

December 31, 2024

ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) OF GREATER KANSAS CITY TO THE GENERAL BOARD OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) IN THE UNITED STATES AND CANADA

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Transitions

Staff

Rev. William Rose-Heim, Regional Minister, and President (FT to 12/31/2024)
Rev. _____ /Interim Regional Minister(FT Beginning February 1, 2025)
Rev. Amy Shoemaker, Associate Regional Minister for New Church (FT)
Ms. Kylie Graham, Regional Camp and Conference Coordinator (FT)
Ms. Jessica Lopez, Office Manager (FT)
Ms. Paula Diehl, independent contractor Financial Secretary (PT)

Regional Board Officers

Ms. Peggy Chandler, Moderator
Rev. Andy Beck, Moderator-Elect
Ms. Kathy Harris, Treasurer
Rev. Jill Standley, Secretary
Rev. Mary Lou Kegler, Past Moderator

Representative to the General Board – Rev. Laura Phillips

Congregations: sixty-two

Open Pulpits: eight

Clergy on hundred eighty-six

Demographic Information for Service Area (MissionInsite) • [Quick Insite 2024](#) • [Religious Insite](#)

Executive Summary

The eight-county area on both sides of the Kansas and Missouri State Line hosts a growing population of 1.9 million people, with LatinX and Pacific Islander populations projected to grow fastest by 2033. The percentage of those in this area not involved in a religious congregation or community is projected by MissionInsite to be 60.8%. That number is projected to grow by 13.7% over the next 10 years. Greater Kansas City Disciples are becoming increasingly responsive to the

reality that every aspect of local and regional ministry now requires adaptive leadership, more experimentation, and fresh approaches to making new disciples of Jesus Christ. DISCERNING, EXPERIMENTING, and strengthening COVENANT PARTNERSHIPS describe much of the work for GKC Disciples in 2025. Results from dozens of interviews with individuals and congregations this past year were evaluated and prioritized by participants in a working Regional Assembly last fall. Plans were formed, leaders committed, and implementation is already underway. There is fresh energy, hope, and support from the Proclamation Project, Church Narrative Project, Tri-Regional Partnership Initiative, the Kansas Leadership Center, New Church Ministry of the CC(DOC) and collaboration with the Pause/Play program (St. Paul School of Theology) just to name a few invaluable partners. Changes in Regional leadership are broadening opportunities to explore better ways to conduct the essential work of a Regional staff and Regional Board and more effectively equip and inspire courageous lay and clergy leadership.

We cannot overstate the value of the mutual support we have experienced (continuing) through participation in the Tri-Regional Partnership Initiative (TRPI) with Kansas and Nebraska Disciples and with the wider Church. Our General Minister and President has been present with us and significantly helped our creative collaboration from its beginning in 2020. Added assistance from the College of Regional Ministers, the General Commission on the Order of the Ministry, the Church Narrative and Proclamation Projects, and several initiatives among the General Ministries has only reinforced among us the importance of keeping our covenants with God and each other. In this time when three out of five Regional staff members will have concluded their ministries in December, 2024, already leaders from all three Regions in the TRPI have met to discern how best to be mutually supportive in the present while recognizing an opportunity to reimagine in 2025 how to make better use of staff gifts and abilities to serve our combined 190+ congregations before making major calling/hiring decisions in 2026. Despite significant challenges, there is more hope than anxiety, more anticipation than grief, and better ministry and leadership development happening during this interim time.

Leadership transitions in our Region

- Rev. _____ -called Interim Regional Minister and President beginning February 1, 2025!
- Rev. William Rose-Heim from Regional Minister and President to active retired
- Rev. Amy Shoemaker – from Transitional Regional Director for Ministry Innovation to Associate Regional Minister for New Church
- Ms. Kylie Graham – Camp and Conference Coordinator(half-time) and now (10 hours/week) Administrative Assistant
- Ms. Jessica Lopez – from Regional Office Manager to new secular employment
- Ms. Paula Diehl – from Bookkeeping Contractor to retired
- Regional Board – one third of our Regional Board is new. Membership of our Board better reflects the diversity of our Region

Our Regional Commission on the Order of the Ministry is reconfiguring and reimagining clergy support with help from members of the General Commission on the Order of the Ministry. Currently new ministers under care include four commissioned ministers, four candidates for ordination

We continue recruiting congregational leaders for workshops offered through the Tri-Regional Partnership Initiative in a partnership with the Kansas Leadership Center (KLC) <http://kansasleadershipcenter.org/>. KLC has granted the TRPI another sixty tuition-free scholarships to award Disciples in our regions and community partners with whom we serve. Workshops are designed to introduce adaptive leadership practices, help leadership teams to try experiments in ministry innovation and practice mutual accountability for better results. Congregational and Regional leadership team learning takes place in person and online along with teams from secular communities. Teams from a variety of nonprofit, for profit, education, criminal justice, and government organizations provide critical feedback for our teams about how our planned experiments might affect people outside as well as inside the Church.

