

# COMMUNIQUE

News from the General Board & Administrative Committee • Indianapolis, IN • SPRING 2011

## General Board recommends that Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins serve a second term

By Wanda Bryant Wills



Sharon E. Watkins

The General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) made a major decision at the opening session of its 2011 meeting. The Board voted on Saturday, Feb. 26 to recommend to the General Assembly that Rev. Dr. Sharon E. Watkins serve a second six-year term as General Minister and President.

Watkins accepted the Board's recommendation to widespread applause and thanked the group for their support of her leadership.

"Sharon Watkins has done an excellent job representing Disciples," said Regina Morton, chair of the Review/Search and Call Committee. "She has made us known around the world with her prophetic voice and pastoral presence. Through her administration we have better utilized technology and creative ways to keep us solvent in these trying economic times."

The board voted by paper ballot in

Executive Session following a presentation by Morton, who presented a summary of findings from the Review/Search and Call Committee's work. The RSCC was named by the General Board at its spring 2010 meeting where GMP Watkins indicated her sense of call to serve another six-year term. The RSCC implemented an online and paper survey, entitled, "Listening to the People – A Review Questionnaire for Rev. Dr. Watkins" which was completed by more than 600 people.

Watkins also gave her statement of re-election to the board prior to its vote.

<http://bit.ly/2011GMPreElectStatement>

"The church is blessed to have faithful leaders who have engaged in this process of discernment," said Watkins after the vote. "I am grateful to all who have given of their time to help shape the next six years through the re-election process."

Watkins became the first woman to serve as General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), following her election at the 2005 General Assembly in Portland, Oregon.

During her nearly six-year tenure, she has encouraged Disciples to reclaim Christian unity and wholeness as part of their core identity. She has preached a message of hope and inspiration to Disciples throughout the United States and Canada – and around the world. Her leadership has helped Disciples think more creatively about future directions for the church in a time of global change. She implemented a 21st Century Vision Team and collaborated with the Mission Alignment Coordinating

Council, both of which allowed Disciples to envision more opportunities for networking, collaboration and a renewed focus on mission and ministry. The merger of Church Finance Council functions into the Office of General Minister and President in 2007 also led to a reduction in structure and released financial resources for ministry.

In 2009, Watkins was selected as the first woman to preach at the National Prayer Service at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. as part of inauguration activities for President Barack Obama. She also served on the President's Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships.

Watkins has been a strong advocate for justice and racial reconciliation. She has spoken at numerous ecumenical gatherings championing issues that affect 'the least of these' – including improved children's health, health care reform, and humane and compassionate immigration reform.

Watkins' name will now be forwarded to the General Assembly, which will meet in Nashville, Tenn., July 9-13. It is at the Assembly that the final vote on re-electing Watkins will take place.

"I am ecstatic about Sharon's nomination, said Nancy Brink, from the Pacific Southwest, representing Church Extension. "She has learned a lot in these six years and we have learned with her. I think we will be ready to move forward in positive directions with her experienced leadership."



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## General Assembly 2011: Tell It! By Nathan Day Wilson

“There’s a party going on in Nashville in July, and we hope you’ll be part of it!”

With that exclamation, General Assembly Program and Marketing Director Patricia Case detailed the activities, arrangements and aspirations for the 2011 General Assembly, July 9-13, in Nashville, Tenn. The Assembly’s theme is “Tell It!” based on Deuteronomy 6:1-12, which is part of the sermon of Moses to the Hebrew people before they enter the Promised Land.

Well-known preachers and speakers will share their perspectives with the audience at evening worship and morning sessions. Keynote speakers include Holly McKissick, pastor of St. Andrew Christian Church in Olathe, Kan; William “Bill” Lee, pastor of Loudon Ave. Christian Church in Roanoke, Va; Brian D. McLaren, an author, speaker, pastor and networker and Marian Wright Edelman who founded and leads the Children’s Defense Fund. Business will take place on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday morning and on Tuesday afternoon.

The Assembly programming emphasizes reaching and empowering

congregations.

Chief among the program offerings to help meet these intentions are two-hour learning tracks, scheduled for 2:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. on Monday and Wednesday of Assembly. Clergy and key congregational leaders are urged to participate. Continuing education credits will be offered.

The three tracks are “Youth Ministry is Missional Ministry,” “Leading Change” and “Congregations: Find New Life in Ministry.” Each track will give participants the opportunity to learn from one another and specialists about engaging in faithful ministry in a changing landscape for mission. Details are online at [www.disciples.org/ga](http://www.disciples.org/ga).

