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, 2016

Moderator: Cameron Douglas
1138 Way Thru The Woods SW
Decatur, AL 35603
256-606-8284 (c)
e-mail: pastorc1@me.com

Moderator-Elect: Kathy Mason
16287 Hagler Mill Dr.
Northport, AL 35475
205-339-6560 (h) 205-246-9652 (c)
e-mail: mason217@att.net

First Vice Moderator: Roger Peadro
418 Sandy Ridge Circle
Mary Esther, FL 32569
850-496-8560 (c)
e-mail: rogerpeadro@yahoo.com

Second Vice Moderator: Floretta Timmons
182 Timmons Road
Hayneville, AL 36040
334-563-7785 (h) 334-467-8148 (c)
e-mail: florettatimmons@yahoo.com

Secretary-Treasurer: Kanessa Doss
935 Boulder Lane
Auburn, AL 36830
334-220-2365 (h)
e-mail: kanessamiller@gmail.com

Regional Minister: John Mobley
861 Highway 52
Helena, AL 35080
205-425-5245 (w)
e-mail: jpmobiley2@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 (h)
e-mail: bc Thomason66@yahoo.com
ITEMS OF INTEREST
(from within the Region)

OUTREACH GIVING

The giving through July, 2017, 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 11.18% from the amount given for the same period in 2016. Church-wide gifts to Disciples Mission Fund and the four Special Day Offerings have decreased by 4.67% compared to the same period in 2016. Church-wide giving to Week of Compassion, through July, 2017, shows a 0.6% decrease from the year-to-date amount in 2016. Year-to-date giving to Week of Compassion in Alabama-Northwest Florida has decreased by 13.32% from the year-to-date amount in 2016.

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

C.J. Cobb is scheduled to be installed as pastor with First Christian Church, Jasper, on Sunday, September 10. He began this new ministry in June. Paul Allen is scheduled to be installed as pastor with First Christian Church, Huntsville, on Sunday, September 24. He began this new ministry in mid-August. Cameron Douglas concluded his service as Interim Senior Minister with First Christian Church, Huntsville, on August 13. On that day he was presented with the Honored Minister Pin as he moves into retirement.

Fannie Ashley was ordained to Christian ministry at First Christian Church, Montgomery, on August 20. Rick Malugani has been approved for ordination. A service of ordination is planned for Sunday, October 15, 2017, at Fairhope Christian Church, where Rick serves as pastor. Linda Davis has been approved for commissioning for her work as Youth Director with First Christian Church, Huntsville. A certificate of commissioning will be presented to her formally on September 24 at First Christian Church, Huntsville.

CONGREGATIONS WITH MINISTERIAL VACANCIES

Robertsdale, First (Alan Woods is Interim Supply)
Tuscaloosa, First (Jim Brooks is Interim Minister)

JOYS AND CONCERNS OF THE CLERGY

Jerry Smith (retired, Hartselle) was hospitalized in Decatur with pneumonia and other issues in late August. Jose Diaz (minister, Primera Iglesia Cristiana, Fort Walton Beach) is under the care of heart specialists and kidney specialists to determine when and whether surgery may be done to address several areas of blockage to his heart. He is currently on medication and is feeling better. Mark
**Foglio** (minister, First Christian Church, Pensacola) has been on a medical leave of absence from his duties for several months and continues to be in recovery from illness. He had colon surgery in May and has battled an esophageal infection, a stomach infection, and iron deficiency since then. Pete Smith, brother to **Willie Smith** (minister, New Salem Christian Church, Hayneville), died in Montgomery on August 13 and a funeral service was held on August 26. **Pat Parvin** (minister, Village Christian Church, Auburn) is happy to report that his daughters, Dawn and Kelly, are improving from recent hospitalizations and surgeries. **Frank Rittenberry** (minister, First Christian Church of River View, Valley, AL) continues to receive treatments in his ongoing battle with cancer in his hip and lungs. David Mobley, the brother of **John Mobley** (Regional Minister) is receiving treatments for stage-4 kidney cancer that was first discovered in 2015 and now has relocated to his liver. Dean Fearson, son of **Harvey Fearson** (community minister, First Christian Church, Fort Walton Beach), suffered a gunshot wound to the chest on August 27. Noah Edge, son of **Gary Edge** (minister, Valley Christian Church, Birmingham), continues to recover from surgery earlier this year.

