

**THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH  
DISCIPLES OF CHRIST  
IN TENNESSEE**

**2024 REGIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**OUR  
WORLD:  
THE WAY, THE TRUTH, THE LIGHT**

**October 11th & 12th, 2024**

**Anointed Temple of Praise**

**Christian Church**

**Memphis, Tennessee**

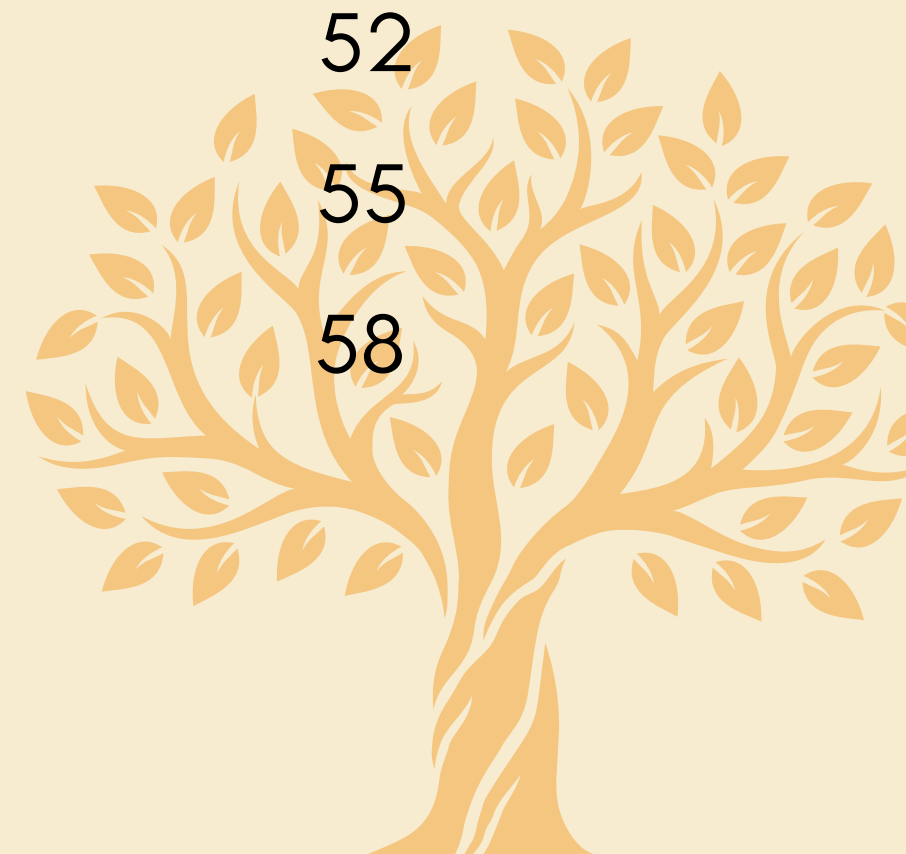
**Ephesians 2:10**

**"For we are God's handiwork,  
created in Christ Jesus to do good  
works, which God prepared in  
advance for us to do."**

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**Tennessee**  
DISCIPLES of CHRIST

4006 Ashland City Highway, Nashville, TN 37218  
Tel 615/646-3705 Fax 615/646-3707  
Rev. Kevin McNeil  
Interim Regional Minister and President  
[revmneil@tndisciples.org](mailto:revmneil@tndisciples.org)

Tennessee Disciples,

Welcome to the 2024 Tennessee Disciples Regional Assembly, “Our World: The Way, The Truth, The Light. We gather from West, Middle, and East Tennessee to commune with God, and connect with one another. As we are back together again, we are looking forward to your presence and participation in the worship service, workshops, dinner, and luncheons. Take this opportunity to connect to new people or reconnect with old friends.

We are coming together to learn and grow and fellowship together. This year has been a year of transition and God is guiding us through it. The Tennessee Region is rich in its history and is strong. It is a region that draws its strength from its diversity of gifts and personalities as all are welcomed at the table.

We’re a diverse group of Christ-followers from across the region who worship in old sanctuaries, beautiful edifices, living rooms, coffee shops, and online. As Disciples, we read and wrestle with the scriptures and we believe God loves the whole world, you included.

*in God’s covenant of love which binds  
us to God and to one another.*

From The( [Preamble to The Design of the Christian Church \(Disciples of Christ\)](#))

It is this covenant love that calls us together and keeps us together during this time of transition. God has a plan for us and as the scripture states:

*6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: Philippians 1:6*

A very special thanks to all Regional Staff, and Dr. Debra Reid who spent countless hours working to make sure that there is room at the table for all. Thank you to all who showed up for your participation, patience, and love displayed in this gathering. A special thank you to Dr. Thomas and Dr. Kim Murray and Anointed Temple of Praise and Pastor Bill Russell and Central Christian in Memphis for opening your doors, welcoming your siblings and helping to make this assembly a success.

Blessings to all,

Rev. Kevin L. McNeil





*Tennessee*  
DISCIPLES of CHRIST

October 11, 2024  
4006 Ashland City Highway, Nashville, TN 37218  
Tel 615/646-3705 Fax 615/646-3707 Rev. Kevin  
McNeil Regional Minister and President  
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Welcome to the 2024 Christian Church in Tennessee Regional Assembly! My prayer is that we will better hear God's call as we are challenged to take action to love OUR WORLD and one another. It has been an honor to serve as Regional Moderator for the past two years! We had a few unexpected challenges along the way, including a transitioning in leadership, but the Lord continues to see us through.

This Assembly could not have been possible without a hard-working innovative Planning Committee, dedicated Volunteers, and a supportive Regional Board and Staff. On behalf of the region, we are appreciative to all of those who contributed to making this a successful Assembly. Special thanks to the Committee Chair, the Rev. Dr. Debra Reid, and her team! We are grateful for the host church, Anointed Temple of Praise Christian Church and their pastor, the Rev. Dr. Thomas Murray for opening their doors to serve us.

