The General Assembly Committee of the General Board has a two-fold responsibility. First – the General Assembly Committee replaced the former Time and Place Committee and thus will be bringing a separate business item to approve the location and date of the 2017 General Assembly.

The second responsibility is to follow up on approved or referred resolutions which contained actionable items from the previous General Assembly and report back to the current General Assembly.

**GA-0919 Christian Unity & War**

Following the recommendation of the General Board, GA-0919 was referred by the General Assembly to the Council on Christian Unity (CCU). The Council was directed to work with Disciples Peace Fellowship (DPF) to bring back a report to the 2011 General Assembly regarding GA-0919. The result of this collaboration was the Faithful Conversations process: a model for engaging divisive issues while maintaining our unity. The cooperation between Dr. Robert Welsh of CCU and Dr. Jim Higginbotham of DPF was crucial to the launch of this collaborative effort.

Faithful Conversations came to life in part to save some aspects of the proposed Call for Action process that was defeated by the 2009 Indianapolis Assembly. As such, Faithful Conversations seeks to engage the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in study, dialogue, worship, prayer and action around issues of war, peace and unity.

Faithful Conversations was a highly acclaimed dimension of the 2011 Nashville Assembly. High praise must be given to Dr. Robert Welch and the CCU Board for a great deal of this success. Following the launch at Nashville, Faithful Conversations moved into the regions and congregations in 2012. Resources were placed online and conversations were held in 4 regions: Indiana, Pacific-Southwest, Nebraska and Georgia. The process was promoted in two other regions: Illinois-Wisconsin and Mid-America. Participants were encouraged to take the process home and use it in their congregations and ecumenically in their communities.

These insights were gleaned in the regions where conversations were held:

1. There is a tendency for Disciples to initially embrace pacifism, but to move toward a just war position as the three traditional positions of Christianity (just war, holy war and pacifism) are discussed and better understood.
2. Some questions were raised about the realism of just war theory. Has there ever been a just war? Is not just war almost pacifism if one adheres to a strict application of its precepts?
3. There was some attempt by conversation participants to ease just war restrictions so that it’s easier to claim that a given war is just.
4. Pacifism was seen by some as more of a personal choice than a national choice.
5. There is no place within just war theory for revolution. Justice advocates may have good reason for rejecting at least some aspects of just war theory.
6. Disciples are proud of U.S. military traditions and of family members who’ve served, but they are painfully aware of conflict between military norms and biblical norms and the spiritual/psychological toll taken on Christian military personnel when they take action which conflicts with what they learned in Sunday School. This conflict is especially acute when the enemy is a bomb-wielding child on a city street, not a uniformed soldier on a battlefield.
7. We Disciples need to listen to each other in the face of:
   a. Our differences on questions of war and peace
   b. The moral pain that returning soldiers need to talk out

It is important to note that there will be a Sacred Conversations track focused on the topic of Christian Unity and War at the 2013 Orlando General Assembly. Perhaps it is fair to say that the Sacred Conversations that are taking place in Orlando are partially due to the success of the Faithful Conservations in 2011 and thus arose from the spirit of GA-0919 and the very hard conversation that took place at the spring 2009 General Board meeting regarding GA-0919 (which led to the recommendation that GA-0919 be referred to the Council on Christian Unity). One of the highlights of Sacred Conversations at Orlando will be the introduction of resources for congregations engaged in ministry with returning veterans and their families.

**GA-1116 Addressing Anti-Muslim Action in America**

The resolution encouraged all expressions of the church to engage in interfaith dialogue and action so that mutual regard and understanding between Muslims and Christians will be deepened. It is thought that some Regions have done so, but no central repository of response has been maintained. Disciples Peace Fellowship continues to be available to all expressions of the church as a resource for matters of peace and reconciliation.

**GA-1117 A Call For Reflection and Advocacy on Behalf Of the Democratic Republic of Congo**

General Assembly Resolution 1117 asks the church in each of its expressions to become knowledgeable about the challenge of God’s people in the Congo due to the exploitation of the mineral wealth of that country which has led to war, countless deaths, and the sexual exploitation and humiliation of the population.

The resolution supported legislation in the United States and Canada which would require manufacturers of electronic products to trace the minerals they use in their
products and so that they could certify that they are “DRC Conflict Free.” And it called on Global Ministries to equip the church with resources for education that led to advocacy of behalf of these sisters and brothers.

