



# THE CHRISTIAN ALABAMA-NORTHWEST FLORIDA

A Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) In Alabama-Northwest Florida Publication

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The Regional Office is located at 861 Hwy 52, Helena, AL 35080  
205-425-5245 \* 205-425-5246 (FAX)

## REGIONAL STAFF

Regional Minister  
John Mobley  
jpmobley2@aol.com

Associate Regional Minister  
Dale Braxton  
braxtondale@hotmail.com

Admin. Asst./Office Manager  
Susan Henderson  
alnwfl@aol.com

Women's Ministries  
Betty Wright  
btywright@aol.com

Youth Ministries  
Nisha Warbington  
nisha7@aol.com

Young Adult Ministries  
Diane Wood  
dwservant@aol.com

Minister of Anti-Racism and Reconciliation  
Sekinah Hamlin  
revhamlin@gmail.com

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## **DATES FOR YOUR INFORMATION**

### APRIL

- 4 Easter Offering (to support the General Ministries of the Church)
- 7 Licensing and Ordination I (9:15 a.m.) - Regional Office
- 12 Senior Adult Ministry Cabinet (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office
- 15 - 16 College of Regional Ministers - Indianapolis, IN
- 17 - 20 General Board of the Christian Church - Indianapolis, IN
- 23 - 25 Alabama-NW Florida Regional Assembly - First Christian Church, Decatur

### MAY

- 2 Camp and Conference Sunday (congregational promotion)
- 4 Licensing and Ordination II (9:15 a.m.) - United Christian Church, Montgomery
- 8 & 15 Pre-Miracle Day workdays at First Christian Church, Anniston (call 256-236-1316)
- 8 "Let's Talk" - Women's Spring Gathering (10 am-3 pm) - First Christian, Montgomery
- 12 Committee on the Ministry (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office
- 15 Biennial Planning Session (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office
- 16 - 23 Pentecost Offering (for new congregation establishment)
- 20 Anti-Racism Team Conference Call (4:00 p.m.)
- 29 Convocation Executive Board (10:00 a.m.) - Mt. Moriah Christian Church, Letohatchee

### JUNE

- 5 Region-wide Miracle Day - First Christian Church, Anniston
- 5 - 7 Discovery Camp (begins and ends at 10:00 a.m.) - YMCA-Hargis
- 7 - 11 Junior Camp, Chi Rho Camp, and CYF Conference (begins and ends at 10 a.m.)-YMCA-Hargis
- 13 Ordination Service - Nathan Hartley (4:00 p.m.) - Mt. Moriah Christian Church, Letohatchee
- 14 Staff Planning meeting (10:00 a.m.) - Regional Office
- 20 - 25 Fine Arts Camp - Noah's Ark Retreat Center, Panama City Beach, FL
- 23 - 27 ICWF/DW Quadrennial Assembly - Greensboro, NC
- 26 Regional Convocation One-Day Workshop - Mt. Moriah Christian Church, Letohatchee
- 28 Project Advisory Team (6:00 p.m.) - Primera Iglesia Cristiana, Ft. Walton Beach

## REFLECTIONS FROM THE REGIONAL MINISTER



“...to the Ends of the Earth” is the theme for the 2010 Regional Assembly for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Alabama-Northwest Florida. The Assembly theme in 2008 emphasized the first part of Acts 1:8, “And you shall be my witnesses....” In 2010 we are reminded that God’s call to be a witnessing community extends far beyond our own communities, and far beyond our own Region. Indeed, we are called to be witnesses to the good news of God’s love to the ends of the earth. In other words, we are called to a global mission in which we seek to witness and serve as a united community of Christ’s followers. Jesus was wanting his disciples to see that the same spirit that is active and alive in Jerusalem and all Judea is also active and alive in Samaria and even to the ends of the earth. As part of a global family of Christians, the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region is making room during this Assembly for our global ministries to be shared and celebrated.

The Disciples of Christ have a long-standing history of global mission work. Today, through Week of Compassion, Disciples have an ongoing witness to the love of Christ as we respond to those who are experiencing great need due to natural and/or human-made disasters. Today, through our Global Ministries, which takes us all over the world, Disciples are in relationships of mutual support and solidarity with Christian partners as, together, we give witness to the good news.

This Regional Assembly will provide opportunities for us to hear stories of God’s work in the world. It will be a time for us to expand our awareness of the connections we share with other Christians in other places. In particular, we will hear about brothers and sisters in Honduras who seem open to a deepening covenant relationship with Disciples in Alabama-Northwest Florida. This new relationship has the potential, I believe, for teaching us much about what God wants from us as global Christians living within God’s realm.

