Ohio Regional Newsletter ~ December 2025

Around The Region & In My Heart

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

Christmas Is Both Faith AND Work, Held Together In Love

It is no surprise to any parent, or teacher, or pastor, or… many others that holidays oftentimes are far more work than play and take more energy and resources than it may appear on the tinselly surface. Anyone who has some responsibility of care for or nurture of others knows that all of the sights, sounds, flavors, and experiences of a holiday do not come without a cost. For every tasty gingerbread cookie we eat there was someone who baked and decorated it. For every lilting Christmas carol we hear there was someone who composed it, someone who played or recorded it, and someone who made it accessible to you via a streaming service, compact disc, or orchestra. For every Christmas live nativity, candlelight service, or even stirring sermon there are so many others who make the sets or costumes, purchased the candles or are ready to clean up the wax, or who theologized over scripture and wrote commentaries, not to mention those who preach it.

But most all of we who "work" Christmas would also say, I hope and pray, that the work is well worth it for the faith, hope, love, and joy it inspires. I know when I was a local church pastor that if all that hard work for Advent and Christmas didn't result in a deeper sense of Christ amongst us, I would have given up doing them a long time ago. I didn't give up because it always has stirred souls – mine and many others.

What I am seeking to do this Advent and Christmas seasons is to avoid, as best I can, pitting the faith of Christmas against the work of Christmas, as if work is not faithful and faith is not hard work. Really it is a continuum, all part and parcel of the same package, if you will. What this helps me to realize is that in those moments where crafting Christmas feels really difficult and the mechanics of putting together an event that is just right or buying the perfect Christmas present is as faithful and meaningful as singing carols and making snow angels. Similarly, when I am able to sit back and enjoy Ella's Christmas album and drink a nice eggnog, or receive a gift that tickles my fancy, that is part of the work of Christmas as well.

But I am also reminded in these efforts of the gentle but insistent words of spiritual leader Howard Thurman about the work of Christmas that comes after the delights of Christmas celebrating. This is the work of making Christ's birth into our world real in the lives of those around us. Christmas was never meant to just be "our work" or to inspire "our faith." It was always meant for more, for others. Thurman's poem[1] compels us to both enjoy "the songs of the angels" and marvel at the visit of royalty and shepherds, but to take the energy, the wonder, and the love from our experience of Christ's birth to make the lives of real human beings better because of his incarnation. In Thurman's words, "To heal the broken, To feed the hungry,… To rebuild the nations," and more.

This is what we are trying to do in the Christian Church in Ohio. Through our priorities and programs, trainings

and events, pastoral care and communication, we are seeking to make the embodiment of God into our world a reality for those who our ministry affects. Whether it is honoring pastors on their retirement from ministry, helping a seminarian receive a scholarship, advising a church board on options for financial security, or planning a retreat for high school youth leaders, each and every thing we do is the "work of Christmas" throughout the year.

And we seek to do this work faithfully and ensure our faith works hard, all with love. The love of God in Christ Jesus compels the staff, the Regional Church Council, our Regional Elders, our Camp Christian staff and volunteers, and all of the Commissions, Committees, and Teams of the Christian Church in Ohio to do and be what God calls us to do and be. Our prayer is that everything we do may "bring peace among others,… [and] make music in the heart."

Your support in this work is gratefully received. Please give generously to the Christmas Special Offering in you local congregation, or online here: Christmas Offering - Disciples Mission Fund

Faithfully Yours,
Allen

[1] "The Work of Christmas," by Howard Thurman

Ohio Congregations Participate In "Children Here! Children There! Children Worship Everywhere!" Retreat

What happens when you gather 49 kids, 3 teenagers, 37 adults, and 26 adult church leaders for a three-day working and learning retreat? You end up with… *Children Here! Children There! Children Worship Everywhere!* (A grant funded through Lilly Endowment's **Nurturing Children Through Worship and Prayer Initiative**.)

Three Christian Church in Ohio congregations (Anderson Hills Christian Church of Cincinnati, Kemper Road Christian Church in Forest Park, and First Christian Church in Middletown) and eight Kentucky churches near Cincinnati engaged with GenOn Ministries (https://www.genonministries.org/) to learn best practices and resources for welcoming children into corporate worship in intergenerational ways.