Since the General Assembly met, the Securities and Exchange Commission of the United States issued a Final Ruling on September 12, 2012 which outlines the process by which manufacturers who use minerals mined in the Congo must trace the source of their minerals in order to determine if they are “DRC Conflict Free.” The tracing process is mandated to begin with calendar year 2013. The report of the SEC may be found at this web address:  http://www.sec.gov/rules/final/2012/34-67716.pdf

While the final ruling does require manufacturers to apply due diligence, which is audited, to trace the source of the minerals used in their production and report the same to the SEC in their annual filings, it does not require manufacturers to label consumer products in any fashion which was anticipated in GA 1117.

Addressing the call for education and advocacy, the Common Global Ministries Board of Directors, during the course of the completing the Five Year Strategic Plan, made the decision to focus on one geographic area for a period of twelve to eighteen months. The region chosen for the initial focus is the Democratic Republic of Congo. During this period emphasis will be placed on advocacy priorities, pilgrimages to the DRC, and exchange visits. Educational material will be developed for use in Bible studies, Sunday school classes and Vacation Bible School. Professor Rick Lowery will develop a Bible study series and a scholar from the DRC will also develop a parallel study. The goal is to ensure that every DOC /UCC congregation has a greater awareness of challenges and triumphs of the Community of Disciples of Christ in Congo.

GA-1119 Moral Injury and Spiritual Care in a Time of War

A resolution was passed at the 2011 GA that included “reflection, research, prayer and education so that we might respond to brokenness and be agents of healing in a time of war”.

On June 4, 2012, the Soul Repair Center at the Brite Divinity School opened with help from the Lilly Endowment. Dr. Rita Nakashima Brock (a Disciples theologian) and Rev. Herman Keizer, Jr. (U.S. Army Col. Ret. who served 34 years as a military chaplain) serve as founding co-directors. Dr. Coleman Baker serves as Center Program Manager.

The Co-Directors and Center Program Manager have traveled to clergy and chaplain conferences, church assemblies, divinity schools, denomination headquarters, individual churches, retreat centers, and scholarly annual meetings to speak about moral injury. The Center held its first conference on moral injury at its Official Launch on November 12, attended by over 200 people, and in February 2013, over 60 people from congregations and Veterans Affairs clinicians gathered for the very first training program for churches interested in
supporting veterans with moral injury. A second training is scheduled for June 2013.

The Disciples’ support for work on moral injury has resulted in the term becoming more familiar to the general public well beyond religious circles and in stirring up media interest in the concept because of mounting suicides in both active duty troops and in the veteran community. The Center is the only one in the United States and has received coverage in various media outlets including radio, news magazines and newspapers. The Co-Directors taught a webinar for the Christian Reformed Church in January, which had the highest attendance and later listens ever.

In addition, Dr. Brock published Soul Repair: Recovery from Moral Injury After War, co-authored with Gabriella Lettini, in November 2012.

GA-1120 Human Trafficking

Disciples Women continues to provide resources for education including Bible study, PowerPoint presentations, prayer walks, and advocacy opportunities. Both staff and volunteer committee members provide leadership for retreats and women’s groups to provide education and information on the breadth of human trafficking and the depth of need to end the practice and heal the victims. Members of the Executive Committee have attended trainings in their own regions. Vendors used for logo items are researched to establish that slave labor is not used in their supply chains. Pertinent legislation is updated on Facebook page to alert when there are opportunities to engage elected officials in dialog to inform of its importance and encourage appropriate voting on legislation. The recent reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) which included the reauthorization of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act was reported on, monitored and celebrated via Disciples Women social media.

As the planning team for the Quadrennial Assembly of 2014 worked to discern an appropriate theme, addressing the needs of human trafficking victims was represented and reflected in both the mission and education pieces of the event. A community walk to raise funds for Atlanta programs for trafficking victims is being planned. The theme “I See You” emerged in part from the awareness that trafficking victims are among us and we do not recognize them or their needs and our desire to become aware so that we may provide needed support and services.

Educational and advocacy articles are provided for each issue of Just Women magazine. Local agencies are used as resources to educate women’s groups on how they can be involved in both education and advocacy.

