

**GB-2113**  
**National Convocation of the Christian Church**  
**and the**  
**National Christian Missionary Convention**

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**STAFF**

Yvonne T. Gilmore, Interim Administrative Secretary of the National Convocation and Associate General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Brenda Rossy, Director of Meetings (OGMP) and Ministry Associate for the National Convocation

**General Board Report on 2020**

Collaborative leadership, prophetic imagination and re-organization, and innovation in the faithful practice of presence have been the central foci of the National Convocation of the Christian Church and the National Christian Missionary Convention in 2020. The National Convocation is a beacon for wholeness in the Black Church within the context of the movement for wholeness in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) over against the forces of fragmentation that undermine the flourishing of all of God's beloved children. It includes almost 600 congregations, ministry settings, and churches in-formation across the United States and Canada as we continue to nurture and welcome new churches and emerging leaders.

*"<sup>9</sup>After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands." -- Revelation 7:9*

Inspired by the multi-lingual, multi-national, multi-cultural witness of faith narrated in Revelation 7:9, the National Convocation under the leadership of Administrative Secretary Rev. Dr. Timothy James, collaborated with Rev. Lori Tapia and Rev. Chung Seong Kim, and the ministries of Obra Hispana, and North American Pacific Asian Disciples, to plan the 2020 EXPERIENCE, IT'S REAL, at Texas Christian University. The planning team also included the Rev. Dr. Irie Session, incoming President of the National Convocation Board of Trustees and other board members, the Local Arrangements Committee, Texas Christian Missionary Convention, and the South West Region. They worked together to carefully discern and plan meaningful events to

provide a glimpse of the covenantal hope and promise of Revelation 7:9 amidst the shared ministry of Disciples. Due to the global pandemic, the event has been postponed until 2022.

The Black Ministers Retreat convened March 9-12 in Nashville, Tennessee. Themed "Be Bold," it provided enduring and bountiful theological and exegetical tools as well as meaningful fellowship on the eve of cancellation announcements due to COVID-19.

Overcoming and transforming inherited distortions of identity and a tradition of theologically sanctioned oppression, African-American congregations in the United States have consistently attended to the transformation of the landscape of civil rights, and the American protestant landscape. Inequity in healthcare and employment, violence against unarmed Black citizens, and violence related to systemic racism has been amplified in our consciousness and shifted the way we organize and practice presence in 2020.

#### New leadership and staffing for the future

In a virtual business session on August 15, 2020, at the 26th Biennial Session of the National Convocation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Advisory Council presented the Rev. Yvonne T. Gilmore as the interim administrative secretary. Rev. Dr. Donald K. Gillett, II, President of the National Convocation, led the advisory committee tasked with the search process leading to Gilmore's nomination and her unanimous election by the administrative committee of the general board. The extensive search followed the executive search model.

She follows the 17-year tenure of Rev. Dr. Timothy James. He retired on December 31, 2020.

Rev. Gilmore began serving as Interim Administrative Secretary of the National Convocation, and Associate General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) on December 1, 2020. From 2013-2020, she served as Associate Dean of Disciples Divinity House of the University of Chicago (DDH), and as a co-teacher in the MDiv Arts of Ministry sequence at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. She is also a core trainer with Reconciliation Ministries and co-directs "Living Justice: An Anti-Racist Practicum," a justice learning and innovation lab that seeks to test out new approaches for connecting transformative leaders and ideas. She is a former member of the Board of Directors of Higher Education and Leadership Ministries (HELM), and the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). She has also served as a new church planter, staff chaplain, and interim pastor in Ohio, Maryland, and Washington, DC. She was ordained at Michigan Park Christian Church in Washington, DC, and formerly served as an intern of Park Manor Christian Church in Chicago, IL. She holds a BA in International Relations from The American University, and an MDiv from the University of Chicago Divinity School.

She is deeply invested in building on the strategic momentum of the National Convocation and the National Christian Missionary Convention to further the exceptional work of the Black Church, and earnestly excited about the unique opportunities afforded by this interim period to assess future possibilities for ministry and to advance operational resources for engagement in the wider ecology of ministry, vision, and service in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) across the United States and Canada.

