

The Indiana Christian



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Regional Assembly to go Virtual on October 2-3

The Indiana Regional Board has re-affirmed the time for our next Regional Assembly but has changed the "place." Instead of gathering at the Warren Performing Arts Center in Indianapolis as previously announced, the 2020 Regional Assembly will be virtual on the Internet. Regional Assembly Program Chair **Will Jewsbury** made the proposal to the Board and they concurred that this was the wisest choice to protect the health and safety



of our members. And it is an exciting choice as well. Some creative options are emerging that will link our members together and maintain the spirit of our Assemblies.

Disciples Women will have the opportunity to gather on Friday evening, October 2, at 6:30 p.m. EDT for a Women's Event using Zoom Meeting.

The event will provide the opportunity for Indiana women to engage in dialogue with one another and with our keynote speaker, **Rev. Lisania Martínez**, from

San Luis Potosí, México. The biennial business meeting will also occur.

On Saturday morning, October 3, the Regional Assembly will happen in three 45-minute sessions at 9:00, 10:00, and 11:00 a.m. EDT. The 9:00 a.m. session, using Zoom Webinar, will be our biennial business session led by Moderator **Julia Johnson**. This session will include consideration of some proposed changes to our Regional Constitution.

At 10:00 a.m. we will reconvene on the Zoom Meeting platform for a keynote address by Rev.

Martínez on the Assembly theme "Who is My Neighbor?" We are hoping for several hundred persons to participate in this event and all will have the opportunity for conversation in a small group following the keynote to reflect together on the Assembly theme.

At 11:00 a.m. we will

move to a worship service with **Rev. Terri Hord Owens**, General Minister and President as our preacher. This service will be streamed simultaneously on several social media platforms. **Chris**

Higgins, Director of Music at Allisonville Christian Church, is producing this web event and will be coordinating an All-Assembly Choir who will sing for the service.

There is no registration fee to participate in the Regional Assembly, but you need to register to receive the links to participate. You may register for all assembly events at this web address: <http://indianadisciples.org/regional-assembly-2020>

Don't miss the chance to be part of our Region's first ever virtual Regional Assembly. Reserve October 2 and 3 on your calendar today. †



Lisania Sustaita Martínez to be Regional Assembly Keynoter

Disciples of Christ pastor from San Luis Potosí, México will provide the keynote address for our Regional Assembly and will also serve as the speaker and special guest for the Women's Event. **Lisania Sustaita Martínez** is the pastor of a rural congregation outside of her hometown of San Luis Potosí in central México. A lifelong member of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) she is also a licensed nurse and an elementary school teacher.



Continued on page 3

Indiana Regional Logo Facemasks Available

To honor our clergy, the Indiana Regional Board recently distributed to each of our ministers a facemask that displays our Regional logo. In the letter accompanying the masks Regional Moderator **Julia Johnson** said it was a gift to say thank you to the pastors for being frontline, essential workers in this time. "May you feel the prayers and strength of the gathering of spirits when you wear this mask in your community. May you know you are not alone in the work and call of our church in Indiana."

And you, too, can have a matching mask! While supplies last you can order your own, or one for everyone in your household, for \$5 each. The reusable polyester/cotton blend masks have adjustable ear straps, nose wire, and are machine-washable. They may be ordered at

this web address: <https://wmt.suran.com/main/preview/9642> †



Ashley Sherard-Clarke



Preston Adams



Cheryl Russell



Becky Sundquist



Doug Collins



Kate Penney Howard



Nate Kibler

In The Spirit Richard L. Spleth, Indiana Regional Minister



Caring for Our Neighbor is Essential Work

Back in mid-March we were ready to send the Spring issue of the *Indiana Christian* to the printer and all of a sudden the world changed. We quickly pulled an article off the front page and dropped in a box that said "COVID-19 Coronavirus Forces Congregations to Suspend Regular Worship Patterns." That headline was truer than we could have known. Since March, the life of all of congregations and our society as a whole, has changed. Sadly, we have grieved the death of members of our congregations and waited for the recovery of others who have contracted the virus. As this issue goes to press, we do not know how long we will be dealing with this great challenge, but it is likely to be longer than we can imagine.

This is not the first time the world has dealt with a pandemic. In mid-14th century the "Plague" swept across Asia and Europe devastating the population and eventually causing the death of half the population. The Plague continued to come in waves over several centuries. It resurfaced during the time of Martin Luther in Germany in the early-16th century.

