2014 Christmas Special Offering Congregational Planning Guide
CONTENTS

Christmas Special Offering Resource Guide 2014
Sundays ~ December 14th and 21st

What's inside?

3 WAYS TO PROMOTE THE CHRISTMAS OFFERING
How you can get your congregation involved

4 PLACES TO GO FOR HELP

5 ANSWERING YOUR CONGREGATIONS QUESTIONS
Frequently asked questions concerning the Christmas Special Day Offerings

6 HOW TO GET STARTED
A primer on how to “kick start” your church’s Special Day Offerings

7 SUGGESTED TIMELINE AND GOALS
Frequently asked questions concerning the Christmas Special Day Offerings

INFO

For bulletin or newsletter inserts and clip art, contact the Regional Church Office at 614-433-0433 or online at www.ccinoh.org

or

Disciples Mission Fund
www.disciplesmissionfund.org

The Ohio Disciple Outreach Ministry Team is grateful for your faithful support of the Christian Church in Ohio.
WAYS TO PROMOTE THE CHRISTMAS OFFERING

- Promote the Christmas Offering and Regional Ministries during all four Sundays of Advent
- Make a promotional bulletin board and include a Christmas stocking to collect the offering envelopes
- Pass a Christmas stocking around the congregation to collect the offering
- Ask people from your congregation to provide personal accounts of how Regional ministries and programs have affected their lives
- Promote the offering by way of ‘Minutes for Missions’ and Children’s Sermons using the enclosed ideas or by making up your own
- Include information on the offering and its support of the Region in your newsletter and bulletin
- Make a congregational Christmas card for people to sign. Ask them to donate to the Christmas Offering the equivalent of what it would cost to mail cards to other church members
- Have someone build a manger in which to collect the offering. Place a board over part of it and serve communion from it on Christmas Eve
- Put Christmas Offering envelopes in your bulletins each Sunday of Advent. Get extras from the Regional Church Office or Church Finance Council
- Set a goal for the offering and mark your progress weekly
- Educate your congregation so they know 100% of this offering goes to support the Region
- Fellowship Dinner with a freewill offering
- Take up an offering during Christmas Eve services and remit it to the Region.
- If you already collect a Christmas Eve offering, tithe 10% to the Region.
PLACES TO GO FOR HELP WITH THE CHRISTMAS OFFERING

- **Christian Church in Ohio**
  355 East Campus View Blvd
  Suite 110
  Columbus, OH 43235-5616
  (614) 433-0343
  Email: ccio@ccinoh.org
  Website: www.ccinoh.org

- **Disciples Mission Fund**
  PO Box 1986
  Indianapolis, IN 47206
  (317) 635-3100
  www.disciplesmissionfund.org

Although your church may be familiar with the Christmas Special Day Offering, the Regional Church Office wants to provide you a few resources to assist you in making this season a reminder to others that the success of regional ministry is something that we all can claim and celebrate. As you administer the Christmas Special Offering in your church, remember to go and tell about your excitement for the programs, opportunities, and experiences that our Regional ministry facilitates. Thank you for your leadership, support and desire to be the messenger for peace and good news in your church and beyond this Christmas.
ANSWERING YOUR CONGREGATIONS QUESTIONS

Why is the Christmas Special Day Offering important?
The Christmas Special Day Offering is one of four Special Day Offerings taken annually (offerings are taken on Easter, Pentecost, Thanksgiving, and Christmas.) These offerings provide support for the wider mission and ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The Christmas Special Day Offering is designated to support the hands on work of the Disciples’ regional ministries. Christmas Special Day Offerings are of vital significance to the 32 regions which make up the Disciples of Christ.

Who will benefit from this year’s offering?
100% of your Christmas Special Day Offerings are used by the Ohio region. For more information about regional ministries visit Ohio’s website at www.ccinoh.org.

How does the Christmas Special Day Offering support the Ohio region?
Your regional church cares for and supports congregations and pastors in Ohio and is responsible for training local and lay clergy leaders, sponsoring camps and conferences at Camp Christian, establishing new congregations, offering program assistance and ministry initiatives to help revitalize existing congregations. The Christmas Special Day Offering enables the Christian Church in Ohio to perform the essential work of sustaining and enhancing ministry, programs, congregations, and clergy in Ohio.
HOW TO START YOUR CHRISTMAS SPECIAL DAY OFFERING

Here are some helpful suggestions on how to get started with your Christmas Special Day Offering, whether you have already implemented other Special Day Offerings in your church or this is your first experience.