At the same time, adults and children read scripture, created faith-based images, took "God walks," and wrote elements of worship during the most beautiful fall weekend—one where the trees "sparkled with God's glitter."

Was it a little loud at times? Yes.
Were the rooms full of bunk beds uncomfortable? Yes.
Did some kids melt down? Yes.
Did some adults melt down? Of course.
Did we make it through wonderful foundational resources to create the first 12 child-focused worship services—created *with* children and adults from ages 4 to 81? YES.

From this work, GenOn will soon offer virtual and in-person opportunities to help churches discover practices that fit their context for engaging children meaningfully in worship and in the worship space. The 12 child-focused worship services include sermon preparation materials, words for worship (litanies and prayers), creative and sensory prayer opportunities, and "extras"—depending on whether a group created a rap, made coloring pages, or filmed a video using tiny Nerd boxes.

So… what happens next?
To be continued…
Rev. Olivia Updegrove, Program Coordinator

2025 Christmas Market & Celebration A Wondrous Success!

We had such a WONDERFUL day on Saturday, December 6th at the annual Christmas Market & Celebration at Camp Christian!!

Amazing vendors, crafts, cookie decorating, tasty food, a scavenger hunt, fellowship with old friends, meeting neighbors, and it even snowed a little bit.

Thank you SO MUCH to EVERYONE who made the Christmas Market and Celebration so special.

We invite you all to **SAVE THE DATE NOW** for next year. We will be holding our annual Christmas Market and celebration next year on **Saturday, December 5th, 2026**.

For some photos from the big event, check out https://www.facebook.com/media/set/?set=a.1276308841203515&type=3

Disciples Pastor Mark Statler In Concert In Newark December 14th

We wanted to share that one of our Christian Church in Ohio clergy, Pastor Mark Statler of the Carrollton Church of Christ – Disciples of Christ preaches in song as well as sermon! He has been busy with Christmas concerts in Carrollton, OH and Wheeling, WV and has one more coming up in Newark, OH. For the Carrollton and Wheeling concerts he was joined by musicians Roger Hoard, who was Country Music Superstar Brad Paisley's guitar instructor and Jamie Peck, who won an Emmy Award for composing & playing music for WQED TV's documentary, "Over Pittsburgh."

On December 14th at 6 p.m. he will sing solo at Norwalk First United Methodist Church, 60 W. Main St., Norwalk.

There is no charge but guests are invited to bring a non-perishable food item for their Love Bus outreach ministry.

Pastor Statler writes, "Thanks! I'm proud & blessed to be a member of the Christian Church in Ohio! Love and an early Merry Christmas, Mark Statler."

District 4 Hosts Annual Blue Christmas Service on December 16, 7 p.m. at Bazetta Christian Church

Once again Rev. Cynthia Klingemier will be offering a worship service that is calm, quiet, and contemplative and called Blue Christmas. The service will be at **Bazetta Christian Church on Tuesday, December 16, at 7 pm**. The church is located at 4131 Bazetta Rd., Cortland, OH 44410.

Clergy Virtual Christmas Party December 17th, 10 a.m.

Our December Clergy Conversation Gathering will be on Wednesday, December 17th in the morning, at 10:00 a.m. via Zoom, and it will be our annual Clergy Virtual Christmas Party! This lighthearted and fun event is mainly geared for building community amongst clergy in the Regional Church and just having some much-needed holiday fun.

In preparation for the Clergy Virtual Christmas Party, you might consider the following:

- Find a fun virtual background to use while you are at the party. If you don't have one, try one from this site: https://www.thebash.com/articles/christmas-zoom-backgrounds If you've never used a virtual background, here's a tutorial: https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/210707503-Changing-your-Virtual-Background-image
- You will be invited to share a favorite holiday memory or story! We will have a time of sharing, and we'd love for you to contribute!
- Wear something fun for the season! Perhaps it is a favorite beautiful (or ugly) Christmas sweater, or the reindeer nose and antlers you were gifted last Christmas! Or perhaps you just want to wear the colors of the season. Feel free to have some fun dressing up.
- Last year we learned our Christmas Ornament names and the years before we learned our snowman, reindeer and elf names. This year be prepared to learn your Christmas Cookie name!
- Have your favorite holiday drinks and snacks available. Eating and drinking on screen is not only allowed, but strongly encouraged! I'm going to have a nice hot chocolate in one of my favorite Christmas mugs ready, along with a few Christmas cookies.

