

# THE NEW CHRISTIAN MESSENGER

ONLINE-ONLY  
EDITION

[www.gadisciples.org](http://www.gadisciples.org)

VOLUME 83, ISSUE 3

June 2006

## FIRST ONLINE-ONLY EDITION PUBLISHED!

*by Rev. Bill Thompson*

You are reading our first "online" edition of the New Christian Messenger. We are publishing this issue only in electronic form. If you are receiving this, you either already receive the regional email sent out by our webmaster Buddy Ray, or it has been forwarded to you by a regional friend or your congregation.

We encourage you to send this on to friends, print and post on your church bulletin board, or print in your church newsletter. The Christian Church in Georgia is entering the summer months, with its typical slow down in contributions to regional ministries. This, along with some unique financial challenges facing the region, mean that we have not had the funds to provide this edition in print to our usual mailing list.

At the regional assembly at Ray of Hope Christian Church last November, you will recall the announcement of a "bridge fund" to help the region through a cash shortage. We are very grateful for those who have contributed to this fund. It has helped tremendously; however, the cash shortage has continued partly due to the lack of regular increased contributions from churches, the pulpit vacancies in eleven of our congregations, and the continued need to sell the Woodland church property. This is a matter for prayer on the part of all of our churches. We need to have a strong region to assist us and lead us in the coming years. Let us pray for God to send forth the financial resources to strengthen our regional church in the remainder of this year.

We hope you enjoy the articles in this online issue. In August, we will again mail out the New Christian Messenger. Deadline for articles for the August issue will be August 9<sup>th</sup>.

## 2006 Is Busy Year For Disciples General Minister

Ever wondered what it's like to be General Minister of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)? Dr. Sharon Watkins, our new General Minister, maintains a web site ([www.disciples.org/watkins/](http://www.disciples.org/watkins/)) that is interesting to explore. I took a look at her schedule for 2006 and counted more than 45 speaking engagements during the first six months of the year.

One of the first meetings of the year was with the Administrative Committee of the General Board. This 20 person committee conducts business between meetings of the General Board. Our own Rev. George Bennett (former regional moderator) serves on this committee. The next meeting of the General Board is to be July 22-25, 2006. Each of the regional ministers attends the annual General Board meeting and presents a report of the work of his or her region. I encourage you to explore the Disciples web site and find out what is going on in the church. Dr. Ray Miles represents the Christian Church in Georgia at these meetings.

One of the ongoing processes is that of finding more efficient ways of financially supporting the work of the general church. In May, a Mission Funding task force met to find better ways to finance the church's general ministries. The task force is expected to report its findings to the General Board in July. Read the entire news release on the web:

[www.disciples.org/dns/releases2006/0653.html](http://www.disciples.org/dns/releases2006/0653.html)



## UPCOMING EVENTS:

**June 17**

YADA - Camp Christian Conference Center

**June 18**

Chi Rho Camp - Camp Kicklighter

**June 19**

Chi Rho Camp - Camp Christian Conference Center

**June 21-25**

Mix in '06 - Indianapolis, IN

**June 25**

Junior Camp - Camp Kicklighter

**June 26**

Mid Hi Conference - Camp Christian Conference Center

**July 6**

Servants for Christ - Camp Christian Conference Center

**July 7**

Genesis Camp - Camp Christian Conference Center

**July 9**

Camp Balaam - Camp Christian Conference Center

**July 9**

Created to Be Me - 8th Grade Conference - Christmount Conference Center, NC

**July 16-20**

SERF Youth Leaders Conference, Christmount

**July 17**

Junior 2 Camp, Camp Christian Conference Center

**August 2**

Lawrenceville-Athens area ministers luncheon, Ryan's, Lawrenceville

**August 9**

Messenger deadline

**August 19**

CWF Commission Meeting, Regional Office, Macon

# Michael's Memo

by Rev. Michael Weeks

Summer camp is underway and I want to encourage you to read stories and see pictures on our website from each camp. Please help the youth and children share their new knowledge about **peace** when they get back home. By way of introducing this summer's theme-**PEACE TALKS**, I want to remind you of an old story you have likely heard before. Six visually impaired men went to "see" an elephant. Each one approached the creature from a different direction. Making their astute observations, they each claimed to know the truth about the beast. Their conclusions were quite varied, including a wall, a spear, a snake, a tree, a fan, and a rope. The part of the elephant they happened to touch determined their perspective.

