



## Regional Updates

November 24, 2020

In his Reflections on The Preamble to the Design, Rev. Thomas Kleinert wrote, *“Baptism is deeply personal. To the believer it is the tangible and memorable assurance of God’s love and forgiveness as well as the tangible and memorable expression of God’s claim on his or her life. But baptism is also communal. Newness of life is not a private adventure, but life as a member of God’s covenant community. It is life with the brothers and sisters of Christ.”*

As we approach Thanksgiving, the families of our congregations are re-evaluating their holiday plans and many are deciding that, for the sake of their loved ones and the larger community, not to gather in the ways we have always done. This is not an easy decision, but with the continued rise of COVID-19 cases in our state, it is a faithful decision. The church family is no different.

The communal nature of our baptism resembles the spirit of Thanksgiving. Like family celebrations, the family of Christ gathers to celebrate the saving acts and presence of Christ including the meal of fellowship called the Lord’s Supper. Each time we gather as the community of faith, our baptismal experience reminds us of the old dying and the new coming to life. Through a broader understanding of how being raised to new life more concretely ties us to God and one another, our gatherings take new shape and purpose. The Body of Christ is always seeking to do what is best for brother and sister.

It is with the humility of this understanding that I ask of you to consider once again the level of safety offered when holding worship indoors. With the new county metrics information available, **we ask that our congregations consider online worship until the seven-day positivity rate in your county drops to 5% or lower.** There are 23 counties in the state who are currently close to or below 5%, with many significantly higher. You can monitor the rate of your county and find Thanksgiving guidelines using these links:

<https://files.nc.gov/covid/documents/dashboard/COVID-19-County-Alert-System-Report.pdf>  
<https://files.nc.gov/covid/documents/guidance/NCDHHS-Interim-Guidance-for-Thanksgiving.pdf>

The postponing of in-person worship does not necessarily mean that all events in the congregation's life should also be suspended. Food pantries that serve the poor may need to continue to provide support to our neighbors. Different decisions may need to be made regarding pre-schools, daycares hosted in our buildings, and other events that bring together smaller groups of persons. But our worship life may unknowingly put some or all of us at increased risk.

Since March, many of our congregations have discovered that they can stay connected "virtually" using Facebook, Zoom, and YouTube. Some have pre-recorded their services and some have "live streamed" from their sanctuary. If your church live streams, we would encourage you to do that with the fewest persons possible. If you decide to continue, or resume, your worship services, encourage the most at-risk people in your congregation to stay home. That includes people over 60, people with heart, kidney, or lung disease, and those with chronic respiratory conditions. Continue to observe the safe practices of wearing facemasks, social distancing, and avoid touching, congregating, sharing materials, and singing.

The news of vaccine developments is promising and builds our hope that this challenge will come to an end. We pray for patience as we move through the coming months, and for the health and safety of all God's children around the world.

With Hope this Thanksgiving,  
*+Valerie Melvin, Regional Minister*

## Broad Street CC, New Bern



Many thanks to Ms. O'Teria Mitchell and Joel Hemenway of Cricket Wireless for the 40 Thanksgiving Meals! The meals have been distributed through our coordinators on our Missions Team and we are blessed to assist in making Thanksgiving more possible to many in our community! We also shared several meals with our neighbor church with whom we share a Bible Study, St. Peter AME Zion.

## *Messiah Community CC* *Winston-Salem* Planting Seed in Good Soil!



11/22/2020  
MESSIAH CCC  
donation to CRISIS CONTROL MINISTRY  
Pastor F. Robinson & Margaret Elliot-Exec. Dir.

## WOC Keeps Serving NC

To date, Week of Compassion, has provided three successive grants to the Pamlico County Disaster Relief Coalition – 1 for operational expenses, 1 for building materials, 1 for case management and building materials. To continue the much needed recovery from tropical storms Florence and Dorian, Week of Compassion, Disciples Volunteering, and PCDRC applied jointly and received a grant for just over \$20,000 (mostly in Lowe's credit with some additional cash for administrative support at PCDRC). These funds are primarily being directed to projects for which our partners at Brethren Disaster Ministries are providing volunteer labor.

Camp Caroline continues to be open to housing volunteer teams, with precautions in place for COVID-19. Given the potential exposure for both volunteers and survivors, WOC is not actively promoting volunteer opportunities, but if there are congregations in North Carolina that are eager to find a way to serve, Pamlico County would be a possible option.

