

**Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
in the Pacific Southwest**

**Origin: Rev. Richie Sánchez, Regional Minister and President – CEO
GB-26-1358**



The following is provided as information to the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada.

The Pacific Southwest Region (PSWR) is spread throughout three states (*Las Vegas, Nevada, Hawaii, and Southern California*) and worships in a minimum of nine languages. We are grateful to God for our many diversities, richness in cultures, and wide range of theological perspectives. We are a beautiful tapestry of Disciples in faithfulness, hope, and radical hospitality.

Celebrations:

We celebrate/d another series of region wide camp seasons. Our *camper registrations have increased* for our Summer Youth Camp Programs (June 22 – 27, June 29 – July 4, July 6 - 11, 2025) and Winter Youth Camp Programs (February 13 - 16, 2026) all held in our beautiful Loch Leven Camp and Retreat Center (160-acres), Mentone, CA. This is in large part due to our building relationship with the Christian Church in Arizona, and it's Regional Minister, Rev. Dr. Jay Hartley, their congregations who entrust/ed us with their youth, clergy, and adult leader volunteers in these programs.

We celebrate/d our Regional Gathering, October 18, 2025, which welcomed the Office of General Minister and President's Vice-President and Chief of Staff, Rev. Yvonne Gilmore and the Church Narrative Project Facilitator / Keynote Speaker, Dr. David Anderson Hooker. Both were able to address our PSWR Disciples with stirring and inspirational sermons. We gathered under the theme: Unbreakable Hope: God's Power in Clay Jars (*Esperanza Inquebrantable* - 码量令趴公吗 坚不可摧的盼望)– 2 Corinthians 4: 7 – 9. We were blessed with vibrant worship and learning in an array of languages (English, Spanish, Korean, Mandarin, and Tagalog). There were opportunities for fellowship, mission, song, performances, and hearings of the preached Word.

Also, we celebrate/d a Clergy Retreat (*including a 2-night hotel stay*) that preceded our Regional Gathering. We created a space for some active pastors, chaplains, and a few retirees to dine, unwind, rest, build relationships, fellowship, learn, and laugh or have some fun.

An accomplishment from 2025:

In our last general board report, we discussed hopes for “trying new initiatives and partnerships with congregations, helping them to meet difficulties / challenges seemingly beyond their own limitations.”

Background, University Christian Church, San Diego, CA, and its Senior Pastor, Rev. Dr. Caleb Lines sought to serve better Latinx (English as Second Language) members and those in the surrounding community. In August 2024, our PSWR New Church Development Committee saw their vision, gladly providing care and support of a new ministry under the pastoral leadership of UCC Latinx Community Minister, Rev. Diego Salazar-Galvis. There is a core leadership group that hosts monthly events for the

community to feature local Spanish artists and musicians. It continues to grow in scope of service and mission. All the while, helping to broaden the experience/s of the congregation and local community. A larger question ensued, how might the University Christian Church, San Diego, CA, this new ministry, and our region extend radical welcome beyond the walls of the San Diego – Tijuana (San Ysidro Port of Entry) border? What might be a larger endeavor that can have an ecumenical multi-tiered approach and response to the changing border dynamics and ongoing crisis?

In February 2025, a series of prayers and conversations began with Ecumenical, General Church, Local Congregations, and partners on both sides of this border wall. All had a willingness to continue exploring ways to respond to the border crisis, helping to mobilize congregations / organizations with new partnerships and initiatives. We are glad to share, thanks to the initial efforts of Week of Compassion, the Southern California Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ, our CC DOC Pacific Southwest Region, and the congregation we were able to launch in August 2025, the Border Dignity Project (*a three-tiered approach to responding to the immigration crisis*). You can call the church for a copy of the first four months (September – December 2025) Impact Report Update of the Border Dignity Project.

