

GREAT RIVER REGION OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DOC)**GB-26-1342**

This past year has been one of celebrations and new beginnings! We have celebrated three ordinations, multiple installations, and several new candidates who have entered the RCOM process. A few of our pastors have entered into the D.Min. program at Phillips and are grateful to be continuing their theological education through the generosity of the grants gifted by Phillips.

Kings Highway Christian Church in Shreveport enjoyed their 100th Anniversary celebration in the fall, and Rev. Ryan Pfeiffer, Senior Pastor of FCC, Fayetteville, has just recently celebrated his 20th anniversary with that faithful congregation. And with the regional board's approval in November, I have been called to serve as the Executive Regional Minister. I am beyond humbled and thrilled to continue this journey of leading the Great River Region into the future! Throughout our region, we see visible signs of God's faithfulness in blessing us with a future that is both bold and bright!

As we live into the future that God holds for us, we recognize that there will be painful experiences along the way...one of which is the closing of congregations with a long history of faithful service. First Christian Church, Slidell, is the latest congregation in the GRR to make that difficult decision to end their visible ministry. However, in the process of their discernment in making that difficult decision, they felt God guiding them to leave a legacy of hope, healing and love upon their community. A portion of their property has been donated to a community organization for the purpose of establishing a women's shelter for their community. Truly, FCC Slidell's commitment to serving their community will continue for years to come!

We continue to be blessed by the ministry of Rev. Ronny Nowell, Disaster Response Coordinator. We will complete 2/3 of our 3-year pilot project with Week of Compassion in March. This position has been such a blessing for the GRR in connecting members to WOC solidarity (and/or equity) grants following natural disasters. Ronny's work in both connecting congregations with WOC resources, as well as providing pastoral care to communities in crisis, has been an invaluable gift. The leadership of the GRR is creatively thinking of ways to extend his position in partnership with Week of Compassion beyond the pilot period.

Another blessing of this past year is the extensive improvements made to Pea Ridge Cemetery, the final resting place of Rev. Sarah Lue Bostick, the first African American woman to be ordained in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). To learn more, please join our Facebook group: "Pea Ridge (Pearidge) Cemetery Lonoke County, Arkansas".

Our challenges include engaging with congregations who do not seem to value their identity as member congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Our GRR Executive Team is working to prioritize the work of the region in this next year, which will include the

intentional invitation to these congregations to join us at the Table. One of our hopes is directly tied to the outcome of this endeavor: that God would help us to clarify and refine who we are as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Great River Region.

As we look toward the future, we have identified two distinct areas of growth that are vital to the expansion of a D.O.C. presence in Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi: increasing our social media presence and strengthening our funding sources. Preliminary discussions are happening among GRR leadership about the potential benefit of investing in a social media strategy to promote our congregations in their local communities. And with the assistance of the Christian Church Foundation, we will be celebrating our first “Legacy Dinner” on April 30.

We are looking forward to seeing where God may lead the GRR in the coming years!

With joy and gratitude,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rev. Alison Robuck".

Rev. Alison Robuck

Executive Regional Minister - GRR