

**Christian Church (Disciples Of Christ) Capital Area Regional
Assembly Report &
“State Of The Regional Church”
October 13, 2018
Rev. Allen V. Harris, Regional Minister**



My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing. If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you. ~ James 1:2-5

Do we face trials as a church? Yes, as congregations, as clergy and lay leaders, as a Region, and as a denomination, most certainly. But we are facing them and asking for God's wisdom and strength to do so! The Christian Church Capital Area (CCCA) consists of **44 congregations**, one of which is seeking affiliation with the Christian Church (Disciples Of Christ) (plus two others considering it!) Our diverse and faithful communities are located across **Maryland, Northern Virginia, Washington D.C., Delaware, and the eastern panhandle of West Virginia**. The CCCA includes over **170 clergy** persons serving in diverse ministries, from non-profits and community organizations to colleges and universities, from military and health care chaplains to retired clergy, as well as local congregations and a **multitude lay leaders and church members**. We are home to three social justice ministries: the **Disciples Center for Public Witness, the Disciples Refugee and Immigration Ministry, and the Ecumenical Poverty Initiative**. Two Disciples-founded social services agencies serve in our Region: **Bethany House**, a low-income senior housing facility – **which celebrated its 50th Anniversary this past year**, and **Rockville Nursing Home**, both located in Rockville, Maryland. Finally, our Region is abundantly blessed with two camp & conference centers: **Camp Mary Mac** in western Maryland, and the **Christian Church Conference Center at Bethany Beach**.

+ Steadfast, Gifted Leadership

I am profoundly honored to have served as your Regional Minister since June of 2015. But I could not do this alone. I serve you along with many gifted leaders including our staff: **Verdell Wright**, the Region's Administrative Assistant, **Pam Findley**, our Camp & Conference Support Staff and Registrar, and **Aracelis Vincente**, our Retreat Marketing & Reservation Agent. Just as important are our Administrative Committee Members, including our Regional Moderator, **Kevin Wiggs**, Moderator-Elect, the **Rev. Miriam Gentle**, Board of Trustee Chair, **Judy Walter**, Secretary, **John Small**, and 2018 Regional Assembly Co-Chairs, **the Rev. Kathleen Kline Moore & the Rev. Ciara Simonson** and the other Commission and Team Leaders and members of the Regional Board to help guide our Region in our ongoing goal of being a faith-filled, sustainable, and dynamic expression of Christ's ministry.

It should be noted that currently three of the six paid staff members of the Christian Church Capital Area are People Of Color and half are women and half are men.

+ Fulfilling Promises

Even though it was begun in the midst of one of the greatest recessions in the United States and was ultimately undersubscribed, the Capital Area Region's *Share The Light* capital campaign, which concluded it's active fundraising in 2012, was able fulfill most of the commitments it had made to

those who gave so generously. One promise left unsatisfied was the work at **Camp Mary Mac to expand the dining hall, upgrade the kitchen, and add staff quarters.**

In conjunction with the **50th Anniversary** of the purchase of Camp Mary Mac, in April of 2017, at a joyful and well-attended celebration, the Capital Area celebrated the completion of two of the three final commitments to Camp Mary Mac. **The Shorty & Thelma Melott Dining Hall and the new kitchen/office were dedicated on Saturday, April 29th, 2017.** An expanded dining hall, complete with a beautiful new fireplace, a completely rebuilt kitchen with new appliances and air conditioning, and an office, ADA-compliant bathroom, and first aid room were finished. And today I can celebrate with you the completion of the **new staff quarters** as of this summer and declare the Share The Light Capital Campaign completely finished.

Not part of the capital campaign, but equally important, is the rebuilding of the cabins which is being funded by congregations and individuals throughout the Region. All of this work has been diligently and faithfully led by the Mary Mac Management Committee under the leadership of **Mike Cline, Chair, Bob Stockslager, Chair-Elect, and Mark Grzeszkiewicz, Secretary.** We will be honoring the memory of our beloved Bob in some significant way at Camp Mary Mac. There is one final cabin to be completed and some detail work to be done.

