Under the theme, “One God, One Church, One Mission” the National Convocation is purposed to provide an instrumentality within the structure of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) as a forum for the discussion of pertinent issues related to the Black Church in the context of total church life. Meetings and programs are arranged for fellowship; program promotion; leadership development; and such other general purposes as shall support and strengthen the congregations in the total mission of the church.

Our vision is to be a leaven in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) recognizing and developing leaders for the empowerment of African American pastors and congregations for the benefit of the whole church.

We began the year in a whole church collaboration effort with the Office of the General Minister and President, Disciples Home Missions, The Pension Fund, The Department of Black Ministry, Christian Theological Seminary and The Christian Church in Indiana, to host the nationally acclaimed, 2014 Academy of Preachers. Young preachers, male and female, from across the nation including several Disciples of Christ preachers, were given opportunity to preach on a national stage in a forum for growth and review. Indiana was a great place for this event in which Disciples played a major role in its success.

The National Convocation is very excited about the information regarding the Merger Agreement of 1969 is being shared more and more, in circles of learning and cultural growth in the church. We are a church with a most interesting past and it helps to know where we have come from in order to plan where to go. We are intentional to emphasize and encourage the imperative and initiative to become a pro-reconciling/anti-racist church. We seek to become a church that serves, leads, and welcomes all to worship and feast at the Table as welcomed by God. We were blessed and challenged by our Minister of Reconciliation, Rev. April Johnson, who led us in an Anti-Racism Training Workshop during our December 2014 Board of Trustees meeting. We were made aware of three levels of racism that are peculiar to the African American community: institutional racism, socio economic - different access to goods and services; personal mediated racism, commission and omission, police brutality, and teacher
devaluation; and Internalized racism, acceptance of racism and the limitations imposed upon you as defined by others and/or yourself.

A major highlight of the 23rd Biennial Session of the National Convocation held at Columbus, Ohio was the successful Pre-Event sponsored by DHM and directed by Minister Sheila Spencer, Director of Christian Education and Faith Formation, the attendance was tremendous. We were really pleased to see the kickoff of the Preston Taylor Institute, sponsored by the African American Leadership and Development Program, directed by Dr. Bill Lee. It was a powerful experience. Ministers left looking forward to the next installment of the Institute. Many thanks go to Jackie Bunch and the Local Arrangements Committee in Columbus, for their hard work and commitment to the success of the Biennial Session. They made the Ohio Region and the city look good for the upcoming General Assembly. In our December Board Meeting, the Articles and By-Laws were amended to allow for the person nominated and elected to serve as vice president, would become president-elect at the end of their vice-presidency. The remaining officers would be nominated and then elected at the Biennial Session.

The 23rd Biennial Session of the National Convocation took place in Columbus, Ohio. Our theme was “BE STILL AND KNOW”, based on Psalm 46: 10. We were very happy to see attendance at more than six hundred registered adults and children. We were led in inspirational preaching, moving music and informative resource talks by persons who were willing and eager to serve. An added blessing to the Biennial Session was the cooperation the Local Arrangements Committee received from the entire region. Members of the Local Arrangements Committee came from as far as Cleveland, Xenia and Cincinnati. The inaugural class of the Preston Taylor Institute gave the clergy and lay leaders an opportunity to be for real, honest and transparent in discussing their passion and challenges in ministry. Mission First, was lifted up with the Board as an imperative program to strengthen our church from congregations outward. When Mission Gatherings take place in our regions, all Disciples are encouraged to participate.

It was the dream of our former president, Rev. Patricia Maples, to hold the 2014 Spring Executive Committee Meeting of the Board in Ghana, West Africa. The trip included the Executives, the Merger Staff, Board Members and friends. This was another example of collaboration between The Division of Overseas Ministries, Disciples Home Missions and the National Convocation. It was an unforgettable experience. We were able to dedicate three water wells, one at a school and two others in local communities. We also took clothing, school supplies and toys for the children at some of the schools and churches we visited. We were able to meet some of our overseas mission partners and were blessed to have the leadership of now retired Africa Area Executive, Rev. Sandra Gourdet, respectfully known as “Mama Sandra”.

Disciples Home Missions practically serves hand in hand with the National Convocation in that our Merger Staff, Min. Sheila Spencer, Dr. R. Wayne Calhoun and Rev. Chesla Nickleson are housed in this ministry. We are all proud and pleased to welcome Rev. Chesla Nickleson as our newest Merger Staff member to serve as Program Director for the Office of Disciples Women. DHM president Dr. Ron Degges and Office of Disciples Women president Pat Donahoo
understand and are committed to the Merger Agreement and stress for diversity and inclusion throughout the life of church. It was my pleasure to attend my first Quadrennial Assembly in Atlanta, Georgia and witness the full scale and diverse participation of Disciples women from all over the country. I was impressed at the number of actively participating African American women.

I was honored to have a sabbatical last fall and used this as an opportunity to refresh my preaching craft that had shown signs of needed improvement recently. I studied with Dr. Frank Thomas, Professor of Preaching at Christian Theological Seminary who served as my preaching coach. This was time well spent.

Respectfully submitted,
Timothy M. James, Administrative Secretary

**Recommended Action:**

The General Board receives the report from the National Convocation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and forwards the report to the 2015 General Assembly for consideration and discussion.