



# THE NEW CHRISTIAN MESSENGER

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## Camp Christian Is Being Adopted!

by Rev. Linda S. Whitmire

The idea grew out of a conversation with another pastor in the Region: Camp Christian, one of our Region's happiest stories, was up for adoption! Well, at least it was seeking support from those who have rejoiced in its ministry and rebirth. These persons would become members of the camp's 'Friendship Circle,' joining others to help under gird the camp and conference ministries with extra financial dollars.

You will remember that the beloved camp site at Gordon, Georgia was closed six years ago by our Regional Board. What had always been a rustic facility had become a run-down facility: unsafe and unacceptable. Should the camp be sold and a new camp started elsewhere? Some new to Georgia said 'yes'. Others, with a history of treasuring the hallowed moments spent in that rustic setting, said, 'NO!' It was for many of us a place filled with sacred memories, calls to ministry, stories shared, grace grown. "How can we help? How can we reclaim 'our' camp?" became oft expressed cries. A plan to raise funds to support the camp's renovation, among other needed missions for the greater church, was initiated: the Sowing Seeds Campaign. The gifts that came, along with designated funds, allowed our Region to start necessary renovations and add what had been needed and dreamed: a year-round facility, expanded to embrace adult and clergy groups needing retreat. Under the outstanding leadership of our Associate Regional Minister, Rev. Michael Weeks, we transformed an unusable summer time facility into clean, safe and attractive sacred space with the ability to serve our church year round. Usage figures tell the story: 272 persons served in 2001 (the year the camp re-opened), 6450 persons used the facilities since 2002, 4403 persons attended a retreat, 2047 summer campers served, 1356 persons have been to a retreat or conference in the last year, 372 Disciples attended summer camp this year.

Rev. Brad Miller, senior pastor at Brookhaven Church in Atlanta and current moderator of our Board when first he came to the camp after the renovations and reopening said, "Two years ago I drove into this camp - when it was condemned - and wept. Today I drove in ... and I wept." Many of us have felt that same wellspring of gratitude and joy at the change, the renewal of this valuable commitment of our shared Christian ministries, this extraordinary gift we offer to one another through our Region's camp and conference facilities at Gordon.



Friendship circle at Camp Balaam

## 'Identity Theft—Who Stole The God In Me?' Is Retreat Theme

Rev. Betty Brewer-Calvert, Director of Women's Ministries, and Ann Haines, President of Christian Women's Fellowship in Georgia invite you to join them for a fun-filled Georgia Disciples Women Retreat, October 13-15, at Norman Park Baptist Assembly. Reconnect your life with God as we discuss the theme - "Identity Theft - Who Stole the God in Me?" Rediscover your passion and the Spirit inside of you. Experience the joy that comes from living God's purpose. Display freely the living Christ in you. Rev. Lois Artis, President of Church Finance Council, is the retreat speaker.



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## UPCOMING EVENTS:

### August 19

CWF Commission Meeting  
Regional Office, Macon

### September 11

NE Ministers Lunch  
Golden Corral, Winder

### September 16

Regional Board Meeting  
Regional Office, Macon

### September 19

Lawrenceville/Athens Area  
Ministers Luncheon  
Golden Corral, Lawrenceville

### September 23

Camp Directors Meeting  
Camp Christian Conference Center

### September 24

Reconciliation Special Day Offering

### October 1

Reconciliation Special Day Offering

### October 2

NE Ministers Lunch  
Golden Corral, Winder

### October 4

Messenger Deadline

### October 13-15

Women's Retreat  
Norman Park Conference Center

### October 17

Lawrenceville/Athens  
Area Ministers Luncheon  
Golden Corral, Lawrenceville

### November 6

NE Ministers Lunch  
Golden Corral, Winder

### November 12

Thanksgiving Special Day Offering

### November 17

Regional Board Meeting  
Epworth-By-The-Sea

### November 17-19

157<sup>th</sup> Regional Assembly  
Epworth-By-The-Sea

### November 19

Thanksgiving Special Day Offering

### November 20

Regional Office Closed

### November 23-24

Regional Office Closed -  
Thanksgiving Holidays

## Michael's Memo by Rev. Michael Weeks

You will read throughout this issue about Georgia Disciples commitment to our camp, conference, and retreat ministries. You will see photographs from both Disciple camps. You will read statistics about retreat and camp usage and you will be invited to support these ministries. I always take a close look at the ministries I am being asked to support before I give. I ask questions like:

- What success has this ministry experienced?
- Is this ministry vital to our church's future?

