Regional Board Approves Faith Formation Grant Process

The Regional Board has approved guidelines submitted by the Faith Formation Commission establishing the opportunity for congregations to apply for faith formation grants of up to $5,000. The grants will be funded by a portion of the proceeds from the sale of the Barbee Christian Camp. The intention is to form a partnership between congregations and the Region in significant new expressions of ministry that will enable the development of faith communities that are more effectively involved in faith formation.

These grants are intended to encourage congregations to take a fresh look at their current ministry, and then enable them to begin new ministries that will help bring renewed vitality to the congregation. Each congregation seeking a grant will be asked to adopt and show progress toward goals that will help lead the congregation to spiritual growth.

The Faith Formation Commission will administer the grant on behalf of the Region. While working on the guidelines for this new program, the Commission Chair Rebecca Sundquist stated that there were six key themes they hoped would emerge as congregations imagine their new initiatives including:

1. Growing in relationship with God.
2. Living as disciples of Jesus at home, work, in the community and in the world.
3. Developing new understandings of the Bible.
4. Participating in the life and ministries of the faith community.
5. Engaging in service and mission in the world.
6. Deepening spiritual life and practices.

Congregations will be expected to provide matching funds equaling at least 10% of the grant they request. More information about the grant, and an application may be found on the Region’s website, www.indianadisciples.org. Grants will be made in the fall and the spring each year. For more information contact Associate Regional Minister Carolyn Reed at carolyn@indianadisciples.org.

Barbee Blessing Gatherings Connect Indiana Disciples

Over 300 Indiana Disciples came together in the month of May to receive a Barbee Blessing check for their congregation in the amount of $1,000. The gatherings were hosted in local congregations throughout the state and brought together representatives of congregations along with Regional Board members and Regional staff. 120 congregations participated in this process resulting in the distribution of $120,000 to be used by each congregation for a new initiative of their choice in the area of faith formation.

At each gathering participants shared aloud their best camp memories and began to dream together about ways the essential elements of camp, including the deepening of relationship with God, the formation of community, exploration of the scriptures, and appreciation for God’s creation, might be manifest in local church settings.

At the gathering held in LaPorte, Franklin Berkey, from Central Christian Church, Elkhart, recalled being at the very first camp at Barbee in 1952 and spotted friends he met that week pictured on the Barbee Blessing poster. Congregations are reporting doing a variety of things with their blessing. Linwood Christian Church in Indianapolis is planning a Disciples heritage trip to Cane Ridge, Kentucky for middle schoolers. And congregations in South Bend, Elkhart, and Mishawaka are pooling their funds to create a shared spiritual life retreat for their members. We give thanks for the many ways this gift will be used.
The Butterfly Effect and our effort to address the immigration challenge

Actions have consequences. Even small, seemingly inconsequential, actions can influence something far greater than seems apparent. Benjamin Franklin made this point when he said:

For want of a nail the shoe was lost,
For want of a shoe the horse was lost,
For want of a horse the rider was lost,
For want of a rider the battle was lost,
For want of a battle the kingdom was lost,
And all for the want of a horseshoe nail.

Many the parent seeks to teach this lesson of sequential consequences to their children by reading them the popular children’s book If You Give a Mouse a Cookie. And scientists, particularly meteorologists, have mused on “The Butterfly Effect.” If a butterfly flaps its wings in China can that ultimately contribute to, or inhibit, the development of a typhoon in the Pacific?

That question is imbedded in chaos theory, an attempt to understand the origins and influences on complex systems. Figuring out how weather systems develop and being able to predict them is important work. Equally important is understanding how our actions as individuals impact the whole human family, often in ways far beyond our understanding.

As our group of Indiana Disciples travelled recently to Chiapas, Mexico our conversation with our mission partners there led us to wrestle with these issues. We went, in part, to understand how our church is responding to the influx of Central American immigrants who are moving into Mexico at the Guatemalan-Mexico border. What we discovered was that this wave of displaced persons is really part of a much larger social dislocation that has occurred over many years in that place.

Around 25% of the population of Chiapas are indigenous people who are Mayan descendants. Many do not speak Spanish but keep alive an older original language. Sadly, they are too often victimized and discriminated against as the “other” in that society. And, too many have been forced off their land, unable to compete as simple farmers because of the changing economic landscape that was created by the NAFTA treaty with the United States and Canada in 1994. As heavily subsidized U.S. corn poured into Mexico, prices dropped by 70% and small farmers found themselves unable to make a living. Millions have been forced to leave their farms since NAFTA.

