

**2008 ANNUAL REPORT
GENERAL BOARD MEETING
HILTON INDIANAPOLIS NORTH HOTEL
APRIL 11-15, 2008**

THE REPORT OF THE NATIONAL CONVOCATION

To our Moderator, Newell Williams, our
General Minister and President, Sharon E. Watkins and
Members of the General Board,

The National Convocation continues to serve as an instrumentality for the vital participation and leadership of African American Disciples in the life of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). We are keenly aware and supportive of the priorities of the church to start new congregations, transform existing congregations for mission, nurture leadership for new and renewed congregations, and become an anti-racist/pro-reconciling church. We are in our intense period as we prepare for our 20th Biennial Session of the National Convocation which will be this summer, July 25-28, 2008, in Memphis, Tennessee. Under the capable leadership of our Board president, Councilman Harold Collins of Memphis, Tennessee, member at Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church, and the enthusiastic assistance of Dr. Kelvin Turner, Executive Pastor of New Directions Christian Church serving as Local Arrangements Chairman; we are off to some solid plans and preparations. This year's theme is: "God, Our Weapon in Spiritual Warfare." We are a supporting sponsor of the Black Ministers Retreat, a Disciples Home Missions project, taking place in Louisville, Kentucky, March 3-6, 2008.

To the ends of achieving and fulfilling our priorities, the National Convocation provides a critical presence of challenge and inspiration for the success of the church. The challenge has been present since the Merger of 1969. How do we through regular channels in the church start African American churches? Some models of church development do not work for all churches. Understanding that every church has its own personality helps to work with new congregations individually and in relations to the particular constituency. We are proud of the work that R. Wayne Calhoun, Director of Evangelism (DHM) is doing in the area of Transformation. More opportunities have become available for this vital ministry to reach African Americans in the local setting. The annual summit for youth through the African America Clergy and Leadership Development Project is slated for July 19-20, 2008 at Transylvania University in Lexington, Kentucky. This project seeks to encourage young persons to seriously consider church leadership in their futures, either as clergy persons or other significant areas of responsibility. The African American School of Faith and Life, a regular offering at the Biennial Session, is on course for another real and relevant year in Memphis. Billye Bridges, Director of Christian Education (DHM) serves as he dean of this program. We will certainly miss the leadership of Lonnie Graves who served as Program Associate for the Office of Disciples Women. She served with a gentle spirit and a most encouraging heart. We are looking forward to more of the same, however, with the start of Sheila Spencer assuming this role.

The National Convocation recognizes as one of our greatest challenges is to truly become an anti-racist/pro-reconciling church. We are working collegially with our general units and General Minister and President to make this a reality. We therefore ask all church leaders in congregations, regions and general units to take the Anti-Racism Workshops. There is something beneficial and challenging for all races. This is our greatest challenge because it confronts our life style and personal history. The pursuit of this priority, in particular, is most redemptive in that it addresses so many other issues, like faith, hope and love. It also helps us to dream of a beloved community that may be reflected in a church that is Multi-Cultural and Inclusive advancing into the twenty-first century.

A full annual financial review may be found in the National Convocation office.