

Welcome and Opening Comments
St. Louis-Area Disciples Summit on Racial Justice
September 19, 2015
Compton Heights Christian Church (DOC)

Welcome! We are so grateful for your willingness to spend this day helping Disciples work together on the hard racial justice issues before us. May we be Church – the people of Jesus together today.

I am Jacque Foster, pastor of Compton Heights Christian Church. On behalf of our congregation, I welcome you HERE to this space. And that welcome includes the necessities -- the restrooms are out this door to the left and then on your right. This main level of the building is fully accessible. There are also restrooms down the narthex stairs, if you choose to take the stairs. If you need anything today please ask me or another CHCC member. We have on Red ribbons with Black Lives Matter buttons in the middle of them.

When I say WE welcome you, I mean not only **Compton Height CC**, but especially:

The **NBA (National Benevolent Association)** team who have poured their heart and soul and energy and passion into bringing us together as Church to recognize our brokenness and to bring new health to Church and communities. NBA hopes that this may be a model for Disciples in other areas of the country, because the need is everywhere.

Reconciliation Ministries, particularly Rev. April Johnson, Director of Reconciliation Ministries for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). as Reconciliation moves into a renewed sense of urgency in helping Disciples live into our calling as an Anti-racist/Pro-Reconciling church.

Rev. Dietra Wise Baker, pastor of Liberation Christian Church here in St. Louis who had headed up the on the ground planning for this event

Rev. David Gerth and Ms. Brittini Gray of Metropolitan Congregations United who have worked with congregations across the ecumenical and inter-faith spectrum in these critical months.

We have been a long time coming to this day, from a time when Dietra, Derrick Perkins, and Jeff Moore and Margie Pride and I sat around a table sharing our pain and trying to imagine what it might look like for Disciples come together, to do this work together, to stand next to each other.

Ronald Montgomery, a St. Louis Native, poet, and artist wrote a poem

The Conversation is not over when the Answer is Love - the last stanza of which is:

Pray now that our sons and daughters come home alive –
Pray now for real dialogs, with people of all colors . . . a pale you, a rainbow me
Pray now that our children outlive their parents – a brighter future to see
Just as much, pray that all see God is listening and blessing changes
Not our colors, but our hearts and minds, that (God's) rearrangin'

Our purpose today is to come together – to dare to really talk – to hear the stories – so that we may create together a mission for racial justice and reconciling ministries in the St. Louis area Disciples congregations, ministries, and communities.