



CHRISTIAN CHURCH IN OHIO

D I S C I P L E S O F C H R I S T

A covenant network of congregations in mission:

*We are the Body of Christ gifted and called in covenant together as Disciples of Christ
to be centers of transformation on the new mission frontier of our own communities*

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Matthew 18:20

"For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them."

Dear Christian Church in Ohio Supporter,

From the wandering of Moses and the people of God in the wilderness when God said to Moses, *"My presence will go with you,"* (Ex. 33:14) to the revelation to John of the city of God descending from heaven when the definitive promise came that, *"the home of God is among mortals,"* (Rev. 21:3) God's presence with us has been assured. Whether as words of comfort, challenge, or commissioning, God's pledge to be present among us is powerful and welcome. Of course, the ultimate understanding of God-With-Us was Jesus Christ who often reminded the disciples (and those of us who follow) that the Divine would *always* be present with us, whether as creator, redeemer, or sustainer. In fact, his final words in the gospel of Matthew are ones of eternal presence, *"And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."* (Matthew 28:20)

Showing up for each other is as important for us human beings as it is for God. A famous actor once said, "Eighty percent of success is just showing up." We believe the Christian Church in Ohio has been "showing up" and being fully present for and deeply engaged with the leaders and congregations across Ohio.

For example, the Regional Church has been God's presence this past year:

- ❖ When a pastor who announced her retirement and needed counsel on how to conclude her ministry well was assured by the Regional Minister that the congregation she served faithfully would make the transition smoothly, and when the celebration took place the Regional Elder and Regional Minister offered blessings on her retirement and a commitment to be there for her in her retirement and the congregation in its time of transition.
- ❖ When a congregation discovered acts of vandalism had damaged their church building and the Regional Church Office connected the pastor and treasurer with the Week of Compassion and the Region's Rural and Urban Church Fund for grants to help repair the damage and the Regional Elder counseled the Pastor to help him have hope for the future.
- ❖ When a Pastoral Search Committees sought to craft a congregational profile that was accurate, faithful, and exciting to potential candidates, and then was guided faithfully in the search process by the Regional Minister and Regional Elder and provided ministerial profiles of candidates that fit their mission and ministry priorities through Disciples Home Missions' Office of Christian Vocation.
- ❖ When a clergy person discerned it was time to move on from their current ministry and turned to the Regional Minister to give them wise counsel, offer options for future ministry, and then to write a Regional Reference for their Ministerial Profile when they entered Search & Call.

- ❖ When a young person who has struggled to believe that God loves and accepts them just as they are was invited by a friend to summer church camp and discovered a caring community led by faithful Directors, Counselors, and Camp Staff who live deeply Christian values and who honored their life journey and equipped their spiritual life in ways they never imagined.
- ❖ When a minister had a passionate idea about confronting racism and building reconciliation between congregations of different races and reached out to our Pro-Reconciliation/Anti-Racism Commission seeking support and a grant from our Reconciliation Fund to bring their idea into full reality and then received that assistance and held a very successful event.
- ❖ When a church's youth group, needing to reenergize itself after COVID diminished their numbers, chose to have a retreat in the Monroe Lodge at Camp Christian and there they found Camp Christian, with its well-kept facilities, its delicious and nutritious food, nestled in God's beautiful creation, to be the perfect place to revitalize their group.
- ❖ When a seminarian who was struggling to make ends meet paying for classes, housing, and other expenses, reached out to the Commission on Ministry and was told about scholarships provided by Disciples Home Missions, the Christian Church Foundation, and Disciples Higher Education and Leadership Ministries and, with the Regional Minister's letter of recommendation, was awarded a scholarship.
- ❖ When the spouse of a pastor who had a major health problem reached out to the Regional Office worried about paying the medical bills that insurance wouldn't cover and was connected with the Pension Fund and received a Ministerial Relief and Assistance grant from them and a grant from our own Regional Pastoral Relief Fund, relieving them of a great deal of stress.
- ❖ When a small group of leaders of a congregation faithfully decided to conclude that church's physical ministry and the Regional Minister carefully walked them through the steps of working with the Disciples Church Extension Fund, the Disciples Historical Society, and the Christian Church Foundation to get the best value for their building, preserve their essential documents for archives, and create a Legacy Fund to honor the church's name in perpetuity, which they did joyfully and successfully.
- ❖ When a congregation's governing board who had concerns about their pastor reached out to the Regional Elder and Regional Minister for guidance and help in working through the tough issues and together who then connected them with mediation resources from trained counselors, found a resolution to their concerns.
- ❖ When a church treasurer needed guidance on how to remit special offerings in a way to ensure their church's generous donations to the Easter, Pentecost, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Week of Compassion, and Reconciliation Offerings, and to the Disciples Mission Fund were correctly designated and were guided through the process by our Regional Administrator and, on top of that, was provided with a copy of the Church Treasurer's Handbook from the Disciples Center for Faith and Giving.
- ❖ When a retired pastor needed to talk and not feel so alone reached out to the Regional Minister and they met and laughed and cried and remembered together, which then led to a delightful videoconference gathering of retired clergy set up by our Regional Administrator.
- ❖ When a clergy person yearned for a renewed connection to God was invited to attend a spiritual retreat designed by our Spiritual Life Committee and arrived to be welcomed by our Camp Site Manager and nourished with food prepared by our Food Services Director and to be led by a gifted teacher and spiritual guide;
- ❖ When a Commissioned Minister serving one of our smaller and more vulnerable congregation sought out more training and learned of the new partnership our Commission on Ministry is developing with the Christian Church of Illinois/Wisconsin and the Christian Church in Michigan to provide a three-year, mentor-guided, Commissioned Ministry Training program to support these vital ministries, in addition to Clergy Continuing Education and Lay Ministry Education.

