

Follow the news of Michigan Disciples, the witness, worship, mission and spiritual pulse of our congregations and region.

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May 19,2018

Neil E. Topliffe, Editor

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### MICHIGAN DISCIPLES ONLINE

Stay up-to-date with events and activities with Michigan Disciples and our congregations. There are several ways to stay informed.



Michigan Disciples now has its own Facebook page. Be sure you go to "[Michigan Disciples](#)"

and LIKE us so you can get the latest news, updates and video reflections. It's also the place to post your events and reflections. Spread the word - SHARE with your friends as well.

Camp Crystal community has an active Facebook page as well: [CampCrystalMI](#)

### WEBSITES

Michigan Disciples - [www.michigandisciples.org](http://www.michigandisciples.org)

Crystal Conference Center - [www.crystalconferencecenter.org](http://www.crystalconferencecenter.org)

**Regional Assembly Program Book online - [Click Here](#)**

Includes full reports of Regional Minister, Commissions, Committees and Finances (March financials).

# Transforming Us to Transform the Church

## General Minister Hord Owens Inspires

Under the theme of “Transforming Us to Transform the Church,” 75 plus representatives and pastors, from 21 Michigan Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregations gathered May 5 in Flint for their annual Regional Assembly. Hosted by Triumphant Temple of Praise Christian Church, representatives received reports of Commissions and Task Forces, acted on a few business items, elected Regional Board members and were inspired by the message of our General Minister and President, Rev. Teresa “Terri” Hord Owens.

The Regional Assembly set a “first time” moment this year, sending live video to it's Facebook page feeds ([Click here](#) to view Terri's sermon).



“Everything we are as Christians is what we believe about God,” Hord Owens reminded us. “Never put limits on who you can be, or whom you can accept, or whom God will redeem,” she exhorted.

We are called to take our ordinary lives and give them to God as an offering, giving all that we have, transforming beyond our “selves” as only God makes possible in us, she added. “Transforming begins when we begin to give our selves to God.”

Terri’s words came in a closing worship to the Regional Assembly, providing a spirit-filled bookend to the meeting of Michigan Disciples which began with Pastor Arnold Lakes opening the assembly in prayer and

praise.

Our General Minister and President’s words of challenge and vision were preceded by the transforming power of the Triumphant Temple of Praise quartet. The group, led by Pastor Frank Gilliard, sang two praise songs, “I Still Have a Praise Inside of Me,” and “After You’ve Done All You Can, You Stand.”



In between the opening and closing praise worship moments, the Assembly received reports, heard updates on the health and direction of the region and acted upon business items.

## Regional Assembly Actions

1. Elected to the Regional Board as members at large were Patricia Howe (Cascade Christian, Grand Rapids – photo right with Regional Minister Eugene James) and Rev. Glen McIntyre (Burt Lake).
2. Approved the recommendation of the Crystal Commission that the region enter negotiations with United Camps, Conferences, and Retreats to manage Crystal Conference Center on behalf of the Michigan Region. A mutually agreed upon initial agreement would be for two years, beginning in 2019, with annual renewal options.
3. Approved an initial operating capital of \$28,000 from the Oakland Endowment Fund to be made available to UCCR for Crystal Conference Center operational cash flow purposes.
4. Approved an emergency resolution endorsing the Raise the Age campaign to increase the age of juvenile incarceration from seventeen to eighteen in the State of Michigan, and encouraging Michigan Disciples to contact state legislators to support the relevant legislative bills. [See attached details sheet and contact information.](#)



## 2018 Strategies - 3 Big Rocks Communications - Caring - Crystal



The focus of 2018 has been on “Three Big Rocks” – Communications, Caring Missions & Ministries, and Crystal, reported Neil Topliffe, chairperson of the **Strategic Ministry and Planning Task Force**. “**Strategy '18**” is focusing on those Three Big Rocks and, in collaboration with the Stewardship and Finance Commission, has prepared a

PowerPoint presentation to share with congregations and regional leaders, identifying the importance of receiving monthly financial support from our Disciples members to sustain a healthy Regional Ministry presence in Michigan.

