

Disciples LGBTQ+ Alliance

AllianceQ

Pentecost Sunday

Virtual Celebration Honoring the
*30th Ordination Anniversary of
the Rev. Allen V. Harris*



A Blessing and Dedication of Gifts to the Allen V. Harris
Open & Affirming Ministries Endowment Fund
and an Affirmation of the Gifts of Every Body

May 23, 2021

4:30 p.m. PT | 5:30 p.m. MT | 6:30 p.m. CT | 7:30 p.m. ET

Disciples LGBTQ+ Alliance – AllianceQ

Setting a place at the table for persons of all gender expressions and sexual identities

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Pentecost Sunday Virtual Celebration Honoring the *30th Ordination Anniversary of the Rev. Allen V. Harris*

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Sunday, May 23, 2021



Gathering

Thank you for joining us for this Pentecost celebration. You are invited to introduce yourselves in the chat window; share your name, pronouns and location. We're so GLAD you are here! The Disciples LGBTQ+ Alliance – AllianceQ – is more than 40 years old, with its beginnings in 1979 as GLAD: the Gay, Lesbian and Affirming Disciples Alliance.

Allen V. Harris was an early leader in the Alliance. Today we bless and dedicate gifts to the Allen V. Harris Open & Affirming Ministries Endowment Fund and affirm the gifts of every body, for this is our call: joining in God's work of transforming the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) into a just and inclusive church that welcomes persons of all gender expressions and sexual identities into the full life and leadership of the church. For more information about the Alliance, see page 11.

Welcome

Rev. Luther Young

Call to Worship

**Rev. Sara Nave Fisher, Rev. Dr. Jonathan Fisher,
Sophia Fisher, Ransom Fisher, and Lenora Fisher**

Please join us in the Call to Worship. Adapted from Chalice Worship #98 and Chalice Hymnal #488.

Siblings in Christ, we are called:

Called to follow Jesus.

What a challenge! What an opportunity!

Called to move, as Christ did, among the people;

To feel with them;

To care for them;

To change their lives with love.

Called to name, as Christ did, the oppressions that destroy our world:

Those of which we are already aware

And those injustices we have not yet learned to recognize or name.

**ALL: Today we celebrate the Spirit's Call on those who have gone before,
as we look to them as examples of a life of faith:**

As the Spirit called Isaiah, who in time marked by terror, proclaimed that the lion would lie down with the lamb

As the Spirit called Mary Magdalene, who ran from the tomb crying out that Jesus was alive

As the Spirit called the early believers at Pentecost,
as the Spirit called John and Junia,
as the Spirit called Carol Blakley and Debra Peevey,
as the Spirit called people throughout history to step up,
to make a difference, to proclaim the Gospel of Love,

And as the Spirit called Allen Harris,
who, for even more than thirty years has faithfully loved and served, following the way of Christ...

ALL: So we are called...

Called to discern those gifts of life God has hidden deep within each one of us.

Called to discover and to share those gifts of our hearts, our bodies, our whole selves.

Called to place our gifts in God's care, from which they came.

Called to follow Jesus

And yes, we can answer,

We can follow, because we have been called first to love.

Called to be God's children.

Called by name.

ALL: Thanks be to God!

Prayer

Dann Bain

Query

Rev. Nathan Russell

Musical Reflection

"I Am [God's] Child" by Moses Hogan

Rev. Luther Young

Scripture Readings

Isaiah 56:1-8
Matthew 12:1-8

Rev. John Payne
María "Cuca" Pérez

Message

“Human Laws and Holy Calls”

Rev. Stephanie Kendall

Song

William DeShay Jackson

“All Belong Here” by Lenora Rand and Hannah Rand, *The Holy Other Songbook*

*When you're not sure who you really are
When all you feel is the shape of your scars
And you have more wounds than you can count
Open your eyes, look all around
You aren't alone, this is your home*

*Come and remember who you are here
Do this to remember who I am
Come and remember you belong here
All belong here*

*When you don't know how to forgive
When locked doors seem like the only way to live
And you've got more questions than you can count
Open your eyes, look all around
You aren't alone, this is your home*

*Come and remember who you are here
Do this to remember who I am
Come and remember you belong here
All belong here*

*At this table come as you are
Broken and bleeding's ok
At this table eat and be filled
Come and drink in this grace.*

*Come and remember who you are here
Do this to remember who I am
Come and remember you belong here
All belong here*

Communion

Rev. Chaim (C.J.) Rodriguez

Offering Ourselves + Dedication of Gifts

Rev. Melissa Guthrie Loy

Please join us in a Litany of Commitment.

