

**GB-21-1181**  
**CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN OREGON & SOUTHWEST IDAHO**

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**<https://www.facebook.com/CCOSWI>**

Staff: Regional Ministers: Rev. Dr.  
Douglas A. Wirt (PT), Rev. Dr. Cathy  
Myers Wirt since 2001  
Bookkeeper: Elizabeth Cronin, one day  
a week

Leadership Associate: Bernice Rivera,  
part time, New Church, Leadership  
Ministries  
Communications Associate: Rev. Stacy  
Shelton, part time, media and admin  
tasks

**Report to General Board of Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)**  
**in the United States & Canada**  
**April 2021**

Oregon and Southwest Idaho Disciples have now completed seven years in the new regional identity authorized by General Assembly Resolution 1325. We minister **in forty-four communities of faith**, with worship in **rural, urban and suburban** communities, speaking **English, Spanish, Swahili, and Chuukese, stretching 700 road miles from east to west**. The Regional Moderator is Rev. Erik Free, Pastor of Keizer Christian Church, Keizer, Oregon. The **Regional Board** is made up of 33 volunteer members, representing all five of the Regional Districts, three languages, and 26 congregations, meeting three times a year.

The regional church puts a high priority on Regional Minister presence in congregations during time of transition, special occasions and relationship building unconnected to specific events or requests. To achieve this, the regional church in 2020 employed two Regional Ministers 1.75 FTE, with limited part time staffing for program and administration. During COVID 19 Pandemic, we have had to adapt in new and create ways to be present with congregations and leadership. We have done this through 5 monthly calls for district clergy groups, online events and meetings and by attending worship on line in numerous congregations with follow up after the services.

We had intended for Salem First Christian Church to host the 2020 Regional Assembly, May 15-16 where we were to celebrate three congregations moving from affiliating to fully recognized congregation status. The site selection for this Regional Assembly coincided with the move of Claremont School of Theology from California to Salem, Oregon in order to become a graduate school of Willamette University. Because of the Corona Virus Pandemic, we held our 90 minute Regional Assembly on line. Attendance was slightly higher than we usually see for an in person event and we received a sizeable offering for COVID relief for our partners of FEDICE Ecuador.

In July 2020, 27 students in the Disciples Seminary Foundation Certificate of Ministry program completed the fourth semester of a two year program taught in Spanish in Portland. An online graduation was celebrated in July.

The women's Pray and Play events met in two of the six scheduled locations before the pandemic forced us to move our women's events to online format. We participated in the two Wild Women of the West online events with five other regions, with our region heavily represented. In the fall we held a regional women's event with 75 participants, including a visit from our Global Mission Partner, Blanca Puma from Ecuador. Our fair trade sale that generally creates a large amount of sales and profits for FEDICE Ecuador went on line at the end of the year with sales of over \$1,500, enabling us to send \$300 to the FEDICE USA fund that supports ministry with our Ecuadorian partners.

Oregon church camps moved to zoom "camp in a box" format and Idaho camps chose to cancel programming for 2020.

The regional New Church Ministry Team recommended, and our board approved, that three congregations move from affiliating to fully recognized status in 2020. These include the one congregation from each of our three primary languages spoken among churches in the region, Spanish, Chuukese and English. The congregations are Iglesia Nueva Vida, Gresham, Oregon; Pacific Islands Family Church, Portland; and Portsmouth Union Church (DOC/UMC), Portland. With all Disciples we celebrate the outcomes of the 2020 Vision and the goal of 1,000 new churches in the first two decades of the century.

The Oregon SW Idaho regional church has a team of one day trainers for Anti Racism/Pro Reconciliation events and an Anti-Racism team that met multiple times in 2020. In the spring the team had two conversations on line about impact of racism and offered a full day online format Anti-Racism training attended by over 75 people. A number of Georgia Disciples participated online for this event. In addition, the region made a grant to pay facilitators for an 8 week book group online for three groups from six congregations that read a book together about anti-racism identity. The added benefit from the book group was building relationships between congregational members from different congregations.