Task Force leaders will be making arrangements to visit our local churches to share the Strategy '18 presentation with local leaders and members. Resources also will be made available online for ministers and church leaders to use with their congregations.

## Priorities Renewed for 2016-20

The Priorities Committee recommended that 2016—2018 priorities continue for the Region for the next biennium of 2018—2020.

- Refresh, Renew, Revitalize, Transform our congregations: actively strengthening our leadership through the commissions of the region and Regional Elders.
- Resource congregations and pastors for Conflict Management.
- Endeavor to build unity while understanding and respecting our diversity.
- Resource congregations to be missional.
- Commit to training, mentorship and educational opportunities focused on our youth as our future and current church and denominational leaders.

In addition the Strategic Ministry Planning Committee have set a goal and strategy for 2018 to provide a focus for the coming months:

**GOAL:** Re-energize Christian Church Michigan Region in 2018

**STRATEGY:** Focus on “Three Big Rocks” Communications -- Caring Missions & Ministries -- Crystal.

## What is Your Vision for Michigan Disciples?

Armand Aronson, Grand Rapids, and a Strategic Ministry Planning member, invited Disciples members present and, in our congregations, to help the task force as it continues to look at the future vision we should

be looking toward in the coming few years. How would **you** answer the questions: **What do you have as a future vision for Michigan Disciples in 3-5 years – what’s it look like? Send you 1-5 sentence reply to us at [info@michigandisciples.org](mailto:info@michigandisciples.org).**



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**Our mailing address is:**

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## Financial Reports

### Individual gifts needed to balance budget

Chair Sarah Beth Simonds reported our balance in the Regional operating fund as of



March 31 at \$35,157 with expenses of \$29,036. Total fund balances for the year to date was income \$61,152 and expense \$43,322. All accounts were positive at the end of the first quarter, though Simonds noted our greatest time of income/expense is in the second and third quarter with Crystal registrations and expenses having a heavy impact.

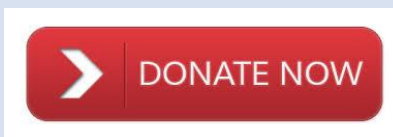
The budget for 2018 was approved at the December 2017 meeting of the Regional Board. 2016 Audit was completed. With the retirement of our part time bookkeeper, **Mike Lipsey**,

accounting functions will be transferred to Treasury Services of the Office of General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Fees for the service will be approximately \$9,600 annually.

Sarah Beth reported that there now is approximately \$2,000 in individual monthly gifts being made but that an additional \$2,000 in monthly giving is still needed to meet our 2018 budget projections. Strategy '18 emphasis with the Kickstart '18 giving challenge has generated 14 new monthly givers and 16 expressing an Intent to Give so far in 2018.

All Disciples church members are invited to express their intent to give recurring gifts. [CLICK HERE](#) to download the "Kickstart '18" Giving Form.

You can begin your monthly recurring donation now by clicking the "DONATE NOW" button and go to our secure online donation center to make a recurring contribution by credit or debit card. Or send a check monthly to the Regional Office, marked "Strategy '18."





*Moderator Mitzie VanDongen provides accompaniment during opening worship.*



*75 registrants from 21 churches participated in the business of the region.*

## Lord, Teach us to Pray



Please join us in prayer for these congregations and their ministries

### PRAYER

- First Christian Church - Cadillac
- United Church of Wayland - Wayland
- Riverview Christian Church - St. Joseph
- First Christian Church - Muir
- Bethany Christian Church - Detroit
- Kalamazoo Christian Church - Kalamazoo
- Full Gospel Christian Church - Detroit

This prayer request is a call to pray together for our congregations in Michigan, Disciples in covenant with one another. We look forward to lifting up each of our Michigan Disciples congregations in the coming year.

