

GB-26-1355

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oklahoma

General Board Report 2026

Rev. Michael Davison, Regional Minister

The Oklahoma Regional staff has changed. Following the retirement of Rev. Pamela Holt as Regional Minister, Rev. Randy Kuss joined the staff in February 2024. Rev. Kuss guided the Region through the transition and search process, assisted by our resilient staff: Ellen Spleth, Marla Hensley, Carrie Cobbs, and Rev. Michael Davison. The work and imagination of our Regional Moderator, Stacy Minnick, the Executive Committee, and the Regional Board ensured a smooth transition during the last biennium. Rev. Kuss' first six months included our Regional Assembly Business on land (April 20, 2024) and Regional Assembly at Sea (July 11-14, 2024). With the help of our Regional search partner, Rev. Paul Koch, the Regional Minister Search Committee followed the Executive Search model, and at a Called Regional Assembly on June 28, 2025, Rev. Michael Davison was called to serve as the next Regional Minister. He began the role and duties of Regional Minister on August 1, 2025.

The job description for the Associate Regional Minister was revised, and a search committee was established. The committee began its work in September 2025, and at a called Regional Board meeting on January 31, 2026, Rev. Shannon Cook was called to serve as Associate Regional Minister. She will begin on April 11, 2026.

During our Regional Assembly (March 6-7, 2026) at First Christian Church in Edmond, OK, the next Regional Moderator, Executive Committee, and Regional Board were elected and installed to serve the 2026-2028 biennium. Our Regional Moderator is Rev. Jesse Jackson, Jr.,¹ who serves East Sixth Street Christian Church in Oklahoma City.

Regional Minister's Report

"Describe your church in three words." Last fall, I asked clergy and laity around Oklahoma to describe their church. You can find a visual of the words I heard most often [here](#). Take a moment and write the three words you would use to describe your church. What kind of words are they? Adjectives. Verbs. Nouns. Keep those words with you and revisit them this fall. Are they still the words you would use?

In their own ways, our congregations are faithful, effective, and innovative² in proclaiming the good news of God as the Region connects, equips, and empowers Oklahoma Disciples to love and serve like Jesus.

¹ Rev. Jesse Jackson, Jr. email: jessejackson@cox.net / 405-833-7170

² I first encountered the idea of faithful, effective, and innovative congregations in the mid-2000s while serving on the Kentucky Regional staff. We spent time in consultation and workshops with George Bullard, who uses this idea to understand the lifecycle of a congregation and its resilience through change. George Bullard, *The Congregational Life Cycle*, bullardjournal.org 2021.

“You Might Be a Disciple If . . . when asked what you personally believe, you say, “Do you have a couple of hours?”³

Followers of Jesus do Jesus-like things. That’s our reminder, our mirror, and our evaluation tool for times like these to manage the essentials of unity, the liberty of non-essentials, and the charity; perhaps ‘grace’ or ‘graciousness’ are better words for what we extend to our neighbors and one another. That consistency isn’t easy. The one we claim as Christ never promised it would be. We won’t always get it right, but Jesus never said we would. He asked us to love one another and set for us an example. On this side of eternity, the rest is up to us with the help of God. We can worry ourselves about being the best-kept secret in town, in Christianity, or how to hang on. Or, we can decide what kind of ancestors⁴ we want to be right now and go be them.⁵⁶

Our congregations are alive and faithful in their own ways and contexts. Demographic, cultural, and economic changes beyond our control affect all our congregations. The sun is rising for those who are growing or maintaining their ministry, membership, and outreach, proclaiming the good news of God. The sun is setting for some congregations who are in distress due to the maintenance of their buildings and declining membership, which have affected their finances and vision for ministry, proclaiming the good news of God. Growing, declining, or somewhere between, our clergy are shouldering the anxiety of their people, as well as the discontent with the politics and policies of our time, all while caring for their families and seeking healthy self-care. Clergy are focused on being present for their people, their communities, and the next faithful step as a follower of Jesus. As I listen, they are balancing the church’s current state with a vision for its future, while many in the pews yearn for the church as it once was in Western culture.⁷

From solo State evangelists to seven ministerial and support staff in a centralized location, to the small decentralized staff today, the Region’s strength and vitality are embodied in the volunteerism, collaboration, and covenantal accountability of the laity and clergy. It’s always been that way. This is a time of opportunity and experimentation as we build a bridge to a future we continually envision and claim. Our GMP, Rev. Terri Hord Owens, encourages us to “Be the Church we say we are.” We think of ourselves as a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world, welcoming as we have been welcomed. And we are, but

³ David Polk, ed., *You Might Be A Disciple If . . .* Chalice Press (St. Louis) 1997.

