



THE CHRISTIAN ALABAMA-NORTHWEST FLORIDA

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

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No. 3

The Regional Office is located at 861 Hwy 52, Helena, AL 35080
205-425-5245 * 205-425-5246 (FAX)

REGIONAL STAFF

<p>Regional Minister John Mobley jpmobley2@aol.com</p>	<p>Associate Regional Minister Dale Braxton braxtondale@hotmail.com</p>	<p>Admin. Asst./Office Manager Susan Henderson alnwfl@aol.com</p>
<p>Women's Ministries Betty Wright btywright@aol.com</p>	<p>Youth Ministries Nisha Warbington nisha7@aol.com</p>	<p>Young Adult Ministries Diane Wood dwservant@aol.com</p>

Minister of Anti-Racism and Reconciliation
Sekinah Hamlin
revhamlin@gmail.com

IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

All meeting locations are at the Regional Office unless otherwise noted

JUNE

May 29-June 5 Pentecost Offering (for New Congregation Establishment)
5 Labyrinth Dedication and Celebration - Village CC, Auburn - (5 year anniversary) - 4:00 p.m.
6 Committee on the Ministry (10:00 a.m.)
10 - 15 Beach Camp (begins at 7:00 p.m. and ends at 10:00 a.m.) - Noah's Ark Retreat Center - Panama City Beach, FL
20 - 24 Junior Camp, Chi Rho Camp, and CYF Conference (begins and ends at 10:00 a.m.) - YMCA-Hargis
24 - 26 Discovery Camp (begins and ends at 10:00 a.m.) - YMCA-Hargis (extended care is available until 4:00 p.m. - contact Nisha at Nisha7@aol.com)
24 - 26 Regional Convocation Assembly - New Hope Christian Church, Letohatchee

JULY

6 Miracle Day Planning Committee (6:30 p.m.) - Madison Christian Church
9 - 13 General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) - Nashville, TN
23 Licensing and Ordination I (9:15 a.m.)
30 Licensing and Ordination II (9:15 a.m.) - United Christian Church, Montgomery

AUGUST

5, 6, 7 Children Worship and Wonder Training - First Christian Church, Huntsville
6 Anti-Racism Team (10:00 a.m.) - First Christian Church, Tuscaloosa
5 - 15 Visits from Elena Huegel, Global Mission Partner for Alabama-Northwest Florida
10 Commissioning and Ordination I (9:15 a.m.)
13 Clergy-Women's Luncheon (11:30 a.m.)
28 "Senior Adult Sunday" in Alabama-Northwest Florida

GOD'S ACTIVITY AMONG US

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

In the aftermath of the deadly tornadoes that swept through the southeast United States on April 27, there have been numerous expressions of care and compassion by Disciples individuals and congregations. Whether it involved making a special monetary contribution to Week of Compassion for the recovery efforts or a focused drive for food, bottled water, clothing items, baby items, etc., many of our Disciples congregations made immediate responses to stand in solidarity with those impacted by the storms.

I have learned of at least two children's groups from congregations in other Regions, one in the Southwest Region and the other in the Kentucky Region, who made and sent cards with drawings and messages for children in Disciples congregations in Alabama to have in the week following the tornadoes. Some of the cards were sent to Montgomery, First, and some came to Tuscaloosa, First. I had the privilege of seeing some of these cards, many of which included the first name of the child who sent the card. The cards said things like, "I am sorry this happened," or "God loves you," or "I am praying for you." The artwork that accompanied these cards was simply priceless. Without a doubt, this kind of gesture is a sign of God's activity among us. God is active in the act itself. And God is active in the work of those teachers in Texas and Kentucky, whose names we may never know, who are helping children care about other children who are hurting in far away places.

–John Mobley, Regional Minister

(Editor's Note: God is present in all of the acts of compassion that accompany tragedy. We may not have easy answers to why such tragedies are allowed to happen, but we can stand firm on the affirmation that God is with us in the midst of it and God is present in every act of love and solidarity for those who are hurting and experiencing loss.)

"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."
– 2007 Disciples Identity Statement

[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.]

A PASTORAL WORD FROM YOUR GENERAL MINISTER AND PRESIDENT

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

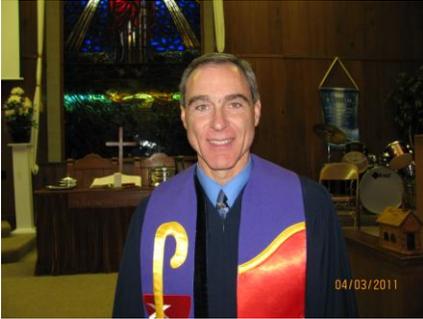
As I continue to see the evidence of the storm damage in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi, Tennessee and Missouri; as I watch the flood waters spread in Tennessee, Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi, my prayers intensify for you.