+ Facing The Unexpected

And into the best laid plans, there are always surprises, even in Regional Ministry. For example, in January 2018 Barry McNew received a phone call from the Borough of Waynesboro, Pennsylvania. The deed of the former **First Christian Church of Wayneboro**, a part of the Capital Area Region, was still in the name of the trustees of that congregation, and Barry was the sole remaining surviving Trustee. The borough was deeply concerned about the seriously dilapidated condition of the building and needed its owners to act before something serious happened. Barry turned to the Trustees of the Region for help, and after a thorough site visit, a property assessment, prayer and discernment, it was agreed to sign the property over to the Borough in a quiteclaim deed. We have requested that the few remaining stained glass windows be salvaged and that the eventual purchaser of the property consider giving a donation in the name of First Christian Church, Waynesboro, to the Christian Church Foundation.

+ Salt & Light Leadership Training Event

The biennial Salt & Light Leadership Training Event took place **October 14, 2017 at National City Christian Church** in Washington, D.C. Sponsored by the **Commission For Congregational Life**, this creative leadership education event offered 18 workshops ranging from "*I Met God and She's Black*" to "*Listening, Learning and Leading in Interreligious Engagement*" to "*Psalms in Worship: For Times of Crises and Times of Joy*" to "*Why Community Organizing Matters and How it Relates to Anti-Racism Work*" to "*Taboo Topics: How We Talk About Hard Stuff in Congregations.*" This event is one of the premier lay leadership training events in the Capital Area Region. Neil Romstedt chaired the planning team. **Save the date for our 2019 Salt & Light Leadership Training Day: October 12, 2019.** Please speak to the Rev. Timothy Bobbitt if you have any ideas for speakers or topics!

+ Addressing Our Finances And Empowering Leaders To Be Wise Stewards

Our Regional Church, like so many in our denomination and ecumenically seeks to be wiser about ministry in the face of shifting and shrinking resources. We continue to work with Treasury Services, under the able leadership of **John Goebel**, Vice President for Finance in the Office of General

Minister & President. The CCCA has reaped great benefits from their expertise and thoroughness. Our Regional Treasurer, **Paula Edwards**, Assistant Regional Treasurer, **Espana James**, our Regional Moderator, **Kevin Wiggs**, and previous Trustee Chair, **Hugh Howard**, have worked diligently to systematize our accounting practices and think strategically as we try to support the critical ministry needs that only a Region can provide.

Financial accomplishments of this past year include: We streamlined and cleaned up our insurance policies, working with **Linda Senez** at **The Insurance Board**; We worked with **William J. Singer, Jr.**, Vice President of **Disciples Church Extension Fund** to better invest our funds and finally reimagining how our “cash on hand” and on-demand monies could be invested more wisely for greater return; We moved our Annual Fund appeal to mid-fall, away from the Christmas Offering, and this year invited YOU to “**Be The Hero Of our Story!**” By doing so we increased income from **both** the annual fund and Christmas offerings. Along with the generous gift from **North Chevy Chase Christian Church** for all of 2017, we were able to complete 2017 with a balanced budget (only -\$1,500 at the end of 2017 down significantly from -\$28,000 at the end of 2016) and keeping the deficit in check at about -\$45,000 at the end of 2017, and down from -\$150,000 in 2015); finally getting our stride in providing gift receipts and year-end financial statements;. One of the other strategic moves the Region made was to **conclude the arrangement with the Disciples Center for Public Witness** to be the fiscal home for the Center. The staff time and the financial costs of continuing this was significantly hampering the Region’s ability to regain its own financial footing and move forward in a sustainable manner. This was completed, and December 31, 2017 the Center moved to Disciples Home Mission for financial hosting.

In 2017 we began receiving generous gifts toward congregational revitalization from the investment of the **Landover Christian Church Fund** after it's earthly ministry concluded in 2013, and gifts for both camps from the sale of the facilities of **Mt. Rainier Christian Church** began to be received in 2016 following the end of its earthly ministry in 2015. Rev. Harris participated in a significant educational experience in January of 2017 when he attended the **Disciples Development Conference** offered by the Christian Church Foundation to learn some best practices and be inspired toward better stewardship philosophies and practices.. We give thanks to the **Rev. Randy Johnson**, Christian Church Foundation Vice President in the Southeast Zone, and **Belinda King**, our Disciples Church Extension representative, who are guiding our efforts to become a much more sustainable ministry.

Finally, we addressed the ongoing concern of **the farmhouse at Camp Mary Mac** which has been both a tax liability and human concern as it has been dilapidated and unhealthy for years. We respectfully worked with the tenant and his family and he has been moved to a new home and the house and property cleared of his belongings and secured. We will work with the Mary Mac Management Committee and the Regional Board to reimagine that part of our property.

