

## Our Great Disciples Family Gathering in Memphis

(AKA: General Assembly)

A few dozen of our Disciple clergy and laity from the Great River Region enjoyed inspiring worship services, meaningful workshops, fabulous meals and fellowship time with 2300+ members of our wider church family! Several of our contingency began the Assembly by bringing in our prop - the "GRR Steamboat" - created by our talented Kristen Beach. And although we were prepared to walk into the regional roll-call to Tina Turner's "Proud Mary" - Rollin'...Rollin'...Rollin' on the river - we actually walked in to Prince's song "Kiss", which made us both scratch our heads and laugh at the same time! (The technical piece of coordinating a production like that leaves a lot of room for comical mishaps....so grateful that we are a church that values giving grace!) Many thanks to those who got up early on that first day of Assembly to help the GRR show up with enthusiasm and creativity!

Our first evening, we were blessed to hear the witness and message of Rev. Bernice King, daughter of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. She reminded us - and encouraged us - through a powerful word that the Holy Spirit of God works through US...that God is calling each of us to be a vessel of the Spirit and show up for God on a daily basis! Another powerful message came to us on Monday night when Dr. Stephen Cady - President of Brite Divinity School - shared an extraordinary call to us to reflect upon the shapes of our Tables where we welcome others...for no matter what shape - round, oval, square, or rectangle - they must also always be "cruciform" - for they must always bear witness to the cross we represent. Creative expressions of art and music were offered each night and the final night we witnessed the three living former GMP's - Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins, Rev. Dr. Dick Hamm & Rev. John Humbert - bear witness to where we have been as a church...which opens our pathway to where God may be leading us into the future!

And one of the most powerful experiences for me personally was participating in the Moral Monday march with Rev. Dr. William Barber - along with several hundred of our DOC family - as we stood with him by the county courthouse encouraging law makers to consider the potential outcomes of lives destroyed and lives lost due to cuts in Medicaid. Standing in the blazing sun - robed up with glistening beads of spiritual sweat dripping down his face - Dr. Barber spoke words of life and hope in the midst of life-altering cuts to benefits...which would include many pastors' families standing in our midst. He stood as a powerful witness of one who seeks justice and mercy for the powerless while walking humbly with his God!

There were so many powerful moments - in worship, workshops, General Ministry dinners and receptions - that it is nearly impossible to distill our four days of business sessions and worshipful work into a newsletter article...so I'll wrap it up...for now! Suffice it to say that old friendships were renewed, new connections made, prayer and music uplifted our spirits, and powerful messages of hope, discipleship and transformation were spoken into our lives! I encourage all who attended the General Assembly in Memphis to continue burning the light of Christ within you by sharing your personal experiences with others in your circles...may our

experience in Memphis live **BEYOND** those four days as “we reach, teach, and transform lives through Christ’s Love”.

As always...be a blessing, Disciples,

*Rev. Alison Robuck*

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Interim Regional Minister