

Northern Lights Reflections

Official Newsletter of the Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ) in the Northern Lights Region

Vol 1 Issue 10 October 2020

IN THIS EDITION

Reflections on the Journey
p. 1

Regional Assembly
Annual Fund
p. 2

A Moment with the Moderator
p. 3

Community Connections
Prayer Calendar
Barnabas Grants
Special Offerings: Thanksgiving
p. 4

Rev. Keith Watkins Book Intro
Camp Partners Updates
Word of Thanks
p. 5

Have You Met Alex?
Praying for the New Church
Movement
p. 6

*A publication of the
Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ) in the
Northern Lights Region*

PO Box 23819
Federal Way, WA 98093
Phone: (253) 893-7202
northernlightsdisciples.org

REFLECTIONS ON THE JOURNEY

A moment with Transitional Regional Minister, Rev. Sandy Messick

On a recent trip to Port Angeles, WA, I dared to step out of my comfort zone. My husband, Tom, and I, enjoy traveling with our Fifth Wheel when possible as I travel the region. Tom is always the driver, maneuvering the truck and trailer through the turns and into and out of parking spaces. Until this trip. I'm proud to say I drove for several legs both going to and coming from far western Washington. To tell the truth, I mostly just drove between rest areas along I-90. They offer easy parking, easy off and on from the highway. Although, I did also take us out of a gas station parking lot and back onto the freeway. It's a start.

It's challenging to step out of our comfort zones and try something new. It's so satisfying to dare to be uncomfortable and grow because of the experience. This season in the life of our congregations has forced us out of our comfort zones. We have had to adapt to changing situations and the situations continue to change. Our ways of doing worship aren't the same anymore. We have embraced the need to increase our online presence through Zoom meetings and Facebook live worship services. We have grieved the loss of in-person gatherings but rejoiced in the ability to connect virtually with people who are great geographical distances from us. We have had to try something new.

The truth is: change happens. Sometimes it happens by choice, like trying my hand at driving a truck with Fifth Wheel attached. Sometimes change happens to us whether we like it or not, like a once in a century pandemic. But change happens. We can't always control the change, but we can choose our response. Will we respond by pulling back and pulling in, or reaching out and letting go? Will we respond with fear, or faith? With reluctance or curiosity?

I was talking with my Pastoral Relations Committee recently about long-range visioning for the region and the challenges of thinking long-term when we don't know what may happen next. They suggested I focus instead on the qualities I hope to cultivate within this new Northern Lights Region. I found that helpful. And as I think about those qualities some that come to mind are: deepening spirituality and a deep sense of trust that God is present in the journey. In addition, I hope we can cultivate a spirit of curiosity, wonder, boldness to try new things, and a hunger for justice, compassion, and living forward into God's vision for us and for our communities. What are the qualities you would want to see in a region living out its call? What seeds should we be planting around the region?

Grace and peace,
Sandy

Northern Lights Reflections

REGIONAL ASSEMBLY: NOV 14-15 ZOOM

Join us for our 2020 Virtual Regional Assembly on Saturday, Nov. 14 and Sunday, Nov. 15, 2020. Help us celebrate the launching and resilience of the Northern Lights Region.

REGISTRATION IS OPEN!

<https://docgeneralassembly.givingfuel.com/nlr2020-virtualassembly>

There is no charge to attend this regional assembly. You have the option of making a donation to the region and purchasing commemorative Northern Lights T-Shirts when registering and during the assembly. Proceeds from the T-shirt sales will be divided between our two related campgrounds, Cane Ridge West and Gwinwood Christian Conference Center.

DELEGATES

Are you a delegate? Each congregation can appoint two voting delegates. Ministers with standing in the region and members of the Regional Board also have voting privileges. In addition to notification from your pastor or church office, we do ask you register through the system—this allows us to double check records and keep accurate historical information.

WHAT WILL A VIRTUAL ASSEMBLY LOOK LIKE?

Friday, November 13, 7-8pm (Pacific Time)- Pre Assembly Social Hour and Zoom Practice Session

An hour designed to start bringing us together, greeting one another, and allowing new Zoom users to use the platform and get comfortable with it ahead of the business session and worship.

Saturday Nov. 14, 9-12pm (Pacific Time) - The Business Session

Using Zoom, we will begin with a video Roll Call of the Congregations. We will hear reports of our various ministries and ministry partners, enjoy some fellowship time in breakout rooms, and vote on some important items of business. Breakout rooms will follow the business session for casual conversation and discussion of ideas and opinions about what the next two years' focus for the region could be.

Sunday, Nov. 15, there will be a pre-recorded worship service available to stream online or be used in in-person worship services.