As my service ends as Regional Moderator, it has been a pleasure getting to know and worshiping with so many of you during my congregational visits. Along with the Executive Committee, Regional Board, and Staff we kept the region focused after the resignation and transition of our Immediate Past Regional Minister and President, the Rev. Dr. Christal Williams and the call of the Rev. Kevin McNeil as Interim Regional Minister and President. Our quest to be made whole continues with the appointment of the Regional Search Committee, and the start of their important work, under the leadership of chair and vice chair Elder LaVerne Bobo and Sister Mara Grisham respectively. We look forward to the call of our next Regional Pastor.

On a personal note, both my father and father-in-law went to be with Lord during my time as Regional Moderator. I am grateful for the kindness shown during this time of loss, memorial, and reflection. Also, I unsuccessfully ran for Council-At-Large in Metro Nashville Davidson County, but managed to receive over 16,000 votes. The desire was to have "BETTER DAYS WITH HAYES!" My life has forever changed because of the wonderful people that I was allowed to meet by launching out into the deep and entering a county wide race.

With the theme "Our World: The Way, the Truth, the Light" we are challenged to live our lives focused on good works that result in us making it a priority to love one another and our world. We are now less than a month away from the federal, state, and local elections. If we are to live our lives doing good works then it is essential to vote and support candidates that are community centered and focused on making our world and the people in it better.

The challenge is for the conversation and work to continue in our region and congregations after this Assembly.



Having been baptized into the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) around the age of seven, I am grateful for so many saints that have gone to be with the Lord who served in the Christian Church on whose shoulders I stand. None of these “cloud of witnesses” are more important to my faith walk than my grandparents, Callum and Hildra Hayes who served in churches in Alabama for most of their lives and, my deceased wife, Vivian Reed Hayes, who served in the Tennessee region for many years.

I thank God for my wife Rev. Judge Robin Hayes, my children, stepchildren, G-daughter, son-in-law, mother, stepfather, siblings, and my past and present VILLAGE for their love and support. I am grateful to my local congregation Alameda Christian Church for supporting my decision to step down from serving as an elder during the past year serving as Regional Moderator.

I look forward to the leadership of our incoming Moderators and the entire Regional Board, and the call of our next Regional Minister and President. May of Lord continue to Bless and Keep the Christian Church in Tennessee.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Arnold Hayes', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Arnold Hayes  
Regional Moderator  
The Christian Church in Tennessee  
[www.tndisciples.org](http://www.tndisciples.org)  
[Arnold@tndisciples.org](mailto:Arnold@tndisciples.org)





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**Rev. Kevin McNeil**  
Interim Regional Minister and President  
[revmcneil@tndisciples.org](mailto:revmcneil@tndisciples.org)

Dear Church Family,

Welcome to the 2024 Regional Assembly hosted by the Tennessee Region, Regional Assembly Planning Committee, and Anointed Temple of Praise Christian Church (D.O.C.) Whether this is your first time, or you are a regular attendee, we know that you will be blessed by the worship, workshops, preaching, exhibits, meal functions, and fellowship planned by the Regional Assembly Committee.

It is a great honor to serve as 2nd Vice-Moderator for the Christian Church in Tennessee for the past two years and to work with this wonderful committee, volunteers/staff at Anointed Temple of Praise Christian Church (ATOP), Rev. McNeil and the Regional Staff in Nashville. We are especially grateful to ATOP for so generously opening their church to us for this Assembly. A special thanks goes to Central Christian Church for opening their space to host the Clergy Luncheon and on-site registration.

We hope each person takes advantage of the inspiring worship services and enjoys the magnificent preaching you will hear. Hopefully, you will join us for dinner tonight, choose to attend several of the interesting and informative workshops, be present in worship, join us as we tend to the work of the Region in a worshipful way, and fellowship with the women and men's groups and be an active part of the Assembly. And for the first time the Tennessee Disciples Women's Ministry has joined with us to simultaneously host their Fall Retreat and participate in Regional Assembly.

I heard this song soon after becoming the 2nd Vice Moderator for the Tennessee Region. The Words enveloped me. Tennessee this is our world. We know the way and the truth. And we are the light! This world, this place, this space is big enough to hold us all. And so, I deem this year's Regional Assembly a time when we declare that we may live together. Working together in harmony. Representing the Creator and respecting the creation is our goal. Spreading love wherever we go and whoever we find ourselves with.

It is our hope and prayer that each person attending leaves the Assembly with renewed passion to love flowing with the knowledge that this is Our World and together we can make a difference. As the song "Our World" by the Doubles says, "This is our world, Come together and love one another. Ain't just your world. This is our world. Come together and love one another, Now." God has truly led us as we made plans for an assembly that shows us the way, the truth, and the light.

God bless and keep you Tennessee - You are amazing!

Rev. Dr. Debra McCray Reid  
2nd Vice Moderator and 2024 Regional Assembly Chairperson

Ephesians 2:10 "For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."



Christian Church in the United States and Canada

## Identity, Vision, Mission

### Our Identity

We are Disciples of Christ, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. As part of the one body of Christ, we welcome all to the Lord's Table as God has welcomed us.

### Our Vision

To be a faithful, growing church that demonstrates true community, deep Christian spirituality and a passion for justice.

- Micah 6:8

### Our Mission

To be and to share the Good News of Jesus Christ, witnessing, loving and serving from our doorsteps "to the ends of the earth."

- Acts 1:8

## The Preamble to the Design

As members of the Christian Church, We confess that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, and proclaim him Lord and Savior of the world.

In Christ's name and by his grace we accept our mission of witness and service to all people.