In addition to the two-day learning tracks, there will be 50 resource groups ranging from one- to two-and-a-half hours covering topics and practices under the areas of justice, leadership, mission, spiritual disciplines and vital congregations.

In addition, major speakers will deliver presentations during each of the business sessions as the “Be the Change” series on leading in times of unprecedented change, including “the man who can see around

corners” Harvard scholar Harvey Cox.

The Assembly has a lighter side, as well. A Sunday evening concert features some of Nashville’s finest musicians, who happen to also be Disciples: Gabe Dixon, rock artist and songwriter Craig Wiseman. Fred Craddock hosts an evening of story telling on Tuesday night.

Participants are encouraged to engage in spiritual disciplines such as yoga and labyrinth walks at each Assembly hotel, with leadership from regional sponsors.

A new feature for Assembly is a web-based “Toolkit” that will provide presentation materials and other materials online. Participants can download resources and recreate some of what they experienced, and even tap resources from events they were unable to attend in person.

Congregations are encouraged to emphasize the General Assembly in worship on May 8 or May 15. Materials are available at [www.disciples.org/ga](http://www.disciples.org/ga). Substantial registration discounts are available until April 1. To find out more go to: [www.disciples.org/ga](http://www.disciples.org/ga)

# Disciples Mission Fund needs strong advocates By Wanda Bryant Wills

The Disciples Mission Fund lost ground in 2010, but it can reverse direction through the advocacy of those who believe in the importance of church-wide mission.

That was the message Associate General Minister and Vice President Todd Adams conveyed to General Board members on the closing day of the board's annual meeting.

Adams noted that DMF, the church's common mission fund, was down 4.19 percent in 2010 when compared with 2009. Congregational giving declined by 4.57 percent and individual giving dropped 11.08 percent. The Christian Church Foundation distribution to DMF, however, was up by

13.65 percent over the previous year.

"We finished the year a little stronger in 2010 than we had assumed, but we were still challenged," said Adams. "The only way the fund will recover is if we have people in the pews advocating that it come back. I am encouraging you to be that advocate."

Adams also shared that the church's special offerings dipped last year, with Easter, Pentecost, Thanksgiving and Christmas, all showing declines. Among the two Special Mission Funds, Week of Compassion stayed in the positive category, with giving rising by 5.94 percent. However, contributions to Reconciliation Mission dropped by 7.42

percent.

Meanwhile eight regions saw an increase in giving, including the Capital Area, Great River, Kentucky, Montana, Northwest, Ohio, Oregon, and Pennsylvania regions.

Adams asked every General Board member to: talk with his or her church about giving to DMF; commit to talking to two other churches; and commit to making a personal gift.

Disciples Mission Fund supports 72 ministries of wholeness both in the United States and Canada as well as around the world. To learn more or for online giving, go to [www.disciplesmissionfund.org](http://www.disciplesmissionfund.org)

# CRM asks for a conversation on reasons the church gathers By Wanda Bryant Wills

Why does the church gather? What are the most faithful and productive ways for today's church to come together?

These are key questions that the College of Regional Ministers (CRM) would like for all parts of the church to answer over the next several months. CRM, comprised of regional ministers from each of the Church's 33 regions, has asked for a review of the church's patterns for coming together. Among other things, the review will pay particular emphasis to the biennial General Assembly sessions, which have taken place since 1968.

There also will be discussion about the rotation of elected officers, specifically the two-year term of the moderator team which follows the biennial cycle. Teams spend the first year of their term becoming oriented to their work, followed by the second year which is devoted to planning and preparing for an Assembly.

The requests developed following a meeting with current Moderator Larry Brown who voiced concerns about the impact of the church's biennial cycle on moderator leadership, as well as the work of the Office of General Minister and President and General Ministries.

The business item notes that the "burden of the ongoing two-year planning cycle affects the life of the whole church without pause for discernment and reflection."

The business item adds: "This (cycle) does not always allow these elected leaders to maximize their leadership gifts."

The GMP's Vision Advisory Committee, an on-going committee of the General Board, has been charged to work with the Moderator to implement a survey that will help elicit feedback about the church's opportunities to come together. That survey, which will be released

later this spring, will go to the church.

The committee also will look at the governance issue involved with the term of office for elected officers.