Our faith reminds us of God’s unfailing love for God’s world. May we find a new appreciation and a new desire to be active participants in what God is doing in all parts of the world through the ministries we share together as Disciples of Christ.

Your partner in ministry,

John P. Mobley



**The 2010 Men's Retreat in Alabama-Northwest Florida was held on March 12-13 at YMCA-Hargis. The retreat leader was Rev. Eugene Fisher and the theme was "God First - - Spirit, Mind, and Body." Thirty-four men participated**

## REFLECTIONS FROM THE ASSOCIATE REGIONAL MINISTER

### *We've a Story to Yell to the Nations*



Reflecting over the theme for the Regional Assembly “To the Ends of the Earth”, my mind went down memory lane to a song I heard on the radio. *“We’ve a story to tell to the nations that shall turn their hearts to right, a story of truth and mercy, a story of peace and light, a story of peace and light. For darkness shall turn to dawning, and dawning to noonday bright and Christ’s great kingdom shall come to earth, the kingdom of love and light.”* The theme suggests to us that we are to be Christ witnesses to the end of the earth, we are to proclaim the message, to shout it from the roof tops. We’ve a story to yell to the nations. We have a song to be sung to the nations that shall lift their hearts to the Lord, A song that shall conquer evil and shatter the spear and sword.

Acts 1:8 says “You shall be witnesses unto me,” The Lord appoints them their work, and with authority assures them of an ability to go on with it, and of success in it. “It is not for you to know the times and seasons- this would do you no good; but know this...you shall receive a spiritual power, by the descent of the Holy Ghost upon you, and shall not receive it in vain, for you shall be witnesses unto me and my glory; and your testimony shall not be in vain, in the country about, and all the world over.”

Recently, we went to Honduras and we experienced what it means to be witnesses from our doorsteps to the end of the earth. We experienced that extravagant hospitality and the desire to really become our brothers' and sisters' keepers. We all have a part in the worldwide spread of the gospel. We should all be "world Christians."

We are missionaries ordained from our mothers' wombs. This helps us to find our purpose in life. God is leaving His church on earth a little longer for the evangelization of the nations. We are missionaries with a message. We've got a unique gospel that deserves a hearing in the ears of every human being on earth. We are missionaries for God's Glory. It isn't so we'll make a great name for ourselves or have a lot of fun traveling to different locales. It's for His Glory alone.

See you at the Assembly!

Dale C. Braxton



**Sixteen persons participated in the 2010 PEPP Retreat at YMCA-Hargis on February 26-27. Members of the Region's Anti-Racism Team led the retreat on the theme, "Anti-Racism and Reconciliation."**

## **“BEING WELL: CONGREGATIONAL HEALTH, VITALITY, AND YOU!”**



Even though many parts of the Region were challenged by snow and ice, the third annual church transformation event was a great success. “Being Well: Congregational Health, Vitality, and You!” was hosted on February 12-13, 2010, by First Christian Church, Birmingham, and was attended by approximately 100 persons. Rev. Bill Lee, pastor at Loudon Avenue Christian Church in Roanoke, Virginia, brought a dynamic message on Friday night, and he also led a conversation with ministers/spouses at a breakfast on Saturday as well as leading a plenary session on Saturday morning. Weather prevented Dr. Toni Craven from being with us as had been planned. Although many who planned to participate were unable to make the trip to Birmingham, those who were able to attend found helpful workshops, enriching worship, meaningful fellowship with other Disciples, and useful tools for both personal and congregational transformation. All who attended received the gracious hospitality of First Christian Church, which provided for all of our needs, including a delicious lunch on Saturday.

Evaluations following the event were very positive. If you were unable to attend, please know that you were missed. We hope to have a full house at our next such gathering.

Please remember to register your email address on the website. This will allow you to receive regular newsletter updates that will keep you informed on all of the latest news and events in the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region.

### **WHAT YOU NEED TO DO**

Go to [www.alnwfdisciples.org](http://www.alnwfdisciples.org)

Click on "register" in the top left hand corner and follow the process.

It is that simple!

