



THE CHRISTIAN ALABAMA-NORTHWEST FLORIDA

A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) In Alabama-Northwest Florida Publication

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Please remember to register your email address on the website. This will allow you to receive regular newsletter updates that will keep you informed on all of the latest news and events in the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

Go to www.alnwfldisciples.org

Click on "register" in the top left hand corner and follow the process

It is that simple!

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

FEBRUARY

- 2 Licensing and Ordination II (9:15 a.m.) - United Christian Church, Montgomery
- 4 Division of Mission Conference Call (7:00 p.m.)
- 6 CWF/DW Cabinet (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office
- 6 Division of Administration and Stewardship (10:00 a.m.) - Grace Christian Church, Helena
- 12 - 13 Congregational Transformation Event - First Christian Church, Birmingham
- 20 Regional Board Meeting - Grace Christian Church, Helena
- 26 - 27 PEPP Retreat - YMCA-Hargis (*Note change from previous dates*)
- 21 - 28 Week of Compassion Offering

MARCH

- 1 - 4 Black Ministers Retreat - Goldsboro, NC
- 7 Regional Assembly Sunday (congregational promotion)
- 8 Staff Planning Meeting (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office
- 12 - 13 Men's Retreat - YMCA-Hargis
- 15 - 19 Young Adult Spring Break Work Trip - New Orleans, LA
- 20 Anti-Racism Team (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office
- 27 "Come and See" Event for New Beginnings (10:00 a.m. - Noon) - Location TBD
- 28 - April 4 Easter Offering (to support the General Ministries of the Church)

3rd ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL TRANSFORMATION EVENT
“BEING WELL: CONGREGATIONAL HEALTH, VITALITY, AND YOU”
FEBRUARY 12-13, 2010 - FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH, BIRMINGHAM



Rev. Bill Lee



Dr. Toni Craven



Rev. Warren Lynn

The Region’s Program Committee on Church Development is sponsoring the third annual congregational transformation event on February 12-13, 2010, at First Christian Church, Birmingham. The theme of the 2010 event is “Being Well: Congregational Health, Vitality, and YOU.” As in the past, the weekend will begin with a dynamic worship service on Friday night with an outstanding preacher. On Saturday there will be a total of eight workshops offered that will be aimed at addressing issues of health – spiritual, congregational, and personal. Participants will be able to attend three of the eight workshops. There will be time for scriptural instruction in a Saturday morning plenary session as the day begins. Cokesbury will set up a book display of resources which will be of help to those are seeking to be healthy in every way.

Our preacher for Friday evening, February 12, will be **Rev. Bill Lee**, pastor of Loudon Avenue Christian Church in Roanoke, Virginia, for more than 30 years. Widely-regarded as one of the most dynamic preachers in the Christian Church, Rev. Lee served as Moderator for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) from 2005 to 2007. He is also a past president of the National Convocation. Under his leadership, his congregation has demonstrated a strong commitment to neighborhood and community involvement, especially in ministries that focus on the quality of life of Roanoke’s youth. Rev. Lee is a strong advocate for health ministries and has created programs and ministries that provide an array of medical and social services to disadvantaged persons in the community. He is also a passionate voice for clergy health and wellness and relates the health of congregations to the health of their leaders. In addition to bringing the sermon on Friday evening, Rev. Lee will address ministers and spouses (if applicable) at a breakfast gathering on Saturday at the Drury Hotel in Birmingham, where we have arranged a large block of rooms at a special rate.

Guests from beyond the Region who will be with us on Saturday include **Dr. Toni Craven**, Professor of Hebrew Bible at Brite Divinity School in Ft. Worth, Texas, and **Rev. Warren Lynn**, Director of Search and Call with Disciples Home Missions in Indianapolis, Indiana. Dr. Craven will lead a plenary session on Saturday morning and also one of the eight workshops. She will help participants understand the biblical concepts of “shalom” and “sabbath” as they relate to health and vitality. Rev. Lynn will explore a variety of spiritual disciplines so that participants may find new ways of nurturing their spiritual connection with God on a daily basis.

Congregations are urged to pay a registration fee of \$250, which allows any number of persons from their congregation to attend. The cost of an individual registration is \$25. The registration fee includes lunch. Registration information was included in the November Leader’s Packet. Please contact the Regional office (205-425-5245) if this information is needed.

REFLECTIONS FROM THE REGIONAL MINISTER



Every congregation in the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region is strongly encouraged to have a large number of its members and leaders present for the congregational transformation event that will be held at First Christian Church, Birmingham, on Friday and Saturday, February 12-13, 2010. (Please see a separate article in this newsletter regarding this event.). For the third consecutive year this Region, through the Program Committee on Church Development, has planned a stimulating opportunity for the Region to come together in pursuit of being transformed in all of the ways God wants to transform us.