- Set dates to receive the 2014 Christmas Special Day Offering
  Most congregations will receive the Christmas Special Day Offering on Sundays, **December 14 and 21**. However, you may decide to select other dates that more closely meet your congregation’s needs or special calendar. Dates will not appear on printed materials.

- Mark your selected dates on the church calendar – Make sure you have the necessary materials
  You will need leaflets, bulletin inserts, and posters, which are available online at [www.disciplemissionfund.org](http://www.disciplemissionfund.org) You will also need offering envelopes. All materials available on the Church Finance Council website may be copied freely or scanned to create newsletter or worship bulletin announcements, promotional signs, bulletin board posters, or other printed or electronic media.

- Recruit help from members of your church
  In advance of the Christmas Special Day Offering, plan on asking members of your congregation to present the Minutes for Mission on each of the Sundays designated for receiving the offering. Ask outreach committees to prepare announcements or exhibits for display promoting the Christmas Special Day Offering. Request informational brochures from your region that explains the specific ministries offered in your area. Be sure to provide promotional materials to your newsletter editor, webmaster, church secretary, and of course, your pastor. And finally, talk with your youth and children’s coordinators about ways to involve the young people of your church in the Christmas Special Day Offering.

- Seek additional help from Disciples Mission Fund
  Do you have additional questions about the Christmas Special Day Offering? Feel free to contact the Disciples Mission Fund at (317) 635-3100
SUGGESTED TIMELINE AND GOALS FOR THE CHRISTMAS SPECIAL DAY OFFERING

- **Four to six weeks prior to the Christmas Special Day Offering (November 2 – 16, 2014)**
  - Set a goal for your congregation’s combined offering. Consider working with groups within your church (e.g., women’s and men’s groups, youth groups, Sunday School classes, etc.) to set specific goals that can contribute to the overall goal of the church.
  - Ask volunteers from your worship committee or other groups to promote the Christmas Special Day Offering using displays and/or putting up posters around the church.
  - Ask church school teachers if adults may share stories of the importance of regional ministry within various children’s and youth classes. Provide opportunities for youth to collect their own offerings in the time leading up to the Christmas Special Day Offering.
  - Provide worship resources found online at disciplesmissionfund.org to your pastor and church leaders.

- **Two to three weeks prior to the Christmas Special Day Offering (November 23 – 30, 2014)**
  - Arrange for individuals within your church to present the Minute for Mission on each of the days that the Offering is received.
  - Be sure the presenters have copies of the Minutes for Mission provided in the Resource Guide.
  - Be sure that the individuals responsible for the Children’s Talks have received copies of the suggested talks available in the Resource Guide.
  - Be sure the individuals responsible for the offering prayer, prayer of thanksgiving, and prayer of petition have received a copy of their prayer available in the Resource Guide.

- **One week prior to the Christmas Special Day Offering**
  - Remind individuals responsible for the Children’s Talks, Minutes for Mission, and the worship prayers about their upcoming tasks. Also, remind your church secretary to include leaflets and offering envelopes in worship bulletins and other church related media.
  - Stuff inserts and offering envelopes in bulletins a day or two prior to the Christmas Special Day Offering.

- **After the Christmas Special Day Offering**
  - Announce the total received in worship and/or in the church newsletter, reminding church members their gifts support the Christian Church in Ohio.
  - Thank the congregation and all of your volunteers for their willingness to share generously of their time and resources.
  - Evaluate in small groups what went well and what could be improved for next year’s Christmas Special Day Offering in your church.

- **Send offering by January 3, 2014**
  - Share ideas that worked effectively in your church with the Regional Church Office. Send them to Dr. William Edwards, Christian Church in Ohio, 355 East Campus View Blvd., Suite 110. Columbus, OH 43235-5616 or email bedwards@ccinoh.org
### How to Set Your Church’s Goals for the Christmas Special Day Offering

- **Review the amount given during previous year’s Christmas Special Day Offering**
  
  As you review, consider ways your church can meet or exceed these amounts. We recommend setting a goal of five or 10 percent more than last year’s offering. As you challenge your congregation to increase its giving, consider these factors:
  
  - Church members are more likely to increase their giving if they are aware of what the offering supports. Encourage awareness as well as a deep understanding of how the Christmas Special Day Offering supports regional ministry in Ohio.
  