That was hard for our group to hear and appropriate. We knew that manufacturing jobs had left Indiana for Mexico impacting our own communities. It was sobering to understand how at the same time our corn and soybean exports have impacted small communities in our neighboring country.

Great social unrest began in Chiapas in 1995. Thankfully the church, beginning then, and continuing now, has been a reconciling force, providing protection to the most vulnerable and serving as a bridge between disparate people. Our Global Ministries partners work ecumenically with street children, small farmers, refugees, indigenous people caught in the justice system, and those whose human rights are at risk. In the grand scheme of things, the numbers of persons impacted is modest. But what if it is the “butterfly effect?”

What if providing hope, dignity, and opportunity to people one by one, who are caught in a political and economic system way beyond their control, over time impacts the whole society? Who is to say?

Recently one of our pastors, based to the Disciples, horrified at the image of suffering we see day by day in the news from the US-Mexico border, wrote me to ask if our church was addressing this in any way. I was pleased to point him to the Disciples Refugee and Immigration Ministries and their work of advocacy and education for our church, Sharon Stanley-Rea serves as the Director of this office, a part of Disciples Home Missions, and it also includes Tana Liu-Beers, an immigration attorney who works as a resource to our congregations, regions, and members. In addition, Global Ministries supports the work of border ministries on our behalf in California, Arizona, and Texas. We will send a group of Indiana Disciples to witness this firsthand next spring at the Southwest Good Samaritan Ministries in Los Fresnos, Texas.

What can you do? Do something. Benjamin Franklin reminds us that failing to do a small thing can sometimes have an unforeseen and devastating effect. The opposite is also true. Doing something, however small, might create a cascade that turns the tide. So, pray, read, donate, converse, befriend, write, call, and vote. It is a start.

Blessings on you and your congregation.

Richard L. Spleth
Regional Minister

For more information on the work of Disciples Refugee and Immigration Ministries go to: https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/

Regional Calendar

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<td>August 16-17</td>
<td>Regional Board,  Allisoville Christian, Indianapolis</td>
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<td>August 17</td>
<td>Anti-Racism Pro-Reconciliation Training, Avon Christian</td>
<td>Lectionary Preaching Camp, First Christian, Bedford</td>
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<td>August 23-25</td>
<td>Women’s Retreat, Brown County State Park, Nashville, IN</td>
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<td>SEPTEMBER 7</td>
<td>Nurse and Certification Meetings</td>
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<td>September 10</td>
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<td>San Luis Potosi, Mexico Trip</td>
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<td>OCTOBER 8</td>
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<td>Commissioned Ministers Continuing Education Event, Indiana Interchurch Center</td>
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<td>Commission on Ministry Meetings</td>
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Unless otherwise indicated, meetings will be held at the Indiana Interchurch Center. All times, unless otherwise indicated, are for the Eastern Time Zone. You can also view the regional calendar by visiting our website at: http://indianadisciples.org/upcoming-events.
New Models of Women’s Ministries

At the Regional Assembly last fall, Linda Brown, incoming president of the Indiana Women’s Council, surveyed congregational women’s groups to see if they would be interested in a visit from Council representatives. Visits began this past spring to those who responded positively. As a result of those visits, the Council has collected some ideas for ministering to/women in Indiana - and sharing new models of ministry that are working for congregations.

In April, two representatives from the Council visited with a group of women from West Street Christian Church, Tipton, Indiana. While women are active in many aspects in church leadership, they also have ministries that are specific to women. One is a book sharing group and another is a hands-on mission group called “Stitchin-Knittin-Knottin.”

The Stitchin-Knittin-Knottin group is involved in many projects. Among them are the production of fleece blankets to distribute to those who need them. They also make prayer shawls as a warm and visible way to communicate to those needing prayer that they are surrounded by the warmth of God’s love. The group crochets red hats for babies born prematurely to help keep their heads warm. A large, well-stocked crafts room in the church serves as a comfortable space for the group to gather.

The book sharing group reads books about a variety of topics throughout the year. The discussion that ensues is big part of the ministry. The women who are part of this group all agreed that the books have been a vehicle for forming close, meaningful relationships with one another.

These models for women’s ministry have been meaningful for this congregation. These, and other models that we hope to uncover, can be adapted and used by women in other congregations who seek to build relationships through meaningful study and mission.

