

Standing Amazed at God and God's People

WOW! I continue to stand amazed at GOD and at God's people! It seems like just yesterday when

I saw a flyer for NACSW on a bulletin board in Green Hall at Oakwood College.

However, my grey hair and recent college reunion help me to realize that my first encounter with NACSW was at

least 20 years ago! It also means that Rick Chamiec-Case and the other members of this organization have been impacting my life for a very long time. Quite honestly, had it not been for my Christian social work professors at Oakwood who assigned us to read Alan Keith Lucas' *So You Want to Be a Christian Social Worker*, a divinely-orchestrated encounter with Diana Garland, who spoke highly of the association, and the witness of NACSW through numerous publications and conventions, I'm not sure how I would have learned to integrate my faith in practice. I am thankful to God and God's representatives in NACSW for being a formidable force in shaping the trajectory of my life. Yes, I stand amazed at God's mastery.

I am also extremely thankful that my relationship with NACSW has grown over the years. This organization has allowed me to stretch and serve in unimaginable ways. As I reflect on my 20-year history with NACSW, I realize that NACSW provided me with many "firsts" in my personal and professional career: volunteering at a conference, presenting



Kesslyn Brade Stennis

on a topic that was of both personal and professional interest, and publishing in a peer-reviewed journal. And over the years, I have had the opportunity to continue my service-learning by coordinating convention workshop programs, co-chairing last year's annual conference, and serving in various positions on the Board of Directors. These opportunities have shaped my life in ways that I didn't always realize I was seeking, but God did and NACSW was the conduit!

And now, as I embark upon yet another opportunity within NACSW, I am humbled to tears. God and God's people within this wonderful organization have opened the door for me to serve as President of NACSW's Board. While I am honored, I am also keenly aware that assuming this position requires greater commitment to God and greater responsibility to God's people. The old biblical adage is applicable here: "to whom much is given, much is required." I step into these shoes as Board president as an African American woman understanding the godly requirements and accepting the responsibility to uphold the mission and vision of NACSW.

I also recognize that I must work collaboratively to address some of the issues that I see as most critical for NACSW's continued growth and contribution. These issues are aligned with:

- 1.) *Cultural Inclusion* regardless of age, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, political affiliation, denominational background, etc.
- 2.) *Financial Fortification* by concentrating recruitment efforts toward college students and young professionals while continuing to facilitate discussions with seasoned members related to

the identification of avenues and implementation of processes that solidify a sound economic position
3.) *Contemporary Relevance* which is systematically assessed and intentionally addressed through our internal reviews, publications, advertisements, programs, virtual presence and services, including outreach to diverse communities.

Finally, as I follow Denis Costello as Board president, I am hopeful. NACSW's history is legendary, its leaders have been impactful, and its members have been faithful. While I believe that our unique identity as a Christian social work organization is one that is galvanizing to many, my hope is that NACSW will positively impact and empower those on the fringes of membership and those who are disenfranchised in our larger global community. Respectful of differences in opinions and practices that exist within our social work professional and various faith traditions, I do firmly believe in the African proverb that states: "When spider webs unite, they can tie up a lion." When we as members of NACSW and God's beloved community unite, we can dismantle the lion-like strength of poverty, homelessness, abuse, "isms," health disparities, ecological destruction, international and national unrest, substance abuse, educational and wealth inequities, child abuse and human trafficking, and the numerous human rights and social justice issues within our world. For, in my opinion, addressing these issues as Jesus did is our purpose for being. My hope is that our collective work will solidify our spiritual and organizational presence in the global community that is seeking persons equipped to competently integrate faith and practice.

NACSW BOARD ELECTION RESULTS

NACSW is pleased to announce the final results of its Fall, 2015 Board election. The four candidates who were elected by the membership to serve on NACSW's Board with terms running from 2016 - 2018 are:

- Ardis Fuge, Alexandria, Virginia
- Eleanor Speakes, Fresno, California

- Kesslyn Brade-Stennis, Baltimore, Maryland
- Samantha Taylor, Frederick, Maryland

Please keep these newly elected Board members in your prayers for wisdom and guidance.