+ Strengthening Communication And Connection

The Region’s weekly “**Capital Area Region’s Opportunities and Announcements E-Mail**” continues to be a key cornerstone of our goal to connect and empower the ministry of the Region and it’s leaders. This communication goes out with news from our local congregations, the Region, denomination, and our ecumenical partners. Please sign up today by e-mailing us at: mail@cccadisciples.org. An occasional “**Capital Area Pastoral Care E-Mail**” continues to inform out to clergy with joys and concerns of the ministers and key lay leaders of the congregations and has greatly aided the mutual support and care of our clergy. I continue to celebrate the Region and our congregations and ministries via **Social Media** (see the expanded list at the bottom of this report) and we invite you to connect in each and every way possible! I even led a class on “**Social**

Media & The Church” at Buffalo Seminary, Bethany College, Bethany, WV February 16 & 17, 2017. I am available to local congregations to help them use social media more faithfully and effectively to spread the gospel message.

+ Recommitting Ourselves To Pro-Reconciliation/Anti-Racism

We continue to struggle to reform the Regional Pro-Reconciliation/Anti-Racism Team, although this work is still being done in various other ways. We are currently in discussions to plan both Clergy one-day trainings and full two-and-a-half day trainings. We are gifted by the presence of two PR/AR Core Trainers in our Region: the **Rev. Dr. Marcus Leathers** and the **Rev. Nathan Hill** who led our November 2016 2 ½ Day Training.

Rev. Johnson came to the Region in March of 2017 as part of our **Camp & Conference Director & Counselor Training Day** and led sessions for both the entire training as well as a small group training. **Rev. Tapia’s visit to the Region for the ordination of Rev. Rodriguez in September 2017** was extended at our request to meet with her and talk more in depth about how the Capital Area Region can be more intentional in our ministry with our Spanish-speaking clergy, congregations, and leaders. This visit was very fruitful and will be the foundation for future expansion of Hispanic ministries in the Capital Area. **Rev. Sandhya Jha and Rev. Yvonne Gilmore led a Clergy 1 Day Training** just prior to this Regional Assembly.

We work closely with the **Rev. April Johnson**, Minister of Reconciliation for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the leaders of our Racial/Ethnic Ministries including the **Rev. Timothy James**, Administrative Secretary of the National Convocation, **Rev. Lori Tapia**, National Pastor of the Central Pastoral Office for Hispanic Ministries, and the **Rev. Chung Seung Kim**, Executive Pastor of the North American Pacific/Asian Disciples.

Plus, I have also made it a point to attend the biennial meetings of our Racial/Ethnic Constituencies, including attending the August 2017 NAPAD Convocation in Redding, California and the July 2018 National Convocation Session in Birmingham, Alabama. My goal is to attend Obra Hispana in 2020!

A significant part of our Region’s Pro-Reconciliation/Anti-Racism work is simply being intentional and proactive in our relationships with one another. When the pastor and leaders of **Pilgrimage Christian Church** came to the Regional Board to request that the deed for their property, which has been in the name of the Region since the congregation, with the assistance of the Region and Disciples Church Extension, purchased the property in Suitland, Maryland, finally be transferred to the congregation alone. The Regional Board voted to do so and we have been working dilerberately and carefully to finalize that transfer, and it should happen soon.

+ Martin Luther King, Jr. Annual Tribute & Action

Our January 15, 2017 event honoring the legacy of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was a resounding success as we hosted as our guest preacher the **Rev. Frank A. Thomas**, Professor of Homiletics and Director of the Academy of Preaching and Celebration at Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, Indiana. The interfaith event included several choirs, testimonials, and readings from the work of Dr. King. The inaugural CCCA “Bridge Building Award” was presented to two worthy recipients, the **Rev. Dr. W. Chris Hobgood** and the **Rev. Joan Bell-Haynes**, for their work for justice and racial reconciliation. The **Rev. Rosetta Robinson** ably led the planning team.

