

GENERAL BOARD

Title: Report of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oklahoma

Origin: Rev. Thomas R. Jewell, Regional Pastor

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

Oklahoma Regional Church Staff



Rev. Thomas R. Jewell
Regional Pastor
(M/W)



Rev. Gary W. Mitchell
Assoc. Regional Pastor
(M/W)



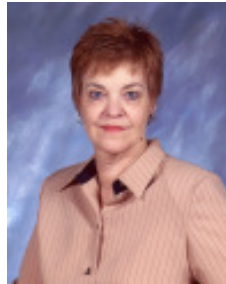
Rev. Charles Hattendorf
Assoc. Regional Pastor
(M/W)



Rev. Loma Sullivan
Assoc. Regional Pastor
(F/W)



Rev. Leslie Dotson
Assoc. Regional Pastor
(F/W)



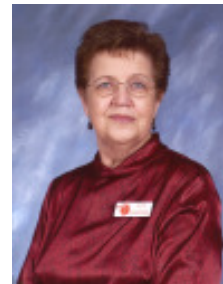
Pastor Jean Scott Gaudin
Pastoral Asst/Office Mngr
(F/W)



Mr. Richard Keith
Financial Administrator
(M/W)



Ms. Laura Townsley
Administrative Assistant
(F/W)



Ms. Joyce McLendon
Administrative Assistant
(F/W)



Rev. Dorothy Coy Light
Communications Director
(F/W)



Rev. Billie Lee
Health Care Advocate
(F/W)

Global Mission Intern



Ms. Erin McKinney
(F/W)

General Ministry Partner



Rev. James Hamlett
(M/W)

Global Mission Partner



Sister Denisse Picardo Rodriguez
(for Caminante)
(F/B)

Regional Campsite Administrators:



Mr. Spencer Bowen
Central Christian Camp
(M/W)



Mr. Jim Hawley
Camp Christian
(M/W)



Mr. Gene Bineau
Texoma Christian Camp
(M/W)

Number of Congregations: 173
Congregations in Formation: 1

Total Members: 38,182
Participating: 25,296
Worship Attendance: 14,050

States included in the Region:
Oklahoma
Website: www.okdisciples.org

Oklahoma has fulfilled the region's primary purpose as stated in paragraph 20 of The Design in the following ministries:

Mission...Service

For the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oklahoma mission is experienced within the boundaries of the Oklahoma regional church, in North America and in the Caribbean.

Oklahoma Disciples in the Northeast Area dedicated their fifth Habitat for Humanity home in November, 2008. Through donations of time, talents, and treasure from scores of Disciples, a mother and her six children were able to celebrate Christmas in their new home. Many gifts including working on the house, serving coffee and meals, donating bunk beds and quilts, and support for this family were graciously accepted and prayerfully acknowledged.

In June 2008, one of our Southwest Area churches in Altus burned to the ground in the early morning hours. The congregation was immediately faced with a decision of whether to fold or find different ways to "do" church. Just the night before congregational leaders and the pastor had discussed over dinner what God's plans for FCC, Altus might be. By late morning, that same group had convened again and decided "whatever it was God was calling them to be or to do, God was not calling them to do it in that building!"



In response to the fire and loss of the building, Week of Compassion, the Regional Church and other local congregations offered their support in prayer, money and in-kind gifts. This continues to happen even now – 8 months later. The Altus congregation has seen this "disaster" as a blessing and is looking forward with renewed vigor in ministry and mission. Within the year they plan to break ground for their new building.

Last fall 23 Oklahoma Disciples traveled to Greensburg, Kansas to assist that community in rebuilding after the tornado that had devastated that community. In February 2009, 26 Oklahomans traveled to Matamoras, Mexico during Week of Compassion to build two casitas for impoverished families living in the area.



