2012 Christmas Special Offering Congregational Planning Guide
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Christmas Special Offering Resource Guide 2012

SUNDAYS December 16 and 23

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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

- 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.
- 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.
PLACES TO GO FOR HELP WITH THE CHRISTMAS OFFERING

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

- **Disciples Mission Fund**
  
  PO Box 1986  
  Indianapolis, IN 47206-1986  
  (317) 635-3100  
  www.disciplemissionfund.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 CONGREGATION’S 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 33 regions which make up the Disciples of Christ.

- 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.

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 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 2012 Christmas Special Day Offering**
  Most congregations will receive the Christmas Special Day Offering on Sundays, December 16 and 23. 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. 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 4 – 18, 2012)**
  
  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 [http://www.disciplesmissionfund.org](http://www.disciplesmissionfund.org) to your pastor and church leaders.

- **Two to three weeks prior to the Christmas Special Day Offering (December)**
  
  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**

Arrange 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 4, 2013**
  
  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 2012 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:** Luke 2:10
  “But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people…”

› **LECTIONARY SCRIPTURES:**
  Zephaniah 3:14-20   Micah 5:2-5a
  Philippians 4:4-7   Hebrews 10:5-10

› **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**
  143 - Joy to the World
  150 - Hark, the Herald Angels Sing
  155 - Angels We Have Heard on High
  164 - Good Christian Friends, Rejoice
  170 - How Great Our Joy!

› **Offering Prayer**
Eternal God who reigns over all our lives, accept these gifts and use them to further your ministries in our region. Bless those who have given themselves freely to ministries here at home and throughout the Christian in Ohio. May we never forget the gift of salvation you gave to use through Jesus Christ, and bless those who have generously given to your church for the furtherance of Christ’s Good News in the world. In our Redeemer’s name we pray. Amen.

› **Call to Worship**
  **One:** I've got good news! God hears the troubles of the world, and seeks to make a saving path of compassion and justice.
  **Many:** Good News!
  **One:** I've got good news! We are not alone. God walks with us to protect and guide us.
  **Many:** Good News!
  **One:** It’s our turn to pick up the song of angels and announce to the world God’s plans for healing and grace. Will you respond with joy?
  **Many:** Great Joy!
  **One:** Now open your heart to worship, and offer to God all the joy of your faith!
  **Many:** Great Joy!
Prayer of Thanksgiving
Gracious God, we give you thanks for Your saving work among us. We dedicate these offerings to Your glory with gratitude so that we can touch the lives of people throughout the state of Ohio with the ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Amen.

Prayer of Petition
Please join me in praying for our regional church as we lift up its many ministries this Christmas season. When you hear the words, “God in your mercy” please respond, “Hear our prayer.”

L: For our Regional Minister and President, Dr. William Edwards, who walks with churches through conflict and change, God in your mercy,
P: Hear our prayer.
L: For our regional staff who train leaders for transformation and assist congregations in claiming their unique mission. God in your mercy,
P: Hear our prayer.
L: For new churches received and nurtured by the regional church. God in Your mercy,
P: Hear our prayer.
L: For those in our region who support and grant standing to our ministers, upholding our need for trustworthy leadership among our pastors, God in Your mercy,
P: Hear our prayer.
L: For the ways our region teaches faith and discipleship, helps our congregations to network with each other, and provides resources to our leadership, God in Your mercy,

P: Hear our prayer.
L: For those who lead Anti-Racism/Pro Reconciliation ministry and for all in need of that ministry, God in Your mercy,
P: Hear our prayer.
L: For the children and those who work tirelessly on their behalf at the Cleveland Christian Home, God in Your mercy,
P: Hear our prayer.
L: For the children and those who work tirelessly on their behalf at the Cleveland Christian Home, God in Your mercy,

P: Hear our prayer.
L: For the encouragement and support of regional elders, God in Your mercy,
P: Hear our prayer.
L: O God, we give You thanks that You call us to be the church, that You give us companions to walk with on the journey, that You give us the ministry of the Ohio Region challenging us to be Christ’s community in this time and place. Bless us as we seek to follow Your will for our lives. For we pray in the name of Jesus, the One we seek to serve, Amen.

(Please refer to the back page of this planning guide for a complete listing of the Regional Church Staff and their ministry assignments and include them in your time of prayer)
Communion Meditation - Good News of Great Joy

“But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people…’” – Luke 2:10

I think about those shepherds on the hillside outside of Bethlehem so many years ago.

