



**Report of the Christian Church in Florida**  
to the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
in the United States and Canada 2009

Origin: William C. Morrison, Jr., Regional Minister

The following is provided for information to the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

**Regional Staff:**

|   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| William C. Morrison, Jr. - Male, African American |                                   |
| Merle Decker – Female, Anglo                      | Charlene Bigio – Female, Hispanic |
| Jasmine Sanchez – Female, Hispanic                | Lamar Thompson - Male, Anglo      |
| Nilda Fres – Female, Hispanic                     | Cheryl Thompson - Female, Anglo   |
| Richie Sanchez – Male, Hispanic                   |                                   |

Number of Congregations: 120 (74 churches and 46 New church starts)

North District: 12 (Churches: 9 Anglo; 1 Black) (New church starts: 2 Hispanic)

Central District: 33 (Churches: 16 Anglo; 1 Black; 8 Hispanic) [New church starts: 1 Anglo; 6 Hispanic; 1 multi-cultural]

West Central District: 23 [Churches: 13 Anglo; 1 Black; 1 Hispanic] [New church starts: 7 Hispanic; 1 Anglo]

Southern District: 41 [Churches: 9 Anglo; 2 Multi-cultural; 1 Black; 1 Hispanic] [New church starts: 28 Haitian]

Southwest District: 11 [Churches: 8 Anglo; 2 Black] [New church starts: 1 Brazilian]

Total Members: 17,721

States included in Region: Florida (except for the Northwest Panhandle)

**OUR VISION**

To be one Church, under the authority of Jesus Christ, experiencing the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, intentionally making new Disciples, respecting diversity, and showing Christian love for all people.

**OUR MISSION**

To **Train**,  
**Empower**,  
**Affirm**, and  
**Motivate** congregations for **MINISTRY**.

***Extending the Ministry of Christ in Mission, Teaching, Witness, and Service***

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Florida continues to extend the ministry of Christ in mission, teaching, witness, and service by working toward its vision. We are committed to the goal of *Reclaiming the Great Commission: Florida Disciples Making Disciples*. The Regional Church is aware that a vision is not meaningful until it has been embraced and implemented by the people. Therefore, on January 24-25, 2008 we conducted clergy convocation to train, empower, affirm, and motivate our pastors and other leaders to grasp this vision for their congregations and make new disciples. Our theme for this convocation was “The Power of a Vision.” Our keynote speaker was William Lee, Senior Pastor, Loudon Avenue Christian Church, Roanoke, Virginia and former Moderator of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada. Bill Lee challenged our pastors to claim and embrace their spiritual leadership role as visionaries for the church because there is power in God’s vision to transform a church.

On September 18-21, 2008, the Christian Church in Florida celebrated its Centennial Regional Assembly. The theme for this historical occasion was *The Journey – La Jornada – Le Voyage*. Since 1869 Disciples of Christ have been on the Journey within the State of Florida to extend the ministry of Christ in mission, teaching, witness, and service. From 1874 until 1881, the Florida Disciples held yearly meetings with Georgia Disciples and on September 20, 1881, the Florida Disciples began to conduct their own annual meetings. In 1974 the Christian Church in Florida restructured and changed from conducting annual meetings to biennial assemblies. In our 100<sup>th</sup> Regional Assembly, we were challenged, motivated, encouraged, and inspired by the outstanding sermons presented by our keynote speakers: Reverend Dr. Sharon Watkins, General Minister and President; Bishop Chester Lawrence Aycock, Presiding Bishop of the Goldsboro-Raleigh District Assembly, Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ; and Reverend Marta Ramirez de Cruz, Pastor, Iglesia Cristiana (Discipulos de Cristo) de Vega Alta, Puerto Rico. Our Bible lecturer was the Reverend Dr. Samuel Pagan, Global Ministries Missionary to Jordan and the Holy Land.



### **Camps and Conferences**

The Camps and Conference Ministry in the Florida Region serves a vital role in fulfilling our mission and extending the ministry of Christ. Our Conference Center was built by the Disciples Men in the early 1950s. In the past eight years, we have done a lot of renovation on the original buildings and today we have an up-to-date facility to accommodate our campers and other guests. After 54 years of service, we had to replace our swimming pool at the Conference Center. Our new pool was built by Weller Pools who has projects across the Southeast, the Caribbean Islands and throughout the United States. Weller provided us outstanding service, met deadlines, and delivered to us an excellent pool within our budget. The new swimming pool at our Conference Center is a big splash for all our campers and other visitors.