For more information, please contact Caroline Hamilton-Arnold  
[Caroline@weekofcompassion.org](mailto:Caroline@weekofcompassion.org)





ALEX is a database that will be shared by the whole Church. General

Minister and President Terri Hord Owens set this as an objective early in her tenure, knowing from her earlier experience in corporate settings **that business intelligence (data) is key to making informed decisions.** ALEX will position Disciples to finally have a real-time directory and picture of churchwide trends that has been impossible with the current yearbook system.

A single e-mail and password have been assigned to your congregation. Each congregation will have just one e-mail address/password combination that is shared among the pastor, administrative assistant and whomever is designated to enter attendance and/or financial data. This username and password can be changed by your congregation as staff change. The warehouse can be accessed on the web via computer or mobile device.

To move the Yearbook and Directory orientation process along, make sure your pastor/administrator has:

- Received and responded to the ALEX email invitation to login and tour the database. If you can not locate your invitation email, reach out to [ALEX@disciples.org](mailto:ALEX@disciples.org)
- For more details and a quick introduction to the ALEX dashboard, visit <https://disciples.org/ALEX/>

**Stay Tuned,  
More Information Coming Soon!**

## Ready For A Change?



Even after the pandemic, online worship is likely here to stay. Whether you've been providing a devotion via your phone or doing full-on productions from the sanctuary, you may be ready to think about new ways to make this sustainable. Whether you're experienced with tech or new to the field, you can join in. In fact, we welcome those with experience to consider offering a helping hand.

Rev. Terri Hord Owens invites you to a panel discussion of worship planners from both the content and technical sides of online worship.

**Tuesday, Dec. 1, 2020 via Zoom  
8 pm ET/5 pm PT**

Registration Link:

[https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_VnFQOulrQGa3rxyUhUVG1g](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_VnFQOulrQGa3rxyUhUVG1g)

## You're Invited!



### Finding Joy in a Difficult Year:

### A Facebook LIVE Event with John Pavlovitz

Tuesday, November 24  
9pm ET/ 8pm CT/ 7pm  
MT/ 6pm PT

[\*\*JOIN HERE\*\*](#)

## BECOMING A TRAUMA-INFORMED FAITH COMMUNITY



**Upcoming Dates:  
December 7 and January 12**

You are invited to join Partners in Health and Wholeness and the UMC Northern Piedmont District for “Becoming a Trauma-Informed Faith Community.”

We will define what a trauma-informed faith community is, how to become one, and look at the various ways in which faith communities can productively address trauma. This work is crucial as we find ourselves in layers of communal and individual stress in our world.

This conversation will be whole-person driven, with language that supports and honors our various stories and experiences. We hope that this time will empower you to invite new and healthy ways of doing life and ministry with your faith community, especially with all challenges of COVID-19.

Registration is required to receive call-in details. There are two more opportunities to join us virtually. Please click the link below to register:

<https://www.ncchurches.org/event-single/becoming-a-trauma-informed-faith-community/>



### **New Church Academy Attracts New Ministry Interest for CCNC's Future!**

This year's New Church Leadership Academy gave the Ekklesia Core Team

members who participated the opportunity to get to know the Disciples of Christ. Our group is very ecumenical, so few of them are familiar with our denomination. The group was very motivated by the sessions, and incredibly moved by how welcoming, open minded and caring of our communities the DOC is.

The choices of subject matter were timely and relevant, and DeAmon Harges with The Learning Tree has continued to partner in strategy with Ekklesia to build community outreach programs.

Additionally, the financial sessions and the legal information were very helpful for new church plants like ours. The keynote speakers were very inspirational, teaching efficient brainstorming techniques and also taking the church outside the walls. Even though Ekklesia is already a ministry “without walls” it still seeks inspiration and ideas for expanding the ministry into the community in more relevant and meaningful ways.

All the leadership sessions will benefit our organizational growth as well as leadership training for these new circles.

We are thankful for Disciples' scholarships for Ekklesia to be able to participate in this opportunity.

Thank You, NC Disciples!