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

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**Luncheon for Retired Ministers/Spouses**
Monday, January 8, 2018
Hilton Garden Inn, Orange Beach, AL

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**2018 Ministers and Mates Retreat**
January 8 - 10, 2018
Hilton Garden Inn, Orange Beach, AL
“Sharing our Stories”
(facilitated by members in the Ministry Support Network)

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**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.

Christian Church in Alabama-Northwest Florida, 861 Highway 52, Helena, AL 35080
DATES FOR YOUR INFORMATION

SEPTEMBER
5 Commissioning and Ordination South (9:15 a.m.) - United Christian, Montgomery
12 - 14 Annual SERF Retreat (Southeast Regional Fellowship) - Christmount - Black Mtn., NC
18 Anti-Racism Team Conference Call (7:00 p.m.)
23 Program Committee on Church Development (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena
25 Division of Mission Conference Call (7:00 p.m.)
24 - Oct. 1 Reconciliation Offering promotion
26 - 28 Disciples Outdoor Ministries Summit - Upper Midwest Region
29 - Oct. 1 Women’s Retreat - YMCA-Camp Chandler (near Wetumpka, AL)

OCTOBER
1 World Communion Sunday and Reconciliation Offering Sunday
7 Division of Nurture (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena
11 Commissioning and Ordination North (9:15 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena
13 - 14 Hispanic Ministries Commission “Encounter” - YMCA-Hargis
21 Regional Assembly Planning (10:00 a.m.) - Valley Christian, Birmingham
27 - 29 Administrative Committee of the Christian Church - Indianapolis, IN
31 Optional Arrival Day for Senior Adult Retreat (St. Bernard Retreat Center)

NOVEMBER
1 - 2 Senior Adult Retreat (St. Bernard Retreat Center) - Cullman, AL
3 - 4 Southeast Hispanic Convention - Lake Placid, FL
4 CWF/Disciples Women Cabinet (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena
7 Commissioning and Ordination South (9:15 a.m.) - United Christian, Montgomery
12 - 19 Thanksgiving Offering Promotion (for Disciples colleges and seminaries)
15 - 18 College of Regional Ministers - Indianapolis, IN

DECEMBER
2 Regional Nominating Committee (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena
9 Christmas Party for children and families served through Christian Services for Children in Alabama (CSCA) (Noon - 2:00 p.m.) - Selma, AL
11 Committee on the Ministry (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena
16 Executive/Personnel Committee (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena
17 - 24 Christmas Offering Promotion (for the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region)
19 Staff Planning Meeting (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena

JANUARY, 2018
8 Retired Ministers Luncheon - Hilton Garden Inn, Orange Beach, AL
8 - 10 Ministers and Mates Retreat - Hilton Garden Inn, Orange Beach, AL
17 Commissioning and Ordination North (9:15 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena
19 - 21 Young Adult/Senior Adult Retreat (St. Bernard Retreat Center) - Cullman, AL
26 - 28 Youhtopia (Youth, grades 6 - 12) - YMCA-Camp Chandler
27 Committee on Recommendations (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena

FEBRUARY, 2018
3 CWF/Disciples Women Cabinet (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena
6 Commissioning and Ordination South (9:15 a.m.) - United Christian, Montgomery

(Continued on back)
FEBRUARY, 2018, (continued)
17 Division of Administration and Stewardship (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office
18 - 25 Week of Compassion Promotion
24 Regional Board (10:00 a.m.) - First Christian Church, Birmingham

MARCH, 2018
1 - 3 SERF Collaboration Event - Christmount (Black Mountain, NC)
5 - 8 Black Ministers Retreat - Location TBD
15 Optional Arrival Day for Men’s Retreat (YMCA-Hargis)
16 - 17 Men’s Retreat - YMCA-Hargis
23 “Healthy Boundaries” workshop for clergy (9:00 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena
25 - April 1 Easter Offering Promotion (for General Ministries)

APRIL, 2018
1 Easter Sunday
11 Commissioning and Ordination North (9:15 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena
12 - 19 Administrative Committee/General Board/College of Regional Ministers
27 - 29 Alabama-NW Florida Regional Assembly - Valley Christian, Birmingham