## **2010 REGIONAL ASSEMBLY SET FOR APRIL 23 - 25**

The 2010 Regional Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Alabama-Northwest Florida will be held at First Christian Church, Decatur, Alabama, on April 23-25, 2010. Complete information on registration and housing was sent out in the January and March Leader’s Packets and is available on the website <[www.alnwfdisciples.org](http://www.alnwfdisciples.org)>

The 2010 Regional Assembly will focus on the theme, “...to the Ends of the Earth.” The Assembly will emphasize the mandate from Christ, found in Acts 1:8, for his disciples to continue his work of proclaiming the good news to the ends of the earth. We will be joined by several partners representing ministries that are taking the Disciples witness to the ends of the earth. These partners include: Rev. Amy Gopp, Rev. Sandra Gourdet, and Rev. Felix Ortiz. Please see the write-up below to learn more about these special guests.

## OUR ASSEMBLY GUESTS



**Rev. Amy Gopp** serves as Executive Director of Week of Compassion, the relief, recovery, and development ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the U.S. and Canada. A native of Ohio, Rev. Gopp received a Bachelor's degree from the American University School of International Service, Washington, D.C., in 1994, followed by a master of Arts degree in Conflict Revolution from the McGregor School of Antioch University in Yellow Springs, Ohio, and a Master of Divinity from Union Theological Seminary in New York in 2005, the year she was ordained. She has lived in Yugoslavia, Bosnia, and Croatia, serving as a peace activist in war-torn areas. She served as Intern Coordinator with Disciples Peace Fellowship for four years prior to coming to Week of Compassion as Associate Director. She began her service as Director in 2008.

Rev. Gopp will be the preacher at the Friday night worship service and will be a part of the workshops on Saturday afternoon.



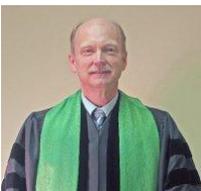
**Rev. Sandra Gourdet** serves as Executive in the Africa Office of Global Ministries, a joint ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ. Rev. Gourdet and her husband Daniel, began service with the Division of Overseas Ministries in 1973 and have served on the mission field in the Congo, Zimbabwe, and Haiti. Born in Birmingham, Alabama, Rev. Gourdet was ordained at the Macedonia Christian Church, Birmingham, in 1999. She received Bachelor's degrees from Miles College and the University of Alabama. She also studied at L'Accueil Fraternal, LeChambor Sur-Lignon, France, and she completed her theological education at the University of South Africa, where she received a degree in 1999. Rev. Gourdet and her husband, Daniel are the parents of two grown children.

Rev. Gourdet will be the preacher on Saturday morning, and she will give leadership to the Saturday afternoon workshops.



**Rev. Felix Ortiz-Cotto** serves as Executive in the Latin America and the Caribbean Office of Global Ministries, a joint ministry of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the United Church of Christ. A native of Puerto Rico, Rev. Ortiz-Cotto served as a congregational pastor prior to beginning service with the Division of Overseas Ministries in 1985. He was ordained by the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Puerto Rico in 1976, after having received a Bachelor's degree from the University of Puerto Rico and his master of Divinity degree from the Evangelical Seminary of Puerto Rico in Hato Rey. Rev. Ortiz-Cotto is married to Maria Esther Cruzado-Amador, who coordinates People-to-People programs through the Division of Overseas Ministries. Rev. Ortiz-Cotto and his wife, Maria, are parents to two adult children.

Rev. Ortiz-Cotto will be a part of the Saturday morning worship and he will give leadership to the Saturday afternoon workshops.



**Rev. Cameron Douglas** has served since 2006 as pastor of First Christian Church, Decatur, which is hosting the 2010 Regional Assembly. Under his leadership the congregation is engaging in many ministries that touch lives in the community and far beyond. Holding the distinction of being the first "Global Mission Congregation" in the Region, First Christian Church embraces a ministry of witness and service that reaches all around the world in the name of Christ. Rev. Douglas has served as District 1 President and has been active in the work of the Regional Board. He was ordained in 1985 after having received an undergraduate degree from Purdue University and graduate degrees (M.Div. and D. Min.) from Christian Theological Seminary and Anderson University School of Theology. Rev. Douglas is married to Diane Douglas, and they are the parents of two adult daughters.

Rev. Douglas will preach at the final worship service of the assembly, which begins at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday.

## **REGIONAL ASSEMBLY WORKSHOPS ON SATURDAY AFTERNOON**

Four plenary workshops will be offered in the sanctuary at First Christian Church, Decatur, on Saturday afternoon of the Regional Assembly, which will take place on April 23-25, 2010. Each workshop will be 45 minutes, with a 30-minute break between the second and third workshop. Here is the line-up of workshops:

**2:00 p.m.** - *“Compassion...to the Ends of the Earth”* (Led by Rev. Amy Gopp, Executive Director, Week of Compassion) Rev. Gopp will share stories and give information about the ways that Week of Compassion is making a difference in the lives of individuals and communities both close to home and around the world.