The Zoom connection link and information will be sent early next week.

If you have a topic you would like to discuss at one of our future clergy gatherings, or a person who might share some wisdom on a topic of relevance, please contact our Regional Minister, Rev. Allen V. Harris, at AHarris@ccinoh.org.

Joyfully Yours,
Rev. Allen V. Harris, Regional Pastor & President, Christian Church in Ohio

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Fifth Christian Church of Cleveland Offers Christmas Cantata On Christmas Eve

Join us at Fifth Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) for an unforgettable evening of music, fellowship, and celebration at our annual Christmas Cantata and Banquet! This year, we'll be honoring our Widows & Youth! Please invite any and all widows and children to a beautiful banquet and an outstanding worship service.

Come and hear our incredible choir and experience the joyful melodies of the season with Maestro Glenn Brackens, Artist in Residence. This is more than a concert—it's a celebration of community and the eternal hope of Christ's coming.

DATE: Wednesday, December 24, CHRISTMAS EVE CANTATA CONCERT: 6:00 PM
COMMUNITY BANQUET & PHOTOS WITH SANTA: 4:00 PM - 6:00 PM

Bring the whole family early for a special community dinner prepared by our Chef in Residence, Maryah Baker, and capture memories with Santa! This is a perfect way to share the warmth of Christmas with neighbors and friends.

LOCATION:
Fifth Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
14109 Benwood Ave, Cleveland, OH 44128
(Rev. E. Regis Bunch, Senior Pastor)

We are a church built on love and community, and we welcome everyone to our house—whether you're a long-time member or a neighbor seeking a warm, friendly place this Christmas Eve!

REHEARSALS:
SATURDAY DECEMBER 6TH AT 4PM
FRIDAY & SATURDAY DECEMBER 12TH & 13TH 4PM
FRIDAY & SATURDAY DECEMBER 19TH & 20TH 4PM
#FifthChristianChurch #ClevelandChurches #ChristmasCantata #Widows #Widow #Youth #ChristmasInCleveland #DisciplesOfChrist #CommunityLove #HolidayConcert #PrepareTheWay

Advance Winter Retreat
Featuring Rev. Amy Gopp
January 9-11 at Camp Christian
For young adults ages 19-30

Mark your calendars, because Advance Conference is BACK! January 9th, 2026 is the annual Advance winter retreat at Camp Christian. This event is headlined by the Reverend Amy Gopp, Senior Minister at United Church of Christ in Kent and former Director of Week of Compassion with the Disciples of Christ. With her wide range of experiences in our world of faith, the Advance community will be taking a deep dive into what OUR collective purpose is as Disciples of Christ. In a continually fracturing world, it is more important than ever to understand the core concepts of the church and how we can be our best selves both inside and outside of it.

Join us for a weekend getaway at Camp Christian that promises to be filled with thoughtful discussion, fun events, and applicable worship.

Early bird registration begins now and runs through December 18th! **Register now** to save on sign up fees!

Not sure if you're able to come just yet? Do not worry! The registration window will continue to be open at the normal event rate all the way through January 2nd of 2026. Afterwards, registration will continue to be open, but the pricing will increase in this late registration window.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to reach out to us here on Facebook, Instagram, or via email at email@advanceministry.org.

Save The Date: Faithful Response Immigration Gathering, March 17-19 at Camp Christian
Gathering Dates: March 17-19, 2026 (Check in at 4:00 pm, check out at 10:30 am)
Gathering Location: Camp Christian, 10299 Maple Dell Rd, Marysville, OH 43040

While the United States has a long history of hostility towards immigrants, the current administration has created a crisis for immigrants and refugees through aggressive immigration enforcement and racial profiling, diverting resources from the public good to immigration detention and deportation. With the rescinding of the sensitive sites memo from the Department of Homeland Security, churches have become a target of enforcement. This has created an atmosphere of fear for immigrants in churches as well as for those who seek to be in solidarity with them. Additionally, immigration

enforcement has unjustly targeted, detained, and deported many neighbors within our own communities, and there is an urgent need for community defense.