- Prayers of intercession for the injured and for those who have lost loved ones and colleagues; for those whose security has been shattered through damage to homes and schools and churches and land and places of business.
- Prayers of thanksgiving for all those who have stepped up to be a neighbor to others in this time – who just instinctively reached out to grab a hand and develop partnerships to meet the need.
- Prayers of especial gratitude for Disciples ministries: the regions, Week of Compassion, Disciples Volunteering, and local congregations who have been there in the immediate aftermath and will be there for the long haul.

May each of you have the strength you need for each day. May the partnerships formed throughout this ordeal speak of God's love and God's will for life, even the midst of loss. May God bring healing to both body and soul.

Your sister in Christ,
Sharon E. Watkins

REFLECTIONS FROM THE REGIONAL MINISTER



As followers of Christ we seek to engage in a meaningful mission that addresses the needs around us. We pray and ask for God's guidance as we discern the mission to which God is calling us. Sometimes we may think we have our mission all figured out...and then something happens that changes it overnight.

After the deadly tornadoes ripped through Alabama on April 27, 2011, the landscape of our mission changed. Overnight the needs around us changed. People were hurting who were not hurting before. People were homeless who were not homeless before. People were suddenly grieving for lost loved ones and lost property. God's people always must be ready for a new call from God that moves us into different places and different forms of ministry. God's call to us changes when the circumstances around us change.

Let me give an example, When the good Samaritan, in Jesus' parable, was embarking on his journey from Jerusalem to Jericho he probably was not planning for any detours. He may have calculated how long the trip would take, and he may have even had plans for what he would do in Jericho when he arrived there. We know from the story that he had some money in his possession. He may have had plans for how he was going to spend that money, either in Jericho or somewhere else on the journey.

But it all changed in an instant. The moment he saw the badly wounded man lying in the ditch, his trip to Jericho changed. Because he was open to the spirit of a compassionate God, he spent time caring for this fellow-traveler who had been beaten and robbed. He took a detour to take the man to an inn. He spent the money that he had in his possession to cover the lodging costs that the stranger would have. He even promised to return to the inn to pay anything more that might be due. None of this had been in the plans of the Samaritan, yet his openness to the changing needs around him prepared him to respond.

Many congregations in Alabama-Northwest Florida have been directed by the Spirit of a compassionate God to express care for those impacted by the tornadoes. They have given money, collected food, clothing, toys, medicine, school supplies and many other things that were needed, all of a sudden, by persons in their communities. Some of our congregations are considering serving through the Office of Disciples Volunteering (DHM) as "mission stations" to offer space and hospitality to volunteer work groups that will come from Disciples congregations from all across the country in recovery and rebuilding efforts. These new ministries were not envisioned before April 27, but the needs around us are now calling us to move in new directions in ministry.

May we always be sensitive to the changing needs around us. And may we always be flexible enough to alter our plans, as did the Samaritan, when our compassionate God prods us to express our faith in new ways.

Your partner in ministry,
John P. Mobley

DEADLINE NEXT ISSUE:
JULY 1, 2011



Greetings, Disciples!

At a speed we have never before experienced, Disciples are becoming the people God intends us to be. It's an exciting time to be the Church. It's also a time when the massive changes we face are likely to leave us feeling disoriented.

That's why the 2011 General Assembly is a perfect time for us to gather in Nashville, TN, July 9-13. Come, be reoriented by the Spirit for a renewed sense of ministry in a new landscape for mission!



Sharon E. Watkins
General Minister and President

This year's General Assembly focuses on Deut. 6:1-12 – one of Moses' final sermons to the children of Israel before they cross the Jordan into the Promised Land. What do they need in order to keep their bearings in the face of this massive change? Moses says, remember the basics: "Hear O Israel, the Lord is One. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and strength."

To this day, we reorient when we recall the core of who we are in relationship to a redemptive God; when we remember God's faithfulness to our children and to our children's children. We reorient when we remember a simple truth: "We are Disciples of **CHRIST**: a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world."

So, come worship with thousands of Disciples. Be inspired by [excellent preachers](#) and some of Nashville's [finest musicians](#). Come, bring all the wisdom with which you are blessed and share it in [Learning Tracks](#) designed for a church on the move. Engage in [business](#) as we strive to be faithful Disciples.

You'll find new offerings designed to enhance your experience now and beyond this gathering. Special spiritual practices will be encouraged in each hotel as "Habits of Wholeness" (Bible Study, labyrinth walking, yoga, etc.). The ["Be the Change"](#) lecture series will infuse our business sessions with the perspectives of scholars and other leaders on what it means to lead through change.

