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

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

MAY
8 - 15  Pentecost Offering promotion (for new congregation establishment)
14  Biennial Planning Meeting (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena
17  Regional Staff Planning (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena
18  Committee on the Ministry (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena
23 - 27  Certificate Program for Hispanic Ministers - Lexington Theological Seminary

JUNE
5 - 12  Global Mission Partner, Elena Huegel (serving in Chile), will be making visits and presentations in the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region
5 - 10  Beach Camp - Dauphin Island, AL
11  Disciples Men's Cabinet (9:00 a.m.) - Regional Office
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

"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

In most congregations there is a discipline that comes around from time to time called long-range planning, strategic planning, or ministry planning. Regardless of the term that is used, congregations are wise to engage in this task because the world around them is changing. The needs around them are different than they were a few years earlier. The gifts within the congregation are also different because the people in the congregation are changing. They are aging, the children are becoming adults, new members have joined, former members are no longer around. The faithful congregation devotes itself to this important task. The task involves much prayer, time, and focused conversation around the question, “what is God calling us to do and be at this particular time in our faith journey as a congregation?” Has your congregation done this lately? I hope so.

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) as a denomination also has a need to be relevant in the world into which God has put us. Like a local congregation, we need to engage in processes from time to time that help us clarify what it is that God is calling us to be and to do as a church. The world around us is changing rapidly. The capabilities and opportunities of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) are also different from what they once were. We, as a denomination, must find relevancy by discovering our niche, our special calling, as a part of Christ’s body. And we must channel our energy and resources so that we fulfill our calling in an effective manner. Since we cannot do everything that needs to be done, we must name our particular gift and calling as a church.

The Mission Gathering that will take place at the upcoming Regional Assembly can best be understood as part of our denominational effort to engage in faithful long-range planning. We are setting aside time for prayer and focused conversation about our mission. We value the input of every person who is part of this church; therefore, in small groups of about 6 persons, conversations about the church and its mission will be led by a facilitator. Mission Gatherings are happening all around the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in 2016. May we each do our part by participating and sharing our thoughts about where God can best use us as a church.

The input that is gleaned from the 2016 Mission Gatherings will go to a Mission Council that will meet in early December. The Mission Council will have the task of interpreting data and coordinating the next steps between multiple expressions of the church as we move forward in mission. Please pray for all of the Mission Gatherings that are taking place, and please pray for the Mission Council to be directed by God in its important work later this year.

Your Partner in Ministry,

John P. Mobley
Regional Minister

Do you have a legal, up-to-date will? Have you remembered your congregation and the larger church (including the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region) in your end-of-life planning? (Contact the Regional Minister for information about becoming a Legacy Partner in the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region.)
REFLECTIONS FROM THE ASSOCIATE REGIONAL MINISTER

On April 24, 2010, a resolution from the Committee on Recommendations to the Regional Assembly expressed the desire and the commitment of the Christian Church in Alabama-Northwest Florida to be a Global Mission Region, believing that God has created unity in mission and purpose for the church wherever it exists, and that God uses differences of culture and language to enhance this mission.

This resolution was adopted and a formal relationship between the Commission for Christian Development in Honduras and the Evangelical and Reformed Church in Honduras was formed. Since the formal adoption of the resolution several trips have taken place in order to learn about each other.

On February 12-18, 2016, a delegation of four—Dale Braxton, Jose Diaz, Ana Diaz, and Israel Martinez—went to Honduras. What an amazing trip it was! The Evangelical and Reformed Church in Honduras received us with open arms and with gratitude for the partnership and what it means to them. During this trip we traveled to San Marcos de Ocotepeque, Trinidad, and Santa Barbara to preach and to present commentaries written in Spanish.

