



The New Christian Messenger

www.gadisciples.org

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Christmas Offering Special Day



Repeat the Sounding Joy

Isaac Watts' well known hymn, *Joy to the World*, has resounded the Good News of God's love for humanity for nearly 300 years. In this beautiful carol, we are reminded of angels—filling the heavens with their joy for the birth of the Christ child.

The special day offerings of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) have been historically an opportunity for individuals to give joyfully over and above to the ministry and mission of the larger church: Easter, Pentecost, Thanksgiving and Christmas. In previous years, all special day offerings were proportionally divided among regions and general units. In 2003, the funding system changed the distribution of special day offerings.

- ▶ **Easter** 100% designated for general ministries to strengthen congregational life.
- ▶ **Pentecost** 100% designated for new church development, divided equally between the region in which the offering is received and general new church ministry.
- ▶ **Thanksgiving** 100% designated for higher education institutions who are responsible for the theological education of the church's leaders.
- ▶ **Christmas** 100% designated for regional ministries in the region where the funds are contributed to strengthen congregational life.

This year, as a result of these changes, 100% of your Christmas offering will remain in the region to support the ministries of the Christian Church (DOC) in Georgia

Several years ago, Wendy Wright, in the journal *Weavings*, defined joy as "divinity dancing in us." Let God dance within you as you participate in the 2003 Christmas Offering!



Georgia's Region includes (from top) summer camp, St. Simons' retreats, various churches of all sizes, Dr. Cynthia Hale at the regional assembly, the regional board being named, churches of many ethnicities, men's retreat, women's retreat and youth assembly.



CAMP CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE CENTER



Sign up for an Adult retreat today online or get a registration form at church on Sunday. Find out about the full slate of winter and spring retreats or get more information on these events offered by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia from your pastor or online at www.gadisciples.org.



January 23-25, 2004
Spirituality for Real People: A Retreat Experience

Examine the roots of prayer and the spiritual life. Get a fresh start on your relationship with God!
Presenter: Rev. Landa H. Simmons
Register by 1/9/04 Registration: \$95



January 30- February 1, 2004
The Leadership EDGE

How to set goals and achieve results in "Church Leadership" Are you looking for additional training as a congregational leader? Join us for this opportunity to examine your gifts and talents!
Presenter: Dr. Bob Harris
Register by 1/9/04 Registration: \$95



February 10-11, 2004
VOICES Clergy Retreat

Renewing, reenergizing, refreshing your sense of call and equipping you to assist others in hearing God's call! Clergy are invited to share in a time of fellowship and learning about changing the way Christians think about work; helping them to see careers as ministry to the world on behalf of Jesus Christ!
Presenter: Rev. Doug Skinner; Music: Steve Burton
Sponsored by the Christian College of Georgia
Register by 1/15/04 and save. Registration: \$50



February 27-28, 2004
Camp for Big Kids Winter Retreat

If you missed out on camp as a kid or just want to see how things are going at camp - we have a retreat for you! Pastor and youth ministry teams: invite those persons you would love to see as youth sponsors or as future counselors to this one!
Presenters: Patrick Chandler & Michael Weeks
Register by 1/16/04 and save.
Registration: \$45

Former General Minister and President, Dr. Richard Hamm addresses Regional Ministers in Peachtree Conference Center



Camp Balaam 2003 counselors enjoy The Gardner Room in Woodland Lodge, which is shown below.





An awesome worship service at the 2003 Youth Assembly.

YOUTH-A-PALOOZA

st. simons island
2004

Over 400 will be gathering January 16-18, 2004 for the annual **Youth Assembly** to learn how to "Get Loud" about their faith in Jesus Christ! The new name for this event **Youth-A-Palooza** was chosen by the Youth Activity Council to represent their vision of a group of teens coming together from different congregations to form one community of faith.

If you are familiar with the Lollapalooza Music festival, you know that it features many different styles of music all coming together so that people can learn to appreciate variety. This was behind their decision to give our assembly a name change, and I think we can all appreciate what they are saying about Christ's Church.

Keynoters: Rev. Russell Peterman of Sandy Springs Christian Church and Professor Kathy Whitson of Eureka College will lead



Organized Chaos will be on Saturday

our youth in this learning, fellowship, and spiritual growth event. Students will learn how to live their faith out loud in a world that is moving Christianity toward the margins. Youth and adults attending will leave with new ideas about

how to follow Christ and share their faith in God with others.