In 2020 we laid the foundation for a new partnership with FEDICE USA, a fundraising/fundraising arm of our global partner ministry, FEDICE, in Ecuador. FEDICE USA will now be an affiliated ministry of the regional church. Our staff will donate time for the bookkeeping and accounts will be kept separated from each other.

The Regional Ministers serve in multiple capacities beyond the region. Cathy completed a term at the end of 2020 as Vice Chair for the **Week of Compassion Board of Stewards**. She has consulted with the planning committee for the 2020 **Wild Women of the West conference**, an interregional women event for 6 western regional churches. Doug has completed his term on the general **Reconciliation Commission**, and with the board for **North American Pacific Asian Disciples**. He continues with the board of **Disciples Seminary Foundation (Vice Chair)**.

During 2020, the Regional Ministers **assisted eight congregations** in some part of a pastoral transition. Congregations with new pastors in 2020 include Lynchwood Christian, Portland, Oregon, Albany First Christian Associate.

Three congregations have a shared identity between Disciples and a denominational partner. These are Mountain Home (American Baptist), Lone (United Church of Christ) and Portsmouth (United Methodist). The regional office shares a building with local offices of the American Baptists, Presbyterian Church USA and

Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon, a partnership of over fifty years. The United Church of Christ conference decided to vacate the Interchurch Center in 2018, subleasing their office to the **Oregon Latino Health Coalition**. Disciples participate in EMO and a number of local interdenominational groups for fellowship, study, advocacy and service.

Oregon SW Idaho Disciples continue to support Disciples Mission Fund and special offerings while addressing many urgent needs in local communities such as food insecurity and affordable housing. While some of our offerings were lower in 2020, our Week of Compassion giving totaled over \$115,000. The region received grants from WOC in 2020 for flooding in two communities, responses to summer wildfires, COVID 19 food security grants for 3 congregations and COVID 19 grants for families in our newer congregations put at risk by the pandemic. The total of the grants was over \$15,000. We were incredibly grateful for the presence of the WOC staff in this difficult year.

Our Annual Fund for 2020 was the highest ever since we began receiving these gifts in 2005. We received over \$21,000 from 60 households. The Annual Fund represents 6% of our budgeted income.

2020 marked the last year of a 5 year future story vision plan. We met all of the goals adopted by our board in 2014. Information about these goals and the Future Story can be found on our website at <https://www.oidisciples.org/about1-cy5v>. The regional vision plan called for a transition to less Regional Minister staff time, that began with FTE of RM staff time in 2019 being reduce from 2.0 to 1.75 time and will be reduced to 1.33 FTE in 2021. There is a hope to add another staff member for women's ministries in 2021. We currently have no administrative assistant on the staff and anticipate filling that role with volunteers in 2021.

With such long distances across our region and volunteer hours becoming more limited, we are planning for local Disciples regional relationships to happen increasingly online and within districts. At the same time, we accept our mission to unite with Disciples across the regional and general church and with the whole people of God across the globe. This year we saw evidence of the community within the region during our wildfire season when several caravans of supplies moved by caravan by members from 7 congregations, donated by 4 additional congregations, up and down freeways from people less impacted to the site of catastrophic impact.

Romans 5 the scripture reminds us....

*"We understand that our sufferings produce endurance, endurance produces character, character produces hope and hope does not disappoint us."*

What we learned about our regional church in 2020 is that we are resilient.

- We met wild fires with compassion
- We met racism with prayerful conversation and action
- We met COVID with strategies for gathering and generosity with our partners in Ecuadorian rural communities
- We met restrictions with ingenuity
- We met distance with technological connection
- We met isolation with community

We remained an active regional church and will do so again in 2021.

### **Recognized Ministries**

Cascade Christian Camp – Campground located in Cascade, Idaho

FEDICE USA – North American partner with Ecuadorian FEDICE sustainable development ministry

Oregon Disciples Foundation – investments and grant making body

Verne Catt McDowell Foundation – scholarship granting body