Adapted from Chalice Worship #512 and a Litany of Commitment by Rev. Lee Hull Moses.

Celebrating the extravagant love and grace of God, we offer our whole selves,
we recommit to the work of justice and inclusion.

What an abundance of gifts we have to offer:
musical talent, the melody of laughter,
the use of our hands in cooking and repairs,
the use of our minds in problem solving,
curiosity, compassion, patience, urgency,
spiritual reservoirs, financial resources,
obedience, and courage to act.

Everyone has something to give. Every body is a gift.

ALL: I am a gift. You are a gift. Every body is a gift.

We remember the gifts and the lives of saints who have made way for us,
speaking their names or listing their names [in the chat window]...

We honor the gifts of LGBTQIA siblings who do not receive affirmation
from their communities or churches. We welcome these siblings
into the full life and leadership of the church.

ALL: Every body is a gift.

Let us covenant with one another and with God:

ALL: We are Disciples of Christ, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world.

As individuals, we make these promises:

**ALL: I promise to share in service to our community and our world,
because the world needs a sign of God's hope.**

**I promise to support the Alliance through my gifts of prayer, time or money,
because my gifts make a difference.**

I promise to love my neighbors even when we don't agree, because we all have a place at the table.

Together, we make these promises:

ALL: We promise to be a church where all are welcome, called by name and fully affirmed.

We promise to provide opportunities to worship, learn and serve.

We promise to bear witness to God's limitless love for the world.

The Lord will be our God, and we will be God's people.

God has been faithful to us, throughout the generations.

ALL: God's faithfulness is new every morning. The Spirit is at work in us and through us!

We dedicate the financial gifts for the Allen V. Harris Open & Affirming Ministries Endowment Fund.

Honoring Allen's 30th anniversary of ordination, the Disciples LGBTQ+ Alliance strived to raise \$30,000.

People of God, the Spirit of is at work. With an abundance of financial support and impact stories, the Allen V. Harris Open & Affirming Ministries Endowment Fund "30 for 30" Campaign raised...

AllianceQ promises to put your gifts to good use.

You are invited to raise your hand as a gesture of blessing our gifts and one another.

May God bless the donors, the dollars, all of us and our embodied gifts...

Guided by the Spirit, sustained by the Spirit, following the Spirit,
may we breathe new life into this movement for wholeness.

ALL: Amen.

Equipping + Sending Forth

Rev. Terri Hord Owens



Words of Gratitude from the Alliance

It has been a joy to receive your stories: stories of coming out and the coming about of inclusion. Stories of conflict. Stories of hope. Stories that move us toward wholeness. Thank you for giving all you can to shape stories of welcome as we live into God's story of love and grace. This is holy work.

- Rev. Melissa Guthrie Loy, Executive Director + Minister

We are the body of Christ. We are the instruments of God's love and justice. When people look into our faces, they see God smiling back at them. When we embrace another, they feel engulfed in the love of Christ. When the collective body moves together, lives are transformed, and the world is changed for the better. Every body is valuable. Every body is needed. I thank you for partnering with us in this sacred work. May God bless and strengthen you for the days ahead.

- Rev. Luther Young, Moderator

For Allen V. Harris and Craig Hoffman

Grateful for the way they let their lights shine, inspired by their proud witness, AllianceQ presents a small gift to Allen and Craig. In addition to his support of Allen, we lift up Craig's parallel journey in the United Church of Christ as a proudly, openly gay ordained clergy person in that tradition.

Words of Gratitude from Allen V. Harris

Thank you. From the depths of my heart, I thank you for your generosity. For your gift to the Allen V. Harris Open & Affirming Ministries Endowment Fund and for so much more grace and love throughout your life. I am profoundly grateful. Along with the Disciples LGBTQ+ Alliance I appreciate your recognition of the 30th anniversary of my ordination to ministry in this most significant way.

Worship Participants



Rev. Luther Young, Jr. (he/him)

Rev. Luther Young, Jr. is the minister of music and a pastoral leader at Woodland Christian Church in Columbus, OH, and moderator of the Disciples LGBTQ+ Alliance. He is a current Ph.D. candidate in sociology at The Ohio State University, where his present research investigates the causes and effects of homophobia in predominantly black churches.



Rev. Sara Nave Fisher (she/her), Rev. Dr. Jonathan Fisher (he/him), Sophia Fisher (she/her), Ransom Fisher (he/him), and Lenora Fisher (she/her)

The Fishers are a dual-clergy Disciples family; Jonathan is an ACPE Certified Educator as an Army chaplain, and Sara is a pastor in the public sphere having most recently served in San Antonio, Texas. Sophia (13), Ransom (11), and Lenora (9) are kind and fiercely loving, and together the Fisher family seeks to be a witness for the abundant and inclusive love of God.



