

From the General Board: A Report of Hope
By Pastor Stephanie Himmel, General Board Member

Last month, I had the privilege of gathering with Disciples from across the church at the General Board meeting, and I came home with something I want to make sure reaches you: good news.

I came back from this year's meeting encouraged.

Not just informed or updated, but genuinely encouraged, which felt like a gift, because the world we're living in does not seem to hand out encouragement freely.

During our time of sharing prayer concerns, we heard from the pastor of our national church in Washington, D.C., about the threats she has been navigating and the burden she carries simply for showing up and leading. We heard from Disciples serving in parts of the world, and even here in the United States, where naming their location or the work they are doing could put people in danger. The difficulty and suffering across our body is real.

And yet, in the middle of all of it, Pastor Stephanie Kendall shared something that has stuck with me. She reminded us of a tradition often used in worship at our national church in D.C. She says, "We need each other," and the congregation responds, "We need each other!"

Try it this Sunday. Say it out loud and hear your congregation say it back. There is something healing about remembering that faith was never meant to be carried alone.

Because of the scope of reporting to work through, each board member is assigned to a small group. I was in Small Group 5, so for the duration of this article, you are too.

In our small group setting, we heard updates from a portion of our General Ministries and regions. What I witnessed was a church that is alive, growing, and Spirit-led.

[NAPAD](#) is planting new churches. NAPAD (the North American Pacific/Asian Disciples of Christ) serves 121 congregations across 20 distinct ethnic groups. Some of these new churches are launching with budgets as small as \$2,000, and only two of their pastors receive a full-time salary. Yet the Spirit is moving. New congregations are opening. The church is growing at the edges, and it is a holy thing to witness.

The [National Convocation](#) is connecting and advocating. The National Convocation, which serves and uplifts Black Disciples, continues positioning itself as a connector, bridging congregations, affirming identity, and proclaiming that the transformative love of Jesus Christ is a prophetic witness that advances and uplifts the Black Disciples community.

A new regional merger is coming! In a historic vote, the board approved the formation of the Living Waters Region, a merger of the Illinois/Wisconsin and Michigan regions, set to become official in 2027. It was an honor to cast that vote and witness a vision rooted in collaboration and shared ministry.

I also serve on the General Board's Mission Committee and was invited to join a smaller working subcommittee. Our initial session centered on a structured community discernment process built around three questions I now invite you to sit with:

What are your clearest and most meaningful memories of the church?

What can we work on to bring more of that to life?

What is the purpose and priority of the church? What do we need more of?

What came out of our session wasn't a wish list. What happened in the choir room at Geist Christian Church was a theologically grounded, missional conversation about who we are and what we are called to do right now. Not just a new mission project, but a way of living and being the church together.

I'd encourage you to try these questions in your own small group, ministry team, or even around the dinner table. Because what we need more than ever is more curiosity. More connection. We need each other. (*Hey now, say it back!*)

The virtual [General Assembly](#) is an invitation for everyone to connect. This year's GA will look different. It's the inaugural event, which means it will be imperfectly full of possibility. We hope it extends the table, adds seats, and helps us practice the necessary conversations that shape us as a movement for wholeness.

There is much in our world that calls us to grieve, and we must continue to weep with those who weep. But we are a people of resurrection hope who press on knowing the Spirit is not finished with us yet.

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Full reports from General Ministries and Regions may be found at [Disciples.org](#)