This year we will gather around the theme, “Being Well: Congregational Health, Vitality, and YOU.” This theme will allow us to focus upon many areas of individual practice and congregational life where we could be healthier instruments of God’s grace.

As we all know, congregations can quickly become unhealthy communities in which God’s purposes are not lived out effectively. I am convinced that no congregation ever means to become unhealthy. And yet it happens, tragically and far too often, because congregations lose their focus and slip into patterns of living that allow them to forget who they are, who they are called to serve, and for what purpose they exist. Just as an automobile needs to have its hoses flushed out occasionally to deal with negative build-up that keeps its engine from optimal performance, individuals and congregations often need to be renewed by replacing what is unhealthy with the healthy. In fact, this is the essence of transformation – replacing whatever keeps us from our mission with practices and attitudes that move us more closely into God’s will for us.

The workshops that will be offered at this church transformation event will deal with a variety of issues that impact congregational and personal life. Each person will be able to attend three workshops. Resources will be able through the workshops and also through the Cokesbury book display. Worship, both on Friday night and at the conclusion of the event, will draw us into God’s presence, which is necessary for any real transformation to occur.

All clergy and their spouses are invited to attend a breakfast session with Rev. Bill Lee on Saturday morning at the Drury Hotel, where we have a block of rooms reserved for our group. There is a meeting room just down the hall from the breakfast area where a free, hot breakfast is available daily. Hopefully you were able to make your reservations by the January 12, 2010, deadline. If not, you may want to call 1-800-325-0720 and mention the group name “Disciples of Christ” to see if rooms are still available at the \$69 rate we had negotiated.

I look forward to seeing a great crowd on February 12-13. This event will help our Region, as well as our congregations, be a more healthy and effective instrument for God’s mission in the world.

Your partner in ministry,

John P. Mobley

2010 MEN'S RETREAT SET FOR MARCH 12-13



The Disciples Men will sponsor a Men's Retreat on March 12-13, 2010, at YMCA-Hargis. The theme of this retreat will be "God First - Spirit, Mind, and Body." The special guest leader for this retreat will be **Rev. Eugene Fisher**, Director of Benefits, Pension Fund of the Christian Church. Prior to his service with the Pension Fund about three years ago, Rev. Fisher served as the leading minister for the Reconciliation Mission of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). A native of Columbus, Ohio, Rev. Fisher was raised in the Woodland Christian Church. He received a B.S. degree from Franklin University in Columbus, Ohio, and a Master of Divinity degree from Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis, Indiana. He has served congregations in Indiana, Ohio, and Missouri. He is married and is the father of two grown children.

In addition to the presentations from Rev. Fisher, the men will have a session entitled, "Technology and Ministry in the 21st Century," which will be led by Jeremy Harbin, minister at Union Christian Church, Tuskegee. There will also be presentations from persons who will have been part of the delegation to Honduras in January. There will also be a presentation on the plans for the 2010 Miracle Day, which will be held at First Christian Church, Anniston, on Saturday, June 5, 2010. Music leadership at the retreat will be provided by George Dudley, retired minister who is also a member at First Christian Church, Birmingham.

The Retreat will have a business session where a new slate of officers for 2010-2012 will be presented. There will be a report on activity in the Disciples Men's Fund. Decisions will be made about special projects that the men of the Region will support in the coming year. All congregations are encouraged to bring their offerings for the Disciples Men's Fund to the retreat. Several years ago a goal of \$10 per active man in each congregation was suggested as the amount each congregation should contribute to the Fund. All congregations are strongly urged to participate in this fund. Checks may be brought to the retreat or they may be mailed to the Regional office at 861 Highway 52, Helena, AL 35080.

The cost of the Men's Retreat is \$75. Registrations received prior to February 26 will be at the discounted rate of \$65. The Men's Cabinet has approved a special incentive for this retreat for the congregation that has the most men attending the Regional men's retreat for the first time. The winning congregation will receive a \$200 voucher toward summer camp costs.

The retreat begins with dinner at 6:00 p.m. on Friday, March 12, although men are invited to arrive as early as 2:00 p.m. for fellowship, fishing, hiking, or other outdoor activities. The retreat will end no later than 2:30 p.m. on Saturday.

Registration information was included in the January Leader's Packet. Please contact the Regional office if you need this information.