A report will be submitted by the GMP Vision Advisory Committee to the General Board in 2012, including instructions for actions that the board might direct its committees to implement. To read the full business item, go to: <http://bit.ly/gb110761>

## GENERAL BOARD SNAPSHOTS



*Larry Brown, Moderator, officiates at the General Board meeting.*

# General Board Forwards 2011 Moderators names to General Assembly



**Regina Morton**

For Moderator



**Susan Ward Diamond**

For First Vice-Moderator



**Rick Ikeda**

For Second Vice-Moderator

**Regina Morton** has been nominated to serve as Moderator of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). A native of Tennessee, Morton lived in Washington State for a number of years, returning 'home' in 2009. While in Washington, she held positions as elder, moderator, usher and children's Sunday school teacher at United Christian Church of Renton, Wash. She was also an active member of the Northwest Regional Board.

Morton is currently a member at Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Memphis, Tenn., where she serves in the nursery and is studying to become a Stephen's Minister, a ministry which offers training that assists lay people in providing Christian care to people in need.

Morton has worked with the general church in a number of capacities over the last several years. She has chaired the Personnel, Policies and Procedures Committee of the Administrative Committee and the Review/Search and Call Committee. She also has been a member of the Governance Committee of the General Board and Administrative Committee.

She holds a Master's degree in Applied Behavioral Science from City University of Seattle, Wash., and a Bachelor's degree in education from Tennessee State University in Nashville, Tenn. She is a certified personal life coach and describes herself as a teacher at heart who advocates for fairness and justice.

**Susan Ward Diamond** has played an active role in the local, regional and general expressions of the church. She is currently Senior Minister at First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Montgomery, Ala.

She previously served for 13 years as Senior Minister of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Naples, Fla. Diamond has been nominated to serve as First Vice-Moderator.

She has served on numerous church and community boards in both Naples and Montgomery. She also has served on the regional boards of the Florida and Alabama-Northwest Florida regions. With the General Church, she has been a board member of the Christian Church Foundation since 2004 and the Foundation's representative to the General Board from 2008-2010.

Diamond has a Doctor of Ministry degree from United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, a Master of Divinity degree from Brite Divinity School in Ft. Worth, Texas and a Bachelor's degree from Texas Christian University, also in Ft. Worth.

**Rick Ikeda** has been nominated to serve as Second Vice-Moderator. A native of California, Ikeda has lived in the Salem, Oregon area since graduating from Willamette University in Salem with a degree in physics. He briefly served as a science and math teacher, but today works as vice president for purchasing and technology at Western Tool Supply in Salem.

He is an active member of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Salem, and has served as a deacon, board member, chair of outreach, youth sponsor, elder and chairperson of elders. In working with youth, he has participated in numerous youth mission trips. He also has led short-term missions trips to Ecuador to work with Oregon's Global Mission Partner FEDICE.

Beyond the local church, Rick has served on Oregon's Regional Board, the General Board, Administrative Committee, the Audit Committee and the Review/Search and Call Committee.

# New and departing church leaders acknowledged

The General Board recognized several transitions of leadership within the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) over the past year at its annual meeting. General Minister and President Sharon Watkins formally welcomed several new persons who have moved into ministry positions since the last General Board meeting as well as acknowledged the contributions and work of those retiring or moving on to pursue new opportunities.

## New Positions

### General Ministries

**Lori Adams** – Transitional President - Church Extension - Adams began serving in the new position in August 2010. She previously served as Church Extension's Vice-President for Missional Development and Operations.

**Mark Anderson** – President of Disciples Benevolent Services – Anderson started in his new position in January 2011. He most recently served as Programs and Operations Director at Ronald McDonald House Charities in Kansas City, Mo. He worked for seven years as executive director of SAVE, Inc., a non-profit in Kansas City, as well as one year as an associate vice president at the National Benevolent Association.

### Regional Ministries:

**Teresa Dulyea-Parker** -Starting as regional minister for the Illinois/Wisconsin region in May 2010, Dulyea-Parker was installed in the position in November. She had been pastor at First Christian Church in Medina, Ohio since 1997.

**Eugene James and Maggie Mills** – James and Mills were installed as transitional regional ministers in Michigan in May 2010, following the retirement of the previous interim minister. James is pastor of Northwestern Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Detroit. Mills is an ordained Disciples minister, who had previously served the region as a senior volunteer staff person.

**José Morales** – Morales was ordained and installed as Transitional Regional Minister for the Central Rocky Mountain Region in January 2011. He was previously associate pastor at Iglesia del Pueblo – Hope Center Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Hammond, Ind.

## Persons leaving positions:

### General Ministries

**Dennis Hagemann** – In Dec. 2010, Hagemann departed as President of Disciples Benevolent Services, after leading the organization through a challenging period in its history.