Our January 14, 2018 event honoring the legacy of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., hosted by United Christian Parish of Reston, Virginia, had the distinction of welcoming as our guest preacher

our own General Minister & President, the **Rev. Teresa Hord Owens**, whose sermon, “*Why We Still Can’t Wait*,” explored the text Amos 5:21-24. The worship service included readings from the work of Dr. King, music from the UCP Choir, and Holy Communion. Paired with the service was a panel discussion, constituted entirely by young adults from within and beyond the church, speaking on the theme, “*Inspired By A Dream: Where Do We Go From Here*,” and moderated by NBC-4 Reporter Chris Lawrence. The annual CCCA “Bridge Building Award” was presented to two worthy recipients, posthumously to **Oscar Haynes** (presented earlier in November at the dedication of his exhibit at National City Christian Church) and the **Rev. Nathan Hill**, Pastor of University Christian Church in Hyattsville, Maryland and core trainer for the Disciples Pro-Reconciliation/Anti-Racism Program. Both were honored for their work for justice and racial reconciliation. The **Rev. Rosetta Robinson** ably led the Tribute & Action planning team.

Please save the date for the 2019 Martin Luther King, Jr. Tribute & Action. It will take place on Sunday, January 20 at 3 p.m. in the afternoon at Michigan Park Christian Church in Washington, DC. The Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon will speak.

+ Discerning, Nurturing, Supporting, Celebrating Those Called To Ministry

The critical work of discerning, nurturing, supporting, and celebrating the call to ministry in those individuals in our Region continues. Under the leadership of the **Rev. Dr. Cheryl Tatham**, Director of the CCCA Commission For Ministry, and the **Rev. Ciara Simonson**, Director-Elect, many candidates have been nurtured, supported, and certified for ministry. On September 17, 2017 the **Rev. Chaim Abramowitz Rodriquez** was ordained into Christian Ministry at Iglesia Cristiana Nacional, Washington, DC and on January 21, 2018 the **Rev. Tracey Perry** was ordained to the Christian Ministry at University Christian Church, Hyattsville, MD. On August 5, 2018 the **Rev. Rachel Leslie** was ordained at First Christian Church, Falls Church, Virginia. We celebrated three new Commissioned Ministers: **Pastor Cathy Brookes**, Minister Of Pastoral Care & Healing at First Christian Church, Falls Church in April of 2017, **Pastor Mike Cline** Minister For Congregational Care at Boonsboro Christian Church in February of 2018, and **Pastor Andrew Rogers**, Executive Minister of Michigan Park Christian Church in May of 2018.

The commission also celebrated the call of new pastors to congregations in our Region in 2017: **Rev. Joy Majied** was installed as Pastor of Garfield Memorial Christian Church, McLean, Virginia in March; **Pastor Nancy Green** began as Pastor of Boonsboro First Christian Church, Boonsboro, Maryland in July; **Rev. Rayner “Rusty” Hesse** began as Pastor of Bethany Beach Christian Church, Bethany Beach, DE in September; **Rev. C.J. Rodriguez** became pastor of Iglesia Cristiana Nacional in Washington, DC also in September; **Rev. Ciara Simonson** was installed as Senior Pastor of Springfield Christian Church in December of 2017. In 2018 we welcomed: **Rev. Terri McLellan** was installed as Pastor of Shepherd Park Christian Church in Washington, DC; in January, **Rev. Alexis Kassim** was installed as the Associate Pastor of Little River United Church of Christ in Annandale, Virginia in June; **Rev. Steven Moore** was installed as the Senior Pastor of First Christian Church, Fall Church also in June; **Rev. Charles Lucas, Jr.** was installed as Pastor of Henson Valley Christian Church also in June; **Rev. Dr. Marcus Leathers** was installed as the Co-Pastor of United Christian Parish in Reston, Virginia in September; **Rev. Phil Curran** was installed as the Pastor of Columbia United Christian Church in Columbia, Maryland also in September. **Rev. Annie Smith** is serving as Pastor of Heritage Christian Church in Silver Spring, Maryland, **Rev. Steven Baines** has come on staff at National City Christian Church as Senior Strategist for Outreach, Development and Spiritual Formation. Congregations which are in transition in their pastoral leadership include all those listed above who have installed new pastors, but also: **First**

Christian Church, Baltimore, and Hyattstown Christian Church. Abundant gratitude is given to the **Rev. Warren Lynn** and his staff in the Office of Christian Vocations at Disciples Home Missions.

This is in addition to the innumerable congregational and pastoral farewell, anniversary, emeritus, and homegoing services in which I participate as your Regional Minister as well as others who represent me and the Region.

