

GB-21-1187
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
in the Upper Midwest

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Leadership

Rev. Joshua Patty, Regional Minister
and President
Rev. Tiff Williams, Associate Regional
Minister and Camp Director
Rev. Liz Woodward, Partner Regional
Minister
Lori Krase-Cayton, Administrative
Coordinator for Ministries

General Board Report on 2020

The past year was one of challenge, adaptation, and transition for the congregations and leaders of the Christian Church in the Upper Midwest as we continued to live our vision of being **Disciples Together**.

The *COVID pandemic and response* made it unwise and unsafe to gather together in large numbers after March. For many congregations, this meant transitioning worship services, educational opportunities, meetings, and outreach efforts to virtual spaces. For our region, it also meant no large gatherings in one space, meaning no weeks of church camp and no All-Congregation Gathering at our Christian Conference Center. Our physical distancing also made it difficult to grieve our losses or to celebrate blessings.

On May 25, *the killing of George Floyd* by a police officer while being arrested in Minneapolis, MN attracted international attention and outrage. In response many of our church leaders participated in protests, prayer vigils, educational sessions, community organizing, and more, exemplifying our work to be an anti-racist/pro-reconciling church.

On August 11, *a massive derecho* with peak winds estimated at 140 mph caused severe property and crop damage across large parts of Iowa. In many areas, power was knocked out for more than a week, hampering initial responses and creating hardships for those affected. Our region worked with partners, including Week of Compassion and Disciples Church Extension Fund, to support congregations and communities affected. In the immediate aftermath, we opened our camp facilities, offering beds, cooling stations, and charging stations for those whose homes were heavily damaged or without power.

Our region offered some creative responses to the challenges of this past year. We granted more than \$10,000 in *technology grants* to congregations. This helped many

congregations buy equipment and software to better share their ministry using the Internet.

While there were not in-person church camps, our staff and camp interns prepared *camp crates*. These age-specific boxes were sent to 325 homes, and along with prepared online materials they helped 550 people have a camp experience last summer. And, with plenty of unused camp space, we invited pastors and their families to enjoy a safe place for vacation.

We adapted two other large activities into virtual events. The annual *women's retreat* was held online over four days in September. And the *All-Congregation Gathering* was held through Zoom, YouTube, and Facebook on October 3.

Recognizing the hard work and sacrifices of our worship leaders, the regional staff prepared an *All Region Worship Service*, for Sunday, December 27. This prerecorded service was provided to all congregations and streamed online, giving many people a well-deserved morning off the Sunday after Christmas. Like the Gathering, it was also an opportunity for many in the Upper Midwest to worship together in one spirit.

The past year was also a time of transition as we keep growing in ministry. In January, over 100 clergy gathered for the annual Minister's Institute, deepening their understanding of *issues of race and systemic racism*. As part of our commitment to this mission, a new requirement for standing requires our ministers to include anti-racism experiences as part of their annual continuing education hours.

Despite the limitations of the pandemic, many of our congregations experienced a transition of leadership in 2020. Several ministers retired or concluded their service. Many leaders began new ministry positions. During the year, the Upper Midwest also completed a regional minister search. We were blessed with the gifts and experience of our Interim Regional Minister, Rev. John Richardson through September, and we welcomed a new Regional Minister and President, Rev. Joshua Patty, on October 1.

Campground

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Crystal Harvey, Reservations Director

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Related Ministry

Disciples Public Presence
Rev. Dr. Laurie Pound Feille, Founder and Co-Facilitator
Rev. Dan Adolphson, Co-Facilitator
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