The Executive Director and the Program Director of Disciples Women were invited to provide an educational presentation to the pastors attending the Black Ministers Retreat in 2013. Rev. Irie Sessions completed the three-person team to help pastors become
aware that there are victims sitting in their congregations and the importance of language and sensitivity to their experience is necessary to help them heal.

Representatives from the Executive Committee of Disciples Women will be leading Sunday morning Bible study on human trafficking as one of the options at this year’s General Assembly.

**GA-1121 Justice in Education Reform**

The resolution was presented on the floor of the General Assembly at Nashville, Tennessee in 2011. The only push back we got was that some people thought it was unfair to charter schools.

At the time, it was more a resolution about people getting involved in what was happening in their local communities. In the fall of 2011, the theme and the materials developed for The Light a Candle, Forty Days of Prayer for Children, leading up to the Children's Sabbath, were about public education. The thrust of this material was to encourage people to find out what was going on and to get involved in what was happening in their local school systems. Jan Ressenger of the UCCs helped us to develop the materials. We sent out several of Jan's excellent e-mails that explained what was happening in the public education system to those who were part of the Disciples Care for Children Network. Our Family and Children’s Ministries released one Rapid Response. In 2012 the theme for Children's Sabbath was education so some of the same materials were updated and posted for the Light a Candle for Children, Forty Days of Prayer leading up to the Sabbath. Here is the Action Page for 2012, [https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/dhm/dhm-ministries/family-and-childrens-ministries/light-a-candle/light-a-candle-action-page/](https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/dhm/dhm-ministries/family-and-childrens-ministries/light-a-candle/light-a-candle-action-page/).

Because of this Resolution hopefully other Disciples have been inspired to get involved in their public school systems.

**GA-1122 Preventing Sexual Abuse and Ministering to Its Victims and Survivors Creating Safe Church/Safe Ministry**

Of all human groups, the church should be the most comforting for the hurting. After all, we are called by God to be welcoming, caring and nurturing. The turmoil in many congregations and denominations over sexual abuse shows in stark relief the results of trust broken.

In Nashville in 2011, the General Assembly passed Resolution 1122, calling the Christian Church (DOC) to prevent abuse and minister to the survivors and victims of abuse. For many years the General Commission on Ministry (GCOM) and Regional commissions on ministry have been encouraging boundary training and other "safe church" practices, requiring these trainings for pastors to maintain ministerial standing, and for leaders to participate in camp and other youth programming.

Each of our congregations has the opportunity and responsibility to create safe space
and context for ministry. We are called to 1) assess the safety of our ministries 2) educate and train our leaders, and 3) assure that children, youth, and adults alike are respected and cared for in life-giving ways. Most of us never think there will be a problem in our congregation, until the un-thinkable happens and lives and communities are devastated. The very act of creating safe space and understanding proclaims to those in our congregations and those who yet to be in our congregations that we care about their lives. When we begin the process of becoming a safe church, we are proclaiming the Good News of Gods' love for those who have been abused in the past and those who will be protected in a safe place. To be a safe church is to be a community of Christ's welcome.

The national leader in abuse risk management, Praesidium provided an in-depth Abuse Prevention education workshop at the 2011 General Assembly. It was praised by everyone who participated from women who have been abused in the church to pastors of congregations. Praesidium (Latin - "to guard or protect from harm") has done extensive study and provides us an array of resources. You may check them out directly: www.praesidiuminc.com. The Insurance Board provides Praesidium's resources to our congregations! As Disciples of Christ ALL of our congregations are provided free support materials through the Insurance Board/Praesidium. (Your congregation does not need to be covered by IB in order to receive this support; it is available to you simply because you are DOC!)

Through the online SafeConduct Workbench your congregation can do free self-assessment, free boundary training, and begin your process of background checking. You will find excellent free resources in areas such as Abuse Prevention policy development (even with new policy templates), Parents' Guide for Teens and the Internet, Internet Safety Guidelines, Electronic Communications policies, Social Network Guidelines for Parents, Adult - Child Affection Policy. Excellent resources are available to us and it is as easy as going on the site: www.insuranceboard.org/safety_solutions/safe_conduct_workbench.aspx.

For more information about how your congregation, camp or other ministry can create safe space and safe ministry, contact your Regional Minister and other congregations that have done good work in this area.