I am sure you ask the same kinds of questions. Let me answer by sharing some comments from camper evaluations.

- I feel better about myself. I think I can do more and I'm proud of myself.
- I believe at camp I have an alternate personality that is different than at home. I'm less cautious to do exciting things and while feeling independent I don't feel as alone as I sometimes do at home.
- This year at school I was class vice president. And if I did not go to camp, I would not have thought of trying for a high spot in my school. Camp teaches you so many things that you use in everyday life.
- Camp helps you feel freer to be yourself and not have others judge you. At home, many people think I'm a punk, but at camp, I'm just a Christian and people don't judge me the way the world does.
- I have a closer relationship with God.

Why are retreats, conferences, and camps so important to the development of individuals? The answer is found in their words.

More than once in my life I have said at the closing Friendship Circle, "Now we go back to the real world." I was wrong. What these comments and my experience have taught me is that camp is the real world. Camp is the place where you can really be yourself and find your place to serve in a loving Christian community. Please join your Disciple friends in supporting Camp Christian Conference Center.

## Women's Ministry News by Rev. Betty Brewer-Calvert

### Women's Retreat

We can count on the 2006 Disciples Women Retreat, October 13-15 in Norman Park, to be extra special! With mission projects on and off campus, an enthusiastic keynoter to help us rediscover our passion for the Christian faith, spirit-filled worship, and opportunities for fun and fellowship, how can we go wrong?

Through our theme "Identity Theft -- Who Stole the God in Me?," we will look at scriptures that nurture our identity, things that rob us of our identity in Christ, and ways to unleash the power of God that flows from living our identity - God's purpose. Keynoter Rev. Lois Artis is President of the Church Finance Council, the mission funding unit of our churches. Speaking at the Disciples Women luncheon at the General Assembly in Portland last summer, she moved and inspired women from across the church. Prayerfully preparing to be at our retreat in October, she expresses hope that it will "be a powerfully transforming experience for all of us."

Come to retreat! Registration materials have been mailed out and can also be accessed online at [www.gadisciples.org](http://www.gadisciples.org).

### Mix in '06 Vital Statistics

- 3022 attending (633 UCC; 2190 DOC; 42 other; 31 combined DOC/UCC; 51 friends of DOC; 31 friends of UCC; 54 international sisters)
- 31 Georgia Disciples

### Offerings totaling over \$67,000:

- \$31,954 for women's ministries;
- \$28,711 for mission (*Disciples Mission Fund, UCC Wider Ministry, Global Ministries*);
- \$6,738 for Indiana Women's Prison Family Preservation Program (*coins given at mealtimes ensure children can visit their incarcerated mothers and provide multidisciplinary services to help build healthy families*)
- Over 3183 health kits assembled for Church World Service (*plus 655 partial kits completed by an Indianapolis church*)

# CHURCH FOCUS:

## FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH, AUGUSTA

*An Old Version of Church Windows*

*by Rev. Byron Wells*

With a rich history, First Christian Church in Augusta has served the city of Augusta in rich and robust ways since 1835. Mirroring the beginnings of many churches, First Christian originally began meeting in the homes of members and in rented space until the congregation was able to construct its first house of worship in 1842 under the leadership of its founding pastor, Dr. Daniel Hook. In 1845, Alexander Campbell, a founder of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) preached in the pulpit of First Christian Church.



Any article about First Christian Church of Augusta is not complete without mentioning one of its early members, Emily Tubman. "Miss Emily" was a great benefactor not only of First Christian, but many other churches in Georgia and Kentucky. Living a life of simple humility, "Miss Emily" asked that no records be kept of the various gifts she gave, but many churches,



colleges and schools were touched by her generosity. Truly living her faith through faithful

giving and witness, Emily Tubman is a fine example of how we all can make a difference in our community and world by sharing the abundant blessings God shares with us.

First Christian has been located in its present structure since 1876, and its present structure has seen numerous renovations over the years. Upon entering the sanctuary, one is awestruck by the magnificent organ pipes which were installed in 1920. Being blessed with beautiful stained glass windows, the church is celebrating this year the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the installation of its "Good Shepherd" window which was installed in memory of Rev. Alonzo Phillips who died while serving the congregation. In April of 2005 a Georgia Historical marker was installed outside the church honoring the congregation's rich heritage.



