# THE CHRISTIAN

A publication of the Christian Church in Illinois & Wisconsin

### **Restore and Rewind: Pentecost Offering**

When it comes to church, we have a lot of negative tapes playing in our heads: "Church is judgmental." "Church is hypocritical." "They're afraid to have fun.""They think they're better than everyone else."

It's time for restoration. Time to rewind the tape.

New Church Ministry is dedicated to fostering faithful communities marked by deep Christian spirituality and a passion for God's love and justice. Like our ancestors, we're going back to the beginning, when new Christian communities gathered together and shared all they had, organizing everything around the Spirit's dreams for their lives and their communities. Yesterday, today, and tomorrow, God is singing a new song: not a song of judgment, but of welcome and forgiveness; not a song of superiority, but of humility and grace; not a song of hoarding, but of sharing everything we have!

God's movement for wholeness is already underway. Your gifts to the 2024 Pentecost Offering, received in most congregations on Sunday, May 12, and Sunday, May 19, are divided equally between our regional CCIW ministry, which supports local new communities of faith, and New Church Ministry, which trains, equips, assists, and multiplies emerging and affiliating leaders to be "movement initiators."

Let's a new song, CCIW Disciples! Add your voice to the chorus and support the 2024 Pentecost Offering.





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### The 80/20 Rule

### RICK HAMILTON, INTERIM REGIONAL MINISTER

I suspect we have all grown a little weary of hearing the work and giving theories about how twenty percent of the people do eighty percent of the work; likewise: twenty percent of the people give eighty percent of the gifts. While those axioms do bear out to be generally true, I want to write today about the eighty/twenty rule from a financial perspective.

I recently turned 60. That means professionals lined up at my door for a "ten-year checkup". Physicians, Lawyers, and yes, Financial Planners all wanted to do a check up on the round number. To be honest, I did most of them. Sara and I have been working with a Financial Planner for about 20 years. It has made a difference in our lives. She always starts the same way, with the same two questions: "Do you still love God enough to give 10%?" This is always followed by the corollary question: "Do you still love your family enough to save 10%?"

We have been living off Eighty Percent of our income for quite some time. There's an excellent chance we will never stop. This is where I could get distracted by a discussion about tithing: How Biblically strong is it? Is tithing a minimum guideline or a budgeting max point for giving? How does one start to "tithe" — with net or gross income. And honestly, I have scripturally informed answers to all those questions. Yet, what I really wonder about is why we don't apply a similar approach to our congregational giving?

I imagine a conversation would start like this:

Outreach should be the first thing we do when we budget as a church. As we model giving and generosity, and as the members see we are committed to generosity, it helps create a culture of generosity throughout the church. So, do we love our immediate neighbors enough to tithe to ministries that impact our community?

"Do we love our immediate neighbors enough to tithe to ministries that impact our community?"

"Do we love our denominational family enough to tithe to it?" Second question: do we love our denominational family enough to tithe to it? If we are living under the guideline of the financial planner's 80/20 rule, the answer in both cases should be "yes". I believe churches that "Twithe" (Yes, it's a word I made up, but you can use it for free), inspire generosity. I believe churches should give equal first percentages of their received General Fund Offerings to Local Outreach AND to the Disciples Mission Fund.

THEN . . . I believe churches should regularly tell the stories of what our giving means in the neighborhood and the world. Tell the stories of Missionaries, tell the stories of Search and Call support from the Region, tell the stories of Church Camp, tell the stories of Ministerial Education, tell the stories of Racial/Ethnic Constituency and Justice Ministries, tell the stories of Disaster Recovery and New Building loans.

And YES, tell the stories of local food pantries and medical outreach organizations, tell the stories of feeding children and buying school supplies, tell the stories of clothes closets and homeless shelters. Tell the stories. Because when you have invested in them, the stories truly belong to you!

Giving and Generosity is a Spiritual Discipline. Twithing is a little bit hard, but a lot achievable if we put our minds and the Spirit to it. And yet, there is a paradox to this generosity thing: you can't outgive God. Go ahead and try.

Generously yours, Rick

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### **Deep Listening**

### ALEX RUTH. ASSOCIATE REGIONAL MINISTER FOR TRANSFORMATION

In Matthew 11:15 Jesus tells the assembled crowd (some of whom had been sent by John the Baptist to ask Jesus if he was the one for whom they were waiting) "Let anyone with ears listen!" (NRSVUE) Notice Jesus doesn't want people to "hear," he wants them to "listen."

