

Connected in Covenant

- 1 | Reflection with the Regional Minister
- 2 | Share your church's news, updates, challenges, and successes!
- 3 | Clergy Anti-racism/ Pro-reconciliation
| Gwinwood Retreat Center annual meeting
- 4 | Open and Affirming Discernment Team update
- 5 | The Fig Tree: An article about one of our own!
- 6 | General church news



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Small Changes, Big Results

A Reflection with the Regional Minister, Paul Allen

Several years ago, my wife Patti and I traveled to Jamaica for a mission trip. It was sponsored by First Christian Church in Manhattan, Kansas, but they partnered with a local Methodist Church as well. We arrived in Falmouth, Jamaica, and worked in a clinic that saw hundreds of people a day. Patti did most of the work; as a nurse, she fit right in, but I was relegated to counting pills in the pharmacy or doing a few basic tasks at a children's refuge called The Place of Safety, where we built a swing set and worked on storage lockers.

One of the things that surprised me after we returned home was how long it took to reflect on our experiences from this trip. It happened in stages. When we were in Jamaica, we did not have time to think; there was always something to be done, a patient to be seen, food to make and then eat, a trip to take, and worship services to attend. When I got home, everything seemed so normal, and I began to wonder if anything I did made a difference.



Later that year, Jamaica was hit by Hurricane Sandy. While the area where we worked was not hit as hard as areas in the hurricane's direct path, there was still damage to homes and property, and some of the people we worked with were affected. Again, it made me wonder, what difference did we really make? It is like we were a small drop of water in a lake. We may disturb the surface around us and cause a few ripples, but in the end, there was no distinguishable difference.

I struggled with this idea, and then I heard an old story in a new light that brought me hope. You may have heard it before, I certainly had, but it took on a different meaning.

Cont. on Page 2

Anti-racism/Pro-reconciliation training opportunities for 2026



With few exceptions, all active and Retired-active ordained and commissioned clergy with Northern Lights regional standing, as well as our in-care candidates, are required to complete six hours of Anti-racism/Pro-reconciliation training in 2026. All clergy needing training in 2026 have been sent emails, and our news resources have listed them through the year.

Those unable to attend our May and August in-person sessions may opt to take a six-hour training held by another Disciples Region or by other approved denominations under the umbrella of Churches Uniting in Christ.

We have been adding to a list of approved online trainings at the Northern Lights website as they are made known to us: northernlightsdisciples.org/boundaries-arpr-training.

You may also contact the Regional Office to inquire about other trainings you hear of.

Approved virtual or online opportunities include:

- **Tennessee Region** – October 24th at 7 am-2 pm PT: [REGISTER](#)
- **SW Region** – December 12th at 8 am-2 pm PT: [REGISTER](#)
- **UMC General Commission on Religion & Race** – Recorded on YouTube – On your schedule (*in 2026*): "Racial Justice: A Mandate to Our Discipleship" 4-Part Webinar Series. [VIEW MORE INFO & LINK TO VIDEOS HERE](#) – All four videos must be completed for a total of six hours. Share a screenshot from the end of each session with the Regional Office to receive credit.

RSVP for Gwinwood Retreat Center annual meeting

Dear Western Washington Disciples Congregations
(Tahoma & Salish Sea Areas):

**Gwinwood Retreat Center will hold its annual meeting
at 11 am on Saturday, November 14th.**

**The meeting will be in person at Gwinwood
(or join virtually on Zoom). Lunch will be provided.**

Church Owners (western Washington Northern Lights Region Disciples churches) may register two delegates plus their pastor as voters. Non-voters are also welcome. **Please RSVP by November 6th if you'll be joining us for lunch.** Select your delegates for 2026 and let Gwinwood know who they are!



*On the agenda: Updates on efforts to rebuild McKinnon Lodge, election of trustees, and the latest news on what's happening at Gwinwood, our finances and investments, and our positive outlook for the future.

*Gwinwood is also seeking candidates to join the Board of Trustees. Should you have nominees, please forward to director@gwinwood.org.

*We ask that each church owner **RSVP** and let the Board know who your voting members are.

Hope to see you there!
The Gwinwood Board of Trustees

An update from the NLR Open and Affirming Team

Greetings from your O&A Co-Chairs – Rev. Dr. Christie Love and Rev. Gloria Soja

We hope that your fall season has started well. As chairs of the Regional O&A Team, we want to offer quarterly updates on our work and share opportunities to engage with this process.

After the Region passed the resolution to begin a three-year process of discernment, we began to meet on an almost weekly basis. Dr. Love and I have had 13 meetings together and an introductory meeting with the full committee.

We sent a survey out to the regional congregations, in hopes that we would be able to “take the temperature” of the region. To date, we have received 66 responses to the **survey**, and we have met with about half of the individuals who requested it through their survey responses. The stories that have been shared with us are vulnerable, sometimes painful, and often inspiring.

The survey remains open, if you would like to respond, or you can reach out to us directly.

The survey responses have been overwhelmingly positive and affirming, though we do recognize the challenge of bringing along as many voices and diverse viewpoints as possible, especially when those who disagree, or are not sure where they stand, are reluctant to participate.

As many of you expressed, we too want to continue to honor the diversity of experiences and perspectives, while creating avenues for exploration, discussion, and discernment. We share your concerns around creating and maintaining safe spaces for dialogue, generating a more complete understanding of what it means to engage in this process and the potential impacts on the local congregations, and the need for transparency throughout the process.

For some of us, this is an “about time” effort. For others, it is still a place of pain, fear, and frustration. We understand that not all of us are ready or able to commit to full engagement in the process, and we do hope that you will engage as much as you are able.

The committee will be meeting on October 24th to review the survey summary report, engage in initial process planning, and begin some work group discussions.

We are excited to engage in this process and look forward to learning and growing together as we discern what it means to move more fully into living as an inclusive community.



Ephrata UMC has a solid impact through music, food, funds and love

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When Ephrata United Methodist Church (UMC) was extensively damaged by fire on Palm Sunday in April 2021, its carillon was silenced. Although members began worshipping there in December 2024 and the building reconstruction was completed in November 2025, the carillon music was not restored until Spring 2026.

After the fire, community members asked the UMC to restore the carillon. It plays pre-recorded digital music on the hour from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. for neighbors walking and working in town.

The repertoire includes familiar hymns and seasonal music.

The church started the carillon tradition nearly 50 years ago, so the equipment was too old to repair. It had to be replaced. Now the carillon is in a 22-by-20-inch box in the church office. Before the carillon was six feet tall, 2.5 feet wide and 2.5 feet deep in a storage room with an 18-by-12-inch unit in the church office. Now it is easily accessible so the music can be changed.



Bobbi & Rev. Don Dunn, Ephrata, WA

"We value hearing church music during the day," said Christy Price, a member who moved to Ephrata in 1992. "It's comforting."

"The community not only asked for it, but also made contributions to restore it," said Don Dunn, the pastor, who came to Ephrata in October 2014 to serve **Memorial Christian Disciples of Christ (DOC) Church.**

In 2017, he began serving both the DOC and UMC churches half time. After the fire, the UMC worshiped at Memorial Christian until it closed in April 2024. Then, they worshiped at the Adventist Church until December 2024. During rebuilding, they prepared and served monthly community meals at the Bread of Life church kitchen. [...]



Continue Reading this article about our very own Rev. Donald Dunn in The Fig Tree!

thefigtree.org/oct26/100126ephrataumcdunn.html

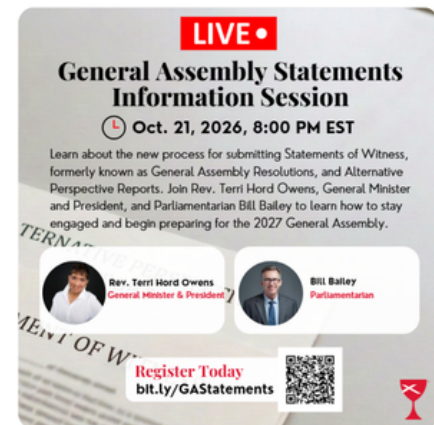
Get to know DCEF's CEO



Grab a cup of coffee, tea, or cocoa, grab a comfy sweater, and join [Disciples Church Extension Fund](#) (DCEF) **November 12th at 11 am PT** for a conversation with President and CEO, Rev. Dr. Courtney Stange-Tregear. She'll share lessons she's learned about leadership and faith, her vision for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), DCEF's future, and what gives her hope in this challenging landscape for ministry. Facilitated by Creative Writer/Digital Media Specialist Nadine Compton, this webinar will also give Disciples the opportunity to ask Dr. Stange-Tregear how DCEF's building and capital planning services can assist their places of worship. [Sign up here](#)

GA resolutions changes

As the church prepares for the online 2027 General Assembly, a new process is being introduced for Statements of Witness, formerly known as GA Resolutions, and Alternative Perspective Reports. **Join Oct. 21st at 5 pm PT** for an introductory information session for this process. General Minister and President Rev. Terri Hord Owens and Parliamentarian Bill Bailey will provide an overview, explain the process, and answer questions. [Find out more here](#)



DSF talks about preparing for sabbaticals

A sabbatical can be a transformative season of rest, renewal, and discernment for ministers and congregations alike. Join Disciples Seminary Foundation on November 2 at 1:00 pm PT for practical guidance on preparing for a sabbatical, including the Lilly Endowment Clergy Renewal Program, congregational communication, healthy boundaries, and preparing for both leave and return.

This free workshop is being offered through the DSF Collective.

[Learn more here](#)