Understandably this dread disease caused people to be anxious. Johann Hess, a prominent leader of the Reformation, wrote to Luther in 1527 and asked if it was proper and permissible for

clergy to flee their city to avoid contracting the disease. Luther responded "no," that clergy were, in essence, "essential workers." He said that they needed to stay to tend their flock and provide comfort and strength to those who are ill and facing death. He said that city officials were similarly bound by their responsibilities for public health, but that others could evacuate their community to avoid exposure to the disease.

His words to his friend provide a helpful guide even today as we see how he attempted to lean on both faith and science to guide his actions. He said, "I shall ask God mercifully to protect us.



Martin Luther

Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance inflict and pollute others and so cause their death as a result of my negligence. If God should wish to take me, he will surely find me, and I have done what he

has expected of me and so I am not responsible for either my own death or the death of others. If my neighbor needs me however, I shall not avoid place or person, but will go freely as stated above. See this is such a God-fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy and does not tempt God." (from the letter addressing "Whether One May Flee from a Deadly Plague" written to Rev. Dr. Johann Hess)

Luther is essentially saying "wear a mask." One should not be negligent and inadvertently inflict harm on others. We are called to care for our neighbor by protecting their health and safety.

Now as this issue of the *Indiana Christian* goes to press our attention is drawn to our nation's original pandemic—racial injustice. The tragic death of George Floyd in Minneapolis, alongside other senseless deaths on the streets of our cities, has awakened us in a new way to the chronic illness of systemic racism in our society. We have known but have too often chosen not to acknowledge the disparity of opportunity for persons of color in our society, and the

privilege inherent to those who are white. Perhaps now, in this strangest of years, there is an opportunity to face this challenge and begin to rectify and dismantle the injustice that is built into our society, and too often built into our bones.

Addressing racism is essential work and from it no one of us has permission to flee. Wrestling with this

issue requires our deliberate attention and engagement. When the Regional Board met in June we wrote together a statement on racism. You can read it in this issue on the opposite page. I think writing that piece was some of the hardest and best work our Board has ever done. It required that we listen closely to one another and choose our words with care. It compelled us to be responsive to our neighbor, both those sitting by our side and anonymous ones in our life whose names we have failed to learn.

No one of us will ever forget this year and the confluence of events that have changed how we live. There is no doubt

that 2020 will be remembered with deep sighs in the years to come. But 20/20 is also the standard we use for good vision. I pray that as we move from this year into the next we are able to claim that we have seen ourselves and our world in a fresh way and begun to change our patterns of living to assure the health, safety, and opportunity of our neighbor. †

Blessings on you and your congregation,

Rick

Richard L. Spleth
Regional Minister

2020 Regional Calendar

AUGUST

- August 15** Regional Board Meeting
- August 24** Assembly Virtual Choir Application Deadline
- August 29** Anti-Racism Pro-Reconciliation Training

SEPTEMBER

- September 12** Commissioned Ministers Interviews
- September 19** Regional Board Meeting
- September 23** Registration Deadline for Regional Assembly

OCTOBER

- October 2** Regional Assembly Women's Event
- October 2** Anti-Racism Pro-Reconciliation Training
- October 3** Indiana Regional Assembly
- October 9 & 10** Financial Literacy Academy

NOVEMBER

- November 7** Healthy Boundaries Training

*All events are virtual, unless indicated otherwise

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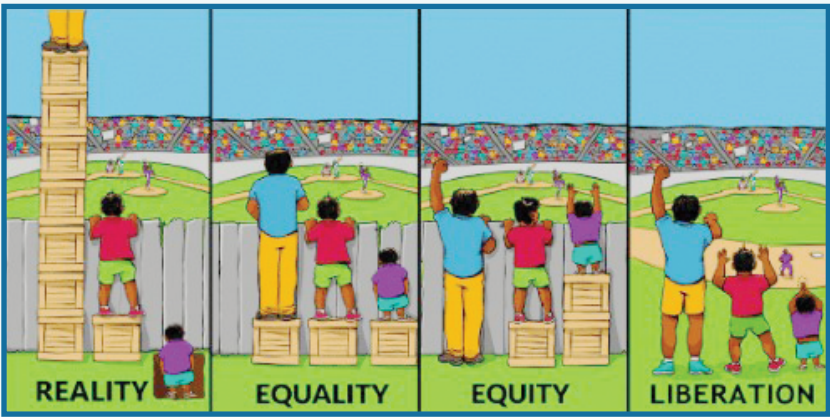
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FALL ISSUE
DEADLINE
OCTOBER 22, 2020





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Indiana Regional Board Statement on Racism

As leaders of the Christian Church in Indiana, and people of faith, we are reminded to “speak out on behalf of the voiceless, and for the rights of all who are vulnerable.” (Proverbs 31:8 CEB) We lift our hearts in grief at the slaying of George Floyd on the streets of Minneapolis, an act of violence inflicted on him not only by four police officers but a society that devalued his personhood due to his race.