In 2008, the Oklahoma Regional Church entered into a partnership with Caminante in the Dominican Republic. Ten Oklahomans traveled to Boca Chica, DR in April for a work/study mission trip, establishing the "Oklahoma Classroom" - a modest setting that provides space for children in the community to receive basic education. We have committed \$6,000. per year to support Caminante's ministries to at-risk children and youth in this beach

community outside the capital city of Santo Domingo. In February, Oklahoma's Regional Pastor, Rev. Thomas R. Jewell, was part of the Global Ministries Pilgrimage delegation that visited the ministries supported by Disciples in the Dominican Republic and Haiti. In March, 2009, 9 Oklahomans returned to Boca Chica to continue work on the classroom. In April, a second mission trip will offer 9 additional Oklahomans an opportunity to view this ministry first hand.

Presently 12 Disciples in the Oklahoma Regional Church have been trained through Global Ministries to be Ministry and Mission Interpreters.

The Oklahoma Regional Church is pleased to report the National Benevolent Association (NBA) has begun remitting quarterly earnings to the regional church from Fellowship of John funds that were given for the expressed purpose of providing benevolent care for those in need. In recent months, NBA has begun distributing those funds directly to Oklahoma so that benevolent care can continue to be offered to those who were residents of the Oklahoma Christian Retirement Community at the time of the NBA bankruptcy in 2005. During the past three years Disciples Retirement Community of Oklahoma (DRCO) has raised \$152,228 and provided benevolent care for 4 residents. Additionally, DRCO has welcomed two representatives from NBA onto the DRCO Board of Directors and looks forward to receiving two representatives from the General Board of the denomination as was outlined in the agreement reached last year.



In 2008 DRCO called the Rev. Billie Lee to serve as Health Care Advocate for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oklahoma. Administered through the regional church, this new position is being funded by DRCO as an extension of its continuing ministry to senior adults. This new position establishes a resource point for health-care services for the regional church. Initially, the thrust of this program will focus on the senior population in our congregations and will eventually be expanded to cover the whole age spectrum of the church.



Begun out of an awareness of the need for solid resources regarding senior health care services, health-care advocacy encompasses guidance to individuals and families as well as activities that promote health and access to health care in our communities and beyond. Such advocacy supports and promotes the rights of the patient in the health care arena and helps to build the capacity to improve community health and enhance health policy initiatives focused on availability, safety and quality care.

Among the first areas addressed through this new position will be surveying the availability and quality of older adult health-care facilities across Oklahoma. Other areas to be addressed will include clergy self care, congregational health fairs, and health education.

Rev. Billie Lee was ordained in 2002 following a long career as a registered nurse. She will continue her ministry as pastor of First Christian Church, Wetumka. Billie can be contacted at

blee@okdisciples.org and, when not “on the road” visiting congregations, will have an office at Oklahoma Disciples Center, 301 N.W. 36th Street, Oklahoma City.

Teaching....Leadership Development...



The Regional Church practices a teaching ministry each summer under the leadership of Associate Regional Pastor, the Rev. Gary Mitchell, when we invite children and youth to discover the fellowship of the wider Christian community as it gathers to learn more about Jesus. In 2008 more than 580 youth were involved in summer camp and conference ministry. Under the leadership of the Rev. Gary Mitchell, Associate Regional Pastor for Children, Youth, and Young Adults and some 154 adults, both lay and clergy, countless hours and several days were provided so a wonderful Disciples educational and recreational opportunity could be experienced by Oklahoma youth.

Following a year-long study conducted by *Kaleidoscope*, an independent organization that assesses non-profit campsites across the United States and specializes in planning services to enable camps, conference centers, retreat centers, environmental education centers and other leisure learning facilities to thrive, the Regional Church Board accepted the recommendation of the Commission on Children, Youth, and Young Adults, to create new opportunities for summer ministries. CrossPoint Camp will be introduced this summer in southern Oklahoma and will feature camping events for four age levels at one time in one location, offering campers new and exciting ways to experience God in a beautiful outdoor setting. CrossPoint campers will find a challenge course, great Bible study, worship, and fun camp activities all centered around a beautiful lake setting. While the format is new and challenging, it has the promise of being a unique camp experience for children, youth, directors, and staff.