**2:45 p.m.** - *“Global Mission Congregations”* (Led by Rev. Sandra Gourdet, Area Executive, Africa Office, Global Ministries) Rev. Gourdet will help participants understand the importance of the “Be A Global Mission Congregation” initiative, and she will encourage participants to be intentional in their commitment to be involved in ministry that reaches to the ends of the earth.

**4:00 p.m.** - *“Possibilities for Partnership in Honduras”* (Led by Rev. Felix Ortiz, Area Executive, Latin America and the Caribbean, Global Ministries, and the 8-member delegation from Alabama-Northwest Florida who went to Honduras January 29 - Feb. 3, 2010) Participants will learn more about the elements of partnership with a global ministry church. They will also hear stories and see pictures from those who recently made a trip to Honduras and who believe that this Region needs to embrace partnerships with both the Christian Commission for Development in Honduras and the Evangelical and Reformed Church of Honduras.

**4:45 p.m.** - Dialogue with Presenters at the first three workshops. This 45-minute session will offer time for questions and answers and an opportunity for deeper discussion related to the earlier presentations.

## **DON'T MISS “MUSIC FOR MISSIONS” ON SATURDAY EVENING DURING REGIONAL ASSEMBLY**

On Saturday evening, April 24, following an All-Assembly Barbecue Dinner, everyone is invited to “Common Grounds” – a coffee-house style worship service at First Christian Church, Decatur. This service will be a celebration of the musical gifts of many talented young people in the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region. The “Music for Missions” program will begin at 7:00 p.m. This musical event is open to anyone, even those who have not registered for the Assembly. There is no cost to attend; however, an offering will be collected to create a new Regional fund for youth and young adult mission work.

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE REGIONAL BOARD MEETING ON FEBRUARY 20, 2010



- \* The Board approved a Design for Senior Adult Ministry, making the senior adults a recognized fellowship group of the Region.
- \* The Board received the Audit for 2009 (copies will be furnished upon request).
- \* The Board approved a Regional Budget for 2010 which projects income and expenses in the amount of \$452,975.
- \* The Board approved revisions to the Region's Refund Policy for Regional events (see the newly-revised policy below).
- \* The Board approved of an "Executive Search Model" that had been previously approved by the General Board and commended for use by Regions in their search processes for Regional Ministers.
- \* The Board voted to give full congregational status to Primera Iglesia Cristiana Hispana, Anniston, Alabama, as the newest congregation in the Region.
- \* The Board received numerous reports from the program ministries of the Region, from Districts, from fellowship groups, from the General Board representative, and from the Executive Director of Christian Services for Children in Alabama, and from Regional staff.
- \* The Board celebrated the successes of the current biennium and expressed gratitude to staff, officers, and all those who have served in leadership roles.

### PRIMERA IGLESIA CRISTIANA HISPANA, ANNISTON, CELEBRATES BAPTISM



On Sunday, February 21, 2010, the Primera Iglesia Cristiana Hispana, Anniston, received a certificate of recognition of its status as a fully-affiliated congregation of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Alabama-Northwest Florida. On the same day, the congregation celebrated the baptism of five adult members of the church.

**(Pictured here is Pastor Carmen Reyes, assisted by Faustino Cruz, administering baptism as members of the congregation witness the sacred act.)**

## **REFUND POLICY**

Refund Policy for events sponsored by the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region: 100% refund for emergencies, provided that notification is received prior to the beginning of the event; 50% refund for emergencies in which notification(written) is made after the beginning of the event; 100% refund for non-emergencies if requested in writing at least seven days prior to the first day of the event; No refunds will be given for non-emergency cancellations after seven days prior to the beginning of the event. Written requests for refunds must be received by the Regional Office, 861 Highway 52, Helena, AL 35080 (email <alnwfl@aol.com>), within seven days of the last day of the event.

While refunds are not available other than as outlined in this policy, substitutions will be allowed as long as the original registrant, or responsible adult, is able to locate an eligible participant who is able to take the slot and as long as the original registrant, or responsible adult, communicates this information to the Regional office. The Region will not be responsible in assisting in identifying a substitute. Notification should be provided to the Regional Office as soon as possible and any substitute must complete the necessary paperwork prior to arrival at the event.