2010 REGIONAL ASSEMBLY SET FOR APRIL 23 - 25

The 2010 Regional Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Alabama-Northwest Florida will be held at First Christian Church, Decatur, Alabama, on April 23-25, 2010. Complete information on registration and housing was sent out in the January Leader's Packet and is available on the website <www.alnwdisciples.org>

The 2010 Regional Assembly will focus on the theme, "...to the Ends of the Earth." The Assembly will emphasize the mandate from Christ, found in Acts 1:8, for his disciples to continue his work of proclaiming the good news to the ends of the earth. We will be joined by several partners representing ministries that are taking the Disciples witness to the ends of the earth. These partners include: Rev. Amy Gopp, Rev. Sandra Gourdet, and Rev. Felix Ortiz. Please see the write-up below to learn more about these special guests.

OUR ASSEMBLY GUESTS



Rev. Amy Gopp serves as Executive Director of Week of Compassion, the relief, recovery, and development ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the U.S. and Canada. A native of Ohio, Rev. Gopp received a Bachelor's degree from the American University School of International Service, Washington, D.C., in 1994, followed by a master of Arts degree in Conflict Revolution from the McGregor School of Antioch University in Yellow Springs, Ohio, and a Master of Divinity from Union Theological Seminary in New York in 2005, the year she was ordained. She has lived in Yugoslavia, Bosnia, and Croatia, serving as a peace activist in war-torn areas. She served as Intern Coordinator with Disciples Peace Fellowship for four years prior to coming to Week of Compassion as Associate Director. She began her service as Director in 2008.

Rev. Gopp will be the preacher at the Friday night worship service and will be a part of the workshops on Saturday afternoon.



Rev. Sandra Gourdet serves as Executive in the Africa Office of Global Ministries, a joint ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ. Rev. Gourdet and her husband Daniel, began service with the Division of Overseas Ministries in 1973 and have served on the mission field in the Congo, Zimbabwe, and Haiti. Born in Birmingham, Alabama, Rev. Gourdet was ordained at the Macedonia Christian Church, Birmingham, in 1999. She received Bachelor's degrees from Miles College and the University of Alabama. She also studied at L'Accueil Fraternal, LeChambor Sur-Lignon, France, and she completed her theological education at the University of South Africa, where she received a degree in 1999. Rev. Gourdet and her husband, Daniel are the parents of two grown children.

Rev. Gourdet will be the preacher on Saturday morning, and she will give leadership to the Saturday afternoon workshops.



Rev. Felix Ortiz-Cotto serves as Executive in the Latin America and the Caribbean Office of Global Ministries, a joint ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ. A native of Puerto Rico, Rev. Ortiz-Cotto served as a congregational pastor prior to beginning service with the Division of Overseas Ministries in 1985. He was ordained by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Puerto Rico in 1976, after having received a Bachelor's degree from the University of Puerto Rico and his master of Divinity degree from the Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico in Hato Rey. Rev. Ortiz-Cotto is married to Maria Esther Cruzado-Amador, who coordinates People-to-People programs through the Division of Overseas Ministries. Rev. Ortiz-Cotto and his wife, Maria, are parents to two adult children.

Rev. Ortiz-Cotto will be a part of the Saturday morning worship and he will give leadership to the Saturday afternoon workshops.

AMBER CHURCHILL IS FIRST GRANT RECIPIENT FROM THE MILDRED B. WATSON MEMORIAL FUND



Amber Churchill, a young adult who is in Ministry Care, has been chosen as the first recipient of a grant from the Mildred B. Watson Memorial Fund, which was established in 2008 by the Valley Christian Church, Birmingham, and the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region. This Fund was established to assist Disciples, particularly young adults, as they develop leadership skills and gain greater awareness of the ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Amber received the grant to assist her to be a part of the delegation to Honduras in 2010. Members of the delegation will have significant interaction with Global Mission personnel as well as with partners who are living and serving in Honduras.

Amber Churchill is a 2009 graduate of the University of Alabama- Birmingham, where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree, majoring in psychology and criminal justice. She serves in a volunteer capacity as youth director with Grace Christian Church in Helena, where she is a member. Sensing a call into the ministry, Amber was received into Ministry Care by the Region's Committee on the Ministry in October, 2009. Amber is currently considering options as she plans to pursue formal theological education and ministerial preparation and training. She is the daughter of Jane and John Churchill, who is an ordained Disciples minister.

RECONCILIATION IS FOCUS OF YOUNG ADULT RETREAT



Twenty-one young adults representing nine congregations, five states, eight colleges, and one seminary participated in the Young Adult Retreat at Camp Chandler Jan 22-24. They enjoyed fellowship and planning for future events in addition to learning about their part in God's Dream for humanity. The program included sessions on implicit prejudice and decision-making, and the devastating effects of white privilege on each person.