We lament

- that his name is added to far too many others whose lives have been unjustly taken, including most recently Ahmaud Arbery in Georgia, and Breonna Taylor in Louisville.
- that our nation still allows inequity and discrimination to reign unchecked.
- that we have offered only faint support to the oppressed among us, ignoring Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s 1963 plea to the church from his Birmingham jail cell.

We pray

- for the families who have lost their loved ones.
- for those who, like Rachel of the Bible, find themselves weeping inconsolably.
- for those throughout our society who fear for their personal safety, wondering if they or their loved ones will arrive home safely each day.

We confess

- that some of us have enjoyed privilege and power at the expense of others.
- that we have failed to listen to the stories of those who have experienced racial violence.

- that we have failed to speak, and our silence has left siblings of color without allies as they are denied the justice and opportunity our nation ostensibly promises to all.

We commit

- to expanding our anti-racism training beyond our clergy to congregational members of every age.
- to support the efforts of groups seeking to raise the consciousness of our nation, including the Poor People's Campaign led by Disciples minister Rev. William Barber.
- to holding public officials accountable for the abuse of power, supporting those who offer peaceful protest with our presence, our voices, and our votes.

We invite

We invite the ministers and members of our congregations to join us in humble reflection and committed action, to dismantle the structures of racism as they exist within our church and our nation,

- until all are as angry about injustice as those who have suffered its effect so long,
- until seats at the table move beyond tokenism and all God's people are equally valued, and
- until God's justice rolls down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

*Regional Board of the Christian Church in Indiana
June 6, 2020*

“Lisa” is one of the first Disciples women ordained among the Mexican Disciples, alongside Bere Gil Soto, her hometown friend, who now serves Iglesia Hermandad Christiana in Indianapolis. Lisa obtained her Master of Divinity degree at the Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico and earned the Dean's Medal for her essay on “Who's Pastoring the Pastor?” which addressed holistic and mental health concerns for clergy.

Lisa is interested in the way we can reread the Bible from different perspectives, so we can find the importance of validating and celebrating diversity in life, social justice and environmental issues such as animal rights, climate change, and redemption of nature; hoping these issues can turn into common language in church and school. She uses a blend of music, art, and Latin American liberation theology in her preaching and teaching. She says, “I want to preach freedom, relief, mental health and tenderness as much as I preached structures and blind morality when I was a teenager.”

And on the side, she is developing a plant nursery at her home and managing the project through social media as a way of interesting people in gardening as a tool for therapy and spirituality. Though she describes herself as an “introvert” you will experience her as a woman of power and conviction. We invite you to meet her at our next Regional Assembly as she helps us think about “Who is My Neighbor?” †

Ministry Milestones

MINISTRY CHANGES

Deb Strock-Kuss began serving as Associate Minister at Geist Christian Church, Promise Road campus, Fishers on March 15

Ashli Cartwright-Peak retired from ministry at Oak Grove Christian Church, Monticello on March 15

Lanny Lawler began serving as Interim Minister at First Christian Church, Marion on April 1

Will Jewsbury concluded serving as Interim Pastor of Central Christian Church, New Albany on April 26

Deborah Daniels Calhoun retired from ministry at Augusta Christian Church, Indianapolis on May 26

Paul Snyder began serving as Senior Pastor of Central Christian Church, New Albany on April 27

Kelly Nichols began serving as Pastor at Westview Christian Church, Indianapolis on May 18

VJ Stover concluded as Interim Minister at Westview Christian Church, Indianapolis on May 22

Monique Crain Spells concluded her ministry as Director of Recruitment and Admissions at Christian Theological Seminary on June 5

Jessica Singleton concluded as Pastor Southside Christian Church, South Bend on June 14. She continues her chaplaincy at Franciscan Health, Michigan City

Rick Abbott began serving as Interim Pastor at Oak Grove Christian Church, Monticello on June 14

John Williams retired from ministry as Senior Minister at Federated Church, West Lafayette on June 28

Linda McKiernan-Allen retired from ministry as Senior Minister at West Street Christian Church, Tipton on June 30

VJ Stover began serving as Interim Senior Minister at West Street Christian Church, Tipton on July 1

Alecia Gross began serving as pastor at St. Paul Christian Church, St. Paul on July 5

MARRIAGES

Frank Everett, Senior Pastor at Greenfield Christian Church, Greenfield, and Nedra Koenig were joined in marriage on Friday, May 15

DEATHS

Herbert Gillen, retired Disciples minister and former co-manager of the Barbee Christian Camp, died on May 7 †

An Uncharted Journey

By Rev. Kate Penney Howard, Senior Pastor, North Christian Church, Fort Wayne

I dread moving. All the boxes and newspaper. And I am always misplacing the tape. Unpacking is worse. The cabinets are too small for your cookie sheets, and that special piece of furniture doesn't fit through the door or fit in its space.

