



Currents

A publication of the Great River Region of the Christian Church (DOC)

Great River Region Newsletter

9302 Geyer Springs Road, Little Rock, AR 72209

September 2016

grrdisciples.org

Great River Region Family:

This month, I want to give space for Rev. David Chisham, First Christian Church in Baton Rouge, to share reflections surrounding the flooding conditions that have affected Baton Rouge, including Disciples families at FCC. I also want to thank you for the ways that you have supporting the immediate recovery efforts. Week of Compassion continues to support and journey with us as long-term recovery efforts begin.



In addition, I wanted to share with you an update from the Regional office - for the past eight months I have been working with the Personnel Committee to create job descriptions for the GRR office staff, and to gain clarity regarding the work flow processes between the two staff administrative positions. As this process unfolded and with the current deficit the GRR is experiencing (-\$42,000), we made the decision to eliminate the Administrative Assistant position. This affected Tina Jones, who had been with us for 10 years in this role – this was effective August 8, 2016. We want to wish Tina well in her future endeavors and pray that God will lead her to an organization where she can thrive and be successful.

Please feel free to send Tina cards of encouragement. Her address is: #2 White Aspen Court, Little Rock, AR 72212

HISTORIC, EPIC, MILLENNIAL, BIBLICAL FLOODING IN SOUTHEAST LOUISIANA



The adjectives are many, trying to describe adequately the enormity of the week-long flood that hit Southeastern Louisiana in the middle of August, 2016. Emerging from an already difficult month that began with the death of Alton Sterling and following protests, then the unthinkable assassination of three law

enforcement officers, then an unnamed storm ambled in from the Florida panhandle, pausing over about a dozen parishes in Louisiana to dump an estimated 7 trillion gallons of water. That's substantially more water than fell during Hurricane Katrina.

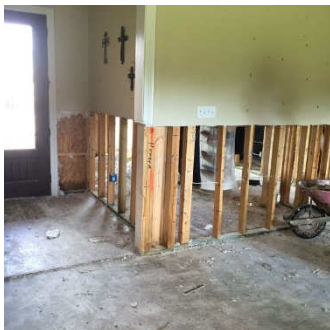
Much of the rainfall was concentrated northeast of Baton Rouge; Watson, a city in Livingston Parish, received over 31 inches of water in 15 hours. The flat terrain of south Louisiana doesn't receive much assistance from gravity to move that mass of water quickly, so as the small streams and rivers swelled with the massive influx of runoff, the water backed up into neighborhoods that had never seen floods before. As the mass of water continued its slow, southeast trek towards Lake Maurepas and Lake Pontchartrain, new suburbs and towns were engulfed along the way, and we were helpless to do anything about it except to try to get out of its path.



Chris Culp, the chair of the elders at First Christian Church, evacuated the first day to his in-laws home when his neighborhood, one of the first to flood, was overrun. In the middle of the night there was a knock on his in-laws door telling them that they had to leave, water was now rising in that neighborhood. About 1 A.M. on a Sunday morning he arrived at First Christian Church's campus where Chris and his family sheltered for several days waiting for the waters to recede.

Ann Landry, a member of First Christian Church, had rescued friends from the initial flooding, and brought them to the safety of her home to sleep for the night. Ann awoke in the middle of the night to flood water already in her bedroom. The next morning, she, her 5 year old son, the family dog and her friends had to float out of the neighborhood in a flat-bottom boat that navigated right up to her front door. Stories like this have been told time and again—homes that were safe and dry one day were flooded out the next day, sometimes several days later.

All totaled, an estimated 60,000 homes were flooded, and in some communities as much as 90% of the homes took on water. While First Christian Church's building remained dry, 27 homes of families from First Christian Church ended up with water in them. A few only took on a few inches, many took on 2-4 feet, and most had no flood insurance because they were not in a flood zone. The phrase "we lost everything" has been a buzzing mantra around town. For those with insurance, rebuilding is costly; for those without insurance, FEMA will likely cover only a portion of the costs.



