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The mission of the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region is to encourage and equip its congregations and pastors for the ministry of Jesus Christ in local communities and throughout the world, while seeking to nurture them into deeper relationship with God, with each other, and with the whole Church.

Important Dates to Remember

June
1
Pentecost Sunday

7
Miracle Day (8:00 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.) - First Christian Church, Tuscaloosa

8 - 13
Beach Camp - (“The Lighthouse” Retreat Center at Romar Beach Baptist Church) - Orange Beach, AL

21 - 23
Genesis Camp - YMCA-Camp Chandler

21 - 23
Discovery Camp - YMCA-Camp Chandler

21
Regional Convocation One-Day Workshop (8:00 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.) - Edward Point Christian, Century, FL

23 - 27
Junior Camp, Chi Rho Camp, and CYF Conference - YMCA-Camp Chandler

25 - 29
ICWF Quadrennial Assembly - Atlanta, GA

July
16 - 19
National Hispanic and Bilingual Assembly - San Diego, CA

19
Commissioning and Ordination South (9:15 a.m.) - United Christian, Montgomery

20
District 3 Anti-Racism Workshop (4:00 - 6:00 p.m.) - Mt. Calvary Missionary Christian, Tuskegee

24 - 27
23rd Biennial Session of the National Convocation - Columbus, Ohio

27 - 31
Gathering for Regional Youth Council members in SERF - Christmount

August
6 - 9
North American Pacific Asian Disciples Convocation - Chicago, IL

9
Clergy-Women’s Luncheon (11:30a.m. - 1:30 p.m.) - Regional Office, Helena

10
District 4 Anti-Racism Workshop (4:00 - 6:00 p.m.) - United Christian, Montgomery

20 - 23
College of Regional Ministers/Forum of Regional Moderators - Indianapolis, IN

24
Senior Adult Sunday in Alabama-Northwest Florida

“We are Disciples of Christ, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. As part of the one body of Christ, we welcome all to the Lord’s Table as God has welcomed us.”

– 2007 Disciples Identity Statement
REFLECTIONS FROM THE REGIONAL MINISTER

We talk a lot about “love” in the church. Our message to the world is that in Jesus Christ we have come to know of the unconditional love of God which has the power to forgive and transform our lives. We quote John 3:16, which speaks of God’s love in Jesus Christ and indicates that embracing this love in faith will save us and give us new life. It is a simple message, but a powerful one.

I believe that people outside the church are paying attention when we speak this message. My hunch is that most people would like to believe that such a message could actually be true. They have been disappointed by promises of earthly love that have come up empty. The idea of a love that is big enough and strong enough to hold them in spite of failures and difficulties is a refreshing message indeed. But many people in the world today are not simply going to believe the church’s message just because we proclaim it. They are watching us, the church, to see if the love we spend so much time talking about is for real. Sadly, the church is often a poor representation of the love it preaches. So much is at stake when this happens, for the world turns the other way convinced that there is nothing extraordinary about the love we preach.

For example, when the world looks at the church and sees division, it is an indication that although we talk a lot about love, it isn’t strong enough to keep us united. Jesus prayed fervently on the eve of his death that his followers would be one – united in love – “that the world may know...” (John 17:22) Unity among Christ’s followers is important because of the message it gives to the world – that in God’s love, we are family. In God’s love, we can look, think, and act differently and still be one. The extraordinary love of God is powerful enough to include all of us. That’s the message the world wants and needs. But when they see a church broken apart by division, judgment, and competition, they assume that the love we proclaim is no different from the common love that can be found in the world – the kind of love that is here today and gone tomorrow – the kind of love that comes and goes with our changing appetites. There is nothing compelling about that kind of love. If that is all the church is offering to the world, no wonder there seems to be a lack of interest in the church today, especially among young people.

Jesus prayed that the world would know the authenticity of God’s love by the unity of those who have embraced God’s love in faith. I believe unity must be a priority for the church and we should find ways to express it whenever and wherever we can. It needs to be the kind of unity that is expressed among people who are different – from different backgrounds, cultures, and theological and political perspectives. There is nothing newsworthy about unity in the church when everybody acts and thinks alike. That kind of unity more resembles a clique, which is very common in today’s world in many clubs and organizations. But there IS something newsworthy about a unity that crosses all barriers and differences to bring people into relationship as brothers and sisters.

Disciples were born as a unity movement. Still today we seek to be a “movement for wholeness” (unity) in a world that is quite fragmented. So much is at stake. May we not be the ones who, because of self-centered and divisive commitments, cause the world around us to assume there is nothing special about the love we preach. We are being watched. What messages concerning God’s love are being formed by those who are observing us?

