July 1, 2019

Each congregation receives the bi-monthly Leader’s Packet, along with individuals who have requested it. Leader’s Packets are also available on-line through the Region’s website <www.alnwfldisciples.org> Each Minister and/or Moderator (or Board Chairperson) is asked to review this material carefully and share it appropriately within the congregation.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents.................................................................(Gray)
Regional Officers and Regional Staff...........................................(Orchid)
Items of Interest........................................................................(White)
Dates For Your Information......................................................(Canary)
Regional Prayer Calendar (July - September, 2019).......................(Blue)
Summer Prayer Calendar for Ministers Active in Non-Congregational Ministries....(Pink)
Congregational Giving Report (through May, 2019).........................(Tan)
Regional Refund Policy..............................................................(White)
Flyer for Gathering of Moderators(or Board Chairs) and Treasurers and Pastors...(Green)
Registration Form for Gathering of Moderators(or Board Chairs)/Treasurers/ Pastors...(White)
2019 CWF/Disciples Women’s Fall Retreat Flyer..............................(White)
2019 CWF/Disciples Women’s Fall Retreat Instructional Overview ..........(White)
2019 CWF/Disciples Women’s Fall Retreat Registration Form.................(White)
“Save the Date” Flyer for the March 13-15, 2020, SERF Women’s Event........(Goldenrod)
2019 Senior Adult Retreat Flyer...................................................(Lilac)
2019 Senior Adult Retreat Registration Form...................................(White)
Parish Paper
    July.........................................................................................(Cherry)
    August...................................................................................(Turquoise)

Christian Church in Alabama-Northwest Florida, 861 Highway 52, Helena, AL 35080
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
March, 2019

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

Moderator-Elect: Fannie Ashley
3126 Old Dobbin Road
Montgomery, AL 36116
334-279-1889 (h) 334-430-0255 (c)
e-mail: fannieashley@aol.com

First Vice Moderator: Jeanette Martinez
2639 W. Michigan Ave., Unit A
Pensacola, FL 32526
407-692-1582 (c)
e-mail: martinezjean65@yahoo.com

Second Vice Moderator: Ed Guindon
1317 Panorama Circle
Birmingham, AL 35216
205-617-0687 (c)
e-mail: ejguindo@southernco.com

Secretary-Treasurer: John Nettles
1139 Terrace Acres Drive
Auburn, AL 36830
334-703-6360 (c)
e-mail: jwnarchitect@att.net

Regional Minister: John Mobley
861 Highway 52
Helena, AL 35080
205-425-5245 (w) 205-533-3810 (c)
e-mail: jmpobley2@aol.com

Associate Regional Minister: Dale Braxton
8420 County Rd. 45
Ft. Deposit, AL 36023
334-227-0011 (w) 334-412-4057 (c)
e-mail: braxtondale@hotmail.com

Youth Ministries Staff Person: Nisha Warbington
15561 Dockery Road
Coker, AL 35452
205-330-8968 (h) 205-454-2054 (c)
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), 2018-2021:

Stuart Price
613 Owens Road
Auburn, AL 36830
334-821-1123 (h) 334-707-3165 (c)
e-mail: pricesb@auburn.edu
ITEMS OF INTEREST
(from within the Region)

OUTREACH GIVING

The giving through May, 2019, 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 11.85% compared to the amount given for the same period in 2018. Church-wide gifts to Disciples Mission Fund and the four Special Day Offerings have decreased by 0.29% in 2019 compared to the same period in 2018. Church-wide giving to Week of Compassion is down 2.6% compared to the year-to-date amount for 2018. Year-to-date Week of Compassion receipts in Alabama-Northwest Florida are showing a 6.53% increase from the 2018 year-to-date amount.

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

Jeff Damron will begin his service as Minister with Union Christian Church, Tuskegee, in mid-July. He previously served as pastor with Pleasant View Christian Church near Camp Hill. Edd Spencer concluded his service as Interim Minister with Union Christian Church, Tuskegee, on June 23.

