

# The Indiana Christian



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## Regional Search Committee Update

**T**he search for the next Indiana Regional Minister is well underway with the search committee comprised of eight members: Matt Rosine (chair), Raquel Collazo, Tonja Gerardy, Luis Gierbolini, Monique Crain Spells, Nathan Kibler, Baek Hee Kim, and Sandy Kincaid. This past winter the committee was oriented to the Regional Search and Call process under the guidance and experience of Rev. Teresa Dulyea-Parker of the Christian Church in Illinois/Wisconsin and Michigan. As part of the process, committee members also participated in a unit of

Anti-Racism training with Rev. Nathan Hill, Senior Minister at University Christian Church, Hyattsville, Maryland. One of the first tasks in the search process is to seek help from pastors and lay persons across Indiana. Committee members hosted listening sessions (via Zoom) to help identify priorities and dreams for our Region and leadership qualities needed to shape our future. Those unable to attend

the sessions contributed ideas through an online survey. Feedback from the region was valuable in helping the committee glean reoccurring ideas that were adapted to construct a Regional Profile and Position Description. The position was announced in March through Indiana Region and General Disciples of Christ channels. Candidates are asked to send a letter of interest by April 15, 2023

to [mrosine@ccf.disciples.org](mailto:mrosine@ccf.disciples.org). They should also have a current profile and reference letters on file through the Search and Call system of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). In accordance with the Executive Search Process, candidates' search and call paperwork and written essay responses are submitted to an independent screener to be evaluated and categorized.

The screener will send a report to the Search Committee in preparation for interviews to be conducted this summer. The committee is grateful for your participation and prayers during this search process. You can stay informed of the Region's search for a new Regional Minister at [www.indianadisciples.org/regional-minister-search](http://www.indianadisciples.org/regional-minister-search) †



### Easter Offering Extends Our Witness

**T**he Easter Special Offering supports ministries that help Disciples witness to that good news. General ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) witness to God's love through:

- Relationships with global mission partners serving in communities impacted by climate change.
- Health and social service ministries that meet basic needs for neighbors.
- Mental health resources for pastors and congregations.
- New congregations worshipping in a variety of languages and worship styles.
- Leadership development programs that nurture new leaders in the church and the world.
- Stewardship education for congregations to grow in their practice of generosity.
- Opportunities like the General Assembly, where the church can gather for worshipful work.
- Support for hospital and military chaplains serving around the world.
- And so much more.

Please give generously to the Easter Offering in your congregation on April 2 and 9, or make a gift at [disciplesmissionfund.org/give](http://disciplesmissionfund.org/give). †

### Krista Hunter is New Ministry Associate

**K**rista Hunter began January 1 as our newest Regional staff member. Krista succeeds Sandy Kincaid who retired at the end of last year, and like Sandy, will coordinate our communications, event registrations, and provide support to the Regional Board.



Krista has attended a Disciples congregation since the age of three. She is the wife of Rev. Kyle Hunter, Senior Minister at Speedway Christian Church. Krista has a B.S. in General Studies from IUPUI. She served as a mortgage loan officer for a credit union for several years, and more recently has been a stay-at-home mom for her and Kyle's three children: Aubrey, Cody & Lucile. She is excited to join the Regional Staff as a Ministry Associate, and we are excited to have her with us. †

You can reach her at [krista@indianadisciples.org](mailto:krista@indianadisciples.org) or 317-926-6051 ext. 30

### First Christian Church Bedford invites you to the

### CAMP DEDICATION

May 7, 2023

2:00 pm – 4:00 pm (Eastern)

Bedford Camp & Conference Center

33 Church Camp Rd., Bedford, IN 47421

Help us dedicate the new pool and camp remodeling!

In The Spirit Richard L. Spleth, Indiana Regional Minister



You Have the Power to Influence Others and Shape the Community in Which You live

The cities and towns of Indiana are big on tourism and conventions. In 2019, pre-pandemic, it is estimated that tourism contributed \$9.6 billion dollars to our state's economy. That fell off, obviously, when COVID precaution limited travel and large gatherings, but there is no question that bringing tourists to our state generates wealth. Think of all the folks who attend the Indianapolis 500, Indianapolis Black Expo, Valparaiso Popcorn Festival, Notre Dame football, Madison Chautauqua, Greenfield Riley Days, and the West Side Nut Club Fall Festival in Evansville. And then there are our beautiful state parks and the Indiana Dunes National Park.

Tourism is big business. That is why many of the cities across our state have a visitor's bureau, to cultivate such activity. I think, they should also have a church cultivation department, because houses of worship are also an economic engine powering our cities and state.

A study by Partners for Sacred Places in Philadelphia, funded by the Lilly Endowment, suggests that the economic impact of a single congregation on its community is over \$1 million. How so? Churches employ staff, and they purchase goods and services from a network of small businesses and individual vendors. They attract visitors to worship services, weddings, funerals, concerts and recitals, public programs and outreach endeavors.