Jose and Anna Diaz along with Israel Martinez led a conference for the seminary. Each seminarian we are sponsoring was presented with a commentary from the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region to help them with their studies. What a gift! These students were filled with excitement and joy to receive such a gift. They traveled a long way to the Theological Institute in San-Pedro Sula and to receive a gift such as this was like manna falling from heaven to make the long journey more special as they prepared for leadership.

There are congregations in the Evangelical and Reformed Church in Honduras that are being started in many small communities. There is a shortage of trained people who can serve as pastors. Therefore, the Evangelical and Reformed Church in Honduras has said that the most needed assistance is in the form of scholarship and educational materials written in Spanish, particularly books related to ministry and theology.
In 2013 the delegation recommended that the region provide 5 students with a 3-year scholarship at the Theological institute in San-Pedro Sula. Since 2013 we have doubled the number of sponsorships to 10.

Currently our Region is sponsoring the following persons who are studying for ministry at the Theological Institute: Marvin Mercedes Aguilar Hernandez, Jorge Diaz Cartagena, Victor Manual Lazo Castillo, Jose Sabas Velasquez, Riby Absalon Mendez, Marvin Yovani Cruz R., Domingo Lucio Lopez, Jose Dionisio Reyes Lopez, Carlos Arzu, Jesus Hernandez.

Each student may receive notes of encouragement from you by sending them to the following address to the attention of:

Rev. Samuel Bustillo, President.
Sino do la Iglesias Evangelical y Reformada de Honduras
12-13 Ave, 4-5 Calle, S.O. No. 96 Barrio El Benque,
San Pedro Sula, Honduras, C.A

Thank you for the opportunity to serve and for all you do to make this Region what it is. Thank you also for lovingly answering the question….. And who is my neighbor?

Your Partner in Ministry,
Dale C. Braxton
Associate Regional Minister

Plan Now to Attend the 2016 Regional Assembly

April 29 - May 1, 2016
First Christian Church, Florence, Alabama

Theme: “...And Who Is My Neighbor?”

Special Guests Include:

Rev. Bill Lee, Pastor, Loudon Avenue Christian Church, Roanoke, Virginia
Rev. Rebecca Hale, Vice-President of Mission/Ministry, National Benevolent Association
Rev. Vy Nguyen, Minister of Week of Compassion

Registration Information was included in the January and March Leader’s Packets.
SPECIAL GUEST SPEAKERS for the 2016 REGIONAL ASSEMBLY

The 2016 Alabama-Northwest Florida Regional Assembly at First Christian Church, Florence, Alabama, will include sermons and/or presentations by some excellent leaders in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Each of them is most qualified to help develop the theme, “...And Who Is My Neighbor?” They include Rev. Dr. William Lee, Rev. Rebecca Hale, and Rev. Vy Nguyen.

**Rev. Dr. William Lee** served as Moderator of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada from 2006-2008. For 37 years Dr. Lee has served as Pastor at Loudon Avenue Christian Church in Roanoke, Virginia. He and his congregation have been active in leadership in his community. The Roanoke City Council named the Rev. Dr. William L Lee as the citizen of the year for 2011.

Dr. Lee received his Bachelors of Science degree in Special Education from Virginia State University with honors (Cum Laude) in 1974, his Masters of Divinity from the Divinity School at Duke University in 1978 and his Doctorate of Ministry Degree from Ashland Theological Seminary in June 2009.

Dr. Lee has served on numerous Boards of ministries related to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). He has preached and given lectures at denomination-wide events and Assemblies. He has given outstanding leadership across the life of the church for many years.

Dr. Lee has been married to the former Dana Barnes for 40+ years and they are the proud parents of two adult children, Aaron Michael and Sarah Barnes.

**Dr. Lee will preach on Friday night and lead a workshop on Saturday.**

**Rev. Rebecca Hale** serves as the NBA Vice President for Mission and Ministry. In her role, she supports the creation and implementation of mission programs of the National Benevolent Association. The position brings together her passion for supporting congregations as they seek to be missionally centered and nurturing partnerships across the life of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Prior to serving with the NBA, Rebecca worked in congregational and regional leadership for the Disciples church in Pennsylvania, Northwest Region, and Florida. She was called to serve as Transitional Regional Minister and President in both the Northwest and the Florida Regions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Her denominational commitments also include working as the Transformational Partner for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Indiana and she served for three years as chairperson for the Week of Compassion Advisory Committee.

