



**CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN OHIO**  
**DISCIPLES OF CHRIST**  
A COVENANT NETWORK OF CONGREGATIONS



## Ohio Regional Newsletter May 2021



### ***Across The Region And In My Heart***

Rev. Allen V. Harris, Regional Pastor & President,  
Christian Church in Ohio  
May 2021

May 1st marked my one month anniversary of having the honor and joy of being your Regional Minister. Already I am so very gratified by the outpouring of support for me in this new role and I am very heartened by the openness to new possibilities and the eagerness of leaders across the Region to move forward with hope and possibility. This offers a strong and positive place from which my ministry with you can begin.

It is likely that this email is the first time some in the Region are learning about my call to be your Regional Pastor and President. After a thorough and faithful search process, conducted using the rigorous [Executive Search Process model](#) advised by the Pro-Reconciling/Anti-Racism commitment of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), I was presented to the Regional Church Council at their March 6 meeting, was interviewed by them, and then upon a unanimous vote was called that day to begin my ministry April 1st. I invite those persons who do not know about me to check out the detailed bio that is on the Regional website at: <https://www.ccinoh.com/about-us/regional-staff/rev-allen-v-harris.aspx> I thank the co-chairs of the Search Committee, the Rev. Melanie Harrell Delaney and the Rev. Debbie Saxe, as well as our Regional Church Council Moderator, Candis Wilson, for their wisdom, patience, expertise, and hard work for staying with this process and for guiding the Region through this important time in its life.

My first month has been filled with many opportunities to get acquainted with clergy and lay leaders, especially through Regional and District Clergy videoconference calls and meetings with local Search Committees and their leaders. I am also putting a great deal of effort into building relationships with the Regional Church Council, the Regional Elders, and clergy colleagues as they gather in their District and Regional meetings, as well as with our Ohio Black Pastors, our Hispanic/Latinx and American Asian and Pacific Islander clergy. I trust as time goes on there will be a gathering or meeting of a group or committee of which

you are a part where you and I will have the chance to meet. And, of course, we are all yearning for the day when we can do that safely in person and face-to-face.

As I have met with individuals and groups across the life of the Ohio Region, I have been asked about my priorities as your new Regional Pastor & President. I have tried to make it clear that first and foremost I want to listen to you and learn about the mission and ministry which is at the heart of what motivates you to serve God, follow Christ, and rely upon the Holy Spirit. Even though I know this Region well, having served as a local church pastor in Cleveland for over 14 years and being quite involved in the life of the Region including camp, I nonetheless want to learn from you about what are your ideas, hopes, priorities and plans for ministry in your congregation and community, hear from you exactly what you need that a Regional Staff/Council/Minister can help you with. Whatever we cannot help you with, work with partners in other Regions, our ecumenical and interfaith associates, and even non-profit organizations who might help us strengthen our outreach and sustain our vital ministries. Please feel free to email me at [AHarris@ccinoh.org](mailto:AHarris@ccinoh.org) to share with me about yourself and your congregation and community.

And in that last regard I have also met with Rev. David Long-Higgins, the Transitional Conference Minister of the Heartland Conference of the United Church of Christ as well as with Rev. Nayiri Karjian, Association General Minister of the Living Water Association of the Ohio Conference UCC. I have also reached out to the Rev. Dr. Jack Sullivan, President of the Ohio Council of Churches and we will be working closely together as well. I am also a regular participant in the College of Regional Ministers where resource and wisdom sharing is customary and common. We can do more together than we can apart from one another.

But to answer the question about my priorities, they are simple, perhaps obvious, and yet will be nonetheless challenging. First and foremost, I want to lead us in addressing in a comprehensive and systemic way the racial injustice that limits the fullness of the ministry of the church and distorts the work of Christ to which we are so committed. Second, I want to strengthen the connections within and beyond the church, the Body of Christ, helping us to not only know one another better as individuals and communities, but to learn from one another and rely upon one another to help further the Gospel in ways that we cannot do alone. Third, I am committed to improving communications within the Region. This monthly All Region Email newsletter, and its companion email, the monthly Congregational Leaders Mailing, are central parts of this effort. You can help us by making sure your entire leadership team (Board, Elders, Diaconate, Staff) are on the email list. Invite them to subscribe by emailing us at: [ccio@ccinoh.org](mailto:ccio@ccinoh.org).