In addition to nurturing and certifying clergy, the Commission For Ministry also seeks to network and educate our clergy. In the winter of 2017 we brought the **Rev. Cynthia Lindner** to our Region to share in workshops, discussions, and individual conversations around the theme of her recent book, **“Multiplicity And The Well-Lived Pastoral Life.”** This topic, and the ramifications for ministry that flow from it, were powerful for the Commission members and the Regional Minister to explore as we care for clergy in the coming years.

One of the great successes of this past year was the creation of and offering of a **Disciples History & Polity Course** that was *not* led by the Regional Minister! The **Rev. Yakelin Santos**, working with preeminent historian and scholar, the **Rev. Peter Morgan**, designed and led a 5-week course attended by eight students, including seminarians, ordained clergy from other denominations serving Disciples congregations, and Commissioned Ministers and more recently offered a two-weekend course for a congregation considering affiliation with the Christian Church (Disciples Of Christ). Plans are in the works to create an online interactive version of this course.

The CCCA Region also offered a **Clergy Healthy Boundaries Training** course for clergy, the first led by the **Rev. Coretha Loughridge**, Interim Regional Minister of Virginia, March 13, 2018. **The Rev. Dr. Martha Brown** received certification in “Teaching Healthy Boundaries” training from the Faith Life Institute and offered her first training in September of 2018. The Commission continues to work diligently on updating all of its forms, policies, and procedures on care and nurture, interviewing, ordaining, and commissioning ministers in the church. The Commission also oversees the Seminarian Scholarship program.

A key focus for the Commission For Ministry in 2018 has been to continue to be to understand better both the role and support needed for **Commissioned Ministers** as well as the **Apprentice Track to Ordained Ministry**, approved by the General Assembly in 2009. Rev. Dr. Tatham is committed to getting our processes for tracking and communicating with those in our care standardized and efficient, and the Commission has begun using Basecamp to help with this.

+Ongoing Care & Training For Our Clergy

The Commission For Ministry works in tandem with the CCCA Ministers’ Association, under the leadership of President, the **Rev. Delancy Catlett**, and President-Elect, the **Rev. Joy Majied** to care for and provide ongoing training for our clergy and opportunities for building community amongst the clergy. The Association focuses on nurturing clergy connectedness with each other and the Region, on continuing education events and grants, and overseeing the **Ministerial Crisis and Stress Relief Fund**.

In April, 2016, the Minister’s Association hosted their spring meeting, in conjunction with Ecumenical Advocacy Days, and brought in the **Rev. Dr. Dietra Wise Baker**, on staff with the National Benevolent Association, to speak on the topic of the conference, “Lift Every Voice! – Racism, Class and Power.”

In the Spring of 2017 the Ministers' Association brought the **Rev. Paul Tché**, President of the Council On Christian Unity, to speak on the topic "How To Be A Good Interfaith Neighbor." He spoke at the Spring Annual Dinner, led a workshop at First Christian Church, Baltimore, and preached at First Christian Church, Falls Church the weekend of May 19-21, 2017.

The Ministers' Association brought the **Rev. Jennifer Hope Kottler** in to lead a two-day Clergy Spiritual Renewal Retreat February 9-10, 2018 at the Claggett Retreat Center outside of Frederick, Maryland and almost 30 clergy from richly diverse backgrounds participated. Her theme was "Be Still & Know" from Psalm 46. Next year's Retreat has already been scheduled for **February 22-23, 2019**, again at the Claggett Retreat Center, and the **Rev. Dr. Bruce Epperly** will be our retreat leader. Our theme will be Healing Ministry.

+ Reimagining Our Camp & Conference Program

Our Camp & Conference Commission, under the leadership of the **Rev. Nathan Hill**, Director, and the **Rev. Marcus Leathers**, Director-Elect, brought on board two new and young leaders, **Jordan Kline** and **Mindy Swain**, to co-chair our Outdoors Ministry Committee. Along with **Marina Overby**, who is nominated as the new Director-Elect of the Commission, a significant movement toward revisioning and renewing our program will be ensured, as well as to truly diversify our core leadership both racially and age-wise. Together we are working to improve our church retreat, camp, and conference program, including addressing the need for greater diversity in leadership and programs, better and more consistent policies and procedures, and better communication. It was a significant improvement to the overall operations of the Region to pull out the camp and conference work from the administrative operations of the Regional Office into their own separate staff positions. We were **thrilled** to bring on board **Pam Findley** as our Camp & Conference Support Staff and Registrar and **Aracelis Vincente** as our Retreat Marketing & Reservation Agent. Both have proven extraordinarily helpful in reducing the load on the me and our Administrative Assistant so they can attend to their own tasks, and to increase the efficiency and improve responsiveness for those seeking to use our camp, conference, and retreat facilities and programs.

