At least two persons in each congregation, the Minister and Board Chairperson, and perhaps others, receive this Packet. Please review this material carefully to determine how it needs to be shared most appropriately within your congregation.

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CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN ALABAMA-NORTHWEST FLORIDA
861 Highway 52
Helena, AL 35080
(205) 425-5245
(205) 425-5246 (fax)
e-mail: alnwfl@aol.com
website: www.alnwfldisciples.org

Regional Officers and Regional Staff
September, 2014

Moderator: Jan Pooley
2805 Jerry Pate Court
Shalimar, FL 32579
850-651-5124 (h) 850-585-3497 (c)
e-mail: jpooley5@cox.net

Moderator-Elect: Cameron Douglas
1138 Way Thru The Woods SW
Decatur, AL 35603
256-606-8284 (c)
e-mail: pastorclme.com

First Vice Moderator: Gerri Johnson
P. O. Box 9776
Montgomery, AL 36108
334-263-1742 (h) 334-531-0419 (c)
e-mail: gj_wondering@yahoo.com

Second Vice Moderator: Loretta Rucker
2520 Lawn Ave. SW
Birmingham, AL 35211
205-925-1826 (h) 205-541-0925 (c)
e-mail: loretta@bellsouth.net

Secretary-Treasurer: Carmencita Ortiz
20 Forever Wild Lane
Oxford, AL 36206
256-419-6775 (c)
e-mail: marifamily@msn.com

Regional Minister: John Mobley
861 Highway 52
Helena, AL 35080
205-425-5245 (w)
e-mail: jpmobley2@aol.com

Associate Regional Minister Dale Braxton
8420 County Rd. 45
Ft. Deposit, AL 36032
334-227-4752 (h) 334-227-0011 (w)
e-mail: braxtondale@hotmail.com

Youth Ministries Staff Person: Nisha Warbington
15561 Dockery Road
Coker, AL 35452
205-330-8968 (h) 205-454-2054 (cell)
e-mail: Nisha7@aol.com

Administrative Assistant: Susan Henderson
861 Highway 52
Helena, AL 35080
205-425-5245 (w)
e-mail: alnwfl@aol.com

Regional Representative to the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), 2014-2017:

Beth Thomason
2007 Orba Drive NE
Huntsville, AL 35811
256-837-8182 (w) 256-714-0943
e-mail: bethom66@yahoo.com
ITEMS OF INTEREST
(from within the Region)

OUTREACH GIVING

The giving by congregations in Alabama-Northwest Florida to the Disciples Mission Fund and the four Special Day Offerings (Easter, Pentecost, Thanksgiving, and Christmas), at the end of May, 2015, shows a 1.34% decrease from the amount given for the same time period in 2014. Church-wide gifts to Disciples Mission Fund and these four Special Day Offerings have decreased by 2.85% from the year-to-date amount in 2014. Gifts by Alabama-Northwest Florida congregations to Week of Compassion through May, 2015, have increased by 35.02% above the amount given through May, 2014. Church-wide giving to Week of Compassion, regular and designated, is showing a year-to-date increase of 0.3%.

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.

NEWS OF THE CLERGY

Rick Malugani was installed as pastor of Fairhope Christian Church on June 7 and received a certificate of commissioning for his new ministry. Betty and David Massey will be installed on July 26 as co-pastors with Westwood Christian Church, Pensacola, and they will each receive certificates of commissioning for their new ministries. Paul Ingram will begin his service as Interim Minister with First Christian Church, Pensacola, in July. Mickey Johnson has ended his ministry with First Christian Church, Valhermoso Springs, in order to accept a call as pastor with First Christian Church, Decatur. His new ministry in Decatur will begin in August. Bob Powell will complete his service as Interim Minister with First Christian Church, Decatur, in July.

Dan Stewart is serving as Supply Pastor with Mt. Calvary Missionary Christian Church, Tuskegee. Cassandra Smith is serving as Supply Pastor with Mt. Zion Christian Church, White Hall.

CONGREGATIONS WITH MINISTERIAL VACANCIES

Hartselle, First (Jerry Ridling is Interim Minister)
Huntsville, First
Meridian, First (Cameron Douglas is Interim Minister)
Mobile, Azalea Hills (Phillip Hayes is Interim Minister)
Montgomery, First (Jim Brooks is Interim Minister)
Pensacola, First (Paul Ingram is Interim)
Valhermoso Springs, First

(Continued on back)
JOYS AND CONCERNS OF THE CLERGY

Willie Smith (Minister New Salem CC, Hayneville) is recovering from surgery that he had on May 27. Betty Berg, the sister of Phyllis Kirk (Minister of Music, Grace Christian Church, Helena) died on June 8. A memorial service was held on June 13.

