 closed, 10 withdrew, 21 were removed from regional under care status, 1 was a duplicate.

The Year Book also lists ministers with standing in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). This listing is provided by the Office of Search and Call in Disciples Home Missions. 6,686 ministers were listed with denominational standing. Of that number, 2,153 (31.4%) were listed as retired (1080 active retired) and 2,250 (32.8%) are listed as pastors of the more than 3,400 congregations.

**Week of Compassion  
Administrative Committee Report 2015**

Dear friends,

This time last year when I submitted Week of Compassion's report to you, the first issue I discussed was the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Syria and the surrounding Middle East. Since then, the situation has only grown worse, and there are more refugees in the world today than there were during World War II. The church is being called to respond to this crisis, and on behalf of the Church, Week of Compassion continues to faithfully serve and respond to the millions of refugees who are fleeing for safety. Through our partnership with the ACT Alliance, Global Ministries, and Church World Service, we are coordinating a global ecumenical response that includes advocating with the US government to increase the number of refugees who come into the U.S., as well as providing emergency food and water to the many who are on this long, dangerous passage.

We continue to work closely with our partners to respond to other international crises around the world that impacted communities this past year. The Nepal earthquake in particular, which struck this past April, caused devastating damage to many communities. Week of Compassion sent \$50,000 to ACT Alliance for emergency needs within the first week of the earthquake, and in the near future, we plan to commit an additional \$100,000 for long-term rebuilding with our partners. We have been and will continue to be with the people of Nepal for the long road of recovery ahead.

Week of Compassion welcomes a new associate director, the Rev Caroline Hamilton-Arnold, who will begin her new position January 1, 2016. Caroline's primary responsibility will be strengthening and building partnerships for our church's response to domestic disasters with our ecumenical partners.

We are grateful for our church and the partnerships we have with many local congregations. Because of your support, Week of Compassion continues to be strong, both financially and in its mission to provide relief where it is most needed. Week of Compassion is able to live out its mission because many individuals and congregations put their compassion into action. Thank you!

Respectfully submitted,  
Rev. Vy T Nguyen  
Executive Director



*Reconciliation Ministry advances the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)'s journey toward wholeness by empowering each expression of the Church to implement structural change to address historic fractures*

**Context:**

In the face of televised public outcry and heightened awareness of disparate treatment of people of color by police officers, school officials and border patrol agents, Reconciliation Ministry embraces the renewed engagement with each expression of the Church. Over the course of the last five months, Reconciliation Ministry has facilitated a plethora of dialogues, analysis and awareness trainings with ecumenical partners as well as in Regional gatherings with congregations. With the support of ministry partners we have created new and invoked old resources, developed webinars and workshops to equip participants with tools to confront the racial injustice exemplified by the school-to-prison pipeline, the child immigration crisis and terrorism against African American churches. With the backdrop of the numerous incidents of tensions in community police relations experienced in the deaths Michael Brown, Freddy Gray, Walter Scott, Sandra Bland to name a few, the intentional arson of churches attended by African American worshippers and the deliberate murder of the Pastor and eight parishioners at Bethel AME in Charleston, South Carolina – it is in this context where we find our mission actualized and ready to respond when asked “how can we help and what can we do?”

**Ministry Highlights –**

- The Racial Justice Response Fund was established to allow donors whose giving is intended to support churches affected by arson, or tragedies like Mother Bethel AME could be designated and directed for those racial justice and compassion efforts. The first grant was awarded one week following the South Carolina tragedy.
- Workshops – We sponsored and led three standing room only workshops at General Assembly in July with Dr. Miguel De La Torre and the Disciples Center for Public Witness. Dr. De La Torre challenged our call and commitment to act on behalf of the marginalized with a lecture, a panel response and a movie (soon to be self-published) with a theme of a “Theology of Hopelessness” complimented with his work entitled “Trails of Hope and Terror: Testimonies on Immigration”.  
The Disciples Center for Public Witness’ workshop in partnership with Reconciliation Ministry sparked a group of concerned participants to develop an organizing initiative



to revive our whole church history and narratives from our divided past and our journey toward wholeness.

- As a response to workshops presented in Great River, Kentucky, Mid-America, Northwest, and Tennessee we are working with transformation teams toward team-building and organizing efforts to re-claim our identity as a PRAR Church, as well as to support meaningful ways to equip congregations toward faithful action eradicating racism in their communities.

### **Opportunities –**

The fiscal year 2016 will represent a second consecutive year in which the ministry projects a deficit budget. With receipts from the Reconciliation Ministry Special Offering trending toward a continual decline, further projections indicate that we have reached a point of warning in funding. As a result, a task force is being convened to review our mission in its current reality and its charter in order to pursue a sustainable way forward for the Church. This task force will be populated to include representatives from the CORM, Transformation Teams, Reconciliation Commission Moderators and ex-officio representatives of the Racial Ethnic Ministries' Pastors as well as Dr. Sharon Watkins. A report of the task force's findings will be submitted to the Administrative Committee's Spring meeting.

Keenly aware that we wrestle “not against enemies of blood and flesh [*each other*], but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places,” it is our immediate plan to lift this mission and ministry to God in prayer and spiritual discipline. We are neither deterred nor discouraged and yet, we are realistic that funding mission and ministry is an authentic challenge facing the whole Church in each of its component parts.

Humbly yours,

April Johnson  
Minister Reconciliation  
October 2015

**Center for Faith and Giving**  
**Bruce Barkhauer, Executive Director**

Bruce Barkhauer is currently on a well-deserved sabbatical and therefore unavailable to submit a report. In his absence, please note the following:

- At the 2015 General Assembly in Columbus, Ohio, GA-1536, *Resolution Calling for a Study Document on Understanding Stewardship as a Spiritual Discipline and its Practical Application in the Early 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, was adopted. The Center will begin work on this document upon Bruce's return from sabbatical. The study document will be presented to the General Assembly in 2017.
- Annual stewardship campaign materials for 2015, "Measuring What Matters: Stewardship as Discipleship" are available for order at [www.centerforfaithandgiving.org/resources](http://www.centerforfaithandgiving.org/resources).
- The Center is pleased to announce that "Stepping into Stewardship" will take place in Orlando, FL, March 30 – April 1, 2016. This event is significant in that it represents a growing partnership with the United Church of Christ Office of Stewardship and Philanthropy. The conference will feature the Rev. Dr. J. Clif Christopher, Dr. Bill Enright, the Rev. Dr. John Dorhauer, and the Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins. Additionally workshops will be led by nationally recognized experts from both denominations.