



# THE CHRISTIAN ALABAMA-NORTHWEST FLORIDA

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

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The Regional Office is located at 861 Hwy 52, Helena, AL 35080  
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### **IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER**

\*All meeting locations are at the Regional Office unless otherwise noted\*

#### FEBRUARY

1	Licensing and Ordination II (9:15 a.m.) - United Christian Church, Montgomery
4	Senior Adult Cabinet (Noon)
5	CWF/Disciples Women's Cabinet (10:00 a.m.)
11	Division of Administration and Stewardship (10:00 a.m.)
12	Regional Board (10:00 a.m.) - Grace Christian Church, Helena
18 - 19	"What If...?" - Congregational Transformation Event - First Christian Church, Birmingham
19	Boundary Training (9:45 a.m.) - First Christian Church, Birmingham
20 - 27	Week of Compassion Offering
24 - 25	College of Regional Ministers - Indianapolis, IN
26 - March 1	General Board of the Christian Church - Indianapolis, IN

#### MARCH

5	Program Committee on Church Development (10:00 a.m.)
7 - 10	37 <sup>th</sup> Annual Black Ministers Retreat - Wichita, Kansas
8 - 15	Trip to Honduras by a 9-member Delegation from Alabama-NW Florida
12	"Children Worship and Wonder" Retreat/Refresher (10:00 am - 2:00 p.m.)
18 - 19	(Change from earlier date) - Men's Retreat - YMCA-Hargis
18, 19, 20	Children Worship and Wonder Training - First Christian Church, Anniston
25	Workshop - "Sexual Misconduct in the Ministerial Relationship" (9:00 am)

#### APRIL

2	Women's Spring Event (10:00 a.m.) - First Christian Church, Montgomery
6	Licensing and Ordination I (9:15 a.m.)
16	Division of Mission (10:00 a.m.)
17 - 24	Easter Offering (for general ministries of the church)
23	Regional Assembly Planning Committee (10:00 a.m.) - New Hope Christian Church, Letohatchee

## DELEGATION OF NINE PERSONS PLAN TRIP TO HONDURAS IN MARCH

On March 8, 2011, nine representatives from the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region will be making a trip to Honduras to meet with partners from the Christian Commission for Development in Honduras and the Evangelical and Reformed Church of Honduras. This visit will be a time of strengthening the relationships with leaders in those groups and working to identify specific ways that our partnerships will be expressed with these groups. Persons planning to make the trip include: Dale Braxton (Snow Hill Christian Church, Mt. Willing), Jose Diaz (Primera Iglesia Cristiana Hispana, Ft. Walton Beach), George Dudley (First Christian Church, Birmingham), Laura Hutchinson (First Christian Church, Florence), Meleah Miller (First Christian Church, Decatur), Sharon Oakes (First Christian Church, Pensacola), Jan Pooley (First Christian Church, Ft. Walton Beach), Loretta Rucker (Macedonia Christian Church, Birmingham), Bill Smith (First Christian Church, Dothan).

### GOD'S ACTIVITY AMONG US

(stories of how God is using the Christian Church to touch and transform lives)

In over fifteen years of pastoring, I have concluded through divine revelation never to be afraid or feel out of order to preach salvation in Christ at a funeral. The first two funerals I preached were within weeks of each other. The first was for a middle age woman who died all of a sudden and the second was for a four-year-old who was killed in a hit-and-run automobile accident. The late Elder Earl Murray, Sr., guided me through both of those funerals. He looked at me and the multitude of the people on both occasions and challenged me as a very young pastor. He said, "do not forfeit an opportunity to feed such a large multitude so that Lord's house might be filled." I gradually started to preach salvation in Christ at funerals. As years went by I began to see more and more people come back and unite with the church because they heard me preach salvation in Christ at the funeral. I remember preaching salvation in Christ at a funeral two years ago and eight people came forward at the funeral and gave their life to Christ. They have become some of the most faithful members at the New Bethel Christian Church. I have had some who have shared with me how they heard the gospel message during the funeral of their deceased loved one, and it encouraged them to go back to reunite with their home church.