(Please notify the Regional Office of other joys and concerns.)

General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
July 18-22, 2015
Columbus, Ohio
Theme: “SOAR!”

A GATHERING OF MODERATORS AND BOARD CHAIRPERSONS
All Moderators/Board Chairpersons are invited to a special gathering for a luncheon and a time of fellowship, conversation and sharing. The goal is to help Moderators and Board Chairs be better equipped for the important leadership roles they occupy in the life of the congregation. Pastors are also welcome to accompany their Moderators/Board Chairpersons to this gathering.

*Note: A Flyer and Registration Form may be found in this Leader’s Packet.

Saturday, August 15, 2015
11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH, MONTGOMERY
(1705 Taylor Road 36117)

DEMOGRAPHIC SERVICE AVAILABLE

Congregations in the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region can access demographic information on their communities by going to www.Link2lead.com and following the directions given (click on “register” to get started). This Region is providing this service at no cost to your congregation. If you have not downloaded recent demographic information for your community, with the latest census updates, please do so in order to lead your congregation to meet the needs of your community. Thank you for your gifts to the Disciples Mission Fund, which makes this ministry possible.
## DATES FOR YOUR INFORMATION

### JULY

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Commissioning and Ordination North (9:15 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena</td>
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<tr>
<td>18 - 22</td>
<td>General Assembly of the Christian Church - Columbus, Ohio</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Commissioning and Ordination South (9:15 a.m.) - United Christian, Montgomery</td>
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### AUGUST

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<td>12</td>
<td>Commissioning and Ordination North (9:15 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Gathering of Moderators/Board Chairpersons (and pastors) - Montgomery</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>“Senior Adult Sunday” in the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region</td>
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### SEPTEMBER

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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Commissioning and Ordination South (9:15 a.m.) - United Christian, Montgomery</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Program Committee on Church Development (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 - 24</td>
<td>Southeast Regional Fellowship (SERF) Staff Retreat - Christmount, Black Mtn., NC</td>
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<tr>
<td>25 - 27</td>
<td>Women’s Retreat - Camp Chandler</td>
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<tr>
<td>27 - Oct. 4</td>
<td>Reconciliation Offering Promotion</td>
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### OCTOBER

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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Division of Mission (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>World Communion Sunday and Reconciliation Offering Sunday</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Disciples Men’s Cabinet (8:30 a.m.) - Regional Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Division of Nurture (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Commissioning and Ordination North (9:15 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Optional Arrival Day for Young Adult Beach Retreat - Orange Beach, AL</td>
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<tr>
<td>16 - 18</td>
<td>Young Adult Beach Retreat (“The Lighthouse” Retreat Center) - Orange Beach, AL</td>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Program Committee on the Regional Assembly (10:00 a.m.) - First Christian, Florence</td>
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### NOVEMBER

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<td>3</td>
<td>Commissioning and Ordination South (9:15 a.m.) - United Christian, Montgomery</td>
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<td>5 - 6</td>
<td>Senior Adult Retreat - St. Bernard Retreat Center, Cullman, AL</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>CWF/Disciples Women Cabinet (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena</td>
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<td>15 - 22</td>
<td>Thanksgiving Offering Promotion (for higher education ministries)</td>
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### DECEMBER

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<td>5</td>
<td>Regional Nominating Committee (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office</td>
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<td>Committee on the Ministry (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Executive/Personnel Committee (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 - 20</td>
<td>Christmas Offering promotion (for Regional ministries)</td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Staff Planning Meeting (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office</td>
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### JANUARY, 2016

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<tr>
<td>11 - 13</td>
<td>Ministers and Mates Retreat (Hilton Garden Inn) - Orange Beach, AL</td>
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<tr>
<td>15 - 17</td>
<td>Young Adult Winter Retreat - YMCA-Camp Chandler</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Commissioning and Ordination North (9:15 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena</td>
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<tr>
<td>22 - 24</td>
<td>Youhttopia (youth grades 6 - 12) - YMCA-Camp Chandler</td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Regional Committee on Recommendations (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena</td>
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(Continued on back)
FEBRUARY, 2016
2 Commissioning and Ordination South (9:15 a.m.) - United Christian, Montgomery
6 CWF/Disciples Women Cabinet (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena
20 Division of Administration/Stewardship (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena
21 - 28 Week of Compassion Promotion
27 Regional Board (10:00 a.m.) - Location TBD

