

## GB-21-1160

### Christian Church in Arizona

#### Contact

Christian Church in Arizona  
917 E. Sheridan Street  
Phoenix, AZ 85006-1627  
Phone (602) 468-3815  
Email: [region@azdisciples.org](mailto:region@azdisciples.org)  
Web site: [www.azdisciples.org](http://www.azdisciples.org)

#### Leadership

Jay R. Hartley, Reg Min & Pres  
Matthew Clark, Reg Min Administrator  
Jay Deskins, Reg Youth & Children's  
Min  
Lyn Saint-Erne, Administrative Assistant  
Linda Sexton, Women's Min Coordinator

### Report of Christian Church in Arizona – January, 2021

**Our Mission:** “To create an environment and relationships in which congregations and leaders are called, supported and equipped for congregational mission and ministries which are transforming, growing and faithful.”

#### Our Report:

2020 began with a great celebration in the Christian Church in Arizona – the installation of a new Regional Minister. Rev. Terri Hord Owens presided at the installation on January 11, after which we enjoyed a “salsa bar” featuring homemade salsa by a number of our congregations. As part of the weekend, Rev. Owens spoke to a gathering of Hispanic pastors and leaders who gathered for dinner on January 10 and then preached at a Friday evening service. It was an inspiring event and a beautiful weekend, and we were all excited about what 2020 had to bring!

And then ... #\$\$%^\*(#\$\$^%

Like many of you, we were devastated to cancel church camp. Although we did our best to offer an on-line summer un-camp for children and youth, it certainly wasn't the same.

But in the face of the global pandemic, our region adopted a phrase from Rev. Owen Chandler of Saguaro Christian Church: “We Will Still Be Church.” Pastors around the region showed amazing adaptability in becoming televangelists, recording engineers, and video editors. The Region offered technology grants to help congregations move to online worship.

Pastors and congregation members also showed amazing leadership in continuing direct-service ministries (food, shelter), as well as justice ministries, especially a major increase in anti-racism education in the wake of the killing of George Floyd. The skill, dedication, and faithfulness of our region's pastors are inspiring.

Arizona Disciples women held a fabulous virtual retreat, inviting back 5 past speakers to each share a message.

Our virtual Regional Assembly was also a success, featuring a 4 week series of region-wide conversations about mission and ministry led by a different 3 pastors each week, and culminating in a 90 minute Assembly Gathering for celebration, worship, and a little business. We also successfully elected a new group of officers and board members to lead us into the future.

Among the greatest blessings of this time were weekly zoom meetings with clergy. Clergy shared ideas with each other about online worship, how to manage tensions in the church when some people want to re-open and some don't, and how they are coping with leading during such a time as this. We have felt a greater degree of connectedness among pastors across the region by these regular gatherings. We are moving these conversations to twice a month for 2021.

Some challenges and moments of sadness:

Our staff has reduced from 5 to 3. We said goodbye to our Regional Youth Pastor who was serving on a two year contract made possible by a special grant. We also said goodbye to our long-time Administrative Assistant whose job was phased out as we moved to an all-deployed office, giving up the lease of our physical space as of December 31.

Even though we have been working mostly deployed since March, we expect to face some challenges adjusting to not having a physical office space.

The chair of our Convención and one of our congregations was deported in the Spring, a devastating loss on both an emotional and practical level. We pray and advocate for a day when families and communities are not torn apart by the immigration system.

And several congregations are struggling during the pandemic and not sure whether they will be able to survive.

### **Our Future:**

We begin 2021 with anti-racism training for our new Admin Council & Mission Focus teams, emphasizing from their first meeting the need to always be aware of the ways systemic racism may creep into our decision making bodies. We are pleased to have had two more AZ leaders attend the "train the trainers" program, bringing to four the number of trainers we now have in Arizona, and we hope to engage all of our leaders and congregations in continued dialogue in efforts to continue working to root out systemic racism from our lives and communities.

We are also looking forward, once possible, to holding some leadership development retreats for Hispanic young adults (funding through an Oregon E. Scott grant) as we work to build a more diverse leadership team in the region.

We Will Still Be Church, embodying God's love through seeking wholeness in a fragmented world.

**Regional Staff:**

Jay Hartley –Regional Minister and President (Ordained)

Matthew Clark – Regional Ministry Administrator

Linda Sexton – Disciples Women's Ministry Coordinator

**Statistics:**

Number of Congregations: 25-ish (including 3-4 congregations in formation)

Total Members: 2800

**Related Ministry**

Glendale Mission and Ministry Center

6242 N 59th Ave

Glendale, Arizona 85301-4436