We rejoice in God, maker of heaven and earth, and in God's covenant of love which binds us to God and to one another.

Through baptism into Christ we enter into newness of life and are made one with the whole people of God.

In the communion of the Holy Spirit we are joined together in discipleship and in obedience to Christ.

At the Table of the Lord we celebrate with thanksgiving the saving acts and presence of Christ.

Within the universal church we receive the gift of ministry and the light of scripture. In the bonds of Christian faith we yield ourselves to God that we may serve the One whose kingdom has no end. Blessing, glory, and honor, be to God forever. Amen





## Regional Ministry

Regional ministries exist to cultivate growth in congregations by demonstrating true community, deep Christian spirituality, and a passion for justice, as called for in Micah 6:8.

Regions also educate and empower congregations to become healthy and vital living witnesses to the love, justice, and grace of God through Jesus Christ, as is called for in Acts 2:43-47.

## Our Mission

The Christian Church in Tennessee desires to amplify each Church's call to be formed by Jesus' love by connecting the Region, Church to Church, into an extended open table where everyone knows they can receive the unmistakable grace of God.



## Theme Scripture

Ephesians 2:10

“For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”



# Theme Song "Our World"-Doubles

We need peace  
We need love  
You're not below  
I'm not above  
I've been thinking  
About these times  
What do you do  
When you just want to cry  
I've been around a little over 40 years now and one thing that I know  
Is nothing, nothing changes  
If we don't try  
Ain't just my world  
This is our world  
Come together and love one another  
Ain't just your world  
This is our world  
Come together and love one another  
Now  
We got a slow down  
Take a deep breath  
Look in their eyes  
They're not that different  
I've been around a little over 40 years now and one thing that I know  
Is nothing, nothing changes  
If we don't try  
Ain't just my world  
This is our world  
Come together and love one another  
Ain't just your world  
This is our world  
Come together and love one another  
Ain't just your world  
This is our world  
Come together and love one another  
Ain't just your world  
This is our world  
Come together and love one another  
Now





# ASSEMBLY SCHEDULE

October

11

Friday

October

12

Saturday

9:30AM **REGISTRATION OPENS**  
Location: Central Christian Church  
531 S McLean Blvd, Memphis, TN 38104

8:00AM **CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST**  
Location: Anointed Temple of  
Praise Fellowship Hall

11:00AM **CLERGY LUNCH**  
Speaker: Rev. Dr. Stacy L. Spencer  
Location: Central Christian Church  
531 S McLean Blvd, Memphis, TN 38104

8:00AM **REGISTRATION OPENS**  
Location: Anointed Temple of  
Praise Lobby

10:30AM **REGISTRATION OPENS &  
EXHIBITION HALL SETUP BEGINS**  
Location: Anointed Temple of Praise  
Memphis, TN

9:00AM **MORNING WORSHIP  
SERVICE**  
Location: Anointed Temple of  
Praise Sanctuary

1:30PM **WORKSHOPS SESSION 1**  
Location: Anointed Temple of Praise  
Education Building

10:30AM **BUSINESS MEETING**  
Location: Anointed Temple of  
Praise Sanctuary

3:30PM **WORKSHOPS SESSION 2**  
Location: Anointed Temple of Praise  
Education Building

12:00PM **LUNCH**  
Location: ATOP Fellowship Hall  
**WOMEN'S LUNCHEON**  
Location: Anointed Temple of  
Praise Education Building

5:00PM **DINNER**  
Location: Anointed Temple of  
Praise Education Building

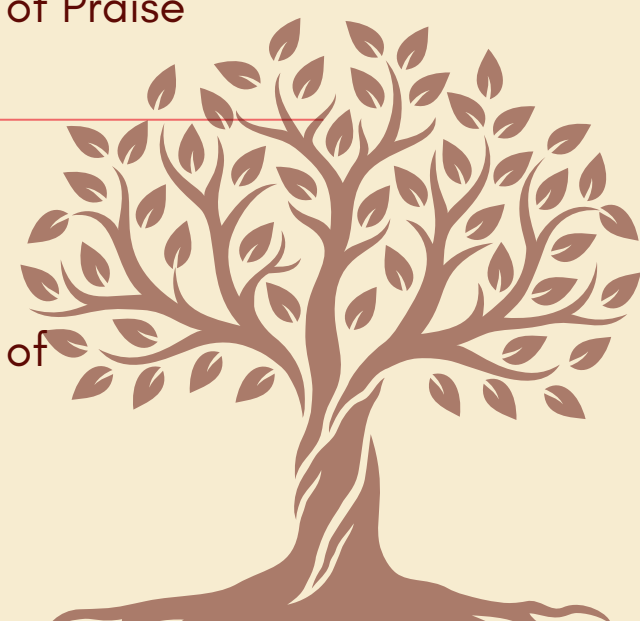
1:15PM **WORKSHOPS SESSION**  
Location: Anointed Temple of Praise  
Education Building

7:00PM **OPENING WORSHIP  
SERVICE**  
Location: Anointed Temple of  
Praise Sanctuary

3:00PM **REGIONAL MINISTER SEARCH  
LISTENING SESSION**  
Location: Anointed Temple of Praise  
Sanctuary

8:30PM **REGIONAL MINISTER  
RECEPTION**  
Immediately Following Service  
Location: Education Building

4:30PM **CLOSING SESSION**  
Location: Anointed Temple of  
Praise Sanctuary



# Assembly Program

## TENNESSEE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST 2024 REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