  - Increased giving to the Christmas Special Day Offering can serve as a model for a stronger commitment to tithing overall. Make a correlation between your church’s increased support of the Special Day Offering and its larger dedication to stewardship.
  
  - The goal for the Ohio Region for the 2014 Christmas Offering is $60,000.

- **Discuss your goal with your congregational leaders and inform your members of this goal well in advance of the Christmas Special Day Offering**
  
  In this way, you will be able to build enthusiasm for, momentum toward, and a sense of congregational ownership and participation.

- **Use different media**
  
  This includes the church newsletter, bulletins, display areas, announcement times, projected images, group meetings, pastoral letters, and bulletin boards to remind members and friends of your congregation’s generosity and its commitment to supporting the Christian Church in Ohio. A PowerPoint presentation is available from the Regional Church Office. You may download it from [www.ccinoh.org](http://www.ccinoh.org).

- **Everyone in your church, from the youngest child to the longest standing member can contribute to church outreach**
  
  Giving to the Christmas Special Day Offering is one way of supporting church outreach. Encourage your members to give at least one dollar to the Offering; ask your youth to contribute the amount of a movie ticket; encourage adults to contribute the amount of their cable bill or monthly cost of a specialty coffee. In other words, be creative! Remind your congregation that living in Christ means promotion and sharing an ‘attitude of gratitude’ within the church.
WORSHIP RESOURCES FOR THE CHRISTMAS OFFERING

- **SCRIPTURE:** Matthew 2:11 - “On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother, and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.”

- **LECTIONARY SCRIPTURES:**
  - Isaiah 35:1-10
  - Isaiah 7:10-16
  - James 5:7-10
  - Romans 1:1-7
  - Matthew 11:2-11
  - Matthew 18:25

- **Minutes for Mission**
The Minutes for Mission are brief stories about regional ministry supported by the Christmas Special Day Offering. Minutes for Mission are usually presented by a church member during worship on the Sundays in which the Christmas Special Day Offering is received. Let the pastor and worship committee leaders know about the worship resources available for Minutes for Mission in this Resource Guide.

- **Children’s Talks**
  Children’s Talks are some of the most effective ways to inform your congregation about the importance of supporting the Christmas Special Day Offering. Children’s Talks are based upon life illustrations that both educate and inspire not only the children to whom they are directed but also the adults who bear witness to these worshipful moments. Included in your Resource Guide are sample Children’s Talks which relate to the unique ministry provided by the Christian Church in Ohio.

- **Hymns from the Chalice Hymnal**
  - 172 – We Three Kings
  - 173 – As with Gladness
  - 528 – The First Noel
  - 715 – Now Thank We All Our God
  - 378 – Wonder of Wonders, Here Revealed
  - 149 – Angels from the Realms of Glory

- **Offering Prayer**
  Most gracious God, we thank you today for your choice blessings that you have bestowed upon us all. Lord may we all give with gladness and sincerity in our hearts. We remember the words of your only begotten Son, when he said, "It is more blessed to give, than to receive". May we give not to become richer, rather we give because we simply love you. Accept these gifts in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen

- **Prayer of Thanksgiving**
  God of grace and mercy, source of all life, giver of every perfect gift. We thank you for the gift of life: for the breath that sustains life, for the food of this earth that nurtures life, for the love of family and friends without which there would be no life. We are our brother's keeper.

  We thank you for setting us in communities: or families who nurture our becoming, for friends who love us by choice, for co-workers at work, who share our burdens and daily tasks, for strangers who welcome us into their midst, for people from multi-cultures who call us to grow in understanding, and for children who lighten our moments with delight and joy.

  We thank you for this day of thanksgiving: for life and one opportunity to love.

  For these and all blessings, we give you thanks, eternal, loving God, through Jesus Christ we pray. Amen
Call to Worship

Leader: In the midst of a dim season, we look with great anticipation, to the light of a faraway star.