Finally, I want to remind myself – and perhaps you will find this helpful as well – that the Region is you. The Christian Church in Ohio is every single member, participant, visitor, and friend of every Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregation and community in our state. The Christian Church in Ohio is every lay leader, elder, diaconate, board chair or moderator, treasurer, secretary and custodian in all of our churches. The Christian Church in Ohio is every ordained and commissioned minister, whether serving in a congregation, non-profit institution, as a health care or military chaplain, serving in a religious institution or in a community or corporate setting, or if they are retired. And, yes, the Christian Church in Ohio includes the Regional Church Council and all its committees, the staff, directors, counselors and campers of Camp Christian, and the Regional Staff. The Christian Church in Ohio is you and it is me. "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it." Thanks be for the Body of Christ!

Faithfully Yours,  
Allen

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## Camp Christian Summer Registration Now Open!

We have an exciting Public Statement!! Summer registration forms are here!! Linked [HERE](#) please find the forms for the various weeks of camp as well as the health and scholarship forms. There are a few differences between previous years' forms and this year's forms due to changes we have had to make around Covid-19, so please take your time to read over the documents carefully.

As you probably know, we have been collecting RSVPs for Camp over the past couple of months, which has helped us to gauge attendance estimates for Camp to ensure we do not exceed capacity set by the Union County Health Department. The numbers of RSVPs have left enough open space that we are encouraging everyone to register even if you have not RSVPd. You do not need to have sent in an RSVP to register for camp.

We look forward to seeing all of you back at Camp Christian this summer, so please share these forms with anyone and everyone you know who may be interested in coming to camp! See you soon!

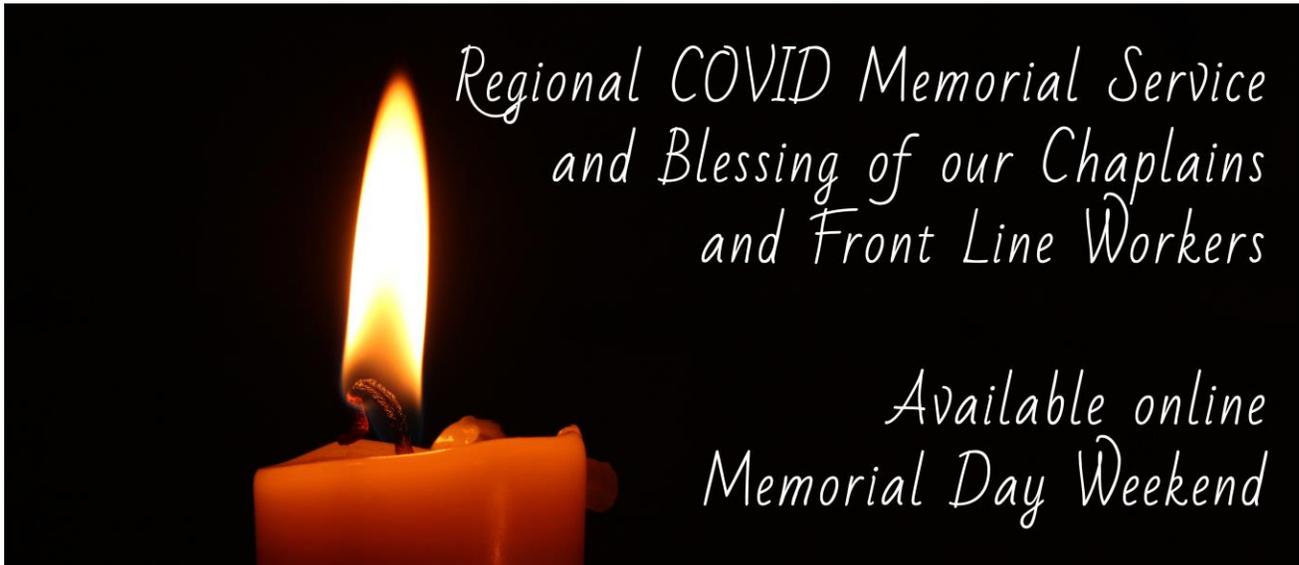
For any questions, please contact Regional Program Director, Rev. Alan Dicken at [adicken@ccinoh.org](mailto:adicken@ccinoh.org).



### Pentecost Offering

The Pentecost Offering supports Disciples new church development. Planning, nurturing and sustaining new congregation is part of the Disciples' vision. This offering supports the specialized ministry of new church development through both regional and general programs. Gifts for this offering are divided equally between the Region in which they're given and New Church Ministry.

For more information and worship resources, go to <https://disciplesmissionfund.org/special-offerings/pentecost>



*Please plan on viewing and sharing a Regional COVID Memorial Service and Blessing of our Chaplains and Front Line Workers, which will be available on our YouTube Channel and through our Social Media accounts and website Memorial Day Weekend.*



## Camp Christian Work Day Saturday, June 5th

**From 7:00am until 5:00pm**  
***Attend as you are able***

We hope that there is a task suited for a wide range of ages and abilities. A detailed list of tasks and expectations can be viewed by clicking [HERE](#).

