

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)



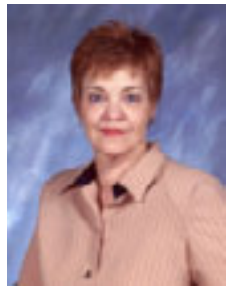
Rev. Charles Hattendorf
Assoc. Regional Pastor
(M/W)



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



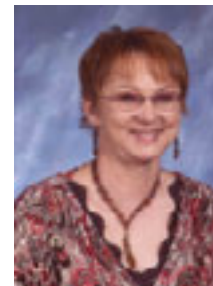
Rev. Leslie Dotson
Assoc. Regional Pastor
(F/W)



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



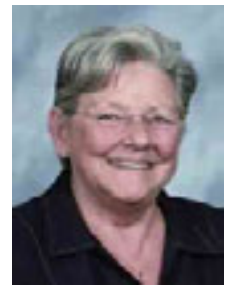
Mr. Richard Keith
Financial Administrator
(M/W)



Ms. Laura Townsley
Administrative Assistant
(F/W)



Ms. Joyce McLendon
Administrative Assistant
(F/W)



Rev. 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
(for Caminante)
(F/B)

Regional Campsite Administrators:



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



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

Mr. Jeff Kendall
Camp Christian
(M/W)

Number of Congregations: 173
Congregations in Formation: 1

Total Members: 37,301
Participating: 24,535
Worship Attendance: 13,933

States included in the Region:
Oklahoma

Website: www.okdisciples.org

The Oklahoma Regional Church is becoming “a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world” thru.....

Mission and 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.



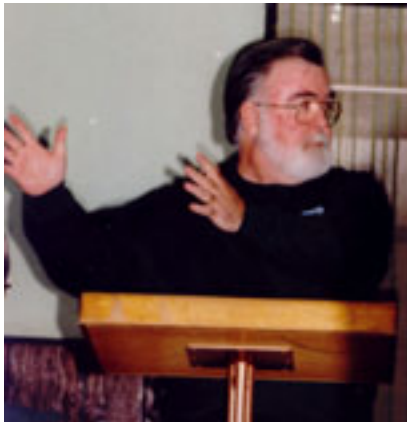
Oklahoma Disciples in the Central Area dedicated their sixth Habitat for Humanity home in October, 2009. Through donations of time, talents, and treasure from scores of Disciples, a new home was constructed at Hope Crossing – a special “Habitat for Humanity” development complete with park and playground right in the heart of northeast Oklahoma City. What was unique about this “build” was that for the first time, members of all three streams in the Stone-Campbell movement – the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), the Christian Church, and the Churches of Christ – participated together in donating countless hours of labor and dollars towards this “build.” All of this was to celebrate the 200th anniversary of Thomas Campbell’s “Declaration and Address” – the founding document for a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world.

This February, 17 Oklahoma Disciples traveled to New Orleans to work with the hurricane recovery efforts. For the past six years, the regional church’s annual “Week of Compassion” mission trip, has found Oklahomans in Kansas, Mexico, Texas, and Louisiana responding directly through their dedicated actions in building and rebuilding efforts.

The Oklahoma regional church’s mission partnership with Caminante in the Dominican Republic continues to grow. Last March, 21 Oklahoma Disciples traveled to the Dominican Republic to work with Caminante and its ministries to children and youth in Boca Chica. In 2009, \$7,200 was sent from the Oklahoma regional church to Caminante (through Global Ministries) to provide financial support. 12 Disciples, including Associate Regional Church Pastor, the Rev. Gary Mitchell, participated in a mission trip to Caminante in January 2010. Three additional mission trips, including one designed especially for Oklahoma youth, are planned to the island of Hispaniola in 2010.



At this year’s Regional Church Assembly, we will welcome our mission intern, Ms. Erin McKinney, and the head of Caminante, our mission partner, Sister Denisse Picardo as special guests.



The Rev. John P. McLemore, Senior Pastor of Central Christian Church, Enid, has been elected to serve Disciples Retirement Community of Oklahoma, Inc. as its President for 2010. John has served as a member of the DRCO Board of Directors since 2007 and currently represents the Oklahoma Regional Church on the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada.

DRCO was established in 2005 by the Oklahoma Regional Church Board to receive funds from congregations and individuals that wished to help support Disciples residents of record when NBA Oklahoma Christian Retirement Community, Edmond was sold by NBA. Since its creation, several individuals whose funds have been exhausted have benefited from the ministry of DRCO. In these last five years, over \$305,000 has been received and more than \$229,000 has been spent to insure that the needs of Oklahoma senior adults do not go unmet.

In 2008, the Rev. Billie Lee was called to become the Regional Church Health Care Advocate as DRCO continues to expand its ministries. This position is being funded by DRCO as an extension of its continuing ministry to senior adults. Billie has become a resource person for health-care services for the regional church. Initially, the thrust of this program has been focused 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.

Teaching....Leadership Development...