CONGREGATIONS WITH MINISTERIAL VACANCIES

Birmingham, First (Interim is not yet determined)
Camp Hill, Pleasant View
Foley, South Baldwin (Jim Clifford is Interim)
Mobile, Azalea Hills
Robertsdale, First (Alan Woods is Interim Supply)

JOYS AND CONCERNS OF THE CLERGY

Harvey Fearson (retired, Fort Walton Beach) died on June 10 following a few weeks of illness. A funeral service was held on June 15. Wendell Miller (retired, Hanceville) is recovering from surgery he had in May. Jose Diaz (Co-Pastor, Primera Iglesia Cristiana, Fort Walton Beach) anticipates kidney transplant surgery at the Mayo Clinic in the coming weeks. The mother of Gary Edge (pastor, Valley Christian Church, Birmingham) is in declining health and is in hospice care in Lanett, AL. The mother of Lucero Clarke, wife of Tim Clarke (Pastor, Pensacola, FCC), died on May 30 in Mexico. Elizabeth Peadro, mother of Roger Peadro (Pastor, Fort Walton Beach, FCC) died on June 9 in Illinois. Jerry Smith (retired, Hartselle) is anticipating colon resection surgery to address problems he has been having with diverticulitis. James Gazaway (retired, Pensacola) is recovering from surgery he had on June 24. Tom Stephenson (retired, Pensacola) has had a couple of injuries due to falling. Please pray for Tom and his wife, Diane Stephenson (Pensacola), as she cares for him.

*Please notify the Regional office of other joys and concerns.
A GATHERING OF
MODERATORS/BOARD CHAIRPERSONS, TREASURERS and PASTORS
All Moderators/Board Chairpersons, Treasurers, and Pastors are invited to a special gathering for a luncheon and a time of fellowship, conversation and sharing. The goal is to help these important leaders become better equipped for the important roles they occupy in the life of the congregation.
*Note: A Flyer and Registration Form may be found in this Leaders Packet.

Saturday, August 24, 2019
11:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH, MONTGOMERY
(1705 Taylor Road 36117)

Mark your Calendars!!

2019 General Assembly
of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

July 20-24, 2019 – Des Moines, Iowa
Theme – “Abide in Me”

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION AVAILABLE (through the Association of Religion Data Archives)

Congregations in the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region can access demographic information on their communities by going to <www.thearda.com> and following these instructions:

* Under the US Congregational Membership tab, select GIS Maps
* Enter the zip code you are interested in (this will bring up a map of churches in that zip code)
* Click on a particular church and then select “Profile” on the right hand side of the screen
* Several categories will be offered to help you learn more about your community

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

JULY
13  Commissioning and Ordination North (9:15 a.m.) - Regional Office
14  Project Advisory Team for Iglesia Cristiana-Nuevo Comienzo (4:30 p.m.) - FCC, Anniston
20 - 24 General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) - Des Moines, IA
27  Disciples Women/CWF Cabinet (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office
27  Commissioning and Ordination South (9:15 a.m.) - United Christian, Montgomery

AUGUST
14  Commissioning and Ordination North (9:15 a.m.) - Regional Office
24  Gathering of Moderators/Board Chairs, Treasurers, Pastors (11:00 am - 3:00 pm) - First Christian Church, Montgomery
25  “Senior Adult Sunday” in Alabama-Northwest Florida

SEPTEMBER
3   Commissioning and Ordination South (9:15 a.m.) - United Christian, Montgomery
9 - 11 Southeast Regional Fellowship (SERF) Retreat - Christmount - Black Mtn., NC
14  Program Committee on Church Development (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office
21  Division of Mission (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office
27 - 29 Women’s Retreat - YMCA-Camp Chandler, near Wetumpka, AL
29 - Oct. 6 Reconciliation Offering Promotion (for anti-racism/pro-reconciliation)

OCTOBER
5   Division of Nurture (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office
6   Reconciliation Offering and World Communion Sunday
9   Commissioning and Ordination North (9:15 a.m.) - Regional Office
18 - 19 Hispanic Encounter - Rolling Hills Retreat Center, Calera, AL
21 - 24 College of Regional Ministers - Toronto, Canada

NOVEMBER
2   CWF/Disciples Women’s Cabinet (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office
5   Commissioning and Ordination South (9:15 a.m.) - United Christian, Montgomery
6 - 7 Senior Adult Retreat - Saint Bernard Retreat Center, Cullman
16  Regional Assembly Planning Committee (10:00 a.m.) - First Christian Church, Meridian
17 - 24 Thanksgiving Offering Promotion (for Disciples Colleges/Seminaries)