### Friday

Clergy Luncheon

Exhibit Hall Opens

Workshops Session 1

Workshops Session 2

Please see Workshop Schedule for details

Please see Workshop Schedule for details

### Dinner

### Friday Night Worship

Opening Song

Anointed Temple of Praise

Welcome

Rev. Dr. Debra Reid, Rev. Dr. Thomas Murray

Invocation

Rev. R.J. Robles

Sacrament of Holy Communion

Rev. Justina Rivera, Rev. Tom Banks, Rev. K.J. Kim

Introduction of Speaker

Rev. Dr. Kim Murray

Music

The Word

Rev. R. Janae Pitts-Murdock

Music

Offering

Rev. Beth Patillo

Benediction

Rev. J. Cody Robertson

### Regional Minister Reception

Immediately Following Worship

### Saturday Worship

Opening Music

Call to worship

Rev. Dr. Debra Reid

Prayer

Rev. K.J. Kim

Music

Scripture Reading

Rev. Stella Hollis

Disciples Merit Awards

Rev. Kevin McNeil

Speaker

Rev. R. Janae Pitts-Murdock

Offering

Rev. Perry D. Wiggins III

### Break



# Assembly Program

Continued

## TENNESSEE DISCIPLES OF CHRIST 2024 REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

### Business Meeting

Gathering Music

Call to Order

Prayer

\* 2025-2026 Budgets for Regional Office and Bethany Hills

\* Presenting of the Slate of Officers

\*Affirm the Location of the 2026 Regional Assembly

Installation of Officers

State of the Region

Introduction of Christian Church DOC Moderator

State of Christian Church Disciples of Christ

Closing Prayer

*\*Vote by the Regional Assembly required*

Regional Moderator Arnold Hayes

Rev. Dr. Debra Reid

Mara Grisham

Rev. Dr. Thomas Murray

Moderator Arnold Hayes

Rev. Kevin McNeil

Rev. Kevin McNeil

Rev. James Shenko

Clyde Hunt

Rev. Steve Herrington

### Lunch

TDWM Business Lunch

Regional Assembly Lunch

Workshops Session 3

Regional Minister Search Committee Listening Session

Laverne Bobo

### Break

### Closing Session

Gathering Music

Prayer

Words of Encouragement

Communion

Benediction

Jeannie Cleveland

Rev. Geoff Mitchell

Lillie Wiggins, Clyde Hunt,

Laverne Bobo

Rev. Kevin McNeil





# WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

## Friday 1:30pm

White Christian Nationalism

Dr. Rob Quinn

Congregation Transformation:

Rev. Kevin McNeil

Mental Health and Health Care Part 1

Cultural Diversity Appreciation Workshop

Dr. Dana Patterson

Turn On The Light: Making Your Ministry Thrive  
On Social Media

Dr. Stacey Dandridge

## Friday 3:30pm

White Christian Nationalism

Dr. Rob Quinn

Congregation Transformation:

Rev. Kevin McNeil

Mental Health and Health Care Part 2

Tennessee Disciples Women's Ministry Cafe

Dr. Christy Marrs-Scruggs

Turn On The Light: Making Your Ministry  
Thrive On Social Media

Dr. Stacey Dandridge

## Saturday 1:15pm

Project 2025: Christian Values vs Christian Nationalism

**Panel:** Dr. Judy Cummings,  
Dr. Earl Fisher, Rev. Vahisha Hasan,  
Rev. Kelli X, Dr. Rob Quinn, Hunter Rhodes

Cultural Diversity Appreciation Workshop

Dr. Dana Patterson

Sabbath Girl, Sabbath Life

Dr. Rosalyn Nichols

Tennessee Disciples Women's Fall Retreat Speaker

Rev. Tara Williams

Gospel Urgency: for Youth and Youth Leaders

Rev. Jerrod Gunter





# Keynote Speaker



## Rev. R. Janae Pitts Murdock

Pastor R. Janae Pitts-Murdock, a native of Detroit, Michigan, and ordained into the gospel ministry at New Bethel Baptist Church under Rev. Robert Smith, Jr., is a lover of God and God's people. Pastor Janae is a lifelong learner who believes that excellence honors God, and for her, anything less is unacceptable. Pastor Janae is a graduate of the University of Michigan – Ann Arbor with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication Studies, Carnegie Mellon University with a Master of Science

degree in Public Policy & Management, United Theological Seminary with a Master of Divinity degree, and University of Memphis with a Master of Business Administration. She is an active member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. and served as Chaplain of the Southern Region which includes Georgia, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, Florida and the Bahamas. She currently serves as Chaplain of the Midwest Region which includes Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio, Minnesota, Kentucky, West Virginia, and Ontario, Canada.

Pastor Janae was a civilian employed by the U.S. Department of the Army as a U.S. Presidential Management Intern and later as a Logistics Management Specialist. She was employed at The Pentagon during the September 11, 2001 attacks. While grateful to have been on assignment and away from The Pentagon on that day, Pastor Janae mourns with those who lost loved ones. Pastor Janae served as Lead Pastor at Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Memphis, TN under Pastor Frank A. Thomas. While at Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church, Pastor Janae charismatically led transformation focused ministries into new models of ministry and spearheaded the church's satellite campus launch. After Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church, Pastor Janae was employed by the City of Memphis as the Coordinator of Teen Services for the Memphis Public Library and Information Center where she was responsible for teen programming at 18 public library locations. In this role, she spearheaded the \$2 million construction and development of a digital teen learning lab, CLOUD901, transforming Memphis youth from information consumers to information creators. Pastor Janae also served as Connections Pastor at First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Rogers, Arkansas where she created systems to connect members to serving opportunities and improve ministry administration.



In August 2019, Pastor Janae began her tenure as the Interim Senior Pastor at Light of the World Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indianapolis, Indiana. During that period, the church experienced healing, revitalization, and renewed strength. Under her interim leadership, Light of the World has launched a leadership development strategy that nurtured church leaders quarterly, faith formation strategy that trained Sunday School and Small group leaders and initiated numerous virtual ministries like daily prayer calls, online meditation, wellness groups and growth groups to aid members during the COVID-19 global pandemic.