Supporting the Indiana Christian

The Indiana Christian has been in continuous publication since 1891 connecting Disciples of Christ congregations in Indiana with each other and with our mission to the world. Today the publication reaches over 5,300 households, including yours, with news about our church. The paper is supported by a portion of Disciples Mission Fund and by the annual gifts of readers who value this publication for the way it connects and energizes our congregations consistent with our mission as the Regional church. You are invited to use the enclosed envelope to make a gift, of whatever size, to undergird this communication ministry. Or go online at www.indianadisciples.org and hit the donate button to make a secure electronic gift. Thank you for your support.

MINISTRY CHANGES

Don Smothers began serving as Interim Pastor of Orestes Christian Church, Orestes, on March 10.

Lynne Kreiger began serving as Pastor of Big Flat Rock Christian Church, Rushville, on March 10.

Ellen Mitchell, Commissioned Minister and Corporate Secretary with DCEF, retired on March 29.

VJ Stover began serving as Interim Pastor of Westview Christian Church, Indianapolis on April 8.

Betsy Arnold began serving as the Transitional Minister of River of Life Christian Church, Logansport on April 25.

Pamela Pettyjohn concluded serving as Pastor of Floyds Knobs Christian Church, Floyds Knobs on April 28.

Henry Ford began serving as Pastor of Chapel Hill Christian Church, Borden on May 5.

Marge Graham retired as Minister of Music at Speedway Christian Church, Indianapolis on May 5.

Diane Zehr began serving as the Interim Minister of Tapestry Christian Church, Greenwood on May 20.

Peggy Hickman concluded serving as Interim Minister at South Side Christian Church, Kokomo on June 16.

Karen Burkley concluded serving as Pastor of Stilwell Christian Church, Stilwell on June 30, and began serving as Pastor of South Side Christian Church, Kokomo on July 15.

John Kixmiller, chaplain at St. Francis Hospital, Indianapolis, retired on June 30.

David Shephard retired as Pastor of First Christian Church, Gas City on June 30.

DEATHS

Joe Ridenour, retired Disciples minister, died on July 2.

BIRTHS

Baek Hee Kim, Pastor of Bethel Christian Church, Indianapolis and his wife, Stella Lee, welcomed a second child, Asher, on May 28.

Nate Kibler, Pastor of Central Christian Church, Lebanon and his wife, Theresa, welcomed a son, Teagan Rex on June 8.

ORDINATIONS

Sheila Spencer was ordained June 30 at Light of the World Christian Church, Indianapolis.
Geist Reflects on Puerto Rico Trip

Ourteen senior high youth and four adults from Geist Christian Church travelled to Puerto Rico from June 8-15 to support the ongoing recovery efforts following hurricanes Irma and Maria in 2017. The group stayed at Camp Morton, the Disciples of Christ campground, near Barranquitas. In addition to working on five different homes that were damaged in the hurricanes, the group had two worship experiences in Disciples of Christ congregations, visited Centro Cristiano, the Disciples of Christ administrative center in Puerto Rico, and had a day of relaxation and wonder off the east coast of the island.

Like most trips, the participants begin thinking they will be a blessing but return feeling much more blessed in return. One example is in the writing of high school student Elsi Miranda. These words are hers...

Today was our second day at this site, and probably the most fulfilling day because of the outcome of our work. For the past two days we had been painting a home which was built for a family that lost everything in hurricane Maria. Although the work we did on the house was very impactful, I was personally moved by a conversation I had with one of our contractors about his experience during Maria. He told me that he was fortunate enough to have lost nothing significant during the hurricane, but he witnessed many atrocities caused by the hurricane. He mentioned that his connection with God was weak prior to the disaster, but when a giant tree landed on his home without harming it whatsoever and instead protected it, he knew it was God looking out for him and his family. Even though the physical work we do is meaningful, stories and experiences like these are what truly give these trips a purpose. - Elsi Miranda

Our thoughts continue to be with all of those who continue the recovery process in Puerto Rico, especially the 106 congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) who continue to be a faithful witness to people across the island.

Closed Doors. Enriched Lives

On April 6, 2014, God’s Grace Christian Church opened its doors for Sunday Worship. The year prior we held weekly Bible Study: Restoring the Faith. God’s Grace Christian Church (GGCC) experienced many new church challenges: where would we meet, how would we spread the word. The first year at Westlane Middle School was good, encouraging and expensive. We found ourselves back where we started, looking for a “home.” Though many places were sought out it was to no avail. Refusing to give up we met at Glendale Library for two weeks and Pike Library for two weeks.

In August of 2015, we settled in at Donato’s Pizza on 82nd and Keystone where we worshipped for half of a year. During that time, we solidified ourselves as a church. We learned to trust the voice of God and each other. Continuing to look for a more permanent place, we kept looking.