MAY, 2018
1 Commissioning and Ordination South (9:15 a.m.) - United Christian, Montgomery
9 Committee on the Ministry (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena
15 Staff Planning Meeting (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena
19 Biennial Planning Session (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena
13 - 20 Pentecost Offering Promotion (for new congregation establishment)

JUNE, 2018
18 - 22 Junior Camp - YMCA-Camp Chandler
18 - 22 Chi Rho Camp - YMCA-Camp Chandler
18 - 22 CYF Conference - YMCA-Camp Chandler
22 - 22 Genesis Camp - YMCA-Camp Chandler
22 - 24 Discovery Camp - YMCA-Camp Chandler
23 Regional Convocation One-Day Workshop - Mt. Calvary Missionary Christian, Tuskegee, AL

JULY, 2018
14 Commissioning and Ordination North (9:15 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena
16 - 19 College of Regional Ministers/Forum of Regional Moderators - Regency Hyatt/Wynfrey Hotel - Birmingham, AL
19 - 22 National Convocation of the Christian Church - Regency Hyatt/Wynfrey Hotel - Birmingham, AL
28 Commissioning and Ordination South (9:15 a.m.) - United Christian, Montgomery

AUGUST, 2018
8 Commissioning and Ordination North (9:15 a.m.) - Regional Office, Helena
26 “Senior Adult Sunday” in Alabama-Northwest Florida

Christian Church In Alabama-Northwest Florida, 861 Highway 52, Helena, AL 35080
REGIONAL PRAYER CALENDAR
FOR SEPTEMBER - NOVEMBER, 2017

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.

September 3 - Minter, Braggs – Joe Crook, Board Chair (334-227-4100)
September 10 - Mobile, Azalea Hills (251-633-6161) Chris Whitehead, Minister (e-mail: <bscout27@yahoo.com>)
September 17 - Pensacola, First (850-477-1642) Mark Foglio, Minister (e-mail: <fccpen@bellsouth.net>)
September 24 - Madison, Madison (256-837-8182) Beth Thomason, Minister (e-mail: <bethom66@yahoo.com>)

October 1 - Robertsdale, First – Alan Woods, Supply Minister (251-978-2901 or e-mail: <manytrees2@gmail.com>)
October 8 - Helena, Grace (205-426-1233) Brad Henderson and Phyllis Kirk, Ministers (e-mail: <brad.henderson1@me.com> or <pskirk@bellsouth.net>)
October 15 - Montgomery, First (334-270-1320) Shane Isner, Minister (e-mail: <isner.shane@gmail.com>)
October 22 - Florence, First (256-764-2192) Jim Storie, Minister (e-mail: <jsstorie66@gmail.com>)
October 29 - Tuscaloosa, First (205-758-2968) Jim Brooks, Interim Minister (e-mail: <jimbrookshere@gmail.com>)

November 5 - Valhermoso Springs, First (256-778-7921) Jeremy Harbin, Minister (e-mail: <pastorjeremyharbin@gmail.com>)
November 12 - Jasper, First (205-384-6302) C. J. Cobb, Minister (e-mail: <cj.cobb@wyle.com>)
November 19 - Valley, Fairfax (334-756-3941) Duwayne Bridges, Minister (e-mail: <burningbridges@msn.com>)
November 26 - Montgomery, United(334-262-3382) Larue Smith, Jr., Minister (e-mail: <laruesmith@wildblue.net>)
Everyone has a STORY

The disciples came up and asked,
"Why do you tell stories?"
He replied:
to create readiness,
to nudge the people toward receptive insight.
(Matthew 13:10,13).

About the Special Offering

The Special Offering is used to fund our Church’s mission imperative to become an pro-reconciling and anti-racist church utilizing experiential education, inclusive worship and intentional dialogue. Our efforts to promote healing, relationship and restoration in the whole family of God are enlivened by funds from this offering. Through it we are able to provide programs for leadership development, curriculum for dialogue and learning, and partnerships within the Church and our communities.