She accomplished all of that while pursuing the Doctor of Philosophy in African American Preaching and Sacred Rhetoric at Christian Theological Seminary. In November 2020, Light of the World Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) elected Pastor Janae to be their sixth Senior Pastor and first female Senior Pastor in their 154-year history.

Pastor Janae is a member of numerous civic and service organizations including the National Council of Negro Women (Indianapolis Section), Jack and Jill of America, Inc., and board member of the Disciples of Christ Historical Society.

Pastor Janae is united in holy matrimony to the one she calls, "God's embodiment of divine love," Jeffrey Allen Murdock, PhD, who is Professor of Choral Music Education and Director of Choral Studies at the University of Arkansas. He is the Founding Director of the Arkansas Center for Black Music, the 2021 GRAMMY Music Educator of the Year, National Music Director of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity Inc., and a member of Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia. Together they parent two sons, Jeffrey III and John Patrick.



# Keynote Speaker

## **Dr. Stacy L. Spencer**



Dr. Stacy L. Spencer is the Senior Pastor of New Direction Christian Church in Memphis, Tennessee, and Idutywa, South Africa. The Olmstead, KY, native is a dynamic speaker, visionary, and author. His energetic and culturally relevant messages address the spiritual growth of the individual and issues in society. He has a passion to teach Kingdom living – to equip people with biblical guidelines and practical resources that can transform their lives and the world.

Dr. Spencer's Kingdom mindset led to the development of Eden Square Town Center; a multi-million-dollar community model intended to reinvigorate an area of Memphis that was considered a food desert. The mixed-use development project includes a middle school, performing arts center, wellness center, retail spaces, and housing. Dr. Spencer is chairman of the board of directors for Power Center Community Development Corporation. The independent non-profit launched Power Center Academy, a charter school that celebrated the May 2015 high school graduation of its inaugural class of 6th graders. He served as President of MICAH, (Memphis Interfaith Coalition for Action & Hope), an organization pursuing social justice in Memphis. Dr. Spencer currently sits on the Board of Alpha USA. Alpha is an organization designed to create conversation through a series of sessions, exploring the basic of the Christian Faith. Dr. Spencer is the newly appointed Director of the Global Pastor's Division, teaching and guiding pastors globally. Dr. Spencer earned a Doctor of Divinity from Drew University, a Master of Divinity from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, and a Bachelor in Broadcast Communication from Western Kentucky University, Dr. Spencer is also an active member of the Germantown Alumni Chapter of Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity.

He and Rhonda Spencer are the proud parents of four sons, Calvin, Omari, Jordan, and Jaden.



# Keynote Speakers

## **Clyde E. Hunt Jr.**



Clyde E. Hunt, Jr. is a native of Mason, Tennessee. Clyde graduated from (Memphis State) the University of Memphis in December of 1981 with a BS in Civil Engineering. He also holds a Master's in Engineering Management from Christian Brothers University, Memphis, Tennessee, and is a certified Project Manager Professional (PMP).

Clyde's professional career began in 1982 with a brief stint as a structural engineer with the Illinois Central Gulf Railroad in Chicago, Illinois. He went on to work as a project manager for the Illinois Department of Transportation in Schaumburg, Illinois.

He then returned to Memphis in 1989 to begin work with the Memphis District U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. One of the highlights of his career was serving in Kabul, Afghanistan in 2005 as the Program Manager for Schools and Clinic Refurbishment for Afghan children. After 37 years, Clyde retired in 2019 and enjoys long-distance cycling, traveling, gardening, fitness training, and dining with family and friends.

Clyde accepted Christ as Lord at the age of 10. He is a 30-plus-year disciple and a member of Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church (DOC), in Memphis, Tennessee. He has served in various leadership capacities including chair of the Diaconate Ministry, and Elder Board, and has contributed his gifts to several committees and boards of the church, community, and Christian Church (DOC) Tennessee Region. Moreover, Clyde served two three-year terms as Moderator under two senior pastors at Mississippi Blvd. He currently serves as Moderator of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada.

Clyde is married to the former Norma Lynnette Simpson, a Family Nurse Practitioner in Memphis and they are the proud parents of Clyde III (Kenya), and Christina and enormously proud grandparents of their grandson, Anderson Clyde

## **Rev. Dr. Geoffrey Mitchell**

Rev. Dr. Geoffrey Mitchell is the Senior Minister of Lindenwood Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Memphis, Tennessee. He began his ministry in Memphis in April of 2019, 50 weeks before the onset of the pandemic. He has served churches in Texas, Iowa, and Illinois. He has started two new congregations from scratch and led his home church for four years growing them from 350 each week to 900 in worship. Geoff holds a Bachelor of Arts in Religion from Texas Christian University, a Master of Divinity from Brite Divinity School, and a Doctor of Ministry from Harding School of Theology. Though an immigrant to Memphis, he is proud to call the 901 home.





# TDWM Fall Retreat Speaker

## Rev. Tara Williams

# Speaker



Dedicated to facilitating the growth and evolution of all people, Tara Faith Williams' body of work spans over a decade and includes multiple church staff roles, a successful business career, and community leadership. While Tara is a dedicated wife, mother, and Grand-T first, her true calling is evident when she holds a Bible in her hand and a message in her heart. Her ministry has touched the lives of hundreds, if not thousands, with its passionate, visionary, and purposeful approach. She is outspoken, fiery, transparent, truthful, and wise, embodying her favorite scripture, 'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'

Affectionately known as Pastor Tara, she uses conviction and straight talk to deliver her consistent message of love, forgiveness, and hope. She considers it a privilege to serve believers from every denomination and culture by helping them know the truths of Scripture and encouraging them to experience these truths practically through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Pastor Tara is known as a practical and effective leader. In her leadership approach, she embodies the essence of "servant." She leads by doing and has been an essential mobilizer regarding social justice issues throughout Nashville, TN. Her commitment to social justice is unwavering; she is a member of the Nashville Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and the Interdenominational Ministers Fellowship (IMF), where she serves as President-Elect.