This story is a useful way to think about the themes of *Peace Talks*. In each of the daily discoveries, a scripture gives a different way of understanding peace.

- Some are very personal;
- others emphasize the community.
- Some talk about our inner life;
- others focus on the world.

Combined with each scripture lesson are words for peace from around the world. These words were chosen because they help to describe these various aspects of peace. Taken together, these discoveries can enlarge our understanding of peace and encourage us to grow as the community of peace that God desires.

We are presenting all of these ideas to our campers so that they might understand a broad peace perspective. We hope that the children and youth will come to understand that the One who created and sustains us wants us to live together in unity and harmony—spiritually, emotionally, socially, and politically.

We are excited about the summer and look forward to our youth returning home with new learnings and enthusiasm. **PEACE TALKS** was written by New Earth: Christian Resources for the Outdoors and I borrowed some of the words in this article from their handbook.

There will be follow-up articles on **PEACE TALKS** in **Michael's Blog** which is accessible from the webpage. I will write an article about each one of our six discoveries in this summer's curriculum. I will see you online.

# Women's Ministry News

by Rev. Betty Brewer-Calvert

## Woman-to-Woman Worldwide

Bolivian visitors Petrona Poma and Maria Navarro arrived Wednesday, June 7, and were greeted at the airport by hosts Ana and Angel Guardiola of Community Christian and Betty Brewer-Calvert. They were guided around Atlanta with help from high schoolers Abigail Ortega of Iglesia El Aposento Alto and Henry Brewer-Calvert of Decatur First. Night time hosting was also provided by Cathy and Leroy Moorehead of Watkinsville First with daytime assistance from friends at UGA, Watkinsville First, Antioch Christian, and Athens First. Sundays were enjoyed at El Aposento Alto and Fayetteville Community Christian Church.

Petty Poma  
playing  
traditional  
Bolivian  
instrument

Petty and Maria live six hours apart (La Paz and Cochabamba) and are friends through Methodist women's ministries and the sewing cooperative in which both participate. While in Georgia, our guests toured local ministries, visited with church women, and "saw the sights." Accompanying them on the van ride to Indianapolis for the Mix in '06 were: Nancy Brewer of Cherry Log, Katharine Phlegar of Athens First, Amanda Reynolds of Barney Welcome Hope, and Betty and Katie Brewer-Calvert of Decatur First.

If you would like to help offset the cost of their trip, please send your contribution to "The Christian Church in Georgia" marked "Woman-to-Woman."

2006 WWW Haiti trip applications are available at the regional office or at

[www.discipleswomen.org](http://www.discipleswomen.org).

Please pray for the 31 Georgians traveling to the Mix in '06, June 21-25. For reports, check: [www.gadisciples.org](http://www.gadisciples.org).

## Retreat Information

Set aside October 13-15 for the 2006 Women's Retreat at Norman Park! Keynoter Rev. Lois Artis, a delightful, articulate, and faithful sister, is President of the Church Finance Council. As head of the unit which receives and distributes mission funding for ministries throughout the Christian Church and the world, Rev. Artis has a real sense of stewardship of all life. Watch for registration materials in July.



# CHURCH FOCUS: FIRST ATLANTA CHINESE CHRISTIAN CHURCH

*Our Mission Dollars Assist Nine Year-Old Church*

*by Rev. Byron Wells*

A fast growing area within the Christian Church (Disciple of Christ) has been that of new Hispanic and Asian congregations. Through giving to Disciples Mission Fund, we are able to assist these new church starts and have seen the fruit of our labors pay off with vibrant churches which enrich our fellowship. First Atlanta Chinese Christian Church is one such congregation. We are blessed to be able to call them brothers and sisters in Christ.

Born a little over nine years ago, this congregation has found a wonderful niche in which to praise God, and share the good news of Christ in Gwinnett County. Meeting for worship each Sunday afternoon at Peachtree Corners Christian Church in Norcross, the congregation is made up of about forty family units with an average age around forty. Many of its members are working professionals living in Metropolitan Atlanta who juggle work responsibilities, long commutes, and family responsibilities along with serving their beloved Lord and church. The membership is unique among the many Chinese churches in Atlanta in that over 90 % of the church's members are from mainland China, with the rest of its membership being from Taiwan and Hong Kong.



