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IMPORTANT DATES TO REMEMBER

FEBRUARY, 2013

- | | |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2 | CWF/Disciples Women's Cabinet (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office |
| 5 | Commissioning and Ordination South (9:15 a.m.) - United Christian, Montgomery |
| 8 - 9 | Congregational Transformation Event - First Christian Church, Birmingham |
| 13 | Ash Wednesday |
| 16 | Division of Administration and Stewardship (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office |
| 17 - 24 | Week of Compassion Offering promotion |
| 23 | Regional Board (10:00 a.m.) - First Christian Church, Birmingham |

MARCH

- | | |
|---------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 2 | Anti-Racism Team (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office |
| 4 - 7 | 39 th Annual Black Ministers Retreat - Oklahoma City, OK |
| 7 | Optional Arrival Date at YMCA-Hargis for Men's Retreat |
| 8 - 9 | Men's Retreat - YMCA-Hargis |
| 15 | "Healthy Boundaries" clergy workshop - Regional Office, Helena |
| 16 - 22 | Trip to Honduras by Alabama-NW Florida Disciples |
| 24 - 31 | Easter Offering (for general ministries of the church) |
| 31 | Easter Sunday |

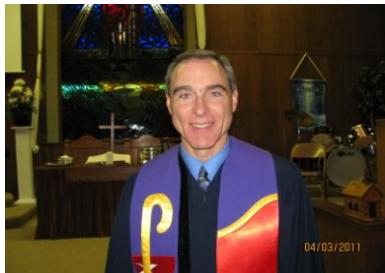
APRIL

- | | |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4 - 6 | Team Leadership Conference - Indianapolis, IN |
| 6 - 9 | General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) - Indianapolis, IN |
| 10 | Commissioning and Ordination North (9:15 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena |
| 12 - 13 | Anti-Racism Training for Clergy/Regional Board - First Christian Church, Montgomery |

"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

REFLECTIONS FROM THE REGIONAL MINISTER



One theologian has described preaching as “one beggar telling other beggars where to go to find food.” I have always remembered this quote and have found it to be quite informative as I understand the task of preaching. The saying can be applied to the task of evangelism in general. This task belongs not only to preachers, but to every person who has embraced the good news of God’s grace in Jesus Christ. Our mandate is to serve as

agents of good news in the world – telling others where salvation may be found. We are all beggars, totally dependent on the grace and generosity of God, telling others, who are also totally dependent on the grace and generosity of God, where they may find such grace. Accepting Jesus Christ into our lives -- confessing him as Lord -- brings us into a right relationship with God. Other approaches to finding what we need fall flat, leaving us empty and hungry.

The theme for the 2013 Congregational Transformation Event, “Invited and Inviting,” is a theme that reminds us of the evangelism mandate. We are called to remember that we have come into the community of faith because of God’s invitation. We did not earn the right to be in such a community. We are included because of who God is – a loving, forgiving, and inviting God – not because of who we are or what we’ve done or not done. In this community, created by the invitation of God, we must remember that the invitation has come not only to us, but to the whole world. But not everyone has learned of this invitation. Therefore, we must become an “inviting” community. We must become good stewards of the invitation we have received by making known to others that the invitation is for them also.

I hope that the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region can find renewal in 2013 in its evangelistic mission. The Transformation Event in February 8-9, 2013, is being planned in order to strengthen us in this mission. Bishop William Willimon, our Friday night preacher and plenary workshop leader on Saturday, will challenge us to be faithful to our evangelistic task.

I also celebrate the fact that 33 ministers in the Alabama-Northwest Florida and Tennessee Regions are participating in Colleague Groups in 2013 in which the year-long focus is evangelism. By studying resources, encouraging each other, and praying together in monthly gatherings, these Colleague Groups will become better equipped to lead the church to be a more effective instrument for evangelism – sharing the good news of God’s grace in Jesus Christ.

How about your congregation? Is anyone talking about evangelism? Is there anything in your 2013 budget that indicates a commitment to this all-important part of our ministry? Is there any intentional effort to discover those persons in your community who may not be receiving the invitation that God is trying to deliver to them?

I pray that the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region and the entire Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) will realize that we have not received a “private” invitation into God’s grace but we have received an “open” invitation that includes our neighbor just as much as it includes us. Let us spread the word, by our actions and by our words. We are beggars who must tell our fellow beggars where to go to find food.

