



Northern
Lights
Region

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

*A partnership of the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) in
Alaska, Washington, North Idaho, and Montana.*



Report to the General Board
GB-26-1353 Regional Report of NoL
February 5, 2026

In the past year, I have driven over 20,000 miles, visited 43 churches, two campgrounds, attended two College of Regional Minister meetings, two General Board meetings, the General Assembly, two Pride Parades, four Ecumenical Worship services, and countless meetings over Zoom or in person.

We have several pastors moving through the Committee on Ministry seeking Ordination or Commissioning, including two who are new to the region and two who will be celebrating their ordination or the recognition of their ordination. We have four congregations that are about to enter into search and call. They all have Interim Ministers in place. We have established a Regional Elder pilot program and a New Church Formation Ministry Team, and we have reworked our Camping Ministry Team into a Faith Formation Ministry Team which focuses on Regional Christian Education for all ages. Our Regional Assembly will be held at Kennewick Christian Church in Kennewick, Washington, on May 1-3, 2026. Rev. Rebecca Hale, Executive Vice President of the National Benevolent Association, and Rev. Chris Dorsey, President and CEO of DHM, will be our featured speakers.

Our camping programs in 2025 went very well. We had more youth and kids at our camps in 2025 than we have since before the pandemic. The finances for our camping program also look better than in years past. The Gwinwood Retreat Center has completed negotiations with its insurance company after the lodge and dining area were destroyed in a fire. They are now beginning a Capital Campaign to rebuild the lodge.

In 2025, a congregation decided to affiliate with the Disciples of Christ denomination and the Northern Lights Region. Nueva Vida en Cristo in Kennewick, Washington, began this process in 2025, and we look forward to celebrating their full affiliation at our Regional Assembly in May. We continue to emphasize connecting with our congregations across a large geographic region. Some congregations can feel isolated due to their geographical distance. The Northern Lights Region is looking to expand its ministry through the Regional Elder program, as well as calling on the Commission on Ministry to contact Congregational Ministers and Chaplains to provide support and care.



Northern
Lights
Region

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

*A partnership of the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) in
Alaska, Washington, North Idaho, and Montana.*



Together we give thanks for the efforts we have begun, the work that continues, and the new realities that God calls us to.

* Accomplishments from 2025

The Northern Lights Region is celebrating the affiliation of a new congregation, Nueva Vida en Cristo, in Kennewick, Washington. We are celebrating the launch of the new Regional Elder pilot program, the reformation of the New Church Formation Ministry Team, and the restructuring of several of our existing Ministry Teams. We have provided several grants for congregations, including a technology grant, a food insecurity grant, grants to attend General Assembly, reconciliation grants, and transformation grants. New opportunities for Ordained and Commissioned ministers, Chaplains, other Ministry Professionals, and Retired Ministers to join retreats, educational opportunities, and collegial support groups have been provided.

* Hopes for 2026

- To continue to make personal visits to our 45 congregations in this Region during the next year.
- Reimagining our Regional Assembly structure, leadership terms, etc., in response to the changes in our General Assembly meetings.
- Supporting the Regional Elder Pilot Program.
- Meeting the changing needs of our congregations.
- Providing support for local Pastors, Chaplains, and those engaged in other ministries.

*Challenges Ahead

The biggest challenges facing the Northern Lights Region includes the continued decline in membership of our small, rural congregations; the geographic size of our region leading to disconnection between congregations and pastors; established congregations seeking information and guidance to transform themselves in ways that will meet the needs of the communities in which they are located; and the lack of pastors in the Search and Call system willing to serve in our region. Like many regions, we are struggling with the added pressure of ICE agents in the Seattle and Tacoma, Washington areas, and changes instituted by the Department of Homeland Security, leading to many of our congregants feeling unsafe and unsure of their legal status.



Northern
Lights
Region

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

*A partnership of the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) in
Alaska, Washington, North Idaho, and Montana.*



* A congregational story of strength or hope in your region that the General Board members can share with their own congregations.