A study by Partners for Sacred Places in Philadelphia, funded by the Lilly Endowment, suggests that the economic impact of a single congregation on its community is over \$1 million.

Those visitors travel and make purchases supporting the local economy. It all adds up. So with 9,000 churches in Indiana the collective impact is over \$9 billion—the same, essentially, as all our tourism combined. Imagine!

Churches create jobs, not just within the congregation, but by their social impact,



community. And they provide outdoor recreation spaces. The societal benefit is big. Partners for Sacred Places calls this the "halo effect"

That "halo effect" is not only measured in dollars. Several years ago I was visiting First Christian Church in Martinsville. The previous Sunday the Outreach Committee had asked each member to write down

With 9,000 churches in Indiana the collective impact is over \$9 billion—the same, essentially as all our tourism combined.

within the community itself. They incubate other non-profit organizations. They provide early childhood education. They offer direct aid in the form of food and clothing. They counsel, support, and make referrals for individuals and families in crisis, thus undergirding the mental and emotional health of the

on a slip of construction paper all the places where they expressed volunteer service—one slip for each place. So, things like Boy Scouts, and the local homeless shelter, and Meals on Wheels, and Habitat for Humanity, and their own outreach center to youth in the community called The

Haven. During the week the committee took these colorful slips and formed a construction paper chain which was displayed in the sanctuary the week I visited. It completely circled that space. It was a halo, a visual reminder of the collective impact their members were making on their community.

You have a halo too. They are not only reserved for angelic figures in medieval art. Day by day, week by week, you have the power to influence others around you and shape the community in which you live, by the way you invest yourself, and represent yourself. We do that all the time unconsciously and anonymously, but it would not hurt to make it known from time to time that your effort is born of your faith, and

your faith is nurtured in your house of worship. That would be a kind of burnishing your halo in the best sense.

Bottom line, our state and each of our communities are enriched by the presence of our 130 congregations. Each of them provide spiritual power and economic power, much greater than we often imagine. And the impact of our 14,000 participating members? Incalculable.

Blessings on you and your congregation.

*Rick*

Richard L. Spleth  
Regional Minister

2023 Regional Calendar

APRIL	22	Anti-Racism Pro-Reconciliation Training (Disruptive Theology)	19-21	You & Me 2 Geneva
			19-24	M.A.D. Geneva Explorers Bedford
			26-28	New Beginnings Bedford
MAY	5	Anti-Racism Pro-Reconciliation Training (Practical Application)	26-July 1	High School Geneva Middle School Geneva C.R.O.S.S. Geneva
			29-July 1	You & Me Bedford
	15	Early Bird Deadline for Camp Registration		
JUNE	3	Regional Board Meeting	JULY	
	12-14	You & Me 1 Geneva	3-8	High School Bedford
	12-17	Explorers Geneva	10-15	Middle School Bedford
	15-17	New Beginnings Geneva	17	Anti-Racism Pro-Reconciliation Training (Confronting the Powers)
			July 29- August 1	General Assembly

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SUMMER ISSUE  
DEADLINE  
JUNE 30, 2023





# Disciples Congregations Address Drug Overdose Challenge

Two Indiana Disciples congregations are finding a new way to minister to the neighbors in their communities. Central Christian Church, New Albany and First Christian Church, Martinsville have both installed a NaloxBox on their property. A NaloxBox is a hard acrylic box mounted to an exterior wall that provides 24/7 access to naloxone and is an effective measure of addressing the increase of opioid overdoses in Indiana. Each unit contains six to eight naloxone kits. There is no cost to the congregations to implement NaloxBoxes.

Central Christian Church said, "As the hands and feet of Christ, we want to support our neighbors dealing with addiction, and we hope this small gesture will be a life-saving resource for those who need it."

Overdose Lifeline is a statewide Indiana non-profit dedicated to helping individuals, families and communities affected by the disease of addiction/substance use disorder. Their office is located in the Interchurch Center, where the Indiana Regional office is located in Indianapolis.

Through advocacy, education, and support, Overdose Lifeline envisions a time when the disease of addiction does not carry a stigma but is provided the attention and care required of a chronic disease. To learn more about Overdose Lifeline's naloxone distribution opportunities, or to request a free naloxone kit, visit [www.overdoselifeline.org](http://www.overdoselifeline.org). †



## Jerry Zehr Honored as Interfaith Ambassador

Indiana Disciples Minister Jerry Zehr has been recognized as the Interfaith Ambassador of the year by the Center for Interfaith Cooperation. A banquet recognizing Jerry for his leadership in Interfaith ministries was held on March 19 in Indianapolis.



An ordained minister for 35 years, he helped to create four interfaith organizations, including the Carmel Interfaith Alliance and the Indiana Multifaith Network. He retired from parish ministry in 2021 after serving Carmel Christian Church in Carmel, Indiana.

