

GB-21-1172
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Kentucky

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Leadership

- Dean Phelps, Transitional Regional Minister
- Linda Jones, Associate Regional Minister
- Rachel Nance Woehler, West Area Minister
- Dave Carr, Youth/Young Adult Director, Committee on Ministry Staff
- Lon Oliver, Director of Disciples Appalachian Scholarship Ministry
- Carol Devine, Editor, CCK News

General Board Report for 2020

The Christian Church in Kentucky continues the search for its next regional minister. The search committee has worked diligently while Dean Phelps serves in the interim. The committee receives guidance and counsel from John Mobley, regional minister with the Christian Church in Alabama and Northwest Florida, as the search consultant.

The Region's ministry to congregations is twofold: mission and nurture. The Christian Church in Kentucky has helped congregations serve human needs by developing ministries like Green Chalice, Disciples Appalachian Scholarship Ministry (formerly Kentucky Appalachian Ministry, or KAM), and by developing Pro-Reconciliation Anti-Racism conversations for clergy.

The Christian Church in Kentucky expresses concern for the renewal of the life of congregations, members, and ministers, offering leadership in matters of mutual concern. Toward this end, the Region certifies the standing of ministers and establishes criteria for maintaining standing. For 2021, the Region certified standing for 367 clergy, 237 of whom continue in active ministry. 174 clergy with standing are engaged in some form of congregational ministry among 205 congregations in the Region.

The Region works as a partner with congregations in search and call. 33 Kentucky congregations engaged in search and call during 2020, and 14 of these completed their searches during the year.

COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed congregational and regional life. The requirement to be healthy at home required quick adaptations. While some of these changes are temporary, our life as congregations and as a region will be fluid for the foreseeable future. The pandemic will continue to affect our life, our witness, and our ministry. We will never be the same.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Region took these actions:

- The office on Red Mile Road closed on March 16, with staff working while staying healthy at home;
- Travel by regional staff was suspended;
- Camp programs at both Camp Kum-Ba-Ya and Camp Wakon'Da-Ho were cancelled for 2020 in lieu of virtual camp options;
- Regional meetings, including clergy gatherings and search committee meetings, have been conducted by video conference;
- The Region produced guidelines for congregations to use as they plan their steps toward reopening. Congregations received these as helpful.

Anti-Racism Pro-Reconciliation

Kentucky's Reconciliation Team has worked for several years both to provide Anti-Racism Pro-Reconciliation training and to include it alongside boundary training as a condition for clergy standing. In 2019, eight persons from Kentucky joined colleagues from the other SERF regions in learning about resources from the Episcopal Diocese of Alabama, *Seeing the Face of God in Each Other*.

Two pilot events were held in person, but a third pilot of the curriculum was cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The group that had been trained to lead conversations adapted the plans to an online video conference format. The Region has monthly online sessions of *Seeing the Face of God in Each Other* on the calendar through July 2022.

The Committee on Ministry and the Reconciliation Team have shifted the language around this work, realizing that training is not a working model for what we hope to accomplish. That is, it is not a question of imparting knowledge, completing a class, or checking a requirement off the list. We will not train our way out of systemic racism.

Training has never produced unity. Unity requires reconciliation; reconciliation requires confession, and confession requires accountability. The adaptive challenge facing the Region is creating the environment where accountability is welcome and confession is authentic.

The Region describes *Seeing the Face of God in Each Other* as regional conversations on race, racism, and reconciliation. Although clergy are required to participate in these conversations, the Region hopes that these conversations will extend among congregational leadership.

Committee on the Ministry

The Committee on the Ministry is experiencing new trends and challenges in the relationship between church and clergy. The number of individuals interested in becoming candidates for both ordination and commissioned ministry is dwindling. Meanwhile, the need for qualified, called, and equipped leaders increases. The church continues to lose clergy through retirement and career change. More churches are

seeking ministers that will serve part time. Experienced interim ministers are becoming a rare commodity.

Kentucky currently has thirteen candidates for ordination, one for recognition of ordination, and five for commission. The Region also has six pending applications. This is 30% of the number of candidates that were under care a decade ago.

Because of the decline in candidates, the Region's Ministry School has become unsustainable. To meet the needs of congregations, the Committee on Ministry is working on a portfolio-based approach to educational requirements, based on the 16 Areas of Ministerial Practice. We value our partnership with Lexington Theological Seminary in this effort.

Youth and Outdoor Ministry

Neither of the campgrounds in Kentucky hosted camps in 2020. Both site teams worked to provide virtual programming for our youth, led by the adults they know and with whom they enjoy spending time.

Renovations are taking place at both campgrounds. Plans for construction of a new bathhouse and installation of a pool are underway at Camp Wakon'Da-Ho. Camp Kum-Ba-Ya has installed new siding on the Billy Williams Lodge and is working on camp infrastructure. The Lodge provides year-round programming at Kum-Ba-Ya.

The leadership development and ministry with children and youth that take place at camp are important aspects of any region's ministry. Outdoor ministry is valuable. However, the needs of camp facilities raise the question of whether regions, the Kentucky Region in particular, should continue in the property management business. Increasingly, professional needs are met by amateur volunteers or staff that lack the necessary training and experience. Each of these staff and volunteers works in the best interest of the camp and the church as they understand it, but would it be a better use of staff and volunteer resources to focus on programming for outdoor ministry, leaving property management to groups with the necessary skills and professional expertise?

West Area

Under the leadership of West Area Minister Rachel Nance Woehler, the Area maintains a communication network among congregations and ministers and a virtual information center for resources for ministerial leadership and administrative needs. It also provides a channel of communication and coordination for regional programs and activities.

While the Region owns Camp Kum-Ba-Ya, the Area manages the day-to-day operational aspects of the camp. An advisory committee composed of persons from the Area plans programming for the camp and provides supervision and administration for Camp Kum-Ba-Ya facilities, staff, program, fundraising, and improvement.

In early March, the newly created Leadership Development Team organized and led a day of nine workshops and worship for clergy and laity across the West Area. The theme was *I Love to Tell the Story*. One hundred registered for the special day.

General Assembly 2023

Kentucky's Disciples were disappointed by the decision to cancel the 2021 General Assembly that was to be held in Louisville, although we also saw it as the right and responsible decision. The Region had leadership in place for local arrangements, and we were looking forward to welcoming our siblings from across the United States and Canada.

But the sun still shines bright in Kentucky. Although the request came as a surprise to us, we are delighted that the General Assembly has reached an agreement with Louisville to host General Assembly in 2023. The local arrangements chairs have agreed to continue in their roles. Kentucky's new regional minister will have the opportunity to get to know the Region by jumping right into Assembly preparations.

The Christian Church in Kentucky is excited to roll out the carpet for General Assembly, July 29-August 1, 2023. Come back to the roots of our movement, reconnect with Disciples history, stop in at Midway University, Transylvania University, and Lexington Theological Seminary, visit the Muhammed Ali Center, or just relax and enjoy an ice cold Ale 8-1 with a Kentucky Hot Brown. Whatever your preference, we look forward to seeing you in 2023.

Campgrounds

Camp Wakon'Da-Ho
7900 E Kentucky Hwy 70
Yosemite, KY
(606) 787-6564
Linda Lee, site manager

Camp Kum-Ba-Ya
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Affiliated Institutions

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