The Regional Church practices a teaching ministry each summer under the leadership of Associate Regional Church 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 2009 more than 592 youth were involved in the summer ministries program of the regional church. Under the leadership of the Rev. Gary Mitchell, Associate Regional Church Pastor for Children, Youth, and Young Adults and some 161



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.

The Oklahoma Commission on Children, Youth, and Young Adults, as a part of the discernment process and an ongoing desire to create the best possible summer ministry programming, is continuing to create and live into a vision which:

- Seeks to create meaningful events which appeal to more participants in each age level.
- Encourages and resources participants to seek God in tradition and innovation.
- Creates program standards including health, safety, activities, and facilities.
- Maximizes limited resources by increasing numbers of camp participants at all events.
- Reflects the connection of all Oklahoma Disciples congregations in ministry together.

Crosspoint Camp, a multi-age summer ministry experience in 2009, exceeded expectations in regard to facility and having certified Crosspoint Camp program staff available for camp activities. Children and youth were challenged to learn more about their capabilities on the camp challenge courses, a five story climbing wall, and a myriad of water based activities!



CYF Mission Camp, held in Stillwater, Oklahoma, will be an **addition** to the 2010 summer ministry schedule. Participants and adult sponsors will be lodged in a local hotel and will do local mission projects. As of February 2, the new CYF Mission Camp event already had **100 registrations**.

Changes to this year's schedule for summer ministries include: *Discovery Camps*: Low attendance at Discovery Camp II at Central Camp and Discovery Camp at Camp Christian led to reduction of these camps from the schedule. In 2009, each of these camps had thirteen campers. *Central Mid-High Camp*: Removing this camp from the schedule at Central Christian Camp allows for an increase of campers in CYF and in Chi Rho camp numbers. *Camp Christian CYF*: Twenty three campers in 2009 led the commission to decide not to schedule this event in 2010 at Camp Christian. CYF aged campers will have the opportunity to join campers from around the regional church in three other CYF summer ministry events. These changes in the summer ministry schedule for 2010 reflect the opportunity to increase camper numbers at other regional summer ministry events while significantly reducing the numbers of directors and staff needed to sustain these programs.

When Crosspoint Camp was added to the schedule, the commission anticipated a reduction in summer ministry numbers of approximately 80 campers due to Texoma Christian Camp offering their own programming. In reality, during 2009, our summer ministry program had a **net increase** of 12 campers over our 2008 totals.

The commission continues to consider new approaches to summer ministries. Future ministry opportunities might include regional church mission trips, a Disciples history tour, mountain experiences, and other events that the discernment process may reveal.



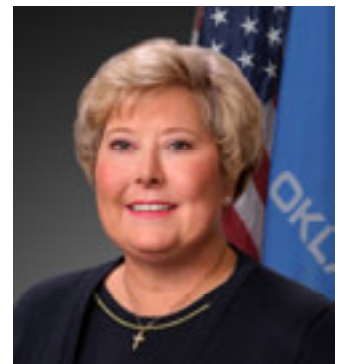
The annual Leadership Training School (LTS) that takes place on the last Saturday of each January was postponed to the first Saturday in February this year because of winter weather. While attendance dipped slightly (some instructors could not reschedule and some attendees could not be present on this new weekend), still nearly 300 persons benefited from three different sessions featuring 43 different class topics themed around ‘planting

hope, growing faith.” Scores of volunteers gave their time, talent, and expertise in this morning event held at First Christian Church, Oklahoma City.

Associate Regional Church Pastor, the Rev. Leslie Dotson, works with our Licensed Ministry Training Program (LMTP) which had 2 candidates complete this training since the last General Board. They are John Zook, Waukomis Christian Church, Waukomis and Lynda Powell, Britton Christian Church, Oklahoma City. Currently the LMTP Board supervises a program that consists of twelve required courses plus a sexual ethics seminar and stole camp. 12 students are now in the program.

Stole Camp, a one-day session in practical parish ministries, was held this year at Crown Heights Christian Church, Oklahoma City, 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.

Oklahoma’s 2010 Regional Church Assembly, April 22 – 24 in Enid, features Lt. Governor Jari Askins as the speaker at the opening worship. Askins is an active member of First Christian Church, Duncan and will address the assembly about the “Issues and Needs of Children in Oklahoma.” Continuing with the theme of “Here There and Everywhere; Oklahoma Disciples in Faithful Mission,” General Minister and President Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins will speak to the assembly about “Movement for Wholeness in a Fragmented World,” and newly ordained Rev. Bethany Lowery will preach the closing worship about the church’s mission around the world.



Witness...

The Oklahoma regional church, through its Faith in Action Commission has been active in helping to plan the 2010 Oklahoma Regional Assembly with its theme “Here, There, and Everywhere” – emphasizing local, area and global mission opportunities.



This year’s Oklahoma Disciple Men’s retreat addressed the question: “What does it mean to be a man of faith in today’s world?” Three speakers from three generations challenged men gathered from across the regional church to “man up”! This two-day event is held at Central Christian Camp and Conference Center, Guthrie.