DECEMBER
7   Christmas Party for Christian Services for Children in Alabama (CSCA) - Selma
9   Committee on the Ministry (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office
14  Executive/Personnel Committee (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office
15 - 22 Christmas Offering Promotion (to benefit the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region)

(continued on back)
JANUARY, 2020
13 Luncheon for Retired Ministers/Mates (Noon) - Hilton Garden Inn, Orange Beach, AL
13 - 15 Ministers and Mates Retreat - Hilton Garden Inn, Orange Beach, AL
18 - 25 Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
22 Commissioning and Ordination North (9:15 a.m.) - Regional Office
24 - 26 Youthtopia - YMCA-Camp Chandler
24 - 26 Young Adult Winter Retreat - YMCA Camp Chandler

FEBRUARY, 2020
1 CWF/Disciples Women’s Cabinet (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office
4 Commissioning and Ordination South (9:15 a.m.) - United Christian, Montgomery
8 Division of Administration and Stewardship (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office
15 Regional Board (10:00 a.m.) - First Christian Church, Birmingham
16 - 23 Week of Compassion Promotion
22 - 25 General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) - Location TBD
25 - 28 College of Regional Ministers - Location TBD
26 Ash Wednesday

MARCH, 2020
2 - 5 46th Annual Black Ministers Retreat - Nashville, TN
13 - 15 SERF Interregional Women’s Event at Christmount - Black Mountain, NC
20 - 21 Men’s Retreat - Rolling Hills Retreat Center, Calera, AL
27 Healthy Boundaries workshop for Clergy (9:00 a.m.) - Regional Office

APRIL, 2020
5 - 12 Easter Offering Promotion (for general ministries)
10 - 12 Easter Rally for Chuukese Disciples - Pensacola, FL
15 Commissioning and Ordination North (9:15 a.m.) - Regional Office
24 - 26 Regional Assembly - First Christian Church, Meridian, MS

MAY, 2020
5 Commissioning and Ordination South (9:15 a.m.) - United Christian, Montgomery
13 Committee on the Ministry (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office
16 Biennial Planning Session (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office

JUNE, 2020
15 - 19 Junior Camp, Chi Rho Camp, and CYF Conference - YMCA-Camp Chandler
19 - 21 Genesis Camp and Discovery Camp - YMCA-Camp Chandler
27 Regional Convocation One-Day Workshop - New Bethel Christian Church, Greenville, AL

Christian Church In Alabama-Northwest Florida, 861 Highway 52, Helena, AL 35080
REGIONAL PRAYER CALENDAR
FOR JULY - SEPTEMBER, 2019

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 7 - Greenville, New Bethel – Tommie Means, Minister (334-382-2819 or e-mail: <tlmatt@elmore.rr.com>)

July 14 - Birmingham, Valley (205-879-0419) Gary Edge, Minister (e-mail: <garyhe33@hotmail.com>)

July 21 - Pensacola, Arbol de Vida (407-692-1582) Israel and Jeanette Martinez, Co-Pastors (email: <renovandotufe@yahoo.com>)

July 28 - Letohatchee, Big Union – Timothy Silmon, Minister (334-335-2757 or e-mail: <silmontim@yahoo.com>)

August 4 - Hayneville, Little Union –Willie Timmons, Minister (334-399-1614 or email: <timmons@live.com>)

August 11 - Huntsville, First (256-881-0150) Paul Allen and Laura West, Ministers (e-mail: <allen0719@att.net> or <laura@fcc-hsv.org>)

August 18 - Cotondale, Cotondale – Bob Powell, Minister (email: <powells18@att.net>)

August 25 - Tuskegee, Union (334-727-2556) Jeff Damron, Minister (email: <jeffdamron1952@gmail.com>)

September 1 - Letohatchee, Mt. Moriah – Nathan Hartley, Minister (334-563-7764 or email: <nathanhartley5@aol.com>)

September 8 - Letohatchee, New Hope (334-548-2504) Howard Jones, Minister (e-mail: <howardjones1951@gmail.com>)