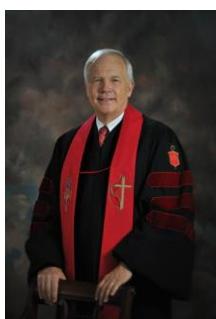
Your Partner in Ministry,

John P. Mobley
Regional Minister

DEADLINE NEXT ISSUE:

March 1, 2013

**“INVITED AND INVITING” TO BE HELD ON FEBRUARY 8-9, 2013
(BISHOP WILLIAM WILLIMON TO PREACH ON FRIDAY NIGHT)**



The Region’s Program Committee on Church Development has sponsored four congregational transformation events since 2008. Moving to an every-other-year schedule, the next event will be held on February 8-9, 2013, at First Christian Church, Birmingham. These weekend events have included prominent preachers and a variety of workshop leaders. These events have provided ideas and inspiration to help congregational leaders to be agents of transformation in their own congregations. Our Friday night preachers have included Dr. Fred Craddock, Dr. Sharon Watkins, Dr. Bill Lee, and Dr. Todd Adams, all of whom have brought us powerful messages.

In 2013 the Program Committee on Church Development is excited to sponsor a fifth Region-wide congregational transformation event. The theme is “Invited and Inviting.” The Friday evening worship service on February 8 will feature Dr. William Willimon, former Bishop of the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church. Several years ago Dr. Willimon was listed by *Newsweek* magazine (along with Disciples preacher Fred Craddock) as one of the top 12 most effective preachers in the English-speaking world. Dr. Willimon is a prolific author, preacher, and workshop leader. You will not want to miss an opportunity to hear him preach on February 8, 2013.

The next day, February 9, there will be a variety of workshops to help equip participants to be agents of transformation in their own congregations. The day will begin with a plenary workshop led by Dr. Willimon. Following the plenary, there will be opportunity for persons to choose from a variety of workshops, listed below:

– “Meet, Greet, and Hit the Streets” (workshop leader, Mickey Johnson) - This workshop will give specific information to participants about how to promote the ministries of the congregation in the community. Information will also be shared about how such a ministry is now affordable to congregations in Alabama-Northwest Florida.

– “Gossiping the Gospel: Discipling and Inviting in a Noisy World” (led by Division of Mission members) Participants will learn what Disciples of Christ congregations are doing well in many places and also what does not seem to work as well. Participants will be cautioned against mimicking popular evangelizing techniques of some other denominations.

– “Extending the Invitation: Using Your Gifts” (workshop leaders, Fannie Ashley & Melissa Anderson) - Ever feel inadequate? Are you unsure about what you can do and where you can fit in to the church’s ministry? Are you reluctant to volunteer to do something? This is nothing unusual for members of a congregation. There are gifts and talents that everyone has that are activated by the Spirit for the common good of your community of faith. You can’t do everything, but you can do something. The trick is discovering what.

– “Whose Church Is It?” (Workshop leader, Carl Gebhardt) - This workshop will explore the ideas of church identity and personal ownership of its mission. There will be dialogue about the differences between our written definitions/mission statements and the realities in our congregations. It is assumed that all church people present will have something positive, hopeful, and challenging to contribute to our common wisdom.

– “Led By the Spirit: The Gift of Hospitality” (Workshop Leaders, George and Judy Dudley) - This workshop will take a look at the adventurous trip from “visitor” to “family.”

– “Getting Ready for Company: Impressions and Barriers” (Workshop Leader, Diane Stephenson) This workshop will help congregations think about the need to prepare for visitors so that their first impression of the church will be positive and will lead to return visits.

The “Invited and Inviting” event will include lunch, fellowship, and worship in addition to the workshops. The event will end around 2:30 p.m.

The cost of registration for “Invited and Inviting” is \$25 for an individual registration (\$10 per child needing child care) or \$250 for a congregational registration (which covers registration for as many as the congregation would like to bring). It is imperative, however, that congregational registrations include a listing of persons who will attend so that adequate preparations can be made for those who attend. The registration deadline is February 4, 2013.

2013 MEN'S RETREAT - MARCH 8-9 (optional arrival date, March 7)



The annual Men's Retreat is planned for March 8 -9, 2013, at YMCA-Hargis. For a nominal added cost, men have the option of arriving on Thursday, March 7, for fishing, hiking, and fellowship prior to the beginning of the retreat on Friday afternoon. 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 2013 Men's Retreat is “When Men Pray....” The guest leader for the retreat will be Rev. Dr. Rick Lowery.