MARCH, 2016
1 - 3 42nd Annual Black Ministers Retreat - Location TBD
10 Optional Arrival Day for Men’s Retreat - YMCA-Hargis
11 - 12 Men’s Retreat - YMCA-Hargis
20 - 27 Easter Offering Promotion (for General Ministries)
27 Easter

APRIL, 2016
1 “Healthy Boundaries” workshop for clergy (9:00 a.m.) - Regional Office
13 Commissioning and Ordination North (9:15 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena
29 - May 1 Alabama-Northwest Florida Regional Assembly - First Christian Church, Florence
30 Mission Gathering (3:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.) - First Christian Church, Florence

MAY, 2016
3 Commissioning and Ordination South (9:15 a.m.) - United Christian, Montgomery
8 - 15 Pentecost Offering promotion (for new congregation establishment)
11 Committee on the Ministry (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena
14 Biennial Planning Meeting (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena
17 Regional Staff Planning (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena
21 2nd Annual Hispanic Encounter (tentative) - Location TBD
23 - 27 Certificate Program for Hispanic Ministers - Lexington Theological Seminary

JUNE, 2016
5 - 10 Beach Camp - (“The Lighthouse” Retreat Center at Romar Beach Baptist Church) - Orange Beach, AL
20 - 24 Junior Camp and CYF Conference - YMCA-Camp Chandler
24 - 26 Genesis Camp - YMCA-Camp Chandler
24 - 26 Discovery Camp - YMCA-Camp Chandler
25 Regional Convocation One-Day Workshop - New Salem Christian, Hayneville, AL
24 - 28 Chi Rho Camp - YMCA-Camp Chandler

Christian Church In Alabama-Northwest Florida, 861 Highway 52, Helena, AL 35080
REGIONAL PRAYER CALENDAR
FOR JULY - SEPTEMBER, 2015

CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) IN ALABAMA-NW FLORIDA

Note: Congregations are urged to lift up in prayer during worship the congregation(s) designated on each Sunday of the year. Special prayers are encouraged for the ministers listed as well. A phone number is listed for each congregation (in some cases an e-mail address is also listed) in order for persons to make contact with that congregation to learn of special joys and concerns prior to the Sunday when it is listed.

July 5 - Birmingham, Valley (205-879-0419) Gary Edge, Minister (e-mail: <garyhe33@hotmail.com>)
July 12 - Pensacola, Renovando Tu Fe (407-692-1582) Israel and Jeanette Martinez, Church Planters (email: <renovandotufe@yahoo.com>)
July 19 - Letohatchee, Big Union – Timothy Silmon, Minister (334-335-2757 or e-mail: <silmontim@yahoo.com>)
July 26 - Hayneville, Little Union (334-548-2755) Willie Timmons, Minister (334-399-1614 or email: <timmons5w@live.com>)
Letohatchee, Salem – Joan Andrews, Board Chair (334-227-8906)

August 2 - Cottondale, Cottondale – Milford Walters, Minister (205-372-3840) or (email: <mwjw8491@gmail.com>)
August 9 - Tuskegee, Union (334-727-2556) Danny Shoemake, Minister (email; <dannysandra2002@yahoo.com>)
August 16 - Letohatchee, Mt. Moriah – Nathan Hartley, Minister (334-563-7764 or email: <nathanhartley5@aol.com>)
August 23 - Letohatchee, New Hope (334-548-2504) Howard Jones, Minister (e-mail: <howardjones1951@gmail.com>)
August 30 - Huntsville, First (256-881-0150) Laura West, Associate Minister (e-mail: <laura@fcc-hsv.org>)

September 6 - Minter, Braggs – Joe Crook, Board Chair (334-227-4100)
September 13 - Mobile, Azalea Hills (251-633-6161) Phillip Hayes, Interim Minister (e-mail: <phillip.hayes@att.net>)
September 20 - Pensacola, First (850-477-1642) Paul Ingram, Interim Minister (e-mail: <paulingram806@compass.net>)
September 27 - Madison, Madison (256-837-8182) Beth Thomason and Mark Underwood, Ministers (e-mail: <bethom66@yahoo.com> or <pastormu@hiwaay.net>)

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Alabama-Northwest Florida, 861 Highway 52, Helena, AL 35080
2015 SUMMER PRAYER CALENDAR FOR DISCIPLES MINISTERS WHO ARE ACTIVE IN NON CONGREGATIONALLY-BASED MINISTRIES

CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) IN ALABAMA-NW FLORIDA

Note: Congregations are urged to lift up in prayer during worship the ministers(s) designated on each Sunday of the summer. It is recommended that special prayers for these ministers be included in the intercessory prayer for that congregation, remembering that their ministry is something we all share.