- ❖ When a congregation, needing to find ways to renew their energy and passion for ministry after the difficulties of the last few years, decided to honor their Pastor's Anniversary and their congregation's homecoming received a visit from the Regional Elder in person and Regional Minister via video and a certificate of celebration.
- ❖ When a lay leader who wondered what on earth was going on in the Christian Church in Ohio was added by our Regional Administrator to our monthly All Region Newsletter and our Congregational Leaders Mailing email lists suddenly discovered incredible news about what creative and innovative ministry and mission our local congregations were doing around the state, in addition to all that the Regional Church, General Church, and our Ecumenical Partners had been doing and were planning to do in the future.
- ❖ When the Regional Assembly planning committee realized that a traditional sit-down biennial meeting was risky to plan with COVID still so prevalent decided to instead design a Family Reunion at Camp Christian and over 300 people registered and the event was a resounding success thanks to the hard work of the planning team, the Regional Administrator, the Camp Site Manager, the Food Services Director, and the Regional Minister and a host of volunteers;
- ❖ And there are so many MORE ways the Regional Church has been present in the life of clergy, lay leaders, congregations, and partner ministries across the life of the Christian Church in Ohio!

In so many moments in life and in so many ways the Christian Church in Ohio seeks to be God's presence in the hearts and lives of individuals and communities. But there are also **so many more ways** the Christian Church in Ohio needs to be God's presence in the lives of individuals and communities around the state. This presence takes time, effort, dedication, and love. And this presence requires money to make it real.

Your gift to the 2022 Renewal Initiative will help the Christian Church in Ohio be present for more and more congregations, clergy, and lay leaders. Last year we received \$88,174.02 but that was short of our goal of \$100,000. Our goal this year is more modest, \$85,000. We are so grateful that we have already received \$39,514.52 in donations prior to the Regional Assembly and this letter being prepared. You can choose via mail or online to give to the Regional Church Operating Expenses, Camp Christian Operating Expenses, or where it is needed most. Any and every single gift, large, medium, or small, helps the Regional Church show up when we are needed around the church.

And one of the very easiest ways to amplify your gift, and therefore expand the presence of the Christian Church in Ohio into the life of congregations and leaders is to make your gift a recurring gift. Whether weekly, monthly, or quarterly, making the gift you give regular and predictable helps the Regional Church Office and Staff expand ministry in real and tangible ways. We have a goal of adding at least 20 new recurring supporters between now and the end of the year. You can easily do this on our secure online donation page:

<https://www.ccinoh.com/donation>

Please help us to be God's presence for those who need us.

Faithfully Yours,

Rev. Allen V. Harris, Regional Pastor & President

On behalf of The Regional Church Council, The Regional Elders, The Regional Staff

Up to date details about the Renewal Initiative donations, plus the brochure, are always available at
<https://www.ccinoh.com/other-pages/renewal-initiative.aspx>