



Great River Region Newsletter

9302 Geyer Springs Road, Little Rock, AR 72209

August 2016

grrdisciples.org



*What do you see carved in the picture?
Melissa Norton did a wonderful job decorating
for their fellowship meal at FCC, Hot Springs.
Pastors Don and Holly Naftz and their congregation
were great hosts.*



Rev. Dr. Nadine Burton

It breaks my heart to see a nation in turmoil divided by the color line, political lines, class and economic lines. In Psalm 133, unity is compared to descending upon the mount of Zion, representing the place where God dwells and the gathering place of God's people. It is a place where God is present with us. Unity is holy. Unity is where God ordains life and blessing for the whole people of God, and life forever more! In the midst of these chaotic times, what do we do with our Disciples history of unity as our polar star? What do we do with the gift of unity given by God? And how can we use this gift to foster solutions to the world problems?

On Sunday, I preached at First Christian Church in Hot Springs and shared the message "Unity Is a Gift from God" from Psalm 133. Today, I want to share an excerpt from the sermon with you:

Alexander and Thomas Campbell and Barton Stone sought to bring together all God's people into one universal church. They paved the way in developing a plea for unity, influencing the thought, inclusion, and principle in Disciples' theology. Birthed through a systematic approach of unity and inclusiveness, "Disciples" and "Christians" joined together to live a set of spiritual beliefs and to establish the witness and unity of the New Testament gospel. The ultimate uniting of the two groups depended entirely on the will and action of local congregations coming together in various cities and towns across the region where both groups lived.

Local congregations took the reins of a movement and were intricately involved as catalysts for unity

*becoming a reality. Alexander Campbell affirmed in the Millennial Harbinger in 1831 that "It is well known to those brethren and to the world, that we have always, from the beginning, declared our willingness, and desire to be united with the whole family of God on earth, irrespective of the diversity of opinion among them. We do not object to their opinions as terms of fellowship between us."*²

¹ Mark Toulouse, 78. Mark G. Toulouse, *Joined in Discipleship: The Shaping of Contemporary Disciples Identity* (St. Louis, Missouri: Chalice Press, 1997), 153-154. Quoted in the *Millennial Harbinger*, October 1830, 474.

² Alexander Campbell, "News from the Churches," *Millennial Harbinger*, September, 1831: 385.

Regional Board Nominating Committee

With Regional Assembly comes the task of nominating officers for the Regional Board. We are recruiting members who have a heart and passion to serve the Great River Region. If you have the leadership gifts and the skill set to support the GRR, please 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.

The list of officers include: Moderator, Acting Moderator, Treasurer, Secretary, RCOM Chair and 12 members at large who represent constituency groups throughout the life of the region. We are in need of an Acting Moderator (who will fill the role of Moderator after the first two year term), and a Treasurer. We are also in need of Members at Large. Keep in mind that we also want representation from all three states (AR, MS, and LA).

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!

I also want to share with everyone that we received a resignation letter from Alisha Gourley, resigning from the position of Regional Youth Coordinator, effective July 25, 2016. Our prayers go out to Alisha as she seeks her next ministry assignment. I understand that there are strong relationships that have been built with Alisha, which will continue, in spite of her not being in the youth coordinator role. She is still a part of the Great River Region and we want to encourage her with well wishes. We plan on looking at creative ways to fill the Youth Coordinator position. However, it will take some time. We are working on a plan for Fall Fandango in October, and the Regional Assembly in November. For Now, Ronny Nowell, at FCC Rogers will take the leadership role for the Fall Fandango event.

Regional Office Update:

We want you to know that repairs to the regional office building have been completed. Our total repair bill is around \$20,000. Thanks to those of you who gave to help us defray the costs. We are still taking donations, as all monies will help with the bill and with our current deficit. We have not moved back into the building, as we have a meeting planned with the Executive Committee this week to talk about next steps and recommendations from the Building planning team. Stay tuned...

Week of Compassion provides SCSCY with a Solidarity Grant to help teens get a fresh start



In partnership with the National Benevolent Association and the interim Interim Executive Regional Minister of the Great River Region, Rev. Dr. Nadine Burton, Week

of Compassion of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is providing timely and much needed support in the form of a solidarity grant to Southern Christian Services for Children and Youth (SCSCY) in Jackson, MS, after a recent fire in their PALS residential home. The solidarity grant is made to assist with the immediate needs of the youth affected by the fire. SCSCY is a longstanding health and social service ministry of the Disciples church and a partner of the NBA/DHM Disciples Care Exchange. We give thanks to God that every child and adult at the home is safe and escaped unharmed. And we give thanks also for the support of individuals, congregations, regions and general ministries for their prayers and donations to SCSCY during this time.

If you, or your congregation, would like to make a donation to Southern Christian Services during this time of acute need, they are in need of paper products, food, cleaning supplies, as well as financial contributions. All are needed and much appreciated. Please call 601-354-0983 or email Joshua Friedel, scscyjoshua@att.net if you are interested in making a contribution or you can make a donation at www.scscy.org. They are also accepting drop off donations at their HQ office located at 860 East River Place, Suite 104, Jackson, MS 39202. In addition, I know they would all appreciate our continued prayers of recovery and support.