During the Lenten Season of 2018 we began having weekly worship at Pleasant View Lutheran Church. Their pastors were young and new to the church but opened their arms and welcomed us in. That became our home for the last 3 years.

Though we were small in number we were mighty in faith and service. We partnered with Dayspring Women’s Shelter providing Cookies and Carols to the women and children during Advent and Telling the Easter Story in Lent. We learned practical ways to share the Gospel and passed out over 10,000 pencils through our Pencil Drive.

We participated in personal/team development learning how Myers-Briggs could help enrich communication with each other and in community. Children have always had a place at GGCC as our Associate Pastor Jr. led us in worship each week. In October 2018, she began leading the Call to Worship and getting our spirits ready to celebrate our Savior!

On August 5, 2018 Pastor Anita shared with the congregation that she would be moving out of state to continue following the voice of God to do ministry in Henderson, Nevada. Pastor Anita met with the church to talk about what this would mean for the church. After prayers and much consideration, the church decided to close.

On July 14, 2019, we concluded our weekly worship services. Though our doors are closed tovisible weekly gatherings, our lives have been enriched and we are encouraged to continue to let the oil run.

Tapestry Church Walks to Jerusalem

Members of Tapestry Church – A Disciples of Christ congregation, completed a virtual walk from Greenwood to Jerusalem starting on January 27, 2019 through April 14, 2019. Sixty-five enthusiastic people turned in their miles walked each week. The miles were totaled, and weekly virtual destinations were highlighted in their e-news and bulletins. Also, a visual of the journey was used each week at church showing their progress.

The final cumulative miles walked by the congregation were 11,904. Marcia McKinney, who serves as the faith community nurse for the congregation, coordinated the project. “We only needed 6,205 if we traveled the southern route,” she said. “We were able to go north of the Mediterranean Sea and add some additional side trips to some fascinating places. We arrived in Jerusalem on Palm Sunday so we could spend that last week walking with our Lord.”

Marcia has created a detailed packet of information on this project and would be happy to share it with other congregations. You may contact her at marcia@tapestry-church.net

Pentecost Offering Supports Congolese New Church Start

The annual Pentecost Offering of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) supports new churches. Half of the offering collected in Indiana stays in Indiana churches here while the other half is used by New Church Ministry to support church leaders across the U.S. and Canada with training and other resources.

One of Indiana’s newest churches is Congolese Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) led by Jean Baptiste Boongo. Jean Baptiste and his extended family relocated to Indiana from Congo where they had been active in the Disciples Church in Congo. Congolese Christian Church began at Southport Christian Church in 2017 and has recently moved to Augusta Christian Church on the northwest side of Indianapolis where much of the local Congolese community lives. The church has been growing in attendance with Sunday morning crowds around 100. The church recently requested several items to support their ministry and your Pentecost Offerings made it possible to provide a pulpit, a keyboard, and communion ware. They’ve also had chairs donated recently.

We celebrate this growing congregation!
 Seeds of Hope Growing in Northwest Indiana

First Christian Church of Highland, Indiana has maintained a community garden for seven years. The mission of the garden has long been to provide healthy produce to anyone who wants it. First Christian believes that all people should have access to healthy foods, especially vegetables.

Nearly all the produce harvested is donated to area food pantries. Last year, over 800 pounds was donated for the food insecure. In 2018, Seeds of Hope Community Garden officially became Seeds of Hope Farm and Garden, a certified USDA Farm through the EQUIP program. Seeds of Hope Farm and Garden anticipates adding a high tunnel (or maybe two) to existing gardens.

This year, the gardens have been doubled and plans for continued expansion are a part of the long-term vision of the ministry. Community plots and an educational farm-to-fork garden, with both gardening and cooking classes, are also a part of the expansion project. Seeds of Hope has also had a long-held dream to add a labyrinth to the grounds for community and congregation use. The farm and the labyrinth paired together make for a unique ministry opportunity.

Though the rains have been heavy this year and planting has been delayed, crops have been planted and regular volunteer hours are scheduled for continual maintenance of the farm. David and Brenda Michaik are the Seeds of Hope Farm and Garden managers, and Rev. Rebecca Sundquist took a course through Purdue Extension to be a certified Master Urban Farmer. Overall, this congregation is committed to healthy food sustainability, feeding the poor, and cultivating new relationships within the community and beyond.