Jerry has a new daily devotional book entitled **"The Peacemaker's Path: Multifaith Reflections to Deepen Your Spirituality."** Each day offers a reflection, scripture passages from the world's religions, questions to contemplate, a call to action, and a closing prayer. It is available from a variety of online booksellers, including [www.christianbook.com](http://www.christianbook.com)

The Center for Interfaith Cooperation is located in the Indiana Interchurch Center. Founded in 2011 by Executive Director Charlie Wiles, the organization seeks to connect Hoosiers of many faiths together to deepen an understanding of the religious traditions of our state and build relationships among people of faith. Disciples ministerial candidate Dorian Condre is a new staff member at the Center. †



## Shift in Healthy Boundaries

Every five years, all our ministers with standing (credentialed) are required to complete a one-day training called "Healthy Boundaries." This is a session that covers ethical boundaries related to our Clergy Code of Ethics. Many things are covered including relationships, money, use of social media, relationships with former congregations/congregants, etc. This is a significant training that brings together colleagues to learn and discuss our ethical obligations as clergy.

This training has been conducted by a committee under the supervision of the Commission on Ministry for about 20 years. We are shifting to a new season in this training. These sessions will now be conducted by a group called LeaderWise ([www.leaderwise.org](http://www.leaderwise.org)). They specialize in things related to clergy and are an ecumenical group. This training will be online, so ministers won't need to travel to attend.

In the past (pre-COVID), the fee for our training was about \$45. In this new season, with utilizing LeaderWise, the cost will now be \$100. The Commission on Ministry believes the benefits of this training will outweigh the increased cost.

The requirement for Healthy Boundaries training exists in large part because we believe that clergy with healthy boundaries help to also create a healthier congregational system. So, we want to highly encourage your congregation to cover the cost of this training for the clergy who serve your congregation. If your congregation also has chaplains, pastoral counselors or other ministers with standing as members, you might also consider helping to pay at least part of their fee as well.

Questions regarding this shift may be addressed to Associate Regional Minister, Carolyn Reed, at [carolyn@indianadisciples.org](mailto:carolyn@indianadisciples.org) †

## Ministry Milestones

### MINISTRY CHANGES

**Charissa Ramey** concluded her ministry as Pastor of Nameless Creek Christian Church, Greenfield on November 6 and began serving as Pastor at Sixth Street Christian Church, Middletown on November 13  
**Linda Trowbridge** began as Interim Pastor of Nameless Creek Christian Church, Greenfield on November 13  
**Stephen Eberhard** concluded his ministry as Pastor of Wabash Christian Church, Wabash on November 14  
**Carolyn Watkins** concluded her ministry as Pastor of Linwood Christian Church, Indianapolis on November 13 and began serving as a hospice chaplain on November 14  
**Jeff Seger** retired from ministry and as Pastor of First Christian Church, Winamac on November 27

**Stephen Sundquist** began serving as Transitional Pastor at First Christian Church, Winamac on December 4  
**Frank Everett** concluded serving as the Interim Pastor of Danville Christian Church, Danville on December 31, and began serving as Interim Pastor at the Linwood Christian Church, Indianapolis on January 1  
**John Williams** concluded serving as the Interim Senior Pastor of Allisonville Christian Church, Indianapolis on December 31  
**Mike Sbrljan** began serving as Minister at First Christian Church, Sheridan on January 1  
**Venessa Harmel** began serving as the Pastor of Danville Christian Church, Danville on January 1  
**Beau Underwood** began serving as the Senior Pastor of Allisonville Christian Church, Indianapolis on January 1

**Evie Stuard** retired from ministry and as Pastor at Tabernacle Christian Church, Franklin on January 29  
**Deb Strock-Kuss** retired from ministry and as Associate Pastor at Geist Christian Church, Promise Road Campus, Fishers on January 29  
**Randy Kuss** concluded his ministry at Geist Christian Church, Promise Road Campus, Fishers on January 29  
**Diana Thompson** began serving as the Interim Minister at Tabernacle Christian Church, Franklin on February 13  
**John Dunn** retired from his ministry at Central Christian Church, Washington, on February 28

### BIRTHS

**Freya Harper McLoughlin** was born to Rachel & Matt McLoughlin

**Emery Kay Snyder** was born to Paul & Kaitlyn Snyder. Paul is minister at Central Christian Church New Albany.

### DEATHS

**Rev. Dr. Sue Cardwell**, long time missionary to Congo, and the first woman professor at Christian Theological Seminary, died on December 17, 2022  
**Rev. Ellen Anderson**, retired Disciples Minister, died on January 28, 2023  
**Rev. John Porter**, retired Minister died January 25  
**Marilyn Moffett**, died March 7  
**Rev. Diana Bush-Harris**, died January 9  
**Rev. Donald Arterburn**, died November 24 †



**Pension Fund**  
of the Christian Church  
*strong smart secure*

## Pension Fund Supports Financial Wellness and Mental Health Assistance for Pastors

**P**ension Fund is probably best known for the benefits to retirees but there's a lot more offered by this general ministry partner. In addition to a variety of savings tools and relief and assistance programs, Pension Fund also sponsors *Your Money Line* and *Learn to Live*, two newer offerings available for member clergy. Indiana Disciples clergy, if you haven't checked out these programs, read on to learn more and make use of them sometime soon!