Reconciliation Ministry Special Offering - Sept. 24 & Oct. 1, 2017
CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN ALABAMA-NORTHWEST FLORIDA
(Disciples of Christ)

RECONCILIATION GRANT APPLICATION
(For a Regional Partnership in Reconciliation Ministries)

NOTE: “Reconciliation Ministries” are understood to be congregational programs of education and outreach that address the issue of racism in North America and which have the effect of building racial understanding, healing, and harmony for participants in these programs. Congregations are encouraged to sponsor such programs and, if needed, request grants from the Reconciliation Fund. In the past, two or more congregations have formed partnerships in sponsoring Reconciliation Ministries. The Anti-Racism Team of the Region, which takes action on grant requests, encourages these partnerships and will look favorably upon grant applications that originate from such partnerships. The Anti-Racism Team also welcomes grant requests from Districts that need funding for special initiatives that intend to foster an anti-racist/pro-reconciliation identity.

Date ________________________________

Name of Congregation (s) (or District) ____________________________________________

Minister (or Contact Person) _____________________________________________________

Address . ___________________________________________________________________

Phone __________________________ Email ___________________________________________

Please offer a brief description of the program which clearly states: (Attach a separate sheet)
   1) the purpose, description, and anticipated goals of the program
   2) the number of persons who will be involved in leadership of the program
   3) the number of persons served through the program
   4) the budget for the program, which itemizes anticipated expenses and lists sources of income for the program, including the amount the congregation(s) (or District) will allocate
   5) any other relevant information concerning the history and development of this program

Amount of Funds Requested _______________________________________________________

Do you anticipate making additional grant applications for this program in the future? _____
(Yes or No)

Signature of Person Completing Form ______________________________________________

Role/Position in the Congregation ________________________________________________

Christian Church in Alabama-Northwest Florida, 861 Highway 52, Birmingham, AL 35080

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| TOTAL | 131,417.00| 116,700.00| -11.20 |

NOTE: THIS REPORT COMPARES GIVING FROM JANUARY-JULY 2016 TO GIVING JANUARY-JULY 2017
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NOTE: THIS REPORT COMPARES GIVING FROM JANUARY-JULY 2016 TO GIVING JANUARY-JULY 2017
CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN ALABAMA-NORTHWEST FLORIDA
(Disciples of Christ)

MILDRED B. WATSON MEMORIAL FUND

**Purpose**
The Mildred B. Watson Memorial Fund is a permanent fund established by the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region, in partnership with Valley Christian Church, Birmingham, and the Christian Church Foundation, that will provide annual income to support leadership education for persons in the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region. Mildred Watson supported the entire Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and had a strong desire to see young people and young adults gain exposure to the ministries of the wider church. She valued education for all Disciples and she particularly wanted to see ministers have the education, resources, and support they need for their service to the church. The Mildred B. Watson Memorial Fund will provide resources which address these commitments that were dear to Mildred Watson during her lifetime.

APPLICATION FOR A GRANT FROM THE WATSON FUND

Name of Applicant

Date of Application

Address of Applicant

City State Zip Code

E-Mail Address of Applicant

Phone Number of Applicant

Congregation Where Applicant is a Member

Minister’s Name

Based on the Purpose of the Mildred B. Watson Memorial Fund, as described above, please attach a separate sheet summarizing the opportunity for which you are requesting a grant and how it relates to the purpose of the Watson Fund. (Please limit to one page)

What is the total amount needed to participate in this opportunity. $ __________________

Of this amount, how much will you be able to pay? ____________________ How much do you anticipate obtaining from other sources, if any? ____________________

What amount are you requesting from the Watson Fund? ____________________
RENEWAL & FUN

CRAFTS – LINE DANCING – SINGING – MORNING WATCH – GAME DAY TAILGATING – GENTLE YOGA

MIND BODY SPIRIT

RETREAT TO REFRESH

SEPTEMBER 29 - OCTOBER 1, 2017

CAMP CHANDLER
1240 Jordan Dam Road
Wetumpka, Al 36092
WITH RESOURCE LEADER

REV. MARY BETH HARPER

Y'ALL COME – Y'ALL COME – Y'ALL COME – Y'ALL COME – Y'ALL COME
Women's Fall Retreat - 2017

WHAT TO BRING:
Bible, bedding, sheets, pillow, blanket, towels, toiletries, casual wear (including rainwear), walking shoes or hiking boots, items for silent auction, journal or writing materials, coffee cup, water bottle.
Toiletry items for human trafficking victims will be collected to support The Well House.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION:
Registration begins Friday September 29th at 3:30 p.m.
Retreat begins with dinner at 6:30 p.m.
Retreat ends Sunday October 1, around 10 p.m.
Camp Chandler does not rent linen supplies.

