

# GB-22-1211

**Name of ministry:**

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in North Carolina

**Ministry**

**Executive/Regional**

**Minister name:**

Bishop Valerie J Melvin

**Ministry**

**Executive/Regional**

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

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) hereafter referred to as the CCNC, is genuinely a resilient region. Like our sister regions within the denomination, we endure life's interruptions while sustaining hope in God for our future.

Our region continues to thrive by adapting and reimagining who God has called us to be in relationship with one another and our community. While the pandemic brought times of extended isolation, we remained steadfast to avoid the danger of insular behavior.

Adapting: we began the year with a 31-day prayer vigil. The theme, Soul Care for Life Repair based on III John 2. During this time, we positioned our souls in prayer and fasting (personal choice) to more fully embrace God's plan and practice for our lives.

Modifications for repurposing began with our Regional staff. In addition, we have been fortunate to welcome new ministry and support staff; an Executive Administrator, an Assistant Camp Manager, a Kitchen Manager, and a Youth Director.

Early on, we spent time evaluating and inventorying our services to congregations, their effectiveness, and their impact. Through honest and transparent

communication, we discovered a new focus statement: Empowering our resilient congregations to discover their new reality through resourcing, inspiration, bravery, and change. The main objective was to connect our gifts/skills with the needs of local congregations, requiring creative, risk-taking, and innovative programs. Each event on our regional calendar was surveyed to address the demand and relevance. As a result, several items were removed, and several innovations were added.

We identified specific office hours for listening to the needs of congregations. Without imposing on the pastor's relationship with members, we became the extra set of ears to listen to their concerns and fears and offer reassurance. This simple objective has been very successful.

There are two additional services recommended, scheduled for implementation in 2022. First is the service of Clergy Loaners. A short-term project utilizing the skillsets of clergy not currently pastoring to meet the needs of a congregation with limited staff and provide the clergy with experience. Second, we will take another look at the Small Church Connection (transformation). Inspired by the leadership session provided to our region by Mark DeYmaz, several congregations are planning intentional conversations around partnering with other non-profit ministries/social agencies, ministry, yoking, and merging.

In celebration of thriving through adaptation, we observed our 173rd Assembly on April 17 via live stream instead of our chosen site, Barton College, Wilson, NC. With 237 in attendance, we hosted a unique musical concert of sounds from across the region. We remembered those who passed on and highlighted healing, surviving, and recovery testimonials. For all that has been, Thanks; for all that will be, Yes! These words, which served as our theme, come from Dag Hammarskjold's pen, the second Secretary-General of

the United Nations and the Nobel Peace Prize winner. We have lifted these words from his journal/diary pages, published posthumously under the title, Markings.

While our time together is always a time to celebrate where we have been and how we have come to the present moment, we are still called to affirm what lies ahead. This seemed especially true this year. So, we choose to say Thanks for all that has made up the faithful witness of the CCNC, especially in the past year, but to also speak a deliberate and forceful Yes to what shall be opening up before us. In his keynote address, Bishop William Willimon of the Duke University Divinity School, did just that.

Thriving:

The Commission on Ministry, working in tandem with the Regional Minister, reinstituted Ministerial Standing forms. We reviewed and responded to more than 100 of our clergy reporting on their year's progress. In January 2022, each minister received their standing letter along with a laminated card. In a time when identity seems dangerously fluid, reinstituting this process clarifies the partnership between the minister, the region, and especially the local congregation. We are grateful to Rev. Rick Spleth and the Indiana region for their assistance with the process.

Our youth are some of the most surprising disciples I know. We had over 100 youth ages 5 to 18 from our region experience Camp Caroline through five different camps. During the summer, we implemented new rules and regulations to help maintain safety during the COVID-19 pandemic and reported zero positive COVID cases during the camp season.

We are thankful for the groundwork laid for a Young Adult Commission. It was as if someone heard our prayers for the Young Adult needs of connection and continuity. Conversations among regions have given way to opportunities for collaboration regarding resources and models for young adult ministry and to

build a network of support. As a result, several young adults are actively engaged and preparing for a 2022 gathering.

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

In addition to healing from a global health pandemic, we need more intentional actions towards reconciliation. Without genuine acknowledgment of a dilemma and the necessary (albeit uncomfortable) work to resolve it, the difficulty only grows and causes extensive damage. Our healing begins from within our congregations. This is our biggest challenge for 2022.

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

In 2022, we will continue restructuring our Region with changes to some portions of our governance document. We are moving towards an administrative working board, allowing for more authority in the management and visioning of the Region rather than only reporting past activities. Our two-year priority for the Region includes a) the financial stability of our Region, b) broadening the landscape of our camp, and c) impactful programming for congregations and leaders.

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

The CCNC would like to offer thanks for the many resources provided by the General Church. More than ever, we need to know where to go to find answers to the pervading questions of our faith and function. Also, it will be most helpful to enlarge the scope of grant opportunities that lead our congregations into deeper community involvement and racial reconciliation.

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

The CCNC would appreciate the prayers of the General Church for the courage to continue to adapt to new methods of being a region without compromising the tenets of our faith. Pray for our clergy's physical and mental health who serve across the pastoral, chaplaincy (military, medical, and prison), higher education,

community, and volunteer spectrums of ministry. The weariness of pressing through strenuous situations is very apparent. The increasing number of clergies facing severe health challenges is even more telling. Pray with us for the call of God to send more laborers into the vineyard, for indeed, the harvest is too great for the limited laborers. Finally, pray for our Regional leadership as they lead us through restructure in our priorities, governance documents, and future as a covenant fellowship of churches.