Two core commitments energize Rev. Hale's ministry: The first is her commitment to helping Disciple communities explore landscapes for ministry opportunities and develop faithful missions based on assessment of those landscapes. This passion arises out of the theological commitment that "God so loves the world" and that the church exists to advance God's mission in the world. The second core commitment to her ministry is partnership development that encourages communities to more clearly visualize and formulate a shared mission and to fulfill that shared mission in powerful life-changing ways.

**Rev. Hale will preach on Saturday morning, lead a workshop and speak at the Women’s Luncheon on Saturday.**
Rev. Vy Nguyen was called to serve as Executive Director of Week of Compassion in 2014. He is a native of Viet Nam and came to the U.S. as a child with his family as they sought safety. Through the ministry of Week of Compassion, Vy came to know the Disciples of Christ and became active in the church. Vy holds a Master of Divinity from the Divinity School at the University of Chicago, and earned his B.A. in religious studies with a minor in environmental sciences from Texas Christian University. He joined Week of Compassion after serving more than 5 years with Church World Service for the Southwest Regional Office where he worked with congregations and donors to increase their fund-raising portfolio. Prior to his work with Church World Service, Vy worked with the Lutheran Volunteer Corps office in Berkeley, CA, where he strengthened relationships between volunteers, congregations, and non-profit agencies. Vy and his wife, Linh Bui, live in Oakland, CA.

Rev. Nguyen will lead a workshop and speak at the Men’s Luncheon on Saturday.

REGIONAL ASSEMBLY WORKSHOPS
10:30 a.m. - First Christian Church, Florence

“Creating a Community Church”
Workshop Leader -- Rev. Dr. Bill Lee
(from Dr. Lee) “Loudon Avenue Christian Church is described by people in the Roanoke Valley as a ‘community church.’ Dr. C. Eric Lincoln defines the black community church in this manner: for blacks, the ‘church was his school, his forum, his political arena, his social club, his art gallery, his conservatory of music. It was lyceum and gymnasium as well as sanctum sanctorum.’ This definition is not exclusive to the black church, it can be any church. We embrace that moniker and commit ourselves to living into that designation. In this workshop, I will give a power point presentation that will highlight how we became a community church. I will also give practical tips on how our model can be replicated in many local congregations. We believe at Loudon Avenue that we are a church that is constantly transforming herself because we are a community church.”

“Being Neighbors to the Refugees”
Workshop Leader – Rev. Vy Nguyen
(from Rev. Nguyen) “Millions of people are fleeing conflict in Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan and Ukraine, as well as persecution in areas of Southeast Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, creating the highest level of displacement since World War II. Why are people fleeing? Where are people going? At this workshop you will find out how we, as Disciples, are responding.”

“Stories From the Church:
Connecting Meaningfully with Those On Our Doorsteps”
Workshop Leader – Rev. Rebecca Hale
(from Rev. Hale) “When you think about the most vulnerable persons and the deepest needs in your community, who and what comes to mind? How is your congregation already responding and what might help you go deeper and be more effective? In this workshop we will explore stories, strategies and partnerships for connecting with the deepest needs in our communities.”
Throughout 2016, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is encouraging Mission Gatherings to help the Church identify mission priorities to which God may be calling us as we move toward the year 2020 and beyond. The input received at dozens of Mission Gatherings all across the life of the church will be shared with a Mission Council that will formulate recommendations for consideration by the Church.

