



Christian Church in Indiana

(Disciples of Christ)

1100 West 42nd Street
Suite 150
Indianapolis, IN 46208-3375
(317) 926-6051
(317) 931-2034 FAX
www.indianadisciples.org

Ministry: The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana
1100 West. 42nd Street Suite #150
Indianapolis, Indiana 46208
www.indianadisciples.org
317.926-6051

GB-26-1344

Regional Minister
REV. DR. CRISTAL WILLIAMS
drchristal@indianadisciples.org
rg

Regional Minister: Rev. Dr. Cristal L. Williams
Regional Minister Email: drchristal@indianadisciples.org
Current Regional Moderator: Rev. Luis Gierbolini
Regional Moderator Email: gierboliniluis@gmail.com
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Associate Regional Minister
REV. CHERYL RUSSELL
KUNKEL
cheryl@indianadisciples.org

quest: A Journey of Faith
Program Director& Associate
Regional Minister
REV. ANITA COBB
anita@indianadisciples.org

Reconciliation Program
Coordinator &
Ministry Associate
CANDACE BOYD SIMMONS
candace@indianadisciples.org
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General Board Report 2026

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana

Accomplishments in 2025

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana experienced a full and faithful year of ministry marked by the sacred juxtaposition of holy growth and meaningful transition. Through it all, we did not shrink back.

We concluded 2025 celebrating four ordinations, exciting pastoral installations, along with an increase in individuals enrolling in seminary. Our relationship with Christian Theological Seminary remains vital. Through this partnership, both Disciples students and the wider Disciples of Christ community are experiencing new and emerging opportunities for leadership and formation.

In December 2025, we celebrated receiving our third Lilly Endowment grant, *Supporting Hoosier Churches*. This generous award strengthens the work of middle judicatories and their congregations by deepening leadership capacity, fostering innovation, enhancing sustainability, and cultivating stronger relational networks. Simply put, this initiative equips the region in its ability to help congregations and clergy to do together what they cannot — and should not — do alone.

The Indiana Disciples will focus on what we are calling **CRITICAL Care** (Capacity, Relationships, Innovation, and Technology). We will hire 3 Area Pastoral Consultants, 1 Rural and Small-Town Coordinator and 1 Cohort leader to engage congregations on the margins and provide an additional layer of pastoral care to clergy, seminarians and regional cluster events. We also seek to strengthen relationships with our immigrant congregations by establishing leadership structures and programming that respond directly to their needs, as we live more fully into being one region, one church. Grant funding will also support a comprehensive review of our regional website and an assessment of staffing needs.

In November 2025, the Christian Church in Indiana invited Rev. Dr. Heber Brown, executive director of the Black Church Food Security Network, to lead a three-day consultation with four

African American congregations focused on land/property stewardship, gardening, and community-farmers markets collaboration. The BCFSN and the Indiana New Church Committee entered partnership around the Indiana Disciples Feed Initiative and other emerging projects.

a region-wide Congregational Vitality gathering, *Revive and Thrive*, at Light of the World Christian Church in Indianapolis. Thirty congregations and more than one hundred clergy and lay leaders gathered from across Indiana and beyond. Rev. Dr. Dawn Darwin Weaks and Pastor Reuben Del Pilar led courageous and transformative conversations addressing church attendance decline, clergy burnout, and congregational renewal. The gathering created space for honest testimony, strategic networking, and renewed hope.

Because we are committed to the wellness and equipping of clergy and lay leaders alike, we offered three quarterly leadership development workshops:

- Board Chairs and Moderators Training (February 2025)
- Congregational Ethics and Healthy Boundaries (June 2025)
- Budget, Finance, and Compensation Best Practices (September 2025)

These trainings strengthened governance practices, deepened transparency and accountability, and sharpened our shared understanding of financial sustainability across the region.

We also entered partnership with the Christian Church in Mid-America to strengthen our Rural and Small-Town Ministry Initiative, ensuring that no congregation — regardless of size or geography — ministers in isolation. A coordinator was hired to organize and lead this initiative.

In June 2025, the region offered a Clergy Wellness Retreat entitled *Strengthening the Bandwidth*, engaging more than sixty clergy — chaplains, retired ministers, seminarians, ordained, and commissioned. Dr. Tim McNinch of Christian Theological Seminary and Rev. Dr. Denise Bell of Lexington Theological Seminary offered guidance on clergy self-care, rest, and the sacred responsibility of tending one's own soul.

In Spring 2025, our Regional Ministry Staff authored and published a devotional resource now distributed throughout Indiana and across the wider denomination. The idea was born from our commitment to care for the regional church as we navigate the complexities of our world. Twenty-five writers contributed reflections. This resource reflects our ongoing dedication to spiritual formation and shared theological reflection.

A Hope for 2026

As Regional Minister, it is my fervent hope that the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana will neither retreat nor turn away from the pressing issues of our time. There are no innocent bystanders. We are called to proclaim truth shaped by love, liberation, and covenant — a covenant that reminds us we are our sibling's keeper. As children of God, caring for the whole body is not optional; it is essential. As members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), we affirm that unity is essential. May we grow in reconciliation, deepen our resilience, and remain steadfast in care for all our neighbors.

This is critical. This is essential. This is now. May our Regional Church continue to be sacred space — where all of God's children gather in safety, dignity, and belonging — where the Kingdom of God is not merely proclaimed, but embodied.

Challenges Ahead

For more than sixty years, the Regional Office has been housed in the Indiana Interchurch Center, originally constructed as a shared witness of denominational collaboration. Today, only two denominational offices remain in the building. Rising maintenance costs have made continued occupancy increasingly unsustainable. We must think critically and faithfully about fiscal stewardship, ensuring that our financial commitments prioritize clergy wellness, congregational support, staff vitality, and long-term sustainability.

Additionally, we face:

- Congregational decline and closures
- Pastoral and community impacts of shifting governmental policies.
- The responsibility to provide safety, advocacy, and spiritual covering for immigrant congregations.

These realities require courage, wisdom, and strategic clarity.

Congregations of Strength and Hope

For this General Board report, I lift two congregations whose witness embodies resilience and covenantal faithfulness.

Iglesia de Hermandad — A Church on the Frontlines

Founded in 1989, Iglesia de Hermandad lives in covenantal partnership with Westview Christian Church in Indianapolis. Under the faithful leadership of Rev. Rossy Ricart, the congregation remains spiritually grounded while preparing its members for turbulent times.

Their partnership with Westview is covenant in action — shared space, shared ministry, shared future. Rev. Ricart, a former Moderator of the Midwest Convention of Obra Hispana, has completed her CPE requirements and is moving toward ordination. She stands daily on the frontlines of ministry, equipping Spanish-speaking members to navigate both faith and life, while ensuring immigrants in the community have the education and resources needed to face present challenges.

Light of the World Christian Church — Feeding Indiana at Night

Under the leadership of Rev. Janae Pitts-Murdock, Light of the World Christian Church continues to embody justice and nourishment through Talley Gardens and its evening food pantry — the only evening pantry in Indianapolis serving working families.

The garden ministry, led by Marsha Cummins and her steadfast volunteers, reflects careful stewardship and intentional cultivation. Inspired by leaders such as Rev. Dr. Heber Brown and the Black Church Food Security Network, this congregation demonstrates that food justice is gospel work. Through sacred collaboration with the Indiana Disciples Feed Initiative, they nourish both bodies and spirits — modeling what it means to be church beyond Sunday morning.

Submitted,



Rev. Dr. Christal L. Williams
Regional Minister
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www.indianadisciples.org
drchristal@indianadisciples.org