

Regional Ministers Report of the Christian Church in Tennessee

Greetings in the name of Christ our Redeemer,

With 2025 now behind us and as we move through the first quarter of 2026, much has been happening across the region.

In the last quarter, we witnessed increased activity involving two of our smaller congregations that came under pressure from other reform movements attempting to “steepjack” those congregations. One attempt was unsuccessful; unfortunately, the other was not. The week before Christmas, I received a call from a member of Kirks Christian Church stating that the church had been transferred in a secret meeting. After several phone calls to the parliamentarian, members of the congregation, and representatives connected with New Church efforts, I made multiple trips in an attempt to mediate. Unfortunately, legal documents had already been signed by trustees during a private meeting, leaving little room for intervention.

This highlights an alarming trend. During my tenure in the region, this marks the sixth instance in which congregations have been affected in this way. I have had conversations with regional staff and will soon be meeting with regional elders and area representatives to assess how we can proactively reach out to smaller, more vulnerable congregations to provide guidance, support, and structural protection.

I have also been in conversation with Dr. Murray and the New Church Commission about strategies to provide greater stability for smaller congregations, particularly in areas of spiritual formation and long-range development. Additionally, I have been working with Dr. Carolyn Butler, Chair of the Leadership Development Commission, to expand training opportunities across the region so that all congregations may benefit from strengthened leadership resources.

We have also seen meaningful progress at Bethany Hills. We concluded 2025 with a 27% increase in camp usage over the previous year, resulting in both increased revenue and expanded exposure. We hired a new staff member, including a part-time Facilities Technician, to address maintenance schedules and begin resolving deferred maintenance issues.

Overall, we ended 2025 with significant positive momentum. Financially, we have made measurable progress in reducing our fiscal shortfalls. This has required considerable effort from the regional staff, and I am deeply grateful for their full engagement and commitment. However, we are now at a point where greater buy-in and relational, covenantal investment from the Board will be essential as we move forward together in ministry.

When I first came to the region, Bethany Hills carried a shortfall of over \$110,000, and the regional budget reflected a deficit of over \$100,000. Both have now been drastically reduced. For your review and transparency, I have included my year-end financial analysis.

One ongoing challenge remains: several congregations are not participating in covenantal giving. This is an issue that must be addressed as we seek to strengthen our shared ministry and sustain the work of the region.

I have included two attachments to help with discussion about strategic planning:

1. The 2025 Budget analysis
2. A breakdown of regional giving by congregation (Excel Sheet)

Grace and peace,

Rev. Kevin McNeil