

2020 Virtual 26<sup>th</sup> Biennial Session

August 15, 2020

Disciples Women

Program Director and Merger Staff Report

Rev. Chesla Nickelson

*Disciples Women's Ministries is a conduit for diverse connections empowering each woman to find her voice and live out her call.*

*We seek to live out our purpose, our call and our mission as Disciples Women through the commands found in Micah 6:8*

*To act justly*

*To love mercy and*

*To walk humbly with our God*

**AND**

*The National Convocation Disciples Women are called by God, to serve our community and the world, to bring comfort to the suffering, encourage the struggling and empower the striving.*

### **Just Women**

The 2021 *Just Women* Bible study, "Power and Possibilities" will have 8 lessons by various writers, including Disciples Women staff. It will also have connections and a section to highlight a Disciples Woman's work. Taking into account the feedback from the Bible Study testers, each lesson will be shorter (1000 – 1200 words instead of 3000 – 3000) and there will be more focus on life application.

The editor, Kathy McDowell resigned. We are grateful for the gifts and time she shared with us. We are also grateful for the numerous ways our former designer, Rev. LaShaundra Smith improved the look and feel of the Bible study as our skillful and passionate designer. Going forward, Rev. Leah Jackson, a current member of the *Just Women* team has agreed to be the editor of this new version of the *Just Women* Bible Study and ministry associate Regenia Smith will be our new designer. These changes will save a significant amount of money and will hopefully be more beneficial to our readers.

We are excited about these changes and pray they meet the needs of the women we serve in the best way possible.

## **On the Road and in the streets**

Since our last meeting I have been involved in various retreats, workshops, ordinations, seminars and conferences. I have been present as a representative, teacher, facilitator and speaker. From the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women to the Black Women and HIV Awareness event (a Disciples Women Endowment Fund and Black Leadership Project Grant recipient), I have learned a great deal and broadened the network of Disciples Women and Black Disciples collaborators. A few highlights are below.

**Sarah Lue Bostick Tour:** To celebrate Disciples Women's 145<sup>th</sup> Birthday and share the impact of Sarah Lue Bostick, I donned a costume, created an accent and portrayed Sarah Lue Bostick for several gatherings throughout the year.

**Black Women and HIV Awareness:** Had the opportunity to speak about how the church, specifically the Black Church can be part of the solution to the rise in HIV contraction among Black Women.

**Dynamic Difference:** I was able to visit two Disciples churches led by Black Disciples that are doing ministry differently. The Gathering in Dallas, TX and Tapestry Church in Oakland, CA have ministries that meet people where they are and help people see their own worth in the realm of God's love. They are teaching people there as many ways to be church and to be Christian as there are people.

**Lets Talk About Sex :** Along with Toni Bond (Ph.D student at Claremont Theological Seminary) and Daphne Gascot Arias (PhD student and Pastor of Downey Memorial Christian Church), co-facilitated an Interfaith Voices for Reproductive Justice intensive workshop at Sister Song's biannual Let's Talk About Sex Conference titled, "Liberating Bodily Autonomy & Sexual Pleasure within Religious Canonical Text."

## **Monday Moments**

Beginning in November 2019, the Executive Committee of Disciples Women began offering a weekly short devotional titled, "Monday Moments." These short, inspirational notes from the committee are intended to engage Disciples Women, to remind people you are not alone, to stay connected and to be an offering to help through the week. These are posted every Monday on [the Disciples Women's Facebook Page](#) and can also be found on the Disciples Women's website.

## **Newsletter**

#DWConnect is now our quarterly newsletter sent through constant contact. It is also posted on the Disciples Women website and across social media. This allows us to share information and stay connected. If you have anything you want shared with the Disciples Women community, or if you have not received #DWConnect please send your information to [odw@dhm.disciples.org](mailto:odw@dhm.disciples.org)

## **Woman to Woman Worldwide 2020**

As a result of the 2018 journey to Cuba, the Woman to Woman participants along with our Cuban partners, wrote [GA-1927 Concerning the Reopening of the U.S. Embassy in Cuba: Ending the U.S. Embargo Against the Island, and Promoting A Constructive Relationship Between Both Countries](#). The Resolution was adopted by the majority of participants in the 2019 General Assembly business meeting.

In October 2019, a delegation of Disciples Women participated in a Woman-to-Woman Worldwide (W2WW) pilgrimage to Morocco, coordinated by Global Ministries. The women were moved by the ministries of Global Ministries' partner, the Evangelical Protestant Church in Morocco (EEAM). They listened to stories of women and families who have faced challenges, and have arrived in Morocco after journeying many miles for safety. Please visit the [Disciples Women's Woman to Woman page](#) to find out more about the journey, the projects being supported and participants you can contact to share with your congregations and organizations.

The 2020 Woman to Woman Worldwide Journey to Southern Asia has been canceled. Information about the possibilities of a 2021 journey will be shared on the website when it is available.

## **Sabbatical**

The plan was to be on sabbatical March 13 – June 13, 2020. I was scheduled and registered to attend four weeks of Spanish Language School in Barcelona, with the help of the Black Leadership Project Grant and the Disciples Women Endowment Fund. As a result of COVID 19, I was unable to travel and ended my sabbatical early with the agreement to continue my sabbatical when it is safe to travel internationally again.

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