Our guest preacher will be Rev. Derek Penwell, Pastor of Douglass Blvd. Christian Church in Louisville, KY and the author of several books about the changing church



Rev. Derek Penwell

landscape. <https://derekpenwell.net/>. Other worship elements will be provided by leadership from across the Northern Lights Region.

**We can't wait to see you there
and see how you Shine!**

[https://
docgeneralassembly.givingfuel.com/nlr2020-virtualassembly](https://docgeneralassembly.givingfuel.com/nlr2020-virtualassembly)

A WORD FROM THE TREASURER: Annual Fund *Bill Jennison, Treasurer*

As we approach our first regional assembly, though at a different time and much different format than originally planned, we are reminded that we **Shine!** together as the Northern Lights Region. We have seen our ministry together confront many challenges and find creative and exciting ways to do new ministry. You can continue to support these vital ministries by your contributions to the Annual Fund. The Annual Fund is an important component of the financial strength of our region. Through your generous support we can continue to meet the challenges and possibilities of this strange new time. We are able to provide resources to congregations to navigate the opportunities of on-line worship. We have been able to access one another through electronic gatherings of lay and clergy; the work of the region to do together that which we cannot do apart has continued in many new and creative ways.

Please consider being a part of the Annual Fund of the Region. You can contribute electronically through the region's website northernlightsdisciples.org or by sending a check to **PO Box 23819, Federal Way, WA 98093**. Let us continue to **Shine!** together as we do ministry in the Northern Lights Region.

Northern Lights Reflections

A MOMENT WITH THE MODERATOR

Regional Moderator, Rev. John Keener



This “God” stuff is frustrating. You would think understanding God would be pretty simple . . . but it’s not! It turns out that God is complicated, really complicated. During these times that we are living in with all of the frustrations, anxiety, and divisiveness, I don’t need complicated . . . I need something simple and easy to hang on to. When it comes to God I tell people that God and I are in a relationship but that its “complicated”. It seems to work on *Facebook*.

There are so many opinions about God. So many understandings. So many theologies. So many books. There is everything from the ultra-conservative, evangelical, fundamentalism to the ultra-liberal, left-wing, and “anything goes” understanding (with everything in-between). It seems that everyone has his or own interpretation about God. If you don’t believe me . . . just ask. Ask people what they believe and think about God. You will hear it all. So, which one is the correct one . . . the right one . . . the one we all ought to be following?

Heavens knows I could use some direction right now!

Things are a mess. I have been told that we have been stricken with the pandemic because we, as a nation and as a people of faith, have turned our backs on our reliance upon God. What we are suffering through is our consequence (read “punishment”) for turning our backs on God. If we would only turn back to God everything would be fine. I’d believe that logic if I could just figure out when I turned my back on God in my life because if I did that, I don’t remember doing it. God sure is not helping me out on this one.

Remember, I said our relationship is complicated.

God has left me standing in the dust quite often when I thought God would take care of business. For example, snow removal. If God loved me as much as I love God, God would not put snow on my sidewalk and driveway for me to shovel for hours on end during our Montana winters! Nope, God lets the snow fall where it lands . . . mostly on my sidewalk and driveway. Same with mowing the yard. You’d think that if God wanted a perfectly manicured lawn in which the grass

was exactly two inches tall, God would have made the grass stop growing at two inches. Nope! I’ve got to mow that stuff at least once a week to insure that it is acceptable to my neighbor’s expectation of two inches.

See what I mean? I want God to take care of me as I have been told that God will. God will take care us if we believe, I am told. Well, I believe and yet the snow keeps coming, the grass keeps growing. Then someone else tells me that “God takes care of those who take care of themselves”. That seems contradictory if I am the one doing all the work. I’m with Mother Teresa on this one. I appreciate the fact that God has extreme confidence and trust in me taking care of all life throws at me, but at the same time I wish God didn’t! I could use a break!

Couldn’t we all?

God is complicated. This complication is frustrating. Frustrating because like any good human being, I want to know. I have an inquiring mind. I like “black and white” answers. I like certainties. I do not enjoy wading around in the shadows or gray areas of life. I don’t like ambiguity. And, yet, that seems to be what I experience when it comes to God . . . a divine mystery that is constantly keeping me bouncing back and forth like a ping pong ball in an eternal game. I feel like God is keeping me on my toes and I’m no ballerina!

I am certain that I am not the only person who struggles with this “God” stuff. I imagine that there are many who have frustrations while attempting to make sense of God in their lives. I am not the only one and with the way things have been going on for some time, I think that there are even more of us as we attempt to make sense of the mess we are living in. Adding to this confusion and frustration is the fact that there are as many answers and opinions as there are questions and people.