Richard H. Lowery, Ph.D. Yale, is adjunct professor of Hebrew Bible at Lexington Theological Seminary in Kentucky, where he served as dean, and Phillips Theological Seminary in Oklahoma, where he served 17 years as a tenured professor. He also teaches in the commissioned and licensed ministers program at Christian Theological Seminary in Indianapolis.. He speaks at church gatherings throughout the US and Canada, and has written articles and lessons for scholarly and popular publications, including *The Chalice Introduction to the Old Testament* and journals of preaching and stewardship. He is the author of three books, including *Sabbath and Jubilee*, and wrote the Bible commentary for the *Storyteller's Companion: Daniel and Revelation*. He's currently working on a book, *Genesis and Human Rights*. Rick is a past president of the Society of Biblical Literature Southwest Region. He is married to the Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins, General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). They are the parents of two 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 included with the offering collected at the retreat. Registration forms and information on costs were included in recent Leader's Packets. The early-bird deadline for registration is February 16. After that date there is an increase in the registration fee. Please contact the Regional office if more information is needed.

CWF/DISCIPLES WOMEN'S SPRING EVENT

WHEN: May 18, 2013

WHERE: First Christian Church, 1705 Taylor Road, Montgomery, AL 36117

THEME: "Lord, Teach Us to Pray: Generation to Generation"

TIME: Registration at 9:30 Event Begins at 9:50 a.m. and ends by 2:30 p.m.

Our keynote speaker Shelia Spencer will help us to connect across the generations.

IN LOVING MEMORY
RICKIE L. BRUNNER (died on Jan. 15, 2013)



The Alabama-Northwest Florida Region expresses its deepest sympathy to the family of Rickie Brunner who died on January 15. Rickie Brunner was a faithful servant to the Region, having served in many capacities including Chairperson of the Committee on the Ministry and as a current member of the Program Committee on Church Development. Rickie left her influence on those who knew her and served with her. She was an active member of First Christian Church, Montgomery, which hosted her funeral on January 17, 2013.

UPDATE ON THE REGION'S HONDURAS PARTNERSHIPS

The Alabama-Northwest Florida Region is fortunate to have one of its own ministers in Honduras this winter. Rev. **Rebecca Frankford**, a retired Disciples minister and a member of First Christian Church, Athens, is serving in Honduras as a short-term mission volunteer through Global Ministries. Rev. Frankford will be working with our two partners, the Christian Commission for Development and the Evangelical and Reformed Church in Honduras, and will become familiar with needs so that she can advise the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region on opportunities for specific ministries in collaboration with our Honduras partners.

Rev. Frankford will be joined in Honduras by a 10-member delegation from Alabama-Northwest Florida in March. This will be the third delegation of persons from the Region to visit our partners in Honduras. The following persons have committed to being on the delegation to Honduras, March 16-22, 2013: **Dale Braxton, Ana Diaz, Jose Diaz, Sue Goebel, Tom Goebel, Jeremy Harbin, Kenny Hays, Laura Hutchinson, Jan Pooley, and Maria Zamarripa**.

Please pray for Rev. Frankford and for the 10-member delegation as they work with our Christian brothers and sisters in Honduras.

NEWS OF THE CLERGY

Roger Peadro has completed his Doctor of Ministry degree through Beeson Divinity School at Samford University in Birmingham.

Laura Hutchinson began her service as pastor with First Christian Church, Anniston, in mid-December. An Installation Service is planned for February 17. **Laura West** was installed on December 16 as Associate Minister with Children and Families at First Christian Church, Huntsville. **Edd and Mary Pat Spencer** retired from active ministry at the end of January as they ended their service as co-pastors at First Christian Church, Birmingham. They were each presented with an Honored Minister Pin on their final Sunday with the church. **Jane Hull** has been called to serve as Interim Senior Minister with First Christian Church, Birmingham, beginning February 4. **Frank Rittenberry** has been called to serve as pastor with First Christian Church of River View in Valley, Alabama. Frank previously had an 8-year ministry with this congregation. **Michael Cassady** has been called to serve as pastor with Pleasant View Christian Church in Camp Hill. His ministry began in January.