July 5 - John Gregory, Hospital Chaplaincy, Birmingham, AL <jwgregory68@gmail.com>
July 12 - John Churchill, Hospice Chaplaincy, Birmingham, AL <jloyal@bellsouth.net>
July 19 - Kathryn Menser, Institutional Chaplaincy, Westminster Village, Pensacola, FL <kathrynmenser@att.net>
July 26 - Alan Lindell, Pastoral Counseling - Anniston, AL <bajar@centurytel.net>

August 2 - Nisha Warbington, Regional Staff, Youth Ministries <nisha7@aol.com>
August 9 - Robert Davis, Firehouse Shelter (Downtown Cooperative Ministries) - Birmingham, AL <revdavis3@charter.net>
August 16 - Diane Wood, Hospital Chaplaincy, Birmingham <dwservant@aol.com>
August 23 - Harvey Fearson, Community Ministry, Fort Walton Beach, FL <harveyfearson@hotmail.com>
August 30 - John Mobley, Regional Minister <jpmobley2@aol.com>

Christian Church in Alabama-Northwest Florida, 861 Highway 52, Helena, AL 35080
<table>
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**TOTAL** | 100,629.85 | 94,752.25 | -5.84

**NOTE:** THIS REPORT COMPARES GIVING FROM JANUARY- MAY, 2014 TO GIVING JANUARY- MAY, 2015

Christian Church in Alabama - Northwest Florida, 861 Hwy 52, Helena, AL 35080
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**Note:** This report compares giving from January - May, 2014 to giving January - May, 2015.
A GATHERING OF MODERATORS
AND BOARD CHAIRPERSONS

All Moderators and Board Chairpersons are invited to a special gathering for a luncheon and a time of fellowship, conversation and sharing. The goal is to help Moderators and Board Chairs be better equipped for the important leadership roles they occupy in the life of the congregation. Pastors are also welcome to accompany their Moderators/Board Chairpersons to this gathering.

Saturday, August 15, 2015
11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH,
MONTGOMERY
(1705 Taylor Road 36117)

NOTE: There is no cost to attend. However, reservations must be made by sending the registration form to the Regional office by mail, fax [205-425-5246], or email <jpmobley2@aol.com> prior to August 7.
A GATHERING OF MODERATORS
AND BOARD CHAIRPERSONS
Saturday, August 15, 2015
First Christian Church, Montgomery
12:00 noon - 3:00 p.m.

REGISTRATION FORM
(Please submit only one Registration Form per congregation)

**The following persons will be attending from our congregation:

Name ___________________________  Email ___________________________

Name ___________________________  Email ___________________________

Name ___________________________  Email ___________________________

Congregation ______________________________________________________

Please list any dietary restrictions:

NOTE: There is no cost to attend. However, reservations must be made by sending this registration form to the Regional office by mail, fax [205-425-5246], or email <jpmobley2@aol.com> prior to August 7.

Christian Church in Alabama-Northwest Florida, 861 Highway 52, Helena, AL 35080
YOUNG ADULT BEACH RETREAT

at “The Lighthouse” Christian Retreat and Conference Center
23370 Perdido Beach Blvd., Orange Beach, AL 36561  <http://www.facebook.com/Romar.Beach.Baptist>

DATE: OCTOBER 16 - 18, 2015

THEME: “The Well-Worn Path Meets the Road Less Traveled: Finding Unique Expressions in our Shared Life”

Facilitator:  Rev. Beth Thomason, Pastor, Madison Christian Church

All who consider themselves young adults in the Alabama-NW Florida Region are invited to participate in this retreat for renewal, fun, and relationship-building. The Retreat begins with dinner on Friday, but those desiring an extra day at the beach may arrive on Thursday for an additional $35.