For years, I have been praying and asking God to prepare me to preach salvation in Christ in such a time as this. He revealed to me that the funeral crowd will be one of the most unsaved crowds that I will ever face in one service. I know this type of preaching may be outside of some church traditions. And yes, I agree that reflections on the deceased help the family and friends through their bereavement. However, God revealed to me that what people really need is the joy of the Lord and they need to know how to get that joy. I know the importance of telling the bereaved to keep the good memories of the deceased in their hearts. Nevertheless, I also understand the importance of telling them how to accept Jesus into their lives.

Submitted By Elder Tommie Means,  
Pastor of the New Bethel Christian Church (DOC) Greenville, Alabama

*[Editor's note: This story reminds us that our congregations have numerous opportunities to proclaim good news, whether through regular or special worship services, outreach ministries, fellowship events, or even funerals. Rev. Means' testimony says that we should not neglect any opportunity to share good news with people who need to receive it. Doing so may lead to transformation in people's lives.]*

"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."

*[Editor's note: Stories, submitted by our readers, are needed for this regular feature of our newsletter. Pastors, in particular, are asked to share stories that celebrate the ways that God is working in the ministries of Disciples congregations in Alabama-Northwest Florida.]*

## REFLECTIONS FROM THE REGIONAL MINISTER



The Region's Program Committee on Church Development has taken the lead in planning and developing the fourth annual congregational transformation event, which will be held on February 18-19, 2011, at First Christian Church, Birmingham. This committee is urging us to ask the question, "What if...?" The question is left open-ended because we know that there are so many variations of this question that we need to be asking ourselves. Each of us, and each of our congregations, needs to reflect on the "what ifs?" as a matter of prayer and discernment about where the Spirit of God wants to take us.

What if ... the church was truly a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world? What signs of fragmentation in communities and families would call the church to take action? What kinds of new ministries would be developed so that the church would have meaningful interaction with the hurting people in its community? How would human and financial resources be allocated to addressing the needs?

What if ... church members loved God with heart, soul, strength, and mind and their neighbors as themselves? What would that mean for our evangelism efforts? What difference would that make in our worship? How would that impact the hospitality of our congregations?

What if ... our congregations focused on people more than on property and on ministry more than maintenance? Would that mean that the church would extend itself beyond its own walls to go where the people are, rather than waiting for them to come to us? Would those commitments make us more authentic and thus more inviting to young adults who seek a church that is both humble and relevant?

What if ... the church really followed the Jesus of the New Testament, the man from Galilee who ate and drank with sinners and prostitutes, who treated with dignity the tax collectors and the demon-possessed, who wasn't afraid to touch the lame, the blind, and the sick, who placed great value on children and what they can teach us, and who offered forgiveness to thieves, outcasts, as well as to religious leaders.

### **What if...? What if...?**

I invite each of us into a time of prayer before God. I urge us to do this as individuals and as congregations. Asking "what if?" in a context of prayer helps us exercise our spiritual imaginations, and that is a good thing. May we each come to the transformation event in February prepared to imagine church in new ways. No religious renewal and transformation movement has ever been launched until people of faith have asked "What if...?" The power of spiritual imagination can lead us into renewal as God's people.

I look forward to greeting you on February 18 and 19 in Birmingham at "What If...?"

Your partner in ministry,  
John P. Mobley

Deadline for the next issue:  
March 1, 2011

**“WHAT IF...?” - FEBRUARY 18-19, 2011**  
**(A Region-wide Congregational Transformation Event)**

The Program Committee on Church Development for the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region is planning a dynamic weekend event for all leaders and members of Alabama-Northwest Florida congregations. “What If...?” is the theme of the fourth annual congregational transformation event. This event will be hosted by First Christian Church, Birmingham, on Friday and Saturday, February 18 and 19, 2011. The Committee has been able to enlist some impressive leaders for both the worship and workshops that will be a part of this gathering.