People: Though far off, its radiant light brings a message of hope, peace, joy, and love.

Leader: We turn our eyes toward Bethlehem, and eagerly wait for what is sure to come.

People: In preparation, we make ready, grateful hearts filled with praise and adoration for our coming Savior.

Leader: We can feel His presence as we sing, pray, listen, and commune with one another.

People: It can entice us to rejoice, knowing that soon the light of the world will once again shine bright for all.

Leader: So let us make a place in our hearts for our Savior who will soon be here.

People: Let us make room for Him, in the crowdedness of this season, with praise and thanksgiving.
Prayer of Petition

- Leader: God Emmanuel, we know you are with us here and now. As we celebrate the coming birth of your son, open us the true meaning of the season: That you chose to live amongst us as a tiny, vulnerable baby. We worship a God who chose to experience the joys and triumphs of being a tiny child here on earth.

- Congregation: We celebrate the birth of the Christ child, so small and fragile.

- Leader: As we celebrate this gift, help us remember the humbleness of his birth. Christ was not born in a regal palace surrounded by the trappings of royalty. Instead he was born in a stable, surrounded by animals and laid in a manger. We worship a God who knows firsthand the struggles so many of us face every day to provide for our families.

- Congregation: We celebrate the birth of the Christ child, who understands our plight.

- Leader: Christ’s birth was heralded by angels, worshipped by shepherds, and honored by wandering magi. Jesus was honored at his birth by both the humble and the mighty. And the shepherds proclaimed the birth of the Savior and the magi brought him the finest gifts they had to bring. We worship a God who seeks to meet the needs of us all.

- Congregation: We celebrate the birth of the Christ child, and proclaim him as Lord and Savior and present to him our finest gifts.

- Leader: Mary and Joseph presented Jesus at the temple to honor their religious beliefs. The elderly Simeon and Anna both prayed over him that day and proclaimed for all to hear that this child would bring redemption and salvation. But Simeon added that Mary’s soul would be pierced to, by the turmoil this child would experience. We worship a God who continues to prophetically speak to us, and to offer us comfort in the midst of crisis.

- Congregation: We celebrate the birth of the Christ child, knowing that his birth is followed by the cross.

- Leader: Then Jesus’s small family had to flee. Joseph was told in a dream to flee to Egypt to escape the demented King Herod’s wrath. And we are told that the mother’s of the region were weeping and wailing over the loss of their sons. We worship a God who knows the horrors of war and persecution, who understands the plight of the refugee and grief of loss.

- Congregation: We celebrate the birth of the Christ child, and humbly acknowledge how much pain he knew. And we ask that we can do our part to end such hurt.

- All: We celebrate the birth of the Christ child, God Emmanuel. God is with us here in this place!
Communion Meditation – What Gifts Shall We Bring?

“On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” –Matthew 2:11

As you develop this communion meditation consider naming the blessings in your life. Maybe you could fill a treasure chest with things that you treasure. Maybe you could set the table with personal items that are reflections of the blessings God has given. By using the tangible items of your life others can reflect on and consider the tangible items of their own lives.

Describe the items you have in the treasure chest or on the table. Why are they significant? What do they symbolize? How has God blessed you?

As we come to the table with our treasure chest’s full of treasures, let us thank God understanding that the greatest gift in that chest is God’s grace, the forgiveness of our sins, the invitation to sit and sup and remember our Christ whose giving, whose very birth reminds us that God’s giving is abundant, and our welcome at this table is unending. We are welcome as we are. Let us come receive these elements and partake of them so that we might remember the one whom they represent and give God thanks for the gift of Jesus.
I want to illustrate this methodology by looking closely at the Matthew 2:11. I ask myself, “What is fundamental to the human experience that is in this text?” My first response is the human experience of worship and adoration. The text says, “Falling to their knees, they honored him.” I would examine the human experience of worship and honoring. What was the custom of Jesus’ time for honor and worship? What did it mean in the cultural context of the scripture for the magi to fall down on their knees and honor?