COST:  $50/person, or $85/person (for Thursday arrivals)

(Thanks to a subsidy from the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region)

Registration Deadline: October 7, 2015

(Please complete the form below, detach it, and return it with your check to the Regional office.)

REGISTRATION FORM

Name ___________________________________________ Phone ___________________________

Address ________________________________________________________________

________________________________________ Planned Arrival Date

Email _________________________________________________________________

Congregation _________________________________________________________

* Please let us know if you have any special needs or dietary restrictions.

Mail Registration Form, along with a check for $50 (or $85 for Thursday arrivals) payable to “Christian Church-ALNWFL”, to: Regional Office, 861 Highway 52, Helena, AL 35080
REFUND POLICY

Refund Policy for events sponsored by the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region: 100% refund for emergencies, provided that notification is received prior to the beginning of the event; 50% refund for emergencies in which notification (written) is made after the beginning of the event; 100% refund for non-emergencies if requested in writing at least seven days prior to the first day of the event; No refunds will be given for non-emergency cancellations after seven days prior to the beginning of the event. Written requests for refunds must be received by the Regional Office, 861 Highway 52, Helena, AL 35080 (email <alnwfl@aol.com>), within seven days of the last day of the event.

While refunds are not available other than as outlined in this policy, substitutions will be allowed as long as the original registrant, or responsible adult, is able to locate an eligible participant who is able to take the slot and as long as the original registrant, or responsible adult, communicates this information to the Regional office. The Region will not be responsible in assisting in identifying a substitute. Notification should be provided to the Regional Office as soon as possible and any substitute must complete the necessary paperwork prior to arrival at the event.

Approved by the Regional Board, February 20, 2010
Church Leaders Please Note:

AUGUST 23, 2015
is
SENIOR ADULT SUNDAY
in the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region

Please Use this Day to...

give recognition to all senior adults in the congregation.
express gratitude in special ways for the contributions of senior adults in the life of the congregation.
encourage senior adults to register for the 2015 Senior Adult Retreat, November 5 - 6, 2015.

Congregations may want to...

feature senior adults in worship leadership on Senior Adult Sunday.
invite testimonials from senior adults regarding past experiences at Senior Adult Retreats.
set up a table prominent in the church that has flyers and registration forms for the 2015 Senior Adult Retreat.
Fourteenth Annual

SENIOR ADULT RETREAT
Thursday, Nov. 5 - Friday, Nov. 6, 2015
(Begins at 11:30 a.m. Thursday and concludes by 1:30 p.m. on Friday)

“Play! It’s Not Just For Kids”

Retreat Leader:
Rev. Gary Edge
Pastor, Valley Christian Church, Birmingham

ST. BERNARD RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTER
1600 St. Bernard Drive, Cullman, AL 35055
(at I-65, exit #308, go about 3-4 miles on Hwy. 278 E., to the retreat center entrance)

Cost Options
$95/person, double occupancy room w/ 2 twin beds (Early-Bird cost is $85)
$120/person, single occupancy room w/ 2 twin beds (Early-Bird cost is $110)
$60/person for participants lodging off-site (Early-Bird cost is $50)

**Limited Financial Aid is Available upon Request**

Early-Bird Deadline is October 15, 2015

Christian Church in Alabama-NW Florida, 861 Highway 52, Helena, AL 35080
SENIOR ADULT RETREAT - Thursday, Nov. 5 - Friday, Nov. 6, 2015
St. Bernard Retreat and Conference Center, 1600 St. Bernard Drive - Cullman, AL 35055
(at I-65, exit #308, about 3-4 miles on Hwy. 278 E. to the retreat center entrance)

“Play! It’s Not Just For Kids”
Led by: Rev. Gary Edge, Pastor, Valley Christian Church, Birmingham

REGISTRATION FORM
(Please use separate form for each person registering)

Name ________________________________________________ E-Mail ______________________________

Address ___________________________________________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________________________________________

Phone Number _____________________________________________________________

Home Congregation ________________________________________________________________________

**Please describe any dietary restrictions, food allergies, or physical limitations on a separate sheet.

Please check ONE of the following options:

Option One  [Enclose $95 with this form (before October 15, pay only $85)]
  (Option One includes registration and all four meals at St. Bernard Retreat Center.)

_____ I am planning to room in the dormitory (double occupancy) at St. Bernard Retreat Center.

_____ I plan to room with _________________________________________________________________.

_____ Please assign a roommate.

Option Two  [Enclose $120 with this form (before October 15, pay only $110)]
  (Option Two includes registration and all four meals at St. Bernard Retreat Center.)

