JOIN in ...  
A NEW BEGINNING IN 2022

Launching a COVENANT PARTNERSHIP 
Michigan & Illinois-Wisconsin Regions

“See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them.” (Isaiah 42:9)

January 2: Launch Sunday
All our churches across both regions will join together—using special prepared resources: litany, prayer, and a video sermon by our new Regional Minister, Teresa Dulyea-Parker.

April 18-20: Clergy Retreat
Clergy from both regions, be sure to carve out three days for YOU after Easter. You have more than earned it, given the past two years. Special effort has gone into making registration cost LOW and providing a powerful keynoter, Rev. Dr. David Anderson Hooker who will help to consider our stories within the narratives that shape us.

... And there’s more to come!

It’s NOT a Merger!
Changes for the Christian Church 
(Disciples of Christ) Michigan Region

Most of us have heard and learned by school math that two halves make a whole. To be quite blunt, due to financial strains and an outlook for the future, the Michigan Region is entering a Covenant Partnership with the Illinois/Wisconsin Region as we face the reality of staying “Whole.”

The issues surrounding these challenges have been studied through task forces and regional committees. Options and alternatives were presented (and without all the details), the most logical and effective choice resulted in our forming a Regional Covenant Partnership.

We Did Not Merge!
Probably the most asked question that has tumbled around our churches and church members is “why did we have to merge?” The simple and honest answer is that WE DID NOT MERGE! The Michigan Region is still the Michigan Region and the same is true for the Illinois/Wisconsin Region.

Each Region will continue to operate separately with a Regional Board. Each will maintain their own finances. Crystal Conference Center (Camp Crystal) is still solely owned by the Michigan Region.
It’s a New Covenant Partnership
Somewhere in the process of us talking about the future with the Illinois/Wisconsin Region, the word “partnership” seemed to have gotten lost, and merger substituted. So let us reset the original intention and define what this Covenant Partnership is! It begins January 2 when we ask all our churches to use special worship resources as we join together in praise and prayer.

In the past both Regions have employed staff that consisted of a Regional Minister, some Associates and at least one administrative office person. In Michigan for numerous years, we have had only a Regional Minister and an administrative assistant striving to support our congregations. With the knowledge that our Regional Minister (Eugene James) was retiring at years-end and that we would be unable to hire a full-time replacement, alternatives were explored.

Knowing that other Disciple Regions have “shared” Regional Ministers, the Michigan Region began to look for a partner that might be willing to share their Regional Minister with us. With many hours of exploration and prayers by many faithful Michigan and Illinois/Wisconsin Disciples, this joint “partnership” with the Illinois/Wisconsin Region was conceived.

What Will Covenant Partnership Mean?
So the next anticipated question is “what will this Covenant Partnership do?” Those involved in the process of putting the partnership together see this as a stewardship action that is fiscally sound. By the agreement with the Illinois/Wisconsin Region, we will financially receive the services of a “shared” Regional Minister for the Michigan Region. Truthfully this is the major component in the partnership. There are certainly other advantages that we can share in this partnership, but the sharing of Regional Minister responsibilities is key.

Three Regional Associates
To support Teresa Dulyea-Parker, our new Regional Minister, we have called upon three ministers in Michigan to serve on a part-time basis as Regional Associates—Rev. Bob Larimer (North), Rev. Peter Morgan (West), Apostle John Harvey (East). They will work closely with the Regional Minister and congregations and clergy in each of their Districts to support the congregations.

Regional Office has Moved … Across the Street
In the continued theme of good stewardship and financial responsibility, changes have taken place in the Regional Office. As of this writing, the Regional Office building was sold and moved across the street to First Christian Church, Lansing. They have graciously rented us space for our Administrative Assistant, Jessica Burton. The church also will provide meeting space on occasions when the Region needs to hold in-person meetings.

We Need Your Prayers
In summary, we all know change is inevitable. You can embrace it or you can fight it. We have taken this difficult time (a lemon) and turned it into a positive (lemonade). As followers of Christ, we know He has a plan and holds the plans for the future of our Region. Please help us embrace this partnership that allows us to remain independent as the Michigan Region yet be enriched by our new Covenant Partnership with the regional ministries’ leadership of the Illinois/Wisconsin Region.

Please join in prayer with your Disciples members in congregations across both our regions, calling upon God’s wisdom and strength as we launch this new journey together in 2022. With your support and prayers, we will succeed.

Russ Tiller
Blaine Christian Church member
Michigan Disciples Board member