I would probably find out that honoring has an aspect of bringing gifts. In almost every culture all over the world, including in Jesus’ time and before, honoring people is to bring gifts. This is what I would preach about – how when we worship, and treasure and value someone, we bring gifts. I would compare the custom of honoring people in Jesus’ time with how our gifts honor people today. I would probably look at our consumerism, and if we are not careful, we give gifts to honor ourselves rather than honor the person to whom we are giving the gift. Then I would ask: what kind of gift do we give God as we honor God’s coming into the world. We saw in the text what the magi gave, but what do we give and in what spirit do we give it?

I would then ask four simple questions to structure the sermon: What is the situation? What is the complication? What is the resolution? What is the celebration?

**Situation:** The magi bring gifts to Jesus to honor and worship him (we bring our gifts to worship Christ)

**Complication:** the gifts of the magi were pure – gold, frankincense, and myrrh (often our hearts are not as pure)

**Resolution:** true worship involves falling to one’s knees
(symbol of humility) and sharing of one’s resources in purity whatever they may be (material gifts are an expression of a pure heart) – some gifts are not material)

**Celebration:** Christmas the opportunity to present our gifts to God in purity and thankfulness. At the heart of the text is the human experience of worship and reverence as kneeling before God and presenting one’s gifts.

*Article contributed by the Rev. Dr. Frank Thomas, Christian Theological Seminary, Indianapolis, IN*
WHAT ARE MINUTES FOR MISSION?

So,

you’ve been asked to give a Minute for Mission during one of your Advent services. What does this mean?

Minutes for Mission are stories, anecdotes, or illustrations which you will present as part of your congregation’s worship service. Written in a style that lends itself to conversation Minutes for Mission allow you to demonstrate in a visible way your own commitment to the outreach ministries of the church; tell a story that helps the whole church’s mission to become real and personalized; and to participate in your congregation’s focus on mission throughout the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) – in particular, the important work done by the Regional Church in Ohio. Below are listed ten ways you can prepare for your Minute for Mission reading.

1. Read the Minute for Mission you have been chosen to present
2. Reflect on your thoughts and emotions as you have encountered and understood the story. Imagine how your congregation will respond to the story.
3. Read the story again.
4. Read the Offering scripture and reflect on how your Minute for Mission connects to the scripture.
5. Read the story again – this time, out loud.
6. Now that you are familiar with the story and its impact, try telling it in your own words.
7. Ask your pastor or another member of your church to share a similar story that reflects on the importance of the ministry of the Ohio region.
8. Pray about your presentation
9. Don’t forget to include details about how and where people in your congregation can make their gifts.
10. Remind the congregation of the goal for this Special Offering and invite everyone to give generously on the designated days.
MINUTE FOR MISSION ONE

What Gifts We Bring!

Did you know that your Christmas offering helps to support Ohio Women’s Ministries (OWM)? The Ohio Regional Office staffs a committee that plans activities for women all over Ohio. Those activities include a Spring Convocation and a Fall Retreat. And, we are beginning to hold meetings out in the Districts so women can attend opportunities close to home. These gatherings provide the opportunity for women to experience spiritual growth, fun, and fellowship with other Christian women.

OWM groups have learned about human trafficking and how we can be involved in stopping it, supported development projects at Camp Christian, provided scholarships for attending national events, contributed money to mission projects, both stateside and internationally, and assisted women in growing as leaders in their churches and communities.

Be as generous as you can. Your gifts help to grow women of all ages.

- Marcia Naugle, Ohio Disciples Outreach Committee
MINUTE FOR MISSION TWO

The Spiritual life is a great and unknown journey. Jesus is the light that guides us. The Holy Spirit is the power that moves us. Almighty God is the one who faithfully watches over us and reveals to us our purpose in life.

Walking the spiritual path is challenging, but it is often the most rewarding. Our Spiritual path brings meaning to our lives as we grow in discipleship and service, and grow in wisdom, compassion and love. As long as we stay faithful and actively participate in our spiritual journey, as long as we respond to God’s call and as long as we spread love whenever and wherever we can follow is Christ’s footsteps, our life is united to God. God rejoices in the gifts of something we can do as long as we give from our heart.

Through our Christmas Special Day Offering we support our Regional Church Ministry through gifts. This Offering goes totally to our own Region to help us witness together.

