



Spotlight on Crestwood #36

The General Assembly

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This is a big deal. Apparently a really big deal. In the forty-five years I've been a Disciple, I've heard about the General Assembly. I've known people who were delegates, but I never asked them much about it. I assumed it was a business meeting where mostly boring church business was discussed, punctuated by sermons.

The Assembly may have a little of that, but, my goodness, it is so much more. Hats off to those who suggested this for the Spotlight. And thanks to Crestwood member Dabney Parker, a former Second Vice-Moderator of the Assembly, who filled in some blanks. I've learned a lot.

First a little background. Our denomination is divided into regions for the sake of organization. Kentucky has so many Disciples congregations that we are formed into our own region. Like the other areas, we meet every other year for a Regional Assembly (Crestwood hosted this in 2016). On alternate years, the entire denomination gathers at the General Assembly, which draws Disciples from all over the United States. This year the nation's Disciples are gathering in Louisville, Kentucky. The General Assembly was suspended during the Covid years but it is reviving on July 29 in full form after a four-year hiatus. Normally it attracts about 10,000 people. It takes a while to re-group after Covid and, as of last week, only about 3,000 were registered for this year, according to our Rev. Kory Wilcoxson. But 3,000 people gathered together is not small beans. The Assembly is being held not far from us, in the large downtown Louisville Convention Center.

Looking at the agendas and schedules on-line, it is hard to actually grasp how it works. I think it's one of those events you have to attend once to fully understand. I hesitate to say anything definitive about how it unfolds. It sounds like a tiring, but exciting, four days that runs from breakfast to rather late at night each day. The topic this year is the Kin-dom of God, a topic that apparently has been a sermon series in many other churches like ours.

There are too many workshops to list here, but they are divided into three tracks of worship designed to emphasize our Kin-dom. 1. Kin-dom of God within us (faith, music, theology that sustains faith). 2. Kin-dom of God among us (community engagement, hybrid worship, and connecting to our neighbors in our community) 3. Kin-dom of God abroad— (service with neighbors, exploration of difference, and exploring our identity as Disciples in the world).

Dozens of workshops fall within those three topics. Here are only a few examples, but you can get the idea: How to confront Christian Nationalism, Climate Change and Green Chalice, Not your Father's Ministry, Pastor Wellness, Disaster Preparedness, Practical Giving. There is even an experiential anti-racism exercise to take place in downtown Louisville and a trip to Cane Ridge. Five resident artists have prepared immersive and interactive art installations.

It looks like there are many opportunities to meet old friends—and eat while you are doing it. I counted more than ten Disciple colleges and universities that are hosting luncheons for their alumni. There are student divinity houses from different colleges meeting together. There are receptions for what I call the alphabet groups: DCEF, SUIM, DCHA, NAPAD, DJAN, CUIM, DCHS. Apologies if you are a member of any of those groups, but I wonder why full names aren't written out at least once for those of us ignorant about anachronisms.

There are four pastors scheduled to lead worship services and two with Bible lectures. Our own Rev. Wilcoxson is in charge of coordinating communion for each service. If I'm reading the materials correctly, each evening ends with a service at 7 pm. But if delegates aren't worn out by then, there are more opportunities for gathering and socializing until 10 pm.

Rev. Wilcoxson says that there are no controversial topics being debated this year, but there is always important church business to discuss. He is a voting member. Each church is allowed a number of voting delegates, dependent on the congregational size. He is not aware of any other Crestwood members

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attending this year, which I think is a shame. I would imagine it would be hard to return from days of exciting discussions and activities without bringing new ideas home with you.

Attending the assembly is not cheap, but it is far less expensive than many professional conventions. There are a variety of prices, but basically it is \$275 a person. It is not too late to register. On-site registration begins at 1pm on Friday. If you are good with spontaneity, I think you should plan to go. I would suspect it would be easy to attend just one day, seeing how close we are to Louisville. If you want more information, the details are on the website <https://ga.disciples.org/>

Rev. Wilcoxson has this to say about the General Assembly: "The General Assembly gives us a chance to come together as a church family to worship, do business, and reconnect. I look forward to seeing friends and colleagues from around the country, as well as participate in business sessions that help us live out our calling as Disciples. I'm so glad we're gathering in person again!"

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If there is some area of the church you would like to know more about, please share your ideas with me. Let's explore together. [Gaye Holman](#)



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