With such a rich history, it would be easy for the congregation to rest upon its laurels, but its pastor, C. Don Manning, is leading the church forward with vital community outreach projects, and renovation projects that are positioning the church to continue to serve its community in the future. Just recently the congregation took on the task of collecting toys and games for children who are facing surgery at the nearby Medical College of Georgia. We are blessed to have First Christian as one of churches in the Region of Georgia.

(The church has a very nice web site - <http://www.firstchristianchurcaugusta.org/>. Take a look at the photos of the Tiffany style stained glass windows.)

### Camp Christian is Being Adopted (cont'd from pg. 1)

But there are bills that remain. The loan secured from Church Extension resulted in a monthly payment of \$4082. In addition, there are utility and maintenance needs which stretch our Regional budget each month. "What we need is somebody to adopt us," my friend said. And the idea was born.

The first group to 'adopt' consists of 17 members of Sandy Springs Christian Church: former campers, parents of campers, past moderators who remember the importance of the camp to the Region. We have adopted the camp for the months of September 2006, 2007 and 2008. Our gifts/pledges of \$5450 will cover the mortgage payment and utilities each of the next three Septembers when the camp transitions from summer to year round ministries. Additional gifts are expected as we dedicate our month to the children and youth of Sandy Springs and to those throughout our Region. We are blessed

and privileged to take our place in the Friendship Circle as our camp's first 'adoptees'.

Two additional churches have groups working to secure funds to adopt other months - nine remain! Proudly these who participate step into the Friendship Circle, joining hands with our campers in that closing ritual of every camp week: that time when tears flow freely and gratitude comes in tight hugs, when the Spirit of Christ gathers us in, enfolding us in love shared in a time and place apart. Groups such as parents of campers, or past counselors, or Sunday School or men's groups might want to 'adopt' the camp for a month. May the blessings of our ministries at Camp Christian always be that beacon and measure of our growing together the church of Jesus Christ.

What a privilege to adopt!!

# CAMP CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE CENTER

Peace Talks was our curriculum at most camps this summer, striving to help campers understand on a personal level how to live peacefully in our world. We were not talking about the politics of governments, but focused instead on the spiritual aspects of how one can follow Christ and live a peace-filled life.



**Servants for Christ campers built a low ropes challenge course in the woods this summer at Camp Christian.**



## Peace Talks

Campers enjoy recreation - volleyball, basketball, ping pong, boating, fishing, group building games, hiking, jogging, soccer and softball. The coolest place to be during a warm summer day was in the pool or perhaps those exciting water games which include water balloons.



**Mid Higher's ride the trolley they built.**



Camp Christian graduating seniors posed for a photo on the dock.



Kicklighter CYFer's in small group



Campers also enjoyed singing, small group and worship during camp this summer.



Young Adults enjoy singing and playing guitar.

Thank you to our volunteer directors and counselors who made camp possible this summer. We also want to say thanks to the parents and congregations who helped fund camp this summer by paying registration fees. We look forward to working with you again in 2007.



# Teaching And Learning *by Ronald Midkiff, Team Leader* *Huangshan Oral English Program For Chinese Pastors and Seminary Instructors*

Oh, how I wish I could speak and understand the Chinese language! This morning one of our students preached at Huangshan Church. Mary had preached last summer at Huangshan Church, and I remember how she held the congregation's attention. Well, she preached again today and even though I could not understand what she said, I knew she was preaching with much conviction and feeling. Watching Mary preach reminded me of a Craddock story my class read last week.

You may remember it. Fred tells about visiting in the hospital and meeting a woman who was pounding her fists on the hospital chapel door saying, "Let me in! Let me in!" Fred got someone to open the door and he went into the chapel with her and offered to pray with her. Fred started praying, but soon the woman interrupted him with her own praying—screaming out to God not to take her husband because he was "not ready" and she had kids and no education to get a job. Fred said that she prayed as if she had God "by the lapels" and shouting her prayer to Him. That is what I heard in Mary's prayer this morning as she stood to preach. Such feeling. Such emotion. Such compassion. I really wish I could understand the Chinese language!