**James Powell** - The former president of Church Extension since 1995, Powell made the decision to move out of the position last summer. Powell is now working as Church Extension's Senior Advisor for Advancement until his retirement on July 31, 2011.

**David Vargas** – Currently President of the Division of Overseas Ministries and Co-executive of Global Ministries, Vargas announced in September that he will retire on Aug. 1, 2011. He has served with DOM/Global Ministries for 27 years.

**Cyrus N. "Russ" White** – In Oct. 2010, the board of Christian Board of Publication (CBP) announced that White will end his tenure as President and Publisher on July 15, 2011. White took over as president of CBP in 1997, and has served longer than any president since the founder, R.A. Long. He leaves to join GraceNet, Inc., a non-profit corporation that provides research, coaching, and consulting in the effective spiritual leadership of revitalizing congregations, as chair of the board and chief executive officer.

**Geunhee Yu** – Yu will retire from his position as Executive Pastor of North American/Pacific-Asian Disciples in Nov. 2011 after nearly 20 years of service. He has been the only person to serve as Executive Pastor since the position was created in 1992.

### Regional Ministries:

**Larry Crist** – Crist retired as regional minister of South Idaho after serving in that position for 27 years.

Also, outgoing members of the General Board were honored at the conclusion of the meeting for their years of service.

## GENERAL BOARD SNAPSHOTS



*Rev. Callie J. Smith of Indiana preached at the General Board's Sunday morning worship service. Smith was awarded the Fred Craddock Award for Excellence in Preaching at the 2009 General Assembly in Indianapolis.*

# General Board hears presentations about transforming Regions for ministry

By Nathan Day Wilson

*“Here is the church, with prayer and vision, throw open the doors, go out and do mission.”*

Building on the familiarity of the “Here is the church, here is the steeple” jingle while altering the words to reflect the changing dynamics in the life of the church, was one regional minister’s way of typifying the transformation of the church’s regional ministries.

Ben Bohren, Regional Minister of Northern California/Nevada, used the words of the revised jingle to express some of the ways that churches in various regions are re-imagining their ministries.

Rebecca Hale, Transitional Regional Minister for Florida, earlier presented the overall report for the church’s 33 regions. Hale stated regional transformation is about more than simply doing away with the old to embrace the new. Rather, transformation of regional ministries includes “giving the right attention to what came before and is passing away while giving our best energies to what is emerging.”

Hale described regional ministry work as being part of the “connective tissue” between congregations and regions. Drawing on the writings of consultant and former General Minister and President Dick Hamm, Hale noted numerous factors contributing to the need for change: the disconnection between congregations; the diminishing loyalty to denominations; the diversity of perspectives in society and in churches; the decline of long-established congregations.

Utilizing research from the Berkana Institute, Hale said there are four potential stances for leadership “in the midst of moments such as this”: the protective mode, which is continuing to promote past practices without allowing room for emerging ones; giving hospice to the old, which is recognizing the old is passing and giving care to it as it passes; encouraging the emergence of the new without any attention to that which is passing; and, being a bridge that celebrates what is passing while supporting what is emerging.

“Balancing the amount of energy and resources that go to supporting systems that are passing away and putting resources and energy into the new that is emerging is always a difficult thing to manage,” said Hale.

Several regional ministers, including Bohren, described moments and processes of embracing the old and the new in their respective regions:

- ♦ Both Dani Loving Cartwright, Regional Minister of the Southwest, and Sandy Messick, Regional Minister of the Northwest, addressed the excitement of moving from owned facilities. Cartwright said her virtual ministry allows her to “imagine however God wants us to be with people.” Messick noted that the region’s move to a virtual office freed money for mission,

redefined the region as being more than a person or building and – illustrated by the dispersion of the office furniture – spread the region to “wherever and whenever congregations are doing ministry.”

- ♦ Bill Edwards, Regional Minister and President of Ohio, described that region as an extension of congregational missions and a network providing coaches, webinars and spiritual relationships for its clergy.

- ♦ Bill Spangler-Dunning, Lead Transitional Regional Minister and President for the Upper Midwest, demonstrated the use of ooVoo, an online video conferencing service, by connecting to five colleagues in different parts of the United States for a brief chat. Spangler-Dunning uses the service to join others in prayer, Bible study, lectionary discussions and more.

- ♦ Tom Jewell, Regional Pastor of Oklahoma, discussed the four areas of the Oklahoma Health Care Ministries and its growing popularity.

