

The Indiana Christian



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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



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.

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



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.

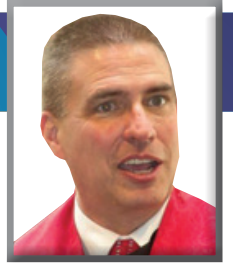
Congregations are reporting doing a variety of things with their blessing. Linwood Christian Church in Indianapolis is planning a Disciples heritage trip to Cane Ridge, Kentucky for middle schoolers. And congregations in South Bend, Elkhart, and Mishawaka are pooling their funds to create a shared spiritual life retreat for their members. We give thanks for the many ways this gift will be used. †



ABE MARTIN LODGE at BROWN COUNTY STATE PARK

See page 3 for more detailed information.

In The Spirit Richard L. Spleth, Indiana Regional Minister



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

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, new 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. †

Rick

Richard L. Spleth
Regional Minister

For more information on the work of Disciples Refugee and Immigration Ministries go to: <https://www.discipleshomemissions.org/missions-advocacy/refugee-immigration-ministries/>

What if providing hope to people, one by one, overtime impacts the whole society?

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

2019

Regional Calendar

AUGUST

August 16-17 Children Worship & Wonder Training, First Christian, Bloomington

August 17 Anti-Racism Pro-Reconciliation Training, Avon Christian

August 23-25 Women's Retreat, Brown County State Park, Nashville, IN

SEPTEMBER

September 7 Regional Board, Allisonville Christian, Indianapolis

September 10 Nurture and Certification Meetings

Sept. 25-Oct. 5 San Luis Potosi, Mexico Trip

OCTOBER

October 8 Nurture and Certification Meetings

October 11 & 19 Financial Literacy Academy

October 15 Lectionary Preaching Camp, First Christian, Bedford

October 19

Fall Commissioned Ministers Meetings
October 22 Lectionary Preaching Camp, First Christian, Rochester

NOVEMBER

November 2 Healthy Boundaries Training, Allisonville Christian, Indianapolis

November 9 Anti-Racism Pro-Reconciliation Training, Central Christian, Indianapolis

November 12 Nurture and Certification Meetings

November 14 Disciples Chaplains Dinner, Allisonville Christian, Indianapolis

November 16 Commissioned Ministers Continuing Education Event, Indiana Interchurch Center

November 21 Commission on Ministry Meetings

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>.

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**FALL ISSUE
DEADLINE
OCTOBER 22, 2019**



Indiana Disciples Women's Retreat

August 23-25, 2019

The final countdown is on for registering for the 2019 Regional Retreat for Women, "Lift EVERY Voice" on August 23-25 at the Abe Martin Lodge in Brown County State Park. The weekend retreat will feature a multicultural worship, conversations and reflection, special speaker Rev. Marilyn Williams, a 145th birthday celebration, mission opportunities, and moments to relax and enjoy nature.

On Saturday evening of the retreat, your donated items to the Turning Point women's shelter will be dedicated and presented. Our Disciples voices will be lifted as we

share an abundance of needed items for the women of Turning Point. Keep collecting and bagging the items as we prepare to gather, worship, listen, reflect, converse and engage in mission together.

Our hope is that as we gather, we will learn new ways to "hear" each other the way God hears us. Come and be part of a community of Indiana Disciples women as we lift EVERY voice to the glory of God.

Event registration is still open.

Register online at www.IndianaDisciples.org/Events. †

Lodging Information

Lodging arrangements should be made directly with **Abe Martin Lodge at (877) 563-4371**. Let them know that you are with the Indiana Disciples Women. The deadline for guaranteed room reservations has passed, but there may still be vacancy in the lodge, in the rustic cabins (surrounding the lodge) or in cabin suites (within walking distance of the lodge).



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.



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/with Disciple 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-and 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. †

Ministry Milestones

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 26.

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 Stilesville Christian Church, Stilesville 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

Fourteen 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 Cristian, 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

By Pastor Anita Cobb

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 62nd and Keystone where we worshipped for half of a year. During that time, we solidified ourselves as a



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 to directly support new 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 the 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! †

church. We learned to trust the voice of God and each other. Continuing to look for a more permanent place, we kept looking.

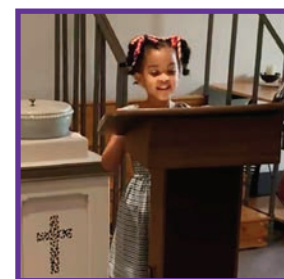
During the Lenten Season of 2016 we began having weekly worship at Pleasant View Lutheran Church. Their pastors were young and new to the church but opened their arms and welcomed us in. That became our home for the last 3 years.

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 to visible weekly gatherings, our lives have been enriched and we are encouraged to continue to let the oil run. †

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 Michalak 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

By Rev. April D. Scott, Program Director



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



Auburn Concert Stirs Community

By Tom Cupka

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 Brianna's Hope; a bi-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! †

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 †

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 leader is Ron Allen, who taught preaching and Gospels and Letters at Christian Theological Seminary for 37 years before retiring in 2019. Ron's most recent book is *I Will Tell You the Mystery: A Commentary on Preaching from the Book of Revelation* (2019).

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

At the bleakest point slightly more than a year ago, North Christian Church leaders examined whether they could continue as a congregation, because of the declining attendance and support.

The custom-designed air conditioning system in the 1964 building went out, and restoring it included a price tag of more than \$500,000 for a church averaging 25 or fewer people per week in worship attendance.