Approved by the Regional Board, February 20, 2010

## **PRE-MIRACLE DAY WORK DAYS PLANNED FOR MAY 8 AND MAY 15**

Hopefully each congregation is making plans to participate in Miracle Day at First Christian Church, Anniston, on Saturday, June 5, 2010. Packets of information have been mailed to those persons who have been named as local coordinators in congregations. This information will be helpful as each congregation promotes Miracle Day. If your congregation has not yet received this information, please email the Miracle Day Volunteer Coordinator, Nancy Cobb, at <ncobb@knology.net> to request a packet for your congregation.

Due to the nature of some of the projects that are being planned for Miracle Day, there is some work that needs to be done prior to June 5. In particular, the painting that will be done in the sanctuary on June 5 will require some sanding and priming well before Miracle Day. The surface needs to be dry before the paint goes on. Some of the outdoor projects may also need some work done prior to June 5. If you or others from your congregation can commit to one of the prep-work Saturdays (May 8 and 15), please call First Christian Church, Anniston (256-236-1316) to give your name and contact information. Those who may have conflicts that will prevent them from working on the big Miracle Day (June 5) will especially want to consider coming to be a part of one of these smaller Miracle Days in May.

## **"LET'S TALK"**

All Disciples Women are invited to share in conversation regarding Women's Ministries in the ALABAMA-NORTHWEST FLORIDA REGION

DATE: May 8, 2010 - 9:30 - 3:00 p.m.

PLACE: FIRST CHRISTIAN CHURCH, MONTGOMERY

LUNCH WILL BE SERVED

Please notify the Regional Office, by May 3, of the number planning to attend from your church, via email at [alnwfl@aol.com](mailto:alnwfl@aol.com).

**IMPORTANT!! - BIENNIAL PLANNING SESSION**  
**Saturday, May 15, 2010**

At the beginning of each new biennium, the elected officers, District presidents, fellowship group presidents, Committee/Division chairpersons, and Regional staff gather to prepare for the next two years. This Biennial Planning Session will take place at the Regional office on Saturday, May 15, 2010, beginning at 10:00 a.m. The major work on this day will involve sharing of names of Disciples in the Region who should be asked to serve on the Divisions and Program Committees of the Region for the next biennium. It is hoped that those who are gathered will represent all the different areas of Regional life and will be able to offer names of capable persons to serve in various capacities. This task is always made easier, however, if willing workers would volunteer to serve on a Regional committee.

**Please call the Regional office (205-425-5245) or email the Regional Minister at <jpmobley2@aol.com> if you are interested in being asked to serve during the 2010-2012 biennium.**

**OUTREACH GIVING UPDATE**

The giving, through February, 2010, by congregations in Alabama-Northwest Florida to the Disciples Mission Fund and the four Special Day Offerings (Easter, Pentecost, Thanksgiving, and Christmas) is showing a 26.42% increase from the amount given in 2009. Church-wide gifts to Disciples Mission Fund and the four Special Day Offerings decreased by 12.12% from the amount given in 2009. Week of Compassion giving in Alabama-Northwest Florida (regular and designated) increased by 264.88% over the amount given in 2009.

Disciples outreach ministries are carried out in partnership between general ministries, ministries of higher education, Regions, congregations, and other related ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The financial support given by your congregation enables this partnership to be effective in carrying out the ministry of Jesus Christ. Your commitment to our shared ministries is greatly appreciated.

**EASTER SPECIAL DAY OFFERING**  
**MARCH 28 - APRIL 4, 2010**



Please give generously to support the Easter Offering, which supports the general ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Your support of this offering will make it possible for Disciples to extend our witness from our doorsteps to the ends of the earth. General Ministries supported through this offering include Disciples Home Missions, Division of Overseas Ministries, Church Extension, Christian Church Foundation, Disciples Benevolent Services, Pension Fund (for ministerial relief), Council on Christian Unity, Disciples of Christ Historical Society, and Higher Education and Leadership Ministries.



On March 15, 2010, Ana Diaz (pictured, center) was presented with a ministerial license for her ministry as a Church Planter with Primera Iglesia Cristiana Hispana, Fort Walton Beach, Florida. Pictured with her are the members of the Project Advisory Team which is giving oversight to the development of this new congregation. After 16 months the congregation is averaging nearly 50 in worship and offers programs throughout the week. Jose Diaz, Ana's husband, serves as lead Church Planter.