A Mission Gathering is scheduled in conjunction with the 2016 Regional Assembly in Alabama-Northwest Florida. On Saturday afternoon, April 30, from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., a Mission Gathering will take place at the Baptist Campus Ministry Center, which is adjacent to First Christian Church, Florence. All Disciples are welcome to participate in the rich discussion about mission which will take place in groups of six, facilitated by the Table Leader.

*Your input is important as we discern the directions God would have us move as a denomination.*

**Elena Huegel, Missionary in Chile**

(Global Mission Partner for the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region)

*is coming to a location near you in June, 2016*

The Division of Mission has developed the following itinerary for Elena Huegel while she is in Alabama-Northwest Florida. Appreciation is expressed to those congregations that have agreed to host gatherings and invite other District congregations to those gatherings. Each gathering listed is open to the entire District where the gathering will take place. Please contact the person listed for more information about a particular gathering. At each event, a light meal will be provided. There will be a donation basket to receive contributions for the meal.

**Sunday, June 5 - 4:00 p.m. - District One** congregations will gather at First Christian Church, 1701 Carridale St. SW, Decatur 35601 (contact pastor Mickey Johnson <mickey@tvpinc.com> or call 256-565-5958 for more information)

**Monday, June 6 - 6:00 p.m. - District Three** congregations will gather at Union Christian Church, 1111 County Road 69, Tuskegee 36083 (contact pastor Danny Shoemake <dannysandra2002@yahoo.com> or call 404-861-2815 or Stuart Price <pricesb@auburn.edu> or call 334-821-1123 for more information)

**Tuesday, June 7 - 6:00 p.m. - District Four** congregations will gather at United Christian Church, 1116 Edgar Nixon Blvd., Montgomery 36105 (contact pastor La’Rue Smith, Jr. <laruesmith@wildblue.net> or call 334-850-1641 for more information)

**Wednesday, June 8 - 6:00 p.m. - District Five** congregations will gather at South Baldwin Christian Church, 19489 W. Keller Road, Foley 36535 (contact pastor Tim Clarke <timmclarke@gmail.com> or call 251-424-7923 for more information)

**Sunday, June 12 - 4:00 p.m. - District Two** congregations will gather at Valley Christian Church, 2600 Cherokee Place, Birmingham 35216 (contact pastor Gary Edge <garyhe33@hotmail.com> or call 205-879-0419 for more information)
OUTREACH GIVING UPDATE

The giving through February, 2016, 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 33.30% from the amount given for the same period in 2015. Church-wide gifts to Disciples Mission Fund and the four Special Day Offerings have increased by 5.74% compared to the same period in 2015.

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

Timothy Clark was installed as pastor with First Christian Church, Hartselle, on Sunday, March 13. Shane Isner will begin his ministry as pastor with First Christian Church, Montgomery, in mid-April. Edd Spencer will conclude his service as Interim Minister at First Christian Church, Montgomery, in mid-April.

CONGREGATIONS SEEKING A MINISTER

Huntsville, First (Cameron Douglas is Interim Minister)
Meridian, First (Stan Wright is Interim Minister)
Mobile, Azalea Hills (David Chambers is Interim Minister)
Pensacola, First (Paul Ingram is Interim Minister)

Timothy Clark was installed as pastor with First Christian Church, Hartselle, on Sunday, March 13, 2016. Participants in the service included (l-r) former pastors Jerry Smith and Jerry Ridling with Rev. Clark and Regional Minister John Mobley.
The Men's Spring Retreat was held March 11-12, 2016, at YMCA-Hargis Retreat Center in Chelsea, AL. The theme was "Reflections with Jeremiah: Judgment and Hope." Cameron Douglas, Interim Minister, First Christian Church, Huntsville, (pictured center) was the guest leader.

**STATEMENT AFFIRMING AN ANTI-RACIST IDENTITY**

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, Ft. Walton Beach
- Sellers Memorial Christian Church, Hayneville
- First Christian Church, Huntsville
- Grateful Life Community Church, Huntsville
- Madison Christian Church, Madison
- 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