

GB-26-1346
CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) IN KENTUCKY
REPORT TO THE GENERAL BOARD - APRIL 2026
Rev. Dr. Donald K. Gillett, II

Accomplishments of the Christian Church In Kentucky in 2025

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Kentucky (CCK) celebrates as we live out our mission in response to God's call to be faithful to the gospel of Jesus Christ and the leading of the Holy Spirit. The mission of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Kentucky shall be to proclaim, teach, interpret and celebrate what God has done, is doing, and promises to do, in the light of Scripture, informed by apostolic tradition, reason, and experience. The Region shares in the mission of the whole church in calling persons to conversion and communities to transformation in response to the gospel.

2025 Accomplishments:

- Caring, Connecting and Equipping for witness and ministry through 158 touches/connections with Kentucky Disciples congregations and clergy across Kentucky. in worship services, installation services, ordination services and commissioning services, search and call meetings, presentations and consultations.
- Completion of new bathhouse and concrete pads & walkways around pool and bathhouse at Camp Wakon' Da-Ho Gifts.
- Continued increases in our camping ministries and operating in the black at our two campgrounds; Kum -Ba-Ya and Wakon' Da-Ho.
- Chartering New Life in Christ Christian Church.
- Forest Church beginning the process as a new church plant with New Church Ministries.
- Updating our Healthy Boundary Training with several new modules.
- Strengthening our partnerships with Green Chalice, Disciples Appalachian Scholarship Ministry (formerly Kentucky Appalachian Ministry, or KAM), Kentucky Christian Missionary Convention, Cane Ridge Shrine, Christian Care Communities, Kentucky Council of Churches, Lexington Theological Seminary, Midway University, Mission Behind Bars and Beyond, Transylvania University, congregations and ministers.
- Being a collaborator with the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary Black Church Studies Program and being awarded a 300K Black Churches in Rural and Small Towns Initiative Grant. With this 5-year grant, in 2025 we were able to walk with the initial and Cohort of 15 congregations from KY, OH, VA, TN, NC and SC working with two historic African-American Conventions (Kentucky Christian Missionary Convention and the Piedmont District Convention) and five other regions.
- Being a partner with the Christian Church in Ohio and receiving a \$1.25 million dollar grant through the Lily Endowment Inc. This grant has allowed 12 congregations (Independence CC, Florence CC, Erlanger CC, Bullittsville CC, Owenton CC, Crittenden CC, FCC Georgetown, Carrollton CC, Anderson Hills CC, Kemper Road CC, Middletown CC, Legacy CC) to begin gathering with the hope of creating 60 justice-based corporate worship resources over the next five years with children leading

Congregational Story of Hope & Promise

I will share four congregational stories of hope, strength and promise from across the Commonwealth of Kentucky

First Christian Church, Covington KY (located in the northern part of our region). Over the past several years, FCC Covington had been experiencing financial challenges. After much prayer and discernment, the congregation decided to sell their building. But their story does not end there. The congregation sold their building to a non-profit that hosts concerts and uses the money raised to reach out to at-risk kids. FCC Covington is still worshipping in the same space, and is looking for a place to continue their feeding ministry in the Covington community. This congregation has shown great strength, as well as a willingness to find new ways to minister and be a church.

First Christian Church, Mayfield KY (located in the western part of our region). In the aftermath of the devastating 2021 tornado, the congregation demonstrated remarkable resilience, uniting the community in a shared mission of recovery and hope. With help from Dr. Milton West, Interim Minister Rev. Rick Loader, Jim Michel at Disciples Church Extension Fund, and area and regional staff, the congregation discerned a vision for renewal and growth in their rebuilding efforts that honors the past while looking forward to the future. In January 2026, they welcomed their new pastor, Rev. Dr. Micah Spicer, and their beautiful new mission-oriented church building is slated to open in fall 2026.