There is a distinct difference between hearing and listening. A person who is deaf can listen without hearing, either through reading lips, sign language, or closed captioning. (Which brings up something that bears mentioning, how accessible to those with hearing impairments is your church? Do you have audio assist devices? Do you have closed captioning in your virtual gatherings?) Although I am not proud of it, I am living proof that someone can also hear without listening. If my wife had a nickel for every time I have asked her to repeat something because I wasn't listening the first time, she could take a nice vacation! Oftentimes I hear her, but because I'm thinking about something (or nothing) I don't listen to her. When that happens, I've learned to stop and take a moment for a mental reset. Then I pay attention and focus on her, so that I can listen to her and in so doing, show her that I love and respect her.

Technology has made it fairly easy to be heard. Whether it is through social media, a podcast, or any number of communication tools, it is easy to get our message out to others. It is relatively easy to be heard. But having someone else listen to us, well that is a different story altogether!

Because it is easy to broadcast a message, lots of folks are doing so. Which means the world is a very noisy place. Lots of people are talking, many are being heard, but only a few are truly and deeply listening.

I vividly remember how I felt when someone took the time to listen to me truly and deeply when I was exploring my call to ministry. Dennis slowed down and focused not only on the words I was saying, but also on the excitement and uncertainty behind the words. Because he invested that time, energy, and intention, I've been able to experience so many sacred moments and meet so many inspiring people. I'm sure he had a laundry list of things going on in his life, clamoring for his attention, but he didn't let that hold him back from listening.

Many of our families, friends, neighbors, church members, and even our pastors, are longing for someone to listen to them. To hear them, yes, but to really listen to them. Because as we listen to others we testify to their importance in our lives and we remind them (and ourselves) that we are all fearfully and wonderfully made in God's image.

This year by Eastertide practice is to be intentional about listening to others. I'm starting with my family, and with the people I interact with in my ministry. I'm not going to chastise myself for not listening that deeply to everyone. But I am going to focus on paying more attention, listening deeply, and being present in the moment. Will you join me? I would love to hear the stories of what you hear, of how your life and relationships are impacted by going beyond hearing to deeply listening to those around you.

Journeying Together, Alex "Because it is easy
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"I believe that our Christian faith ought to motivate us to address the environmental concerns that we are experiencing as well as how it disproportionately and unfairly affects some of us, in particular."

### **Knowing Our Home**

ELI ROLÓN JEONG, ASSSOCIATE REGIONAL MINISTER

The word "ecology" derives from the Greek οῖκος (oîkos) meaning "house" and λογία (logía) meaning "study of." Ecology, as the branch of biology known to us today, has roots in the late 19th century, and deals with relationships between organisms and their living environments. Beyond the strict scope of a natural scientific discipline, ecology may refer to the natural world or the environment and how it pertains to all living organisms, including humans. Ecology pertains to us in a real and lived sense, even if we are not ecologists. As Christians, ecology is inseparable from our theological considerations.

In a way, our concern for how we relate to and maintain our living spaces — our houses, offices, classrooms, leisure spaces, and more — is part of this extended notion of 'ecology.' After all, in its simplest form, "ecology" means just that—the study of our house or home. We should also consider our wider environments because drastic changes with dismal consequences are in effect.

In 2022, a research study by the University of Stockholm concluded no rain on Earth is unaffected by "forever chemicals"—human produced compounds used in an array of consumer products that are tied to cancer, developmental and other health risks. These chemicals render rain water, even in Antarctica, unsafe. "Based on the latest US guidelines..." said one researcher, "rainwater everywhere would be iudged unsafe to drink." 1

2023 was the warmest year on record, higher than the previous record set in 2016. The rise in global overall temperature resulted in part from increased emissions because of consumption of fossil fuels, deforestation, and other industrial practices. These changes in our environment are affecting marine life, food production, biodiversity and human health. For instance, over 1 billion tons of food goes to waste every year, thus reducing the potential for nourishment and sustenance of many world populations while also accounting for 6% of greenhouse emissions. These constants are affecting marine life, food production, biodiversity and human health. For instance, over 1 billion tons of food goes to waste every year, thus reducing the potential for nourishment and sustenance of many world populations while also accounting for 6% of greenhouse emissions.