In the report to the Regional Church Board, the consultant noted that Central Christian Camp and Conference Center could be a high quality, multi-style site; Camp Christian had the potential to operate viably as a small, rustic camp and retreat center; and that Texoma Christian Camp will have to reinvent itself to have a future. Since each of the campsites are owned and governed by the congregations in the areas directly relating to the campsites, recommendations were forwarded to each campsite’s board or committee for their consideration.

The Institute of Theological Studies (ITS) was begun this past year by the Northeast Area Disciples. A program for furthering biblical study for laity, it is a one day event with prominent speakers, biblical classes, worship, and gathering for fellowship and lunch. The theme for the 2009 event to be held this summer is “W.O.W.” – Words of Worship – and will feature Phillips



Theological Seminary faculty members, Dr. Joe Bessler and Dr. Kay Lynn Northcutt.

The annual Leadership Training School (LTS) that takes place on the last Saturday of each January, was again a huge success. Scores of volunteers gave their time,

talent, and expertise in this morning event held at First Christian Church, Oklahoma City. In 2009, more than 450 of us gathered to experience three different sessions featuring 40 different class topics themed around community, justice, and spirituality.

Associate Regional Pastor, the Rev. Leslie Dotson, works with our Licensed Ministry Training Program (LMTP) which had 5 candidates complete this training since the last General Board. They are Russ Brown, Disciples Christian Church, Newcastle; Summer Powers, Crown Heights Christian Church, Oklahoma City; Jean Scott Gauldin, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oklahoma; Mary Ann Ward, Chickasha; Joe Woods, First Christian Church, Cherokee. Currently the LMTP Board is in the process of revamping the program. Presently there are nine required courses plus a sexual ethics seminar and stole camp. 12 students are now in the program, two of which will soon complete the training. Three new candidates have just been admitted into the program, and another is awaiting a decision on admission.

Stole Camp, a one-day session in practical parish ministries, was held this year at Harvard Avenue Christian Church, Tulsa, in conjunction with Phillips Theological Seminary. This event invites first-year seminarians and participants in the licensed minister training program to be engaged with Regional Church pastoral staff and seminary faculty in particular parish skills crucial for those just beginning ministry in a congregational setting.

Witness...

The Oklahoma Regional Church, through its Faith in Action Commission prepared and published this past year a “Disaster Response Manual” for congregations. It is a helpful guide for church leaders to prepare their congregations on how they can respond to local, regional, national and global disasters.



Last summer Oklahoma Disciple Men hosted Sessions 2008 where nearly 300 men from around the United States and Canada gathered at First Christian Church, Edmond for the four-day event. An outstanding array of speakers featured Rev. Mark Briley, Indianapolis; the Rev. Bill Lee, former General Church Moderator; the Rev. Dr. Rick Lowery, noted Old Testament Bible scholar; and General Minister and President, the Rev. Dr. Sharon E. Watkins. *Acappella* – the fabulous men’s singing group - sang at the opening worship. Men enjoyed workshops, golf and softball, working on a Habitat home, and the sights of Oklahoma City.

This year’s Oklahoma Disciple Men’s retreat featured the return of Rev. Mark Briley who spoke on the healing of the nations from the book of Revelation as 70 men gathered for the two-day event held at Central Christian Camp and Conference Center, Guthrie.

Oklahoma Disciples’ Women, under the pastoral leadership of Associate Regional Pastor, the Rev. Loma Sullivan, are raising funds to support bringing an international guest to Quadrennial Assembly in 2010. After consultation with the Office of Disciples Women, Indianapolis, we’re

hoping this international guest will be from Caminante - our Global Ministries Partner in Dominican Republic – which is currently being supported by Disciples women. So far we have raised more than \$3,000 which will be added to the Oklahoma Regional Church's support of this ministry in 2009.