Bridgeport Christian Church, Frankfort KY (located in the central part of our region) in Frankfort had a fire in 2023 that damaged much of the building. Along with their resilient pastor, Ann Shepherd, they did not miss a Sunday, but met at a restaurant close by and continued their work and witness. They provide grief bags for Family Resource, do monthly mission projects, work with the Veterans at Thomson-Hood, started both Worship and Wonder and Following Jesus, do monthly book clubs and weekly Bible Study, have Intergenerational Sunday School, and are proud to be a Green Chalice church. The fire did not hinder them but became a catalyst. They have experienced growth in the years since and the above is just a small list of how the congregation grows and serves.

Woodland Christian Church, Lexington KY (located in the central part of our region). Is a congregation that was at a true crossroad. A historic 100 year old congregation with a structure that needed repairs totaling more than a million dollars. The congregation with their visionary pastor, Rev. Christy Jo Harbor and their visionary leadership team entered into a land lease integrated model of affordable housing and ministry with Winterwood incorporated. This integrated partnership would fully restore the historic structure with 8 affordable senior citizen units within the existing structure and build a new structure on the grassy lot beside the building with 30 affordable senior units. After not being able to worship in their sanctuary for several years due to the necessary repairs and 3 years of the build/renovation, the congregation will reenter the sanctuary on Easter Sunday this year.

Challenges That Are Ahead For The Christian Church in Kentucky

The following four areas remain major challenges for the (CCK) in 2026:

- First, the political climate in our nation. We are engulfed in a “all or nothing,” “right or wrong;” or “us vs them” culture. Leaving no room to meet each other in the middle.
- Second, the nature of our covenant/community. It is a sad day in the body of Christ persons/congregations decide that they no longer want to be in covenant with the CCK or the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States & Canada because they do not feel there is room at the table. It feels that tables of welcome are already set without the ability to invite others and allow them to bring their own dishes.

- Third, is a challenge that needs to be viewed in two parts. First, the region helping congregations face the reality that they should share space or merge with congregations nearby and understand the reality that their ministry might best be served with bi-vocational ministers. Secondly, the demand for bi-vocational ministers far exceeds the supply. It is a reality that the Region is finding it harder to help smaller attendance congregations secure solid preaching and teaching leadership from persons who understand and appreciate the heritage and the values that are part of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).
- Finally, the ultimate question of how we continue the exploration “How we ensure that we Care, Connect and Equip our congregations as we expand the table?”

Hopes for 2026

As we continue to Connect, Care and Equip the congregations and the CCK the following are a few hopes for 2026:

- The opportunity to launch new Federated (with the UCC and UMC) congregations by our New Church Ministry.
- Create tables of space for greater conversation between persons who have multiple theological, social and political thought.
- Create and participate in more partnerships that benefit our smaller and rural congregations.

Most Recently Submitted Report To The CCK Regional Board

Appendix A is the report submitted to the Regional Board in September 2025

Most Recently Audited Year-End Financial Report

Handled by Treasury Services

Moderator Name & Contact Information

Rev. Leah Eubanks is our Current Moderator. Her phone number is (919) 601-0204, and her e-mail address is revleah458@gmail.com

APPENDIX A REGIONAL BOARD REPORT

Report to the Regional Board

Rev. Dr. Donald K. Gillett, II, General Minister & President, September 27, 2025

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ, the one whose Kin-Dom never ends. As I begin my fifth year as General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Kentucky, I have come to realize that two things can be true the same time. I am grateful, overjoyed and filled with hopeful expectations by the ministry to which I have been called and the ministry that God is leading us as a region together. A ministry that is “welcoming all to the table” and is needed “for such a time as this.” And yet while I am elated with joy, my heart carries grief, Grief as I walk with historic congregations closing their visible ministry or ministry site. First Christian Church Earlington, founded in 1870, closed August 20, 2025; First Christian Church Albany founded in 1832 ceased worshipping as a community and will be selling their property and creating a Legacy Fund; and First Christian Church, Covington founded 1827 is in negotiations for the sale of their property and discernment in regard to continuing as a worshipping community.

A quick review of the 2025 ALEX Congregational Reporting Data indicates the CCDOC list 2887 churches with 1500 reporting an average worship of 61. The ALEX report also indicates of the reporting congregations 64% have an average membership between 1-50 persons, 31% have membership between 51-150 with 18 congregations reporting membership of 350+. Kentucky data is similar.