On Friday evening, the Region will gather in worship at 7:30 p.m. **Rev. Todd Adams**, Associate General Minister and President for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), will be preaching during this worship service. On Saturday morning, there will be a morning worship service that will expose participants to some different approaches to worship that have been effective in attracting younger generations. The service of worship will be led by the **Rev. Suzanne Castle**, Associate Minister for THE SEARCH (an emergent worshipping community) and Campus Ministries at



University Christian Church in Ft. Worth, TX. Following the opening worship on Saturday morning, a variety of workshops will be offered in three different workshop times. Participants may choose to participate in three different workshops during the day.

Congregations may pay a \$250 registration fee to cover the cost of any number of persons that wish to participate from that congregation. Lunch is included for all participants. The cost of an individual registration is \$25, which includes lunch. Registration forms were included in the November and January Leader’s Packets and are also available on-line at <[www.alnwfldisciples.org](http://www.alnwfldisciples.org)>

Rev. Todd Adams has served as Associate General Minister since June, 2007. Prior to that he served in Houston, Texas, as senior minister with Memorial Drive Christian Church. Rev. Adams has done extensive work in stewardship, including a doctoral dissertation entitled, “The Steward as Leader: A Model for Leadership in the Modified Congregational Context.” In his role as Associate General Minister, Rev. Adams has given leadership to the church’s promotion of Disciples Mission Fund and he has been involved in helping the church grow in its commitment to financial stewardship. Much in demand as a preacher and keynoter, Rev. Adams has been the featured speaker in 22 of 33 Regions and also in university settings.

Rev. Adams received his Bachelor of Arts degree in political science from Chapman University in Orange, CA, and his Master of Divinity from Phillips Theological Seminary in Tulsa, OK. He received his Doctorate in Ministry from Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC. He has been married to Kimberly for 16 years and they have two children, Claire and Jackson.

Rev. Suzanne Castle is currently completing her Doctorate in Liturgical Studies and Worship from the Institute for Worship Studies. She received her bachelor’s degree in music, dance, and theater from West Texas A&M, and she received a master of divinity degree from Claremont School of Theology. In addition to her leadership with the emergent worship service at University Christian Church, her other areas of ministry include worship and the arts and evangelism.

Rev. Castle has authored articles and devotional material, and has served the greater church community as a Worship Consultant and as a featured workshop leader and keynote speaker. She has also had the honor of serving in worship planning for Regional Assemblies and

two General Assemblies with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Rev. Castle has served churches in California, Florida and Texas.

She enjoys spending time with her two adopted human daughters—Lizzie and Ava; and her canine daughter—Gidget.

This Region-wide event is aimed at helping congregational leaders imagine new ways of ministering in the name of Christ in today's world. As Disciples, we claim to be "a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world." What if we were truly such a movement? What might be different? What would need to change? Who would we need to pay attention to that we are currently ignoring? These are the tough questions that can lead to congregational transformation.

Make your plans to be a part of this exciting weekend. Please contact the Regional office if more information is needed.

### **A GLIMPSE AT THE WORKSHOPS TO BE OFFERED AT "WHAT IF...?"**

*Creating an Alternative with Special Seasons* (led by Rev. Suzanne Castle, University Christian Church, Fort Worth, TX).

This workshop will offer creative ideas for congregational worship and will emphasize multi-sensory expression. Special seasons are great opportunities to expand worship to include art, prayer, sacred space and music. In this workshop we will explore resources and walk through ways to engage the special seasons of the church year differently.

*Lifestyle Evangelism* (led by Ken Whisenant)

What if...every member of every church in the Region learned to share the good news of Christ as naturally as we talk about all of the other topics influencing our lives. This workshop will help break down the barriers and build ways to engage others in conversation that will create an interest and curiosity that will produce results in God's time. This could spark a new surge in spiritual growth in our congregations, even if we do not have all the answers.

*Upward Sports—An Outreach to At-Risk Youth* (led by Sylvester Hardy)

This workshop will describe the outreach strategy behind the Upward Sports ministries, which have seen success on a global scale for the past three decades. Learn what one community in Alabama is doing to reach out to its youth as Disciples take the lead in fostering partnerships with other churches, schools, and community organizations to offer an Upward Sports ministry.

