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The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) of Mid-America Fall 2023 Annual Fund Campaign

Dear friends,

It's hard to believe that I have now been a Regional Minister for five years. When I first began and met with clergy clusters, I announced "I'm a Jesus guy." That statement was met with faces of 'well, duh.' Implied was 'aren't we all?' What I meant by that was I have this deep love and appreciation for Jesus of Nazareth. While some want to view him as ahistorical or a good teacher, others want to deify him to the point of just admiring what he's done for 'me.' By fixing our eyes on Jesus, we can tap into something deep, an inner knowing, a maturing of the mind of Christ in us. The way he spoke, the way he asked questions, the way he loved unconditionally, has formed my life in ways I cannot fully comprehend.

As I've lived into being a Disciple for many years, I find a divide around the import of this person Jesus. Some in our tribe want to focus mostly on issues of Justice because they believe that's what Jesus was all about. He was all about those on the margins of life, going to them, and offering them Agape and an alternative to the kingdoms of violence and oppression. Others want to focus mostly on Justification, how the life and death of Jesus has determined my eternal destiny. He was all about forgiving sins, loving relationships, and calling people to be born again. I don't see one as more 'right' than the other. Jesus calls us to 'abundant life' and I understand this to be in our everyday living in the Kin-dom of God as well as hope in the Eternal Now. For me, Jesus is at the peak of the hierarchy of values as the embodiment of Divine purpose. Following him proves to be the greatest adventure of my life—meaning for today and assurance for all my tomorrows.

As I prepare to go on Sabbatical (Nov-Jan) the question I am most asked is: Where are you going? It's a reasonable question—what are you going to do differently than your normal life? I will visit a few farms and explore the intersection of faith and sustainable farming, but mostly I want to 'go' deeper in Christ. To sit in contemplation, to commune with him, to reflect on the preciousness of life, family and Church. The Body of Christ has been a tremendous gift in my life and I'm grateful everyday to be serving with faithful, committed Pastors who are making a difference in their communities. They encourage me with the hope and promises of Jesus that His work is still alive and well. There is great joy in knowing God's justification and justice through this person Jesus. I see the Church alive and well and the covenant that holds us together is so vital to keep us all connected, fixing our eyes on the Author and Finisher of our Faith.

I invite you to share in the ministry of the Christian Church of Mid-America. Many of you give on a regular basis and for that we are most grateful. Others have not yet, and I invite you to join me and the great Staff and Board of CCMA in spreading the love and hope of Jesus to a world of great need. To partner with us in the work of God, send your contribution in the enclosed envelope or visit www.Mid-AmericaDisciples.org/give.

Serving Jesus with you,

Rev. Ron Routledge
CCMA Regional Minister and President