The Christian Church Conference Center at Bethany Beach continues to be one of the foremost church conference centers on the east coast. Under the direction of the **Bethany Beach Management Committee**, chaired by **Barry McNew**, and the returning Conference Center Host & Kitchen Manager, **Timothy White**, this facility offers a unique place for spiritual growth, Christian fellowship, congregational and family enrichment through fun, worship, study, prayer, play, and good food! Camp Mary Mac continues to be ably run by our longtime and devoted Camp Manager, **Teresa Swihart**. We celebrated above the **Camp Mary Mac Management Committee** and its ongoing leaders **Mike Cline** and **Mark Grzeszkiewicz**.

+ Nurturing Existing Congregations, Guiding Discerning Congregations, Imagining New Communities Of Faith

Many various ministries fall under the care of the Commission For Congregational Life, under the leadership of the **Rev. Dr. Rosetta Robinson**, Director and the **Rev. Timothy Bobbitt**, Director-Elect, but they manage it well. The Commission continues to nurture and welcome congregations from other traditions which wish to affiliate with the Disciples of Christ, especially **Iglesia de Libres por Jesucristo** in Hyattsville, Maryland and **Iglesia de Sendero de la Cruz** in Baltimore, Maryland. Recently we have begun to help nurture a **new Samoan Congregation**, and worked with the leaders at First Christian Church, Alexandria, Virginia to nest this new and emerging community of faith.

The Commission For Congregational Life also oversees the distribution of **Congregational Assistance and Congregational Transformation funds** which, respectively, help congregations in crisis and congregations seeking to be retooled and transformed for a new day of ministry. We work with a team of consultants from within our Region to work with congregations regarding understanding, connecting with, and engaging their communities more fully, with stewardship and finances, with social media and marketing, and with preaching and prophetic ministry.

In addition to the above, the Commission also has responsibility for working with missionaries, campus ministries especially United Campus Ministries at the University of Maryland, led by **Rev. Holly Ulmer**, Campus Minister; and ARISE Campus Ministry at George Mason University in Fairfax, VA, led by **Rev. Drew Enz**), men's and women's ministries, and youth and young adult ministries, and plans the Martin Luther King, Jr. commemoration and the **Salt & Light** leadership training event.

In the summer of 2018 we tried a unique format for bringing congregations together to nurture stronger networks of support and care amongst churches in a geographic area and to learn about and make deeper connections with resources in the Region and the denomination. The June **Baltimore Disciples Summit** brought clergy and lay leaders from seven of our eight Baltimore area congregations along with Belinda King from Disciples Church Extension and Randy Johnson from Christian Church Foundation to both imagine what might be possible to renew and revitalize our churches, as well as to prepare faithfully for the possibility of closing the earthly visible ministry of some of our congregations and leaving a legacy to continue their ministry and mission. This model will certainly be replicated in other areas of our Region.

+New & Renewed Congregations

Imagining and starting new congregations or communities of faith and congregations yearning for transformation, are also under the auspices of the Commission For Congregational Life. I have also created a "New Church Ministry Cohort" which is seeking to build a network of support, inspiration, nurture, and discernment for persons who wish to start new communities of faith in the Region.

Much of this work is done in tandem with Hope Partnership and their President, the **Rev. Gilberto Collazo**. We were gifted by the visit of **Pastor Terrell McTyer**, Minister Of New Church Strategies for Hope Partnership in August of 2017 who has also become an advisor to our me. The Capital Area Region co-sponsored ten individuals in attending the 2017 Leadership Academy in September. Two congregation, **Hyattstown Christian Church** and **Rockville Christian Church** continue with the Hope Partnership New Beginnings visioning process and two congregations, **National City Christian Church**, Washington, DC and **First Christian Church, Falls Church** have entered into the Epiphany Program of Hope Partnership. The Commission For Congregational Life also authorizes financial assistance for congregations who wish to send leaders to the annual **Hope Partnership Leadership Academy**. Over a dozen leaders from the Capital Area Region have participated in the past two years in the Leadership Academy.