- ♦ Ray Miles, Regional Minister in Georgia, cited many congregations in that region seeking to affiliate with the denomination.

- ♦ Bohren told about the Pentecost Project, a mission project that invited church members throughout the region to see where God was calling them to do specific projects, outreach and ministry. Particularly exciting was a project led by three “unsheltered” or homeless persons who collected used bicycle parts and built 28 bicycles for children living in a local shelter.

The regional ministry reports were received by the General Board.

## GENERAL BOARD SNAPSHOTS



*Sandy Messick, Regional Minister of the Northwest, was among those sharing information about regional transformation.*



This offering will be received in most congregations on **April 17** and **April 24**.  
[www.disciplesmissionfund.org](http://www.disciplesmissionfund.org)

## *Christian Church Foundation makes presentation to Covenantal Dialogue Committee* By Wanda Bryant Wills

The Christian Church Foundation (CCF) shared information about its ministry and work with members of the Covenantal Dialogue Committee during General Board.

CCF became the first General Ministry to present before the committee as part of ongoing discussions that will take place between the committee and General Ministry partners. The Covenantal Dialogue Committee has been charged with dialoguing with General Ministries about their particular mission with the Church and reporting the results of those conversations to the General Board and the respective General Ministry Boards.

"We are the committee that looks to share the joys of the General Ministry partners with the General Board and look for processes where partnerships are possible," said Don Gillett, committee chair and representative from the Division of Overseas Ministries/Global Ministries. "We appreciated the opportunity to have our first meeting with the Christian Church Foundation."

In its report to the General Board, the Foundation noted that it is celebrating its 50th year in 2011 as a financial ministry. Its mission is to offer donors an opportunity to match their resources with their passions through planned giving, including life-income gifts, donor-advised funds and permanent funds. Committee members reviewed the report in detail prior to the conversation with CCF.

"As a steward of the church's Foundation, I appreciated this opportunity to have an in-depth conversation about our ministry and mission," said Gary Kidwell, president of the Christian Church Foundation after the meeting. "The church deserves and I believe should expect transparency and accountability from its ministries. We all do ministry better when we are in dialogue."

The committee noted with appreciation the Foundation's increase in total assets by \$56 million in 2010. When asked by committee members what the General Board might do to help support his ministry, Kidwell emphasized the

importance of increased communication about the positive and hopeful ministries of the church.

The committee also received a brief update from Lori Adams, Transitional President of Church Extension, about the Hope Partnership for Missional Transformation. The partnership has been designed by CE, Disciples Home Missions and Higher Education and Leadership Ministries. Its goal is to provide missional resources for transforming congregations and empowering and equipping congregations and clergy.

"I shared information about the Hope Partnership and wanted to seek the committee's input on the front end of the initiative," said Adams. "I thought the process was tremendously helpful."

The Covenantal Dialogue Committee is developing a baseline of data that can be used with other ministries, and as a starting place for future dialogues.

All of the church's General Ministries also gave their reports to General Board small groups.

# Resolutions to be considered at the 2011 General Assembly

- No. 1116 – Addressing Anti- Muslim Action in the United States and Canada- (Sense-of-the-Assembly)
- No. 1117 – A Call for Reflection and Advocacy on Behalf of the Democratic Republic of Congo – (Sense-of-the-Assembly)
- No. 1118 – Celebrate and Reaffirm Our Commitment to the Vision of Planting New Mission – (Operational, Policy and Organizational Item)
- No. 1119 – Moral Injury and Spiritual Care In a Time of War – (Item for Reflection and Research)
- No. 1120 – Human Trafficking – (Sense-of-the-Assembly)
- No. 1121 – Justice in Education Reform – (Sense-of-the-Assembly)
- No. 1122 – Preventing Sexual Abuse and Ministering to Its Victims – (Operational, Policy and Organizational Item)
- No. 1123 – Support of Children and Youth by Opposing Bullying in Schools, the Church and the Community – (Sense-of-the-Assembly)
- No. 1124 – Re-election of the General Minister and President – (Operational, Policy and Organizational Item)
- No. 1125 – Report of the General Assembly Committee – Time and Place – (Operational, Policy and Organizational Item)
- No. 1126 – Report of the General Nominating Committee – (Operational, Policy and Organizational Item)
- No. 1127 – Amending the Special Rules of Procedure for the General Assembly – (Operational, Policy and Organizational Item)
- No. 1128 – Report of the General Assembly Committee – Update on 2009 General Assembly Resolutions

## The Office of General Minister and President



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