*Fellowship of Twelve—Leadership Development* (led by Susan Diamond)

What IF...pastors were intentional about equipping lay leaders for ministry? How would it change the church, its mission and its ministry? Learn what one pastor and congregation are doing and share your own ideas about leadership development for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

*Setting the Captives Free: The Payday Loan Trap* (led by Rev. Sèkinah Hamlin, SERF Minister of Anti-Racism and Reconciliation)

Persons of color and economically deprived communities are more likely to be impacted by predatory lending. What if congregations educated their members about the injustices of predatory lending and became advocates for the poor and marginalized in their communities?

*What IF...We Read the Book and Followed the Directions?* (Led by Paul Ingram)

It's 11:35 on Christmas Eve and you are trying to put together a swing set for the kids without reading the directions! The time is fleeting and we try to build the kingdom and we have failed to follow the directions! And we are failing in our attempt!!!! What If??????????

*Boundary Training* (led by Nisha Warbington)

This workshop will train congregational leaders on how to structure policies and practices to protect children and youth. Congregations will be reminded of their responsibility for the safety of children and youth who participate in their programs. Attention will be given to best practices for the selection and screening of volunteer and paid persons who work with children and youth.

*Youth Ministry "Outside the Box"* (led by Lesleigh Carmichael, Lead Consultant, Youth Ministry Architects, Nashville, TN)

"What if youth ministry was not looked upon as something that a church could purchase in a can from a church resources site? What if youth ministry was a ministry done with consideration of one's own resources and gifts instead of thinking it had to look like the 6000 member church down the street? What if we valued the training and accountability of those who lead and nurture our youth instead of hiring anyone who walked through the door who could play the guitar? What if we looked at youth ministry as a ministry needing to be done in community with the rest of the church?

## **BOUNDARY TRAINING OFFERED ON FEBRUARY 19**

The Alabama-Northwest Florida Region is sponsoring a Boundary Training workshop for all church volunteers or employees who work with youth and children. This workshop will be offered at First Christian Church, Birmingham, on Saturday morning, February 19, 2011, in conjunction with the "What If...?" congregational transformation event. Nisha Warbington, Regional Youth Ministries Staff Person, will lead the workshop.

In 2007 the Region offered boundary training workshops in various districts of the Region. Many who attended in 2007 may also benefit from this workshop. Volunteers in Disciples congregations who want to work with children and youth are often required by church insurance policies to have formal boundary training.

The registration cost that will be paid as part of "What If...?" (\$25 per individual or \$250 per congregation) will cover the cost of this workshop also.

## WORKSHOP FOR CLERGY ON SEXUAL MISCONDUCT

On Friday, March 25, 2011, a workshop will be offered to clergy and to persons in Ministry Care entitled, "Sexual Misconduct in the Ministerial Relationship." This workshop will begin at 9:00 a.m. and will conclude by 3:30 p.m. Attendance at this workshop is required for all ministers *unless they can verify that they have attended a similar workshop at a prior time.*

Drs. Dale Braxton and Nisha Warbington, both Regional staff, have received formal training through the FaithTrust Institute to provide this training to clergy.

There is no cost for ministers with standing or persons in Ministry Care to attend this workshop, unless they have attended previously. The cost for those who have attended previously or for those who are not *required* to attend is \$50. All persons who plan to participate in this workshop must confirm their reservation by contacting the Regional office by phone (205-425-5245) or by email <alnwfl@aol.com> **no later than March 18, 2011.**

## CHILDREN WORSHIP AND WONDER RETREAT/REFRESHER - MARCH 12, 2011

Those persons involved in Children Worship and Wonder in Disciples congregations in Alabama-Northwest Florida are invited to participate in a mini-retreat on Saturday, March 12, 2011, from 10:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m., at the Regional office. This mini-retreat will serve as a refresher for those who have already participated in a formal CW&W training event.