They were just doing their usual work, going through the motions, expecting dawn to come—as usual—but not expecting angel choirs, and the astounding news of God’s arrival as the Christ Child.

We gather at this Table so often that it can feel like a habit, just the usual work, the same old pattern.

But today, as we come closer to the celebration of Jesus’ birth, may it dawn on us what an astounding thing happens here when we gather each week.

God comes to us, forgiving us, offering us eternal life. The message of the Christ child comes to us through the ages.

It comes to all who can imagine such good news of great joy.

We are Disciples of Christ, A movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. As part of the one body of Christ, we welcome all to the Lord’s Table as God has welcomed us.

- Disciples of Christ Statement of Identity
**DEVELOPING A THEME SERMON**

Unlocking the heart to hear the Good News

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**Signs of Great Joy**

Our theme this year from Luke 2:10 is a universal Advent theme and would do well to fit in to any Advent Sunday message. “But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people...’” There are several powerful themes one could develop out of this one verse alone.

- **Context** – Our theme verse sits in the middle of the census in Bethlehem where Joseph and his very pregnant betrothed Mary arrive to find no room in the inn. Mary gives birth to Jesus and wraps him in bands of cloth and lays him in a manger. It is the promise come true. The savior is born. The passage jumps from the scene in the manger to the shepherds in the fields in the same region. These men who were known for being dirty and smelly, lower ranks of society were met by an angel with a message from God. It was a message for all people, and it would be a message that began with the “least” among them. The angel shared the message of hope to not be afraid and to hear the good news the Jesus Christ the messiah had been born that the men should go and find the baby as a sign of the good news. And then to put an exclamation point on the message the whole sky filled with angels who sang, “Glory to God in the highest heaven...” The birth of Jesus was a big story, a message from God breaking into the world to change the world in the middle of a census, and most people didn’t even know it was happening. But the story was told and is told again and again and we know that this message of hope is still today good news of great joy for all people.

- **Do Not be afraid** – You could develop the theme around the message, “Do NOT be afraid.” In this time of political, and economical unrest, not to
DEVELOPING A THEME SERMON  Unlocking the heart to hear the Good News  continued

• mention war, famine, drought, brokenness; it is the common language of our culture to hear about fear. Be afraid of the enemy (who ever the other is). Be afraid of the other political party. Be afraid of those who will hurt you. Be afraid of God because God causes all the bad things to happen (there are some who preach this to the masses and the masses believe it). However this text is one of many prominent texts where a messenger of the Lord tells the hearer, “do NOT be afraid.” How does hope change your fear?

• Good news of great joy – The message is good news of great joy. The world is so filled with bad news (see the fear suggestion). Bad news gets much higher ratings than good news. But people are hungry for good news, starving for it. How do you prepare people for good news? How do you feel in your bones when you know you will hear good news of great joy? What are your stories of great joy? When we share our stories, others can practice sharing their own story. It is how we become evangelists. It is how we can express our cup that overflows. It is how we can be aware of God’s abundance all around us and through our lives. It is our purpose to share and live the good news of great joy as it pours out of our pores.

Great joy for all people – This message is not for a select few. It is not for the rich or the elite alone, but it is for them. It is not only for the average “middle-class” person who has what they need and some of what they want, although it is for them too. It is not only for the poor and outcast, although it is especially for those who have been oppressed. It is good news for all people. The whole world will be touched by this news. For some this alone is good news. For others it means their status and stuff they have worked for no longer
• means anything, and maybe it never did. That means the messenger will have to turn the prism of perspective on its side for those people. The messenger will have to teach people that their stuff and status doesn’t mean anything and that sounds like bad news, but there is better news than you could have fathomed. This is news of great joy because the promise of hope for someone who doesn’t think they need it, is just as real and as powerful as those who are desperate for hope. Now there is meaning to life in a new way. May all people receive the good news of great joy!

• Relating this to the Christmas Offering – Again I would emphasize the power of telling the story. What are the stories of great joy in your congregations life? And what are the stories of great joy in the life of the region? If you don’t find what you are looking for in this packet, ask a youth in your church or another church about church camp at Camp Christian; ask a colleague who has benefited from counseling or coaching through the region; ask a colleague who is starting a new church; ask a colleague who is working the process of leading transformational ministry; talk to your district representative; call Rev. Dr. Bill Edwards, he is a fount of valuable stories and knowledge on the ministry of the Ohio Region. Then tell the stories. Be inspired and share that inspiration with the congregation you serve. Inspire them to be good stewards of God’s abundant gifts, for where God calls us to ministry God will equip us for the same, because God is faithful. Let us be faithful in return.