Her administrative gifts span the secular and sacred. As a Human Resource Employee Engagement Coordinator for the Facilities Business Operations Center at Vanderbilt University, she applies spiritual principles to help others see the bigger picture while focusing on the details that matter most. These gifts have been paramount in leading New Covenant through the reimagining process after a pastoral leadership change and a pandemic.

Pastor Tara became the first African American pastor of Bellevue Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Nashville, Tenn., in June 2017 and led the congregation faithfully until August 2018, returning to her previous home church, New Covenant Christian Church (DOC) in Nashville, TN, as the Executive Pastor. On February 21, 2021, New Covenant Christian Church called Pastor Tara to serve as the Interim Senior Pastor. Nineteen months later, on September 1, 2022, she joyfully became the Senior Pastor and was installed as New Covenant's 14th Senior Pastor on March 12, 2023.

Pastor Tara's academic achievements are a testament to her dedication to learning and growth. She earned a Master of Divinity Degree from Vanderbilt Divinity School and a Bachelor of Arts in Organizational Leadership from Ashford University. Currently, she is pursuing a Doctorate of Ministry at Lexington Theological Seminary. In conjunction with her studies at Vanderbilt, Pastor Tara holds the Kelly Miller Smith Institute's (KMSI) Certificate in Black Church Studies, a program built to support students who desire to expand their knowledge and appreciation of the historical, theological, and liberating praxis dimensions of the Black Church tradition.

She has been married for 31 years to her covering, best friend, and partner in ministry and life, Anthony "Chan" Williams, Sr. Their blessed love produced the fruit of five beautiful children: Anthony Jr., Aleigha, Amir, Audreona, and their son, Alijah who went home to be with the Lord on December 25, 2018. Alijah gifted them their only grandson, Santana Cai. In 2024, God added to their gift of grandchildren Raya Lennox and Aubrianna Caisee. She is excitedly awaiting the arrival of twins in 2025.

Pastor Tara firmly believes, "The one who blesses others is abundantly blessed; those who help others are helped." (Proverbs 11:25) Not only does she believe it, she lives it!





# Workshop Leaders



## ***Rev. Dr. Judy Cummings***

A public justice theologian, and retired pastor in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Dr. Judy Cummings is one of Nashville's most influential leaders. A trained community organizer she is frequently called upon to speak and act on issues of injustice. Dr. Cummings is an author, pastor, preacher, teacher whose religious convictions and theological insights compel her to serve the most vulnerable, using her platform to help create a more just and equitable world where hope stretches our moral imagination and calls us all to action in whatever capacities we hold.

Dr. Cummings is the chair of the Pro-Reconciliation/ Anti-Racism Commission for the TN Region Christian Church. She chairs and serves on several justice-seeking boards and commissions. She has a robust pastoral care counseling ministry that seeks to help the children of God, thrive and flourish in life. After retiring from the full-time pastorate in 2020, she maintains an active Christian counseling ministry, serves as an adjunct professor for Central Baptist Theological Seminary, Doctor of Ministry Advisor for Lipscomb University, and continues to work on issues of justice. Dr. Cummings continues to preach and teach the gospel across the country.

Dr. Judy D. Cummings has been married to her best friend, Deacon Charles, the love of her life for fifty years. They are Grammy and Grampy to five adorable grandchildren and have many other special grands and children. They are parents to two amazing adult children.



## ***Rev. Dr. Stacy Dandridge***

Dr. Stacy Dandridge, a native Memphian, holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Biblical Studies from Crichton College, a Master of Divinity degree from Memphis Theological Seminary, where she served as a James L. Netters Scholar Graduate Assistant, and a Doctor of Ministry degree from Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta, GA.

Her doctoral project entitled "DigiVangelism: Sharing Faith on Digital Platforms" was designed as a guide to help churches bridge the gap between the use of technology and the proclamation of Gospel. It proposed innovative and creative methods for using digital platforms and technology as a means for furthering the impact of the Gospel message.

Fueled by her passion for ministry and technology, she leads workshops and classes across the country that empower churches, pastors, and media staffs to thrive in the digital age. With a unique blend of faith and technology, her work focuses on developing a Theology of Technology for the Church. She is a fellow of the Black Churches 4 Digital Equity Coalition; a movement of church leaders and non-profits dedicated to closing the digital divide within the black community.

She has published sermons and articles for The African American Pulpit, a preaching repository that ministers to the needs of African American preachers and The African American Lectionary, a liturgical resource for persons who serve and lead in the African American church. She has taught as an adjunct faculty at both Memphis Theological Seminary and the Leadership Institute at Allen Temple in Oakland, CA.

She currently serves as Pastor of Digital Ministry & Technology at Christ Missionary Baptist Church in Memphis, TN under the leadership of the Rev. Dr. Gina M. Stewart. She is the curator of The Digital Church Blog, a repository designed to help churches navigate digital and tech spaces.

When she is not fulfilling her assignments in ministry, she loves reading books, watching NBA Basketball and catching up on the latest movies.





# Workshop Leaders



## **Rev. Earle J. Fisher**

Rev. Earle J. Fisher, Ph.D. holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Computer Science from LeMoyne-Owen College, a Master of Divinity Degree from Memphis Theological Seminary, and a Ph.D. in Communication from the University of Memphis.

Pastor Earle is the Senior Pastor of Abyssinian Baptist Church in Memphis, TN - The Blackest Church in Memphis and Shelby County. He's also the founder of #UPTheVote901 - a nonpartisan voter empowerment initiative committed to producing political power and increasing voter turnout in Memphis and Shelby County.