Maybe that is the problem. God is a mystery. Moses thought he had God cornered in knowing who God was and is . . . but, no! Moses discovered that knowing God fully was like nailing Jello to a tree. God is who God is at any given moment in each of our lives . . . in each of our experiences. Understand that the emphasis is on us . . . as individuals, not as a whole . . . when it comes to relating to and understanding God. Because of that there are as many different answers to the question of

(Continued on page 6)

Northern Lights Reflections

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

A place to share news from our Northern Lights Region congregations, clergy, and leaders.

First Christian, Tacoma, WA – Rev. Barbara Blaisdell has announced her retirement as of June, 2021. A search committee has been formed to begin seeking the next pastor for this congregation.

To submit a Community Connection, please email office@northernlightsdisciples.org with your news. Be sure to include your name, the congregation's name, and any relevant links or other details. We edit for readability and space as necessary.

BARNABAS 2020 GRANTS

The next deadline for Barnabas 2020 grants is Nov 1. So far we have distributed \$6500 in grants to 12 families across our region who have experienced financial hardship from the COVID-19 Pandemic. These grants are available for laypeople from within our Northern Lights Congregations who are nominated by their pastors to receive up to \$500/each in financial support. The grants are funded by individual gifts and a starting donation from the region. To make a donation online click here: <https://northernlightsdisciples.org/>



Upcoming Special Day Offerings



From the very beginnings of the movement, Disciples have founded institutions of higher learning, encouraging students in their intellectual pursuits. The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is still committed to higher education.

Please hold these congregations in prayer during the month of October and into November:

- Oct 18-24: Spokane Valley congregations: Greenacres Christian Church (Chris Hayward, pastor) and Opportunity Christian Church (John Loucks, pastor)
- Oct 25-31: First Christian, Sumner, WA (Rochelle Richards, pastor)
- Nov. 1-7: Tacoma area congregations: East Side Christian (currently worshipping with First Christian), and First Christian Church (Barbara Blaisdell, pastor)
- Nov. 8-14: First Christian, Vancouver, WA (Kevin Carlisle, pastor)
- Nov. 15-21: Federated Church of Waterville, WA (Cyrus Githinji, pastor)

On November 15 and 22, Disciples churches across the US and Canada will collect the Thanksgiving offering. In the midst of national and global challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, our higher education institutions are facing unprecedented challenges and need our support now, more than ever. Even as they work diligently to ensure safe and healthy learning environments, the financial realities faced by many of our schools is adding additional stress to students, faculty and staff.

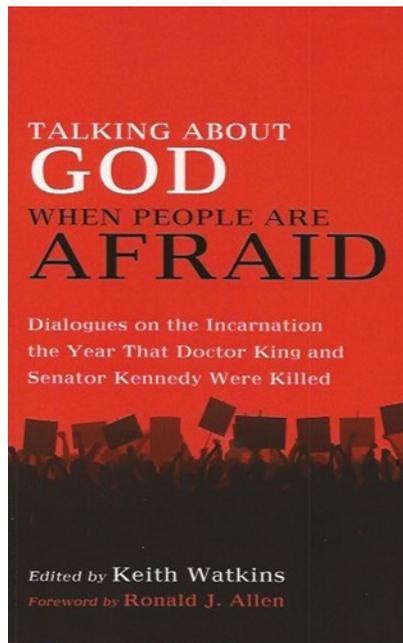
This November, please give generously to this year's Thanksgiving offering. Your gifts make a world of difference as Disciples continue our legacy of supporting education and our institutions of higher learning. <https://helmdisciples.org/>

For more information about Special Day Offerings visit <http://disciplesmissionfund.org/special-offerings/>

Northern Lights Reflections

TALKING ABOUT GOD WHEN PEOPLE ARE AFRAID

A book of sermons previously unpublished, penned and delivered in 1967 and 1968 Seattle, have been compiled and edited by Rev. Keith Watkins. "Talking About God When People Are Afraid: *Dialogues on the Incarnation the Year That Doctor King and Senator Kennedy Were Killed*" seeks to remind us that the 1960s were a period of unusual cultural ferment in North America a ferment that included changes taking place in churches and in preaching, and we find ourselves in a similar situation as the 2020s unfold.



The sermons, written by Revs. Keith Watkins, Tom McCormick, Eugene Kidder, and Robert A Thomas, are described by Marilyn Watkins, Policy Director of Economic Opportunity Institute, Seattle, WA: "Written in an earlier period when protesters were challenging institutions of power, these sermons ask questions relevant today, particularly for white Americans grappling with their own complicity in perpetuating racial inequality. They remind us of the message of liberation at the heart of both biblical and American traditions, and point to our responsibility to challenge authorities that maintain wealth and privilege by oppressing neighbors."