Not all change, even if drastic and catastrophic, results from human intervention. Storms, earthquakes, and fires disrupted living organisms before humans. However, human activity contributes to shifts in our environmental makeup, accounting for close to 50 percent of the increase of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere since 1750. Changes to our environment and ecological concerns are complex, stemming from multiple sources, human and otherwise. Likewise, its effects are nuanced and manifested in distinct ways over various geographies, areas, and communities. The impact of climate change is clear today. However, the drastic effects of changes in our environment are often lopsided, affecting vulnerable people and communities at much higher rates than privileged individuals and communities.

Rev. Dr. Benjamin Chavis, a UCC minister and activist, defined environmental racism as "racial discrimination in environmental policy making, the enforcement of regulations and laws, the deliberate targeting of communities of color for toxic waste facilities, the official sanctioning of the life-threatening presence of poisons and pollutants in our communities, and the history of excluding people of color from leadership of the ecology movements." <sup>5</sup>

Advocates of environmental justice argue that the detrimental effects of our environment often affect people of color and people of socio-economic disadvantage at far higher rates than other folks. For instance, recent studies have found that African Americans are more likely to live in communities that border toxic plants, thus increasing the risk of cancer. Throughout the world, exploitation of land and resources through deforestation and mining often comes at the detriment of indigenous and poor communities.

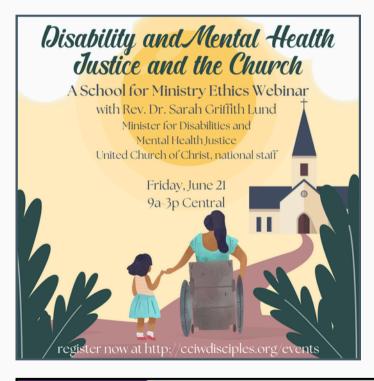
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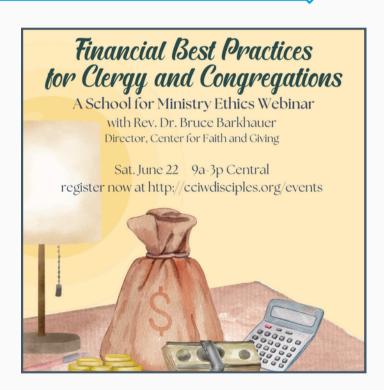


I believe that our Christian faith ought to motivate us to address the environmental concerns that we are experiencing as well as how it disproportionately and unfairly affects some of us, in particular. As Christian environmental activist Rebecca Barnes-Davis said, "we are called first to insist upon justice for all of God's people and creatures. We must never forget the need to protect, defend, and care for God's creation—the earth and all non-human creatures." As Christians, we are called to love our neighbors (Luke 10:27), requiring attention to the needs of our home to ensure we are building together a sustainable and abundant place that is hospitable to all of God's creation in a fair manner.

I am working on a study guide that will hopefully help us navigate discussions and reflections on how we, as Christians, can better understand and respond to our ecological needs. Later this year, I'll share reflections and resources to guide group conversations and self-study.

- 1. https://www.euronews.com/green/2022/08/04/rainwater-everywhere-on-earth-unsafe-to-drink-due-to-forever-chemicals-study-finds
- 2. https://earth.org/2023-to-be-hottest-year-ever-recorded-at-1-4c-above-pre-industrial-levels/
- 3. https://earth.org/the-biggest-environmental-problems-of-our-lifetime/
- 4. https://www.climate.gov/news-features/climate-qa/are-humans-causing-or-contributing-global-warming
- 5. https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/yes-environment-can-have-racist-effects-too/







# UN\*SILENCE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

WITH REV. COURTNEY ARMENTO

A self-paced Clergy Ethics course offered in cooperation with CCIW Disciples Women http://cciwdisciples/ethics

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### Women of Faith Fall Retreat

### BETH RUPE, COORDINATOR OF CCIW DISCIPLES WOMEN

In her book <u>Preaching Women of the Bible</u>, Lisa W. Davison suggests that women have always had a major role in the stories of our faith. And, yet there is little information about them given. Biblical women are often not named; of the 3100 different proper names only 170 are women's names. And, when they are named they are often maligned (consider the stories of Delilah and Jezebel.) And this makes sense when we consider the patriarchal culture of when and where the books of the bible were written and edited.