Whether it is Camp Christian, start New Churches, Stewardship, Pastoral care, Pastoral Search Committees or mission emphases to help local churches reach out through mission trips to the Gulf Coast, Chile’ and now a new opportunity to partner as a Region with the Disciples of Christ Community of the Congo in Boyeka.

Through our Regional Pastor Rev. Dr. William Edwards and Associate Rev. Stephen Bentley, staff and volunteers, Ohio Disciples are on the move and witnessing at home and around the world to the love and care of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

When we do things together as a Region, we stretch the boundaries of our local congregations to be able to minister in ways and in places none of us could reach alone. It is in loving others, it is sharing our gifts, that we become free to receive the most precious gift of all…the grace, love and mercy of Christ in our own lives. The gift you decide to give will be the best gift God ever received. God always rejoices in what we have to offer him. Let us use 2014 Christmas Offering to ask “What Gifts Shall We Bring?” and give whole hearted support to our Regional Ministry together.

-Mary Beth Cascio, Ohio Disciples Outreach Committee
Camp Christian

The Special Day Christmas Offering helps the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Ohio to continue ministry with our youth at Camp Christian. Here is what one former State Youth Officer wrote about his experience at Camp Christian:

“Fun, fantastic, peaceful, spiritual, I could go on and on about Camp Christian.

I have been fortunate to attend Camp Christian for the past 6 years. I can honestly say I have so much fun. The friendships I have made are so awesome. What is so nice is that we even stay in contact outside of camp.

I believe every year I get more and more out of camp. I feel so close to GOD when I am there, and I feel his presence in all I do. It makes me realize how lucky and blessed I am. I enjoy just sitting with my friends talking about how good our GOD is and how much we all have to be thankful for. When I first went to camp I wasn’t sure how I was going to survive without TV or my cell phone, but believe it or not I hardly missed them at all.

Although I have a blast during the day, singing songs, swimming, planning the talent show, when we head out to Vespers I feel GOD’S love and presence so much. It is definitely my favorite time of the day.

I have always been so thankful that my home church First Christian Church in Cambridge has always helped pay for the camp expense and fortunately the Christian Church in Ohio has a Youth Scholarship program to help with the rest of the cost. My hope is that every kid has a chance to experience Camp Christian some time in their youth.”

Jimmy Allen, First Christian Church Cambridge, OH

Camp Christian is a vital part of our Regional Church ministry together! As we give to the Special Day Christmas Offering, 100% of that Offering stays in Ohio to continue this very important work with our youth!
CHILDREN’S TALKS: SERMON IDEAS FOR YOUNG HEARTS

Jesus’ Birthday Present

Props: Gold jewelry and anointing oil that is scented like frankincense and myrrh (otherwise nice perfume). Bible marked to Matthew 2:1-12

So Christmas is approaching and I bet you are all excited. What is the best part of Christmas? We all like getting gifts. And Christmas is also really a birthday. Do you like getting birthday presents too? I know I do. And Christmas is Jesus’ birthday.

The Bible tells us that wise men from the East came looking for a new born king of the Jews when Jesus was very young. Once they found him we are told that they knelt down before him and gave him presents. So even Jesus got birthday presents. Presents that seem odd to us now: Gold, frankincense and myrrh. Let the children smell the oil or perfume. Now we can sort of understand the gold, because even today it is often used as a form of money. But the perfume? Hmm. I know it is sad, but it was a way of tying the Easter story into the Christmas one. Because these pretty smelling spices were used at funeral services back in Jesus’ day. But these were also gifts that were only given to people like kings and queens. The wise men were saying that Jesus was royalty and he only deserved the very best presents.

So since it is Jesus’ birthday and we all know we like presents. It is very appropriate to give Jesus a birthday present. And the way we can do that today is by giving something to the church. And during the Christmas season the Christian Church gives a special offering to help support the church right here in Ohio. So when we give to this offering we are help the Christian Church in Ohio run Camp Christian, start new churches and simply run the regional office with all the help in gives local churches.

The following Children’s Talk was contributed by a member of the Ohio Disciple Outreach Ministry Team.

Children are sure to enjoy and learn about Christ’s birth as seen through their own personal experiences.