*Your Money Line* is about helping participants on the path toward financial change regardless of income level. This is Pete the Planner's financial wellness solution to connect employees to confidential, unbiased financial guidance. Pension Fund's Excellence in Ministry program and Christian Church in Indiana's FLOURISH! Program have both been enhanced by Pete's presentations to clergy grantees and spouses and, as of February 2020, the program is available to all Pension Fund members.

Changing the tide of financial behavior takes motivation and discipline. *Your Money Line* believes a personal relationship with a trusted financial professional is the best way to fully understand the situation, establish a game plan, and stay motivated for good.

The Financial Concierge team at *Your Money Line* gives unbiased advice and will never sell anything to participants. Ever. A guiding principle of *Your Money Line* is it's not about how much money you have, it's about what you do with it. The Financial Concierge Team can't answer securities-related questions, but they can answer so many other questions—from student loan debt woes to how to plan for future expenses. They are accessible 24/7 via the mobile app and online Dashboard. The app makes convenience a priority. The dashboard includes hours of video courses, calculators, and tools to keep participants on the right track. Go to [pensionfund.org/yourmoneyline](http://pensionfund.org/yourmoneyline) to access the tools and resources and to connect with a Financial Concierge.

*Learn to Live* is an online mental health assessment and support tool available at no cost to all Pension Fund active-member clergy. If you are feeling stressed, sleepless, anxious, or discouraged, you are not alone! One in two people will experience a mental health issue during their lifetime. Pension Fund has invested in your mental and emotional well-being by offering online support from *Learn to Live*.

Based on over 10 years of clinical studies, *Learn to Live* offers online programs and clinical assessments based on the proven principles of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. The programs for Stress, Anxiety & Worry, Depression, Social Anxiety, Insomnia, and Substance Use offer effective tools to help you understand how your mind works and change your behavior patterns—to help you live your best life.

*Learn to Live* Provides:

- Immediate 24/7 access to self-paced programs
- Ability to start, stop, and save your progress
- No cost to you (or those in your household over the age of 13)
- As effective as in-person therapy
- Coaching available by phone, email, or text

Member information is completely confidential, HIPPA compliant, and will never be shared with Pension Fund (or the Christian Church in Indiana). Visit [pensionfund.org/learntolive](http://pensionfund.org/learntolive) to get started. †



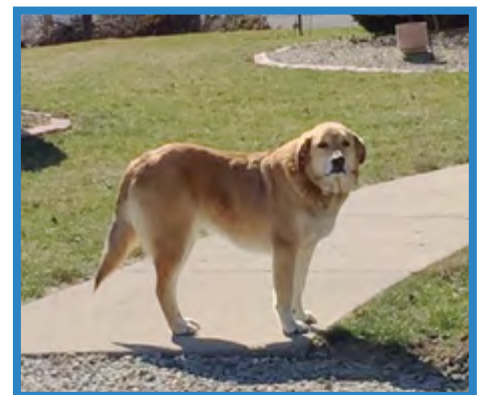
## Regional Minister Speaks at Indiana Statehouse

**R**egional Minister Rick Spleth joined with other clergy and judicatory leaders on March 7 to lobby Indiana legislators on Senate Bill 1. This bill, addressing mental health, would establish a mental health hotline with trained professional staff who could dispatch a clinician-led mobile response team to care for persons experiencing mental distress, and, if needed transport them to a crisis stabilization center. This would provide an alternative to dispatching an ambulance or the police, and transporting individuals to emergency rooms or to jail, which puts undue strain on those resources and personnel.

Senate Bill 1 has unanimously passed the Indiana Senate and Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb has signaled his support. Now it has need for support in the Indiana House, and appropriate funding to fully implement this crisis response system. The lobbying effort of the faith community in support of this program is being coordinated by Faith in Indiana, an Indiana coalition of denominations addressing justice concerns. For more information about the effort to seek full funding of SB 1 go to [www.acallforcare.org](http://www.acallforcare.org). You are also encouraged to contact your individual Indiana legislators to support this campaign. You can identify the persons representing your household at [www.iga.in.gov](http://www.iga.in.gov) †

## Sadie the Dog Welcomes Worshipers at Nameless Creek

**I**f you go to worship at Nameless Creek Christian Church in Greenfield, the one most likely to greet you first is Sadie the Dog. Sadie, a yellow labrador retriever, belongs to Amy and Jason Effing, long time members of the church. The Effings along with Sadie live just over a mile from the church in Hancock County. For several years Sadie has been following them to church on Sunday where she has been adopted by the congregation who often greet her with a pat or a treat even as she greets them with a wag of her tail.