When I answered the call to North Christian Church, Fort Wayne, I never imagined that soon after I would unpack, the congregation would begin a deliberate and difficult process to discern their future. After months of deliberation, we realized that if the visible ministry of this congregation was to continue, then it must become a church on the move. So, we contacted a realtor and began to dwell in the Exodus story, because we knew we had some wandering to do.

We spent a year worshipping in a wine-and-canvas space. On our first day, some people felt the space was too secular, on the last day, they saw the same space as sacred with paintings of creation, butterflies, rainbows, crosses, and lions.

That move changed our understanding of sacred space. Then we spent a year and a half worshipping in another church's building. That move convinced us that we wanted to be a neighborhood church and do community ministry. We were a participant in the Center for Congregations Community Ministry Grant program and made careful plans for 2020 on how we were going to become a community-focused congregation.

We moved again in November of 2019, to nest with a congregation in a neighborhood where there was plenty of ministry to be done.

At the dawn of 2020, we began to make plans for all the training and events that we were going to do: a befriender ministry (listening support), a study to help us understand childhood trauma, a seminar on understanding poverty,



and Anti-Racism/Pro-Reconciliation training. We virtually participated in Hudson, Wisconsin for the Befriender Leader training, which we were able to do thanks to the Indiana Region's Faith Formation grant.

And you know what happened next. Maybe you felt like I did on March 12 when Rick Spleth sent out his message, "I want to recommend that our churches consider not holding their regular worship service this Sunday, and possibly future Sundays."

The first question I asked in prayer was, "would it be safe in two weeks?" No, it would not. Almost everyone in our congregation was in a high-risk group, or in a household with someone who was at high-risk. I couldn't imagine putting any one of those people at risk. And, still, it didn't seem like things would be resolved in a few weeks, or even a few months.

I didn't know what to do but I knew I had to do something, so we suspended all in-person gatherings and I figured out how to use my phone camera and developed a daily devotional for those not on Facebook.

Something happened on that day that made me realize that this wasn't a blip. It was the beginning of the shift that Phyllis Tickle was talking about in her book: *Great Emergence: How Christianity Is Changing and Why.*

I dove into scripture and prayer. When Jesus healed on the Sabbath, he taught us that preserving life was more important than following ordinances. When Paul wrote to the congregation at Corinth, he taught us that, "those members of the body which seem too feeble are necessary." How

could some of us gather, but tell others that they shouldn't come? Which one of us is not irreplaceable? Jesus challenges us to be wise, saying, "All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify."

On Palm Sunday, our congregation had a full worship service on Facebook live and a Zoom coffee hour. It was that Sunday that we unofficially came to consensus that we would suspend in-person worship indefinitely.

Because we were locked down, we were able to accomplish our week-long Befriender Ministry Leader training and roll out our first training series. We have plans to begin our study on childhood trauma and Anti-Racism/Pro-Reconciliation training on Zoom, thanks to a grant from the Indiana Region's Unity & Witness Commission.

Here's the amazing thing: in this virtual shift, we moved out of a building again. And in our distancing, we have become closer. We pray together and study scripture and reflect upon it together every day. Those who use Facebook call those who have the printed devotional and they chat and check in. Our church board decided that they'd likely meet by Zoom after the pandemic wanes.

We do miss each other. We miss singing in harmony, and we miss coordinating carry-in dishes. We miss hugging and shaking hands. We've had to learn how to do things in a new way. We've learned our neighbors' names (at a good social distance).

I feel we are on an uncharted journey. Nobody knows where we are going, or what it will be like when we get there. This journey reminds me of my great-grandfather's journey in 1907. He boarded a ship in Scotland, and every day of that journey, he journaled in his diary which included crossed-off appointments for things that were happening on another continent.

When I realized that we are on a journey, too, I went to my calendar and deleted

.....

BEECHWOOD CHRISTIAN CHURCH

BACK "IN" THE PEWS

SIMPLE STEPS FOR EVERYONE'S SAFETY

.....

