

**NBA Collaborates with St. Louis-Area Clergy
on Racial Justice Initiatives
August 8, 2015**

Following the fatal shooting of young adult Michael Brown on August 9, 2014, by Ferguson police officer Darren Wilson, several Disciple clergy and laypersons joined many others in community responses for justice in Ferguson and beyond. The National Benevolent Association of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)—in cooperation with Reconciliation Ministry, the Office of the General Minister and President, Week of Compassion, and Higher Education and Leadership Ministries—hopes to support these local Disciples efforts for justice and racial reconciliation by promoting and facilitating conversation, gathering, advocacy, and healing.



Key clergy in this movement, including Rev. Dietra Wise Baker, Rev. Jacque Foster, Rev. Jeff Moore, Rev. Derrick Perkins, and Rev. Margie Pride, have been meeting with Regional Ministry Team Leader Rev. Penny Ross-Corona to determine ongoing local actions and wider church response.

These actions include:

- Creating a documentary promoting justice work through the testimony of activist clergy, lay leaders, and residents;
- Working on initiatives addressing the school-to-prison pipeline;
- Developing tools and resources for the wider Church to address other justice crises;
- Nurturing peer groups of Disciples for racial justice; and
- Organizing a St. Louis-Area Disciples Summit on Racial Justice to gather and challenge area Disciples to forge a unique mission imperative for racial justice in the St. Louis region.

St. Louis-Area Disciples Summit on Racial Justice

The St. Louis-Area Disciples Summit on Racial Justice, planned for September 19, will be an opportunity to bring St. Louis-area congregations together to dialogue around issues of racial justice and to equip congregations theologically and emotionally to enter, and sustain, this difficult work.

To help facilitate these efforts, the NBA is contracting with Rev. Dietra Wise Baker, who will serve in a temporary position to coordinate the local organizing of the St. Louis-Area Disciples Summit on Racial Justice. Baker will manage event communications and logistics, working closely with Rev. Jacque Foster, pastor of [Compton Heights Christian Church](#) and co-host of the event.

Baker serves as chaplain and program development manager for Episcopal City Mission; adjunct professor at her alma mater, Eden Theological Seminary; and pastor and planter of [Liberation Christian Church](#) in St. Louis. Responding quickly to the Brown shooting, in August 2014 Baker became the clergy caucus co-leader of the [Gamaliel Networks' Metropolitan Congregations United](#), an organization that resourced clergy and congregations in the early stages of the community responses that emerged following Brown's death in Ferguson.

“We have to come face to face with the fact that racial injustice is everywhere—in our churches, schools, police departments, and local courts,” says Baker. “We are calling St. Louis-area Disciples to decide how we will work together and be known for mission and ministry around racial justice issues. Right now we are known for our hearts—it’s time to be known for our hands.”

“My prayer is that Disciples will come together as we have not come together before—to hear and support each other and to enter into a new depth of ministry to build an anti-racist community,” says Foster. “In this last year, God has moved us to a new place. I believe this is a moment of critical opportunity for us.”

To learn more about racial justice initiatives in the St. Louis region and/or to participate in the St. Louis-Area Disciples Summit on Racial Justice on September 19, please contact STLsummit@nbacares.org.

Additional Disciples resources related to Ferguson:

- Video: [“Ferguson, Clergy, and the Faith that Fuels their Lives”](#) by Leah Gunning Francis (June 2015)
- GA 1518: [Black Lives Matter: A Movement for All](#)
- [Letter from Regional Ministers to the Church](#) (April 2015)
- [Letter from Cabinet to the Church](#) (Feb. 2015)
- [Reconciliation Ministry](#)
- Chalice Press books
 - [Ferguson and Faith](#) by Leah Gunning Francis
 - [Pre-Post-Racial America](#) by Sandhya Rani Jha
 - [Forward Together](#) by William J. Barber II
 - [Inclusion](#) by Eric H.F. Law
 - [Born Apart, Becoming One](#) by Chris Hobgood
 - [Room at the Table](#) by Sandhya Rani Jha
 - [Liberating Our Dignity, Saving Our Souls](#) by Lee H. Butler, Jr.

About the National Benevolent Association

The National Benevolent Association serves as the health and social service general ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The NBA partners with local congregations, regional and general ministries, and a variety of Disciples-related health and social service providers. The NBA initiates, incubates, and connects partner ministries and organizations that provide direct care to those in need.