When Sadie first began her Sunday pilgrimage Amy wondered if they should give her a ride home after worship. "Nope," said Jason, "she found her way here, she can find her way home." He was right. Now Sadie comes to worship even if the Effings do not. She apparently not only knows her geography but her calendar too. Or maybe the credit should go to the members of the Nameless Creek Church for the generous welcome they offer that just makes you want to show up, even if you have to walk a mile both ways. †



**C**hristian Theological Seminary (CTS) welcomes the new year by exploring exciting new horizons. In recent months, we announced our redesigned MDiv degree program that increases accessibility through remote learning, launched two 6-week online courses designed for lifelong learners, and announced the Compelling Preaching Initiative to meet the needs of the church and community.

At CTS, we understand you can't put your life on pause to pursue your calling. Thanks to new remote learning technology and our redesigned MDiv, you no longer have to. Our MDiv program now offers remote learning options for completing classes without eliminating the traditional in-person classroom experience, creating an equitable experience from anywhere with an internet connection. Consistent course offerings and individualized degree mapping allow students to complete required credit hours at their own pace with minimal on-site intensive days.

Listening to community feedback, we also launched two non-degree lifelong learning courses that are entirely online. Our new *Skills for Flourishing Congregations* series consists of micro-credentialing courses that help leaders stay nimble and up to date in rapidly changing ministry environments. The 6-week online courses help church leaders gain skills-based knowledge in key areas of church leadership like strategic planning, fundraising, volunteer management, conflict resolution, and more. Leveraging relationships with partners like the Lake Institute on Faith and Giving, our expert instructors provide premier training in formats that suit busy pastors and church professionals.

The *Our Life in Common Series* is a space for community learning through a theological lens. Theology plays a powerful role in our shared experience. Good theology breathes life into our communities, but misguided theology can foster intolerance and injustice. These 6-week online courses offer meaningful discussion and theological exploration of faith, humanity, ethics, and other relevant topics. Both lifelong learning series are open to all—there are no preconditions for prior education or formal religious commitment.

Finally, we are excited to announce Christian Theological Seminary's *Compelling Preaching Initiative*—an 18-month non-degree program



for Exemplar preachers to engage in a cohort model as together they learn about the theology and pedagogy of teaching and preaching while further developing their own preaching method. The certificate program includes a mentorship component in which the Exemplars will mentor and coach aspiring preachers called Apprentices. Though shaped by African American cultural values, this program seeks to cultivate practices among aspiring and active preachers that can help them proclaim the gospel to a variety of audiences in more engaging and effective ways.

*These new horizons are an extension of our current ministry, theology, counseling, and social justice programs centered on CTS' core values: advancing scholarship and formation, embracing diversity, working toward justice for all, affirming God-given human dignity, and promoting healing and wholeness throughout creation. Over 85% of CTS students receive scholarship support including financial aid opportunities specifically for Disciples of Christ affiliated students. Visit [www.cts.edu](http://www.cts.edu) to find out how CTS could be the next step in YOUR calling! †*

## Amazing Grace Christian Church Partners with Eastgate

**A**mazing Grace Christian Church is now 12 ½ years old but has just gotten a fresh start. The predominantly African American congregation led by Preston Adams has been nested from its beginning at Geist Christian Church—Mud Creek in Indianapolis, but on January 1 moved to Eastgate Christian Church in Indianapolis. They have likened the move as going from “renters to home owners” since they will be purchasing equity in the Eastgate church, month-to-month, and sharing expenses for the property with their new partners. It is a creative arrangement that benefits both congregations.

Conversations between leaders of the two churches were fostered by Regional leadership along with staff of the Disciples Church Extension Fund. The result was a win-win for the congregations: Amazing Grace was able to relocate to a more promising location for their evangelistic outreach, and Eastgate improved its cash flow, reducing operational overhead which releases more money for ministry.

Eastgate Pastor Rick Harting celebrates having a colleague in the building with him and reports that Amazing Grace's presence has been a stimulus to Eastgate's life. The building at 16th and Franklin Road also houses the Autumn Leaves Adult Daycare facility, a ministry that both congregations will now give support.

As Amazing Grace concluded their time at Geist Christian Church, a special combined worship service was held where thanksgiving was expressed and blessing extended. The blessing is already being fulfilled with new members being added to Amazing Grace along with expanded program offerings in which Eastgate is sharing. Win-win! †







*Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, just as it is well with your soul.*

3 John 1:2

**S**ince the early stages, FLOURISH! Program's mission has been and continues to be to "help develop and support healthy clergy who provide bold, confident leadership to build strong churches in our community and the world." As a program of Lilly Endowment's National Initiative to Address Economic Challenges Facing Pastoral Leaders, we have sought to empower clergy and congregations through initiatives aimed at improving personal and congregational finances.