Rev. Bill Thompson recalls the first service in its present building - a baptismal service. "I could only understand a few words in the service and they were when Rev. Zhu gave the prayer in the baptistery saying, "I belong to Jesus."

Reverend Michael Zhu ministers to this congregation and focuses on challenging its members to share the word of God with friends and neighbors. Most of its members discovered the congregation after receiving an invitation to attend a service, a prayer meeting in a member's home, or a Bible Study. Twice a year the congregation sponsors a weekend retreat with outside speakers who challenge and inspire the congregation.

Knowing the importance of living in community and covenant with one another, Reverend Zhu asks that our Region continue



to remember First Atlanta Chinese Christian Church in prayer as the congregation strives to fulfill its call of faith and service. The congregation is searching for a Youth Minister as the congregation takes intentional steps to expand its ministry to youth and children, and asks for prayer that the Holy Spirit will move someone to step forward and take on this new and vital ministry. Reverend Zhu invites anyone to come and worship with First Atlanta Chinese Christian Church as we all seek to serve Christ.

## Kentucky Youth Group To Sing At Atlanta First

The Middletown Christian Church of Louisville, KY will return to The First Christian Church of Atlanta with their 2006 Musical "The Basics of Life" on Monday, June 19 at 7 p.m. This group last performed at First Atlanta in 2001.



We will be serving a baked potato and salad bar dinner prior to their show on Monday, at 5:30 p.m., and then enjoy their musical at 7 p.m. All are welcome to join us at First Atlanta for "Dinner and a Musical" on June 19 - simply call

770.939.4358 to let us know you're coming for dinner or email [admin@firstchristianatlanta.com](mailto:admin@firstchristianatlanta.com).

## New Hope Christian Plans VBS

New Hope Christian Church in Lawrenceville will be hosting their VBS program July 23-28. Borrowing from the 2004 Camp theme - "Join the Party!" - the event is for ages 3 yrs old through those finishing 4th grade. To register call 770-963-1176 and leave names, ages, address and a contact number with secretary or on machine.

Thanks and

You're Invited—

so Join the Party!



# Church And Clergy News

## What's Going On Around The Region

Rev. Katie Hays has been approved for transfer of her ministerial standing into the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and called as minister for First Christian Church in Lawrenceville.

Rev. Dr. Roger Sizemore has been called as Interim Senior Pastor by First Christian Church of Atlanta. Roger comes to First Atlanta from First Christian Church of Savannah, where he served for the last two years as Interim Senior Pastor. He has also served as Pastor of Brooks Christian Church and serves as the Treasurer of the Christian Church in Georgia.

Rev. Janetta Cravens, First Christian Church Macon and Rev. Jack Snellgrove, Chattahoochee Christian Church, have completed training to be coaches for pastors. The training was done under the leadership of Dr. George Bullard at Lake Hickory Institute. Rev. Snellgrove serves as Chair of the Commission on Ministry of the Christian Church in Georgia.

Dr. Dianne Bales has been called by First Christian Church in Winder to serve as part time minister to youth and children.

Rev. Martha Womack at St. Andrew's in Macon has been approved for licensed ministry there with youth and music emphasis.

Rev. Chris Goss from First Christian Church in Marietta has been approved in his transfer of ministerial standing into the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Rev. Janetta Cravens, minister at First Christian Church Macon announced her engagement to William Boyd.

Former Cherry Log associate, Rev. Rebecca Heller, is engaged to Mike Lekan. They have announced their wedding for September 2, 2006, at the United Church of Christ, Kent, Ohio. Rev. Heller pastors First Christian Church in Kent, Ohio.

Ray of Hope Christian Church in Decatur is celebrating their 20th anniversary. In twenty years they have grown from 4 people to thousands of members. Congratulations to "The Ray."

Eagle's Landing Christian Church is awaiting final approvals from the zoning officials before they break ground on their first building. The church has extended a call to Dr. J. Lynn White, former minister at Sandy Springs Christian Church. Lynn has been Senior Minister at First Christian Church, Wilson, N.C. Dr. White will start in late August.