Jane Nettles, a member at Union Christian Church, Tuskegee, and a certified CW&W trainer and story-teller, will lead this retreat. There will be time for worship, new stories, new materials, questions, concerns, trouble-shooting, and sharing of experiences. Lunch will be provided. There is no cost to attend. Participants are required to register in advance by contacting the Regional office or by contacting Jane Nettles directly.

More information may be obtained by contacting Jane by email <abgmomo@att.net> or by calling or texting her at 334-728-1876.

## 2011 MEN'S RETREAT - MARCH 18 and 19



Bruce Barkhauer

The annual Men's Retreat is planned for March 18-19, 2011, at YMCA-Hargis. The Disciples Men's Cabinet has put together a great retreat filled with fun, fellowship, and challenge for all men in the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region. The theme for the 2011 Men's Retreat is "Living Generously." The guest leader for the retreat will be Rev. Bruce Barkhauer, Minister of Faith and Giving for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ.)

Rev. Barkhauer is a graduate of Ohio University (1979) and Christian Theological seminary (1985). He began serving as the church's Minister of Faith and Giving in February, 2010. Prior to that he served for 25 years as a pastor in Ohio and Indiana where he led his congregations to achieve high levels of financial

support for local and global missions as he helped persons understand stewardship as a spiritual discipline that can be practiced with joy and optimism. Rev. Barkhauer will help the men of the Region understand that the practice of stewardship is our basic response to a loving and generous God. Rev. Barkhauer is married to Laura, and they have three grown children.

Each year at the Men's Retreat there is an important offering collection which provides resources for the Disciples Men to support specific mission efforts in and beyond the Region. Men's groups in congregations are urged to collect their money in advance of the retreat so that each congregation's gifts may be placed into the offering at the retreat.

Registration forms and information on costs were included in the January Leader's Packet. The early-bird deadline for registration is February 25. After that date there is an increase in the registration fee. Please contact the Regional office if more information is needed.

### **WOMEN – MARK YOUR CALENDARS!!**

On Saturday, April 2, 2011, all women of the Region are encouraged to attend the Women's Spring Event, which will be held at First Christian Church, Montgomery, beginning at 10:00 a.m. Lunch will be served. More information on this event will be shared with the women of the Region through the March Leader's Packet. Be watching for details!!

### **IS YOUR CONGREGATION A CANDIDATE FOR HOSTING THE NEXT MIRACLE DAY IN ALABAMA-NORTHWEST FLORIDA?**

The Alabama-Northwest Florida Region has held six successful Region-wide Miracle Days since 2000. These Miracle Day projects have attracted Disciples from all across the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region to work together to enhance a host congregation's capacity for ministry.

The Region's Division of Mission hopes to recommend that Miracle Days continue to happen in Alabama-Northwest Florida. The date for the next Miracle Day has been set tentatively for Saturday, June 9, 2012. Applications from congregations that have an interest in hosting the next Miracle Day are welcomed. An application can be found in the January Leader's Packet, or you may contact the Regional office to request an application. If your congregation has a vision for a new ministry that requires physical preparation and that can only be achieved by a large number of volunteers working alongside volunteers from your congregation, you may want to consider hosting Miracle Day in 2012. The deadline for submitting applications is March 31, 2011.

### **NEWS OF THE CLERGY**

**Danny Barfield** began his service as supply pastor with South Baldwin Christian Church in Foley on January 16.

## CONGREGATIONS SEEKING A MINISTER

Athens, First  
Birmingham, Roebuck  
Cullman, First  
Hartselle First (Jerry Ridling is Interim)  
Pensacola, Westwood  
Tuscaloosa, First (Phillip Hayes is Interim)

Congregations that have formally committed to expressing “true community” through intentional efforts to work against racism and toward reconciliation.