#### **This has included:**

- Financial Relief and Compensation Support Grants
- Financial Literacy Academy sessions on stewardship, financial best practices for congregations, and personal finance
- Clergy Peer Groups
- Financial Planner consultations
- Sponsoring regional participation in the Executive Certificate in Religious Fundraising program
- Stewardship Support Grants
- COVID-19 Supplemental Grants
- Partnership with Pension Fund's Excellence in Ministry Program

#### **Clergy participating in the program have told us that the program has impacted:**

- How they view and discuss mission and stewardship
- The congregation's view of abundance vs. scarcity
- Comfort discussing church finances
- Financial practices that protect the church and individuals
- Pre-marital counseling with couples
- Financial conversations with their own significant others
- Messages about money that they pass along to their children
- Their vision of a future that can include a home and/or family
- Their plans or hope for retirement
- Reducing shame and anxiety about personal and congregational finances
- Knowledge of available resources

The Christian Church in Indiana has also been impacted including the recreation of the Commission on Stewardship, Barbee Blessings grants, and decisions to hire a new Associate Regional Minister and invest in Faith Formation.

In addition to the generous investment of Lilly Endowment, the support of churches and donors from across the Indiana Region enabled us to raise the required matching funds to provide grants and programs. In the next months, we have one additional opportunity to raise funds, up to \$75,000, which will be matched by Lilly Endowment in the fall of 2023. You are invited to continue the investment in our clergy, our congregations, and our region through a gift to support the FLOURISH! Program. Help us to continue to offer grants and education to pastors in the Indiana Region. If you have questions about FLOURISH!, contact Sarah Riester, [sarah@indianadisciples.org](mailto:sarah@indianadisciples.org). †



## Love Thy Neighbor

By Jane Bloom, Elder

**I**n Matthew 22:37-39 we are told, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." We have all heard those words often, but what do they mean in real life? Over the last six months we at New Lisbon Christian Church in Union City, Indiana, have seen those words put into action by the minister and elders of Countryside Christian Church in Winchester, Indiana.



We said goodbye to our minister, Sam Davenport, when he retired at the end of June. Before he even retired, Melissa Kleinschmidt, the minister of Countryside, called us to see if we needed help in filling our pulpit until we could find an interim or a permanent pastor. After a few meetings and phone calls, three of their elders had signed on to come one Sunday a month to give the message. The other Sunday was filled by Debra Harmon, an ordained minister of the Disciples denomination, who was also recruited by Rev. Kleinschmidt. In addition, another elder, Mark Winkle, filled in one Sunday and served as a substitute at Countryside for the elders who were at New Lisbon.

We at New Lisbon cannot say enough about what these four people and the support of Countryside Christian Church have meant to us. They have truly ministered to us. During this time we have experienced two unexpected deaths that have hit us hard, and both times their compassion and understanding love have helped us through. Now as we welcome our new minister, Chuck Armstrong to our church, we want to say a heartfelt thanks to both the congregation of Countryside Christian Church and to Pastor Melissa Kleinschmidt, Debra Harmon, Steve McCoy, Bill Bush, Phillip Howell, and Mark Winkle, our neighbors who showed us what it truly means to love your neighbor as yourself. †

## The Welcome Table: Bringing Community Together

**N**orth Christian Church (Fort Wayne) has been studying Mutual Ministry (with people instead of to people) in the Center for Congregations Community Ministry Grant program. One goal was to create a meal program that built community. Pastor Kate Howard knew this would require a change from other meals they'd experienced. "It's got to feel like a restaurant. We need menus, real dishes, names on place cards and each person seated at one long table, with no gaps. And we have to talk with them, by name." The response: "But people won't want to sit with someone they don't know." Pastor Kate responded, "We just had a meal with two other churches and you all formed bubbles. We want to sit with strangers, but we're afraid to impose or be rejected. This has to feel like the wedding banquet, where everybody is brought together, regardless of who they are or where they come from. That's why it's called 'Welcome Table.'"

Welcome  
TABLE  
THE NO-CHARGE POP-UP RESTAURANT

The first Welcome Table had 50 guests, from all walks of life. Afterward, one man carefully tucked away his place card; a treasured memory of the day he was waited upon, called by name, and engaged in conversation. One man tearfully asked the pastor as he pulled out his wallet, "How can I support this in the future, this must happen again. My experience was profound. Thank you." One woman offered to bake cookies for dessert. A neighbor offered to help next time. It was a foretaste of the heavenly Welcome Table. †



# General Assembly Gathering in Louisville This Summer

When the General Assembly meets in Louisville, Kentucky July 29-August 1, 2023, it will be the first time in four years the church as a whole has gathered in person. The theme for the 2023 General Assembly is "Kindom of God Within Us, Among Us." The theme is based on three scriptures: Luke 17:20- 21, Genesis 11:1-9, and 2 Peter 1:3.

The planning committee described the theme, "There are multiple words, scriptures, languages, and ways to share and shape our common life. The church has more than one story to tell, and more than one tool for innovation and distinctive witness in the future. God is with us. What is life before God like? Salt, an open table, Zoom, and treasure in clay jars. What have Disciples learned about life before God in the midst of the uncertainty the church and its members faced over the last three years?"

The theme "Kindom of God Within Us, Among Us" is a call for Disciples to strengthen their relationship to God both individually and communally through an expansive in-person and digital gathering of the church in Louisville. The past three years, local congregations and the wider church have needed to be separated but have also innovated new ways for God's limitless love to be revealed in our church, our communities and around the world. God's limitless imagination holds so many possibilities for the church.