FLOURISH! Program 2019 Update

As we celebrate the many blessings received during the first three years of the FLOURISH! Program, we look ahead with great anticipation to what blessings God has in store for the participants of the next phase. Many lives have been changed as a result of the work the pastors completed while going through the FLOURISH! Program. As we welcome our new cohort of pastors please pray for us as they begin the process of transforming their financial future as well as the financial future of the congregation they serve.

The FLOURISH! mission is to support healthy clergy who provide bold, confident leadership to build strong churches in our communities and state. The FLOURISH! Program is made possible through the generous support from partners such as the Lilly Endowment, Pension Fund of the Christian Church, and local congregations. Together we are answering the clarion call to help alleviate the economic challenges that pastors are facing in an effort to strengthen our clergy thereby strengthening our churches and communities.

Before becoming the program director of FLOURISH! 2.0, I supported its mission and vision by volunteering as a selection committee member. As the second phase of the program continues, I have made a personal commitment to give of my monetary resources to the programs as we invite new partners to share in our work.

The Word of God is the Bread of Life! This is my reason for supporting the work of FLOURISH! To encourage clergy to boldly proclaim the Gospel without hindrance of personal financial challenges. By supporting the vision and mission of FLOURISH!, we together can help strengthen our pastors to proclaim the Good News. The spirit of generosity is what helps the ministry of FLOURISH! move forward in its mission. Our hope is that through the generosity of our current partners and the addition of new partners the FLOURISH! Program will become a permanent resource for future pastors of the Christian Church in Indiana.

A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed.
Proverbs 11:25 (NIV)

FLOURISH! Second Phase Fundraising Goals

The current sustainability grant from Lilly Endowment must be matched dollar for dollar. The required matching funds are coming from congregations through their support of their pastor’s Compensation Support Grant, from in-kind donations and administrative support of the Christian Church in Indiana staff, and through donors like you!

- Congregational match for Comp Support Grants $90,000
- In-kind support from Christian Church in Indiana $127,929
- Funding goal to match remaining dollars $232,071

Auburn Concert Stirs Community

Greetings from First Christian Church in Auburn, Indiana. We recently hosted a Pentecost Sunday concert in our sanctuary for the community of Auburn. Our joy and thanksgiving in ministry is experienced in many forms—sometimes quiet and reverent, sometimes loud and stirring. This concert was the latter—an expression of vibrant music—and an exciting glimpse of our commitment to new programs for our community.

Todd Herendeen was the concert headliner. Todd grew up in the area and has a heart for Christ. He and his band did all the hard work. First Christian did what God has called us to do—provide hospitality. In fact, that is how much of our work is done. We provide space for existing programs, plug ourselves into them where we can, and build a synergy that becomes a mutual blessing. It is the niche that fits us well.

The term Pentecost is indicative of an inaugural moment in church history. So, our concert was called “The Great Christian Combustion of 2019.” It WAS exciting! We had roughly 275 people in attendance (200+ in the sanctuary and the rest in a makeshift overflow area in the lobby). We shuttled people from a neighboring parking lot to the church, because our lot was overflowing.

This concert was not only a concert. We wanted to show our community what we had to offer. Musical entertainment was the invitation to help introduce ourselves and allow others to see the ways we meld the work of the church with the life of the community.

Our new programs include a weekly addiction and support recovery group, in cooperation with the organization, A Better Life; a weekly grief support group in cooperation with the Peggy F. Murphy Grief Center in Fort Wayne, Indiana; and a weekly community Spanish class, offered by two of our congregation’s own. In addition, we made available a brochure listing our regular programs and classes and invited everyone to tour the building. We followed up with an invitation to attend our Strawberry Festival and an upcoming seminar.

Participants experienced the love of Christ through music and hospitality, and our members continued to be excited about what can be accomplished through the strength of the Lord.

The Holy Spirit set our hearts and hands ablaze on Pentecost! 
Preaching Camp Introduces Lectionary Readings for New Church Year

The new lectionary year begins on December 1, 2019, with the First Sunday in Advent, Year A. The Region of Indiana is hosting a Lectionary Preaching Camp to introduce the Gospel of Matthew, the main gospel in the new year, and to think about important ways in which passages and themes in Matthew intersect with main themes in the Christian Year with some attention to other readings. The same camp will be offered in two locations—Tuesday, October 15 at First Christian Church, Bedford and Tuesday, October 22 at First Christian Church, Rochester. Both camps start at 9:30 and end at 3:30.