IN CONSIDERATION OF OTHERS
NO CHILDREN PLEASE

Clip and mail to Christian Church in AL-NW FL, 861 Highway 52, Helena, AL 35080
Make check payable to Christian Church in Alabama–Northwest-Florida.

NAME________________________________________ CONGREGATION_____________________________________

ADDRESS____________________________________ CITY_______________________ ZIP_____________________

PHONE (home) ______ (work) ______ Email ________________________________

Is this your first Retreat? ______ Yes ______ No
How many retreats have you attended? ______

Early Bird Special Registration Fee MUST BE POSTMARKED BY September 15, 2017
$ 115.00

For early bird rate entire fee must be enclosed with registration form for it to apply

After September 15th Registration Fee
$ 130.00

Registration for Saturday only is $75.00 includes meals
Registration for Friday only is $35.00 includes dinner

Fee Enclosed $________

Because of physical reasons I need a lower bunk
I request to be in a quiet section
I need special seating during meals
I need transportation to workshops

Roommate Request________________________________ Dietary Restrictions__________________________

Christian Church in Alabama-NW Florida, 861 Highway 52, Helena, AL 35080
THIRD ANNUAL HISPANIC ENCOUNTER

**All are welcome at this Encounter to: Nurture Relationships, Enjoy Fellowship, Receive Inspiration, and Celebrate the Faith in a Spirit of Unity**
(Note: New Officers will be elected to lead the Hispanic Ministries Commission for the 2017-2019 Biennium.)

Location – YMCA-Hargis, (near Chelsea, Alabama)
** Bring bedding, pillows, towels, and toiletries. **

October 13 - 14, 2017
(Check-in begins on Saturday as early as 2:00 p.m. Retreat officially begins with dinner on Friday, October 13, at 6:00 p.m. and ends Saturday afternoon.)

Registration Cost: **$38 per person (same cost for adults and children)**
Registration Deadline: September 10, 2017

Christian Church in Alabama-Northwest Florida, 861 Highway 52, Helena, AL 35080
TERCER ENCUENTRO COMISIÓN MINISTERIO HISPANO

EVENTO: PASADIA FAMILIAR 13, 14 OCTUBRE 2017

13 Y 14 DE OCTUBRE DE 2017

YMCA – HARGIS RETREAT (928 Hargis Drive, Chelsia, AL 35043)

Registración comienza el VIERNES, 13 de Octubre, desde las 4:00 pm.
El Tercer Encuentro comienza oficialmente a las 7:00 pm con Servicio de Apertura y Bienvenida.

** Favor traer ropa de cama, almohadas y artículos de higiene personal **

-------------------------------------- Favor de cortar y devolver --------------------------------------

HOJA DE REGISTRACIÓN
(Usar una hoja nueva para cada persona y mayores de 3 años)

Nombres de Adultos: ____________________________

Nombres de Niños: ____________________________

Dirección: ____________________________
Calle     Ciudad     Estado     Zip

Numero de Teléfono: ____________________________ E-mail: ____________________________

Congregación ____________________________

Cantidad Incluida $ ____________________________

Favor de incluir el pago de $38.00 por persona (3 años y menos no pagan)
Este pago cubrirá el costo de registración, dos comidas, y alojamiento en el Campamento YMCA Hargis Retreat.
Registración y Pago deben ser recibidos antes del 10 de Septiembre de 2016
Para más información llamar al 256-405-5474 ó 256-239-1500

Enviar a:
20 Forever Wild Lane, Oxford, Alabama 36203
Sixteenth Annual

SENIOR ADULT RETREAT
Wednesday, Nov. 1 - Thursday, Nov. 2, 2017
(Begins at 11:30 a.m. Wednesday and concludes by 1:30 p.m. on Thursday)
(There is an option for persons to arrive at the Retreat Center on Tuesday, Oct. 31)

“Making A Difference: We’re MAD!”