Iglesia el Aposento Alto and Centre Evangelistic la Pierre Anguilar (our Haitian congregation) have both been approved for cosigning of loans by the Regional Board. Both congregations are beginning programs to construct their buildings.

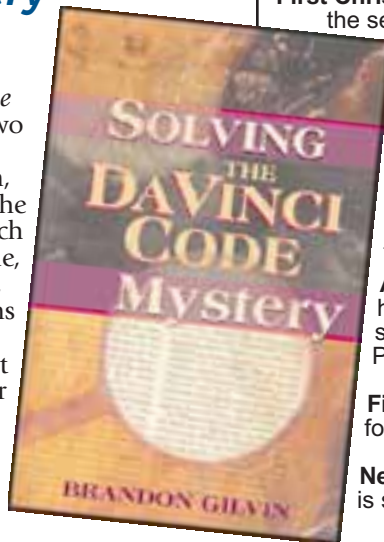
## Solving the Da Vinci Code Mystery Heads to Third Printing

Chalice Press has announced that its book, "Solving the Da Vinci Code Mystery," is headed to its third printing in two years.

"Solving the Da Vinci Code Mystery," by Brandon Gilvin, helps readers separate what is fact and what is fiction in "The Da Vinci Code," a best seller book by Dan Brown upon which a newly released film is based. Through the use of the Bible, noncanonical texts, and a wealth of historical scholarship, Gilvin elicits thought from readers through his explanations to many of the questions from the popular title.

Since Gilvin's book was released by Chalice in 2004, it has continued to be a top seller and served as a catalyst for the creation of a new series by its publisher, the Popular Insights series, which explores popular novels and uses them as an entry into theological discussion. To find more on the title, visit: [www.chalicepress.com](http://www.chalicepress.com) or call

1-800-366-3383.



## Pulpit Needs Keep Regional Staff Busy

Those churches who are in transition include the following congregations. Regional staff are working with search committees to secure leadership for each of these.

**Peachtree Corners Christian Church** – Tom Money began an interim ministry on April 24<sup>th</sup>. He founded the congregation in 1985. A search committee is being formed.

**Loganville Christian Church** – Clay Manley is serving as the interim minister on a part time basis

**Sandy Springs Christian Church** - Searching for an interim lead pastor. In the meantime Erin Lobst and Danny Gulden are carrying the ministerial load assisted by members of the congregation.

**First Christian Church of Atlanta** – Dr. Roger Sizemore has begun a time as interim minister serving with Associate minister Kathy McDowell.

**Union Christian Church in Watkinsville** - Phillip Price continues as interim while the congregation goes through self examination and preparation to begin the process of calling a new pastor.

**Friendship Christian Church in Athens** is being served as interim by the team of Ray Austin and Hoyt Huff. They have appointed a search committee and will be working on calling a pastor soon.

**Guyton Christian Church** is being served in the interim by Doug Holden. They are involved in search and looking at candidates now.

**First Christian Church in Sandersville** is involved in the search process looking at candidates and is being served in the interim by Doug Job.

**First Christian Church in Waycross** is served by interim minister Raymond Lowe and is reviewing candidates for the position of pastor.

**First Christian Church in Savannah** has just entered the pastoral transition phase.

**Antioch Christian Church in Watkinsville** has entered the transition phase and is being served in the immediate interim by David Perkins.

**First Christian Church in Athens** is searching for an associate pastor.

**New Hope Christian Church in Lawrenceville** is searching for an associate pastor.

# As The Spirit Moves

Rev. Brad Miller,  
Regional Moderator

On June 4<sup>th</sup>, the church celebrated Pentecost. It is the celebration of the disciples encountering the rushing winds and tongues of fire that signaled the coming of the Holy Spirit. In response, the disciples went into the streets to begin the important work of building Christ's church. The Good News was made known and 3000 people came forward that day.

In the months and years following that first Christian Pentecost, those who sought to spread that Good News faced tremendous roadblocks. For many, the dedication to their Spirit-led task meant being ostracized in their own communities. For many, the ministry they undertook led to imprisonment and torture. For many, preaching God's Word led to death. Yet, with all the risks, with all the known dangers, they persevered.