Michelle Beech, Shepherd



We know churches have been active in helping their neighbors with food during COVID. If your church provided food relief since March 1, you may qualify for the cost related to that program to be reimbursed. Your church does not have to have a 501(c)3 designation to apply. Please see details about applying below. An important note: There is a tight timeline on this application, it is due Wednesday, December 2.

You can find out more information at the Resourceful Communities Facebook page. If you have additional questions, email [smallgrants@conservationfund.org](mailto:smallgrants@conservationfund.org) or contact the Resourceful Communities staff:

Donna Pratt: [dpratt@conservationfund.org](mailto:dpratt@conservationfund.org) / (919) 902-0889

Olivia Percoco: [opercoco@conservationfund.org](mailto:opercoco@conservationfund.org) / (631) 905-9550

Jaimie McGirt: [jmcgirt@conservationfund.org](mailto:jmcgirt@conservationfund.org) / (910) 231-6760

Applications are due December 2, 2020 at 11:59pm at <https://bit.ly/COVIDreimbursement>

Reimbursements are available for COVID-related food relief activities between March 1, 2020 and November 12, 2020.

REIMBURSEMENT AMOUNT: \$2,500-\$40,000

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES: Eligible expenses for reimbursement include food

purchases, distribution expenses (boxes, transportation costs for delivery, staff time), cold storage for COVID-related food relief, etc.

PLEASE NOTE:

- Construction and capital improvements are not eligible expenses.
- Expenses paid for from Federal funding sources such as PPP or CARES ACT funding are not eligible for reimbursement.

ELIGIBLE APPLICANTS INCLUDE:

- NC-based 501(c)(3) nonprofit organizations, churches, municipalities, local agencies, and tribal entities
- Preference will be given to organizations led by and serving communities of color and/or low-income communities.
- If your organization is not a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, you can still apply for grant funds in partnership with a nonprofit fiscal sponsor. Churches are not required to engage a fiscal sponsor but must meet 501(c)(3) nonprofit requirements set by the Internal Revenue Service. (<https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/p1828.pdf>, Tax Guide for Churches & Religious Organizations).
- Applicants must be located in and serving rural communities.

INELIGIBLE APPLICANTS:

- Organizations in the following counties cannot apply: Buncombe, Durham, Forsyth, Guilford, Mecklenburg, New Hanover, Orange, and Wake.
- Statewide and regional agencies cannot apply.

## Juggling Balls

By: Rev. Sherrie James  
Coordinator,  
Fall Regional Prayers



The Regional Minister asked if I would assist in trying to get people to sign up to do devotions and prayers for the month of November and to help publicize the NC Region's daily devotions.

My immediate response was, "Oh heeek NO! I must help with my elderly parent's care. My house is a mess because of my knee pain. And now you are asking me to help with this daily devotion thing when I feel like EVERYTHING is stacking up on me right now and I have zero time for anything?! THERE IS NO WAY!"

Well, that was what I said in my head. My actual response was a bit different. I said, "Of course, Bishop, I will be glad to help." Isn't that often the way in ministry, especially when we believe in the cause?

At this time especially, I felt like the Church needed to step up. We needed to offer hope and prayer daily. I was proud and thankful that the NC Region was willing to provide this daily devotional ministry. And I truly did want to be a part of it! Still, too frequently, the flesh is weak even when the spirit is willing and on board. To be honest, after I said that I would be willing to take this on, I promptly forgot about it. No joke!

With so much going on, it completely went out of my head for a week until I got an email from Bishop Melvin asking me about it. Then I experienced a panic-stricken and embarrassing, "Oh crud! I cannot believe that I forgot!" moment.

(I know the juggling illustration below is similar to what has been used before but hey, it works!)

I think as pastors – or even as lay people – we frequently have so much going on that one of the balls that we are juggling gets dropped. We are so busy trying to keep all the others in the air that we simply do not notice that a particular ball is no longer in play. Then again, perhaps we notice but simply feel like we dare not bend down and to try to add that ball back into the mix or all of the other balls might crash.

Still, we do know that each ball is important, and we frequently feel guilt when we realize that a certain ball has hit the floor. Sometimes, that fallen ball is a "professional or ministerial obligation." Sometimes, that dropped ball is a "missed opportunity." Sometimes, that forgotten ball is "family fail" or a "family promise" that we are unable to keep. Sometimes, that ignored ball is "self-care." At times, we may feel like we want to take all those darn balls and throw them through a window! And sadly, occasionally, all the balls seem to slip out of our hands all at once and we fall to the floor along with them.

