

GB-21-1167
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of
Great River Region

Contact

Great River Region of the Christian Church
4724 Hillcrest Avenue
Little Rock AR, 72205
(501) 562-6053, FAX (501) 588-1855
E-mail: office@grrdisciples.org
Web site: www.grrdisciples.org

Leadership

Nadine Burton, Exec. Regional Minister
Kristen Beach, Ministry Program Coordinator
Teonicka Russell, Administrative Assistant
Jarrett Banks, New Church Planter

General Board Report on 2020

Regional Assembly

The Great River Region is appreciative of all its volunteers and donors committed to our vision and mission. We are “Keeping the Main Thing...THE MAIN THING!” We gathered virtually with a focus on Matthew 16:13-20 over two weekends. On October 17, 2020 we offered 8 virtual workshops. Pinnacle Outreach Ministry hosted a Clergy Seminar on November 6, 2020. Our Business Session was held November 7, 2020. We closed with worship that same day. Our keynoter was Rev. Dr. William Lee who brought an inspiring message. We can see a glimpse of a better way to serve and have made some strides over the past year. Through an authentic spirituality, love, and mission, we press forward. We continue to work on our GRR Future Story. Thanks to the Long-Range Planning Team for a great job solidifying a new vision and mission that was affirmed at our recent Regional Assembly, which calls us to leverage our calling as Disciples for a Christ-centered witness:

Vision Statement

We are the Great River Region, a movement that empowers Disciples congregations to transform the world through the gospel of Jesus Christ

Mission Statement

We REACH, TEACH, AND TRANSFORM LIVES through Christ’s Love

The strength of the GRR’s vision and mission is the ownership of a small number of congregations and donors. God has been and continues to be faithful to us. Our message is clear: Our story is a collective one with talents and resources. We are called to a culture of generosity, to plant seeds so that the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ can be shared, taught, and exemplified throughout the region. Our long-term spiritual capacity to REACH, TEACH, AND TRANSFORM lives, beckons all congregations to step out in faith to give to Disciples Mission Fund, special day offerings, the GRR Annual Fund, and Designated Giving. *A big thank you to the congregations and individual donors who give consistently to this ministry so that we might continue to live out the call to REACH!*

“THE GRRIL” (Great River Region Institute of Learning)

Insight into our GRR Future Story led to conversations regarding the development and sustainability of the Institute of Learning (The GRRIL). Invitations were sent to prospective advisory council members and/or grant writers. We summarized our vision for the GRRIL, submitted a grant proposal to the "Thriving Congregations Initiative" through the Lily Foundation, which was denied. We know that online learning has become the norm as we move through the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. Our team is formalizing curriculum development for clergy and lay leaders, for Summer and Fall 2021 and 2022. *A special shout out to our grant writing team: Kristen Beach, Teonicka, Russell, Rev. Alison Robuck, Rev. Dr., Bobbie Yellott, Rev. Donald Warren, Rev. Kevin Robbins, and Rev. Odette Woods.*

COVID-19

In March 2020, the COVID-19 Pandemic put a stop to all travel, in-person gatherings, worship, and events. All meetings, worship, and gatherings have been happening via zoom and conference calls. The regional office organized a bi-weekly meeting of all clergy to share updates and policies regarding CDC guidelines, trends, and phases for re-opening of churches. These meetings keep everyone up to date on statistics in their states, sharing ideas for worshipping virtually, and giving everyone a chance to share their feelings and concerns about what is happening in our region and country. Most congregations have still not resumed in-person worship. Some are continuing to meet via zoom, in parking lots, or with pre-recorded worship and Facebook live premieres.

GRR Disciples Women

Last year was an unusual year with COVID-19 entered the country. The decision was made to hold the annual Regional Disciples Women Retreat virtually, which turned out to be an incredible worship experience. Rev. Janae Pitts-Murdock was the keynote speaker. While adjusting to the virtual environment, it was definitely a success! Our theme was *“Come Sit by Me at the Table” (1 Corinthians 11:33 and Romans 12:16)* to Live in harmony with one another.” At the Regional Assembly Disciples Women Fellowship Gathering, Rev. Dr. Christal Williams brought inspiration and encouraged us to *“Keep the Main Thing, the Main Thing” (Matthew 16)*.

Regional Elders Ministry

The Regional Elders serves the Great River Region as pastoral leaders, supporting the Executive Regional Minister and offering pastoral support and friendship to all ministers and their families in the Region. We engage in a monthly Video Conference Call on the first Tuesday of each month for the specific purpose of praying for the joys and concerns from our shepherding groups and any prayer needs of the Region. We create an ongoing network of communication to support to each other and to be accountable to our duties and responsibilities. We had some turnover of Regional Elders since its inception and want to express our sincere appreciation to all who have served and those who are currently serving.

Regional Committee on Ministry

The year 2020 was productive for RCOM. We spent time continuing to live into the GRR Order of Ministry Policy and feel confident that our process is consistent with the Order of Ministry. We met in Louisiana February 2020. COVID- 19 caused us to have the past three meetings via Zoom Conference Call. We will continue the next two sessions virtually and plan to meet in-person in Little Rock, AR October 2021.

RCOM implemented a Succession Plan beginning in 2019 to rotate long-term members off the team and to recruit new members to serve in this capacity. Special thanks to Rev. Ann Pickett-Parker, Rev. Dr. David Chisham, and Rev. Dr. Don Morrow who served tirelessly in these roles for the past 6 years or more, to mentor and walk with candidates for ministry. A special thanks to Rev. Dwight Bailey, who began his term in October 2019 and passed away September 2020. Over the past year, RCOM had 20 interviews.

Pinnacle Outreach Ministry

Pinnacle Outreach Ministry is an extension of Pinnacle Structures, Inc. of Cabot, Arkansas, Rev. Will Feland, President, Rev. Miles Cook, Director, and the Great River Region, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Rev. Dr. Nadine Burton, Executive Regional Minister. Our Mission Statement is: *“Helping Equip the Faithful for the Work of Christ.”* Pinnacle Outreach Ministry gives support to a variety of organizations and ministries as they help meet the needs of God’s people, including ministries to children, women, and leadership organizations. Projects also include the ongoing support and resources and continuing education for active clergy of the Great River Region through Regional Assembly Pre-Events and gifting copies of An Introduction to the New Testament, by **Dr. Eugene Boring**, and The People’s New Testament Commentary, by Drs. Fred Craddock, and Eugene Boring.

Arkansas State Fellowship

The Arkansas State Fellowship consists of the congregations of Central Christian Church in Russellville, Cephaz Chapel in Wrightsville, Cross Street in Little Rock, Mt. Beulah in Pine Bluff and Mt. Sinai in North Little Rock. The congregations usually meet each fifth Sunday for worship and a meal. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Arkansas State Fellowship last met in September 2019 in Russellville and has been unable to convene since. Our vice president, Eld. John A. Brown from Cross Street Christian Church passed away in March 2020.

MCMC (Mississippi Christian Missionary Convention)

MCMC is a network of African American congregations through central Mississippi. The congregations usually meet, for continuing education, training and fellowship. Fellowship gatherings happen each fifth Sunday for fellowship. They also have the annual MCMC Convention that is held in designated congregations throughout Mississippi. Due to COVID-19, these congregations last met in December 2019. We anticipate post-pandemic opportunities to reconnect.

New Church Ministry

Just Love Ministries, Inc., was recently approved for Congregation-in-Formation Status by GRR the Regional Board. Rev. Dr. Jarret Banks accepted the call to plant a new church in Covington LA, effective January 1, 2020. Just Love Ministries (Northshore

Disciples) represents a new expression of church and a way to inspire all churches to “be church” and “do church,” instead of merely “going to church.” Just Love- Northshore Disciples offers Friday Night Dinners and weekly service projects. The new church expression is mobile, with no current plans to own a building. It is a new model that epitomizes a fundamental shift from “proclamation to demonstration” and from “worshipping in a service” to “worshipping with service.” Inspired and guided by the ministry of Jesus, the new expression is measured by the number of people who are served and by the number of people who are involved in service. Our goal is to demonstrate the love of God by imitating the inclusive, selfless, and sacrificial way of love that Jesus taught his disciples.

Disaster Relief

The southern border of Louisiana was affected by recent Hurricanes and Storms. Several members and congregations sustained damage to their homes and churches. Carolyn Hamilton-Arnold, with Week of Compassion (WOC), offers on-the ground relief, connections, tracking, immediate and long-term recovery relief efforts, and service to congregations in the affected areas. Disciples from all over the country give to Week of Compassion, as well as to congregations needing assistance.

We recently connected with the Louisiana VOAD to get weekly updates on relief efforts from organizations in the area. The GRR provided some emergency assistance to members, congregations, and regions whose areas suffered devastation from flooding. Several congregations received disaster relief grants from WOC and the National Benevolent Association (NBA). A special shout out to all our partners committed to journey with and support congregations in the Great River Region.

Rev. Dwight Bailey

Rev. Dwight Bailey passed away on September 17, 2020 at the Intensive Specialty Hospital in Shreveport, LA. Dwight had been on this journey for almost a year. The Executive Regional Minister visited him on September 16, 2020 and conveyed all the love, and appreciation from the denomination that we had for him. Dwight inspired us to be reconciling agents in this world, starting at home in our own areas of ministry. To Team Dwight (*George, Tom, Ely, Clint, Chris, and Christy*), the Kings Highway Church Family, David and Lula Shuler, and the Great River Region, thank you for all the prayers and support during his accident. We want to especially thank all the donors who gave to Rev. Bailey’s GOFUNDME Campaign and the Pension Fund’s Ministerial Relief and Support Program.

Sabbatical/Study Proposal

The dates for the Executive Regional Minister’s sabbatical are June 1, 2021 - August 31, 2021. The focus of this sabbatical is identity, leadership, and affirmation of African American Female Regional Ministers Support (AARMS) in the Christian Church (DOC). Phase I of the Project (Spiritual Encounter) will take place March 20-26, 2021 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The summer study plan includes Phase II of the AARMS Project, with two virtual events which will take in June and July 2021, and a final Spiritual Encounter in August 2021.

Great River Region of the Christian Church (DOC)

Regional Board

Executive Team

John Johnson, Moderator
Rev. Dr. Bobbie Yellott, Moderator-Elect
Victoria Prevost, Secretary
Deborah Nunerley, Treasurer
Rev. Dr. Ryan Pfeiffer, Regional
Committee on Ministry
Rev. Dr. Nadine Burton, Executive
Regional Minister

Members at Large

Rev. Alison Robuck, General Board Rep.
Rev. Paul Seal, Member at Large
Rev. Casey Shawn Allen, Member at
Large
Delaine Boughtman, Member at Large
Rev. Felicia Jennings-Wolfe, Member at
Large
Rev. Donald Warren, Member at Large
Daniel White, Member at Large
Ruby Howard, Member at Large
Rev. Kalie Rhodes, Member at Large
Rev. LaShaundra McCarty, Disciples
Young Adult Rep.
Sam Harrison, Disciples Youth Rep.

Other Constituency Group Presidents

Rufus Edwards, Mississippi Christian Missionary
Convention President
Rev. Rita Richardson, Arkansas State Fellowship
Carol Rhein, Disciples Women President
Harvey Anderson, Disciples Men President
Miles Cook, Regional Elders