In 2008 our women's Encounter held at First Christian Church, Stillwater, had as its theme "Stepping Stones on the Journey – Dealing with Our Stuff." We were led by our keynoter, Rev. Mary Ann Glover, who challenged us to examine our priorities and responses to the events of our lives with an eye on how this affects our ability to minister to one another and others in healthy relationships.

This past year the Commission on Worship and Spiritual Growth affirmed the tradition of the publishing Advent and Lenten devotional booklets featuring the witnesses of clergy and lay persons from throughout the Regional Church. A different devotional was featured each day on the region's website www.okdisciples.org. The devotional booklets are enthusiastically received by congregations which often download and print copies for their members use.

A Senior Adult Retreat – the first ever held by the Oklahoma Regional Church - is scheduled for late April, 2009. It is an initial offering by the Commission on the Laity to minister to congregation members who are 55 years of age or older. The Rev. Dr. W. Darwin Collins, Vice President of Christian Church Foundation and a gourmet chef, will lead this group in a Bible study of the preparation of food for the "table of God." This promises to be both fun and educational for participants who will be able to share their learning with their congregations.

The 2008 campaign of the Annual Fund of the Christian Church in Oklahoma received total contributions of \$128,747 for the various ministries of the Regional Church. Special thanks to former regional church moderator, Mrs. Clarice Morrison, Oklahoma City, for chairing the 2008 campaign. Mr. Paul Thompson, immediate past regional church moderator, will work with the Rev. Charles Hattendorf, Oklahoma Associate Regional Pastor, and the Annual Fund Director in the 2009 campaign.



Even with the extreme deterioration of the financial markets during the last half of 2008, The Oklahoma Disciples Foundation (ODF) was able to distribute from 68 named endowment funds \$239,508.74 – a decrease of only 12.85% from the 2008 distribution. The distributions benefit



congregational ministries, Regional Church ministries – including campsites, Phillips Theological Seminary, women's and men's ministries, scholarships, clergy support, minority and small congregations' ministries – as well as ministries of global outreach. ODF is governed by an Oklahoma board of directors and is served by the Executive Director, the Rev. Dr. Kyle Maxwell, and the Director of Operations, Dr. Vicki Rose.

New Congregations...



Along with other efforts overseen by the Oklahoma Regional Church's New Church Establishment Council, two new congregations received their charters at the 2008 Oklahoma Regional Church Assembly: In the Spirit Christian Church, Tulsa, and Carney Christian Church, Carney. Additionally, the Oklahoma Regional Board last month approved New Beginnings Christian Church, Tulsa as a "Congregation in Formation."

Pastoral Care...

The Oklahoma Regional Church staff begins each Wednesday morning with a half-hour of devotion which includes praying for a specific, different Oklahoma congregation and its staff each week throughout the year. Led by pastoral and office staff, the joys and concerns of other Regional Churches, their staffs, as well as the General Church staff are always included in this weekly devotional time.

A well-established tradition continued to flourish this past year as ordained and licensed ministers were, once again, invited to Advent and Lenten worship services celebrated by the regional church pastoral staff. Hosting this past year occasions for Advent: First Christian Church, Bartlesville, and Wildewood Christian Church, OKC, and for Lent: Yale Avenue Christian Church, Tulsa, and Hillcrest Christian Church, Oklahoma City.

As a direct result of interest expressed by some 50 clergywomen that attended a brunch at the 2008 Regional Church Assembly, Disciples women are sponsoring Oklahoma's first clergywomen retreat which is scheduled in mid-April, 2009. We have approximately 90-100 clergywomen (ordained, licensed or seminary student) in Oklahoma. The retreat will feature the Rev. Dr. Nancy Claire Pittman, of Phillips Theological Seminary, as our guest speaker.

A Pastoral Care Fund, established nearly 20 years ago, continues to be available to both licensed and ordained ministers who hold standing with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oklahoma. Last year, more than \$5,000 was distributed as a result of emergency and special requests.