_____ I am planning to room in the dormitory at St. Bernard Retreat Center without a roommate.

Option Three [Enclose $60 with this form (before October 15, pay only $50)]
  (Option Three includes registration, plus four meals at St. Bernard Retreat Center: lunch and dinner on
  Thursday, and breakfast and lunch on Friday.)

_____ I am planning to find lodging on Thursday somewhere other than St. Bernard Retreat Center.

Note: Anyone wanting to stay at a nearby hotel needs to make reservations directly with the hotel of choice. There are many options in Cullman.

******************************************************

Send appropriate payment with this registration form to:
Christian Church in Alabama-Northwest Florida, 861 Highway 52, Helena, AL 35080

Early-Bird Deadline is October 15, 2015.
REFUND POLICY

Refund Policy for events sponsored by the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region: 100% refund for emergencies, provided that notification is received prior to the beginning of the event; 50% refund for emergencies in which notification (written) is made after the beginning of the event; 100% refund for non-emergencies if requested in writing at least seven days prior to the first day of the event; No refunds will be given for non-emergency cancellations after seven days prior to the beginning of the event. Written requests for refunds must be received by the Regional Office, 861 Highway 52, Helena, AL 35080 (email <alnwfl@aol.com>), within seven days of the last day of the event.

While refunds are not available other than as outlined in this policy, substitutions will be allowed as long as the original registrant, or responsible adult, is able to locate an eligible participant who is able to take the slot and as long as the original registrant, or responsible adult, communicates this information to the Regional office. The Region will not be responsible in assisting in identifying a substitute. Notification should be provided to the Regional Office as soon as possible and any substitute must complete the necessary paperwork prior to arrival at the event.

Approved by the Regional Board, February 20, 2010
Congregational Strength Is Always Plural

What are the common denominators among churches that do effective ministry? Do they all have a thriving youth group? Or a large membership? Or great facilities? No! Strong, healthy, and effective congregations of all types thrive in many different kinds of circumstances. In all congregations, something already works well. The getting-stronger congregations focus on those strengths.

A Language of Strengths

The words that people use to describe healthy or thriving congregations number in the hundreds. Often their language about effective ministry reflects who they are and their theological orientation. Through research with thousands of congregations, we discovered ten areas of strength in American congregations. Surprisingly, leaders and worshipers possess acute awareness of where they believe they are failing and often little recognition of where they are succeeding. Of course, not a single congregation showed strength in all ten areas. Rather, the typical congregation possesses three to five strengths. Further, the specific cluster of strengths makes a unique multiple-strength fingerprint.

What Are the Qualities of a Strong Congregation?

More than half a million worshipers in over 5,000 congregations (randomly selected from throughout the United States) completed a survey during worship services. From their descriptions of how they experience their congregation, we identified ten areas of strength. The data revealed a strong church is one that

- fosters spiritual growth. Worshipers say that they are growing in their faith because of their participation in the church. They feel that their spiritual needs are being met in the congregation.
- provides meaningful worship. Worshipers describe how they often experience God's presence in worship services and they think that worship helps them with everyday life.
- promotes participation in congregational activities. Beyond worship services, many worshipers are involved in leadership, decision making, service, small groups, mission projects, and outreach.
- develops a sense of belonging. Worshipers sense that they are part of a community and enjoy many close friends in the congregation.
- cares for children and youth. Attractive offerings for young people bring satisfaction and support to families. Ministry for children or youth is a valued aspect of the congregation.
- focuses on the community. Many worshipers are involved in social service or advocacy work either through the congregation or with community groups.
- helps worshipers share their faith. Worshipers take part in evangelism activities, share their faith, and invite friends or family to worship.
- welcomes and assimilates new worshipers and participants.

"Statistically, we're supposed to have 3 to 5 strengths... naming them is obviously not one of them."
• benefits from empowering leadership. Leaders inspire others to action and take into account worshipers’ ideas.
• looks to the future. Many worshipers are committed to the congregation’s goals and vision. They believe that the church is always ready to try new things.

A strong congregation also values the best of the past and builds on that to create a vision for the future.