Further, we are designing new ways to capture some of what we are learning. Our Web-based toolkit will offer easy access to materials presented at General Assembly as you go home with new ideas for next steps in ministry.

I'm personally impressed with the [pre-Assembly offerings](#). With topics like stewardship, "eldering," evangelism and extending a radical welcome, they focus on equipping congregations for ministry in a new landscape for mission. Consider [adding a day to your travel](#) to take advantage of these special sessions.

Finding our joy is also part of our planning! [Bring your guitar](#) and strum along (amateurs are welcome!) at the end of the opening worship. Learn to line dance with the youth. Tell your story, or your congregation's story in our video booth.

Meanwhile, watch the mail for our *General Assembly Planning Guide*, a 70-page magazine designed to help you identify opportunities at General Assembly to equip your congregation for mission.

I hope to see YOU – and your congregation's leaders – in Nashville!

Sharon

**CENTER FOR FAITH AND GIVING STEWARDSHIP ACADEMY
PRE-ASSEMBLY EVENT ON JULY 8, 2011, NASHVILLE, TN**



Join us for a rich day filled with leadership by some of the best and brightest authors and speakers about the church's most compelling subject—stewardship! This event is for both clergy and lay people who want to know more about this spiritual discipline and who want to be equipped to lead lives as faithful stewards. This day will enable you to provide leadership in your congregation on this important issue and will broaden your understanding through the recognition that stewardship is not fund raising. It is about much more than money—it is about responding to the activity of a Generous God with the whole of our lives. Stewardship is a lifestyle that leads to the healing of creation and brings wholeness in a fragmented world.

For more information about the Stewardship Academy, visit
<http://www.disciplesmissionfund.org/Stewardship/tabid/683/Default.aspx>

**MADISON CHRISTIAN CHURCH WILL HOST A REGION-WIDE MIRACLE DAY
IN ALABAMA-NORTHWEST FLORIDA IN 2012**



The Division of Mission for the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region has selected Madison Christian Church in Madison, Alabama, to host the seventh Region-wide Miracle Day that will take place on June 2, 2012. Madison Christian Church submitted an application that described a variety of projects aimed at improving the ministry capacity of the congregation, all of which will require many volunteers from all across the Region to complete. More information will be given about work projects and about how to be a part of the 2012 Miracle Day as we get closer to the event. A Miracle Day Committee is being formed and will have its first meeting on Wednesday, July 6, 2011.

NEW SALEM CHRISTIAN CHURCH ENTERS AFFILIATION PROCESS

The Program Committee on Church Development recently gave its approval for New Salem Christian Church, Hayneville, AL, to enter an affiliation process with the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region. This congregation made application to affiliate with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in March. The pastor of this congregation, Willie Smith, will be applying for a ministerial license for his ministry. He was formerly licensed for a pastoral ministry with another Disciples congregation.

A Partnership Advisory Team has been formed to give oversight to the affiliation process. The first meeting of the PAT took place on May 16.

**ELENA HUEGEL, GLOBAL MISSION PARTNER FOR THE ALABAMA-
NORTHWEST FLORIDA REGION
is coming to a location near you in August, 2011**

The Division of Mission has developed the following itinerary for Elena Huegel while she is in Alabama-Northwest Florida. Appreciation is expressed to those congregations that have agreed to host gatherings and invite other District congregations to those gatherings. Each gathering listed is open to the entire District where the gathering will take place. Please contact the person listed for more information about a particular gathering.

Sunday, August 7 - 4:00 p.m. - District One congregations will gather at First Christian Church, Huntsville (contact pastor Guy McCombs <pg@fcc-hsv.org> for more information)

Tuesday, August 9 - 7:00 p.m. - District Four congregations will gather at United Christian Church, Montgomery (contact supply pastor Larue Smith, Jr. <smith7106@charter.net> for more information)

Wednesday, August 10 - 6:00 p.m. - District Three congregations will gather at Union Christian Church, Tuskegee (contact Stuart Price <pricesb@auburn.edu> for more information)

Thursday, August 11 - 6:00 p.m. - District Five congregations will gather at Fairhope Christian Church, Fairhope (contact pastor Mike Barnes <revmikeb@yahoo.com> for more information)

Sunday, August 14 - 4:00 p.m. - District Two congregations will gather at Valley Christian Church, Birmingham (contact pastor Gary Edge <garyhe33@hotmail.com> for more information)

HAVE YOU BEEN LISTENING?

