OGMP

The Office of the General Minister and President
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada

July 19, 2013

Dear Colleagues in Ministry,

Our General Assembly ended up taking place at a very painful time for many Americans, especially in the African American community. The Zimmerman verdict, while cheered by some Disciples, has thrown others into a kind of despair for our nation and our children, a sense that we are sliding backwards at a scary rate. The poignant question of the son of an African American Disciples pastor, "Will I be shot?" symbolizes the depth of fear and devastation that this situation has visited upon a whole community.

In light of the fortuitous circumstance that the NAACP convention was right next to ours, that a number of our attendees were also registered there, and that several of our leaders participate in the National Religious Affairs Committee of the NAACP, meant that we Disciples had an opportunity to extend the ministry of presence with hurting brothers and sisters. That a leader of a predominantly white denomination could stand before the convention and say that we, too, believe that children should not be lost to violence, that we, too, desire to be assured that justice is reached in this case, gave a moment of hope that our nation is not totally divided and polarized along racial lines. That a delegation from our assembly later went to stand with members of the NAACP gave encouragement that we can see this through together. The NAACP voted to suspend their meeting rules to accommodate our presence.

When three people from the National Religious Affairs committee, including a Disciples pastor, wanted to return the favor of bringing greetings, it seemed the natural thing to do and we arranged for them to speak during the pre-worship time. As it turned out, they were not able to accommodate our pre-worship time so we received them later in the order of service.

It is quite possible that in the end this will make extra work for you. Still I believe it was a providential moment to make a witness to our "passion for justice," to a desire to overcome the terrible brokenness represented by the verdict and the various reactions to it.

I have attached my remarks at the service on Sunday night. Perhaps they can be helpful.

Thanks for all you do in interpreting the various ministries of our church to each other.

Blessings,

Sharon E. Watkins

Sharon E. Watkins
General Minister and President

Attachment: Remarks from General Assembly Worship, July 14, 2013

Sharon E. Watkins,
General Minister and President

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