CONGREGATIONS SEEKING A MINISTER

Birmingham, First (Jane Hull is Interim)
Florence, First (Tim Murtaugh is Interim)

FROM THE COMMITTEE ON THE MINISTRY

One of the requirements of all ministers with Standing in the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region is the completion of boundary training and anti-racism training that are offered by the Region. Ministers are required to repeat the training in these two areas after every 10 years. Each year when the Committee on the Ministry reviews the standing of ministers, they take note of whether or not ministers have satisfied this requirement.

In the next two months the Committee on Ministry will sponsor training events in these two required areas. On Friday, March 15, 2013, there will be a "Healthy Boundaries" workshop offered at the Regional office, beginning at 9:00 a.m. Lunch will be provided. There is no cost for ministers to participate, but all ministers who plan to participate are required to notify the Regional office one week in advance.

On Friday and Saturday, April 12-13, 2013, the Committee on the Ministry will partner with the Anti-Racism Team to provide anti-racism training for ministers and for Regional Board members. This training event will be held at First Christian Church, Montgomery. The cost is \$25, which will include lodging and most of the meals. The event begins at 10:00 a.m. on Friday, April 12, and will conclude prior to lunch on Saturday, April 13. Registration information and lodging forms have been included in Leader's Packets and are available on the Region's web-site. **Please note the early deadline of March 11, which is necessary in order to reserve lodging for participants.**

OUTREACH GIVING UPDATE

The giving in 2012 by congregations in Alabama-Northwest Florida to the Disciples Mission Fund and the four Special Day Offerings (Easter, Pentecost, Thanksgiving, and Christmas) decreased by 8.00% from the amount given in 2011. Church-wide gifts to Disciples Mission Fund and the four Special Day Offerings in 2012 decreased by 4.93% from the amount given in 2011. Week of Compassion giving in 2012 in Alabama-Northwest Florida (regular and designated) decreased by 41.93% from the amount given in 2011. The 2012 Easter Offering total in Alabama-Northwest Florida decreased from the total 2011 by 2.55%. The 2012 Pentecost Offering in Alabama-Northwest Florida was 46.11% lower than the 2011 amount. The 2012 Reconciliation Offering in Alabama-Northwest Florida decreased by 11.88% from the 2011 total. The 2012 Thanksgiving Offering in Alabama-Northwest Florida decreased by 14.15% from the 2011 amount. The 2012 Christmas Offering in Alabama-Northwest Florida decreased by 14.84% from the 2011 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.

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.

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
Village Christian Church, Auburn
First Christian Church, Birmingham
Valley Christian Church, Birmingham
First Christian Church, Dothan
Snow Hill Christian Church, Ft. Deposit
First Christian Church, Ft. Walton Beach
Primera Iglesia Cristiana Hispana, Fort Walton Beach
First Christian Church, Huntsville
Grateful Life Community Church, Huntsville
Mt. Pleasant Christian Church, Mathews
First Christian Church, Pensacola
Mt. Calvary Missionary Christian Church, Tuskegee
Union Christian Church, Tuskegee
First Christian Church of River View, Valley



Twelve persons participated in the 2013 Young Adult Retreat at YMCA-Camp Chandler on January 18-20, 2013. The theme of the retreat was "Discovering Your Spiritual Gifts." Rev. Beth Thomason served as retreat leader.



The 2013 Ministers and Mates Retreat was held at the Hilton Garden Inn in Orange Beach, AL, on January 14-16. Don and Charisse Gillett were the guest leaders. Approximately 35 persons were in attendance.

Regional youth enjoyed a Seusstastic time at recent Youthtopia 2013. More than 70 youth and sponsoring adults were a part of the 2013 Youthtopia at YMCA-Camp Chandler on January 25-27. pictured here with the group is "Frank" - a gentle pig who has become a regular addition to events at Camp Chandler!



Edd and Mary Pat Spencer completed their ministry with First Christian Church, Birmingham, on January 27, 2013. On that Sunday they were presented with Honored Minister Pins as they retired from active full-time ministry. They are pictured here with Regional Minister John Mobley.

2013 COLLEAGUE GROUPS BEGIN

Approximately thirty-five ministers from the Alabama-Northwest Florida and Tennessee Regions will participate in Clergy Colleague Groups in 2013 with a focus on evangelism. The participants in this ministry gathered on January 28-29, 2013, at Joe Wheeler State Park Lodge, near Rogersville, AL, for a Kick-off Retreat. Rev. Rick Morse, Vice-President with Hope Partnership, was the keynoter. The colleague groups will meet monthly throughout 2013 for mutual support, study, and accountability.

Pictured below are scenes from the recent retreat.

