



**Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
General Board  
April 17-20, 2010**

**Annual Report  
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in North Carolina  
John M. Richardson, Regional Minister**

*This report responds to the question: “How you are a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world?” It also includes other pertinent information regarding our regional ministry.*

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in North Carolina (CCNC) is a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world through a variety of ministries, relationships, and partnerships. Rarely can we claim any of these to be an “exclusive” ministry of our region. They are always done in partnership with the local church, general church, or ecumenical church.



**Pentecost Sunday Worship Service– 2009**

Certainly one of the most spirit-filled moments in our movement for wholeness came on Pentecost Sunday evening at a worship service in the sanctuary of St. Mark’s Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ in Goldsboro, North Carolina. Bishop Alton Smith, pastor at St. Mark’s Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ and newly installed General Bishop of the Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ International was the host pastor and worship leader. General Minister and President Sharon Watkins was the preacher. It was the first time the General Minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the General Bishop of the Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ had ever led a worship service together. Our worship that evening was glimpse—a magnificent glimpse—of what Disciples of Christ can be as whole church.

After this report is written, but prior to the 2010 General Board meeting, the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Black Minister’s Retreat will be hosted by Bishop Chester Aycok and the Goldsboro-Raleigh District of the Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ International, on March 1-4, at the District headquarters building in Goldsboro, North Carolina. This is the first time the Black Minister’s Retreat will be hosted by one of the Districts of the Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ International.



Under the leadership of Elder Valerie Melvin, planning began in early 2009 on our 2010 Regional Assembly with the theme of “One Church, One Dream.” One of the highlights will be a workshop where a panel of speakers will explore the histories of the Christian Church in North Carolina, the Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ International (commonly known as the Assemblies), and the Piedmont District (historically known as the Tri-State Convention). These are the three streams of Disciples of Christ in the region of North Carolina—our waters flowing together, yet within three distinct watersheds

All these events offer opportunities for bringing wholeness to a fragmented church and world due to racism. Yet, there are challenges. Currently most of the congregations of the Churches of Christ, Disciples of Christ International are recognized in the Year Book & Directory under the Region of North Carolina. However, the Assemblies’ Districts and District offices of bishop, which are somewhat like our regions and regional ministers, are not recognized. The General Assembly of the Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ International is not recognized, nor is the Office of General Bishop. Even though the individuals who serve in the offices of district bishop and general bishop are respected and valued, the ecclesiastical offices in which each serves needs to be recognized by our General Assembly, since the congregations they oversee are listed in our Year Book & Directory. I recommend the General Board begin a process to recognize the offices of pastoral overseers among our sisters and brothers within the Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ International.

2009 was the second year the CCNC partnered with our seven sister regions in the Southeast Regional Fellowship (SERF) in our common Anti-Racism/Pro-Reconciliation Ministries. The Reverend Sèkinah Hamlin Sullivan continues to offer excellent leadership to this ministry, and in the challenging task of “working for” eight regional ministers. The Reverend Hamlin Sullivan presence and leadership has been important in each of the above mentioned events.

The new ministries, in 2009, of First Christian Church in Charlotte are of particular note. On Christmas Eve 2008 the congregation opened their first soup kitchen for those in need of a

hot meal in Charlotte. They have offered a Wednesday noon meal every Wednesday since then. In May 2009 they added a Monday noon meal as well. Each Monday and Wednesday of every week the congregations hosts fifty or more people for a meal, and volunteers have never been in short supply. During the same period congregation has welcomed a community of some sixty Vietnamese Montagnard individuals into the life of their congregation—doubling their average worship attendance. Most of the Montagnards speak little English and so two new classes were started on Sunday morning of English as a second language.

Our regional youth ministries continue to offer opportunities for learning and experiencing the brokenness of our world due to injustice, poverty, and racism, as well as, opportunities for nurturing their spiritual lives. Due to financial challenges, we have been without a staff person to lead our youth and camp and conference ministries, or a regional camp manager. A group of volunteers has stepped in to do an excellent job during the past year. We hope to fill both of these positions, at least on a part-time basis, during 2010. Our 2009 camp and conference season was excellent, with over 500 youth participating.

The Disciples Women in the region of North Carolina are the strongest they have been in many years. Elder Valerie Melvin has offered excellent leadership to this ministry, as well all we do in partnership with the Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ. We look forward to Disciples women (and maybe a few good men) from across North America, and around the world, coming to Greensboro, North Carolina on June 23-27 for the 2010 Quadrennial.

Since the year 2000, sixteen new congregations have been established or affiliated with the region of North Carolina. Most are congregations of color, including one Filipino congregation. A disappointment and challenge is that, to date, we have not had a successful new church start of a Hispanic congregation. We continue to work towards meeting that need.

In the not too far distant future the state of North Carolina will have the fifth highest population of all fifty states. Or, as one North Carolina, politician told me, “Before you retire, the state of North Carolina will be able to determine who the president of the United States will be.” Whether that is true or not, our region does have three major metropolitan areas that are growing, and are predicated to continue to grow for years to come. None of the three have an adequate number of Disciples of Christ congregations. We will continue to work toward addressing that challenge.

The Disciples on Campus at Barton College partnered this academic year with Week of Compassion to establish Campus Compassion. The Reverend Hollie Woodruff, Barton College Chaplin, and the Reverend Amy Gopp, Executive Director of Week of Compassion are leading a group of students in what it means to live out our faith as people of compassion. The learning experiences include an alternative spring break mission trip. The format of this program will be shared with the chaplains from all Disciples related colleges and universities in a retreat later this academic year.

In February 2010 our region hosted a Congregational Transformational event on the campus of Barton College. Over 150 individuals attended. The Reverend Bill McConnell did an excellent job as the keynote presenter. Hopefully the fruit of this event will be realized for sometime to come. We plan to follow it with additional congregational transformational events, at least annually for the foreseeable future. A lay person, Dawn Steadman from First Christian Church, Greensboro, North Carolina volunteered to take the lead in planning this event. She did an excellent job.

Currently the CCNC and the State of North Carolina has the presence and leadership of the Reverend Dr. William Barber, pastor of Greenleaf Christian Church, Goldsboro, North

Carolina. Dr. Barber is the current president of the North Carolina chapter of the NAACP. I am confident that not all Disciples in North Carolina agree with everything Dr. Barber says or does, but he is certainly a powerful, prophetic voice on issues of justice. He has the respect of a large part of the ecumenical faith community throughout North Carolina, as he calls the church and the state to honestly face issue of justice. I am grateful for his powerful and faithful public voice.

In closing I offer my deep gratitude to the dedicated individuals with whom I serve on the regional staff of the Christian Church in North Carolina...

Billy Creech, Camp Caroline Maintenance Staff (1/4 time)

James Bussell, Communications Coordinator (1/8 time volunteer)

Angie Hackett, Administrative Assistant (3/4 time)

Sèkinah Hamlin Sullivan, Minister of Anti-Racism & Reconciliation (Full Time/Shared SERF)

Bob Kennel, New Church Coordinator (Volunteer)

Valerie Melvin, Associate Regional Minister (1/2 time)

Lisa Tedder, Finance Manager (Full time)

J. O. Williams, Capital Campaign Director (1/5 time)