

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**National Benevolent Association Accompanies Racial Justice Work in St. Louis;
Rev. Dr. Dietra Wise Baker Serves as NBA Organizing Specialist**

September 20, 2017 – As part of the mission of the National Benevolent Association, we seek to “advocate for the well-being of humanity.” The NBA continues to actively support racial justice work across the life of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), particularly through a core group of Disciples clergy activists in St. Louis, where NBA’s ministry began 130 years ago.



On Friday, white former St. Louis police officer Jason Stockley was found not guilty of first-degree murder in the death of Anthony Lamar Smith, a 24-year-old black man whom Stockley shot five times after a police chase. Disciples have been among those in St. Louis organizing and protesting the verdict, in many ways a continuation of activism and advocacy following the 2014 shooting death of Michael Brown by former Ferguson police officer Darren Wilson. In cooperation with other Disciples, the NBA has supported ongoing efforts for justice and racial reconciliation in the St. Louis area by promoting and facilitating conversation, gathering, advocacy, and healing.

Resources and Materials:

- [“Injustice Anywhere” Documentary Film and Study Guide >>](#)
- [St. Louis-Area Disciples Summit on Racial Justice >>](#)
- [Response to Crisis and Trauma >>](#)



Since 2015, the NBA has contracted with [Rev. Dr. Dietra Wise Baker](#) as an Organizing Specialist to spearhead this work. In this role, Baker challenges congregations to engage in systemic-level work in racial reconciliation. She has been convening a research and design team of Disciples activists and organizers interested in engaging in conversations around the formation of an affinity group focused on activism and organizing in the work of Disciples across the life of the church. In St. Louis, Baker served as pastor and planter of Liberation Christian Church, and she has been working with Episcopal City Mission, Gamaliel Networks’ Metropolitan Congregations United, and the “Break the Pipeline” campaign focused on dismantling the school-to-prison pipeline.

Currently, Baker is representing the [St. Louis Racial Justice Group](#) and the NBA, and is in conversation with the larger Disciples community, by sitting on an emerging coalition/organizing table made up of local clergy, community, and protest groups. In the days and weeks to come, Baker will be collecting and sharing stories from Disciples “on the ground” in St. Louis, helping to provide a comprehensive narrative of the issues and activities taking place in these movements while aiming to create models for this work that can be shared across regions. We invite you to follow and share these stories and consider how we as Disciples in and beyond St. Louis can get involved and support this work!

(continued)

Injustice Anywhere Update Event

Next Wednesday, September 27, General Minister and President Rev. Terri Hord Owens and Reconciliation Minister Rev. April Johnson will be present for a Disciples gathering at Centennial Christian Church in St. Louis, to affirm this work and to bring clergy and congregations together for conversation and action. [Find event details and registration here](#), and watch for more regional communications coming from the [Christian Church \(Disciples of Christ\) in Mid-America](#).

About the National Benevolent Association

The National Benevolent Association (NBA) 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. For more information about the NBA, visit www.nbacares.org.

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