Because of the movement of God's Holy Spirit among the original followers of Jesus, the church was born. And because of the movement of God's Holy Spirit today, the church is sustained. Make no mistake: Christ's church was not born merely of human efforts, nor is it sustained by such. Christ's church is sustained, even thrives, when we dig deep and seek to understand where the Holy Spirit is leading us.

This is not an easy task. In many cases, I have only recognized the Spirit's guidance in my life after the fact. It is easy to get discouraged when we are in the midst of big decisions, or crises. But we have the experience of knowing that the Holy Spirit is real, that the Holy Spirit is present and the Holy Spirit will guide us if we will only listen, and persevere, no matter the obstacle in front of us.

Want to see the Spirit at work? Look around the region: Iglesia El Aposento Alto is ready to break ground on a new facility. Eagles Landing is preparing to call a new pastor and looking to a ground breaking. Cherry Log is moving ahead with a new facility. Center Evangelistic la Pierre Anguilar is ready to build its first facility. Peachtree Christian Church is planning to expand. All to God's glory and to further the ministry of the church of Jesus Christ.

These congregations serve to remind us that with prayer, with perseverance, with openness to God's Holy Spirit, the church, born on Pentecost, can and will move forward. Thanks be to God!

## Thanks To Our MESSENGER ANGELS

It is with genuine thanks that we affirm those who have given to the ministry of the New Christian Messenger during 2005-06. Thanks to the nearly \$5200 offering, we have been able to underwrite nearly half of our issues. It is again time to renew your subscription to the Messenger. Our goal for 2006 is \$10,000. When we underwrite this goal, we will provide a new year's worth of regional communications. Please mail your check to **The New Christian Messenger, 2370 Vineville Avenue, Macon, Ga. 31204.** Your generous gift will be much appreciated and is greatly needed. Send your gift this month!

### Contributions since Summer, 2005 (in alphabetical order):

Hazel Adams  
Ruth Rosebery Adams  
Dave & Ann Alexander  
Elizabeth Alexander  
Mizell & Julie Alexander  
Alan & Judith Allen  
First Christian Church, Athens  
Sandy Springs Christian Church, Atlanta  
Linda Barner  
Lala Baughman  
Mildred Bell  
Billy & Evie Bennett  
Lola Bethel  
Bogart Christian Church, Bogart  
Robert & Barbara Boyte  
Sue & Terry Baker  
George Camp  
Jim Caton  
Dirk & Laura Chandler  
Patricia Chadwick  
Nancy Chapman  
Margarette Chappell  
Lorna Clark  
Rebecca Clark  
Bob & Ida Ann Clarke  
Sara Cobb  
Jim & Sandra Collins  
David & Fay Conine  
Kenneth & Marcia Courts  
Reginald Daniel  
Johnnie & Alice Daughtery  
Ned & Jean Dawson  
Lyman & Lily Delk  
Hal & Ann Doster  
Ray & Gloria Dotson  
First Christian Church, Eastman

Heike Eubanks  
Bill & Sue Exley (memory of Billie Hillis)  
J. B. Farris  
Deborah Froehlich  
Ann Giles  
Guyton Christian Church, Guyton  
Bill & Carolyn Hammonds  
Morgan & Doris Hodges  
Kathie Howell  
Hoyt & Betty Huff  
Judson & Martha Faw  
Jane Langford  
Bill Lewis  
St. Andrew Christian Church, Macon  
St. Andrew Christian CWF, Macon  
Kathy & Dave McDowell  
Elizabeth & Ralph McElhanon  
Jim & Diane McLendon  
Cecil & Doris McLaggan Jr.  
Jim & Judy Mowrey  
Martin & Shirley Muns  
Dorothy Murphy  
Harriett Nix  
Thomas & Alma Noell  
John Novikoff  
Bob & Vesta Porter  
Carolyn Register  
Betty Reese (honor of Courtney Montgomery)  
William & Ginny Rittmueller  
Frances L. Roberts  
Don & Katie Robinson  
JeNeill Sewell  
DeWitt & Minnie Sheffield  
Billy & Sue Shirey  
Frances Shumake  
Cris and Landa Simmons