Retreat Leader:
Rev. Jim Brooks
Retired Disciples Pastor

ST. BERNARD RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTER
1600 St. Bernard Drive, Cullman, AL 35055 (Phone: 256-734-3946)
(at I-65, exit #308, go about 3-4 miles on Hwy. 278 E., to the retreat center entrance)

Cost Options
$100/person, double occupancy room w/ 2 twin beds (Early-Bird cost is $90)
$125/person, single occupancy room w/ 2 twin beds (Early-Bird cost is $115)
$70/person for participants lodging off-site (Early-Bird cost is $60)
Note: Add $50/person for arrival on October 31 (no meals provided on Oct. 31)

**Limited Financial Aid is Available upon Request**

Early-Bird Deadline is October 9, 2017

Christian Church in Alabama-NW Florida, 861 Highway 52, Helena, AL 35080
SENIOR ADULT RETREAT - Wednesday, Nov. 1 - Thursday, Nov. 2, 2017
St. Bernard Retreat Center, 1600 St. Bernard Drive - Cullman, AL 35055 (Phone: 256-734-3946)
(at I-65, exit #308, about 3-4 miles on Hwy. 278 E. to the retreat center entrance)

“Making A Difference: We’re MAD!”
Led by: Rev. Jim Brooks, Retired Disciples Pastor

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 $100 with this form (before October 9, pay only $90)]
            (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 $125 with this form (before October 9, pay only $115)]
            (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 $70 with this form (before October 9, pay only $60)]
            (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: Those choosing to stay at a hotel may make their reservations directly with their hotel of choice.

Note: Add $50/person to the above cost for arrival on Oct. 31. No additional meals will be provided.

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 9, 2017.
Equipping Volunteers Builds a Strong Church Community

Sociologist Joshua Packard describes an emerging population he calls the “dones.” They are “spiritual refugees” from organized religion who were once long-time members, but who pass through the exit door of the church and never look back. Though many reasons exist for their departure, a significant theme is the feeling of being of ignored or underutilized. “It’s hard for me to be just a passive worshiper,” one of Packard’s interview subjects said. “I’ve got to do things. That’s how I understand my faith and how I understand God.”¹

Signs of Trouble

Marlene Wilson, a recognized specialist in volunteer training, explains that in many churches the Pillars do much of the work, fostering close and satisfying relationships within their clique and making a majority of the decisions. This can leave the Pewitters with a lack of enthusiasm about getting involved. Additionally, while one can be part of an active core of volunteers and still experience a vague sense of dissatisfaction, Wilson describes signs of trouble within a volunteer system.

_The team leader or committee chair does all the work for the team._ Though it is tempting to blame laziness, the culprit might be an overactive team leader. Imagine gathering for a team meeting where the leader lays out her vision for the team’s work, hands out printed material, and adjourns. Later, team members realize that the leader did all the talking. Unless team members are asked to contribute, it seems pointless to participate.

_Leaders are asked to do several jobs at once—and retained for too long._ When leaders juggle multiple tasks, they are unable to give their best effort to any one thing. Without an influx of new volunteers, the regulars may feel burdened and unmotivated. Some churches address this issue by refusing to allow anyone to be in charge of more than one ministry team.

_Unrealistic time commitments scare volunteers away._ The era when volunteers inhabited their jobs for a lifetime is over. “A major trend in volunteerism,” writes Wilson, “is that volunteers prefer three-, six-, or one-month assignments rather than longer commitments. The shorter time commitments fit better into volunteers’ busy lives.”

_There is no system for coaching volunteers._ Imagine being assigned a volunteer job with no one to be accountable to and no one to contact in case problems arise. Supervising is just as important for volunteers as it is for paid employees. The best approach is to create a documented process. Develop a coaching system and write it down.

_Volunteers are more committed to the director than to the program._ Inspirational leaders are never a problem—unless the leader leaves! Every team or committee needs a mission statement that answers the question, “What is our purpose?” and a written vision statement of where the team is heading.²

Discovery First, Equipping Second

Sue Mallory and Brad Smith lay out an equipping system for congregations structured around the journey a new member makes from entry to worship involvement...
to volunteer ministry. At the heart of this equipping system is the discovery interview, which seeks to discover the abilities and interests of potential volunteers. It is best to recruit a team to conduct these interviews. Anyone who is able to ask open-ended questions and practice reflective listening would qualify. The interviewer should take prolific notes or use a pre-fabricated form. Some congregations use volunteer database software for its members, which is fine as long as confidentiality is respected regarding personal issues that might arise in the interview (see “Top 20 Volunteer Management Software Products,” http://www.capterra.com/volunteer-management-software for examples).