September 15 - Mobile, Azalea Hills (251-633-6161) Jane Lose, Board Chairperson (e-mail: <ahcedoc@bellsouth.net>)

September 22 - Pensacola, First (850-477-1642) Tim Clarke, Minister (e-mail: <timmclarke@gmail.com>)

September 29 - Madison, Madison (256-837-8182) Beth Thomason, Minister (e-mail: <bethom66@yahoo.com>)

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Alabama-Northwest Florida, 861 Highway 52, Helena, AL 35080
2019 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 7 - John Mobley, Regional Minister <jpmobley2@aol.com>
July 14 - Kathryn Menser, Institutional Chaplaincy, Westminster Village, Pensacola, FL <kmenser@wservices.org>
July 21 - Alan Lindell, Pastoral Counseling - Anniston, AL <bajar@centurytel.net>
July 28 - Nisha Warbington, Regional Staff, Youth Ministries <nisha7@aol.com>

August 4 - Robert Davis, Firehouse Shelter (Downtown Cooperative Ministries) - Birmingham, AL <revdavis3@charter.net>
August 11 - Diane Wood, Hospital Chaplaincy, Huntsville <dwservant@aol.com>
August 18 - Nicki Swindle, Community Ministry, Anniston, AL <eswindle@ses.psr.edu>
August 25 - Tabitha Isner, Christian Services for Children, <isner.tabitha@gmail.com>

Christian Church in Alabama-Northwest Florida, 861 Highway 52, Helena, AL 35080
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**NOTE:** THIS REPORT COMPARES GIVING FROM JAN - MAR 2018 TO GIVING JAN - MAY 2019
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% 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

ADDENDUM

Non-registered persons are NOT eligible to take the place of persons who have already registered unless they communicate the exchange with the Regional Office at least 5 days prior to the start of the event. A late fee will be assessed as required by the Fee Schedule.

Approved by the Regional Board, February 24, 2018
A GATHERING OF MODERATORS (or Board Chairs), TREASURERS, and PASTORS

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

Saturday, August 24, 2019
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 14.

Christian Church in Alabama-Northwest Florida, 861 Highway 52, Helena, AL 35080
A GATHERING of MODERATORS/ BOARD CHAIRS and TREASURERS and PASTORS
Saturday, August 24, 2019
First Christian Church, Montgomery
11:00 a.m. - 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 14.

Christian Church in Alabama-Northwest Florida, 861 Highway 52, Helena, AL 35080
Disciples Women
Fall Retreat
September 27-29, 2019

Camp Chandler YMCA, Wetumpka, AL

Resource Leader: Marilyn F. Williams, President IDWN

International Disciples Women Ministries (IDWM) of the Christian Church, (Disciples of Christ) United States and Canada

Theme: Ephesians 6: 13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. 14 Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, 15 and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. (NIV)

Pay the Early-bird Registration Fee of $115 by the Deadline of September 6, 2019
Pay the Regular Registration Fee of $130 after September 6, 2019

Pay the Early-bird Registration Fee of $35 for Friday only by September 6, 2019
Pay the Regular Registration Fee of $50 after September 6, 2019

Pay the Early-bird Registration Fee of $75 for Saturday only by September 6, 2019
Pay the Regular Registration Fee of $100 after September 6, 2019

EARLY BIRD DISCOUNT ONLY APPLIES IF FORM AND FULL PAYMENT ARE POSTMARKED BY SEPT. 6TH.
No Payments or Registrations Will Be Accepted After September 20 (electronically or mail)

This Event Is For Adults Only. Please Adhere To This Guideline.
DISCIPLES WOMEN'S FALL RETREAT

Theme: WOWW! Weekend Of Women Worshipping (Ephesians 6:12)
September 27 thru September 29, 2019
YMCA Camp Chandler, Wetumpka, AL

Resource Leader: Marilyn F. Williams, President of the International Disciples Women Ministries (IDWM) of the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ United States and Canada

INSTRUCTIONAL OVERVIEW

What to Bring: Bible, bedding, sheets, pillow, blanket, towels, toiletries, casual wear, rain gear, new or used items for silent auction, journal or writing materials, coffee cup, water bottle. Flashlight, Shoes must always be worn. Camp Chandler does not rent linen supplies.