Talking About God was published September 11, 2020, and is available as a print book and as an ebook. It can be ordered from the publisher (with a 25% discount). <https://wipfandstock.com/talking-about-god-when-people-are-afraid.html>

Read more about this project, it's history, by downloading the editor's reflection (PDF) at <https://northernlightsdisciples.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/TalkingAboutGod.pdf>

CAMP PARTNERS UPDATES

Zephyr Biennial Meeting Held

On September 26, 2020 the members of the Christian Church Conference Grounds, Inc. (commonly known as Zephyr) met for their biennial meeting. The gathered body of representatives voted unanimously to convert the remaining assets of the property sold to a Permanent Fund with the Christian Church Foundation. This action will create an endowment which will make annual gifts in perpetuity to support ministries in the Northern Lights Region and in the member congregations, keeping the Zephyr Legacy alive.

RSVP Gwinwood Annual Meeting November

Congregants and Pastors of the member churches of Gwinwood Christian Camp and Conference Center are called to gather for an annual meeting on Sunday, November 15, at 3:00. The meeting will be held on Zoom this year, an RSVP will be necessary, please email info@gwinwood.org to register your attendance.

Topics will include

- A review of the year at Gwinwood
- The bylaws committee will offer updated bylaws for your review
- We will also discuss the rationale behind a potential name change
- We will discuss the financial status of Gwinwood and related options
- The group will discuss next year's budget
- Elect new board members
- And, ask for your input on the future.

A WORD OF THANKS

Myself and my family have received an outpouring of sympathy and condolences from within the Northern Lights Region following the death of my mother, Marjorie Fraser, in September. I want to *thank you all* for the care, the space to breathe with bereavement leave, and the ongoing expressions of support as the family navigates a new way of living.

Amber Saladino, Office Manager, Northern Lights Region

Northern Lights Reflections

HAVE YOU MET ALEX?

Alex is a database that will be shared by the whole Church. General Minister and President Terri Hord Owens set this as an objective early in her tenure, knowing from her earlier experience in corporate settings that business intelligence (data) is key to making informed decisions. Alex will position Disciples to finally have a real-time directory and picture of churchwide trends that has been impossible with the current yearbook system.

This work is only possible if we have good data. The Alex

database will draw in select data from our current yearbook legacy system, and from the financial database maintained by Treasury Services. Congregations and regions can spot trends in real time. Congregations will be able to update their contact and staff information in real time for submission to the regions for verification before pushing it out to the existing databases housed in general ministries.

For more information, links to frequently asked questions, and a video tour of the congregational interface, go to disciples.org/alex.

SUPPORT THE NEW CHURCH MOVEMENT

The challenges of starting a church are unique.

What could church planters and new congregations achieve if they had Disciples across the United States and Canada praying on their behalf?

[Water the Plants](#) is a church-wide initiative from [New Church Ministry](#) that brings together 1,000 intercessors to pray for the [New Church Movement](#).

Based on 1 Corinthians 3:6, "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow," we take a proactive approach to "watering" church "plants" with prayer. We believe that this spiritual discipline is a vital component in congregation and community development.

If you are interested in participating, you will receive a monthly Prayer Calendar that will guide daily prayers during your own personal prayer times as well as during our group prayer times led by a New Church Ministry Prayer Leader. (This month's calendar can be viewed on our ministry's [website](#).) Group prayer times take place every Tuesday morning and Thursday evening on the phone. In addition, you will receive regular communication regarding further prayer topics as well as a physical prayer reminder of your choice.

To get started, please read and complete this [form](#). If you have any questions, contact us at pray@newchurchministry.org. You can submit a prayer request by visiting our [website](#).



A MOMENT WITH THE MODERATOR continued

who God is as there are people.

Yeah, the relationship that God and I have is complicated . . . especially as a pandemic rages on, a nasty election winds down, racial unrest heats us, and as a people we are divided as we have ever been. At times it is frustrating . . . anxious . . . and tiresome. Whether or not I understand any of it or God's role in it all, I am actually okay. I am okay because I don't need all the answers to explain God because I believe. I believe that God is with me. I believe that God does not abandon me whether God is doing all the work or I'm the one busting butt.

God laughs with me, cries with me . . . in the good and the bad, known and unknown . . . God is with me. Always with me. Because of that I can make it through another day. We all can when it comes to this God" stuff. None of us may ever know the answers to our questions about God . . . we may never fully understand our relationship with God, but we know that God is with us. That is more than enough to sustain us in these troubling times.

Hang in there! I know I am going to. God is smiling and we should too!

Blessings--John