In light of these challenges and needs, it's more important than ever for our churches to faithfully respond to God's call to welcome, love, and defend the sojourner in our midst. As pastors and lay leaders, we must step up in this crisis to faithfully serve those both inside and outside of our churches. This is why the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), United Church of Christ, Church of the Brethren, and the Mennonite Church USA are sponsoring a Faithful Response Immigration Gathering. From March 17-19, we will gather to strengthen our faithful response to the current immigration crisis by facilitating space and providing tools for pastors and lay leaders to:

1. Develop relationships that cross denominational lines to broaden our network of support
2. Create and practice safety planning and rapid response to prepare your congregations and communities for heightened immigration enforcement
3. Spiritually ground your work and care for your congregations to build resiliency and endurance to respond to this crisis

Please save the date and stay tuned for more information and registration for this event in the coming weeks.

Save The Date: Adult Conference 2026 Welcomes Rev. Dr. Valerie Bridgeman!

For the last few years the Christian Church in Ohio (Disciples of Christ) and the Heartland Conference (United Church of Christ) jointly sponsors a summer adult continuing education event that brings the best and most compelling theologians to inspire and nurture faith formation in adults. Next summer, from Monday afternoon June 22nd to Thursday afternoon, June 25th Adult Conference participants will gather at Northwest Christian Church in Upper Arlington to learn from the Rev. Dr. Valerie Bridgeman. Dr. Bridgeman is Dean and Vice President for Academic Affairs and Associate Professor of Homiletics and Hebrew Bible at the Methodist Theological Seminary of Ohio. She will serve as both the morning Bible Lecturer and the evening Vesper speaker. We are thrilled to have this world-class scholar and preacher for our 2026 Conference!

The Planning Team for Adult Conference has made some changes for next year's event to try to make it accessible to more people. Including previous changes such as a one-day registration and individual workshops that are self-contained to that day, for next year we have shortened the event by a day ending on Thursday rather than Friday and we will offer a variety of hotel options in various price ranges.

More information, our theme, and registration will be forthcoming, but please save the dates on your calendar, June 22 – 25, 2026!

SAVE THE DATE
Christian Church in Ohio Regional Assembly
October 9-10 at Camp Christian

Rev. Dr. Jack Sullivan, Jr. Retirement Celebration Draws Diverse Political, Non-Profit, & Faith Leaders

Wednesday, December 10th was the retirement celebration for the Rev. Dr. Jack Sullivan, Jr. as Executive Director of the Ohio Council Of Churches. We celebrated 42 years of ministry for the Rev. Dr. Sullivan and retirement in grand style! A fellowship gathering of Governing Board members followed by an Ohio Statehouse reception and a public worship service at Trinity Episcopal Church in Columbus made the day one of gracious reflection, universal thanksgiving, and collective joy. Former Ohio Governor, Ted Strickland, brought words of gratitude. Representatives from many different denominations and faith traditions were present. Preacher for the event was Bishop Vashti Murphy McKenzie (President of the National Council of Churches). The Rev. Dr. Joel L. King (first cousin of Martin

Luther King, Jr.) also spoke. The Disciples of Christ Honored Minister's Pin, gifted by the Pension Fund, was given by our Regional Pastor, Rev. Allen Harris.

Planning the event were the OCC's Executive Committee: the Rev. Dr. David Long-Higgins, the Rev. Melanie S. J. Slane, the Rev. Dr. Adam B. Sornchai, and the Rev. Allen V. Harris; and the OCC staff, the Rev. Dr. Amariah McIntosh and Min. Deanna Fouchè Baldwin. It was a magnificent day filled with deep appreciation and much joy.

In further news Rev. Dr. Sullivan was named an Ambassador of Restorative Justice by the global body, Restorative Justice International. He was named one of the "Who's Who In Black Columbus" on November 20th. Then subsequently was given the Faithful Servant Award by the Hunger Network in Ohio during its annual dinner in Columbus. What a fine set of honors for this distinguished church and community leader.