Englewood Christian Church in Yakima, Washington

Rev. Dr. Christie Love, Senior Pastor

This video and article were used in our Annual Fund Promotional Materials for 2025

Video Link Youtube: https://youtu.be/WHJkWIJS1qM?si=FqdWG_In7ZIBN1Z1

NLR YouTube channel link: youtube.com/watch?v=TtLFpCg3C14

At Englewood Christian Church, we've been having many conversations about what it means to love out loud. We've introduced what we call the Wide Welcome Initiative, an effort to make sure that everyone in our community feels seen and honored by our space and our actions. One of the places that we recognized was a barrier to those in our community was the signage in our building not being inclusive to our Hispanic and Latinx neighbors who make up nearly 50% of our community members. Receiving a reconciliation grant from the Northern Lights region is allowing us to create bilingual signage throughout our building and in the months to come will allow us to post our new Wide Welcome statement in the lobby in English and Spanish for everyone to read and know our hearts for this city. This also allows us to make our building easier for individuals to navigate who come to our building twice a week to attend citizenship classes that we host in partnership with another local nonprofit as well as the work that we are doing with the Yakima Immigration Response Network.

In addition, we also will be purchasing some materials that we will use to host conversation Cafes starting this fall for English speaking church members and community members to be able to come and practice conversational Spanish so that they feel more confident in engaging in conversations with our Spanish speaking neighbors. We are so grateful to the region for allowing us these resources to make our building more inclusive and welcoming to everyone in our community.



Northern
Lights
Region

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

*A partnership of the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) in
Alaska, Washington, North Idaho, and Montana.*



* What do you want the General Board to know?

Our region is financially sound and is committed to revising the role and scope of regional ministry and covenant relationships. We have ministers providing fresh ideas of congregational life and worship and are looking for new ways to reach out to communities that are quite different, given the size of our region. What works in one area will not work in another.

We have congregations that have reassessed the use of their buildings and properties in ways that are directing their focus outward, addressing the challenges in the communities of which they are a part. These vital ministries are breathing new life into their active participants.

There are challenges as well. On the west side of Washington State, traditional congregations or new church models are not what many people are looking for. We are looking for new models of worship and church structure that will help build community and provide mission opportunities, rather than seeking to build a conventional congregational structure.

Our churches are actively combating Christian Nationalism in rural areas, but are having difficulty finding pastors to lead this struggle. In a similar fashion, smaller congregations in Eastern Washington and Montana are shrinking, cannot afford a full-time pastor, and are seeking new ideas for pastoral leadership.

It is vitally important that all our congregations, but especially those in smaller towns and outdated structures, feel more a part of the denomination as a whole. It is important for the General and Regional expressions to recognize their primary covenantal roles in helping these congregations engage in faithful, missional activities outside their doors and find new expressions of what it means to be church.

*The Region's most recently audited year-end financial statement is attached.

Respectfully submitted,

Paul Allen

Regional Minister-President

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Northern Lights Region



Northern
Lights
Region

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

*A partnership of the Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ) in
Alaska, Washington, North Idaho, and Montana.*



NORTHERN LIGHTS REGION

Leadership

Rev. Paul Allen, Regional Minister-President, paul@northernlightsdisciples.org

Robin Crabb, Regional Administrator, robin@northernlightsdisciples.org

Regional Moderator

Rev. Doug Garner, doug.garner57@gmail.com, (406) 207-9666

Regional Contact

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Northern Lights Region

Mailing Address: 4227 Meridian #C615, Puyallup, Washington 98373

(253) 893-7202

office@northernlightsdisciples.org

www.northernlightsdisciples.org

Campgrounds

Gwinwood Retreat Center

Physical Address: 6015 30th Ave SE, Lacey, WA 98503

Mailing Address: PO Box 3445, Lacey, WA 98503

(360) 491-0195

info@gwinwood.org

www.gwinwood.org

Kate Ayers, Executive Director

Cane Ridge West Conference and Retreat Center

Physical Address: 5133 Cane Ridge Road, Lincoln, MT 59639

Mailing Address: 1019 Central Avenue, Great Falls, MT 59401

(406) 564-1887

contactus@caneridgewest.org

www.caneridgewest.org

Ruth Lindabury, Manager