
MADISON HEIGHTS MESSENGER

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Pam Hubbard
Music Director

George B. Harris, Minister
Email: bernerdharris@yahoo.com
MHCC16@yahoo.com
Church Phone: 845-3855
Open doors-----Open hearts

Brenda Harris
Secretary

General Assembly 2017

Last month Brenda and I attended the General Assembly held in Indianapolis Indiana. Reservations at the hotels around the convention center were very expensive. With rooms close to \$200 per night and parking an additional \$40 a day I decided to try something new. Following a discipline of stewardship we rented a house through "HomeAway.com" This gave us a lot more room, allowed us to bring the dog with us, allowed us to save a lot of money on food costs, I also downloaded the "Lyft" app on my phone and we were picked up and dropped off door to door for a fraction of what it would have cost in parking fees.

On Saturday we registered and got familiar with the layout and planned our activities. Like all of the other assemblies we simply can't possibly do it all. The schedule runs from 7:00am-10:00pm. The docket can be downloaded here <http://ga.disciples.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/GA2017-Docket-Web-verison.pdf> but I confess looking at a 423 page pdf file is not all that easy. We decided to focus on the workshops and the assembly business sessions and we spent a considerable amount of time looking at all of the exhibits in the exhibit hall which is one of our favorite parts of the assembly.

On Sunday morning all of the local Disciple of Christ churches had guest speakers from the assembly. I prefer to experience a regular Sunday morning worship so I looked up the closest United Church of Christ congregation. We arrived at 10:25 for 10:30 service only to find the church was closed. They were holding worship at their church camp for the last day of their camping season. I looked up the nearest church to us on the GPS which turned out to be an independent Christian Church.

Monday began our business sessions and workshops. Business items can be found online at <http://ga.disciples.org/business/>. In addition to the business sessions we attended the "Open Forum with the Nominee for General Minister." The assembly elected Terri Owens as the new General Minister and President. You can find information here <http://disciples.org/ogmp/meet-the-gmp-nominee/>.

We attended four workshops but wish we could have done more. The first workshop was titled "New Beginnings" presented by Rick Morse. You may be familiar with the name, he has spoken at our church and the elders have studied his book "From our Doorsteps." The workshop on Monday was presented by Eric Law & Bruce Barkhouer it was about expanding the congregation's vision of stewardship beyond money to include the currencies of relationship, truth, wellness, gracious leadership, time and place. The workshop on Tuesday was titled "Legacy Giving: A New Stream of Church Funding" presented by Randy Johnson and Kirby Gould of the Christian Church Foundation. It was about helping people to see the power of end of life gifts and how they can enhance the future of the congregation's ministry and vision. The workshop on Wednesday was on the topic of mental health it was titled "Speaking into the Silence" and presented by Angela Whitenhill. It was about building awareness and breaking the stigma of mental health illness in the church.

While assembly is a joyous and spirit filled experience, and it is always wonderful to worship together in assembly, I simply cannot cover everything here in this space. I plan to talk about these experiences in future sermons and newsletter articles. I am frustrated over the failure of stewardship when assembly costs two participants \$3,000 if they rent a room at a local hotel, pay for parking, and sign up for all of the meals. I am broken hearted that people will spend this much money to assemble, call for action in missions, vote on and pledge to support those on the fringes of society, while there is within half a mile of the assembly is a bridge where the homeless have made a camp.

In Christian Love,

George Harris