Oklahoma Disciple Women under the pastoral leadership of Associate Regional Church Pastor, the Rev. Loma Sullivan are hosting with the Great River Region Disciple Women an international guest for Quadrennial Assembly in 2010. She is Sister Denisse Picardo of Caminante – our Global Ministries Partner in the Dominican Republic. This past year Oklahoma Disciple Women have raised more than \$6,000 which will be added to the Oklahoma Regional Church’s support of Caminante in 2010.

In 2009 our women’s Encounter held at First Christian Church, Stillwater, had as its theme “Let Justice Roll Down Like Water . . .” We were led by our keynoter, Rev. Susan Dewey-Gonzales, who challenged us to seek justice in all our dealings with others.

For 2010, we have planned to return to our Disciple Women spring events which we call PREVIEW and will be held in three congregations across the regional church. We are promoting attendance at Quadrennial, use of Disciple Women’s study materials and involvement in the social justice issue of Breaking the Chains of Human Trafficking – an International Disciples Women priority.

This past year the Commission on Worship and Spiritual Growth affirmed the tradition of 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.

The 2009 campaign of the **Annual Fund** of the Christian Church in Oklahoma received total contributions of \$131,644 for the various ministries of the regional church. Special thanks to former regional church moderator, Mr. Paul Thompson, Tulsa, for chairing the 2009 campaign. In such uncertain financial times, it



was encouraging to have our Annual Fund exceed its goal by more than \$2,000. In fact, the 2009 total reflected a **2.2% increase** over 2008!

Even with the extreme deterioration of the markets during the last half of 2008, The **Oklahoma Disciples Foundation** (ODF) was able to distribute from more than 70 named endowment funds \$244,639.10 – an increase of 2.1% over 2009. 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...

The Oklahoma regional church board approved the chartering of New Beginnings Christian Church, Tulsa as the newest Oklahoma Disciples congregation. This congregation will receive its charter at the Oklahoma Regional Church Assembly in April 2010. The Northeast Area of the regional church has formally established a new church “planting team” to encourage and support new church efforts in that area. The Christian Church Commission of Oklahoma City has endorsed funding for new church starts in the metropolitan Oklahoma City area and is looking to call a new church planter to actively begin a new church start in early 2010.

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 worships celebrated by the regional church pastoral staff.

Hosting this past year occasions for Advent: First Christian Church, Tulsa, and Midwest Boulevard Christian Church, Midwest City and for Lent: Brookhaven Christian Church, Tulsa, and Northwest Christian Church, Oklahoma City.

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 \$6,000 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: Kathy Weaver, Northwest Christian Church, Oklahoma City; Bethany Lowery, Disciples Christian Church, Bartlesville and First Christian Church, Nowata; Russ Albrecht, Bethany Christian Church, Tulsa.

Transformation...

The Oklahoma Regional Church's Transformation Team has been actively engaged in promoting, encouraging and equipping local congregational leaders in transformation initiatives. Under the editorial hand of Rev. Charles Hattendorf, the Regional Church's Transformation Team is publishing and distributing a bi-monthly newsletter, "Transformation Voices," that features current articles about Oklahoma pastors and congregations engaged in transformation ministries as well as noting national trends in this growing area.

Interest by Oklahoma congregations in congregational transformation seems to have ebbed somewhat in this past year. It would be helpful to have fresh transformational materials discovered, developed and posted by the Disciples Home Mission.

Pro-Reconciliation/Anti-Racism...

Thanks to the generosity of the Oreon E. Scott Foundation, Reconciliation Ministries and the Oklahoma Reconciliation Council, the Oklahoma Commission on Clergy has planned and scheduled in 2010 several reconciliation workshops entitled "Speaking the Truth in Love". Under the leadership of noted Disciple, Christian Piatt, Oklahoma Disciples clergy will be invited to identify areas of intolerance and insensitivity in their congregations and communities and provide them with skills for reconciliation.

Last May, the Regional Church's Reconciliation Council approved grants totaling \$15,500 to five Disciples-related Reconciliation initiatives:

- HELP (Health and English Language Project), Great Plains Literacy Council and First Christian Church, Altus
- Project Promise, Wildewood Christian Church, Oklahoma City
- Agape Camp, Southern Hills Christian Church, Edmond
- Math & Reading Saturday School, New Vessels Christian Church, Oklahoma City
- ARMS (Adult Role Models) Mentoring Program, Northern Oklahoma Youth Council and First Christian Church, Ponca City
- Clergy Diversity Training Workshops, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oklahoma.

Oklahoman elected General Church Moderator!

Mr. Larry Brown, former Regional Moderator of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oklahoma, was elected General Church Moderator of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada at last summer's General Assembly in Indianapolis. Larry and his wife, Diana, are members of First Christian Church, Chickasha, where he has served as committee chair, elder, and moderator of the congregation. In Oklahoma Regional Church life, Larry was moderator (1998-2000). He also chaired Miracle Day in 2002 and the Annual Fund Steering Committee in 2004. Larry also served as a member of the Regional Church Commission on Clergy for three terms and chaired the Commission in 1997.