

GB-2203

Name of ministry:

Christian Board of Publication/Chalice Press

Ministry

Executive/Regional

Brad Lyons

Minister name:

Ministry

Executive/Regional

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Minister email:

**In what ways is your
region/ministry thriving?**

Chalice Press continues to distinguish itself as a go-to source for Christian resources that welcome all to God's table, with no exceptions. This is especially visible in our inclusive, welcoming anti-racism, pro-LGBTQ+, and family resources that contrast against sharply drawn lines of exclusion from evangelical and conservative Christian publishers. We have earned our reputation and work every day to back it up. We have made inroads in the book industry's media coverage and best-known bookstores, a challenging but significant sign of progress.

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

In the coming year, we face an economy that remains sluggish due to inflation and is still ironing out kinks in the supply chain, which is impacting production costs and timelines. We are also finding that readers seem to be taking a mental break from discussing social justice issues after 2020's focus on racism and the election, as well as people eager to get out of their houses and away from their books.

As a Christian publisher, we face an uphill climb as we compete with other publishers to be seen by book buyers, media, and potential authors. Chalice Press is

part of a marketplace that too often values celebrity over substance, and that creates substantive challenges for our product and our economic success.

And as always, we are David taking on Amazon's Goliath. American consumers are accustomed to Amazon's low prices and discounted shipping, perks they can provide due to their sheer size. We cannot do that, and it makes competition difficult. We work constantly to remind consumers to shop local, whether that's for books or bananas or boots. I hope Disciples will remember that in the church publishing world, we are their local bookstore. Customers may pay a bit more when they buy directly from us, but they are supporting a business that supports their faith and their church's ministry.

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

It may sound simple, but staff retention has been an issue in the last year. Churches and church-related businesses have not been immune from "the Great Resignation," and Chalice Press' staff has had an almost complete turnover in 2021; I am the only employee who started the year with Chalice Press. Our 2022 budget addresses employee retention, as does our effort to streamline operations and improve internal efficiency.

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

We are different from any other general ministry in that we neither receive Disciples Mission Fund nor have an endowment that can sustain our work. Our financial and legal independence (my understanding is that CBP is the only general ministry that is separately incorporated from the denomination) give us the freedom to pursue authors who come from other denominations, faith traditions, or schools of thought, something of a rarity among denominational publishers. But that independence comes at a price, literally, in being completely separate from denominational funding while having to manage expectations from a denomination that does not always understand our complicated

relationship and what Chalice Press can and cannot do for Disciples.

We also acknowledge, as we have for the past two decades, that the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has become too small to sustain our ministry on its own. As a result, we have made the strategic decision to promote our work to bookstores and other book-purchasing venues to broaden our reach. It is a challenge, to be sure, but it has saved our ministry thus far. As the denomination continues to contract, we continue to view ourselves as an undercover promotional operation for the denomination while reaching out to people who are Disciples but just don't know it yet.

How can we pray for your region/ministry?

I will be taking a much-needed sabbatical during the summer of 2022, and we will be asking our employees and board to step into that short-term gap. May God grant them wisdom to make the right choices, and may those choices be easy ones to make!