Donations for Service Projects will be collected: Gift Cards Preferred.

Registration: Begins on Friday, September 27th at 3:30 p.m. Retreat begins with dinner at 6:30 p.m. & ends Sunday at 10 a.m. All guests must register and receive name tag and bed assignment.

Payment Options: Mail checks to the Regional office or pay electronically. No money for registration will be collected at the retreat. All registration forms and fees must be submitted to the Regional Office before the Retreat.
Mailing address: Christian Church in AL-NW FL, 861 Highway 52, Helena, AL 35080.
Make Checks Payable to: Christian Church in AL-NW FL.
Register and Pay Electronically at http://www.alnwfdisciples.org/ministries/women

Cost: Full Weekend: $130 / early bird $115 EARLY BIRD DATE IS SEPTEMBER 6, 2019
      Friday Only $50 / early bird $35 (1 meal, no lodging)
      Saturday Only $100 / early bird $75 (3 meals, no lodging)

Non-registered persons are not eligible to take the place of persons already registered unless the exchange is communicated with the Regional Office at least 5 days prior to the start of the event. FINAL Registration Deadline is September 20, 2019.

This Event Is for Adults Only. Please Adhere to This Guideline.
DISCIPLES WOMEN'S FALL RETREAT
September 27 — September 29, 2019 AT YMCA Camp Chandler, Wetumpka, AL

REGISTRATION FORM
Theme: WOWW! Weekend of Women Worshipping
(Ephesians 6:12)
Resource Leader: Marilyn F. Williams, President of the International Disciples Women Ministries (IDWM) of the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ United States and Canada

NAME______________________________________________CONGREGATION__________________________________

ADDRESS__________________________________________________________________________________________

CITY________________________________STATE________ZIP____________________________________________________

HOME PHONE________________________CELL____________________________________________________________

E-MAIL:___________________________________________________________________________________________

IS THIS YOUR FIRST RETREAT? YES___ NO___ HOW MANY RETREATS HAVE YOU ATTENDED?__________

_________ I NEED A LOWER BUNK BECAUSE OF PHYSICAL LIMITATIONS
_________ I NEED TO BE NEAR AN ELECTRICAL OUTLET BECAUSE OF MEDICAL EQUIPMENT
_________ I NEED SPECIAL SEATING ____________ I NEED TRANSPORTATION FOR WORKSHOPS

ROOMMATE REQUEST______________________________________________________________

IF YOU HAVE SPECIAL DIETARY RESTRICTIONS PLEASE BRING YOUR OWN SPECIAL MEALS AND THE CAMP WILL
PREPARE IT. Microwave & refrigerator are available.

Per Regional Office Directives, No Money for registration (cash, check, electronic transfer) will be collected
at the retreat. All funds and registration forms must be submitted to the Regional Office before the Retreat.
You may mail this form and full payment to: Christian Church in AL-NW FL, 861 Highway 52, Helena, AL 35080
Make checks payable to: Christian Church in AL-NW FL
OR you may register and pay electronically at http://www.alnwfdisciples.org/ministries/women
For questions or assistance please call the Regional Office at 205-425-5245

Fee enclosed (Choose only one)
_________ Friday only ($50 or $35 Early Bird, if postmarked by Sept 6th, one meal no lodging)

_________ Saturday only ($100 or $75 Early Bird, if postmarked by Sept. 6th, 3 meals no lodging)

_________ Full Weekend ($130 or $115 Early Bird, if postmarked by Sept 6th)

EARLY BIRD DISCOUNT ONLY APPLIES IF FORM AND Full PAYMENT ARE POSTMARKED BY SEPT. 6TH.
No Payments or Registrations Will Be Accepted After September 20 (electronically or mail)

This Event Is For Adults Only. Please Adhere To This Guideline.
Save the Date for SERF 2020 Women’s Event  
March 13-15, 2020 at Christmount Christian Assembly, Black Mountain NC

Join your Disciples sisters for “A Mountaintop Experience” featuring
- The Rev. Dr. Cynthia L. Hale – Founder and Senior Pastor of the Ray of Hope Christian Church, Decatur GA, and
- The Rev. Terri Hord Owens, General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the US and Canada
- Dynamic Worship and Workshops, Fellowship, and Fun