Here are some sample questions for a discovery interview:

- I would be interested in learning about your family. Tell me about...
- What do you do (or have you done) to earn your livelihood?
- What do you love doing?
- What do you dislike doing and hope never to have to do again?
- We seldom have the opportunity to share with others those things that we most enjoyed and felt we did well. Are there things you have accomplished that you are really proud of?

Matching and discovery are different tasks, and discovery must come first. Matching then requires a thorough review of the abilities, interests, and motivations of the potential volunteer before seeking to fill available slots. When matching, one should pay attention to not only positive factors, but also reasons why this might not be the best time to volunteer, such as exhaustion from previous service, personal crisis, or a significant life transition.

The Basics of Equipping Volunteers

Success in volunteer service requires encouragement and support. This is often called equipping, a reference to Paul’s call to leaders “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12, NRSV). Here are four keys to effective equipping:

Apprentice your volunteers. In the Middle Ages, the apprentice served alongside the master, who provided instruction and guidance. The apprentice learned by doing. The effect here is that of the slow cooker or crock-pot, not the microwave oven. Demonstrate how it is done, and let it simmer.

Use a team structure. The problem with the solo approach is that we end up doing too much of the work ourselves. If you are launching a new project without a team in place, it risks collapse. If the size of your long-standing committee or team has dwindled over time, you risk burnout. Pay close attention to forming and sustaining the team.

Train for the work. Once you have a team in place, think about attending a training conference together, watching an instructional video, or visiting another congregation that does what you do. Observe and ask questions: What worked? What didn’t?

Develop leaders. While training prepares a person to complete a task, leadership development aims at developing the whole person. For instance, a church-operated food pantry may recruit new volunteers from its customers and train them to stock shelves or clean the floor. Then, invite volunteers who show interest and leadership potential to serve on the board or hold other leadership roles. With proper guidance, this customer-turned-volunteer might develop into a trusted leader. Leaders may come from anywhere.

How Volunteer Ministry Feeds Us

Equipping others for the work of ministry, Paul writes, serves to build a strong, diverse community called the body of Christ. Where do you fit into that community? Are you a Pillar, a Pew-sitter, or something in between? What would a discovery process look like with the newest members, your circle of friends beyond the church, the “dones,” and the “not-yet-dones”?

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: The Rev. Dr. Dana Horrell, executive director of Faithful Citizen (www.faithfulcitizen.net) and United Methodist pastor, works to engage congregations in social ministry.

4. Ibid., 287-88.
SHORT-TERM MISSION TRIPS THAT YIELD LONG-TERM SUCCESS

Reporting on the popularity of short-term mission trips, sociologist Robert Wuthnow estimates that in the US, 32 percent of congregations sponsor short-term overseas volunteer trips every year. About a quarter of the US population has taken part in a short-term mission experience at some point in their lifetime. In fact, the prospect of embarking on a short-term mission trip, fueled by well-resourced, energetic people of faith, can be exhilarating for both participants and the community being served. Still, despite the best intentions, such trips often fall short of expectations for all involved.

Worst Mission Trip Ever: A Case Study

Moments after the ten-passenger van arrived in the Central American village of San Valente, Jenna pulled out her camera to photograph the dozens of patchwork buildings made of corrugated metal, plastic, and wood. Matt said, “Wow! This reminds me of last year, when we were in Mexico.” Scott, the trip’s coordinator, asked the group to help hand out the goods to community residents that would arrive via truck that afternoon.

This mission trip’s purpose was to lay the foundation for a new community church. The mission trip leader sent money in advance to hire someone to dig the foundation trenches. However, when the group arrived at the work site, they were shocked because the trenches were only half-finished. Miguel, their host, explained the reason: They preferred to hire local workers with hand tools, not a single person with heavy machinery, so that more people would be employed. “Looks like it’s going to be a long week!” Jenna exclaimed.

While this story is fictional, it contains instructive examples of misguided actions.