Dr. Fisher is married to Denise Lloyd-Fisher, has one son - Jalen Fisher, and one granddaughter - Karter Ann "Lil Mama" Fisher.



## **Rev. Jerrod Gunter**

Rev. Jerrod Gunter has a heart for developing and equipping youth in every phase of life. With more than 10 years of youth ministry experience, Jerrod has challenged students to make Jesus the priority in their lives. He has started a movement, labeling teens "Riotstarters", that has shown them how to create a culture of prayer and evangelism in their schools and communities. Because of this bold vision, hundreds of students have made a decision to follow Jesus.

He has shared his passion for youth ministry with organizations such as Google, Impact360, Stuff You Can Use, Center for Youth Ministry Training (Nashville) and Dare 2 Share Ministries. His new book, *Riotstarter*, discusses how to create a counter-cultural movement of prayer to transform cities for Jesus Christ.

The Lakeland, Florida native earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology in 2001 from Tusculum College in Greenville, Tennessee. He earned a Masters of Marriage and Family Therapy in 2008 from Capella University in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

He is happily married to Lakeicha, and they are the proud parents of Dezmon, Ariana, Miah and Jalen.



## **Dr. Rob Quinn**

Rob Quinn was born in Wisconsin and grew up in Nashville. He attended Yale University, then graduated from Vanderbilt Medical School in Nashville, TN. Dr. Quinn completed his residency in internal medicine at Vanderbilt University Medical Center. He practiced in Erwin, TN for three years before returning to Nashville then spent the next 40 years caring for patients.





# Workshop Leaders



## **REV. VAHISHA HASAN**

Vahisha Hasan is a social impact strategist and wellness practitioner moving at the intersections of faith, social justice, and mental health. She is a powerful public speaker, transformative facilitator, social justice trainer, minister, and writer with a deeply prophetic voice and imagination for how faith and faith communities can be an active part of healing and collective liberation.

Vahisha's passion is providing supportive tools for wellness for those who labor in freedom and liberation. She is board chair of Transform Network, and also serves as an associate minister at Christ Missionary Baptist Church, under Rev. Dr. Gina Stewart, Senior Pastor, where she was licensed and ordained June 23, 2019.

Vahisha holds a dual Master's of Divinity and Master's of Mental Health Counseling with an Education Specialist Certification from Gardner-Webb University and a bachelor's degree in Communications with a concentration in Interpersonal Organization from The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. She is beginning her PhD journey in Communications at University of Memphis beginning Fall 2024. In addition to penning book reviews, journal articles, online publications, and writing a bachelor's curriculum in Applied Psychology, she has curated and co-edited three editions of Resipiscence: A Lenten Devotional for Dismantling White Supremacy, 2018-2020. Her 4th book was published in 2023, curated and co-edited with Rev. Anne Dunlap, Building Up A New World: Congregational Organizing for Transformative Impact.

Vahisha is her best self in community and is deeply grateful for her biological, chosen, and movement family. You can find her moving to the end of her own rainbow in the US South and on IG and Twitter @vahishahasan FB: @movementinfaith helloevahishahasan.com TRACC4Movements



## **Rev. Kevin McNeil, Interim Regional Minister and President of the Christian Church in TN**

Son of Rev. Henry Alfred Smith and Mary Helen Bowling, Rev McNeil is a fourth-generation preacher with a long history of church service. He is married to the lovely Kimberly T. McNeil and they have three children, Courtney Danyel, Kevin Michael, and Carrington Myles McNeil. Rev. McNeil has received ecclesiastical endorsements from the Missionary Baptist and Free Will Baptist Churches; and in 2008 was ordained by the Christian Church Disciples of Christ in the Piedmont District and Endorsed by the Christian Church Disciples of Christ Region of Virginia.

He is very active in the community and is an adamant supporter of education, social justice and keeping communities informed on current events. He also spends time conducting leadership and boundaries training for various organizations. Rev. McNeil loves sports, reading, watching movies, travel and spending time with family and friends and is very competitive.

Rev McNeil holds a Bachelor of Science in Computer Science from the University of Miami (FL), and an M.A in Counseling as well as an M.DIV. from Liberty University.





# Workshop Leaders



## **Dr. Rosalyn Nichols**

Dr. Nichols is a native Memphian and since 2001 has served as organizing Pastor of Freedom's Chapel Church (DOC) where all are welcomed to love, grow and share together. In 1998 Dr. Nichols organized A More Excellent Way, Inc. with a mission to help individuals from all walks of life to enter into, engage in and maintain spiritually healthy relationships toward the elimination of relationship violence. She is the current President and founding partner of MICAH (Memphis Interfaith Coalition for Action and Hope), the Inter-Faith Officer for MIFA (Metropolitan Inter-Faith Association) and an Alpha Kappa Alpha, Inc., BEO Chapter member. Her travels led her as visiting professor in Gweru, Zimbabwe; as a church planter to the provinces of China, and clergy member to the Holy Land. She preached and presented at the Samuel D. Proctor Conference, was a convener and presenter for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship & Mercer University Conference on Sexuality and Covenant, and a Missions Educator for the Lott Carey Foreign Mission Convention. Dr. Nichols' deepest passion is transformational teaching, preaching while working with others to seek justice, love mercy and walk humbly before her God.



## **Rev. Kelli X**

Kelli X is the Pastor of The Village Church, an African centered Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation in Madison, TN and the Director of Racial Justice Ministries at Scarritt Bennett Center. Rev. X grew up on the South Side of Chicago and attended Tennessee State University, where she earned a Bachelor of Science in Psychology in 2002. Rev. X became an active member of The Village Church in 1999, as it was the first community of faith, she encountered that celebrates its African heritage while loving Jesus and actively answering God's call to fight for justice for of all of God's creation.

