

# GB-22-1199

**Name of ministry:**

Central Rocky Mountain Region of the Christian Church  
(Disciples of Christ)

**Ministry**

**Executive/Regional**

**Minister name:**

Rev. Joan Bell-Haynes

**Ministry**

**Executive/Regional**

**Minister email:**

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

The Central Rocky Mountain Region's ministry is thriving in encouraging congregations to become active agents of Jesus transforming love in the communities where their physical buildings reside; cultivating a climate of transformation; nurturing our children/youth and young adults to discover their own faith and live it out authentically. Heart of the Rockies CC, pastor Melissa St. Clair, Fort Collins, CO continues to transform the community where it lives with creative community partnerships that meet the needs of the most vulnerable in the Fort Collins area. One exciting ministry that is still unfolding is the congregation contributing their undeveloped land to build homes for people with disabilities, along with seniors and families who struggle to afford the high cost of a home in Fort Collins. The proposed housing development, called Heartside Hill will provide diversity of housing types for people at various income levels. This venture is an innovative collaboration between Heart of the Rockies Christian Church, CARE Housing, Fort Collins Habitat for Humanity, and L'Arche Fort Collins. Two of our congregations celebrated their 100th year of ministry: Mountair Christian Church,

Lakewood, CO, Rev. Ruben Rodriguez pastor, honored 100 years of ministry in the Lakewood Community. Ruben wrote in an article: "Churches used to be at the center of community life, and we continue to think of ourselves as a vital element of the community. We are making progress in recovering from the pandemic and reopening to full capacity. The congregation has been meeting online and in a hybrid format through the pandemic, overcoming the technology phobia and maintaining this vital connection that feeds the soul. Our volunteers have worked through the pandemic with all the precautions established by the County. Our goal is to continue collaborations and partnerships that will improve the welfare of our neighbors. Along with some current church improvements in progress, we are in the infant stages of creating a family resource program with a Lift Zone to provide internet access. Not bad for a small non-profit whose average attendance on Sundays is 50 people. All due to relationship building—connecting with the faith community, like-minded civic leaders, the business community, as well as with the City of Lakewood and Jefferson County." First Christian Church, Casper WY also celebrated 100 years of ministry with the Rev. Mark Pumphrey, the great grandson of it's founding pastor: Rev. Charles G. Stout as guest preacher. The decline of membership in our congregations and ministries is no surprise. However, COVID is forcing us to re-evaluate and adapt the why, what, and how of our witness and ministry at lightning speed. The why has not changed. Jesus calls us to "make disciples". The "how and what" of living out our faith in ways that are relevant and authentic have thrust us into creative chaos. The pressure of this reality led our Transformation Ministry to host a five-day retreat in October at the LaForet UCC Conference Center where ministers openly shared: "we are tired and this is hard". They identified what they needed to keep moving forward into the unknown hoping to see a post

covid-landscape where they can begin to create a new normal. The most prevalent needs were the ability to communicate with each other, the region, and their communities in a more effective and efficient manner; quick access to resources and tools to lead their ministries into transformational change. The Region continues to provide technology grants to congregations. In addition, Heart of the Rockies CC, Fort Collins, CO received a Disciples Church Extension Fund Grant for technology upgrades. In the Western District (Utah, Idaho, and western slope of Colorado) Granger Community CC, West Valley City, UT, Rev. Vinnetta Golphin-Wilkerson pastor; First Tongan CC, West Valley City, UT, Rev. Tevita Uesi pastor; First Congregational CC of Samoa, Magna, UT, Rev. Saitumua (Sai) Tafaoialii pastor; St. Francis Assisi CC, Draper, UT, Rev. Charles Hines pastor; Valley CC, Twin Falls, ID, Rev. Jeremy Fort pastor and Rev. Jason Coon associate pastor hosted The Fall Feast/Regional Assembly in West Valley City, Utah, September 3-5, over the Labor Day weekend. Just as COVID was raging again. The Delta variant this time. If only the church could replicate itself like that! In late June registrations were low. Our theme: “I am about to do a new thing” (Isaiah 43:19-20) watered our faith. I was continually inspired by our planning team and our hope in God and indeed God did not disappoint. God gave us rivers in the desert for this assembly! When it was all said and done, we had 132 in-person and virtual registrants; 20 Children/Youth (complimentary registrations provided by the region) and a great host of unregistered persons who participated with the hospitality/local arrangements team. These numbers do not capture the joy at the Pacific Islander Luau where prayers, praise and dancing, the likes of King David, brought us all closer to each other and God. It does not capture the powerful presentations from Rosario Ibarra, Disciples Church Extension Fund and Rev. Dr. Eric Smith, Professor, Iliff School of Theology. These numbers do

not capture the spiritually moving sermons of Rev. Dr. Nestor Gomez, General Assembly 2nd Vice-Moderator and Rev. Dr. Rick Lowery, Disciples Historical Society President. The Holy Spirit raised us beyond numbers and surpassed our hopes for this gathering, including the fact that no one contracted COVID at the assembly! Thanks be to God!!! Our Camp & Conference Ministries came back from COVID this year with the dedication and due diligence of our camp directors. Their goals were to provide children, youth, and families the opportunity for holy encounters with God and others in the natural beauty of the Rockies and protect staff and campers from the ongoing COVID pandemic. Shelly Garrison, Associate Regional Minister of Children and Youth and her staff successfully held Summer camp at the UCC camp center in the Black Forest outside of Colorado Springs, CO. Though the number of campers was down by 20% this year, we thank God that no one contracted the COVID virus. Camp Kum Ba Yah/South Hills Retreat Center (SHRC) is an intergenerational camp located in our western district. It was featured in: The Times-News Newspaper, Twin Falls, Idaho (Mar 23, 2021) by Kimberly Williams Brackett, who wrote: "South Hills Retreat Center a hidden gem...in the South Hills above Magic Mountain Ski Resort." "We here at South Hills Retreat Center can host any type of event," said Jason Coon, camp manager and... [Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)] minister for the South Hills Retreat Center. We have been blessed to have strong support from the Central Rocky Mountain Region Disciples of Christ," Coon said. "With their support we have been able to upgrade the facility." Lastly, we are thriving with resources to fund the ministries of the region and the 44 congregations it supports. The gifts of the saints and congregations allow us to equip, transform and create faith communities who will make a difference for Jesus. The investments we hold with our CRMR Foundation (7.7M), the Christian Church Foundation (1.5M) and the Disciples Church Extension

Fund (105K) keep us faithful to their desires. Thanks be to God for their generous hearts and good stewardship!

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

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The biggest challenges facing our region are:  
1. the inability of congregations to call and support pastors in fulltime or part-time ministry/ congregations without a pastor due to finances (4)  
2. resourcing persons with the call to ministry but lack the resources to attend seminary or pursue the apprentice track because of life circumstances  
3. securing quality executive administrator  
4. decline in Disciples Mission Fund (DMF) contributions  
5. increased demands on pastors/staff-mental health concerns  
6. escalating cost of running camp and conference  
7. starting new faith communities

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

This year I hope to accomplish 4 things:  
1. transformation tools and resources for pastors & congregations  
2. respite care and mental health resources for congregational pastors and chaplains  
3. Continue the initiative to rebuild our Reconciliation Ministry and work with the CC(DOC) Ministry to train 4-5 regional ProReconciliation AntiRacism trainers  
4. Increase the region's DMF giving

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

I would like the General Board to know we are going with Jesus no matter what!

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

Please pray for the Central Rocky Mountain Region to listen deeply to God, each other and the other in their communities and to act justly.