Registration and more information coming soon!
(“SERF” is the Southeastern Regional Fellowship of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) which includes Alabama/NW Florida, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia.)
Eighteenth Annual

SENIOR ADULT RETREAT
Wednesday, Nov. 6 - Thursday, Nov. 7, 2019
(Begins at 11:30 a.m. Wednesday and concludes by 1:30 p.m. on Thursday)

“Stories”

Retreat Leaders and Music Leaders:
George and Judy Dudley
Columbiana, AL

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)

**Limited Financial Aid is Available upon Request**

Early-Bird Deadline is October 16, 2019

Christian Church in Alabama-NW Florida, 861 Highway 52, Helena, AL 35080
SENIOR ADULT RETREAT - Wednesday, Nov. 6 - Thursday, Nov. 7, 2019
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)

"Stories"
Led by:  George and Judy Dudley, Retired Pastor and Spouse, Columbiana, AL

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 16, 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 16, 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 16, pay only $60)]
              (Option Three includes registration, plus four meals at St. Bernard Retreat Center: lunch and dinner on Wednesday, and breakfast and lunch on Thursday.)

_____ I am planning to find lodging on Wednesday 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.

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 16, 2019
THE PARISH PAPER
JULY 2019

TEAM TALK CAN STRENGTHEN VOLUNTEER MINISTRY

Team talk can build a strong ministry team. Of course, some may not think of conversation as an important task, viewing it as getting in the way of work and slowing it down. On the contrary, conversation plays an important role in the life of a team, builds group durability, and sustains effort. Talking about the work helps to reinforce the reasons for doing what we are doing.

“Plug-in” Volunteering

Make no mistake: the American volunteer experience is decidedly task-oriented and talk-averse. Sociologist Paul Lichterman observes that a “task-oriented, short-term, plug-in style of volunteering . . . has become nearly synonymous with volunteering in the United States.” Churches, like many other nonprofit organizations, typically assign volunteers to fill short-term tasks, not long-term assignments. In some ways, the arrangement works out well. Volunteers appreciate that, with only a few hours commitment, they can experience the satisfaction of having “helped out.” It’s easier for staff, who create slots for volunteers to fill and tasks to complete, which can then be quantified and reported to funders. Yet “plug-in” volunteering hampers dialogue.

“Fun Evenings”

Working side by side on tasks does not necessarily build a team. Lichterman’s research bears this out. The researcher volunteered for Fun Evenings, a project offering a drug-free, violence-free evening for disadvantaged youth, anticipating many opportunities for conversation. After all, the event had been billed as a “fun evening” at the Downtown Community Center, and included ping pong, dancing, and youth leadership training for the mostly Black, Latino, and Laotian teenagers, as well as a few white teenagers. The volunteers, all white and a generation or two older, would provide supervision.

From the outset, Lichterman found the situation confusing for himself as a volunteer. What exactly was he supposed to be doing? No one else seemed to know either. Polly, the coordinator, instructed them to monitor the youth and make sure no drugs got in. They were also told that any youth who leave should not be allowed back in, though he observed that the volunteers were lax with this requirement. Notably lacking was any process for building the team itself. Volunteers exchanged pleasantries and nothing more, failing to go deeper into conversation that might have strengthened their bond as friends. It even occurred to Lichterman that he did not especially care how he came across to others, knowing that he would not see these people again. An opportunity had been missed. Volunteers had been “plugged into” their tasks but not each other. Volunteers had “helped out” but not formed a team. More and deeper talk would have built a stronger team.

Four Ways to Build Team Talk

Team dialogue can be strengthened in four ways. First, seek to move the team from shallow conversation to a deeper dialogue that airs genuine feelings and brings differences to the surface. Most small groups have plenty of
conversation, yet plentiful talk without real communication can signal trouble. Practicing honesty and expecting it from others can strengthen the team and bring to the surface real issues that may need to be dealt with.

One technique for practicing honest conversation is called the EIAG (pronounced eye-ag) process. EIAG is an acronym that stands for Experience, Identify, Analyze, and Generalize.