The day will begin with an overview of key purposes that Matthew intended for this gospel in light of the historical situation of the time. The group will explore distinctive features of Matthew’s literary style and, most importantly, theological emphases. Particular attention will be given to the central theme of Jesus’ ministry in the First Gospel—the Realm of God. Also highlighted will be Matthew’s relationships with Judaism (especially the Pharisees) and the Roman Empire. The camp will consider two passages from each season of the Christian Year as representative of conversation among the First Gospel, the Christian Year, and today’s context. The leader will present one of those passages, and campers will work in small groups on the other. The groups will brainstorm possibilities for preaching.


The registration fee is $30, and the registration link is available at http://indianadisciples.org/upcoming-events.†

North Christian Columbus Looks To The Future

By Brian Blair, Reporter for The Republic

As the relief, refugee, and development mission fund of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Week of Compassion works with partners to alleviate suffering throughout the world. This has been our mission for 75 years, since our church first moved to support refugees displaced by war and violence. Our vision remains the same as well: a world where God’s people transform suffering into hope.

We are coordinating and working with partners, such as Church World Service; Southwest Good Samaritan Ministries; Disciples Refugee and Immigration Ministries; and the Oscar Romero Center in San Diego and Tijuana towards a more comprehensive, integrated approach to the crisis. Through these partnerships, immigrants seeking asylum will have safe places to stay while their requests are processed. They will be made aware of their rights and will have access to available resources to ensure a more humane experience.

Our ongoing work in that part of the world helps to reduce migration as we support sustainable development projects and enable communities to better provide for their own needs. This creates more opportunity for young adults who might otherwise come north. More opportunities mean families stay together. More resources stay within the community, making the community even stronger. Meaning that fewer make the dangerous journey across the desert.

When you support Week of Compassion, you support the work of our wider church at the border and in Central America, where we work to make life more sustainable. In this, we truly become the Body of Christ. Together, we answer the call to greet the stranger as though they were Jesus himself.

It is clear, as we see images and hear reports from the border, that our church is still called to respond to great suffering. With your continued support, we can provide the sanctuary that so many believe they will find one day.†

Week of Compassion: Disciples at the Border

By Rev. Vy Nguyen, Executive Director of Week of Compassion

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Indiana Disciples Return From Chiapas

The first of several planned trips to Mexico for people of the Indiana Region was completed in June. Ten Disciples from six congregations travelled to Chiapas, the southern most state in Mexico on the Guatemala border. Participants were Bob Shaw and Susan McNeely of Tapestry Church, Greenwood, Tawn Parent Spicklemire of Downey Avenue Christian Church, Maggie Harris of First Christian Church, Jeffersonville, Kristin Miller of Carmel Christian Church, Angel Rivera-Agosto, of Central Christian Church, Indianapolis, and Rachael Jacobs, Kathie Meyer, Diane Spleth, and Rick Spleth, of Allisonville Christian Church.

The trip was coordinated by Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ, with the intent to understand how our church is engaged in service and witness in this challenged part of the world. Long time Disciples mission co-worker, Elena Huegel, was our guide along with Global Ministries Area Executive Angel Rivera-Agosto.

The group stayed at INESIN, our primary partner in Chiapas. INESIN serves as an ecumenical retreat center whose mission is to foster interreligious and intercultural dialogue transcending the years of conflict that began in that region following the Zapatista uprising in 1996 and the influx of many Guatemalan refugees. INESIN offers a variety of retreats and classes to strengthen communities of indigenous people assisting them through developing food security and improved nutrition, reclaiming cultural identity and spirituality, developing sustainable agricultural practices, and fostering of gender equity.

We visited a rural community where they are engaged in a variety of such services.

Our group also interacted with a variety of other organizations that are partners with INESIN and Global Ministries. These included Melel Xojolobal, and internationally recognized organization working with street children, Si Paz, a human rights organization composed of journalists who document what is occurring in Chiapas to indigenous people and refugees, and Frayba, a group of attorneys who provide legal assistance to indigenous people and immigrants. Each of these organizations were started by the church in Chiapas.

On behalf of the Central Christian Church in Washington, Indiana we presented Elena Huegel a certificate representing the support they have pledged to give to Roots in the Ruin a program she has created to assist persons and groups to heal from the trauma of earthquakes and war.

Additionally, each participant is available to speak about their experience in local church settings as requested. To schedule a speaker for your church please contact Sandy Kincaid at 317-926-6051 or sandy@indianadisciples.org

The next trip to Mexico will be to San Luis Potosí, September 28-October 5. If you have interest in that or future trips related to the Mexico Initiative please contact the Regional office.