Melanie Barton, one of our ministers in the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region, has an international radio program on the World Talk Radio Network every Thursday at 1pm Central time. All shows are archived. Go to <http://www.worldtalkradio.com/worldtalkradio/vshow.aspx?sid=1839>. On this host page go below her picture to choose a month, browse the topics, select one of interest, and then click "listen now." You can download any program to an MP3 player. You can also find them on I-tunes. Go to: itunes.apple.com/podcast/the-dr-melanie-show/id415388636. June 2nd will be a live program from Oconee Outreach Opportunity mission trip for Disciples and United Methodists in Whigham, Georgia. As one visits the archived programs, there are many topics that may be of interest to listeners.

After you have listened to a program go to: <http://www.thedrmelanieshow.com> and download some helpful resources, suggest future topics, make comments, and give feedback. All programs are paid for by advertising. If you have or know of a business that would sponsor a program, contact Melanie at drmelaniebarton@gmail.com. She would love to hear from you.

NEWS OF THE CLERGY

Tom Goebel has begun his new ministry as pastor with First Christian Church, Tuscaloosa. His first Sunday was May 8, 2011. An installation service is being planned for Sunday, June 12, 2011. **Phillip Gilbert** has accepted a call to serve as pastor with First Christian Church, Athens. For the past few years Phillip has served as Adult Care Minister with this congregation. He is scheduled to be installed as pastor on Sunday, July 3, 2011. **Duwayne Bridges** began serving in April as pastor with Fairfax First Christian Church in Valley, Alabama. **Carmen Reyes** concluded her ministry as pastor with Primera Iglesia Cristiana Hispana in Anniston, Alabama, in May. **Diana Hodges-Batzka** will complete her two-year service as Resident Pastor with First Christian Church, Montgomery, at the end of June.

We celebrate recent ordinations of **Diane Stephenson** at Oakmont Christian Church, Saraland, on Sunday, April 3, 2011, and **Tom Stephenson** at First Christian Church, Robertsdale on Sunday, May 22, 2011.

Ministerial licenses have been presented to two newly-called pastors in the Region: to **Ken Whisenant** at Westwood Christian Church, Pensacola, on Sunday, April 10, 2011, and to **Jeremy Harbin** at First Christian Church, Hartselle on Sunday, May 15, 2011.

The Honored Minister Pin was presented to **Connie Bradow** on Sunday, May 22, 2011, at First Christian Church, Pensacola, on behalf of the Region and the Pension Fund on the occasion of her retirement last year.

CONGREGATIONS SEEKING A MINISTER

Anniston, Primera Iglesia Cristiana Hispana
Birmingham, Roebuck
Foley, South Baldwin
Montgomery, First (Associate)
Tuskegee, Union

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
Primera Iglesia Cristiana Hispana, Fort 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.



Village Christian Church will host a Miracle Day anniversary celebration on June 5, 2011 from 4-6 PM. Everyone in the Region is invited to participate, especially those persons who participated in Miracle Day 2006. Pastor Diane Wood reports "The meditation garden and labyrinth have been a blessing to the Opelika/Auburn community for five years and so we are throwing a party and inviting our neighbors to celebrate with us." There will be a brief program in the pavilion during which the Region's new portable canvas Santa Rosa labyrinth will be dedicated. Afterward, there will be a time of fellowship and fun activities for kids of all ages.

GOT SPIRIT??? –

**Traditional Summer Camps
YMCA Hargis**

**CYF Conference (9th -12th grade)
Chi Rho (6th-8th grade)
Junior (4th-5th)
June 20-24, 2011**

Cost is \$225.00 before June 1st
& \$265.00 after June 1st

**Discovery Camp (2nd & 3rd grade)
June 24-26, 2011**

Cost is \$135.00 Before June 1st
& \$150.00 after June 1st

BEACH CAMP

(formerly Fine Arts Camp)

For Youth in Grades 6th-12th

June 10th -15th at Noah's Ark in PCB, FL

**Beach Camp: \$225.00 before June 1st
\$265.00 after June 1st**

Last summer, our Region was able to use the Fine Arts Camp setting as a wonderful tool for outreach. Our youth were able to share with those visiting Panama City Beach by participating in beach ministry and by leading a Backyard Bible School at a local campground. These experiences led us to revision our beach camp, which will focus more on the idea of outreach through art, music, education, and evangelism. Encourage your youth group to consider making this your Youth Mission Trip!!

OUTREACH GIVING UPDATE

The year-to-date giving in 2011, through April, by congregations in Alabama-Northwest Florida to the Disciples Mission Fund and the four Special Day Offerings (Easter, Pentecost, Thanksgiving, and Christmas) decreased by 1.95% from the amount given year-to-date in 2010. Church-wide gifts to Disciples Mission Fund and the four Special Day Offerings are showing a 13.92% decrease from the amount given year-to-date in 2010.