Rev. Harris also attended, and was a workshop leader, at the **Revive! Conference led by the MissionGathering Movement** in February 2018 in San Diego, California. This model of new congregation establishment can work alongside and compliment other new church techniques and strategies. Slides from his workshop presentation, "What Was, What Is, & What Is Yet To Be!" on congregational transformation, can be found online at:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/30im23ckr6u5hby/180223-24%20Revive%20Workshop.pptx?dl=0>

+ Representing The Region

In my capacity as your Regional Minister I serve on several governing boards: the **General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)**, **College of Regional Ministers** (Executive Committee, Pro-Reconciliation/Anti-Racism Co-Chair); **National City Christian Church Foundation Board Of Trustees**, the **Disciples Divinity House of the University of Chicago Board of Trustees**, the **Disciples Center For Public Witness Board Of Governors** (Secretary), and the **Bethany House Board Of Trustees**.

As usual, the annual **Ecumenical Advocacy Days** was held in Crystal City in Washington, DC April 21-24, 2017 and April 23-25, 2018 and many people from the Region were in attendance, including me as your Regional Minister.

This last year the Capital Area Region was graced with the visits of several major conferences. In January 2018 the **Creating Change Conference**, put on by the National LGBTQ Task Force, met at a DC area hotel, and Rev. Harris attended. In March of 2018 the **Black Ministers Retreat** was held at a hotel in Arlington, VA and Disciples from all over the denomination were in attendance. Our own Rev. Dr. Paul Saddler and **Rev. Darren Phelps** led workshops at the BMR. Rev. Harris also attended this Retreat and brought greetings from the Region. In May of 2018 the **Festival Of Homiletics** was held at several locations in Washington, DC, including National City Christian Church. I attended all of these.

+ Keeping Accountability: The Regional Pastoral Relations Committee

My ministry is undergirded and celebrated, and I am kept accountable by the Region's **Pastoral Relations Committee**, which until this year had been headed most ably by **John Caldwell**. This committee completed a second Pastoral Review of Rev. Harris March of 2018. The Committee chose a new chair, and as of April 2018 **Robert "Bob" McCoy** has taken over the responsibilities of the chair. We said farewell from the PRC to John Caldwell and **Rev. Noemi Mena** (and previously **Eva Edmonds** had to resign due to personal circumstances). New members include: **Alan Williams, Rev. Alexis Vaughn, and Lori Thomas**. Continuing PRC members are: **Rev. Marcus Leathers and George Franklin**.

+ Prophetic Activism

One of the great responsibilities the Capital Area Region has, that not all Regions have, is being the repository of the capital of the United States government, and all of the hopes, dreams, frustrations, anxieties, joys, and anger of the citizens of the nation. In 2017 many individuals were moved to a new level of political consciousness and activism not seen since the Civil Rights and Anti-War movements of the 1950's and 60's. This has resulted in a substantial increase in the number of visitors to Washington, DC, as well as the number of marches, protests, press conferences, and social justice education events. The I have sought to respond to these as best as possible, working with the three social justice agencies housed within our confines: the **Disciples Center for Public Witness** under the leadership of the **Rev. Dr. Ken Brooker Langston**, the **Disciples Refugee and Immigration Ministry** under the leadership of the **Rev. Sharon Stanley Rae**, and the **Ecumenical Poverty Initiative**, under the new leadership of **Rev. Ebony J. Grisom**. While these three serve the whole Church, the CCCA has a special bond and responsibility to these organizations and we seek to support, promote, and advocate for the critical work they do on behalf of God's people in need around the world. Rev. Harris sits on the Disciples Center For Public Witness Board Of

Governors and has made himself available to all three organizations to participate in press conferences, marches for justice, and public actions as they deem critical to their work and witness.

In December of 2017 Rev. Harris was arrested in an act of civil disobedience with over 160 other activists on the steps of the United States Capitol in an attempt to bring attention to the importance of a “Clean Dream Act” to urge the President and Congress to pass a permanent, bipartisan and bicameral legislative solution for over 2.1 million immigrant youth and young adults who came to the U.S. as children but have no pathway to citizenship. He also participated in the January 2017 Moral Monday March and the Women’s March On Washington, the May 2017 Immigrant Workers March, the June 2017 National LGBTQ March On Washington, and the March 2018 Youth March For Our Lives. He participated in the April 4 ACT NOW: Unite To End Racism March and Rally led by the National Council of Churches Of Christ. Along with several Capital Area Congregations and lay and clergy leaders, Rev. Harris was involved in the Poor People’s Campaign: A National Call For Moral Revival campaign that was begun in the spring of 2018.