This four-day event will encourage Disciples to gather online and in-person to celebrate the way that God's expansive love connects each of us as "kin" and to part of the larger kindom of God. Go to [www.ga.disciples.org](http://www.ga.disciples.org) to register and for information on worship, workshops, Bible study, opportunities to explore Louisville, mission, and the sacred work of the church. †



## Sacred Places Connecting Indiana Congregations in Facility Assessment and Planning

Six of our congregations have joined with four United Church of Christ congregations in Indiana in a partnership with Sacred Places Indiana, a program of Indiana Landmarks in collaboration with Partners for Sacred Places. Over the next several months these ten congregations will have the opportunity to meet with architects and engineers to assess the structural needs of their facilities, and be guided by the staff of Sacred Places Indiana in mission clarification and capital fundraising.

The group met for the first time on February 28 at the Indiana Interchurch Center, and have three more monthly meetings scheduled. Funding provided by the Lilly Endowment will help the participating congregations secure professional consultations to develop their action plans. The Disciples congregations in this first cohort are First Christian Church, Lafayette, Central Christian Church, Lebanon, First Christian Church, Martinsville, First Christian Church, Richmond, First Christian Church, Bloomington, and First Christian Church, Bedford. Additional cohorts are planned in the future for more of our congregations to have this opportunity. †

# The Community Table - FCC Martinsville's Local Mission

By Rev. Susan Hanscom

On Monday, October 16, 2006, First Christian Church of Martinsville opened its doors at 89 S. Main Street to serve the first meal at the newly established Community Table. Sixteen years later, the doors are still open on Monday nights and hot meals continue to be served from 5:30 to 6:30pm in our Fellowship Hall.

The mission statement for this local operation is twofold: The Community Table seeks to be (1) a tangible response to God's call and commandment to be a hospitable people as well as (2) a figurative and literal extension of the Table of the Lord's Supper. It offers a weekly, free meal, as well as fellowship and prayer, to anyone in the community who wishes to participate.

Originally, eleven teams, crewed by members of First Christian Church were the preparers, servers and cleanup crews for the meals. But over the years many teams have been formed and added to the roster from churches and organizations around Martinsville, including: First Baptist Church, First Methodist Church, St. Martin's Catholic Church Youth Group, Hyndsdales Christian Church, the Noon Lion's Club, the Rotary Club, Kiwanis, Boy Scout Troop 219, Tri Kappa Sorority, 4-H Junior Leaders, 4-H Swine Club, City Changers from Mooresville, Millers Merry Manor and The Haven (led by First Christian's Youth Group.)

Recently, the evening has expanded to include occasional activities such as a local band for dancing, a presentation by the Martinsville Crime Watch and a Town Hall meeting on mental health in Morgan County led by our local Hoosier Action group. It's not unusual for someone or a group to donate little extras to make the meals more special.

For instance, there were frozen pot pies and some candy canes handed out at Christmas for everyone, and there were cute cards for Valentine's Day. Other ideas are in the works to continue to help serve the community in a variety of ways.

It was after my four years of Seminary at Christian Theological Seminary, two years as a student pastor at Centenary Christian Church, and two years as a Resident in Chaplaincy at Methodist Hospital that I felt a strong desire to do SOMETHING to both "fill in the gap" and to find a way to serve. First Christian in Martinsville had been my home for several years. I looked around at how healthy (moneywise) and strong (volunteers) it was and I wondered if we could pull off a weekly meal.

The minute I talked to our pastor at the time (Mark Poindexter) and our associate pastor (Alan Cloar), they took it and ran. We formed a planning committee and settled on the plan to find as many different teams as we could (so no one team would bear the brunt of the work and become burned out.) The rest is history.

The COVID pandemic did some real damage to our routine, but it is back up and going. I hope the guests feel as blessed as the teams do in serving! Come join us any time! †







## FruitFULL Faith

A Spirit-filled Life!

	GENEVA	BEDFORD
You and Me (3 days)	June 12 -14	June 29 -July 1 * (age 5+ and an adult)
Explorers	June 12 -17	June 19 -24 (completed gr. 4 -5)
New Beginnings (3 days)	June 15 -17	June 26 -28 (completed gr. 1 -3)
You and Me 2 (3 days)	June 19 -21	(age 5+ and an adult)
M.A.D. (Music Art Drama)	June 19 -24	(completed gr. 6 -8; 9-12)
Middle School	June 26 -July 1	July 10 -15 (completed gr. 6 -8)
High School	June 26 -July 1	July 3 -8 (completed gr. 9 -12)
CROSS (Recreation/Sports)	June 26 -July 1	(completed gr. 6 -8; 9-12)

\*new in 2023

Early Bird Fees: 6-day camps: **\$440**; 3-day camps: **\$250**

After May 15: 6-Day camps: **\$465**; 3-day camps: **\$275**

Visit [genevacenter.org](http://genevacenter.org) for Geneva camp registration/info.

Visit [indianadisciples.org](http://indianadisciples.org) for Bedford camp registration/info.