Playing to Strengths
Congregational leaders often ask what is working well for another congregation. Such inquiries reflect limited awareness of and unproductive coping with their own congregation’s uniqueness. Facing the reality of your church’s one-of-a-kind mission requires courage. The perception of risk is accurate. The nature of congregations is to avoid failure, yet pursuing distinctive strategies move a church toward greater strength.

Religious leaders like the tempting idea that one key factor will insure church vitality. The notion that a single essential resource will give a congregation the decisive advantage is false. Examples of touted trump cards include congregational size, worship style, worship music, leadership style, or mission orientation. But there is no evidence that such a single winning factor exists.

Another variant of the peddled one-trick solution is the idea of naming the congregation’s weakest area and then making efforts to improve it. Unfortunately, this version is based on the myth that weaknesses can be fixed and unintentionally disempowers a congregation by causing their leadership to focus on some aspect of its system that may never become one of its strengths.

Research demonstrates that all congregations have multiple strengths and require these building blocks to be effective. For example, a congregation that excels in serving the community but lacks any other strength is little more than a social service agency. Just as a congregation that excels in providing a sense of belonging where people care deeply for one another but lacks other strengths is little more than a social club. Congregational leaders must focus on multiple strengths to do all that is expected of people of faith.

If congregational leaders can move beyond their current mental maps, they can see the opportunities for their church by building on its strengths. Church strengths are always multiple, interdependent, and mutually reinforcing. Thus, the strength-building process entails:
• Identifying and appreciating our congregation’s present strengths
• Dreaming of how we can build on these strengths
• Examining and prioritizing action possibilities for building on our strengths
• Pursuing selected options to create a stronger future

Are Congregations Really That Different?
The range and richness of congregational life is impressive. Yet there are some broad patterns that suggest congregations are more alike in some ways than in others. Three strengths pop up as the most common expressions of effective church life:
• Providing meaningful worship: current attendees tend to be satisfied with their worship experience
• Promoting participation in the congregation: the range between the highest and lowest percentage of worshipers engaged in activities across all congregations is fairly small
• Fostering spiritual growth: worshipers describe their growth in faith in highly similar ways

If congregations tend to be more alike in these three ways, they are most different when it comes to the percentage of new people (those who started attending in the past five years) in their midst. Obviously, the long-term effects of failing to attract and assimilate new people have huge consequences. However, churches draw newcomers only when they show signs of vitality in multiple areas.

Avoiding Myth Traps
Myths lure us to beliefs we want to be true. Believing myths is its own reward because it allows us to avoid change. By using the same old methods, we get the same old results. Myths immobilize and trap us into dead ends, blocking us from fully living out our church’s ultimate mission: What is God calling us to be and do?

Strong congregations exhibit imagination, intelligence, heart-felt enthusiasm, and courage. Their members ask, What gives us joy? What are we really about? What are we going to courageously seek?

2. Congregations can discover their strengths with the U.S. Congregational Life Survey and resources (www.USCongregations.org).
How to Enhance the Ministry of Associate Pastors

As one of the best and brightest seminary students, Chris delighted in his first pastoral appointment—the associate pastor of First United Church. Chris reveled in all his ministry responsibilities, such as developing a thriving lay ministry program, helping to set up a much-needed homeless shelter, and growing a strong youth ministry. In addition to regular worship leadership, he looked forward to the opportunity to preach once a month and officiate at weddings and funerals. Chris felt that this ministry setting was the perfect place to initiate new ideas and broaden the range of his ministry gifts.

What Does an Associate Pastor Do?

Many associates carry out the same ministry duties and responsibilities as the senior pastor or head of staff. In addition, they may hold a leadership role in two or three specific ministry areas. Other associate pastors serve as specialists and take on primary responsibility for a single program, such as music or education. Some large congregations call an associate to serve as the Administrative Pastor, who manages the day-to-day operations, supervises other staff members, and coordinates multiple programs.

Church size determines, in large part, the associate pastor’s work profile. Congregations with fewer than 100 in worship are unlikely to have a part- or full-time paid associate pastor. Thus, two out of three U.S. congregations (including Catholic parishes) do not employ an associate pastor. As churches reach the 150 regular worshiper threshold, their leaders begin to consider calling a full-time associate pastor. Some churches call a part-time associate long before they reach this size in order to help the congregation grow its ministries. A program church—one that averages between 150 and 300 in worship services—typically employs one or more associates to lead the larger number of activities associated with their increased size. Because there are more worshipers at larger churches, about half of all churchgoers attend a church served by one or more associate pastors.

What Are Our Expectations?