Dann Bain (they/them)

Dann is an Elder with Park Avenue Christian Church in New York City and Allen and Craig's "godchild". Dann's parents attended Brite seminary alongside Allen, and they are a lifelong Disciple. They are passionate about social justice issues and inclusivity. Currently based in NYC, Dann plans to move to Charlotte early 2022 to be with their partner.



Rev. Nathan Russell (he/him)

The Rev. Nathan A. Russell is the Senior Pastor of Washington Avenue Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Elyria, Ohio. In Spring 2021, Rev. Russell taught as an adjunct faculty member at Brite Divinity School in Fort Worth, Texas.



Rev. John Wade Payne (he/him)

Retired. Served Douglass Blvd. Christian Church, Louisville, KY, and Park Avenue Christian Church, New York City. Interfaith, ecumenical and justice involvements. Authored books related to Jewish-Christian relationships, church history and columnist for expository periodicals. O&A coordinator for GLAD Alliance, 1999-2001. Married, father and grandfather. Living in Fort Myers, Florida, and New York City.



María "Cuca" Pérez (she/her)

María or Cuca is a Latinx woman from Puerto Rico. She became a Disciple in New York City and has participated at the local, regional and general church levels. She now teaches Spanish at Chapman University in Orange, California. She lives with her wife Nancy Brink and friend Etel and her daughter Maya. Her daughter Hannah will soon make her be an abuelita!



Rev. Stephanie Kendell (she/elle/ella)

The Rev. Stephanie is the Executive Minister and C.O.O. of Park Avenue Christian Church in New York City, the co-host of Two On One the Disciples #1 podcast and talk show, and is the current First-Vice Moderator of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). She is passionate about justice seeking ministries that aid in the value of intersectional perspectives; as well as casting big vision for her communities and helping them live into that vision in biblically based, creative, just, and financially sustainable ways. She is based out of NYC where she enjoys theater, soccer, and bird watching in Central Park.



William DeShay Jackson (they/them)

William DeShay C. Jackson is a third-year Master of Divinity student, a fourth-generation Disciple, and is seeking ordination with the Mid-America region. They earned a bachelor's degree in Music Education from Culver-Stockton College with an emphasis in piano and voice; DeShay has performed as a solo and collaborative musician across the country; providing music at the Washington National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., and St. Louis Cathedral in New Orleans, LA. DeShay serves as Minister of Music for First Christian Church in Granbury, TX, and Vice President for Brite Black Seminarians. DeShay loves sloths, Jazz, and aspires to a "Womanist Co-Conspirator."



Rev. Chaim (C.J.) Rodriguez (he/him)

Chaim (CJ) Rodríguez was ordained in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Capital Area Region in 2017 by Rev. Allen Harris and subsequently served as pastor of Iglesia Cristiana Nacional in Washington, DC. He is currently finishing up his thesis project for the Doctor of Ministry degree with a specialization in Hispanic/Latinx Ministry at Barry University. In 2020, CJ returned home to the island of Puerto Rico and is in a season of holy transition.



Rev. Melissa Guthrie Loy (she/her)

Rev. Melissa Guthrie Loy is the Executive Director + Minister with AllianceQ and is a wife and mother. Melissa lectures and teaches in disability justice and is the founding director of Salvage Garden, serving individuals with neurodivergence for whom sensory worship is central. With training in faith-based nonprofit management, Melissa holds degrees from Wake Forest University School of Business and School of Divinity. Undergraduate study was at Wartburg College, affiliated with the ELCA.



Rev. Terri Hord Owens (she/her)

Rev. Teresa “Terri” Hord Owens currently serves as the General Minister & President for the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada. She is the second woman and the first woman of color to serve in this position. She believes in all our ministries that we are called to bear witness to God’s Limitless Love!

About the Allen V. Harris Open & Affirming Ministries Endowment Fund

The Allen V. Harris Open & Affirming Ministries Endowment Fund is invested through the Bostick Select Fund with the Christian Church Foundation, restricted and designated to benefit the ongoing work and operations of the Open & Affirming Ministries program. Rev. Sarah Lue Bostick (b.1868, d.1948) was one of the first women of color ordained in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and served for over 40 years until her retirement. She was a devoted worker for the Christian Woman's Board of Missions and the National Christian Missionary Society particularly in Arkansas, Missouri, Tennessee, Kansas, Texas, and Oklahoma. She worked to establish CWBM auxiliaries across Arkansas and collected an impressive collection of missions literature. This collection, given to the Disciples of Christ Historical Society after Rev. Bostick's death, opened an unparalleled window into women's and African-American studies in the Stone-Campbell movement.