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## Commission Reports

Reports were received from Regional leaders along with 12 Commissions and committees and General Church representatives. Here's a quick snapshot of the reports – full reports will be available on the web site at [Regional Assemblies Reports](#).

### Church Growth & Vitality Commission

Chairperson, Rev. Brenda Etheridge (Schwartz Creek) invited our church leaders to communicate with her on possible workshops or leader training events they would like to have to support them in their local church ministry. He shared that discussion is taking place to provide online training opportunities in the future. She also reported that financial support was recently granted to Central Christian Church, Grand Rapids, for its participation in the New Beginnings program of Hope Partnership, the Disciples general church program working with congregations.

## **Ecumenism – Gospel in Action, Festival of Faith, STEM**

**Jerry McAllister** oversees this Commission that engages in mission, education and ministry with our other faith partners, including the United Church of Christ, Rippling Hope and Systemic Training for Effective Ministries (STEM).



**Carole Enwright** noted the impact that Rippling Hope is having in its revitalizing work in the Detroit area and our Michigan Disciples link with it through our Gospel in Action (GIA) mission work days and other forms of support. GIA – Flint provided water distribution this past year through Vermont Christian Church. We also

launched GIA – Benzie County last summer with a few mission projects.

**Anne McCauslin** updated the gathering on STEM classes coming up in the next few months at the United Church of Christ conference offices in Lansing.

June 8/9 Self-Care - Rev. David Moffet-Moore

August 17/18 Worship II – Rev Jean O'Brien

September 8 Building a Church of Generosity – Bruce Barkhauer

September 22 Biblical Storytelling (CEU class) @ Central Woodward CC, Troy – Rev. Penny Lowes

October 5/6 Covenant – Rev. Herman Haller

November 9/10 Church Administration - Rev. Ron Sinclair

Contact Anne for more details and to register: 248.821.4669,

[annemccauslin57@gmail.com](mailto:annemccauslin57@gmail.com)

## **Commission on Ministry**

Boundary Training sessions will be offered in three locations this year, a required training program for Michigan Disciples ministers to meet their regional clergy standing. Several candidates for ministry are being supported with one due for ordination in coming months.



We currently have four **Regional Elders** working with our congregations: **John McCauslin, Rev. Robert Oliveira, Rev Wayne Ten Roberts, Rev. Terry VanHeyningen.**

## **Personnel Commission**

The commission, under the leadership of **Julie Drews**, is in the midst of reviewing staffing and job descriptions anticipating making revisions in the coming year.

## Crystal Commission

Extended discussion was provided during the Crystal Commission report, allowing representatives to ask questions of Russ Tiller, chair, who explained details of the two proposed business actions to engage United Camps, Conferences, Retreats as operating manager of Crystal Conference Center, beginning in 2019. Participants were provided a timeline leading up to the recommendation, as well as a "Questions & Answers" document ([Click here for a copy](#)). Both resolutions to enter negotiations with UCCR and provide initial operating capital were approved. (see "Regional Assembly Actions" above).



Tiller also provided an update on **Crystal Camps** for 2018

under the leadership of Jill Forton. All deans and programs are in place and registrations continuing to come in.

More than 100 folks already are registered for the **100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Crystal** Conference Center on July 6-8. He also reported that they

July 6-8, 2018



## Don't Miss the Party!

Chair Tim Murtaugh reminded participants that they needed to make their registrations right away for CRYSTAL 100, the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday party for Camp Crystal, July 6-8. Lodging in cabins on the camp grounds is now full, except for a couple of tent sites. More than 100 people already have registered with the deadline to join register for the festivities being June 25.

Registration is \$50 per person that includes Saturday lunch and evening Pig Roast. [REGISTER NOW - click here.](#)

For those still needing lodging in the Frankfort/Beulah area, [check the Crystal website](#) for a few suggestions.

Featured activities are set for all ages, including a silent auction of items prepared by our Michigan churches. Some donations are really exciting, such as a charter fishing trip, and handmade quilt.

Saturday will be special with presentations by Camp Crystal octogenarian Russ Fuller on



engaged Criterium Engineers during the fall of 2017 to conduct an infrastructure study with plans to use it for upcoming capital projects. Dave Cook (Ionia) has been named Camp Scholarships Administrator, working with the regional office when requests are made for camp scholarship financial help.

Tiller also lifted up the new **Wedding Ministry at Crystal** launched this year. He encouraged ministers to direct folks to Crystal Lake as an opportune wedding venue. Crystal website has all the details, [crystalconferencecenter.org](http://crystalconferencecenter.org).



CCMR Facebook | CCMR Web | Crystal Web

Saturday morning, along with memory moments by Pat Sheafor and Jane Heaton. We also will have a Saturday afternoon presentation by Rick Lowery,



President of the Disciples Historical Society, on the significance of camping for Disciples of Christ leadership across the church.

Women's Ministry will be leading the Sunday worship, with Rick Lowery preaching. Friday and Saturday evenings will include vespers and campfires. Saturday will provide swimming, crafts, and climbing wall.

Get all the details and schedule: [Crystal Website](#) or [Facebook: Camp Crystal](#).

## Crystal Property Sale Options Update

Doug Morgan, chair, shared an update on the exploration underway to look at the potential for selling three pieces of unused land at Crystal. He noted that preliminary conversations with Randy Dye of Bayshore Properties Re/Max, Frankfort, identified two areas for consideration, one on either side of Lobb Rd and a second piece on the northwest corner of the property.

A meeting was set for May 18 with Dye and Task Force members to discuss the viability of the Region possibly selling the two sections located on either side of Lobb Road, sometime in the future. Questions to be explored are possible sale options, and steps toward having an assessment made of the property. Progress reports will be made to the Regional Board.

## Regional Minister Reflections

In his annual State of the Region report, Regional Minister **Eugene James**, began, "There are very positive actions occurring this year" for the Region. Included in his positive notes were the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Crystal Conference Center under the leadership of **Tim Murtaugh**; and the UCC/Disciples Festival of Faith 2018 - Festival of Service mission projects in Detroit, Grand Rapids and Benzie County (Frankfort/Beulah).



"The health and welfare of our clergy is very important to me and critical to the vitality of our congregations," our regional pastor to pastors, stated. Eugene lifted up in particular the annual Clergy Retreat and the leadership of Rev. Jill Forton (Cascade) and this year's keynoter, Rev. Bob Cornwall (Central Woodward, Troy).

A special expression of thanks with assembly-wide applause was extended to the faithful and generous service of our bookkeeper, **Mike Lipsey**, upon his retirement in March. Eugene's strongest expression of thanksgiving, however, was to the action taken by the Regional Executive Committee in February, supporting him returning to full-time ministry with the region. "I can't tell you how anxious the time was for me, knowing the essential care and pastoring work being missed in those months of part time, and how grateful I am to the regional leaders and improving financial support from our congregations and members to make my return to service possible," he told those assembled.

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### Upcoming Events for the Region

May 19 – Boundary Training for Disciples clergy and church staff – Central Woodward, Troy \$75

May 20 & 27 – Pentecost Offering to support New Church growth

June 17-22 – Elementary - Camp Crystal

June 22-24 – Disciples Women Retreat – Camp Crystal

June 28-July 1 – Young Families Retreat – Camp Crystal

July 6-8 – CRYSTAL 100 CELEBRATION – Camp Crystal 100<sup>th</sup> birthday party

July 8-14 – Independence Camp – Camp Crystal

July 9-12 – Vacation Bible School – Camp Crystal

July 15-21 – Family of God Camp – Camp Crystal

July 19-22 – National Convocation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Birmingham Alabama

July 22-28 – Chi Rho and CYF Camps – Camp Crystal

September 10-12 – Preaching Camp with Dr. Ron Allen, St Francis Retreat Center, DeWitt

September 21-23 – Disciples Men Retreat – Camp Crystal

For more details on these events and others go to [www.michigandisciples.org](http://www.michigandisciples.org).