Mississippi Christian Missionary Convention, July 7-9, 2016 at First Christian Church in Moss Point

Rev. Donna Rose-Heim facilitated the boundary training for clergy on Wednesday. We also participated in a Mission Gathering event on Thursday, where everyone had the opportunity to share their insight into the future mission and priorities for the denomination. The Youth did an outstanding job leading worship on Friday evening!



Rev. Lester Brooks, preaching

Youth night, MCMC 2016 →





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"

Letter of Invitation, click [here](#)

Speakers

Dr. M. Eugene Boring—Professor Emeritus, Brite Divinity School is one of the world's finest New Testament scholars and interpreters. He is I. Wylie Briscoe Professor Emeritus of New Testament at Brite Divinity School, Texas Christian University. He is the author of numerous books on the New Testament, including *An Introduction to the New Testament*, *Mark from the New Testament Library* series, *Revelation from the best-selling Interpretation series*, and *The People's New Testament Commentary* which he co-authored with Dr. Fred B. Craddock.

Dr. Sharon Watkins—General Minister and President, Christian Church (DOC). As General Minister, Sharon is the general pastor of the denomination, responsible for representing the wholeness of the church, for reconciling differences, and for helping the church retain its clarity of mission and identity. Her work includes interpreting *The Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)* and convening tables for cooperative work. She is an inspirational preacher, teacher and facilitator who shares her considerable skills in a variety of religious and ecumenical settings.

Vy Nguyen, Week of Compassion, Vy (pronounced Vee) was born in Viet Nam and lived in refugee camps during his early childhood along with millions of other Southeast Asian refugees. As a child refugee, Vy was resettled to the US by the church and Week of Compassion's partners; and grew up and shaped in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

In his role and ministry with Week of Compassion, he offers leadership and collaboration with local, regional and global church partners to provide compassionate support in the areas of disaster, sustainable development, and refugee resettlement on behalf of the denomination. He is committed to finding creative ways to serve and bring about positive change on behalf of the church with communities across the world in their times of greatest need.

Rev. Orlando Richmond—Senior Minister, Northside Christian Church since 1997, growing the membership of the church to several hundred and recently completed construction of a new sanctuary and offices, where ministry is aided by a host of technological features. The church has a well-received weekly radio broadcast and a host of ministry and outreach functions. In addition to being a successful litigation

attorney, he has been an instructor at (and attended) Jacksonville Theological Seminary, teaching courses ranging from New Testament Studies to Church Administration. He serves on a number of boards and has been the recipient of many professional and social awards and recommendations.

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. Deborah Wray, Director of Employer Services, Pension Fund

Calling All GRR Clergy

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

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

Registration form – click [here](#)

GRR Executive Regional Minister Search Team Update *August 2016*

The three candidates moved to the next level of consideration by the ERM Search Team have each submitted (electronically) a short video and links to sermon(s) for our review. The videos give us a brief introduction to the candidate along with their reflection on the reason for their answering the call to respond to the GRR Search for a new ERM. References for each candidate have been checked and conference call interviews have been scheduled. These conference call interviews will occur during the first 2.5 weeks in August and we will use a set of standardized developed questions for the interviews. After

the conference calls, the Search team will spend some time in prayerful discernment prior to bringing in our agreed upon top candidate. With the candidate here, face to face interviews and other introductions will take place. If things go as planned, the Team enters into formal negotiations with that candidate. After the terms of the Letter of Call are amicably agreed upon, the Board will be presented with the candidate and an official vote on the candidate and the Letter of Call “seals the deal”.

The time line could result in an announcement of the new ERM at the Regional Assembly in November, but they will likely not be starting until the end of 2016 or sometime in 2017. In the mean time the GRR Board of Directors have voted unanimously to extend Rev. Dr. Nadine Burton’s contract through December 31, 2016.

We continue to covet your prayers for the Team, for the candidates and for our churches as we work through this process and listen for and to God’s guidance.

Jennie Gregory
ERM Search Team Chair

Youth Update:

Fall Fandango is coming – October 9–11, 2016 at Camp Couchdale – stay tuned for details, coming soon!

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

National Convocation installs new officers at the 2016 Biennial Assembly:

Officers

Board Members

Patricia Penelton, President
Milton Bowens
Donald Gillett, Vice President
Perry Spencer, Jr.
Ed Cushingberry, Secretary
Ken Brooker Langston
Gloria Gilliard, Treasurer
Delesslyn Kennebrew

Focus – August: Insurance Board

The Insurance Board is a nonprofit corporation established by the participating Conferences of the United Church of Christ. We administer a property and liability insurance program serving churches and related entities within four denominations: United Church of Christ, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Presbyterian Church (USA), and Alliance of Baptists. The coverages are unsurpassed in the marketplace and the IB is considered a model not-for-profit entity.