STAGE 1 OF BACK ON TRACK IN

GATHERINGS OF 10 OR FEWER

At this stage we will continue to do "no contact" Drive-In church services. We will not serve communion or allow anyone to leave their vehicles. We will continue to broadcast on Facebook Live.

STAGE 2 OF BACK ON TRACK IN

GATHERING OF 25 OR FEWER

At this stage we will continue to do Drive-In church BUT we will add communion in pre-prepared packages delivered to vehicles with gloves and masks. Folks are welcome to converse between cars but we will still ask you to remain in your vehicle. We will continue to broadcast live on Facebook.

STAGE 3 OF BACK ON TRACK IN

GATHERINGS OF 100 OR FEWER

At this stage we will continue to hold services outside. People will be encouraged to bring lawn chairs, we will sing, have communion, and possibly have Elders and Deacons serve at the Table. Social Distancing will be required. The board will begin to evaluate how to move back into the sanctuary. We will continue to broadcast on Facebook.

STAGE 4 OF BACK ON TRACK IN

GATHERINGS OF 250 OR FEWER

At this stage we MAY begin to do hybrid worship or multiple worship services knowing that we can (and will) default back to outdoor worship. We will continue to broadcast on Facebook and 100.7FM for those who don't feel safe to come. We will have volunteers in place for seating and cleaning. This MAY NOT look and feel like "regular" worship.

STAGE 5 OF BACK ON TRACK IN

GATHERINGS OF 250+

We will move very cautiously into these final stages. It is imperative that we act conservatively and with the health and safety of everyone in mind. We are having lots of success with outdoor worship and have no reason to rush!

Beechwood Christian Church

Virtual Worship @BeechwoodChristianChurchDOC

Drive-In church Sundays at 10:30am

French Lick, IN

www.frenchlickdisciples.com

Created by Rev. Ashley Sherard-Clarke, pastor of Beechwood Christian Church, French Lick.

everything from "the before time," because I really do feel that we will land in a new place where congregational life and community ministry will be different, and I don't want my memory of the before time to be a barrier in the new time.

We will get through this. And when it is safe, we will gather and we will sing and hug and laugh. We will tell our stories, and we will unpack. †

Thrive Faith Communities Project Offers Opportunity For Energy Savings

Hoosier Interfaith Power and Light, a mission partner of the Christian Church in Indiana, has announced a new program to help Indiana congregations reduce their energy usage and save money for missions. Called the Thrive Faith Communities Project, the program invites congregations throughout the state to care for creation by reducing the carbon emissions attributable to energy usage in our buildings.

Hoosier Interfaith Power and Light has secured an intern from the Environmental and Sustainability Program at IU to coordinate the program. It is hoped to enlist 100 congregations across the state in an educational and coaching process to help each church achieve significant energy reductions, with anticipation that congregations can achieve a 25% reduction in their energy costs within three years.

Participating congregations will need to form a team to connect with the program. The cost to participate is \$200 per year plus a pledge of 10% of the energy savings to Hoosier Interfaith Power and Light.

You can find out more about the program, and enroll your congregation at <https://hoosieripl.org/thriving-faith-communities/>. For more information contact Terry Bradbury a member of Central Christian Church, Indianapolis, at tbradbury48@gmail.com †



Commission on Faith Formation Awards Three Grants This Spring

By Rev. Rebecca Sundquist, Commission on Faith Formation

The Commission on Faith Formation approved and awarded three applications for the Faith Formation Designated Fund in May. The following congregations are using these funds to develop and strengthen faith formation in their communities:

- **Countryside Christian Church**
(Winchester, IN) - Labyrinth initiative (\$5000)
- **First Christian Church**
(Bedford, IN) - Children's Worship & Wonder initiative (\$5000)
- **Hynsdale Christian Church**
(Martinsville, IN) - Community outreach ministry (\$1000)

The Commission congratulates these congregations on these new ministry initiatives and pray God's blessings upon them as they seek to create these new and meaningful opportunities in faith formation.

If your congregation is interested in learning more about the faith formation grant guidelines, you are encouraged to look them over on the Faith Formation webpage at: <http://indianadisciples.org/commissions/commission-on-faith-formation/indianadisciples.org>. The deadline for fall applications is September 10.