### Prophetic imagination and future planning

African-American congregations in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) have long been committed to overcoming systemic problems in multiple sectors of society including racism, economic inequity, educational inequality, and underrepresentation in leadership. The interim period is a special period to revisit the past, to support and strengthen the mission of the National Convocation, and to prepare for the future. It is an intentional time of assessment and visioning, narrative transformation, and healing. It is a time to activate and clarify mission as new possibilities are tested, and imagination expands. The two-year interim period from December 1, 2020 to December 1, 2022 will include an assessment of current commitments, an inventory of assets and resources for mission, partnerships with historic and emerging partners across the United States and Canada, and structures of support for Black congregations and churches in formation, clergy, laypersons, seminarians, retired clergy, young adults, children, and higher education institutions.

The historic merger of the National Christian Missionary Convention and the International Convention, and every iteration and manifestation of the merger, will also be analyzed and assessed. The program and staffing structure of the National Christian Missionary Convention and the National Convocation was established in strategic relation to the merger positions in Christian Education, Evangelism, and Women's work located at Disciples Home Missions.

As current needs, structures of accountability and support, and programmatic and adaptive capacities are surveyed, clarified, and assessed, recommendations for revisions to better undergird and enable the flourishing of the National Convocation will be offered.

Many disciples are adapting to the challenges presented by COVID-19 and the cultural shifts around us. Among the shifts that present a unique opportunity is the fact that many leaders and congregations have become acclimated to online engagement while travel and the practice of presence is restricted. The National Convocation will build on this adaptive capacity for online interaction during this interim period of assessment, discovery, renewal, and planning over the next year by working with the interim administrative secretary, the board of trustees, National Convocation members, and supporters to 1) get reacquainted with every convention and expression of the National Missionary Convention and Convocation, 2) to gather for worshipful work and planning for the future informed by each fellowship group, 3) and through the exploration of new ministry possibilities and events, according to the following schedule:

## PRAYER LEADERS BY CONVENTION

January	Indianapolis, IN - National Convention
February	Mid-America & Northeast Regional African-American Convocation
March	Piedmont District Convention, South Carolina Missionary
April	Convention
May	Southern & Western District of Churches of Christ (Disciples of Christ)
June	Kentucky Christian Missionary Convention & Ohio African-
July	American Convention
August	Alabama-Northwest Florida Christian Missionary Convention
September	Texas Christian Missionary Convention
October	Goldsboro/Raleigh Assembly, Goldsboro (West of Tarr River)
November	Michigan and Oklahoma African-American Convention MOKAN Fellowship & Mississippi Christian Missionary
December	Convention Washington and Norfolk District of Churches of Christ (Disciples of Christ), East of Tarr River Pacific Southwest African-American Convocation

In addition to gathering at the next biennial session in 2022, the National Convocation will gather to discern God's vision for the future and to reflect through monthly events online. Exciting and substantive "Fifth Sunday gatherings" have been planned, in addition to monthly prayer events and updates led by leaders and members from every Convention.

## FIFTH SUNDAY "HOUR OF POWER"

All Convocation churches and clergy are invited to gather every fifth Sunday. Each fellowship group will be invited to share in creatively leading worship followed by a substantive time of conversation and reflection about our shared vision for the future.

January 31	Fellowship of Black Disciples clergy women
May 30	Young adults
August 29	Men
October 31	Clergy fellowship
December 5	Advent led by clergy partners w/ focus on family connections

## **BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

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Rev. Dr. William Crowder, Vice President (Illinois)  
Rev. Dr. Shannon Dycus, Secretary (Virginia)  
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Dr. Megan Lowe (Tennessee)

### Fellowship group leaders

Rev. Eddie Anderson (California)  
Walter Parker (Mississippi)  
Pernella Shortie (Mississippi)  
Rev. Edward Williams (Alabama)  
Rev. Monique Crain Spells (Texas)  
Jean A. Brown (South Carolina)

### Merger staff - Disciples Home Missions

Sheila Spencer, Christian Education  
R. Wayne Calhoun, Evangelism & Transformation  
Chesla Nickelson, Disciples Women

### Ex-Officio members of the board

Terri Hord Owens, General Minister & President, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
Sheila P. Spencer, Interim President, DHM  
Yvonne T. Gilmore, Interim Administrative Secretary  
Donald K. Gillett, Past President, National Convocation