A hope for 2026:

In the closing of our Regional Gathering, last year, our worship committee members (Rev. Dr. Miseon Choi, and Mrs. Yunkyong Lee Hill) invited attendees to write one hope on a ribbon so that they be joined together with others to create one large thread of hope. Someone wrote on their ribbon, may we become *“like a lotus flower rising above the chaotic environment. Being resilient, beautiful, and vibrant.”* This year, our regional board was charged with this visual and to hear the voice of Jeremiah 29:11 NRSVUE *“For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope.”*

On October 16 – 17, 2026, our region will assemble under the theme: *Defiant Hope*. We hope to encourage and call our congregations to mobilize their hopes / faith in to acts that resist or defy the chaos and crisis seemingly being cemented all around us. We will do this by living out the mandate of love, demonstrating its ability to resist, shine in beauty, and brighten its surroundings.

Challenges ahead:

As it is for many other regions, we cannot continue to overlook that western Christianity finds itself battling some dire statistics that tell stories of church decline, shrinking attendance, and giving as well as an aging (deferred maintenance) and closing of our church facilities. Not to mention, the reports of decreased student enrollment in some seminaries, added pressures from inflation in the economy, stagnant wages, and increasing insurance costs. Our regional leadership has had to intervene in a myriad of ways to prevent churches from having to close because they can't raise enough funds for their insurance. Our beloved PSWR Disciples communities are having to make hard decisions, amid attrition, waning volunteerism and commitment, limited resources for new program, and support. We are very concerned about congregations' ability to attract, competitively compensate, sustain, and retain faithful Disciples clergy to serve and lead in the areas with high and increasing living costs.

Also, unique to our cause are environmental concerns, having dealt with historic wildfires, severe droughts, more intense atmospheric river storms, devastating flooding and increased landslides. In

addition, the current government orders of immigration enforcement and raids have brought on an unimaginable level of pain, anxiety, grief, exhaustion, and has dramatically shaped a new way of being for many of our clergy and congregations and regional church.

A congregational story of strength or hope:

In our last general board report, we commemorate/d the life, work, and ministry of Rev. Dr. Francisco Ramos, our Associate Regional Minister and Director for Hispanic Ministries. He passed from this life to his eternal rest on October 9, 2024. In our collaborative work, he and his wife Rev. Soriliz Rodriguez, Senior Pastor of Casa de Refugio Christian Church, Covina, CA agreed to pastor, mentor, and coach Rev. Marco Santiago and his wife Norma Olvera who drove to the church over 140 miles each Sunday. Under their care, Rev. Marcos completed his graduate studies and became ordained. Both, he and his wife felt a call to start the Hosana Iglesia Cristiana, Vista, CA. Casa de Refugio Christian Church, Covina, CA helped to serve as an umbrella and provided some initial funding support. The core leadership team accompanied Rev. Marcos and Norma to Casa de Refugio Christian Church on Sundays for worship and development. This continued until his group was large enough to find a location in Vista, CA (70 miles away) for worship and growth.

Then, it was vice-versa Rev. Dr. Francisco Ramos and Rev. Soriliz Rodriguez traveled the 140 miles to Vista, CA helping Rev. Marcos and Norma build the congregation until it reached viability and readiness to become a church under care of our region. Our PSWR New Church Development Committee saw their vision, gladly providing care and support of this new ministry under the pastoral leadership of Rev. Marcos Santiago and his wife Norma Olvera who celebrated their first anniversary as a recognized CC DOC PSWR church under care (about 100 people were in attendance).

It takes “a village to raise a child” and courageous churches to reach beyond themselves to create / launch new churches. This ministry and work serve as a legacy to our former staff member, and his wife.

We celebrate/d the start of three more new churches and have a congregation with an interest to affiliate.

We are grateful for the work of our General Church, Units and Ministries, this General Board, our General Minister, and President, and the OGMP Staff and the College of Regional Ministers.

Please pray for our perseverance, bold courage, and defiant hope be lived out throughout our communities, congregations, clergy, and the laity. It is by God’s grace our region can provide the world with vital ministry, works, and example/s of a reign of God that is everlasting.

We are “...confident of this, that the one who began a good work in (us) will continue to complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.” - Philippians 1:6

Recommended Action

The General Board receives the report from the
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the Pacific Southwest.

Enclosures: Our ministry's most recently audited year-end financial statement (for record-keeping only)
Name and Contact information of our Regional Board Moderator, Rev. Dr. Joi Robinson (for record-keeping only)