Scholarships for Disciples campers at Bedford and Geneva camps are available. Visit [indianadisciples.org](http://indianadisciples.org) to download.

Hi Camp Friends!

Last summer, the first week of camp season, all three of the Indiana Disciples Regional Ministers were at camp at the same time! It was a momentous occasion. If you saw the pictures, you might have wondered, who was in the office? It is true that the Indiana Disciple staff are wonderful and capable and had everything covered in the office. But the rest of the story is that ministry happens in so many places. And in the summer, ministry is in action at both the Geneva Camp & Conference Center and Bedford Camp & Conference Center.

Certainly all three of us – Rick, Carolyn, and myself – had fun while at camp but our presence with campers and camp staff was a signal to all that camp is an important part of what we do as a region.

So, why is camp so important in the life of the Christian Church in Indiana?

### Camp is Faith Formation

Camp might be the first-time campers have the opportunity to lead worship. And camp is where these important conversations about faith begin so campers and adults alike can take them back to their churches and continue to discover and grow in their faith.

### Camp is Connection

Youth and adults from across the region, from Valparaiso to Evansville and everywhere in between, come together at camp. It is a time to meet new people, to build relationships that will last a lifetime.

### Camp is Confidence

Campers may lead worship or pray publicly for the first time. Campers may participate in a skit at campfire, something they felt too shy to do before. Campers who began the week quiet and withdrawn may find their confidence in leading their friends on a hike, catching a fish for the first time, or leading a song.

### Camp is Calling

It is a place where mentors may identify and encourage those in whom they see gifts for serving the church or where campers feeling pulled toward ministry can find the support and guidance they need to say yes to God's call in their lives.

We can't wait for camp season to begin for another year of play, creativity, service and learning. You can help get the children in your life registered for camp. You can be a volunteer at camp. You can encourage your church to help pay for youth in your congregation who want to go to camp. You can donate to our camp scholarship fund. You can write letters to campers while they are away. You can pray for campers and camp staff during the weeks they are at camp. We hope you will consider being a part of this very special ministry.

Cheryl

Cheryl Russell  
Associate Regional Minister



## Addiction Recovery and Timing

By Daniel Sherer

In 2016, two small congregations in Southwestern Indiana began working together which included focusing special attention on the local need for more addiction recovery resources.

While I had been working with Pastor Jim Peyton of Central Christian (CCC) in Washington, Indiana, I soon became acquainted with Pastor John Dunn of Broadway Christian Church in Princeton. Pastor John quickly became my mentor as I was new to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). In our first conversation together we discovered a unique common interest: We had both been working with people in work release in addiction recovery (John in Gibson County, and I in Daviess County).

As we became better acquainted, John introduced me to the Center for Congregations and a training opportunity in Mutual Ministry. This was a new challenge for our congregation in Washington to begin learning about ministry "with" people outside of our congregation—in distinction from ministry "for," "to," "over," etc. To summarize briefly: A team from CCC attended education and training activities from May 2018 to August of 2019. For completing this training, CCC received a matching funds grant of \$30,000 from Lilly Endowment Inc. (through Center for Congregations). This led to the launch of "Recovery Central" in late 2019.



By February 2020, Recovery Central began hosting Town Halls in the CCC basement for local city and county leaders, and others with an interest in a stronger addiction recovery community in Daviess County. The birth of Recovery Central (as you might guess) was soon complicated by the arrival of COVID-19. This led to a more focused effort on communication technology and other measures to provide a safe environment to protect participants from the spread of the coronavirus.

By February 2020, Recovery Central began hosting Town Halls in the CCC basement for local city and county leaders, and others with an interest in a stronger addiction recovery community in Daviess County. The birth of Recovery Central (as you might guess) was soon complicated by the arrival of COVID-19. This led to a more focused effort on communication technology and other measures to provide a safe environment to protect participants from the spread of the coronavirus.

The timing of this has been important for a few reasons: First, the intent of Recovery Central was to establish a Recovery Community Organization (RCO). The first RCO in the State of Indiana did not open until 2018. When it did (in Indianapolis), it provided a critical sense of direction as Recovery Central developed a new RCO in Washington, Indiana. Secondly, the timing of funding for Mutual Ministry led to a collaborative effort between CCC and the leaders of a local recovery meeting. The new agency (a developing RCO) was named "REAL Recovery." Thirdly, the timing of COVID-19 triggered a greater effort to establish a meeting room large enough to allow safe distance between attendees, as well as a virtual connection to meetings to accommodate participants at remote locations. A fourth element of the timing came later in 2020, when the November Town Hall at CCC welcomed faculty from Indiana University who brought connections to federal funding. The first grant introduced actually called for the creation of a new RCO—a grant which was awarded the following April!

As I look back on all of this, I cannot describe a plan of my own that would have succeeded. We had to learn Mutual Ministry and make new friends. The Lord does provide! †

Daniel Sherer is a commissioned minister; serving as the Recovery Minister at Central Christian Church in Washington, Indiana