- **Experience.** The process allows group members to understand one moment in the flow of events taking place in the group and how it affected every group member.

- **Identify.** First, identify when someone says or does something that could have a big impact on other members, positively or negatively, asking that person, “Would you be willing to explore the effect this had on the others?” If so, ask that person to withhold comments until everyone has finished.

- **Analyze.** Then analyze what happened by asking everyone present to talk about their own reactions. For example, “When [name] said (or did) this, I felt (thought, observed) or I did (or said) this.” Or, “When it happened, I assumed this, which led me to react the way I did.” After this, you can ask the person whose action you are analyzing, “What was your intention?”

- **Generalize.** Finally, the group can take a moment to generalize or think more broadly about how to act in other situations. Ask the person, “What have you learned?” and ask others the same question. This can deepen the trust required to form a genuine team.

Second, strive for informal, relaxed meetings. The Fun Evenings volunteers never held meetings, but simply showed up for their assigned time slots. Regular meetings empower volunteers to make decisions for themselves, which builds teamwork. However, try to avoid “business-like” meetings that can be deadening. For instance, holding every meeting in “the boardroom” (the designated room where meetings are to take place), can be like always eating in the formal dining room. Look for an informal setting, perhaps somewhere offsite, and share a meal whenever possible to warm up the conversation.

Third, find ways to equalize the conversation so that the same people do not always dominate the conversation. Letting the big talkers have more airtime can be a conversation killer. Granted, some persons are more temperamentally suited to talking and others to listening. Yet the team nearly always gains more from sharing its wisdom than from listening to long-winded monologues. Ask the group to police itself. “If you tend to be a talker, pay attention to how much you talk, and try to talk less. If you tend to be a listener, try to talk more.” Or if someone has been quiet, ask, “We have not heard from you yet. What do you think?”

Fourth, draft a team covenant: a written or verbal agreement that describes and defines members’ relationship as a team. Lack of trust is a key source of trouble in failing teams. Unless members feel safe and secure with the group, they will not contribute to their full potential. Some groups allow sarcasm to predominate, which stokes those who have sincere contributions to make. Or the problem may be more general, such as not knowing what sort of behavior to expect from other team members. A team covenant can correct this situation. George Cladis describes the covenant he developed with his church staff in Darien, Connecticut. It included these promises: (1) intentionally encourage and bless one another; (2) disagree openly, avoiding triangulation and speaking unkindly of others; and (3) like the potter and the clay, be willing to be molded and changed.

**Changed by Others' Testimony**

Talking while we work not only sustains the team, but helps its members grow in faith. Ann Morisy, who works with British churches seeking to expand their outreach, sees dialogue as central to the church’s work in the community. She writes, “The essence of dialogue is that each person who is party to the communication is open to the possibility of being changed by the testimony of the other.” Talk does more work than we give it credit for.

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2. Ibid., 88–89.
LEARN MORE ABOUT YOUR CONGREGATION THROUGH FOCUS GROUPS

For church leaders seeking to better understand their congregation, it pays to listen. Everyone knows the value of one-on-one conversations, yet it might not always be the most efficient use of time for a busy leader. In these situations, a focus group can help. Simple in design, it honors the experience of congregants in the stories they tell, the questions they ask, and the concerns they express.

What Is It?
A focus group typically consists of eight to ten participants who meet for ninety minutes to two hours of discussion led by a trained moderator. Typically, a narrow range of persons is invited to contribute, such as those who share a common demographic (such as age, race, or income) or similar interests or a similar relationship to the topic at hand. For instance, to learn more about a congregation's music programs, do not include both music leaders and musicians in the same focus group.1

The Moderator's Role
A good moderator is key to success. Should this person be an insider or outsider? Well-resourced churches might have no problem hiring a trained professional from outside to do the job. However, if cost is an issue, the pastor or another church leader could play this role as long as the moderator prepares well, knows the basics of group dynamics, and is committed to fairness. While an outsider moderator can be expected to have no particular investment in the outcome of the discussion, a self-aware insider who is committed to neutrality could get the job done for a fraction of the cost of hiring a professional.2

Whether insider or outsider, a good moderator must be able to listen well, paying attention to what is said and paraphrasing or restating the participant's comments when necessary to reflect that he or she has been heard. It helps to have an excellent short-term auditory memory, remembering comments made early in the group and correlating them later with comments made by the same participants. Finally, the best moderators know how to establish a rapport with group members in a short time and think on their feet, using the information the group generates to determine the best line of questioning later.3

Typically the moderator prepares a discussion guide ahead of time. Questions are mapped out in advance yet kept open-ended so that the conversation can go in any number of directions. Move from the general to the specific in asking questions, and record answers on a flip chart or have someone take notes.