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.



Jeremy Harbin was installed as pastor with First Christian Church, Hartselle, on Sunday, May 15, 2011. Pictured here (l to r) are: John Mobley, Regional Minister; Rev. Harbin, Doug Stephenson, Search Committee Chairperson, and Lane Pearce, Board Chairperson.

Ken Whisenant was installed as pastor with Westwood Christian Church, Pensacola, on Sunday, April 3, 2011. Pictured here (l-r) are: Regional Minister John Mobley, Rev. Whisenant, Board Chairperson Gayla Logan, and Search Committee Chairperson Sherri Fleming.



The Honored Minister Pin was presented to Reverend Constance (Connie) Kay Bradow (pictured center) on Sunday, May 22, 2011, at First Christian Church, Pensacola. Pictured with Rev. Bradow are her two sons, Kenneth (pictured left of Rev. Bradow) and Kevin (pictured right), and friends of the family, Haylee Paxton (left) and Mell Paxton (right). Making the presentation on behalf of the Pension Fund, the Region, and the congregation was Regional Minister John Mobley (pictured left). Pictured far right is host pastor, James Gazaway.



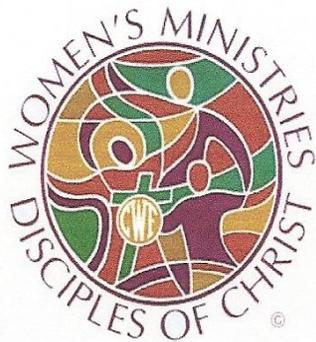
Tom Stephenson was ordained into the Ministry at First Christian Church, Robertsedale, on Sunday May 22, 2011. Pictured (l to r) are: Dale Braxton, John Mobley, Tom Stephenson, Diane Stephenson, Lionel Young and Alan Woods, Board Chairperson.

Diane L. Stephenson was ordained into the Ministry at Oakmont Christian Church, Saraland, on Sunday, April 3, 2011. Pictured here with Diane are Dale Braxton, left, and John Mobley.



The Women's Spring Event held on April 2, 2011, at First Christian Church, Montgomery, Alabama, was a very successful and informative day for Disciples Women. The event was resourced by the Reverends Susan Diamond, Montgomery, First; Rebecca Littlejohn, Anniston, First; and Beth Thomason, Madison Christian. Regional Minister John Mobley thanked those in attendance for the many ways they support Women's Ministries in the region and in the greater church. A time of sharing was enjoyed by those in attendance. The new study materials and service projects were introduced in the afternoon session.

Jun 2011
See how



Tell It!

Repete yo! • ¡Dilo! • 들러 주어라!

• • •

<p align="center">Saturday, July 9</p> <p>9:00 am to 7:00 pm: Boutique in the Exhibit Hall 9:30 pm: After session - Leader Apprentice Program and Enablers - The Well</p>	<p align="center">Sunday, July 10</p> <p>1:00 pm to 7:00 pm: Boutique in the Exhibit Hall 9:30 pm: After session - Clergy Women & Women Seminarians - The Well</p>
<p align="center">Monday, July 11</p> <p>9:00 am to 7:00 pm: Boutique in the Exhibit Hall 9:30 pm: After session—Women's Action Web & Woman-to-Woman Worldwide participants - The Well</p>	<p align="center">Tuesday, July 12</p> <p>9:00 am to 7:00 pm: Boutique in the Exhibit Hall <i>Business Session:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disciples Women's Report • Human Trafficking Resolution #1120 <p>2:30 pm: Resource Group - Breaking the chains of human trafficking, lead by Ev Penzel 9:30 pm: After session - former ICWF/IDWM Executive Committees & ODW Staff - The Well</p>
<p align="center">Wednesday, July 15</p> <p>9:00 am to 4:00 pm: Boutique in the Exhibit Hall Noon: Disciples Women's Luncheon, QA 2014 Site Announcement - Renaissance Hotel</p>	

Locations 2 Know:
 The Well - Nashville Convention Center, Room 201
 Exhibit Hall - Nashville Convention Center
 Luncheon - Renaissance Hotel, Grand Ball Room

Hope Partnership of Church Extension, Disciples Home Missions, and HELM will share the small stage in their joint exhibit hall area.

One of the featured presentations will be by LaVerne Thorpe, Vice President, IDWM Executive Committee and Chair of the 2010 to 2014 social action project focus of Human Trafficking.

Check the schedule daily to see what is happening.