The group enjoyed the climbing tower and high ropes challenge course and a few even braved a windy and cold canoe trip on Lake Jordan. Future events for the young adult ministry include: Alternative Spring Break work trip to our mission station in Slidell, LA; a missions fund-raiser at Regional Assembly in April; Miracle Day June 5 at Anniston FCC; Disciples Women Quadrennial Assembly June 23-27 in Greensboro NC; future domestic and international mission trips; and a Back-to-School lock-in July 30-31.

YOUTHTOPIA 2010

**"If You Judge Others... You Have No Time To Love Them"
"Love One Another" – John 13:34**



Youthtopia 2010 was held on January 22-24, 2010, at Camp Chandler, in Montgomery, Alabama. It was a wonderful event! Our focus was on Anti-racism and Reconciliation. Sixty-three participants were led on an incredible journey by our very own Reverend Sekinah Hamlin and other SERF (South Eastern Regional Fellowship) volunteers. Many members of our own Anti-Racism Team were present as well. The event consisted of a poverty simulation, low ropes course, high ropes course, climbing wall, worship, fellowship, community meals, and so much more!!!

We encourage you to visit our page on the website to read more about the event, and see lots of photos!!!!

"FEED MY SHEEP"
WEEK OF COMPASSION SPECIAL OFFERING
FEBRUARY 21 - 28, 2010



Week of Compassion is the relief, refugee and development mission fund of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada. This ministry seeks to equip and empower Disciples to alleviate the suffering of others through disaster response, humanitarian aid, sustainable development and the promotion of mission opportunities. Please visit www.weekofcompassion.org to find resources for promoting the many ways that Week of Compassion is touching lives in the name of Christ all around the world, all around the year. Your support of the Week of Compassion offering, collected in most congregations February 21 and 28, is much-needed and greatly appreciated.

OUTREACH GIVING UPDATE

The giving in 2009 by congregations in Alabama-Northwest Florida to the Disciples Mission Fund and the four Special Day Offerings (Easter, Pentecost, Thanksgiving, and Christmas) showed a 2.07% decrease from the amount given in 2008. Church-wide gifts to Disciples Mission Fund and the four Special Day Offerings decreased by 8.80% from the amount given in 2008. Week of Compassion giving in Alabama-Northwest Florida (regular and designated) decreased by 28.72% from the amount given in 2008. Gifts to the Reconciliation Offering decreased by 13.35% from the 2008 Offering. The 2009 Easter Offering declined 11.00% from the 2008 total. The 2009 Pentecost Offering declined 27.81% from the 2008 total. The 2009 Thanksgiving Offering increased by 12.66% from the 2008 total. The 2009 Christmas Offering decreased 1.11% from the amount collected in 2008.

Disciples outreach ministries are carried out in partnership between general ministries, ministries of higher education, Regions, congregations, and other related ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The financial support given by your congregation enables this partnership to be effective in carrying out the ministry of Jesus Christ. Your commitment to our shared ministries is greatly appreciated.

NEWS OF THE CLERGY

Willie Smith has been approved for a ministerial license by a subcommittee of the Committee on the Ministry. The license will be presented to him at Salem Christian Church, Letohatchee, where he serves as pastor, on February 7. **Nathan Hartley** has been approved by a subcommittee of the Committee on the Ministry for ordination. The service of ordination will take place in the early part of 2010 at Mt. Moriah Christian Church, Letohatchee, where he serves as pastor. **Mitchell James** has retired from his ministry with Mt. Pleasant Christian Church in Matthews. He ended his ministry with the congregation in December. **Kathryn Menser** has begun a new ministry as institutional chaplain at Westminster Village in Pensacola and at White Sands Manor in Fort Walton Beach. Ordained in 2007, Rev. Menser previously lived in Fort Worth, TX.

CONGREGATIONS SEEKING A MINISTER

Falkville, Cedar Plains (Jerry Smith is Interim)

Madison, Madison (Bob Stegall is Interim)

Mathews, Mt. Pleasant

Tuscaloosa, First (Phillip Hayes is Interim)

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Alabama-Northwest Florida website is brought to you in cooperation with WebMedley.

WebMedley offers full-service website design and marketing services that go beyond the competition. Regardless of the desired outcome of your site - e-commerce, fund-raising, online advertising - WebMedley will make sure it's a perfect fit and has the ability to change as your needs change.

In February, WebMedley will launch their newly revised website highlighting a variety of web-based services including hosting, customer support, customer site design, social media, online marketing and e-newsletters.

Why WebMedley? It's simple. We listen. Nobody knows your business better than you do. WebMedley will customize your message based on what you need and set the tools in place to get you where you want to go. For more information, e-mail info@webmedley.com or give them a call at 800.434.8607.