Our Region's participation in The Church Narrative Project, with an emphasis on skill-building in Transformative Community Conferencing, will be led by Rev. Don Wiltfong who participated in the advanced training in Chicago last September.

WHOSOEVER F.A.I.T.H Community (DOC) – a young GKC congregation ministering primarily with people who have been excluded from or hurt by their experiences in churches – is experimenting with a Story Wagen Ministry originally begun by Rev. Dr. Jose Martinez. Story Wagen is named for its restored Volkswagen bus serving as a mobile ministry to share resources about spiritual health provide and a safe space for people to tell their stories to people who are prepared to listen pastorally. <https://www.storywagen.org/aboutus>. Significant funding and oversight support for this and other creative ministry initiatives is given by our Region's Commission on Ministry Innovation

Our newest congregation in formation in 2025 may be an extension of the Iglesia Christiana Alfa y Omega. Evangelist Jose Escudero and a small team are meeting on the campus of the First Christian Church of North Kansas City, Missouri for a Bible study and worship in Spanish.

Greater Kansas City's Becoming Beloved Community Team continues to promote support for racial justice through faith-rooted community organizing

- Our second annual Racial Justice Summit was held November 2nd at the Independence Boulevard Christian Church in Kansas City, Missouri. Former UCC Associate General Minister and current faculty member at Eden Theological Seminary Rev. Dr. Tracy Blackmon offered the keynote address and eight workshops including responding to White Christian Nationalism were offered by local organizations active in justice work providing inspiration and invitations to Disciples and others who want to join in or expand their involvement in making justice happen. We were blessed by the participation of our National Convocation Administrative Secretary and Associate General Minister, Rev. Dr. Delesslyn Kennebrew. Plans are underway for the 2025 Racial Justice Summit
- Curated the production of bi-weekly Lenten and Advent Devotional videos which have been viewed by many beyond our Region.

- Offered contextual, in-person and online Anti-Racism/Pro Reconciliation workshops for clergy – designed to take their awareness of systemic racism into collaboration with local organizations actively and assertively advocating for changes in laws, policies, and practices that enable inequity in all spheres of community life.
- Created the annual Rev. Mary Lou Kegler and Rev. Bill Rose-Heim Award to be given each year to those “Igniting Collaborative Effort for Racial Justice.”

The BBC is especially grateful for the frequent participation in our event planning meetings and guidance of Rev. Dr. April Johnson, Executive Director of the Reconciliation Ministry. We are also thankful for a grant from the Reconciliation Ministry Commission for help with our Racial Justice Summit.

Three hundred seventy-five campers, directors, counselors, keynoters, and nurses made our Region’s summer church camp and conference season a blessing on so many levels. Our Ministry with Young Disciples is being revived in fresh ways by a collaboration among clergy and other adult volunteers, our Camp and Conference Committee and leadership of Ms. Kylie Graham, Camp and Conference Coordinator. An adult summer church camp was well attended, and plans are underway to continue that.

The revival of our Tall Oaks Conference Center has been a labor of love by dozens of volunteers who have poured hundreds of hours repairing, refurbishing, and raising funds to “bring back the magic.” Between the Tall Oaks Conference Center Inc. board of directors, a highly skilled and passionate staff, and volunteers from groups paying to use the campus for their activities, deferred maintenance is being performed, several facilities have a fresh new look and new furnishings, and more groups signing up to hold events here. The primary mission of this ministry continues: *“To provide a safe haven where spiritual renewal, faith development, leadership formation, education, and fellowship are fostered in a setting that welcomes all people and celebrates God’s creation while reflecting the ecumenical spirit of the Christian Church, Disciples of Christ”*

The Christian Church of Greater Kansas City values our inclusion in this greater “movement for wholeness . . .” and we are pleased to be a contributing partner with you in the mission and life of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada!