

# GB-22-1222

Name of ministry:	The Christian Church(Disciples of Christ) in Tennessee
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In what ways is your region/ministry thriving?	<p>Today, I give thanks to God, and the members of The Christian Church(Disciples of Christ) in Tennessee for making room at the table for all of God's children. Our geographic territory extends from Blountville, Tennessee to DeSoto County, Mississippi. From east to west there are sixty-three congregations helping folks discover, and recognize the unmistakable grace of God. The Tennessee region has and continues to overcome in areas of becoming one region, one church. We have three distinctive areas, and there are differences within each one. Each day we are prayerfully reexamining what it means to be in covenant with others, as we are in covenant with the Christ. We are blessed to work together, members from three distinctive areas of Tennessee to be one church. We encourage folks from East to West to serve in regional capacities. We are blessed to have Vanderbilt School of Divinity, Memphis Theological Seminary and so many other fine educational institutions supporting Disciples students from both inside and outside of region, in their quest to be ordained ministers of the Gospel. Also, we have a host of lay, and commissioned pastors in the field of ministry-assisting, aiding and leading members of our</p>

region in the areas of youth ministries, chaplaincy, overcoming substance abuse, senior (seasoned-saints) ministries, prison ministries, and street ministries-homeless and immigration work. We are blessed to have the Spiritual energy, and fortitude of Clergy from around the Region to help us move from just programs, to PEOPLE. People, Humanity are our main customer, clients and cornerstone. People over programs. Finally, I want to speak to the Community partnerships found in all three areas of the Christian Church in Tennessee. We are hoping to strengthening those partnership, and encouraging congregations to reach out. In 2021, we ordained 8 people, and extended the commissioning for 40 individuals. Regional outreach is another place where we are thriving as a region. Whether it is tornado relief, COVID support, meals to the hungry and homeless our congregations are hard at work supporting their communities and others.

Our ability to partner with others for wholeness, and the betterment of all humanity is a gift. I am proud of that work, and I am looking forward to much more collaboration and partnerships over the years. For an example, our partnership with Vanderbilt Divinity School, Disciples Divinity House, Lexington Theological Seminary. We are also working with "Insight Counseling Center," MICAHA, NOAH and CALEB social justice agencies. So much is happening in our region and I am truly grateful. We continue to thrive in the areas of inviting clergy to attend Pro-Reconciliation Anti-Racism Trainings. and Healthy boundaries programming.

**What are the biggest challenges facing your region/ministry this year?**

No one really likes to answer this question, because you don't want your region or ministry to be tagged as fleeting or failing. However, we have had a tough time, this year. The Tennessee Regional Church is still on the potter's wheel. It seems that the beauty of all those things that makes us a great, and mighty as a region...

could be some of those same things that makes us weary. To me, it all a catch twenty -two. Tennessee struggled with another year of a closed camp ground, and season. Our people love our camping program, and the grounds. However, due to the effects of COVID 19, we thought it necessary to suspend camp on the grounds again, this year. This caused some pain, and disappointment for those who love the facilities and the program. Also, change in staffing and a struggle for the vision for 365 acres of beautiful rustic hills and plains prove to be another issue needing attention.

Yes, we do wonder what will 2022, bring us. However, we are committed to the safety of our Regional Church Family, and will make the necessary decisions to keep the Region safe. We are also committed to pausing, and listening to one another as a means of moving forward.

**What is something you hope to accomplish in the next year?**

I am very excited about the potential 2022, will offer within the lives of our congregations, communities and the marketplace. Collaboration, and partnerships are the way to go as our regional church and board live out the call to grow and make disciples. We understand mission to be "from our doorsteps to the ends of the earth." This cannot happen sitting inside the four walls. We must take it to the streets, communities, marketplace... any place and every place. We also, know that part of our job as a Region is to help congregations do better what they cannot do by themselves. Therefore, we plan to reopen our camp ground to serve more person than just camps and conferences. We will use the facilities to offer our first "School of Ministry" to assist Commissioned and Lay Pastors. We will host our first Creative Writing and Sermon Preparation Four Day Retreat for both Clergy and Laity. We will kick off our first Congregation-Community Grant Programs. Congregations will have the opportunity to venture into deep partnership with

the community, developing faith, and friendship. This will represent both in reach and outreach. We have our committees around the region that will continue planning strongly and inspiration Leadership Development opportunities, Spiritual Growth and Youth ministries. We will continue working to heal areas of brokenness through our work with Social justice and advocacy connections.

Finally our Regional Assembly 2022, will be held in October and so the beat goes on.

**What is something you would like the General Board to know about your region/ministry?**

As I look at a region that is the geographic epicenter of the Southeastern Regional Fellowship, and the diversity that it brings, it is important that we continue to work towards wholeness in people, and congregations. We must work towards eradicating the sin racism, and gender issues that keep us from truly reflecting God's Kindom. We must welcome people who do not look, act, think or respond like we do. We must look for God in the person, and pursue. Secondly, Tennessee will continue welcoming those who wish to learn and know more about the Disciples, and what we are about. We are growing, and an ever changing region. Our Region has come a long way, and there is still road to travel. As Regional Minister and President I continue to be proud to serve in this capacity. I have witness a change over the last five year, and am determined to stand still and see God do many more great things. It has not been easy. However, we've been faithful. What we have accomplished together over the last five year is miraculous, and there is more of where that comes from. It comes from dedicated people, who love God and the church and want to express that love and covenant in twenty-first century ways. "Don't sleep on us!" God is moving, and we are grateful.

**How can we pray for your region/ministry?**

As with each Region, staff and community of congregations pray for us that we will hear God's call to us, and we will have the strength, character and the ability to answer it. Pray that as all people, places, congregations and organizations are redeveloping that we will say, Yes! Yes, to what is new. Yes to what may be filled with the unknown. However, I ask that you would pray that our faith would be bigger than any of our fears. Simply, because we are the Church, and we move and transact out of God's amazing love for all of humanity. Humanity is in the church, and the church, the body of Christ is human.

Thank you.