United Christian Church of Clayton Celebrates 30 Years United In Their Current Facilities

On Sunday, November 9 the United Christian Church of Clayton celebrated the 30th anniversary of being united and worshipping in their current facilities. Their pastor is Rev. Debbie Kautz. Also present were our Regional Minister, Rev. Allen Harris and Regional Elder for District 8/12 Rev. Thomas Barnes. Rev. Harris preached on Matthew 5:14-16 with a sermon titled "Shine, Church, Shine!

The congregation is a uniting of several congregations. Central Christian Church of Kettering founded a new church, West Side Church of Christ, in 1902. The congregation relocated and changed its name to Hillcrest Christian Church in 1948. Santa Clara Christian Church was founded in 1913, also out of the Central Christian Church of Kettering. These two congregations birthed a third one, Northwest Christian Church. Hillcrest and Santa Clara merged to form United Christian Church in 1994, and decided to relocate to its present location on Hoke Road. A sanctuary building was constructed and dedicated in 1995.

On January 1, 2004 United and Northwest formally merged and in February 2004 they dedicated their new addition.

Jackie Piatt Commissioned As Director Of Religious Education At Community Christian Church, North Canton

On Sunday, November 9th Jackie Piatt was Commissioned as the Director of Religious Education for Community Christian Church of North Canton.

Jackie has been in care with the Commission on Ministry Team 2 and completed her requirements to be commissioned.

Participating in the service were Transitional Senior Pastor, the Rev. Brian Shields, Rev. Terry Bartlett representing the Commission on Ministry, and Rev. Jamie Gump, Regional Elder for District 7.

In further news, Jackie celebrated the birth of her second child, Thomas, on November 29th!

Rev. Timothy McCollum Bids Farewell To Bazetta Christian Church, Heads To Texas Pastorate

On Sunday, November 16th we said farewell to Reverend Timothy McCollum as Pastor of Bazetta Christian Church in Cortland.

The Rev. Cynthia Klingemier, Regional Elder for District 4, represented the Christian Church in Ohio.

Reverend McCollum is pictured with his wife, Kristy McCollum.

He has been called to be pastor in a Disciples of Christ congregation in Longview, Texas.

Rev. Vanessa Bostick Installed As Settled Pastor Of Champion Christian Church, Warren, November 16th

Sunday, November 16th was the installation service for the Rev. Vanessa Bostick, Pastor of Champion Christian Church in Warren.

Our Regional Minister, Rev. Allen Harris, preached and officiated the installation service. Search & Call Committee Chair was Patty Urey. Worship leader was Rev. Ken Hopkins, Minister Emeritus of the congregation.

There was a celebration dinner afterwards.

Heights Christian Church and Dr. Kate Gillooly Covenant in Mutual Ministry

The congregation of Heights Christian Church, Shaker Heights, was pleased to host an interfaith community Service of Covenant and Celebration of Mutual Ministry on November 23 in recognition of their recent call of Dr. Kate Gillooly to serve as Pastor. The Rev. Allen Harris, Regional Minister of the Ohio Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), officiated and the Rev. Charles Graves, IV, the Rector of Christ Episcopal Church preached on our collective call to do justice. Participants in the service represented community partners and local congregations, including several from the Interfaith Group Against Hate, of which HCC is a member.

Dr. Kate Gillooly is a long-time resident of Cleveland Heights, and along with her husband and two children, is a proud alum of the Cleveland Heights – University Heights public school system. She has degrees from CWRU, Ursuline College, and Bexley-Seabury seminary in Chicago. She started at Heights Christian Church on June 1, 2016 as Director of Congregational Development. After serving in that capacity for six years, she became its Transitional Minister. Dr. Kate became a commissioned minister in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in October of that year. On July 1, 2025, the congregation issued a call to Dr. Kate to serve as Senior Pastor, continuing the exceptional ministry and leadership that she has provided throughout recent years.

"After several years of uncertainty and change (a pandemic, building sale and move to a new church home, the retirement of previous pastor, and 3 years of transitional leadership), it sure feels good to make plans and promises for our future work together," Dr. Kate said. The congregation, under the leadership of Dr. Kate, looks forward to mutual ministry with a shared commitment to interfaith collaboration, social justice, and serving those in need.