But, I must say, I'm beginning to understand a few Chinese phrases. I told you earlier about learning "Huan Ying Guang Ling," which means "welcome." I think I have that "down pat" now. This has encouraged students to try to teach me more phrases. I usually forget what they have taught me within an hour or so, but today I was



walking from the church to the retreat center for lunch and met one of the older believers from the church I had seen but did not know. As we met she said, "Sher fan la" (my pronunciation spelling) I had an epiphany! I knew what she had said to me!. She had said, "It's time to eat!" Of course, I would remember that phrase.

In my first period class, I teach "Integrated Skills" (that means speaking, listening, reading, and writing).

Most of the students in this class I taught the first summer of the program and taught them all three subjects (that means I was their only teacher that summer). We have developed a close bond over the three years of this program. It's special to me to be able to teach them again this last summer. Level 5 is our top class. They are in advanced English materials and can say and understand about anything I say in English or that they read in their textbooks. In this class are pastors of large city churches and small rural churches, Christian publishing editors, TSPM committee persons and pastors, Bible school teachers, seminary teachers, preachers, pastors, CCC workers—a real mix of Christian workers. What a great time we have studying English together!

(Ronald Midkiff is a member of Cherry Log Christian Church. He is finishing his 3<sup>rd</sup> summer teaching English to Chinese pastors in Huangshan, China. Read more of Ron's reports from China at [http://www.gadisciples.org/news/mission\\_to\\_china\\_2006.htm](http://www.gadisciples.org/news/mission_to_china_2006.htm))

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## Church And Clergy News *by Dr. Charles Beadle* *What's Going On Around The Region*

Rev. Ketty Santos has moved from Iglesia El Aposento Alto to begin a ministry with the New Church Ministries Team at Church Extension in Indianapolis. Ketty will coach new church planters. As she begins a new and exciting ministry, we keep the Iglesia in our hearts and prayers.

Rev. J. Lynn White is returning to the Region to serve as pastor at Eagle's Landing Christian Church (McDonough). He is excited to be returning to Georgia, contributing to this new church in a critical stage of growth. He has been minister at First Christian Church in Wilson, North Carolina, for the past six years.

First Christian Church of Sandersville has issued a call to Rev. Dale Andrews to serve as pastor. Dale comes from the Rice Patch Christian Church in Islandton, South Carolina.

Rev. Tammy Dickson has been called to serve full time as Director of Children and Youth at New Hope Christian Church (Lawrenceville).

Several clergy have had health needs. Rev. Nancy Oliver (Peachtree Christian Church) has had hip replacement surgery and is rehabilitating nicely. Rev. Jack Snellgrove (Chattahoochee Christian Church) is also recuperating from minor surgery. Rev. Wendy Miles is home due to the effects of an acute auto-immune illness and is unable to minister to the First Christian Church of Eastman at this time. Please keep Nancy, Jack, Wendy (and Ray) in your prayers.

# Your Regional Board Hard At Work!

By Rev. Brad Miller,  
Regional Moderator

The Regional Board of the Christian Church in Georgia is your representative seeking to guide ministries of the church and act as liaison to the districts. Made up of clergy and lay persons, it meets at least quarterly to make decisions on regional business. The next regional board meeting will concern the budget for the region and for Camp Christian Conference Center for 2007.



At its last meeting, it held an extended discussion of the goals and mission of the regional church. How do church members view the Regional Church? How can it best serve pastors and people of the region of Georgia? What are we doing well? What do we need to work on? How can we all work together to bring the Good News of Jesus Christ to even more people?

Come to the Regional Assembly (November 17-19, 2006 at Epworth-by-the-Sea, St. Simons Island) to see firsthand the direction we are pursuing. The more we can facilitate an open and honest exchange of ideas and stories, the more we become "the church." When that happens, the Body of Christ is strengthened, and God is glorified!

# Reflections On The Mix

by Rev. Betty Brewer-Calvert

Ask any woman who attended the Mix in '06 what she enjoyed and you will get a different answer. Some remember a particular workshop; others liked the dream weavers who reflected on our experiences through music, dance, and the spoken word; others cherished spending time with friends and family. Some women were challenged by one of the preachers or Bible study leaders; some enjoyed the special-themed worship opportunities. Some sisters participated in mission projects or toured the women's prison; others visited Christian Theological Seminary and heard an address from Disciples General Minister and President Rev. Sharon Watkins. Others made a special friend during the scarf exchange or experienced sacred time in the Red Tent, an area set aside for prayer and meditation.