The Oklahoma Regional Church, in covenant with three congregations, ordained three persons into ministry since our last General Board meeting: Noe Godoy, Memorial Christian Church, Oklahoma City; LeAnn Sapp, First Christian Church, Stillwater; Dianna Izquierdo, Bethany Christian Church, Tulsa.

Each October, the Oklahoma Regional Church lifts up a Month of Ministry to recognize and honor those who have

entered the vocation of ordained or licensed ministry. Last year, we had 317 ordained and licensed ministers in our regional church and we proudly shared the names of ten currently serving Oklahoma Disciples ministers who had been in their present ministry site for twenty or more years: Rev. William Sims, Wildewood Christian Church, Oklahoma City; Rev. Ron Nofzinger, Hillcrest Hospital, Tulsa; Rev. Paul Krueger, Woodlands Christian Church, Ponca City; Rev. Dr. Gery Kinder, Community Christian Church, Tulsa; Rev. Timothy D. Pool, New Covenant Christian Church, OKC; Rev. Les Brown, First Christian Church, Midwest City; Rev. Dennis Clark, First Christian Church, Guthrie; Rev. Mike Albert, Yale Avenue Christian Church, Tulsa; and Rev. Dr. Gary Byrkit, Southern Hills Christian Church, Edmond.

Transformation...

The Oklahoma Regional Church's Transformation Team has been actively engaged in promoting, encouraging and equipping local congregational leaders in Transformation initiatives. Important transformation-related events taking place during the past year include:

1. The Oklahoma Regional Church hosted the three regions "GPS Conference" held in Oklahoma City in January, 2009. More than 100 individuals from churches in these three regions shared in transformation worship experiences together, participated in meaningful and practical workshops and were inspired by the leadership of keynote speakers Dr. Ben Bohren and Rev. Sandhya Jha.
2. In early 2008 16 Oklahoma pastors and lay leaders received intensive training to become "transformation coaches." With this training they are equipped to assist congregations through a transformation process named "Spiritual Strategic Journey."
3. When the 2008 Regional Church Assembly met in April, 2008, at Harvard Avenue Christian Church, Tulsa we gathered around the theme, "A New Thing Springs Forth" based on Isaiah 43:19 – 'I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?' Featuring the Rev. Dr. Alan Roxburgh, one of the principals of Allelon and president of the Mission Leadership Institute, assembly participants were challenged to learn how God makes numerous attempts to transform creation, even us.
4. Under the editorial hand of the Rev. Charles Hattendorf, the Regional Church's Transformation Team is publishing and distributing a bi-monthly newsletter, "Transformation Topics" that features current articles about Oklahoma pastors and congregations engaged in transformation ministries as well as noting national trends in this growing field.



The Oklahoma Regional Church Transformation Team has found particularly helpful the resources materials made available on the Division of Homeland Ministries website. And, several congregations in the regional church have received benefit from Church Extension's "New Beginnings" program.

The Oklahoma Regional Church's transformation efforts could become more effective if the Division of Homeland Ministries would find, develop and post fresh transformation materials, including "testimonials" from individuals and congregations who have found God's presence in their lives to be transformational.

Pro-Reconciliation/Anti-Racism...

Upon the initiative of the Commission on Clergy, the Oklahoma Regional Church is applying for a grant to fund a program of cultural sensitivity and tolerance that will be for all clergy with standing in Oklahoma. A selection of one-day retreat programs is planned for spring, 2010.

In May 2008 the Regional Church's Reconciliation Council approved grants totaling \$13,000 to three Disciples-related organizations:

- Village Ventures (sponsored by Village Christian Church, Oklahoma City) – an after-school mentoring program for at-risk minority children;
- Great Plains Literacy Council (sponsored by First Christian Church, Altus) – teaching English to Hispanic families in Southwest Oklahoma;
- Samaritan Counseling and Growth Center (sponsored by First Christian Church, Bartlesville) -- counseling for Hispanic families in Northeast Oklahoma.