Your Partner in Ministry,
John P. Mobley
NEARLY 200 ALABAMA-NORTHWEST FLORIDA DISCIPLES
GATHERED FOR THE 2014 REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

On April 25-27, 2014, nearly 200 Disciples from congregations all across Alabama-Northwest Florida gathered in Fort Walton Beach, Florida for the 2014 Regional Assembly. The theme was “Love One Another - Amemonos Unos A Otros.” First Christian Church, Fort Walton Beach, and Primera Iglesia Cristiana, Fort Walton Beach, served as co-hosts for the biennial gathering. Special guest preachers included Rev. Juan Rodriguez, Regional Minister in Florida, Rev. April Johnson, Minister of Reconciliation, and Rev. Jose Diaz, one of the host pastors. Also in attendance was Rev. Samuel Bustillo, President of the Evangelical and Reformed Church in Honduras, which is in a formal ministry partnership with the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region.

New officers were elected for the 2014-2016 biennium. They include Jan Pooley (Moderator), Cameron Douglas (Moderator-Elect), Gerri Johnson (First Vice Moderator), Loretta Rucker (Second Vice Moderator), and Carmencita Ortiz (Secretary-Treasurer).
MEET THE NEW REGIONAL MODERATOR

The Moderator for the 2014-2016 biennium is Jan Pooley, a layperson from First Christian Church, Fort Walton Beach. Jan has served in many roles in her home congregation, including service as an elder. In the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region she has served as chairperson of the Division of Mission, and she has served on the Disciples Women’s Cabinet. She currently chairs the Honduras Partnerships Task Group and has been a part of three different delegations to Honduras since 2010. She has completed a Global Ministries training event in Cleveland, Ohio, which enabled her to serve as a Mission and Ministry Interpreter. A few years ago, Jan worked closely with Week of Compassion and the Office of Disciples Volunteering in recovery efforts following Hurricane Katrina.

Jan brings a competent and willing spirit to everything of which she is part. The Alabama-Northwest Florida Region is blessed to have her leading a fine team of elected officers during the 2014-2016 biennium.

ALABAMA-NORTHWEST FLORIDA REGION WILL SPONSOR ITS 8TH REGION-WIDE MIRACLE DAY ON JUNE 7, 2014

Since the year 2000, the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region has sponsored Miracle Days in early June on even-numbered years. This year, on Saturday, June 7, 2014, the Region will sponsor its 8th Region-wide Miracle Day at First Christian Church, Tuscaloosa. In past Miracle Days, Disciples from congregations all across the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region have come together as an expression of unity to work on projects that will strengthen the host congregation’s capacity for ministry in its community. The work projects require many laborers, included skilled and unskilled workers. On Miracle Days there is always plenty to do as persons work side by side on indoor and outdoor projects.

The host congregation has a list of improvements that are needed and which will add to the congregation’s ministry. The required volunteer forms have been provided to pastors and local coordinators. They are also available on the Region’s web-site. Although it is very helpful to have those forms mailed in before Miracle Day, it will also be possible for persons to register on-site. Individuals who would like to make a monetary donation or mail their volunteer forms to the Miracle Day Committee are asked to mail them to Miracle Day, 627 Paul W. Bryant Drive, Tuscaloosa, AL 35401.

CONGREGATIONS SEEKING A MINISTER

Hartselle, First (Jerry Ridling is Interim)
Mobile, Azalea Hills (Phillip Hayes is Interim)
White Hall, Mt. Zion
ALABAMA-NORTHWEST FLORIDA REGIONAL CONVOCATION  
IS SPONSORING A ONE-DAY WORKSHOP

On Saturday, June 21, 2014, the Regional Convocation in Alabama-Northwest Florida will sponsor a workshop that is open to all Disciples in the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region. The workshop will take place at Edward Point Christian Church in Century, FL. The theme, taken from Joshua 4, is “From Promise to Fulfillment.” Participants will have an opportunity to learn more about the heritage of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) even as they explore ways to be faithful Disciples in the future.

The planning team and the host congregation are hard at work to make sure this day is a worthwhile day for all. There will be an opportunity for worship, learning and fellowship. Registration is $25/adults and $15/youth. Registration forms were included in the May Leader’s Packet, which was mailed and which is also on the Region’s web-site www.alnwfldisciples.org. The registration will open at 8:00 a.m. and the activities will conclude around 3:30 p.m.