And yet like hidden gems we find the stories of the brave daughters of Zelophehad who demanded the right to inherit. We see the leadership of Miriam and Deborah. We are awed by the hope of Hannah and the joy of Sarah. Mary Magdalene, fulfilled her call as apostle, sharing the story of Christ's resurrection. Paul counted Lydia, Priscilla, Phoebe and Junia as colleagues. From biblical times until today, women have had a significant role in carrying the good news to each new generation. From the mystics of the Middle Ages to the Sunday School and VBS teachers of today, faith has been transmitted from generation to generation as the wisdom of the maidens, the mothers, and the crones is shared - the stories of lives connected to God.

In these lives and stories, we find hope in what seemed to be hopeless circumstances. We find faith that tomorrow can be better because of God's presence in their lives and world. We find models of compassion and love as they showed us how to care for the sick, provide for the poor, and reach out to the stranger. Join us on September 28 – 29, 2024 for the CCIW Disciples Women Fall Retreat at Camp Walter Scott in Dietrich, IL. During our time together, we will be looking to these women to learn from them how to navigate through life's tough times. We will mine for the wisdom of biblical matriarchs and participate in the prayer practices of women who have taught us new ways to reach out to God in prayer as we seek to grow as Women of Faith.

"From the mystics of the Middle Ages to the Sunday School and VBS teachers of today, faith has been transmitted from generation to generation as the wisdom of the maidens, the mothers, and the crones is shared . These are stories of lives connected to God."

Our keynote speaker is Rev. Jennie Churchman, Senior Minister of Eureka Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Jennie has served with the congregation in Eureka since 2010. She is an ordained Disciples minister and trained spiritual director having completed a program at the Hesychia School of Spiritual Direction in Tucson, AZ. She is a avid hiker having completed the 500 mile Camino de Santiago in northern Spain and the 500 mile Camino route called Le Puy through southwestern France. Jennie has written for The Upper Room Disciplines, taught a class on Spiritual Disciplines at Eureka College in 2013, and led numerous retreats. She is married to Matt Winger. Her daughter Rachel is a student at Bradley University studying engineering. In addition to hiking, she enjoys reading, cooking, gardening, sewing, crafting, watching movies, playing games, and traveling.

Other leaders of the event will include Pearl Witte who will provide us with resources to connect through greeting cards, Jacqueline Myers who will lead crafts, and Nina Scattergood who will lead music. Saturday evening vespers will be led by the Disciples Women of Mosaic Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the event will conclude with worship and brunch on Sunday morning. Offerings will be received for the Blessing Box and for the ministries of Camp Walter Scott.

Come, get inspired by their stories. Come spend some time in nature exploring the beauty of Camp Walter Scott. Come connect to your creative side and inner spirit by making a mosaic candle and/or prayer beads. Come, be strengthened by the Community of Women. Cost for commuter is \$55 and for non-commuter \$80.

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### **Walter Scott Reflection**

## CLAYTON SUMMERS, RESIDENT MINISTER AND CARETAKER WAITER SCOTT CAMP AND LEARNING CENTER

As I write to you today, I'm captivated by the diversity of life around the Sacred Ground at Walter Scott and the ways in which they exist in community. Bald eagles, river otters, and beavers all find sustenance in our lake, oak, pine, and hickory trees root deeply and cast large shadows, and mushroom, moss, and flowers are often overlooked yet are vital to the life and flourishing of the rest.

Our ecosystems reside in their own form of covenantal relationships with one another. They invite us not only to examine how we live into similar relationships as individuals and congregations, but also to how we live into covenantal relationships with the whole of Creation (human & greater-than-human). For us at Walter Scott we do this through being a Green Chalice Ministry. In the face of the climate crisis, we advocate for just and sustainable policy changes at our local, state, and national levels, we transition our energy systems and powered machinery to electric sources, and encourage native biodiversity through a plethora of methods (among many other activities). If you're interested in joining us for this sacred work in your congregation, reach out as we'd be ecstatic to share our experience and connect you with Green Chalice to further this work.

#### WALTER SCOTT REVIEW

After our first quarter in 2024 this year, Walter Scott has had the pleasure to serve nearly 700 meals to assorted retreat groups and have nearly 250 overnight stays. Between our Camp Ambassadors and myself, we are also on track to visit 35 CCIW congregations this year to promote Walter Scott and our ministry during Sunday morning worship. Some other exciting tidbits of happenings include summer camp registration being live on the <a href="mailto:camp website">camp website</a>, our hosting of folks for the <a href="mailto:total solar eclipse">total solar eclipse</a> on April 8, 2024, and goats going strong through the winter!