Feel free to add your own twists and spins on this talk. Imagination is the key!
IDEAS FOR TAKING THE OFFERING

- **Christmas Offering Idea**
  Have the children of your church submit designs for your church bulletin cover. Have the children draw a picture of the Wise men bringing gifts with black felt pens. Have each artist sign his or her picture. You can use a single picture or make a collage of the children’s artwork for the Sundays of Advent or for your Christmas Eve services.

- **Do a Christmas Offering Skit**
  *Before the offertory prayer, the deacons start talking among themselves*

  **Deacon One:** How much money are you going to put in your Christmas Special Offering envelope?

  **Deacon Two:** My wife and I always put twenty-five bucks in when there’s a Special Offering. Why do you want to know?

  **Deacon One:** I was just wondering. We usually just throw those envelopes away. What is this offering for, anyway?

  **Deacon Two:** This one supports the ministries of our Regional Church. You know – Camp Christian, Advanced Conference, Ohio Women’s Ministries, Ohio Men’s Ministry, helping churches that need a new pastor, starting new churches and revitalizing existing congregations. The region helps our church tell the Good News of Jesus Christ in a lot of different places and a lot of different ways.

  **Deacon One:** Wow! I have one more question, though. Since this ministry does so much, why do you only give twenty-five bucks?

  (pause)

  **Both:** The Scripture says, “On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh.” What Gifts Shall We Bring?—Matthew 2:11
Regional Church Office Staff

**Rev. Dr. William H. Edwards** became the Regional Pastor and President of the Christian Church in Ohio (Disciples of Christ) on September 1, 2004. Bill has served churches in Kentucky, Ohio and Tennessee, and served as Associate General Minister and Vice President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada.

Email Bill at bedwards@ccinoh.org

**Rev. Stephen Bentley** joined the Staff of the Christian Church in an Interim position September 2005 and in 2007 was added to the permanent staff as Regional Associate Pastor.

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Our Ministries

Adult Conference
Advance Conference
Anti-Racism/Pro Reconciliation
Camp Christian
Chi Rho
Christian Youth Fellowship
Commission on Ministry
Congregational Transformation
Disciples Fellowship
Disciples Men’s Fellowship
New Church
Ohio Disciples Outreach
Ohio Women’s Ministries
Spiritual Life Commission

The Regional Church Office of the Christian Church in Ohio is here to serve you and your congregations. We want to hear from you.

Contact Information
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Columbus, OH 43235
Phone: (614) 433-0343
Email: ccio@ccinoh.org
or visit our web site at: www.ccinoh.org

Our Vision

A covenant network of congregations in mission:
We are the Body of Christ gifted and called in covenant together as Disciples of Christ to be centers of transformation on the new mission frontier of our own communities.

In covenant together, we are gifted and called to become true community by:

- **Building Trust** through open and clear communication
- **Listening** to one another’s hopes and dreams
- **Caring** for one another in times of joy and of pain
- **Sharing** our transforming experiences of Jesus Christ with our communities around us
- **Maintaining the highest level of ethical integrity**
- **Helping to network** our congregations’ effective ministries with one another
- **Finding ways to empower** gifts of individuals, establishing clergy and laity as missional team leaders, and **equipping** them with the resources to do ministry
- **Taking advantage of the best communication tools** available as they develop.

Because we are centers for transformation, striving to embody deep Christian Spirituality and seeking communion we will:

- Center our life together around the **Lord’s table**
- Focus on vital, engaged **worship** in its variety of forms
- Develop **growing faith** through training, mentoring and service in congregations
- Engage **stewardship** in priorities and planning
- Create **mission experiences** as opportunities for spiritual growth
- Strive for openness to the work of the Holy Spirit!

On a new mission frontier, led by a passion for justice, we will:

- Be an **anti-racist, pro-reconciling** church, continuing to grow in faithfulness to the Gospel
- Value **local mission** as inseparable from evangelism
- Re-establish **evangelism** as a primary calling, in affirmation that our faith is desperately needed by the people of our **communities**
- Hold each other accountable to Christ’s Great Commission to bear the Gospel in our world with integrity and authenticity
- Commit to the **inclusion** of all people, without exception, in the life, functioning, and governance of the church.

Please give generously to the Christmas offering for the benefit of your congregation, our fellow Ohio congregations and our common ministry through the Christian Church in Ohio.