In the days following the flood it was a race to get back to homes to throw out ruined furnishings and tear out flooring and affected drywall. The heat and humidity remained high, creating the perfect petri dish to grow mold, so homes needed to be quickly gutted and interiors dried out before a plague of toxic fungus took over. With the help of church members, family members, and folks from the community, most of our congregants were able to bring the demolition phase to a close this past week. Files have been opened with FEMA and insurance agencies, and homes are drying out.

First Christian Church has been actively responding to needs of those flooded out. We've opened a small depot stocked with airbeds, pillows, electric fans and cleanup supplies. We've partnered with a neighboring church, St. Paul Lutheran church, to provide meals to the community. And we've opened a staff shelter for Red Cross workers who have traveled to Baton Rouge to help with relief efforts.

Donated money has been used to answer immediate needs such as purchasing items for the depot like electric fans and food for the community meal. Week of Compassion has been a strong partner, sending direct grants to evacuees and flood victims. But it's the task of long term rebuilding for which we really need to help our congregation and community. If you look around your own home, you'll see items that you have collected over years, even decades, that make your home familiar and comfortable—the beautiful wood floors that would last a lifetime; the mattress upon which you rested each night; the wedding album and pictures of your children when they were babies. Now imagine all of that in a debris pile on your front lawn, destroyed in a matter of hours. The enormity of rebuilding from such a loss is daunting, and some things are impossible to replace, but with your donations to the flood relief effort, you have and can make it a little easier for our congregation and our community.



Here at First Christian Church, we look forward to helping our family and community rebuild and “re-nest” their homes. Once we’ve helped our families emerged from the cleanup phase and homes have dried and been treated, we look forward to helping them restore and restock their residences with necessities, and those things that make life a little more comfortable.

We at First Christian Church, and the Greater Baton Rouge community all realize that rebuilding is going to be a long term project, and it must go deeper than just getting families back into safe and dry homes. Following weeks of tension and violence that threatened to tear us apart, the floods have reminded us that we’re all in this together. The work we do is a call and confirmation of our Disciples identity statement — “we are a people of wholeness in a fragmented world.”

Thank you for your support of our church’s efforts to do Christ’s work in this moment of crisis.

Rev. Dr. David Chisham
Pastor, First Christian Church
Baton Rouge, LA

Week of Compassion - is the relief, refugee and development mission fund of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada. We seek to equip and empower disciples to alleviate the suffering of others through disaster response, humanitarian aid, sustainable development and the promotion of mission opportunities.

Some of the resources available through [Week of Compassion](#) include:

Leader's Guide

- offering materials order forms
- children's sermons
- minutes for mission
- statistics, facts and quotes
- worship resources
- youth activities and
- inter-generational activities

Mission trip Devotions

A Reading List

Work Trip Grants - the purpose of a work trip grant is to encourage and support participation of groups from Disciples congregations, regions, and other related organizations in volunteer, hands-on mission and service opportunities. These grants enable Week of Compassion to pursue more fully its purpose as the channel for the resources of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in providing ready and compassionate response to human need as a result of natural disaster, poverty, hunger, injustice, war, political and economic upheaval and other crises. For more information about work trip grants, click [here](#)

This is but a small part of what Week of Compassion has to offer - you are encouraged to visit their website and see what else is available to you as a congregation, a constituency group, or as an individual.

Reconciliation Offering Dates: September 25 and October 2

The Initiative Many Members, One Table

In 1996, the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) approved the formation of a church-wide process to discern the nature of racism in North America and to develop ways of helping congregations address racism.



Out of this process, an Anti-Racism/Pro-Reconciliation initiative was put before the church in 1998. At their July, 1998 meetings, the Administrative Committee and the General Board approved this initiative. The initiative is based on several premises.

- Racism is a spiritual and theological dilemma as well as a social evil;
- Racist practice exists throughout the life of the church and needs to be addressed. The church needs to get its own “house” in order even as it looks toward being a transformational agent in the larger world;
- Racism is a systemic problem with historical root causes;
- Racism can be defined in many ways. This initiative is based on an analysis of racism that understands racism to be a combination of racial prejudice and institutional and/or economic power.
- When conceived the initiative was based on a vision for the church as a place “where brothers and sisters of all races, languages, and cultures will grow towards God’s glorious realm, where all have a place at the table and none shall be turned away.”