⁴ “What kind of ancestors?” During the 2023 Northeast Area Clergy Retreat, Rev. Cameron Trimble asked the gathering to imagine the world in fifty years. She asked, “Where does the church fit in that world? What will the church (Christianity) be like in fifty years?” After some discussion, she asked, “What kind of ancestors do we need to be now for that church (Christianity) to exist?”

⁵ A phrase adapted from The Avett Brothers’ song, “Head Full of Doubt/Road Full of Promise.” It appears on their album *I and Love and You* (2009). The original lyric, “Decide what to be and go be it.”

⁶ This paragraph is from my *Message from Michael*, words I offered at our Called Regional Assembly, June 28, 2025.

⁷ This paragraph is from my Regional Board, November 1, 2025.

it is a little different in each congregation and community, depending on local needs, resources, vision for ministry, collaboration partners, and leadership. It will not be work and service we will finish, though, maybe we can take something off the list.⁸

“You Might Be a Disciple If . . . when asked if your congregation is pro or con on any social issue, you answer, “Yes.”⁹

Some 2025 Numbers

- 3 Congregation’s ministries (First Christian Church, Luther, First Christian Church, Perry, and Shepherd Street Christian Church, Chickasha) highlighted on the Region’s podcast.
- 150+ Oklahoma Disciples gathered for the spring Empower & Equip daylong education event at Crown Heights Christian Church in OKC.
- 13 Clergy gathered for the Northeast Area Clergy Retreat.
- 200+ children, youth, and adults gathered at church camp.
- 180+ gathered in June for the Called Regional Assembly at First Christian Church in Edmond.
- 13 Clergy gathered for the Northwest Area Clergy Retreat.
- 18 Clergy Women gathered for an October Retreat.
- 70 Women gathered for a fall Oklahoma Disciples Women’s Retreat.
- 127 youth and adults gathered for Chi Rho/CYF Fall Retreat in November.
- 5 Congregations received Reconciliation grants from our Commission on Faith in Action (First Christian Church, El Reno, Central Christian Church, Enid, First Christian Church, Guthrie, First Christian Church, Midwest City, New Covenant Christian Church, Oklahoma City).

On the horizon, there are dreams and challenges. Right now, it is easy to name the challenges¹⁰ and harder to dream God’s dream.¹¹ Yet, the kingdom of God is already in our midst. You’ve witnessed it and lived it. Oklahoma Disciples will greet both dreams and challenges as disciples of Jesus, trusting one another and trusting in God as best we can each day through prayer, presence, and prior experience, to be the church we say we are.

2026

- 90 youth and adults gathered for Chi Rho/CYF Midwinter Retreat in January.
- When You Host a Banquet . . . Regional Assembly ’26 (March 6-7)
 - Installation of our Regional Minister
 - Musical Guest: Carrie Newcomer

⁸ This paragraph is from my State of the Region report, March 7, 2026.

⁹ David Polk, ed., *You Might Be A Disciple If . . .* Chalice Press (St. Louis).

¹⁰ More dollars would underwrite bigger dreams. I’m focusing on participation (connection), though a dream is for the Region to have some funding to give back to congregations to support their ministries.

¹¹ Bryan Sirchio, “Dream God’s Dream.” Crosswind Music, 1991. [Click here to listen.](#)

- Preacher: Rev. Terri Hord Owens
- RA26 Sponsors: Phillips Theological Seminary, Disciples Church Extension Fund, New Church Ministry, Oklahoma Disciples Foundation, Texoma Camp Board, Central Area, Northeast Area, and Northwest Area

First Christian Church in Claremore used \$10,000 from an estate gift last year to purchase medical debt, relieving \$1.74 million in debt for 1,575 beneficiaries. The congregation has committed \$5,000 this year and is asking their siblings in faith in the Region to join them to raise \$20,000, which, through the organization Undue Medical Debt, could relieve up to \$3.3 million of our neighbors' medical debt. I'll ask our Regional Board to commit dollars for this project and encourage our congregations to join FCC Claremore as they take the lead, helping us remember that this is the church we say we are.

In this coming biennium, Oklahoma Disciples will focus on welcoming, celebrating, creating, staying, expanding, and mobilizing our experience of grace in our practice of Christian faith. And we will revise our Constitution and Bylaws as we align our governance with our current context and that of the General church.

Photos and stories may be found on the Oklahoma Disciples website: okdisciples.org.