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In Memoriam: Diana R. Garland

Diana R. Garland, long standing member of NACW and dean of the Diana R. Garland School of Social Work at Baylor University, died on September 21, 2015, at the age of 65.

For 40 years, Diana was a pillar of NACSW. Our association has been indelibly marked and molded by her passion and tireless commitment to the integration of Christian faith and social work practice. In April, 2015 Diana received NACSW's Distinguished Service to NACSW (see <http://www.nacsw.org/GarlandAward2015.pdf>).

From her early days as a member in the 1970s, and then as a Board member for multiple terms (including a term as Board president), Diana threw herself with energy and gusto in support of NACSW and its mission. Diana served NACSW in a variety of capacities including: writing countless articles for our journal, *Social Work & Christianity*, in addition to two seminar books focused on of her beloved topics: congregational social work; presenting workshops for more than a dozen NACSW conventions; co-chairing two NACSW conventions; delivering several keynote addresses; providing the inspiration for the development of NACSW's online continuing education program; and serving on the editorial board of *Social Work & Christianity* for decades, to name a few. In addition, Diana completed her last book for NACSW, *Why I Am a Social Worker: 25 Christian Tell Their Stories*, just a few months before she died. Altogether, Diana Garland wrote, co-wrote or edited 19 books and more than 120 professional articles.



Diana R. Garland

Diana also supported NACSW and its mission by producing seminal scholarship and building a strong web of professional connections and networks that created a respected place within the social work profession for her passion, congregational social work. Diana also represented NACSW and Christian social work educators in the broader social work education community through various roles on the Council on Social Work Education and the National Association of Deans and Directors of Social Work. Diana was the inaugural dean of the Diana R. Garland School of Social Work at Baylor University, which offers social work degrees at the baccalaureate, masters and doctoral levels.

David Sherwood, the editor in chief of *Social Work & Christianity*, said of Diana that she was “a woman of unparalleled energy, intellect, vision,

and commitment to serving human need through the ethical integration of deep Christian faith and competent professional social work education and practice.”

NACSW's Board has chosen to honor Diana by establishing The Diana R. Garland Legacy Fund to support innovative scholarship and training focused on the ethical integration of faith and social work practice in a variety of settings – including congregational social work. If you wish to honor Diana's life by making a donation to NACSW's Diana R. Garland Legacy Fund, you can look up the Diana Garland Legacy Fund at www.crowdrise.com.

NACSW Announces *Why I Am a Social Worker: 25 Christians Tell Their Life Stories*

NACSW is pleased to announce the summer, 2015 publication of *Why I Am a Social Worker: 25 Christians Tell Their Life Stories* (2015) by Diana R. Garland. *Why I Am a Social Worker* describes the rich diversity and nature of the profession of social work through the 25 stories of daily lives and professional journeys chosen to represent the different people, groups and human situations where social workers serve.

Many social workers of faith express that they feel “called” to help people – sometimes a specific population of people such as abused children or people who live in poverty. Often they describe this calling as a way of living out their faith. *Why I Am*

a Social Worker serves as a resource for Christians in social work as they reflect on their sense of calling, and provides direction to guide them in this process. *Why I Am a Social Worker* employs a narrative, descriptive approach, allowing the relationship between faith and practice to emerge through the professional life stories of social workers who are Christians. As such, it provides a way to explore integration on personal, emotional and practical levels.

Why I Am a Social Worker addresses a range of important questions such as:

- How do social workers describe the relationship of their faith and their work?
- What is their daily work-life like,

with its challenges, frustrations, joys and triumphs?

- What was their path into social work, and more particularly, the kind of social work they chose?

- What roles do their religious beliefs and spiritual practices have in sustaining them for the work, and how has their work, in turn, shaped their religious and spiritual life?

Why I Am a Social Worker provides a realistic view of the gritty realities of a profession that is at the forefront of serving those Jesus described as “the least of these” (Matthew 25).

Why I Am a Social Worker: 25 Christians Tell Their Life Stories (2015), (ISBN # 978-0-9897581-0-9) is 220 pages long, and is now available at NACSW's on-line bookstore for \$29.95 - or only \$23.95 for NACSW members or for orders of 10 or more copies (plus shipping). An e-version (pdf format) of *Why I Am a Social Worker* is available as well.