Secondly, I grieve over the splintering of our communities because of socio-political dynamics. While we did not receive letters this year indicating congregations no longer wanted to be in covenant, we are well aware that there are some who no longer affiliate as they change their information on their websites. However, my hope remains in the God we serve is able to do more than we can every think ask or imagine, according the power that worketh in us. My guiding philosophy remains that “no congregation is too small or too large to receive care.” To this end, our greatest opportunity for service is to Build, Strengthen, Establish, Repair and Reconnect relationships within the region.

This report gives witness and testimony to the ministry, activities, and work of the region as we **Care, Connect & Equip clergy, laity and congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Kentucky.**

CARE

Search & Call

One of the more active ways that the region cares for congregations and its ministers is through the process of being with a congregation during times of pastoral transition. As regional staff it is our imperative to ensure that we touch persons and congregations.

I continue actively working with twenty-eight (28) search committees or 15% of congregations that are part of the CCK. Eight (8) congregations have completed their search, eight (8) are in Phase II – Receiving and interviewing candidates, six (6) are in Phase I- preparing congregational profiles and four (4) have placed their searches on hold and two (2) are in the final stages of their search. The [search and](#)

[call page](#) on the Region's web site lists eleven (11) active searches and seven (7) churches have extended interim calls with no active search committee.

Since our February Board Meeting, the staff is engaged in search and call with the following congregations as of this report.

CONGREGATION	STAGE IN PROCESS	FT/Bi-Voc
Beargrass Christian Church	Associate Minister Search – Receiving Profiles	FT
Bedford Christian Church	Long-Term Interim (Keith Oditt)–Search on Hold	Bi-Voc
Bethany Christian Church, Nicholasville	Long-Term Interim –(Larry Metzger) Search on Hold	Bi-Voc
Burgin Christian Church	Interim (John Opsata) September 2025 – Phase I	PT
Cadiz Christian Church	Interim (Ron Buck) – Receiving Profile – Dec 24	FT
Carrollton Christian Church	Called Settled Pastor (Steven Straub) – April 25	FT
Central Christian Church	Associate Minister Search – Congregation Voting 9/28/25	FT
Central Christian Church	Associate Minister Search – Receiving Profiles	FT
Crestwood Christian Church, Crestwood	Interim (Bob Silvanik) Phase I	PT
Dry Ridge Christian Church	Interim – (Don Chase) Phase II- On Hold	FT
Eminence Christian Church	Interim (Casey Heilman)– Receiving. Profiles	Bi-Voc
Firat Christian Church, Bowling Green	Associate Minister Search – Receiving Profiles	FT
First Christian Church, Dawson Springs	Long Term Interim (Leah Eubanks)- Phase 1	Bi-Voc
First Christian Church, Frankfort	Called Settled Pastor (Elizabeth King) – June 25	FT
Firat Christian Church, Henderson	Associate Minister Search – Receiving Profiles	FT
First Christian Church, Hopkinsville	Called Settled Pastor (Glen Schory) – October 25	FT
First Christian Church, Liberty	Pulpit Supply –Receiving Profiles	FT
First Christian Church, Mayfield	Pulpit Supply – Finalizing Candidates	PT
First Christian Church, Paris	Called Settled Pastor (Judi Ring) August 25	FT
Flemingsburg Christian Church	Interim – No Action in Phase 2	FT
Oxford Christian Church	Called Settled Pastor (Mark Farris) October 25	FT
Pembroke Christian Church	Interim (Dan Masden) – Receiving Profiles Nov 2024	Bi-Voc
Radcliff Christian Church	Called Settled Pastor (Britton McDowell) July 25	Bi-Voc
Sebree Christian Church	Pulpit Supply – Phase I	Bi-Voc
Second Christian Church, Lawrenceburg	Called Settled Pastor (Tim Abell) July 25	Bi-Voc
Shepherdsville Christian Church	Called Settled Pastor (Dave Conway) Feb 25	FT
Twin Pines Christian Church	Interim (Brenton Yadon) – Phase II	Bi-Voc
Waddy Christian Church	Pulpit Supply – Phase 1	Bi-Voc
Warsaw Christian Church	Interim (Suzi Greene) – Phase 1	Bi-Voc