• Article contributed by the Rev. Liz DeWeese, Anderson Hills Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
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

Proclaiming God’s Love from on high through new church starts

WOW! We have “Good News of Great Joy” to share and news about how the love of God through Jesus Christ is being shared!

657 new churches have been formed since 2001 by Disciples in the United States and Canada, but the real news is that there are over 50,000 people who have met Christ through New Church Ministry that is real ‘Good News!’

Here in Ohio your New Church Committee is reaching out to folks who are un-churched in the name of Christ. This is part of every disciple’s calling, to proclaim the Gospel to those who haven’t claimed the Gospel until all know the Gospel. We are not quite there yet, so we are busy in many different ways creating new faith communities.

Currently the new church committee is shepherding 9 new Ohio churches:

- **Light of the Community** in Dayton, *Willie Barnes Jackson new church planter*
- **Mission Cristiana Faro Luz** in Lorain, *Crucita Marrero new church planter*
- **Mission Cristiana Nuevo Vida** in Cleveland, *Vanessa Rivera new church planter*
- **Mission Cristiana Emanuel** in Mentor, *Delores Febus new church planter*
- **Brighter Day** in Mantua, *Jeff Jackson new church planter*
- **Living Faith Community Church** in Springboro, *Tom Parker new church planter*
- **Iglesia Mana** in Columbus, *Illuminado Castellano new church planter*
- **New Song Community Church** in Columbus, *Yvonne Gilmore new church planter*
- **New Project Church** in Delaware, *Wendy Taylor new church planter*

These churches combine to have over 500 previously un-churched people worshipping with them each Sunday. However, just like many of your churches, the people present each week are not always the same mix of people. Combined they have ministries that are touching the lives of thousands people! These ministries include: Prison Ministry, domestic violence counseling, weekly radio ministry, women’s Bible studies, immigration ministry, community evangelism, Sunday School classes for children and adults, music ministry, disciple leadership development programs, and after school children’s programs. These new church planters and their churches are very busy making new disciples!

These new churches are bringing the Good News to people who need to know Jesus Christ and your Christmas offering helps make that possible. And many, many more opportunities await us! In 2013, plans are in the works to launch 4 new church initiatives to share the “Good News of Great Joy!

- **Morgan Wickizer, Chair New Church Committee**
Central Christian Church in Wooster, Ohio, is much like many Disciple congregations – located in a large, old building in a part of town that is changing rapidly, and not for the better. The congregation went from having Sunday School attendance in “the good old days” of more than 300 to having five children in Sunday School on a good Sunday. The job of Sunday School Superintendent, once seen as a prime position of importance and honor, had become the job to take if you wanted to be frustrated beyond belief. And that was what happened to Bobbie. By profession, she is a dietician and she practices the Biblical gift of hospitality through her knowledge and love of food. After a particularly difficult Sunday she and one of her trusted faith partners, Marilyn, were praying over what could be done to help the Sunday School program. During their prayer, they heard the words of John 21 “Feed my Sheep.” So that’s just what they did. Every Sunday, in the church’s Fellowship Hall, members and neighbors enjoy the “Feed My Sheep” breakfast – a hot breakfast and fellowship for all who wish to participate. Most Sundays between 75 and 100 people gather for breakfast. But even more important than the food is the fellowship. By offering a free meal, many who have not traditionally been a part of the church have begun coming every Sunday. One of the elders of the church talks about a differently abled member of the congregation by saying, “I see him all over town now and I have finally realized he was there all the time and I just didn’t see him. I wonder who else I’m overlooking who needs to be a part of the fellowship only the church can provide.” While we don’t have 300 in Sunday School lives are being changed, the love of Christ is being shared, and somehow the job of Sunday School Superintendent doesn’t seem as daunting as it did a few years ago. There are stories like Wooster’s being played out every day around the Christian Church in Ohio. Are we going out to tell the stories of the Good News of Jesus being born anew through the work of our sister churches or are we stuck in remembering the “good old days”?

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!
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 senior in High School (and one of our State Youth Officers) 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, in the Phyo Conference. 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
CHILDREN’S TALKS: SERMON IDEAS FOR YOUNG HEARTS

The following Children’s Talks were suggestions contributed Ohio Disciple Outreach Ministry Team. Children are sure to enjoy and learn about Christ’s birth as seen through their own personal experiences, and perhaps through the eyes of a frightened chicken ...

These talks may be used for two Sundays in Advent. Feel free to add your own twists and spins on these talks. Imagination is the key!