First Christian Church, Anniston  
Primera Iglesia Cristiana Hispana, Anniston  
First Christian Church, Birmingham  
Valley Christian Church, Birmingham  
First Christian Church, Dothan  
First Christian Church, Ft. Walton Beach  
First Christian Church, Huntsville  
Mt. Pleasant Christian Church, Mathews  
First Christian Church, Pensacola  
Snow Hill Christian Church, Mt. Willing

## **STATEMENT AFFIRMING AN ANTI-RACIST IDENTITY**

*Recognizing the division that exists within the human family due to the sin of racism, the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region confirms its commitment to the call of the gospel of Jesus Christ to be an ambassador of unity and reconciliation. The Alabama-Northwest Florida Region confesses its own participation in the sin of racism and is committed to the dismantling of racism wherever it exists in its own institutional life and in the life and witness of its congregations.*

*Therefore, the Regional Board, on February 23, 2002, affirms all current and future efforts within the Alabama-Northwest Region to become an Anti-Racist manifestation of the Body of Christ. This affirmation will be demonstrated through prayer, allocation of resources, and organized efforts to challenge racism wherever it exists within the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region.*

## **OUTREACH GIVING UPDATE**

The giving in 2010 by congregations in Alabama-Northwest Florida to the Disciples Mission Fund and the four Special Day Offerings (Easter, Pentecost, Thanksgiving, and Christmas) decreased by 1.39% from the amount given in 2009. Church-wide gifts to Disciples Mission Fund and the four Special Day Offerings in 2010 decreased by 4.95% from the amount given in 2009. Week of Compassion giving in 2010 in Alabama-Northwest Florida (regular and designated) increased by 122.85% over the amount given through October, 2009. The 2010 Easter Offering total in Alabama-Northwest Florida exceeded the total for 2009 by 12.29%. The 2010 Pentecost Offering in Alabama-Northwest Florida was 40.98% higher than the 2009 amount. The 2010 Reconciliation Offering increased by 23.35% over 2009. The 2010 Thanksgiving Offering in Alabama-Northwest Florida grew by 27.17% over the 2009 amount. The 2010 Christmas Offering in Alabama-Northwest Florida decreased by 38.05% from the 2009 amount.

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.



***In Memoriam***

**Nathaniel Chambliss**

Died January, 2011

**Rev. W. Kenneth Hughes**

Died February 2, 2011

## REFUND POLICY

Refund Policy for events sponsored by the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region: 100% refund for emergencies, provided that notification is received prior to the beginning of the event; 50% refund for emergencies in which notification(written) is made after the beginning of the event; 100% refund for non-emergencies if requested in writing at least seven days prior to the first day of the event; No refunds will be given for non-emergency cancellations after seven days prior to the beginning of the event. Written requests for refunds must be received by the Regional Office, 861 Highway 52, Helena, AL 35080 (email <alnwfl@aol.com>), within seven days of the last day of the event.

While refunds are not available other than as outlined in this policy, substitutions will be allowed as long as the original registrant, or responsible adult, is able to locate an eligible participant who is able to take the slot and as long as the original registrant, or responsible adult, communicates this information to the Regional office. The Region will not be responsible in assisting in identifying a substitute. Notification should be provided to the Regional Office as soon as possible and any substitute must complete the necessary paperwork prior to arrival at the event.

Approved by the Regional Board, February 20, 2010



Young Adult Retreat was held on January 14-16, 2011, at YMCA-Camp Chandler, in Wetumpka, Alabama. The thirteen lucky participants helped to break a new trail, enjoyed fun and fellowship together, and discussed chapters from the book *Oh God! Oh God! Oh God!*

Diane Wood, Young Adult Ministries Director for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Alabama-Northwest Florida, was assisted by Jan Mackenzie and Regional Minister, John Mobley in facilitating the event.

Lots of FAITHFUL youth and several PATIENT youth leaders gathered at Camp Chandler on January 21-23, 2011, for a GOOD(ness) weekend around the topic of "Fruit of the Spirit" The weekend ended up being full of challenges, but everyone practiced SELF-CONTROL!!! The Regional Youth Council (RYC) GENTLY led the youth in nine different challenges (one for each fruit) to help them better understand the fruit!! LOVE AND KINDNESS was offered by all. While the weekend was full of JOY, I'm sure the adult leaders enjoyed some PEACE and quiet upon returning home!!!