Ruth Slenz  
P. R. & Erlene Smith  
Ralph & Emily Smith  
James Sosebee  
Olin & Beatrice Southard  
Milton & Virginia Summerall  
J. L. & Mildred Suttles  
Bethesda Christian Church, Tennille  
Bill & Cheri Thompson  
Sara Tillman  
James Torbert  
Del & Juanita Von Almen  
W. J. & Claudette Wade  
Harry & Sally Walker  
Burdett & Shirley Wantland  
First Christian Church, Warner Robins  
Linda Whitmire  
Judy Zittrouer

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Pam Mikovitz .....Administrative Assistant  
Brooke Ostberg .....Financial Administrator  
Milton Summerall .....Disciples Men Coordinator

# From Georgia's Regional Minister:



*Dr. Ray Miles*

Can you believe it has been one year since I began serving as your Regional Minister? I have been welcomed and encouraged by the people of the region. I have enjoyed visiting many churches. I continue to meet new folks as we share the story of the church in this Region and beyond.

*"There are boundless opportunities here for new ministries. People are waiting to hear what Jesus can do in their lives. It's an exciting time"*

I've also been doing some reflecting. There have been surprises and unexpected rough spots — finances, churches in transition and crises in congregations. Those have not taken away the calling and vision I feel.

I continue to have hope, and I still believe that God has called me to be here. The proof is in congregations that are alive and growing. I've met people filled with hope for the church. They are seeking to be what God calls them to be. Growing numbers of people are hearing the call of God to enter ministry with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). There are boundless opportunities here for new ministries. People are waiting to hear what Jesus can do in their lives. It's an exciting time.

So what do I think needs to be done next?

*First*, we need to clarify our mission and vision statements. We need to clearly say what God is calling us to be and to do as the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia.

*Then* we need to see that we are doing what God has called us to do. We need to make sure our ministries line up with our mission and vision statements. In other words, we need to be **mission driven**. That will mean doing some new things and not doing some older beloved things.

*Third* we need to discover ways to transform congregations. The setting in which we do ministry has changed immensely. We need to transform the church, renew our minds, hearts, and methods so that we can be exactly what God calls us to be. As we do that, God will touch the church and bless us with strength and abilities far beyond our imaginations.

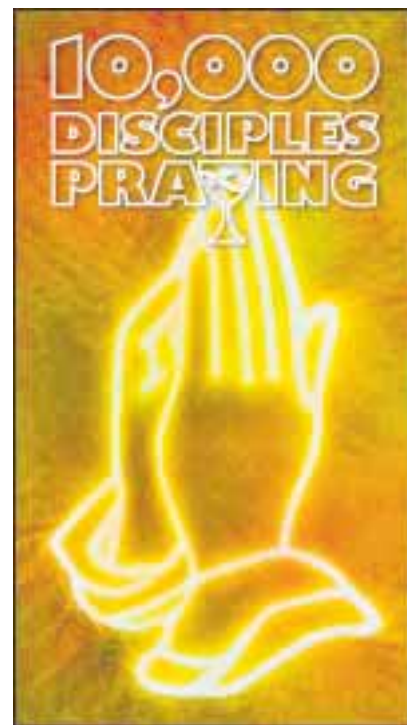
This Pentecost season reminds us that the Spirit of God can touch us as mightily as it did the apostolic church. We can be as transforming as they were. Pray with us and work with us to accomplish that.

## Has Your Church Joined PRAYING DISCIPLES?

"Imagine the impact of thousands of Disciples praying daily for our church!" Sharon Watkins, General Minister and President of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) invites you to become part of a community of people praying daily for the Church and its leadership.

10,000 Disciples Praying is an opportunity for Disciples in the United States and Canada – as well as partners in all parts of the globe – to pray for the work of the church and its leaders. Together our efforts will help the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) live out its vision of becoming a faithful, growing community of believers.

You are encouraged to join this powerful initiative and show your commitment to pray for the church on a daily basis. You will find resources on this site that allow you to become part of 10,000 Disciples Praying, explore new dimensions of prayer, and ways to encourage others to join in this exciting opportunity. Register online at [www.disciples.org/10000](http://www.disciples.org/10000).



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