Written by Jane Troha. Jane has been a member of Heights Christian Church for over 50 years and is the

immediate past Moderator of the congregation. She chaired the transition committee that resulted in Dr. Gillooly's call to be Senior Minister of HCC.

Find out more about this dynamic social justice-oriented congregation at: https://www.heightschristianchurch.org/

Our Global Ministries Mission Co-Worker, Elena Huegel, Visits Ohio

On Tuesday, November 25 our Regional Minister, Allen Harris, spent the day hosting Elena Huegel, our mission co-worker who serves with Disciples Overseas Ministries & Global Ministries. Her ministry is at the Instituto de Estudios e Investigación Intercultural, A.C. (Institute for Intercultural Studies and Research), as the coordinator for Retoños en las ruinas: esperanza en el trauma (Roots in the ruins: hope in trauma) in Chiapas, Mexico.

Elena visited congregations and individuals around northeast Ohio for the week after. Her hosts for the week were Debbie and John McDonald, members at Harmony Springs Christian Church.

To learn more about Elena's work go online to: https://www.globalministries.org/people/elena-huegel/

Rev. Paul Bomeli Concludes Ministry At First Christian Church Of Medina November 30th

On Sunday, November 30th, our Regional Minister, Reverend Allen Harris, worshiped with the faithful disciples of Medina First Christian Church where we celebrated the ministry of Reverend Paul Bomeli as he concludes his ministry as Pastor to this congregation and moves on to serve another congregation in Western Ohio.

For more information about this vibrant congregation please go online to:
https://www.firstchristianmedina.com/general-8

Shreve Christian Church Celebrates 30 Years Of Providing The Christmas Tree At The Cleveland Christian Home, Now The Center's H.O.P.E. Campus

On Sunday, December 7th our Regional Pastor, Rev. Allen Harris, worshiped with the faithful disciples of Shreve Christian Church in Shreve. They are served very ably by Pastor Wayne Enders.

One of the wonderful things Rev. Harris had the opportunity to do was celebrate 30 years of this faithful congregation providing the Christmas tree for the Cleveland Christian Home, now The Center's H.O.P.E. Campus, as well as annual financial gifts. They delivered it on Tuesday, December 2 and Dawnya Underwood, the Executive Director of the H.O.P.E. Campus welcomed them.

Thanks to Shrewsbury tree farm for the gracious donation of the tree at the church and HOPE Campus all these years. Check out this wonderful tree farm at: https://twinsberrytreefarm.com

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Join "One Home One Future" For A More Sustainable Holiday

The holiday season is a time for connection, reflection, and gratitude, fostering a sense of community and belonging.

Embracing sustainable holidays encourages mindful consumption and reduces waste, ensuring that we can enjoy this special time without compromising the well-being of our planet.

Join One Home One Future today to access FREE Sustainable Holidays resources! onehomeonefuture.org/join

Summer 2026 Internship Application Opens This Monday

Be The Neighbor's Internship Application for Summer 2026 Opened!

About the Internship

We are looking for young adults who believe that serving others and working for justice are primary to faithful living.

Interns work to empower and equip service-learning trip groups to put their faith into action through service and justice in ways that are relational, sustainable and dignity-affirming through direct service, education, justice-work, advocacy, and reflection.

Requirements

- Available for in-person training in Fort Worth from May 31 to June 6, 2026
- Able to lead at least four weeks of trips between June 7 and July 31, 2026
- At least 19 years old
- Seek to follow the ways of Jesus
- Committed to serving others and working for social justice
- Comfortable with progressive/liberal theology
- Welcoming and affirming of the LGBTQ+ community
- Must pass a background check

Learn more and apply at: https://www.betheneighbor.org/summerstaff

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November 2025 Refugee & Immigration Resource List from Justice & Advocacy Ministries

Attached please find a copy of the **November 2025 Refugee & Immigration Ministries Resource List**. This latest edition contains Includes news updates, theological reflections, toolkits, advocacy guides, and explainer articles to keep you informed on refugee and immigration issues.