### ***Establish, Receive, and Nurture Congregations in the Region***

The Christian Church in Florida continues to be very active in establishing, receiving, and nurturing congregations in the Region. In 2002, the Florida Regional Assembly set a goal of 50 new congregations in support of the 2020 Vision. We celebrate that we have reached that goal and four of our new church starts (Iglesia Cristiana (Discipulos de Cristo) Emanuel de Kissimmee, Faith Grace Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Iglesia Discipulos de Cristo, Palm Bay, and Iglesia Cristiana Renuevo de Kissimmee) were recognized by the Regional Assembly on September 20, 2008 as congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Florida. We are in conversation with 8 other groups regarding becoming a Disciples of Christ new church start.

We are extremely concerned about renewal and rebirth of our older congregations. In 2009, two of our historical congregations will terminate their ministries, First Christian Church of Tampa and First Christian Church of Lakeland. First Christian Church in Tampa and Lakeland has been in existence for over 100 years and the Region is working closely with both congregations to nurture them through the grief process that comes with closing a ministry. First Christian Church of Tampa has sold their facility and most of the members will relocate to other churches. A small group of people from First Christian Church in Tampa are exploring the possibility of starting a new ministry in Tampa. First Christian Church of Lakeland will terminate their ministry and turn the property over to the Region. We plan to continue a Disciples of Christ ministry in the Lakeland church with a Hispanic new church start. The Hispanic new church start is already worshipping in the facility and was recognized by our Regional Board as a Disciples new church start on February 28, 2009. The new church start is Iglesia Cristiana (Discipulos de Cristo) Dando Vida. Their pastor is Luis Feliciano who is the brother of Daniel Feliciano in



Church Extension. In spite of closing two historical congregations, we praise God for the many years of outstanding ministry that both Tampa and Lakeland have provided in the Florida Region and that out of their death we will experience a resurrection.

### REGIONAL FINANCIAL REPORT

4. Financial Information, Concerns, and Reports of the Region:

- A. What type of accounting method do you use?  Cash  Accrual
- B. Is a professional audit done annually on your books?  Yes  No  
If not, please explain.
- C. For the last three years, with regard to your OPERATIONS BUDGET ONLY,  
Please provide the following information:

|                      | <u>2006</u>         | <u>2007</u>         | <u>2008</u>         |
|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Operational Income   | 847,956.00          | 793,751.00          | 893,957.00          |
| Conference Center    | <u>280,694.00</u>   | <u>316,463.00</u>   | <u>410,173.00</u>   |
| Total Income         | 1,128,650.00        | 1,110,214.00        | 1,304,130.00        |
| <br>                 |                     |                     |                     |
| Operational Expenses | 812,028.00          | 787,936.00          | 891,584.00          |
| Conference Center    | <u>347,767.00</u>   | <u>331,358.00</u>   | <u>394,910.00</u>   |
| Total Expenses       | <u>1,159,795.00</u> | <u>1,119,294.00</u> | <u>1,286,494.00</u> |
| <br>                 |                     |                     |                     |
| Surplus (Deficit)    | (31,145.00)         | (9,080.00)          | 17,636.00           |

- D. If your Region has had insufficient income or deficits in Part C above, how has your Regional Board and Finance Committee been trying to balance your budgets (e.g. staff reductions, program cuts, larger draws from permanent funds, initiative postponements, new streams of income, etc.)?

The Florida Regional Church has used larger draws from savings and investments to cover the deficits in the past three years. In 2008 the Conference Center experienced a surplus of income for the first time in six years. However, like many others, the decrease in Disciples Mission Fund giving has seriously affected our ability to provide resources in support of the denominational priorities of congregational renewal, leadership development, new church establishment, and anti-racism. We are still relying heavily on our savings and investments to meet the basic operational requirements.

- E. What are the key financial issues and concerns currently facing your region's life and vitality?

The key concern and goal of the Florida Regional Church is to increase Disciples Mission Fund giving and develop new streams of funding for the Regional Church.

**Recommended Action:**

The General Board receives the report from the Florida Region.