In this time of creativity and innovation, may the Holy Spirit bless you with unique ideas for faith formation in your congregation, community and beyond. †

On Liberation

By Rev. Doug Collins, Associate Pastor, Allisonville Christian Church, Indianapolis

As June has now come and gone in this COVID-world, I would be lying if I said I was not a bit bummed that the Indy Pride fest (among many other things) didn't happen. In years past, it has been a joy to join Allisonville Christian Church to make space at this special event for God's LGBTQ+ children and allies to celebrate who they are and stand in solidarity against hatred and bigotry. It's a blessing to be a part of the Disciples. This church proclaims that all of God's children are welcome, including those within the LGBTQ+ community, which is still an important message for us as a Christian community to convey to the world.

As our nation continues to grapple with the deep systems of racism on which our laws and governance was built, I can't help but notice the overlap between the message of Black Lives Matter and the importance of being allies to our LGBTQ+ siblings. Though sexuality and race are different issues and no doubt have their own nuanced challenges, the underlying message through it all is that the pain of the marginalized is not only an injustice which must be addressed for the sake of those whose lives depend on it, but that not doing so truly is to the detriment of the healing and liberation of all God's children.

I know many congregations in our region are beginning to explore more deeply the sin of white supremacy and how it is that we can be anti-racist, as an institution, and as individuals. A book study I have started at Allisonville, "Me and White Supremacy" written by Layla F. Saad, is centered around a famous quote by scholar and activist Lilla Watson; "If you have come here to help me

you are wasting your time, but if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."

As a faithful people who believe and trust in God, let me assure you that Pride has happened and will continue to happen every time a child is told that they are loved, no matter what. As folks who know Jesus as a friend to us and who are discerning how to follow the Holy Spirit, let me assure you that taking the time to learn more about the privileges we possess as individuals and as a collective will help us better understand what it is we must do to make life better for Black individuals, for indigenous persons and for other communities of color who have far too long borne the brunt of injustice after injustice.

The Good News, friends, is also the challenging news. God loves all of his children, so ours is the task to continue doing the work to make manifest a world in which all are liberated to be all of who we are made to be, no apologies necessary. It will be challenging and sometimes it will make us wonder if things will ever change, but I know that with the agency of humans and the grace of God's help, liberation for all is possible. So together, let us boldly ask the questions we have been hesitant to ask. Together, let us look within and be honest about our own prejudices and turn to our community for help when we need guidance and understanding.

Take pride in who God made you to be. We were made for healing! †



On Truth

By Rev. Toni Colbert, Light of the World Christian Church, (D.Min. Student, Christian Theological Seminary)

Have you heard about the four college friends who decided to take a road trip instead of study for an upcoming final exam? The friends partied so hard that they completely missed taking the final. The friends decided to concoct an elaborate story in order that their professor would allow them an opportunity to take the missed exam. All agreed to say their car had a flat tire and they did not have a spare. The friends also added that no one was available on the road to assist them.

The professor granted them an opportunity to take the exam. What they had not counted on was the professor placing each one in separate rooms to take the exam. The essay question on the first page was easy and worth five points. The college friends were excited because they were able to answer the first question correctly and earned five points. However, upon turning to the second page the essay question was worth 95 points and their excitement turned to dread. The question simply read, "Which tire on your car was flat?" (adapted from Michael Shannon's illustration on preaching.com)

Jesus spoke often on issues of truth. The Apostle Paul also emphasized Christians "doing" truth. Truth makes us squirm out of our comfort zone. Truth also sets us free from the preoccupation of lies.

Considering the good and not-so-good being cast on society today where do you stand when it comes to truth? Has the ground shifted beneath your feet in any way? Has your voice missed an opportunity to speak out against powers of unfair social systems? As my former pastor, Bishop Tom Benjamin, Jr., says when he closes his radio program, "Think about it."

As a Christian I ask today which tire on your vehicle is flat? What unjust system have you been supporting? How can you shift this narrative towards truth and life giving? In the spirit of coming together it is not too late for the church of Jesus Christ to assist in turning pain and anguish around. †



And Who is My Sister?

By Rev. Maribeth Westerfield, Regional Coordinator for Women's Ministries

Women of the Christian Church in Indiana will gather virtually at the Regional Assembly in October to reflect upon this question: "And Who is My Sister?" In so doing, we join the reflection of the assembly, "Who is My Neighbor?" Our focus will be more specifically related to neighbors who are our sisters in Christ.



Leading us in those reflections will be Rev. **Lisania Martínez**; pastor of Iglesia Cristiana de Porvenir; a congregation in central México near San Luis Potosí. Reverend Martínez will be addressing the group by video, followed by a "live" question and answer session moderated by **Linda Brown**, President of the Indiana Women's Council.

The event, scheduled for Friday evening, October 2, will begin at 6:30 p.m. (Eastern Time). There will also be a brief business meeting and recognition of outgoing leadership and installation of new leaders elected during the business session.