+ “Together On Earth As In Heaven”

We are in the midst of our **2018 Capital Area Regional Assembly October 12-13** at Largo Community Church in Mitchellville, Maryland, exploring the theme, “Together On Earth As In Heaven.” Keynote speaker for the Friday night All-Assembly Banquet was the **Rev. Sandhya Jha** and preaching for the Saturday Worship Service will be the **Rev. Dr. Yvonne Gilmore**. The Assembly is shaped around the new Christian Church (Disciples Of Christ) Mission Statement:

We work together across generations to:

- *Equip leaders grounded in Scripture, centered on Christ, and immersed in the Spirit;*
- *Create communities of inclusion and care;*
- *Attend to the needs of the vulnerable; and*
- *Overcome structural and systemic injustice.*

There is extensive youth and young adult planning for this Assembly as well as opportunities for hands-on-service projects. 2018 Regional Assembly Co-Chairs are **the Rev. Ciara Simonson & the Rev. Kathleen Kline Moore**.

This year’s Regional Assembly had a new element, and that was a much more intentional commitment to inclusion, which manifested itself in **registration documents translated into Spanish and concurrent interpretation of events from English-to-Spanish**. Thanks to Vanessa Rodriguez, interpreter, and to Rev. Terri and Daniel McLellan, who purchased interpretation devices for the Region to use.

+New Visioning Team

As the Region’s Transformation Team, chaired by **Rev. Rick Powell**, concluded its work in 2016 it sent a recommendation to the Regional Assembly to create another body that would continuously evaluate and reimagine the work of the Region for a new day and to address emerging possibilities and unforeseen challenges. The Regional Board created the foundation for a **New Visioning Team** which has been formed. At the request of me as your Regional Minister, this eight member team is entirely made up of persons under the age of 40 and over half of the team are People Of Color. I will serve only as an advisor to this group, and their proposals will go directly to the Regional Board for evaluation, confirmation, and implementation.

New Visioning Team Members include: Alexis Holland – Henson Valley Christian Church; Rev. Alexis Kassim – United Christian Parish Reston, VA/Little River UCC; Jordan (Kline) Parrish – First Christian Church, Falls Church, VA Rev. Lawrence Rodgers – Westside

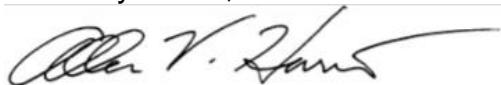
Church Of Christ, Baltimore, MD; Rev. Chaim Rodriguez – Iglesia Cristiana Nacional, Washington, DC; Vanessa Rodriguez – Springfield Christian Church, Springfield, VA; Michael Stone – Christian Temple, Christian Church, Baltimore, MD; and Alexandra Wick – Christian Temple, Christian Church, Baltimore, MD

+ Challenges Ahead

The Christian Church Capital Area is in a much better place than it has been in the recent past, financially, administratively, and relationally, but it has a way to go before it can be declared “stable” or “flourishing.” The larger conversation about the role and priorities of the middle judiciary in the mainline Protestant church still weighs heavy upon our Region, as it does all of our church. Many of our local congregations are struggling to understand their mission and viability in the 21st century, and their insecurity affects the Region’s and the denomination’s directly and powerfully. Addressing these fragile congregations, while still imagining God’s abundant and dynamic future for all of our congregations and ministries throughout the Region, will be the top priority in the coming years.

I believe that as together we pray, study, explore, reimagine, question, propose, plan, and reshape the church to be responsive to the needs, joys, and concerns of God’s people, especially those beyond our walls, we will discover the meaning, depth, and power of the gospel of Jesus Christ to be even more relevant and transformative for the future of our world. We must, as the writer of the book of James says, ask God for the wisdom we need, and actually be willing to ***listen to what God tells us***, even if it comes from unlikely sources and invites us to unimagined possibilities, then and only them will we be “mature, complete and lacking in nothing.” May it be so.

Faithfully Yours,



Rev. Allen V. Harris
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