Donor recognition for the Allen V. Harris Open & Affirming Ministries Endowment Fund can be found here: <http://disciplesallianceq.org/allenharris/>

If your name is not listed and you give us permission to print your name, please [contact us](#).

About the Rev. Allen V. Harris

Allen's journey to be ordained was one of both exquisite beauty and profound pain. It paralleled in chronology the events surrounding the contested nomination of the Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon as General Minister and President of the denomination, whose candidacy was defeated at the General Assembly in Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1991, in large part because of an orchestrated campaign of homophobia because Rev. Kinnamon and his (then) wife, Katherine Kinnamon were supporters of the GLAD Alliance: the Gay, Lesbian, and Affirming Disciples.

While Allen was not the "first" in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) to be ordained openly LGBTQ, nor was he the "first" to be hired in a parish setting as openly LGBTQ, he does appear to be the first to do both, and has been out as a fully-embodied queer man in all of his ministerial settings since graduating seminary. Allen has been dedicated to local, regional and general expressions of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). He has attended and served in leadership at every biennial General Assembly of the Christian Church since 1979 (St. Louis).

Allen became an early leader in the Gay, Lesbian, and Affirming Disciples Alliance; now the Disciples LGBTQ+ Alliance – AllianceQ. He served on the Council for several terms and was founding co-editor of the Crossbeams newsletter with the Rev. Michael Schloff (later serving in that role with the Rev. Jon Lacey). Along with the Rev. Laurie Rudel of Seattle, Washington, Allen was one of the founding "Developers" of the Open & Affirming Ministries program of the Alliance.

With gifts and graces in many areas, Allen is especially experienced in leading congregations and individuals through Anti-Racism/Pro-Reconciliation, Open & Affirming, and Accessible Congregational processes. He delights in and seeks to grow in transformational leadership, using social media for mission and advocacy, and in mentoring new clergy. Allen spent time studying and developing skills in working with multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, economically diverse congregations. He is committed to ecumenical and interfaith work. Allen openly affirms every body.

News Stories about the Celebration + Campaign

[“We were doing what we thought was just and right”](#) (published May 2021)

[An Invitation to Celebrate from General Minister + President Terri Hord Owens: Pentecost Sunday](#) (April 2021)

[Love and care not hatred and shame: a video interview about the magic of relationship in the O&A journey](#) (April 2021)

[Behind the scenes: years and years of love and support](#) (March 2021)

[Birthday blessings: Allen Harris opts for birthday gifts to build up Open & Affirming Ministries Endowment Fund](#) (February 2021)

[Celebrating the ministry of Allen V. Harris: Exquisite beauty and profound pain](#) (January 2021)

[The Allen V. Harris Open & Affirming Ministries Endowment Fund 30 for 30 Campaign](#)

The Disciples LGBTQ+ Alliance

We are members of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), called to join in God’s work of transforming the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) into a just and inclusive church that welcomes persons of all gender expressions and sexual identities into the full life and leadership of the church.

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) recognizes the changing context of congregational life and ministry and is seeking a wider embrace of persons of all gender expressions and sexual identities. The 2013 General Assembly meeting in Orlando passed a resolution stating that the Church welcomes all, and for the first time, included sexual orientation as an identity that should not be denied the radical welcome of Christ and Christ’s church.¹ The 2019 General Assembly meeting in Des Moines passed a resolution inviting the whole church to educate itself about transgender and gender-diverse persons.² In a joint reflection of faith from General Minister and President Terri Hord Owens and AllianceQ Executive Director + Minister Melissa Guthrie Loy in January 2020, Rev. Hord Owens emphasized: “We cannot mandate adherence to either resolution, but with the leadership of many regions, clergy and congregations, as well as ministries such as Disciples AllianceQ, we can offer the space for discernment and education as we all seek to follow the command of Christ to love each one whom God has created.”³

It was at the 1977 General Assembly in Kansas City that the late Carol Blakely of Caldwell, Idaho, a Disciple mother of a gay son, broke silence and called all Disciples to name the reality that LGBTQ+ and affirming persons are our sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, [siblings] parents, congregants, pastors and staff. **Siblings in Christ, we are called. May we hear the call anew. May we respond to the call.** 🏳️‍🌈

¹ [GA-1327](#), Becoming a People of Grace and Welcome to All.

² [GA-1929](#), An Invitation to Education for Welcoming and Receiving the Gifts of Transgender and Gender-Diverse People.

³ “No one excluded from God’s love,” Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), January 2020. <https://disciples.org/from-the-gmp/no-one-excluded-from-gods-love/>