However, as a witness to our Christian faith, we know that Jesus is always there to help us pick up the dropped balls, our bodies, and spirits! Often, our brothers and sisters in Christ are there to help as well.

So today, I want to encourage you to look around on the floor and in the air. Examine and see what balls you accidentally may have dropped in your busy life, and which ones are still in the air. See if some can be removed for now to improve your ability to juggle your

time and energy and to make life less stressful.

Perhaps though, today is your day to stop juggling. Perhaps, today needs to be a day of Sabbath. Maybe this is a day when you simply need to sit on the floor – with all the balls around you but not in motion – and just allow Jesus to hold you. Maybe today, you simply need to pause and pray and allow today to be a day of devotion.



**You're Invited!**

**Spiritual Spa: The Advent Edition  
with Sandhya Jha and friends**

Sunday, November 29  
8pm ET/ 7pm CT/ 6pm MT/ 5pm PT

Join *Liberating Love: 365 Love Notes from God* author Sandhya Jha and friends for an online spiritual retreat to feed your soul on the first Sunday in Advent! Experience Zen water painting, silent meditation with chimes, lectio divina, and body movement.

**[SIGN UP HERE!](#)**



**North Carolina Launches Education  
Corps to Bring Extra Support to K-12  
Schools During COVID-19**

Starting in January, students across the state will benefit from the NC Education Corps, a new partnership between the North Carolina State Board of Education, the Office of the Governor, local school systems and the N.C. Commission on Volunteerism and Community Service.

Education Corps members will provide emergency relief to public schools by employing talented community members — including current college students and recent graduates experiencing financial strain or loss of employment — to provide wraparound services to K-12 students across NC.

“The North Carolina Education Corps will provide immediate relief and ongoing support to students in need. School systems that have initially signed up to participate in the program include Ashe County Schools, Camden County Schools, Clinton City Schools, Cumberland County Schools, Durham Public Schools, Elizabeth City-Pasquotank Public Schools, Halifax County Schools, Hickory City Schools, Jones County Public Schools, Lexington City Schools, Mount Airy City Schools, Newton-Conover City Schools, Perquimans County Schools, Person County Schools, Pitt County Schools,

Stanly County Schools, Vance County Schools, Wake County Public Schools, and Winston-Salem/Forsyth County Schools.

Education Corps members will be hired in December to work with school districts January through June tutoring students, providing technology navigation, assisting counselors, coordinating volunteers and more. Education Corps members will receive ongoing training and support and earn a living wage as compensation for their valuable time.

Compensation for Education Corps members will be provided by local school systems, which can utilize funding provided to them from North Carolina's share of the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund, a part of the federal CARES Act.

The NC Education Corps is searching for its inaugural class of members now. To learn more about the project and apply to serve, visit [www.nceducationcorps.org](http://www.nceducationcorps.org). The priority deadline for applications is November 22 with the final application deadline December 7.

Contact Number:  
252.291.4047

Mailing Address:  
P. O. BOX 1568, Wilson, NC 27894

Physical Address:  
207 Tarboro Street NE, Wilson, NC 27893

Website: [ncdisciples.org](http://ncdisciples.org)

Facebook Page:  
<https://www.facebook.com/CCinNC/>



## A Thanksgiving Litany and Prayer

**By Roger Noble**  
(with translation)

Psalm 126:1-3,5

**Leader:** When the Lord brought back the captive ones of Zion, we were like those who dream.

**People:** The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad.

**Leader:** Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with joyful shouting; then they said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them."

**People:** The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad.

**Leader:** Those who sow in tears shall reap with joyful shouting.

**People:** The Lord has done great things for us; we are glad.

**All:** Our Heavenly Father, we come to you in prayer because we need Your strength and vision. Help us to see the world as You intended it at creation. Even though Your ways remain mysterious to us, we hold to Your promise to show us the way. We ask that You clear our minds of all the things that hinder our judgment as well as our vision. As we prepare for and celebrate this Thanksgiving, we ask that You send us a word of comfort and a word of hope so that we might expect better days for our world, our congregations, and each one of us. We come to this season in anticipation of what You will do in and through Your people. In Jesus, our Christ we pray, Amen.