The Mix invited openness to new friends, experiences, music, worship styles, opportunities, thoughts, and actions. Our Sunday preachers, Claudia De la Cruz and Sandhya Jha, called us to realize that God's home has never been made in the "safe places." They said, "When we refuse to come out of our comfort places, we are not basking in the heat of the presence of the Holy One," reminding us not to push away the Spirit. Not every time and place of the Mix was a "comfort zone;" but the Spirit was there as comfort, guard, and guide. Praise God!

For more info, go to [www.dreamonsisters.com](http://www.dreamonsisters.com); "Dream Catcher" or [www.gadisciples.org](http://www.gadisciples.org); Betty's blog and women's link.

# I Grew Up At Camp!

I grew up at camp. And I mean that both literally and figuratively.

It is literally true because my parents ran a church camp when I was a boy. Every summer I looked forward to who would return, who would be new, what kind of fun would be had. That wonderful situation lasted from the year I was born until I was 15 years old.

I figuratively grew up at camp because it was there that I first heard God's call on my life. True, it took me a long time to respond, but it was at camp that my relationship with God began to form and mature. And I am not alone in that.

Statistics tell us that between two-thirds and three-quarters of all ministers trace the roots of their call back to a camp experience. As remarkable as those percentages might be, an even higher percentage of other adults also had their faith awakened and nurtured when they attended camp as children. I expect it will be no different for the kids of today in the Christian Church in Georgia. Each year, children from all over the state converge on Camp Christian and Camp Kicklighter for a week of fun, fellowship and faith building. Having served as a camp

director, I can tell you that camp is all of that and more.

When we support our camp and conference programs, we support the future of the church. This year's summer camping season may be over, but the ministry of camp and conference goes on, and it is worthy of support. Elsewhere in this issue, Linda Whitmire raises an exciting challenge: who will join in and "adopt" the camp? The mortgage of Camp Christian is approximately \$4000 per moth. If at least 12 churches would pledge to "adopt" the camp by contributing enough to pay the mortgage for a month, it would free up dollars to even further enhance this vital and wonderful ministry.

Can your church, Sunday school class, CWF or CMF group help? I am going to ask the question at my church. Read Linda's article; ask a kid in your congregation what camp means to them; ask yourself what has meant to you. And then make a decision to help.

When we strengthen our camp and conference programs, we strengthen our region, and we strengthen Christ's church. Think about it.

By Rev. Brad Miller,  
Regional Moderator

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## From Georgia's Regional Minister:



*Dr. Ray Miles*

Today CNN is filled with stories of the war in Iraq, the military action by Israel and Hezbollah. The world anguishes as wars and threats of wars seem to multiply instead of cease. Bombs, rockets, guns, and killing seem to be the easiest solution for the differences we face. If people believe or live differently, either beat them into submission or eradicate them from our world. That attitude seems to have become common even in our churches. Liberals and conservatives continue to batter each other over the differences between them. Each shouts the other must agree with "me" or we can't be together. Within congregations we have struggles for power simply so one side can prevail. Search committees are polarized about who should be their next minister.

In the midst of all this, the Spirit of Jesus asks why we insist on right and wrong. Cannot we find ways to live with differences? If we really loved our neighbor as ourselves wouldn't we want the best for those who are different than us, rather than insisting they agree with us?

Within the Disciples of Christ we have long held that diversity is one of the gifts we bring to the table. We talk about relationships with God through Jesus, and with each other, being more important than a set of beliefs. One of the distinct appeals we offer people is that they don't have to agree to a set of beliefs, no test of faith, in order to be a part of us. To be part of us takes the willingness to explore the Word of God for what is being said to you as an individual, and the willingness to allow that others can do the same also.

**To be part of us takes the willingness to explore the word of God for what is being said to you...and to allow others to do the same.**

There is no authoritative voice imposing anything on you.

When we make that attitude work within our congregations; accepting and loving people who aren't like us; when we can be in relationship with people who have different views, then we have something invaluable to offer the world. May God help us discover what it means to be children of the Prince of Peace.

I hope you plan to be at our Regional Assembly November 17 - 19 this year. Information will be continually added to the Regional website. It is our Georgia family gathering and a time to share relationships with one another and with God.

It's good to share the journey with you.