They considered gifting the world-famous Eero Saarinen building and the 13-acre Dan Kiley-landscaped grounds, all listed on the National Register of Historic Places, to another entity.

But the days of literally sweating through that severe hardship are gone. And North Christian, with renewed support from a broad range of entities, now boasts a restored air conditioning system, a leadership more resolute about the hope of the future, and a new, part-time ambassador position to help the congregation expand the facility's community use.

The Rev. Tonja Gerardy, North Christian's minister for the past three years of challenges—first on transitional basis and then officially installed—mentioned that she is now optimistic.

"There was initially a lot of hesitation about making anything public about our situation (last year) until we knew exactly what we were going to do," Gerardy

said. "There were so many possibilities and options to weigh and to consider."

The situation might have seemed especially awkward to some since North Christian had long been the home church of wealthy industrialist and community leader J. Irwin Miller and his wife, Xenia Miller, both strong North Christian financial supporters, and friends of Saarinen.

Since that financial hurdle last year, the church was able to use money from its endowment fund to pay half of the \$525,000 cost for the air conditioning. The other half was picked up by a grant from The National Fund for Sacred Places based in Philadelphia and Indiana Landmarks, the Indianapolis-based preservation agency.

"As a result of this tremendous gift, the congregation has enthusiastically committed to stay here, in this place, and not only survive, but thrive and grow," Gerardy said.

Plus, Indiana Landmarks has been assisting North Christian in various ways since 2015 with everything from fundraising to building maintenance issues. The nonprofit secured national attention for North Christian last year when it named the building to its 10 Most Endangered List, highlighting Hoosier structures at risk of significantly decaying or being lost.

Gerardy mentioned she is glad that North Christian supporters now can dedicate themselves to growing the congregation. That already is happening with regular attendance at 30 to 40 people

per week, representing a slight uptick.

"The rumor mill (in the past) caused us a lot of problems," she said, adding that some people who approached her locally somehow thought North Christian had closed its doors. "Obviously, it's not easy to grow a church some people believe no longer exists."

David Frederick, director of Sacred Places Indiana with Indiana Landmarks, reeled off a lengthy list of agencies, foundations and groups that have worked to stabilize North Christian's present and future.

"It truly has taken a village," Frederick said. "But we're not totally out of the woods yet."

He added that it's rare for his agency to have the chance to preserve a building by three great designers known worldwide: Saarinen, Kevin Roche and Dan Kiley.

"It seems that maybe nine out of 10 times when you see a promotion of Columbus and its architecture, the picture used is that of North Christian Church, given that it's so well recognized and iconic," Frederick said.

Gerardy mentioned that North Christian's congregation "always has considered itself a beacon for the community, and a hub of activity (for meetings and more)."

North Christian Church leadership is seeking ways to use its building to better serve the community, whether that comes in the form of meeting or performance space or some other function. For more information, call 812-372-1531 or visit their website at northchristianchurch.com. †

Week of Compassion: Disciples at the Border

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

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. †



SYNERGY.

By Rev. Bere Gil Soto

According to the dictionary, synergy is the cooperation of two or more organizations, substances, or agents to produce a combined effect greater than the sum of their separate effects. For the last year I have experienced the truth of this statement, as I've been pastoring the amazing people from Iglesia Hermandad Cristiana (Discípulos de Cristo).

Early in 2018, Rev. Héctor J. Hernández, a Disciples minister serving at Iglesia Nueva Creación, a Presbyterian Latino congregation, invited me to talk over a cup of coffee about ways in which we could strengthen each other's ministries and broaden our creative and missional energies.

It was then that we began to dream new dreams. God was leading Héctor in a new direction in his ministry through the National Benevolent Association, where he now serves. His pastoral role at Iglesia Nueva Creación was soon to come to an end, and neither of us wanted the creative energy and missional giftedness of Nueva Creación's community to die. At the same time, we were aware of the financial implication of keeping the communities alive. But we were hopeful, prayerful, and excited about the possibilities.

Our conversations and dreams expanded to include regional minister, Rev. Rick Spleth, and Rev. Alan Thames (Rick's counterpart for the Whitewater Valley Presbytery). Through strategic planning and prayers we all agreed that instead of having two congregations trying to do the same thing, we would unite

forces to continue doing God's work together and stronger.

We began worshipping together and getting to know each other, so by the end of the year, the two worshipping bodies had become one church, making it official on January 6th, 2019.

Iglesia Hermandad Cristiana continued partnering with John Knox Presbyterian Church (where Iglesia Nueva Creación used to meet and where Disciples minister Rev. William Almodovar serves as Youth Pastor). With the financial support of the Hispanic Ministries Lead Team of the Whitewater Valley Presbytery we were able to do wonders this summer—hosting 75 children and youth from the community at our VBS program. We also worked together with the Girls Varsity Soccer of Zionsville High School to execute a soccer summer camp in which more than 150 kids learned what it means to work as a team.

The synergy continues, as we not only share a building with Westview Christian Church, but also do mission together. We took a leap of faith together to plan our very first Back-to-School Festival where we connected with non-religious organizations, restaurants, and stores to receive enough donations to give away free backpacks and offer an afternoon of fun and food for 500 kids and their families.

Presbyterian or Disciples, English or Spanish. None of that matters. What matters is that we've become stronger together, and that together we've become true neighbors of our communities, and for that I say thanks be God. †

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.



A blog of the groups experience may be found on the Region's website at <http://indianadisciples.org/mexico-initiative/>. 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 Potosi, September 28-October 5. If you have interest in that or future trips related to the Mexico Initiative please contact the Regional office. †