### WALTER SCOTT PRESENT

We are excited to give an update on the current status of our strategic plan, a living document that will live and breathe and change as we live into it. We won't get to every item in our strategic plan (affirmed by the Regional Church Council this past October), but we will live faithfully into it to continue Walter Scott's Ministry as a place where wild seeds are sown in people for the future of Creation. At the moment we have 33% of targeted items for 2024 completed, 33% which are in progress (somewhere on the road from having a document created about them to just before completion), and another 33% which we have not yet taken up. We'll have more information about our strategic plan progress in the next volume of the Christian along with a neat graphic!

### WALTER SCOTT FUTURE

We have several other programmatic grant projects we are currently working on beyond the scope of our strategic plan which we are not ready to share yet, but which we are hopeful we'll be able to share in the coming months as they are exciting opportunities and ways for this sacred space to flourish. Stay tuned in the CCIW Messenger Email Newsletter or our various social media channels for (hopefully several) announcements!

Peace on the Journey, Clayton "[Our eco-sytems]
invite us not only to
examine how we live
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"If we could only communicate one thing, what would it be?
What would be important enough that we would want to share it all the time, in every conceivable way?"

### **Everything Communicates**

# APRIL MCCLURE STEWART, ACTING DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATION & DEVELOPMENT MINISTRIES

"Everything Communicates." It's one of the truisms of art, design, marketing, branding, etc. We are always communicating not just with the words we say or messages we craft. Rather, EVERYTHING communicates. Every action, every inaction, every interaction... it all says \*something\*.

If you would like to improve your congregation or ministry's communications, a "What-Are-We-Communicating?" audit might be a helpful first step. Start with your digital presence. In our technological age, the first point of contact is often a church's website or social media profiles. The design, content, and responsiveness of these platforms can invite engagement or turn people away. What message are you communicating through these channels?

What are you communicating with the physical spaces of your church? The arrangement of pews, the choice of artwork, the cleanliness of the facilities—all of these elements send a message. A well-maintained environment communicates care and respect. Directional signs and explanations of customs communicate a willingness to extend welcome. "Insider" materials like memorials or old photos may give current attendees a warm, nostalgic feeling but can feel quite alienating to people unacquainted with a church. Dated decor or old signs or announcements inadvertently convey a lack of attention or worse, a deliberate choice to be irrelevant. What is your space communicating?

Consider your actions and behaviors as a church. When someone walks through the doors are they greeted and welcomed? Are they left alone to figure things out themselves? Does anyone explain elements of the service or extend invitations to fellowship or to greet someone after the service? What are you communicating through actions and behaviors?

These evaluative questions are helpful in determining your starting point. But don't stay there. Take the next, critical step of deeply considering with prayer and discernment the direction you want to go. To do that, you might ask "If we could only communicate one thing, what would it be? What would be important enough that we would want to share it all the time, in every conceivable way?"

Think and pray about your answer. Your particular congregation or ministry has been called by God to co-create the world in a unique way. Perhaps your answer is a message of love, grace, and inclusivity. Or maybe it's a call to justice, mercy, and compassion. Perhaps it's a solution to a problem facing your community. Maybe it's a common commitment or passion shared by your congregation.

Whatever answer the Spirit provides, have courage to listen. Asking these questions can be a scary process because they cut to the core of identity and mission. When you intentionally open yourself to the Spirit's voice, you may find the message you are called to communicate is focused outwards, not on yourself. You may be convicted to center your efforts on others rather than on membership, past and present. You may find that practical application of "everything communicates" means intentionally redesigning your physical space. You may find your congregation needs to invest in crafting a robust and faithful online presence. It may mean training your leaders and volunteers to focus on others' welcome rather than your own comfort.

There's good news, though. As you are intentional in your messaging, thoughtful in your actions, and faithful to your calling, you will also renewed and rejuvenated because that core message also communicates to \*you\*!

If "everything communicates," what is the one thing you want to communicate, and how can you make that your priority in all aspects of your ministry? Fear not. Embrace the power of intentional communication, for in doing so, you can truly transform hearts and lives.