Although we will not share a dinner together, attendees are invited to share their recipes or recipes of others from around the Region. The theme is "potluck" dishes. Recipes will be posted on the Disciple Women in Indiana Facebook page. Look for additional information and instructions through Regional communications.

Rev. Martínez comes from a long line of Disciples in México. Her parents are lay pastors, and 18 others in her extended family are serving or have served as pastors. Lisania has served on the Global Ministries Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ. She has also been an active leader on the Joint Table (Mesa Conjunta), a roundtable for dialogue and mission development among the various expressions of the Christian Church and United Church of Christ congregations in México.

A delegation of Indiana Disciples met Lisania during a pilgrimage to San Luis Potosí last fall. Cheryl Russell, a member of that delegation and pastor of First Christian Church, Noblesville, wrote of that experience: "Pastor Lisania impressed each of us with her thoughtful and powerful sermon. She preached in both English and Spanish which was not only impressive but also a tremendous act of hospitality."

Join us at Assembly for a fun, informative and spirit-filled event when Indiana women gather virtually on October 2. †

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. †



"FLOURISH!" – verb: grow or develop in a healthy or vigorous way.
FLOURISH! is both an action and a result that comes from laying the right foundation. To "flourish" is our desire for every clergy person serving the Christian Church in Indiana. It is also God's desire for us as well.

FLOURISH! 2.0 2020 Update

By Rev. April Scott, FLOURISH! Program Director

As we navigate through the current challenges of COVID-19 and social unrest in communities across the United States and around the world, we must not give up hope!

How do we FLOURISH! in such uncertain times where we must take precautions to social distance ourselves from one another and wear a mask to hamper any potential spread of the COVID-19 virus?

How do we support the call of unity by the disenfranchised?

How do we comfort the hearts of those who are dealing with grief and loss?

How do we operate as the church when the doors of our churches are closed and how does the FLOURISH! Program provide relief to our clergy who are faced with the burden of wrestling with these questions?

These are some of the questions that our clergy and I, as the program director of FLOURISH!, must wrestle with. We must imagine new ways of being the church for such a time as this.

I am reminded of Psalm 92:12 which says, "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree." What is so significant about a palm tree and why does the psalmist use this particular tree as a metaphor to describe the flourishing of the righteous? In my research, I found that palm trees have adapted to withstand stormy weather. When strong storms approach the palm tree, the tree bends and sways as if it were dancing with the strong winds. It does not break, nor does it weaken. In fact, it gets stronger as its roots stretch deep into the foundation that it is planted in! Perhaps this is the message of hope from the psalmist for us today! That when the storms of life are raging, we must adapt, stretch, and deepen our relationship with God and others to FLOURISH!

The FLOURISH! Program is doing just that. We are adapting, stretching, and deepening our relationship with our supporters to help our pastors alleviate economic challenges. When our clergy's concerns about economic challenges are alleviated, they have more energy to devote to the church and the larger community. In May, thirteen new pastors began the formal education portion of the FLOURISH! Program through the Financial Literacy Academy, adapted to an E-Learning model. This allowed the program to stay on schedule to graduate the first cohort of grantees of FLOURISH! 2.0 by the end of 2020. We held our first ever Financial Literacy Academy webinar event with presenter Peter Dunn, aka Pete the Planner. For this webinar, we had an attendance of more than 65 people. The following day, we also hosted a Zoom presentation given by Rev. Dr. Todd Adams, President of the Pension Fund. The feedback we received from both events was very positive and encouraging. October's Financial Literacy Academy will again be virtual. The Peer Group meetings of small groups of grantees will also be held via Zoom as a COVID-19 precaution.

Later this year, we will be hosting several virtual appreciation events for our supporters and for those who would like to become supporters of FLOURISH! It is my hope and prayer that you would consider making a financial investment in the work of FLOURISH! so that we can honor our commitment to the Lilly Endowment to match the funds that they granted the program. Your gifts also sustain this vital resource that helps Indiana Disciples Pastors provide bold, confident leadership to build strong churches in our community and the world. We need your prayers and your financial commitment to help us FLOURISH! Together we can weather the storms of life!! May God bless you and may God's face shine upon you and remember "The righteous shall FLOURISH! like a palm tree"! †

Creating a Trauma-Informed Church

By Rev. Amie Vanderford, The LabOratory Church, www.TheLabOratoryChurch.org

When my husband and I dreamed of starting a trauma-informed church, we could not have anticipated that our start would coincide with a massive Global Pandemic. In our original vision, we saw the need for this type of mental health church based both upon our own personal experiences of trauma and spiritual damage from being excluded and/or harmed by establishment churches, along with the damage caused by the systems of this country, systems based in patriarchy, white supremacy, individualism, competition, and choosing profit over people.