NEWS OF THE CLERGY

Phillip Hayes began his service as Interim Minister with Azalea Hills Christian Church, Mobile, on May 1. Clint Coffey has been called to serve as pastor with First Christian Church, Athens, beginning in June. C.J. Cobb will conclude his service as Interim Minister at the end of May. Jeremy Harbin has ended his ministry with First Christian Church, Hartselle. Jerry Ridling began his service as Interim Minister in May. Franklin Nettles has resigned as pastor with Mt. Zion Christian Church in White Hall in order to start a new ministry. His final Sunday at Mt. Zion will be May 26.

The Alabama-Northwest Florida Region will be launching a new congregation in Birmingham starting in June. The church will be known as Primera Iglesia Cristiana (Discipulos de Cristo), Birmingham. Roberto Rodriguez Sierra is moving to Birmingham from Puerto Rico on May 15. Rev. Rodriguez has been a Disciples pastor in Puerto Rico for over 20 years.

Zach Seitz will begin a new ministry as pastor of a congregation in Fort Myers, Florida, in June. Jane Hull will begin a new ministry as pastor of a congregation in Watkinsville, Georgia, in June. Lee Young will begin a new ministry as pastor of a congregation in Republic, Missouri, in June.

OUTREACH GIVING UPDATE

The year-to-date giving in 2014 by congregations in Alabama-Northwest Florida to the Disciples Mission Fund and the four Special Day Offerings (Easter, Pentecost, Thanksgiving, and Christmas) has decreased by 23.90% from the amount given year-to-date in 2013. Church-wide gifts to Disciples Mission Fund and the four Special Day Offerings are showing a 13.99% decrease from the amount given through April, 2013. Week of Compassion un-designated giving in Alabama-Northwest Florida is showing a 12.4% increase over the amount given through April, 2013.

Disciples outreach ministries are carried out in partnership between general ministries, ministries of higher education, Regions, congregations, and other related ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The financial support given by your congregation enables this partnership to be effective in carrying out the ministry of Jesus Christ. Your commitment to our shared ministries is greatly appreciated.
Gateway To Hope seeks to educate all who care about veterans about the consequences of the spiritual wounds of war and our responsibility to support their recovery. Participants will learn about moral injury and its relationship to PTSD and sexual trauma, and about creating safe communities of support for veterans to tell their stories and reflect morally on them. They will also explore ways to reintegrate veterans into the civilian world, without leaving them to suffer invisibly and in silence.

Tuesday & Wednesday, September 9-10, 2014
First United Methodist Church
2416 W Cloverdale Park, Montgomery, AL 36106

Special Tuesday Evening Performance
THEATER OF WAR

Theater of War presents readings of Sophocles’ Ajax and Philoctetes to military and civilian communities. These ancient plays timelessly and universally depict the psychological and physical wounds inflicted upon warriors by war. Our hope is to de-stigmatize psychological injury, increase awareness of post-deployment psychological health issues, disseminate information regarding available resources, and foster greater family, community, and troop resilience. These readings forge a common vocabulary for openly discussing the impact of war on individuals, families, and communities, to generate compassion and understanding between diverse audiences.

To learn more: 256 775 6642
Email: gatewaytohope 2014@gmail.com
Rev. Robin Lambert
CDR Vince Lambert, USN (Ret)
Recognizing the division that exists within the human family due to the sin of racism, the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region confirms its commitment to the call of the gospel of Jesus Christ to be an ambassador of unity and reconciliation. The Alabama-Northwest Florida Region confesses its own participation in the sin of racism and is committed to the dismantling of racism wherever it exists in its own institutional life and in the life and witness of its congregations.

Therefore, the Regional Board, on February 23, 2002, affirms all current and future efforts within the Alabama-Northwest Region to become an Anti-Racist manifestation of the Body of Christ. This affirmation will be demonstrated through prayer, allocation of resources, and organized efforts to challenge racism wherever it exists within the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region.

Congregations that have formally committed to expressing “true community” through intentional efforts to work against racism and toward reconciliation.

First Christian Church, Anniston
Primera Iglesia Cristiana Hispana, Anniston
Village Christian Church, Auburn
First Christian Church, Birmingham
Valley Christian Church, Birmingham
First Christian Church, Dothan
First Christian Church, Florence
Snow Hill Christian Church, Ft. Deposit
First Christian Church, Ft. Walton Beach
Primera Iglesia Cristiana Hispana, Fort Walton Beach
Sellers Memorial Christian Church, Hayneville
First Christian Church, Huntsville
Grateful Life Community Church, Huntsville
Mt. Pleasant Christian Church, Mathews
First Christian Church, Pensacola
Mt. Calvary Missionary Christian Church, Tuskegee
Union Christian Church, Tuskegee
First Christian Church of River View, Valley