A very visible way in which we care for congregations and clergy is to come alongside and celebrate in the installations, ordinations and commissioning of those called to ministry within the congregational context. Since our last time together staff has joined with congregations in the following installations, commissioning's and ordinations:

Installations

CONGREGATION	MINISTER	DATE
Shepherdsville Christian Church	Dave Conway	June 8, 2025
Erlanger Christian Church	Kyle McDougal	June 29, 2025
First Christian Church, Frankfort	Elizabeth King	August 10, 2025
Second Christian Church, Lawrenceburg	Tim Abell	August 10, 2025
Carrollton Christian Church	Steven Straub	September 7, 2025

Ordination/Commissioning

CONGREGATION	MINISTER	DATE
First Christian Church, Russellville	Larry Baker	March 30, 2025 – Ordination Recognition
Crestwood Christian Church	Stephanie Wallace	July 27, 2025 - Ordination
Crestwood Christian Church	Missy Wallace	August 17, 2025 - Commissioning
First Christian Church, Paducah	Kevin Patterson	August 25, 2025 – Ordination Recognition
Second Christian Church, Mayfield	Leticia Gray-Overton	September 14, 2025 - Commissioning

Clergy

You will hear about the ministry of our Boundaries Trainers and Seeing the Face of God conversation partners in upcoming reports. I just want to say thank you to the trainers and conversation partners involved in this critical aspect of our work.

Through the Commission on Ministry, we have issued standing to 358 ministers in 2024.

Regional Staff

CCIK continues to be blessed by a gifted regional staff working collaboratively to meet the needs of clergy, laity and congregations. In 2025 we did have some staff transitions. Rev. Dave Carr retired, and Rev. Chloe Specht relocated to NC. Rev. Steven Straub was contracted to be the Executive Director of Camp Wakon Da' Ho. Rev. Chloe continues to provide administrative support and New Church Ministry remotely. The search for administrative support, is currently in process and New Church Ministry will begin in the upcoming weeks.

The regional staff maintains traditional office hours and are available by appointment. The regional offices are open Monday-Thursday, 9:00a.m.-4:00p.m. and are closed on select holidays. Please consult the website for closings and contact regional staff should you wish to make an appointment.

Connect***Connection with Congregations***

Since our last board meeting, I have been present in forty-two (42) congregations. I have preached in eighteen (18) of those churches, met with Twenty (20) search committees, been a part of five (5) installations, three (3) ordinations and two (2) commissionings. I have met with the boards and elders offering guidance to five (5) congregations. I have spoken by phone with numerous board chairs, ministers, and laity. In addition, I attended the General Assembly in Memphis, Quilters Retreat, Kentucky Christian Missionary Convention, Piedmont District Convention in Virginia, the Men's Spiritual Life Retreat, New Life in Christ Covenant Ceremony, CYF Camp at Wakon Da' Ho and the United Christian Missionary Society, Christian Care Communities and Lexington Theological Seminary Board meetings. Additionally, I taught two classes for Lexington Theological Seminary and served as the Regional Ministry Search Partner with the Christian Church in Tennessee during their search that called the Rev. Kevin McNeil as their Regional Minister.

While it is my goal to make a personal visit to every congregation, our regional staff is connecting with congregations and pastors. For the relevant details, I commend the reports of Rev. Specht, Rev. Carr, Rev. Nance Woehler, Rev. Snyder, Dr. Oliver, Rev. Snyder and Ms. Thornton, Jr. In 2024 your regional staff has touched one hundred-two (102) congregations, includes twelve of sixteen (12/16) KCMC congregations.

Communications – The Kentucky Christian, CCK News & Social Media

We have multiple ways of sharing regional congregational events and activities and the good news of the region.

The Kentucky Christian our quarterly newsletter, the CCK News our Bi-Monthly electronic newsletter and social media, Instagram, YouTube and Facebook. Our quarterly Kentucky Christian will be going out this month.