We write property and liability coverage in all 50 states utilizing an independent property and casualty distribution system that is unique and in tune with our mission: to support and protect churches and church ministries by offering superior property and casualty risk and insurance management services.

More than 3900 churches participate in the program representing greater than \$11.6 billion dollars in property value. A board of 20 directors governs the IB. The Board is comprised of United Church of Christ Conference Ministers, Disciples of Christ Regional Ministers, and Presbyterian Church Executives, and lay leaders with experience relevant to our mission. We are proud to be represented by this highly qualified group of church and lay leaders. We are a [Recognized Ministry Partner](#) of the Disciples of Christ (Christian Church).

We are ready to assist you in any way. We are never more than a phone call away. Our goal is to provide resources that protect our churches' two most valued assets: people and property.

To learn more about the Insurance Board, please feel free to view our most recent annual report, the [2015 annual report](#).

INSURANCE OVERVIEW

If you hold the responsibility of securing property and liability insurance for your church, you are in a unique position of importance. You are entrusted with not only the well-being and security of your congregation, but with the financial future of your church. Who you choose to help you manage that risk and prevent loss may be one of the most important decisions you make.

At The Insurance Board our mission is simple: to support and protect your church and ministry by offering superior property and casualty risk management and insurance services. That means working with our churches to help avoid the disruptive impact of a loss. It also means providing insurance solutions to protect your church in case a loss still occurs: prevention first, insurance second. We understand your ministry. We work hard to help you continue it.

SAFETY SOLUTIONS

As a church leader you have a duty to provide a safe place for worship and ministry, and to protect your church property. The Insurance Board provides you a variety of resources to help you fulfill your covenant.

Material here is organized by important subjects your church must manage. In each section below, you will find basic lessons, checklists, forms and links to other useful information.

- [Safety Solutions Overview](#)
- [People Safety & Liability](#)
- [Church Property](#)
- [Transportation](#)
- [Youth Activity](#)
- [Church Management](#)
- [SafeConduct™ Workbench](#)
- [Insurance Board Services](#)

And you can keep yourself up to date by subscribing to our newsletter, ***The Steward***, and by attending live and **interactive webinars** on current topics. You can sign up for the newsletter at insuranceboard.org, under the Safety Solutions section.

UPCOMING EVENTS in the Great River Region

Installation of New Pastors:

- Mt. Beulah Christian Church, Pine Bluff will install **Pastor Joseph Bryant** on Sunday, August 7th at 3:00 pm.
- Park Hill Christian Church, North Little Rock will install their new Senior Minister, **Rev. Joe Hodges** on Sunday, August 14th during the 10:00 am service (one service only)

"Rivers in the Desert" - Isaiah 43:16-21 - Dr. Nadine Burton will be preaching a **Revival at Indianola Christian Church, Indianola MS** on August 18 and 19

Retirement reception for Rev. Linda White, Senior Minister at Park Hill Christian Church in North Little

Rock on Sunday, August 21st, 3-5 pm.

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

Mission Gathering Dates -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)

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

Information and registration 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. Following is a part of the "Policies and Criteria for the Ordering of Ministry" for the Great River Region Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

The Regional Committee on the Ministry (RCOM) of the Great River Region (GRR) of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) *works with candidates for ministry and their sponsoring congregations or bodies to see that those who feel called into ministry are prepared and qualified to serve and have the skills, education and experience to equip them for relevant, fruitful ministry.* RCOM works in accordance with the Policies and Criteria for the Order of Ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and *acts on behalf of the GRR in matters pertaining to the care and nurture of ministerial candidates and certification for ordination, commissioning, and ministerial standing.* It is important to note that this process is the *joint responsibility* of the candidate, congregation, and region and therefore requires a willingness of all three partners to invest in the process.

There are two categories of the Order of Ministry in the CC (DOC) which are officially certified by the Region – they are Commissioned Ministers and Ordained Ministers and it is with these ministers that the Regional Committee on Ministry meets. (As Disciples, we affirm that all persons are called to ministry and while Lay Ministry offices within the congregation play an enormously valuable role in the life of the local church, lay ministry offices do not need to seek official certification through the RCOM or the GRR).

Upcoming Events in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

North American Pacific/Asian Disciples Convocation - August 3-6 at Raynor Park Christian Church in Sunnyvale CA

General Committee on Ministry (GCOM) - August 15-17

DHM Presents **Children's Worship & Wonder training** on August 19-20 at First Presbyterian in Shreveport - click [here](#) for flyer and registration info

College of Regional Ministers & Moderators (CRMM) in Indianapolis. Dr. Burton, Interim Regional Minister and Dr. David Britt, GRR Moderator, will be attending this meeting of Regional Ministers and Regional Moderators.



General Assembly 2017 - registration for GA 2017 begins in July!!

'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

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

Wondering about current Joys & Concerns as well as what's happening with congregations in search? Check them out on the regional website – grrdisciples.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 Alisha as she discerns God's continued call in her life, prayers for regional finances and prayers for constituency groups in the Great River Region.

The September issue of Currents will be published after Labor Day weekend. Until next month, blessings to you all!

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