Youth-A-Palooza participants and transportation coordinators note

► **Do not forget** to bring your banners to decorate Strickland Hall!

► **We are encouraging** all participants to bring a \$5 offering. Our gifts will go to congregational revitalization in Georgia and to help fund Camp Balaam.

► **Registration will be** from 5:30 to 7:30 pm, Friday.

► **The event will conclude** with worship ending around 11:30 am, Sunday.



George Bennett was chosen moderator at the Regional Assembly.

I give thanks

"I give thanks to Jesus Christ...that he believed that he could trust me...The grace of our Lord rose higher than my sin, and I found it in the faith and love of those whose lives are lived in Jesus Christ." (1 Timothy 1:12-17) Paul's words reflect my gratitude that you have given me a sacred trust of leadership as moderator of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in GA. I will try to serve Jesus Christ as your moderator with the same commitment that God manifested in Sandra Barnhill and Linda Whitmire who served before me.

There are three shared visions I discern to be central to our mission this next year as we continue under the fruitful leadership of Rev. Dr. Zena McAdams and Rev. Michael Weeks. ► **Reconciliation.** In 1854, when the Christian Churches in Georgia gathered for its Camp Meeting, our African-American brothers and sisters were slaves. In 2003, the leading congregation in the Disciples as well as in Georgia is African-American

In 2003 the leading congregation in the brotherhood as well as in Georgia is African American. I believe that a golden age is before us as we allow God to remove the cataracts of race, sex, age, and class.

► **Transformational Ministries.** Churches that fail to plan, plan to fail. The Christian Church (DOC) in Georgia is making plans to be a faithful church. Your church is a part of that plan.

► **Search Committee.** We will be calling a Regional Minister who is faithful and gifted in the ministries of Reconciliation and Transformational Ministries.

When the Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia meets Feb. 21 in Macon, we will focus on these three visions and we will depend on your participation. Ministry teams will be called into being in these three visions ministries, and I pray that you will faithfully serve with your board when called upon.

George H. Bennett



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FROM BEHIND THE WINDSHIELD / REV. ZENA S. MCADAMS

A chance to help where you live

Next week I will pull out the Christmas boxes so that I can decorate my tree during the Thanksgiving holidays. The process is a love/hate relationship. I don't like to assemble the tree, because it is tedious. I struggle stringing the lights, because I am short. However, I love decorating the tree. As I carefully unwrap each ornament, I am flooded with memories from the last 40 years—images of children, Sunday school parties, CWF gift exchanges, Christmas presents. In *Little Tree*, E. E. Cummings poignantly describes the ornaments and the decorated tree:

*. . . look the spangles
that sleep all the year in a dark box
dreaming of being taken out and allowed to
shine,
the balls the chains red and gold the fluffy
threads,*

*put up your little arms
and i'll give the all to you to hold
every finger shall have its ring*

*and there won't a single place dark or
unhappy*

*then when you're quite dressed
you'll stand in the window for everyone to
see
and how they'll stare!
oh but you'll be very proud*

*and my little sister and i will take hands
and looking up at our beautiful tree
we'll dance and sing
"Noel Noel"*

Thinking about Christmas and the region, I wonder what kind of ornaments would dress our regional tree. . . what kind of memories would our ornaments evoke. Would our ornaments dream "of being taken out and allowed to shine"—VOICES clergy retreat, the clergy prayer service the day the war began, ordinations of Wilma, Karl, Brent, Vinetta, Chris, and Kathy, men's retreat, women's spring conferences and retreat, installation services,

dedication of the camp, children and youth at camp, the regional reception at General Assembly, regional assembly worship and workshops. I like to imagine that every branch would be filled and not "a single place dark or unhappy."

The mission and ministry of the Christian Church in Georgia is important. On Dec. 14 and 21, each church is invited to participate in the Disciple Mission Fund Christmas offering. This is an opportunity for individuals to give over and above to celebrate the work of the region. As of 2003, 100% of the Christmas Offering will remain in the region to underwrite our regional work in 2004. By your support, you are buying our ornaments of memory for next year's tree. Let's dance and sing "Noel, Noel."

Waiting impatiently for Christmas behind the windshield,
Zena McAdams
Interim Regional Minister
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