Please wear work clothes, boots or heavy duty shoes, and bring gloves. Please pack your own lunch. Snacks, Coffee and Water will be provided. Up to date Covid protocols will be followed. Anyone under the age of 18 **MUST** have a legal parent or guardian attending and working with them.

There is no charge to participate, but please complete the online sign up [HERE](#).

For more information about the Work Day, and how to participate and/or contribute, go to the date on the [Regional Calendar](#).

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## CCIO YouTube Channel

Come check out the [Ohio Region's YouTube Channel!](#) We have exciting new content coming and we are thrilled to share these videos with you!

One series of videos we are focused on now is collecting elements of services (not entire services) from congregations around the Region so that others can share on social media or in their own worship services. Coming up for Pentecost, we have a beautiful video shared by First Christian Church of Wadsworth featuring scripture readings in multiple languages! Check it out here –

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yHMYeXWqoc0>



If you or if your congregation would like to contribute elements of worship (again, not entire services), please reach out to [jstoddartbernard@ccinoh.org](mailto:jstoddartbernard@ccinoh.org) or [adicken@ccinoh.org](mailto:adicken@ccinoh.org) to share your church's video with the rest of the Region.

Please like and subscribe to our [YouTube Channel](#) for more updates and for more content coming soon!

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## Congregational News

*Here is some news from a few Congregations around the Ohio Region. If your Ohio Disciples Congregation has news you would like to share with the Region, please email it to Regional Administrator, Jennie Stoddart Bernard at [jstoddartbernard@ccinoh.org](mailto:jstoddartbernard@ccinoh.org).*



### **Compass Christian Church, Mason**

Instead of their weekly Sunday morning service, the Compass Christian (Mason, Ohio) congregation stepped out in service to their community! Each year they take part in what is known as "X-Days" where they join with multiple other local churches that comprise "The Faith Alliance". This effort encourages external, direct, hands-on involvement with many projects in our community. This year Compass Christian selected to build beds for local kids that don't have a bed of their own. (Kids without beds? Unbelievable but true!) Joining with the local chapter of the National organization "Sleep in Heavenly Peace" 14 members of Compass sawed, sanded, stained, drilled and fastened together lumber into headboards that would be soon going to local kids. The Compass congregation also collected new twin size bedding, pillows, and monetary donations desperately needed by the organization! While it may have been a day without a sermon, the "lesson" was one they will never forget! For more information on the "Sleep in Heavenly Peace" project - check out [www.shpbeds.org](http://www.shpbeds.org) No kid should ever have to sleep on the floor!

### **First Christian Church, Wadsworth**

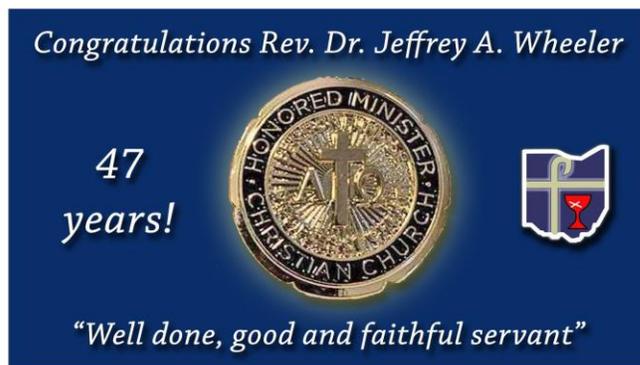
Last year at the conclusion of our congregational book study of "Anxious to Talk About It" congregation members asked "What can we DO to take what we have learned and make a difference in our community?" One member suggested we donate money to our local library to purchase books that celebrate diversity and educate about racism. Attached is a photo of two of our congregation members, Sue Elliot and Lenora Taylor, members of our Outreach Committee, posing with the 27 titles that were purchased. They span the generations and include books for children, youth and adults.



The other new thing we tried was the installation of an outside "Prayer Wall". The prayer wall was put up as part of our Lenten Series focusing on "Community". It was in response to our need to have some way to still share our prayers as a community while we are not worshipping together in our building in person, but also a way to show compassion for our larger community and provide a space to express our collective hurts and hopes during this very difficult time in the life of our world. Each ribbon symbolizes a different type of prayer (Help, Thanks, Joy, Sorry).