How do associate pastors differ from senior or solo pastors? Do they see their ministry role as a lifetime vocation or a required step toward advancement? Our expectations contribute to the effectiveness of associate ministry. Do we expect short tenures? Too often, churches assume an associate will remain on staff for a short time—between eighteen months to three years. As a result, members do not invest in the associate’s work or support his or her leadership. Yet associate staff turnover is only slightly higher than that of senior and solo pastors.

Do we expect less experience or training? The stereotypical associate profile is a recent seminary graduate, young, and assuming a first pastoral call. Yet the average age of associate pastors is forty-six, which is eleven years younger than the average for senior or solo pastors nationally. Further, two out of three associate pastors worked in one or more occupations before entering ministry. At least half served in a previous pastoral position prior to their current call as an associate pastor.
pious. Mainline Protestant associate pastors are more likely to be ordained with a seminary degree (79%) than conservative Protestant associate pastors (62% ordained; 48% with Bible College or seminary degree).

Do we see it as an internship position? In many denominational traditions, recent theological school graduates find their first placement as an associate pastor. The idea is that the senior pastor assists in the continuing development of the new pastor's professional identity and skills. However, the majority of first-call pastors serve as a solo pastor rather than as an associate. Many pastors feel called as associates for their entire ministry and others find associate ministry as a calling after decades in solo pastorates.

Do we expect specialized gifts? Every congregation’s ministries require a leader with a diverse skill set. But the essential traits for effective ministry—whether the leader is a senior, solo, or associate—always include hopefulness about the future, a sense of humor, the ability to laugh at oneself, humility, openness to new ideas, and deep respect for the ministry of others.

Can Associate Ministry Have Negative Side Effects?
A ministry team works when it consists of emotionally healthy people. The quality of effective associate ministry is strongly related to the quality of the senior pastor-associate relationship. If this relationship is problematic, the toxicity eventually affects the whole church. Healthy relationship patterns involve seeing differences among staff as opportunities to learn rather than threats to authority. All pastors should strive to unify people and groups rather than divide them.

Caution: age and gender dynamics. Because associate pastors are disproportionately women while senior pastors remain disproportionately men, in many instances the senior pastor is an older man and the associate pastor a younger woman. Emotionally mature and older senior pastors of both genders refrain from authority struggles. And mature associates fully support the senior ministers’ leadership. In the best teams, both pastors invest equally in making the relationship work.

Caution: language dynamics. Titles matter. The language used to describe each pastoral position speaks volumes about job status. For example, introducing the associate by first name only and the senior pastor as “Reverend Smith” doesn’t accurately represent the associate position’s value. Wise congregational leaders consider how positions are listed on the church website and in all publications. In a multi-pastor church setting, pastors should be introduced in a parallel fashion that reflects they are ministry colleagues, such as “the associate or senior pastor,” or as “one of the pastors of our church.”

How Necessary Is Congregational Support?
The congregation lays the foundation for successful associate ministry before any ministerial candidate arrives by constructing a clear job description. A clear contract outlines all responsibilities (such as preaching, worship leadership, and specific programs or initiatives), compensation, benefits, vacations, and regular meetings with the staff-personnel committee. This groundwork protects both parties from future conflict and disappointment. To support the ongoing growth of an associate pastor, churches can provide book allowances, education reimbursement, conference budgets, and study/travel time. Part-time and unpaid associates benefit from these same considerations.

Do Associate Pastors Find Satisfaction in Ministry?
Rachel began her associate pastor work after serving ten years as a solo pastor. She loved being part of a creative ministry team. For many years, she frequented small venues that featured live music but discovered that even some of the best musicians had difficulty finding places to perform. With multiple responsibilities of a solo pastor, she wasn’t able to think about how her love of music might create opportunities for others. As an associate, she proposed that the congregation start a coffeehouse in the church to host weekly acoustical performances. The church quickly gained a regional reputation as a great place to hear exceptional talent. Rachel found satisfaction in combining her passion for music with the congregation’s expanding outreach ministry.

Pastoral leaders report high levels of job satisfaction. And associate pastors report even higher levels of satisfaction in ministry than senior or solo pastors. In what ways does our congregation affirm the associate pastor’s ministry? What additional steps could we take to support our pastoral leaders?

3. Ibid.
4. See the appendix in Rudnick’s book, which contains example job descriptions and where he makes a strong case for associates to preach at least once a month.
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