The Initiative called the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to practice faithfulness with regard to the elimination of racism, which exists in all manifestations of the church, to discern the presence and nature of racism as sin, to develop strategies to eradicate it, and to work toward racial reconciliation.

Reconciliation Grant application

General Reconciliation Grant awards are intended to catalyze new and/or existing projects that target anti-racism/anti-bigotry initiatives toward promoting reconciliation and recognition of human dignity through racial justice incentives. Award amounts can range from \$2,000 to \$10,000. Applications are due in January.

Reconciliation Ministries grant guidelines and policies have been posted on the [Resources](#) page at reconciliationministry.org.

Regional Board Nominating Committee

With Regional Assembly comes the task of nominating officers for the Regional Board. We are still looking for Disciples who have a heart and passion to serve the Great River Region. If you interested in serving your GRR Disciples, contact Dr. Burton at 501-944-4305 or at the Regional Office at 501-562-6052. She will review specific duties, expectations and commitments for the area you are interested in serving.

We want to offer our Settled Regional Minister a highly functioning board, who is passionate and excited about what God is doing in the GRR!



ONLINE registration is now available [here](#)

Regional Assembly, November 11-13, 2016
Northside Christian Church, West Point MS

Pre Assembly Seminar with Dr. M. Eugene Boring: "Preaching/Teaching the Bible as the Word of God: Explorations in the Gospel of John" Letter of Invitation, click [here](#)

Regional Assembly 2016 Schedule

Friday, November 11

9 AM—3 PM	* Pre Assembly Seminar: Preaching/Teaching the Bible as the Word of God - Dr. M. Eugene Boring
3:00 PM	Regional Assembly Registration opens
4:00 PM	All Assembly Choir Rehearsal
3–10 PM	Hospitality Area & Exhibitors open
5:00 PM	* Fellowship Supper — drop in style
6:15-7:00 PM	All Assembly Choir Gathering and Evening Worship participants meet
7:00 PM	All Assembly Worship
9:00 PM	Reception

Saturday, November 12

7:00 AM	* Minister +1 Breakfast
8:45 AM	Gathering music and singing
9:00 AM	All Assembly Welcome
9:15 AM	“Transformed Minds and Open Hearts: Living Together as One Church” by Dr. Eugene Boring
	Break
10:30 AM	Business Session
11:30 AM	Luncheons: Women, Men, Chaplains, Musicians and Regional Elders
1:15 PM	Workshops
	Break

2:45 PM Education Tracks
Break
6:30 PM * All Assembly Banquet
Banquet Speaker: Rev. Vy Nguyen, Week of Compassion

Sunday, November 13

9:00 AM All Assembly Sunday School: Rev. Tony Nations, Central Christian Church,
Shreveport & Rev. Amanda Duckworth, Northside Christian Church, West Point
11:00 AM Traditional Worship Service: Rev. Orlando Richmond, preaching

* *Registration / Ticket required*

Workshops

1. Stepping Into Stewardship — Rev. Ashley Sherard, Jerusalem Christian Church, Lafayette
2. Week of Compassion Update — Rev. Vy Nguyen, Week of Compassion
3. Growing Your Church's Endowment: Developing Planned Giving — Rev. Bobby Hawley, Christian Church Fdn.
4. Your Message on Social Media — Rev. LaShaundra McCarty, 3C Communications
5. Congregational Governance for Results — Rev. Dr. David Britt, First Christian Church, Pineville
6. May We Do It? Should We Do It? — Rev. Bobbie Yellott, First Christian Church, Sulphur
7. st Century Congregations Must Have Transformational Leadership — R. Wayne Calhoun, Office of Evangelism & Congregational Transformation

Education Tracks

- Healthy Boundaries — Rev. Donna Rose-Heim, Consultant, Trainer, Speaker and Writer
- Injustice Anywhere — Rev. Dietra Wise-Baker, Chaplain and Program Development Manager, Episcopal City Mission
- Mission First — Rev. Dr. Nadine Burton, GRR Interim Executive Regional Minister
- Employee Benefits: Health care and Retirement Benefits for Today — Rev. Deborrah Wray, Director of Employer Services, Pension Fund

Calling All GRR Clergy - time to register now!! September is HERE!