Jesus’ Birthday Present

Begin by asking the children, “Whose birthday are we preparing to celebrate?” Then ask them how they celebrate their own birthdays. Given them time to reply. You’ll no doubt receive the customary responses: Cake. Parties. Presents. Ask the children how we celebrate Jesus’ birthday. Have they ever had a cake for Jesus’ birthday? Have they ever given Jesus a present for His birthday? Isn’t it a funny way to celebrate His birthday by giving presents to each other? How can we give Jesus a present for His birthday? Given them time to come up with some suggestions. You could then move toward the concept of a birthday gift for Jesus which might include a special Christmas offering. Close with a challenge and a prayer of blessing.

Good News of Great Joy

Has God ever told you any good news? If God wanted to get a message to you how do you think it would be delivered?

I’ve got some wild ideas: I think God might tell me good news by whispering in my ear, or writing it out in shining stars against the night sky, or telling me in a dream. God might have my teacher blurt it out, or my dog carry it to me tied to a bone! I told you they were wild ideas! (If you feel brave, ask for their ideas, if not, just plow ahead.)

The story of Jesus’ birth that we tell at Christmas includes a whole “host” of angels, a whole choir of them telling the shepherds the good news of great joy that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and that he would “save” them—help everyone.

A choir of angels is a pretty wild way for God to get a message to us! But God has other, quieter, more normal ways, too. Sometimes it’s the loving voice of our pastor that helps us get God’s message. Sometimes it’s a camp song that tells of God’s love, sometimes it’s a friend’s visit that helps us remember to have joy.

This week and next everyone at our church has a chance to share God’s Good News of Great Joy as we give to the Christmas Special Day Offering that helps the Ohio Region of our denomination. We get to share our joy by sending of money to support their work.

Won’t our offering be “good news”?

- 19 -
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 nativity 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! That’s *Good News of Great Joy*! 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, “*But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people...’*”
Message from Regional Pastor & President

I am excited about the vision we have in the Christian Church in Ohio. God is calling us to be: 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.

A “covenant network” means that we are intentional about our relationships; “centers of transformation” means that our congregations become a place where individuals are transformed by the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ! And in turn, our congregations are transforming the communities in which they are located.

Rev. Dr. William H. Edwards
bedwards@ccinoh.org

Rev. Dr. Edward’s responsibilities include:
- Districts 2, 3, 15
- Strategic Leadership and Vision
- Commission on Ministry
- Congregational Transformation
- Financial Oversight
- New Church
- Ohio Disciples Extension Corp.
- Ohio Disciples Outreach
- Regional Elders
- Regional Staff Oversight

Holy Spirit!

Regional Associate Pastors

Rev. Dr. LaTaunya Bynum
lbynum@ccinoh.org
- Districts 1, 5, 8, 9, 12
- Advance Conference
- Anti-Racism/Pro Reconciliation
- Ohio Black Pastors
- Ohio Women’s Ministries

“A favorite thing about my job is: meeting new people and traveling to different congregations around the region.”

Rev. Stephen Bentley
sbentley@ccinoh.org
- Districts 4, 6, 7, 10, 11, 13/14
- Adult Conference
- Disciples Fellowship
- Disciples Men’s Fellowship
- Spiritual Life Commission

“One of my favorite inspirational verses is: Rejoice in the Lord always! Again I say Rejoice!”

Regional Program Minister

Rev. Dr. Brenda Webster
bwebster@ccinoh.org
- Camp Christian
- Chi Rho
- Children’s Ministries
- Christian Education
- Christian Youth Fellowship

“I see my ministry as provoking interest in the Kingdom of God through creative and motivational programs and activities.”

Regional Administrative Ministry Support

Executive Assistant
Joaanne Arnold
jarnold@ccinoh.org

Office Administrator
Jennie Stoddart
jstoddart@ccinoh.org

Interim Treasurer/Accounting Manager
Rich Haines
rhaines@ccinoh.org

Camp Christian Superintendent
Al Channell
achannell@ccinoh.org

Food Services Director
Doris Woodson
dwoodson@ccinoh.org

Financial Clerk
Sally Wears
swears@ccinoh.org

Stewardship Sharing
Our Ministries

Adult Conference
Advance Conference
Anti-Racism/Pro Reconciliation
Camp Christian
Chi Rho
Christian Education
Christian Youth Fellowship
Commission on Ministry
Congregational Transformation
Disciples Fellowship
Disciples Men’s Fellowship
New Church
Ohio Black Pastors
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
355 E. Campus View Blvd., Suite 110
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.