EQUIP

Clergy

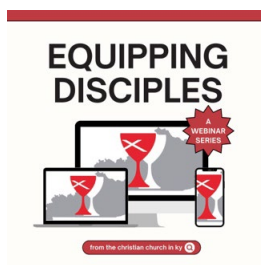
Through the Commission on Ministry, we have 358 ministers who currently have standing in the Region.

We continue to try to have regular conversation with our interim ministers and chaplains, usually in the spring and fall. Our last conversations were this past month. Our next conversations will be in April 2026.

Congregations

Congregational Webinars

Join us for our Equipping Webinar 2025 Series. These webinars are designed to help equip clergy and congregations in their ministry. Each webinar will consist of a 60-90 minute sessions.



Our next webinars will be a webinar for Rural and Small Church, October 2nd – “***EVERY TIME I FEEL THE SPIRIT.***” with Deborah Garr (Seventh Street Christian Church), Larry Sivis (Past President of Disciples Musicians), and Chris Weiss (South Elkhorn). Martin Luther said, “next to Theology I consider music as our greatest gift.” Three congregational musicians (piano, organ, guitar, and choir) share about using music to revitalize our worship and prayer life. Attention will be given to the smaller congregation. (Recorded and available on YouTube)

GRANTS

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Kentucky was blessed to receive two grants this year. The Black Church Rural and Small-Town Ministry initiative Grant and a Children Nurturing Grant. Both grants are 5-year grants that are collaborative as they touch congregations in other regions

BLACK CHURCH RURAL AND SMALL-TOWN MINISTRY INITIATIVE

The Lilly Endowment Inc. awarded \$5M grant to Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary and the CCK is a sub-grantee receiving \$325,000 to serve congregations. This grant initiative seeks to empower and equip rural and small-town black churches through four priorities: evangelism, church growth, engagement with black church rural heritage and black women in ministry. The grant is designed to engage the priorities through educational equipping webinars and conferences and will distribute 15- annual \$3,000 Micro-Grants to its cohort in 6 regions (KY, OH, VA, TN, NC, SC). Dr. Gillett is the project director and Rev. Chloe Specht assist with administrative support.

CHILDREN HERE, CHILDREN THERE, CHILDREN EVERYWHERE

Is a \$1.25 million dollar grant awarded through the Lily Foundation's Nurturing Children Program. This grant will have 12 congregations (Independence CC, Florence CC, Erlanger CC, Bullittsville CC, Owenton CC, Crittenden CC, FCC Georgetown, Carrollton CC, Anderson Hills CC, Kemper Road CC, Middletown CC, Legacy CC) from two regions (Ohio and KY) create 60 justice-based corporate worship resources over the next five years with children leading the way. Each church will update their space and worship experience to be more child-friendly and welcoming. The work within the worship will spread outside of the worship space into retreats that include creating worship materials and learning about how what we do as a church affects the communities in which we live. We thank Rev. Olivia Bryant Updegrave who was the grant writer and the CCK project director. Rev. Josh Snyder assist Rev, Olivia with this grant

MOVING FORWARD

- 1) *Listening Sessions* – I have met with the West Area and Districts 8, 10 and 11 conducting Listening Sessions. Over the next six months, I will continue conducting listening sessions for the remaining districts as well as having 2 open virtual sessions. These sessions are a time for us to gather valuable feedback through dialogue that will provide unique opportunities to hear insights, concerns, hopes and dreams that will lead to a collective vision for our future ministries together.
- 2) *Regional Elders Ministry* – I still am evaluating the possibility of reengaging a network of elders/retired clergy who will assist the regional staff in providing resources and support for clergy and congregations of the CCIK.
- 3) *Sabbatical* – I will be in conversation with Moderator Leah Eubanks, Minister Gray-Overton and the Personnel Committee in planning and shaping a proposal for the April Board meeting for a sabbatical for late 2026/early 2027.

As I conclude my report, I continue to seek your prayers for the regional staff and the ministry of the region. We continue to work towards impacting congregations, communities, and individuals knowing that God is able to do “exceedingly abundantly above all we can ask or think.”

To God Be The Glory!

Rev. Dr. Donald K. Gillett, II