Our country is in a deep level of pain for the majority of people, and we believe that the roots of that pain stem from being divided based upon harmful labels and systems of privilege, that benefit only a few. It is not safe to be different from what our cultural narratives define as normal, which is white, cis-gender, heterosexual, preferably male if in position of leadership, capitalism-loving, nationalistic, polite, and nonconfrontational.

We are taught that speaking the truth is offensive, speaking our pain is attention-seeking and disruptive, and that daring to question the so-called free ideology of this country is anti-patriotic. These values actively conflict with the ability to heal in relationship with other people, as it creates a culture of mistrust and actively pits folks against one another.



During one of LabOratory's online worship services - Rev. Amie Vanderford and husband Thaddeus Shelton, Jr., Co-founder and Minister of Mental Health

of the community, we practice what we preach through attending regular therapy along with questioning our own internal biases while listening to the experiences of others.

The first part of establishing community safety came with writing our Statement of Values. These clearly lay out what we believe, values necessary for healing, and specifically state that we appreciate God's children in all our many and beautifully diverse forms. We also detailed how we as a community plan to work through conflict, and how we hold one another accountable. We define 'sin' as those acts that harm/break relationship with ourselves, others, and God, and we believe in both grace with accountability, and mercy with restorative justice. Cheap grace is not safe, nor is condemnation without the possibility of redemption useful to the health of the larger community.

It is difficult and uncomfortable work to continually examine ourselves and determine what is good for the larger community, but this is the holy work that God calls the Body to do. We are thankful for the growing body of people who want to be a part of the healing in our damaged world. †



Enjoying some time in the new Emerson Avenue Community Garden

In order to heal from trauma, there are two stages that deal with individual healing, yet the third stage deals with healing in relationship with others. While individual therapy is best suited to deal with the first two stages, we believe the church has the perfect opportunity to facilitate and encourage the third stage of healing.

We believe that the first and foremost step in creating a trauma-informed and mental health-focused community is to teach appropriate self-care for individuals while also establishing safety for all people who participate. As leaders

"I Don't Want Any Birthday Gifts!"

By Lou Ann Millett, West Street Christian Church, Tipton

It isn't very often that parents hear their twelve-year-old child declare, "I don't want any birthday gifts." Yet, that was exactly what Ethan Sizelove, a 6th grader at Tipton Middle School, told his parents.

Ethan and his mother and stepfather, Andrea and Andy Wesner, attend West Street Christian Church in Tipton,

Indiana. Ethan is part of a multi-generational line of West Street Disciples, including grandmother Nancy Silvey and great-grandparents, Bob and Evelyn Wesner.

Though Ethan insisted at his last birthday that "he had too many toys already," he, nevertheless, did have a request. He asked his family, friends, and his community

in Tipton County to donate gently used or new stuffed animals. He wanted to give them to first responders to distribute to children who would experience trauma.

Ethan was keenly aware that some kids have bad experiences like car accidents, fires, illnesses, and domestic violence because he comes from a family of



Beechwood Builds Accessible Playground for All

By Ashley Sherard-Clarke, Pastor
Beechwood Christian Church, French Lick, IN

Beechwood Christian Church members, French Lick, Indiana, haven't let the pandemic slow us down. We began fundraising almost a year ago with the prayer that we would be able to provide an accessible playground for all in our community. We were humbled by the support we received from our community and Disciples congregations from all over the Indiana Region. Just recently, the remaining parts of our beautiful new playground, including a wheelchair swing, were installed. We look forward to the time when we can dedicate and officially open it to the public. †

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firefighters and nurses. He had heard stories and knew that stuffed animals could give comfort.

Ethan's idea was spread by friends and family and on social media. Collection boxes were placed around Tipton. People generously filled the boxes—and in time—filled the family's livingroom. Ethan's mom set an end date for collecting and when that day arrived there was "bearly" space for humans.

Ethan sorted the animals and arranged to donate them all over Tipton County. Each of the Township Volunteer Fire Departments, along with fire departments in the county received animals. Donations were also given



to the Tipton County Sheriff Department, the Tipton City Police, and the Department of Child Services. He even remembered the children who were a part of Jubilee Christmas at his church.

Ethan is thankful for all who helped him to help others. It was a birthday wish come true. Stay tuned. Ethan is already thinking about his thirteenth birthday wish. †