Join us at Subiaco Abbey for the 2016 Fall Minister's Retreat
September 26-28, 2016

Theme for 2016 Clergy Retreat:
**Being a Pastor and a Leader in the Church -
Here & Now,
with Purpose & Power,
Satisfaction & Celebration**

Back by popular demand - Dr. Robert Lee Hill, former senior pastor of Community Christian Church in Kansas City, MO.

Registration form - click [here](#)

Youth Update:

Fall Fandango is coming - October 7-9, 2016 at Camp Couchdale - ***Becoming a Superhero Training!***

Fall Fandango is for students currently in grades 6-9. It will be a fun weekend packed full of games, friends (old and new), worship and growing in our faith! Registration forms are available [here](#). The due date (registration and payment) is Monday September 26th in the Regional Office to avoid late fees.

Regional Assembly - November 11-13, 2016 at Northside Christian Church in West Point, MS - keep up with plans at grrdisciples.org, Regional Assembly tab

UPCOMING EVENTS in the Great River Region

Disciples Women Retreats - Mississippi, September 17-18; Louisiana, October 14-16. Registration and scholarship information [here](#).

Mission Gathering Date -September 13 at 5:30 pm - First Christian Church in Tupelo, MS. Please RSVP to the Host Church if you are planning on attending.

Disciples Clergy Retreat - September 26-28, Subiaco Abby. Rev. Bob Hill, Keynote Speaker

Regional Committee on Ministry - September 29-30 (in central Arkansas)

Fall Fandango - October 9-11 at Camp Couchdale (central Arkansas). Registration form [here](#)

Regional Assembly 2016 - November 11-13 at Northside Christian Church in West Point, MS

- ONLINE REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN - click [here](#).
- For information, brochures or downloadable registration form, click [here](#)

Mark your calendars - **Ministerial Standing Forms will be sent in mid-November 2016** - to be returned to the regional office by January 5, 2017.

The Regional Committee on Ministry will be meeting with ministerial candidates and clergy under care in September in central Arkansas. Continuing this month, another part of the "Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry" for the Great River Region Christian Church (Disciples of Christ):

Personal Qualifications for the Order of Ministry - A Candidate for Commissioned or Ordained Ministry must be a participating member in a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation or body. In addition, the church expects the women and men who seek to pursue a call to ministry to demonstrate:

1. Faith in Christ and commitment to a life of Christian discipleship & nurturing spiritual practices
2. A sense of call to the ministry affirmed by the church
3. An understanding of pastoral identity
4. Capacity to engage in theological reflection
5. Strong moral character and personal integrity
6. Commitment to spiritual, physical and emotional wellness sufficient for healthy ministry
7. Care and compassion for all people with appropriate relational skills

8. Responsibility in personal financial management
9. Wise and generous stewardship in the use of God's gifts
10. Skills and abilities necessary for the rigorous, pastoral tasks of ministry

Upcoming Events in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

[General Assembly 2017](#) - registration for GA 2017 is now open!!



'I ask not only on behalf of these, but also on behalf of those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one.' John 17:20-21a, NRSV

Worship Themes

Saturday – “We Pray All Unity Will One Day Be Restored”

Sunday – “We Will Walk Hand in Hand”

Monday – “We Will Guard Each One's Dignity and Save Each One's Pride”

Tuesday – “Together We Will Spread the News that God is our Land.”

Wednesday – “They Will Know We Are Christians by our Love.”

[Oreon E. Scott Clergy Conference](#) - October 3-5, 2016 at Christmount Christian Academy
(christmount.org)

Please continue to hold the Region in your prayers - prayers for the Search Committee as they continue the work to find us a new Regional Minister, prayers for our ministers as they lead our congregations, prayers for Tina as she seeks God's next call in her life, prayers for regional finances and prayers for southeast Louisiana and all of our constituency groups in the Great River Region.

Until next month, blessings to you all!