## PENTECOST SPECIAL DAY OFFERING MAY 16 - MAY 23, 2010



The annual Pentecost Offering provides an important stream of funding for the establishment of new congregations in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). One half of this offering goes to New Church Ministry, which sponsors training events for new church planters and offers counsel and support to the whole church as it seeks to establish 1,000 new congregations by the year 2020. This goal, established in 2001, at one time seemed too lofty for Disciples. But thanks to the leadership of partners in the New Church Ministry office, Disciples have already established more than 600 congregations, and we still have a decade to go before reaching 2020.

The other half of the annual Pentecost Offering is returned to the Region in which it is given to support Regional new church work. In Alabama-Northwest Florida, the funds from the Pentecost Offering enable the Region to support specific projects with start-up funding. The Program Committee on Church Development gives oversight to the Region as it identifies locations for the establishment of new churches, secures leadership for those new churches, and monitors the new church in its formation. Most recently the Regional Board celebrated the full recognition of Primera Iglesia Cristiana Hispana in Anniston, Alabama, as the newest Disciples congregation in the Region. This congregation began its formation in 2005, with Regional support made possible through the Pentecost Offering. Currently funding is being provided toward a new congregation that is in formation in Ft. Walton Beach, Florida. This exciting new ministry is growing in spirit and in numbers, and it is impacting many lives in the Ft. Walton Beach area. Disciples are a part of this effort through the Pentecost Offering. Please give generously!

## NEWS OF THE CLERGY

**Ana Diaz** was been approved for a ministerial license by a subcommittee of the Committee on the Ministry in February. The ministerial license was formally presented to her at Primera Iglesia Cristiana Hispana, Ft. Walton Beach, on March 15, 2010. A service of ordination is planned for **Nathan Hartley** on Sunday, June 13, 2010, at Mt. Moriah Christian Church in Letohatchee. **Danny Reeves** has begun his ministry as supply pastor with Mt. Pleasant Christian Church in Mathews, Alabama. **Jonathan Fisher** has been granted ministerial standing by the Committee on the Ministry in Alabama-Northwest Florida. He serves as an Army chaplain in Huntsville and has received denominational endorsement through the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). A service of celebration of Jonathan's ministry with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) will be held at First Christian Church, Huntsville, on April 25.

## CONGREGATIONS SEEKING A MINISTER

Falkville, Cedar Plains (Jerry Smith is Interim)

Madison, Madison (Bob Stegall is Interim)

Tuscaloosa, First (Phillip Hayes is Interim)



Rev. Phillip Hayes was recognized by First Christian Church, Tuscaloosa, and by the Alabama-Northwest Florida Region for 50 years of ministry since his ordination in 1960. This milestone was celebrated on Sunday, March 21, 2010, at First Christian Church, Tuscaloosa. Rev. Hayes was presented with gifts and a luncheon in his honor. He and his wife, Dorothy, had both of their children present on the occasion.

**Pictured here are: Regional Minister John Mobley, Dorothy Hayes, Rev. Phillip Hayes, and Sandra Brennan, Board Chairperson at First Christian Church, Tuscaloosa.**

## CIVIL RIGHTS PILGRIMAGE A TRANSFORMATIVE EXPERIENCE FOR ALL



Sixteen women and men made their way from Fort Worth to Montgomery during TCU Brite Divinity School's spring break this year. The class, "Exegesis in Hebrew Bible: Amos," included a Civil Rights pilgrimage, which FCC in Montgomery hosted under the direction of Pastor Susan Diamond. The event, a dream seven years in the making, was a resounding success!

Here's a few of the highlights that were included in the three-day pilgrimage:

During the first day of their journey, the seminarians visited the Civil Rights Memorial, Rosa Parks Museum, Dexter King Memorial Church and Parsonage, and several other sights around Montgomery as they reflected on the Bus Boycott. The following day, Rev. Bob and Jeannie Graetz led the group as they continued their pilgrimage to Lowndes County to the Interpretive Center in White Hall and then on to Selma, where they attended the Slavery-Civil War and Voting Rights museums in addition to walking over the Edmund Pettus Bridge. The last day of the Civil Rights Pilgrimage was spent in Birmingham, where the students visited 16<sup>th</sup> St. Baptist Church, Firehouse Shelter, and the Civil Rights Institute. While in Birmingham, they met with the Alabama-NW Florida Region's Anti-Racism Team at First Christian, who graciously provided space for the meeting and dinner.

Each evening was spent in theological reflection and debriefing between leaders and students. Host families in the church provided hospitality. It was a transformative time for everyone—students and hosts alike! Already, conversation with denominational partners is taking place as we evaluate and consider future opportunities for service to the larger church. Many thanks to all who made this experience so meaningful.