Getting Started
To organize a focus group, first define the problem or research question, and then write a statement of the group's purpose. For example, "This focus group will explore ways to shape our music ministry by understanding the experience of those who take part in it." Second, identify a sampling frame (who are the participants?) and identify a moderator. Next, invite your participants. It doesn't hurt to overbook your ideal number of participants by at least 10 percent.

FOR THOSE WHO MIGHT NOT HAVE HEARD
MARVIN'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE DISCUSSION.
LET ME RESTATE...
"WHY DON'T THESE DANGEROUS FOCUS GROUPS EVER HAVE GOOD COFFEE?"
Once you have gathered the focus group, welcome the participants, briefly state the purpose of the group, and break the ice by having people introduce themselves and their experience with the issue. One idea would be to have each person tell a story related to the question under discussion. Next, let people know what questions will be asked and what you will do with the data. At this point, introduce a few ground rules for discussion. Lisa Hinz, extension professor at the University of Minnesota Extension, provides a sample list of ground rules for group discussion that can be utilized in focus groups.\(^4\)

Next, begin asking your questions using a discussion guide. For example, in the case of a youth music program, plan to start out with simple questions such as: (1) How long have you been involved in this program? (2) What kind of music do you like? (3) How do you get to the program? (4) What, if any, challenges do you run into with participating every time? (5) What would you like to learn? The purpose is to get people talking about things that will give clues that can shape the ministry approach.

If unclear about how to start, try asking a fairly general question that anyone can respond to, and ask each person to share. As moderator, make sure everyone participates. This can be accomplished by having group members reply either in random or specific order. It is ideal if everyone responds to each question, but let the group know it is acceptable to pass. One trick to ensure that people are selected randomly is to use a pack of three-by-five cards with names on them, pull a name of two or three persons and ask them to respond.

**Evaluating the Data**

When it comes to analyze the data, the amount of data collected can seem overwhelming. To make the job easier, look back to the original purpose of the meeting and the questions asked. There are four ways of analyzing the data. For best results, choose the method before conducting the group. The data can be analyzed based on:

1. Transcription: Write down everything that was said and analyze the transcript.
2. Recording: Make an audio or video recording of the meeting and create an abridged transcript for analysis.
3. Notes: Take notes on flip charts or ask someone to serve as a recorder, using audio or video recordings only to double-check accuracy.

4. Memory: Present the results of the group to church leaders immediately after the session is over, relying primarily on personal recall.

The first step in analyzing involves looking for themes in the material, sometimes called “coding.” A simple way to code data is to review everything said during the session to determine if it constitutes an answer to any question the moderator asked. This “cut and paste” exercise may unearth hidden themes in the material.

The next step is content analysis. There are seven general guidelines for analyzing the content: 1) consider the actual words used; 2) consider the context for the response; 3) consider the consistency of the responses over the course of the interview, whether answers stayed the same or shifted over time; 4) consider the frequency of comments, 5) their intensity, 6) or how vague or specific they were; and finally 7) find the big ideas or larger patterns that may have emerged. This analysis can form the basis for a written report.\(^5\)

**A Powerful Tool**

Focus groups can be a powerful tool for understanding the congregation. Yet every technique has its limitations. Unlike surveys, which rely on a random sample of the population studied, a focus group cannot reveal exactly how many people in the community feel a certain way about the subject, though it can go a long way toward painting a picture of the population studied. To check and substantiate what was heard in a focus group, try holding multiple interviews with diverse groups in the congregation.\(^6\) The power of the focus group lies in its ability to use the safety and protection of the group to bring private thoughts into the open. Listening to others can be a vital first step toward understanding.

\(^2\) Ibid., 68–69.
\(^3\) Ibid., 77–79.