After nearly a decade of working with children and families living with mental illness and maneuvering the foster care system, Rev. X stepped deeper in her call to ministry by attending Vanderbilt University Divinity School where she earned a Master of Divinity in 2012. Moved by Psalm 150 and Romans 12:1, Rev. X has dedicated her life and inspires her congregation to live lives of worship of God and service to the world. Rev. Kelli X is committed to speaking truth to power and coalition building. She has partnered throughout her ministry with organizations such as Nashville Organized for Action and Hope (NOAH), Planned Parenthood, Moral Movement Tennessee, Southern Christian Coalition, Protect Our Care, New Leaders Council (recruitment co-chair), Fellowship of Disciples Clergywomen (Treasurer), Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in TN (Regional Board Second Vice-Moderator) to seek justice for all God's children.

In 2019, Rev. X began her exploration a long-seated interest chaplaincy which culminated in being a member of Vanderbilt University Medical Center's inaugural cohort of chaplain residents. Rev. X combines her commit to justice with her gifts of chaplaincy as the Director of Racial Justice Ministries at Scarritt Bennett Center. Rev. X creates brave space for people and organizations to cultivate tools to dismantle the system of white supremacy in the world, the Church, and themselves.

Rev. X has been happily married to Rico X for over 20 years. Together they share two amazing children, Kijani and Asatira.





# DISCIPLES MERIT AWARDS

## 2024 HONOREES

### **Mara Grisham**

How does someone come to live a life of service to God, Family, and Community?



Mara Marlin Grisham began such a journey growing up in North Little Rock, AR with a family of strong Christian faith and ethics. She learned the responsibilities of being the oldest child by caring for two younger brothers. Her mom and dad were both educators and she excelled at academics obtaining a scholarship to attend college. At Arkansas College, she graduated Summa Cum Laude in three years with a B.S. in Biology. After college, she worked for a major pharmaceutical company in Memphis as a laboratory technician and analytical instrumentation specialist.

While living in Memphis, Mara and her future husband, Nick Grisham, began attending Central Christian Church, thus her introduction to The Disciples of Christ Church. Mara came to embrace the doctrine of the DOC and began serving in any way she was able. After marriage and relocating to Cleveland, Tennessee, Mara and Nick joined First Christian Church there.

Mara's life has been invested in GOD, FAMILY, and MISSION. While the work of her home church remained a focus, she found other ways to volunteer in her community and also time to start a family. Mara was a teacher in the Cleveland Schools system, retiring in 2012. Another one of her passions of many years was coaching the award-winning Cleveland High School Science Olympiad Team. She served as a "Band Mom", "Soccer Mom" and "Swim Mom" while her sons were in high school. Mara was a founding member of the Greater Cleveland Soccer Association and a coach for youth soccer. She served on the board of the Cleveland Community Concert Association for many years. She has been an advocate of Cleveland Habitat for Humanity for over 30 years serving on the board, as an advisor for Habitat families, participating in the Women's Build projects, and supporting fundraising efforts. Mara has supported the Cleveland-Bradley United Way serving on various program panels. She also serves on the boards of the local YMCA and the Cleveland Orphanwise Program. Additionally, she somehow has found time and energy to volunteer for two USGA golf events held locally.

Mara's service to her home church has included worship leader, teaching, various Disciples Women's officer roles, Elder, Official Board member, and Church Treasurer. Her service also extends to the Regional and General Church. She has served in many roles including Disciples Women's Ministry Cabinet and Disciples Women ministries including a mission trip to Bosnia, serving as Regional Elder, First and Second Vice-Moderator, and several other committees. Mara has attended many Regional and General Assemblies along with several Quadrennial events for Disciples Women Ministries.

Her other interests involve reading, knitting, and travel but focuses primarily on family activities. Mara and Nick have two sons, Lee and Ben, both raised in the DOC church and then attended Transylvania University in Lexington, KY. They are the proud grandparents of Wilson and Hudson (Ben & Annie).





# DISCIPLES MERIT AWARDS

## 2024 HONOREES



### **Rev. Dr. Debra Reid**

Rev. Dr. Reid is a native Memphian. She holds a Bachelor of Science from the University of Tennessee at Martin. Dr. Reid also earned a Master of Religion, Master of Divinity, and Doctor of Ministry from Memphis Theological Seminary. She retired from the Federal Government after 35 years of public service as a senior manager in the Human Capital Organization. She is a spiritual leader at Anointed Temple of Praise Christian

Church (Disciples of Christ) and is very active in the Christian Church Tennessee Region, currently serving on the Regional Board as Second Vice Moderator, the Commission on Pro-Reconciliation/Anti-Racism and the Commission on Ministry.

Dr. Reid is deeply committed to Women's Ministry, and her dedication is evident through her notable service as the Director of Legislation, Vice President, and President of the Tennessee Disciples Women's Ministry (TDWM). Currently, she serves as the Vice President of the Disciples Women's Leadership Cabinet (DWLC), the First Vice President of the National Convocation Disciples Women, and the representative of the National Convocation Disciples Women on the IDWM Executive Committee.

Additionally, she was selected as a 2023 Woman-to-Woman delegate to Japan and South Korea and most recently she has accepted the call as Interim Executive Director of Disciples Women of the Christian Church.

She is the proud mother of two adult daughters, Courtney and Amber, and of Mac, her shorkie.





## Regional Board Members 2024

### **Interim Regional Minister & President:**

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**Tennessee Disciples Men's Fellowship**

TBD

**Tennessee Christian Youth Fellowship**

TBD

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• Denotes Executive Committee member



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Serving 2025-2026

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**Tennessee Disciples Men's Fellowship**

TBD

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***Commission Chairs:*****Commission on Camp, Conference, and Youth**

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\* Member of Executive Committee  
 Listed in red-denotes pending Voting