Have questions? Need help figuring out next steps? April is available to help you or your congregation or ministry with your communications needs. april@cciwdisciples.org

# DISCIPLE SUMMER CONVENTIONS



22 ª Asamblea Bienal de la Obra Hispana

# Generación es DISCIPULAR - SERVIR - CELEBRAR Salmo 45:17

20 al 22 de Junio 2024 - Kansas City, Missouri

Obra Hispana's 22° Biennial Assembly DISCIPLE - SERVE - CELEBRATE

# Revive Renew

23rd NAPAD Convocation

July 17-20, Salt Lake City, UT



28TH BIENNIAL SESSION OF THE NATIONAL CONVOCATION JULY 11-14, 2024 - GREENSBORO, NC



### **WALTER SCOTT**

# **CAMP & LEARNING CENTER**

- Jun 9 15 CYF (Christian Youth Fellowship)

  Completed grades 9th to 12th
- Jun 16 19 You & Me

  Completed grades K to 5th & Adult(s)

  (Parent, Grandparent, etc.)
- Jun 20 22 Beginners Camp Completed grades K to 3rd\*
- Jun 23 29 JYF (Junior Youth Fellowship)

  Completed grades 3rd\* to 5th
- Jun 30 Jul 6 Chi Rho

  Completed grades 6th to 8th
  - Jul 12 14 Social Justice Weekend Camp Completed grades 9th to 12th

\*Campers who have completed 3rd grade may attend either Beginners Camp or JYF Camp.

Visit us online for registration details, camp costs, and additional camp information. Registration closes 2 weeks before the beginning of each camp.

### **REGISTER ONLINE**





www.CampWalterScott.org



### Gifts to CCIW

### **Annual Fund**

#### **CHURCHES**

First Christian Church, Canton Central Christian Church, Danville First Christian Church, Gibson City Community Christian Church, Lincolnshire Niantic Christian Church Pine Creek Christian Church, Polo First Christian Church, Sullivan Christian Church of Villa Park

### **INDIVIDUALS**

Joe Culpepper Patricia King Don and Julia Martin

# Walter Scott Camp & Learning Center

#### CHURCHES

Central Christian Church, Danville
First Christian Church, Gibson City
Lomax Christian Church
First Christian Church, Petersburg
Pine Creek Christian Church, Polo
Fifteenth Avenue Christian Church, Rock Island
First Christian Church, Sullivan
Christian Church of Villa Park
Sunnyland Christian Church

#### INDIVIDUALS

Jane Cahill
Ken and Patricia Crawford
Joe Culpepper
Linda and Philip Damery
Val Fisher
Harry Meyer
Patti Meyer
Alan and Rachel Moore
James and Dorothy Trefzger
John and Jessica Trefzger
Randy and Linda Williams

#### OTHERS

Effingham County S/R NorthStar International Rekindle Foundation The Christian Church in Illinois & Wisconsin is so grateful for the contributions of these individuals and churches who support our mission through their generous gifts, both designated and undesignated.

Your continued prayers and financial gifts to the Region, Camp Walter Scott, Disciples Women, New Church Ministry, and more make possible our collective ministry. Together, we are making Disciples and offering Wholeness to a fragmented world.

Thank you for being a blessing!

### Disciples Women

#### **CHURCHES**

Centennial Christian Church, Bloomington First Christian Church CWF. Pontiac

#### INDIVIDUALS

Jane Cahill
Michelle Cummings
Fred Fechtmann
Judith Leeper
Peggy Mason
Heather Rinderer
Linda Williams
Pearl Witte

### **New Church Ministry**

#### CHURCHES

Community Christian Church, Lincolnshire

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## THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH (DISCIPLES OF CHRIST) IN ILLINOIS & WISCONSIN receives, connects, nurtures, and resources Disciples communities in Illinois and Wisconsin for mission, witness, and service.

receives, connects, nurtures, and resources Disciples communities in Illinois and Wisconsin for mission, witness, and service.

We minister in the name of Jesus and build relationships locally, throughout our region and denomination, and globally.

We connect and empower congregations to be a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world. Together, we are making disciples of Christ. Your support of the Annual Fund makes this work possible. Thank you for your generosity!

O Yes! I want to be a vital partner inthe mission of the Christian Church in Illinois & Wisconsin! Enclosed is my gift to the Annual Fund O S100 O S250 O S500 O Other

Congregation —

Please clip and mail to CCIW Regional Office, 401 W Jefferson St. Bloomington, IL 61071-3826

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PLEASE PLACE STAMP HERE