### **The Rev. Dr. Jeffrey A. Wheeler Concludes Ministry At Northwest Christian Church**

On Sunday, April 14, the Rev. Dr. Jeffrey A. Wheeler concluded as Co-Pastor of Northwest Christian Church in Columbus, Ohio after a more than 14 year ministry there. Rev. Wheeler has been serving in ministry in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for over 47 years having grown up in the East Liverpool congregation. He has also been a longtime leader in the Christian Church in Ohio including his ongoing service as Chair of the Commission on Ministry. During his final service of worship as Co-Pastor, Rev. Wheeler was also presented with the Retired Minister Pin by our new Regional Pastor and President, Rev. Allen Harris. Rev. Dr. Wheeler has moved to northeast Ohio with his wife, Barbara, where they will be closer to family.



### **Share Your Congregation's Unique Social Justice Commitments**

As the Regional Church Office and Regional Church Council seeks to connect our leaders and communities better, and as we work on building stronger and better lines of communications, one of our efforts will be around learning about, supporting, and celebrating the unique social justice commitments our congregations have officially committed themselves to develop and for which they are actively advocating. Therefore we

are inviting congregations to let the Regional Church Office know if you have made any such commitments so that we can network similarly focused congregations and communities. Please have your pastor or administrator email the Regional Office at [ccio@ccinoh.org](mailto:ccio@ccinoh.org) with any/all of the following (or other such social justice commitments that are not listed):

- **Anti-Racism/Pro-Reconciliation** (Does your church have a trained and working AR/PR Team? Let us know!)
- **Green Chalice Ministry** (Has your congregation committed to and registered with the Green Chalice Program of Disciples Home Mission? Let us know!"
- **Open & Affirming Congregation** (Has your congregation gone through the intentional study and voted to become Open & Affirming of LGBTQIA persons and registered with the Disciples Alliance Q? Let us know!)
- **Refugee & Immigration Congregation** (Does your congregation or community have a commitment to working with immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers and are advocating for them? Let us know!)
- **Accessible Congregation** (Does your congregation have a special ministry to and with persons who are differently abled and have you made accommodations to your programs, building, and perspectives to include persons with mental, emotional, environmental, or physical challenges? Let us know!



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### Disciples of Christ Offer New "Limitless Love" T-Shirts

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) have a new and inviting line of t-shirts available that build on our General Minister and President's theme. Rev. Teresa Hord Owens has been sharing in video and sermons her call for our church to "Imagine God's Limitless Love!" To learn more, and to purchase these and other Disciples of Christ apparel, go online to:

[http://store.disciples.org/disciples\\_of\\_christ/shop/home](http://store.disciples.org/disciples_of_christ/shop/home)



# Bethany College



### Bethany College Disciples of Christ Scholarships

If you know of anyone in your congregation that is a senior and is still looking for a college home, share this information or have them reach out to Dan Adams, Senior Assistant Director of Enrollment for DOC Recruitment, to discuss Bethany College. Dan can be reached at [dadams@bethanywv.edu](mailto:dadams@bethanywv.edu) or (304) 830-1269.

Bethany is a Private Liberal Arts College that gives you not only a rural college atmosphere but also a family setting. For some, this will be the first step towards an exciting career while for others, it promises to be an

exploration of a student's passion for the liberal arts. After four years, students leave Bethany prepared for the challenges of the 21st century along with lifelong friendships. As part of their competitive financial aid offers, Bethany College offers Disciples of Christ scholarships in the amount of \$16,000/year. In all, a Bethany experience gives students the confidence to lead and change the world.

To get started, complete an application.

<https://www.bethanywv.edu/admissions-aid/apply/incoming-freshmen/>

Schedule a visit to the beautiful campus which is located in the Allegheny Mountains of West Virginia.

<https://www.bethanywv.edu/admissions-aid/campus-visits/schedule-your-visit/>

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### [Disciples Virtual Gathering - Saturday, August 7, 2021](#)

This summer there will be a wonderful opportunity for Disciples to connect, learn, worship, and imagine new ways of gathering as church. A first of its kind Disciples Virtual Gathering will take place on Saturday, August 7, 2021. Through Bible study, workshops, and worship, the event will focus on the covenant we share as Disciples and the promise of Romans 8:38-39 that nothing can separate us from the love of God. To sign up to receive updates and more information, including a schedule of the day, go online to:

<https://disciples.org/2021-virtual-gathering/>

Regular registration starts at \$25, which includes access to all sessions and workshops, as well as the virtual exhibit hall. Options for reduced registration fees will also be available so the event can be accessible by all. Throughout the day, a virtual exhibit hall will allow participants to connect with ministry partners in real time. If your organization is interested in hosting a virtual exhibit booth, sign up at the link above to receive more information as it becomes available. This all-church event is made possible by the generous financial support of general ministries and other sponsors. If you would like more information about sponsorship opportunities, please sign up at the link above and someone from our office will be in touch.



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**For the full Ohio Regional Calendar with upcoming events and important dates, go to**

<https://www.ccinoh.com/regional-calendar.aspx>

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