

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Holds Statewide Meeting

Almost 200 members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) gathered at Epworth by the Sea on St. Simons Island last weekend for the church's annual statewide meeting.

The 157th Regional Assembly (Nov. 17-19) was devoted to fostering church unity. The weekend's theme: "From a Divided World to the Table – Transformed in Unity."

The Rev. Dr. Dick Hamm, former general minister and president of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada, spoke during worship services and led workshops on church governance. "Dick Hamm's addresses towards transformation gave us hope and ideas of how to be transformed and why we need to be transformed. People are excited about the possibilities," said the Rev. Dr. Ray Miles. As regional minister, Miles oversees the day-to-day operations of the denomination's Georgia office located in Macon.

During a business meeting Saturday, voting delegates approved a 2007 Georgia Region operational budget of \$529,000, plus a closely linked \$177,000 budget for the Camp Christian Conference Center in Gordon, Ga.

Much of the discussion during the business meeting revolved around one budget line item: a proposal to eliminate funding for crisis counseling for clergy, and to no longer fund the psychological screenings required for seminarians undertaking the ordination process. Ultimately, a motion from the floor ensured that the services will remain in place while a committee seeks out grant funding to cover the annual cost on a sustained basis.

The region provides counseling services for clergy through a contract with the D.A. & Elizabeth Turner Ministry Resource Center in Columbus.

The generally calm discussion of the issue during the business meeting "shows the church can be passionate and yet not be disagreeable with each other," Miles said. "The discussion was vigorous, yet all understood that we were moving ahead together and were interested in the very best for our clergy. The action showed a support for the clergy of this region." The region's Commission on Ministry has more than 65 prospective new clergy under its care and nurture.

The overall tone of the assembly "was one of optimism, and hope for the future," Miles said. "There are still (budgeting-related) problems to be dealt with, but the impression was that we can deal with them as a body together. It felt good to be there and be part of the assembly."

Regional moderator Brad Miller said the assembly was one of the most well-planned that he had ever attended. "The connections, old and new, that we make at these events are so important for the future of the church in Georgia, and this event served those connections well," Miller said. "Things like our worship, our workshops, and Katie Hayes' insightful

Bible study Sunday morning highlight the fact that the Georgia Region is blessed with amazing gifts. The assembly was a great time to celebrate those gifts and more.”

As moderator, Miller presides at region board meetings. He is the senior minister at Brookhaven Christian Church in Atlanta.

There are 65 Disciples churches in Georgia, more than half of which were represented during the regional assembly. Nationwide, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) has nearly 750,000 members representing more than 3,000 congregations.

Disciples’ congregations celebrate the Lord's Supper every Sunday. The table is open, which means that all Christians are invited to participate whether they are Disciples or not. For Disciples, the open table is a powerful symbol of their deep commitment to Christian unity. The open table honors diversity even as it celebrates unity in Christ.

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The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia on the web:
<http://www.gadisciples.org>.

To identify Disciples churches in your coverage area:
http://www.gadisciples.org/Main/Cong_list.asp