- Before Jenna reaches for her camera, she and the other missionaries should be advised to get to know their hosts, and gain an understanding of what it is like to live there. Otherwise, the trip—whether to El Salvador or inner city Detroit—becomes voyeuristic or like a tourist destination.

Matt’s memory of last year’s Mexican mission trip highlights that, while changing destinations every year can be enjoyable, the best way to develop a lasting relationship is to make a long-term commitment to one community and return each year.

- The coordinator’s plan to hand out supplies from the back of a pickup truck can be an offensive practice, as it reinforces a pattern of top-down paternalism. Instead, give the items to a local service agency or congregation to distribute.

- The expressions of shock over a half-finished trench remind us that missionaries need to respect that they have now entered their hosts’ world. Logistics and timelines need to proceed under local direction.

Best Practices for Effective Mission Trips

Laurie Occhipinti, an anthropologist who researches economic development, has spoken with missionaries, read scholarly articles and religious leaders’ accounts, and participated in trips herself. With this background,
she offers best practices to ensure that short-term mission efforts are effective.¹

*Establish Long-Term Relationships.* The here today, gone tomorrow quality of many short-term mission trips begs the question: How are we not simply religious tourists? Long-term connection through repeated visits can change the relationship quality between sender and host, assisting team members in deepening their local cultural understanding and allowing those who have made multiple trips to help newcomers learn what to expect and how to behave. Repeated visits also increase the likelihood that local community members will have input into the projects undertaken.

*Reflect on the Experience.* Orientation and debriefing sessions should be mandatory for groups undertaking short-term projects. These sessions work if everyone provides input. Newcomers should be encouraged to talk aloud about their preconceptions about the trip and the culture. At the final debriefing, group discussions provide an important opportunity to frame the social, cultural, and political contextualization of the encounter.

*Work to Ensure the Project Benefits the Community.* Good mission trips often resemble successful community development projects undertaken closer to home. This involves practicing good listening skills with local leaders; focusing on resources, not deficits; and considering how the project could enhance community sustainability five or more years down the road. Such steps ensure that the host community, and not just the mission team, receives lasting benefits.

*Understand the Role of Culture.* Occhipinti notes that mission participants often “collapse cultural differences” by lumping the poor in other countries with the poor everywhere else, disregarding cultural variances. Time invested in learning about the local culture, perhaps even learning language basics, is time well spent.

*Work in Partnership.* “The question is not whether we travel and work with others; the question is how.” In other words, the process of working with others matters as much as the project’s material output. Unfortunately, Christian mission history is tainted by missionaries’ collusion with colonial governments and institutions seeking to extract resource wealth from colonial territories. Only by continually stressing partnership in the project’s planning and execution can both sides of the mission equation—missioners and hosts—learn from each other.

*Where Should We Go?*

When initiating a short-term mission trip, the most important decision may be the first: where should we go? Here are two possibilities for finding that answer.²

*Personal Connection.* This occurs because a church leader learns about the host community through a friend or business colleague. In one case, a professional woman started a nonprofit agency after learning about the poor living near a Nicaraguan landfill while on vacation. Her home church stepped up to support her with funds and additional support through mission trips. If you choose to rely on a personal contact, do your homework. Contact a nonprofit development organization with contacts in the region you plan to visit, or talk with someone in your denominational mission office.

*Institutional Connection.* If your congregation is part of a larger denomination with global reach, denominational staff may have institutional ties with nongovernmental agencies in the host region or country. One advantage: the denominational office may be able to help with logistical arrangements as well.

So which is better? Personal connections may appear more direct and less bureaucratic, yet a potential downside is the “side-of-the-road syndrome.” Occhipinti describes it this way: Everybody loves the mission site that lies on the beaten path, while the greater need may lie just inland from there. For example, Juarez, Mexico, located just across the border from El Paso, Texas, receives many American mission teams, while more remote locations receive hardly any at all.

*Reflecting on Meaningful Mission*

Do mission trips do any good, or are they simply faith-based tourism masquerading as meaningful engagement? When handled effectively, such trips can help missioners from a dominant culture challenge long-held assumptions. Immersion in another culture, especially in a less developed country, cracks open cultural assumptions, as if a fish, always accustomed to immersion in water, suddenly became aware of its surroundings. Such experiences can be transformative.³

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4. Ibid., 95-96.
5. Ibid., 34-38.