Seeking to be a source of trusted information/resources for local congregations, Regions, and ministry partners, Justice & Advocacy Ministries @ DHM offers this curated list of articles, toolkits, and action items about refugee and immigration ministries. You can also find the full resource available as a direct link on DHM's website here or as a direct link to the two-page PDF document here.

Consider Buying Books From Chalice Press For Your Christmas Gift-Giving!

Be on the lookout in your mail for Chalice Press' postcard, highlighting books for Disciples and Disciples congregations and a 30% discount on hundreds of titles. These are great for Christmas gift-giving! Check out

Terri Hord Owens' "Staying at the Table" and "We Call Ourselves Disciples" edited by Kamilah Hall Sharp and Joel Brown highlighting what makes our denomination unique. Start planning now for Lent with two devotionals for personal or congregational use.

You can also download the postcard with more details here:
https://cdn.shopify.com/s/files/1/0091/9466/8129/files/DOC_congregational_postcard_Dec_2025.pdf

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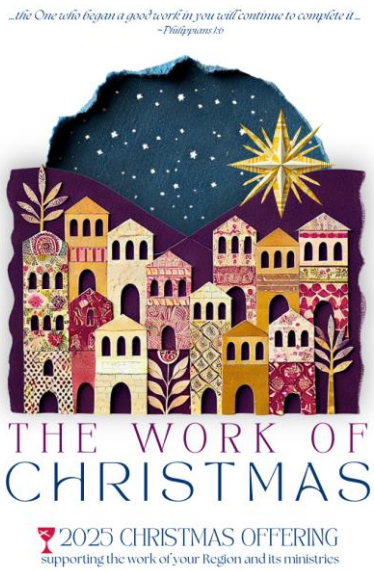
Preparing For The Christmas Offering 2025
"…the One who began a good work in you will continue to complete it." (Philippians 1:6)



God is surely at work among us! As we approach the season of profound meaning and great joy of the Advent and Christmas, let us celebrate the faith of the young couple, the light of the star, the songs of the angels, the openness of the shepherds, and the persistence of the magi, but let us also remember the true work of Christmas is what comes afterwards. The blessed but challenging work of Christmas comes when the glow of the holy night subsides and we return to our daily lives.

The theme of the 2025 Christmas Offering to be received in

our churches in December is "The Work Of Christmas." It is inspired by both Philippians 1:6 as well as the poem of the same name by Rev. Dr. Howard Thurman. (You can read his poem and reflection on it here: The Work of Christmas by Howard Thurman.) This theme reminds us that the coming of the Christ Child into our midst was a call to take the inspiration of that inbreaking of God into our world and transform it into the mission and ministry to which Christ's entire life called us.

The Christian Church in Ohio, which will be the beneficiary of 100% of the offerings received in our congregations and by those who designate it individually, helps your Regional Church staff, Council, Elders, Commissions, Committees, Teams, as well as all that happens in and through Camp Christian make real Christ's calling each and every day.

In the Christian Church in Ohio the work of Christmas becomes:

- Celebrating a church or pastoral anniversary, installation, or retirement demonstrating the appreciation and respect of the wider church
- Hosting state-of-the art speakers, recent authors, and compelling preachers to inspire individuals for the work of ministry in their congregation or community
- Networking congregations with food ministries so that best practices can be shared and mutual support can be offered
- Offering counsel and prayer with those discerning a call to ministry, to clergy struggling with doubt or despair, or pastors wondering if it is time to seek a new setting for ministry or retire
- Connecting a congregation with the Disciples Historical Society to archive their vital historical documents for future researchers and students
- Guiding clergy and congregations through the Search & Call process
- Providing a safe, inclusive, and dynamic setting for faith formation, inspiration, fun, and community at Camp Christian
- Honoring the saints as clergy are laid to rest and congregations conclude their regular and observable ministry

We hope that you will promote and receive this vital offering in your congregation and throughout your networks. Resources are available by clicking **HERE**. Every Every congregation should have received their Christmas offering, posters and bulletin inserts in early December from the Office of General Minister & President. If you did not receive yours, please contact Treasury Services here: Offering Supply Orders - Disciples Mission Fund

Please use the weekly advent bulletin inserts attached to this email.