

**No. 0907**  
**The National Benevolent Association**  
**of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)**

**dba Disciples Benevolent Services**

*Dennis Hagemann, President*  
149 Weldon Parkway, Suite 115, Maryland Heights, MO 63043-3013  
Telephone: (314) 993-9000 • Fax: (314) 993-9018

**OUR MISSION**

In the loving and caring spirit of Christ, Disciples Benevolent Services will partner with regions, congregations and others to develop ministries of care in response to the needs of their communities.

**OUR MISSION IDENTITY**

Our mission identity is to be a positive force in the four mission priorities of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and to positively benefit the Church by being both a provider of high quality benevolent care programs and by being a service provider that enables other Disciples entities to be a provider of benevolent care programs.

**HOW ARE WE PURSUING THIS MISSION AND IDENTITY?**

For the past 122 years, Disciples Benevolent Services (“DBS”) has been the social and health services general unit of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). During 2008, DBS was privileged to directly serve more than 1,100 people through our residential and community-based programs for children, youth and families, people with disabilities and older adults. In addition, DBS sponsors 53 US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) housing facilities for older adults and people with disabilities. These HUD facilities serve more than 4,700 people.

Since 2005, the DBS Board and staff have worked diligently and purposefully from settling matters pertaining to the Chapter 11 bankruptcy and dealing with matters from the past to a more positive, pro-active, forward-thinking approach. We have been intentional in being responsive to the needs and requests of various segments of the Church. For example, in meeting with residents of the former NBA older adult facilities, we heard the need for chaplaincy care among the residents. We promptly acted to establish our new Chaplaincy Care Program that partners with the Region and/or a local Disciples congregation(s) to hire a chaplain to provide ministry to not only the residents of the retirement community, but also to the families of the residents and staff. In addition, the ministry expands to the greater community to meet the needs of others. Our initial focus has been on providing ministry to the communities in which there is a former NBA older adult facility and we will then look for opportunities in other areas. Another example involves a Disciples couple from Texas who approached us with a positive experience they had with a personal care home for their mother. In this case, their mother lived in an assisted living home for 3-4 older adults. The couple wanted to see the Church provide such ministry and they approached DBS about the concept. We have been working diligently to set up such a ministry and our goal is to provide such ministry throughout the denomination in partnership with local congregations.

In summary, DBS has evolved from solely being a provider of direct care services who owns and controls everything it touches to an organization that is both a provider of direct care services and a facilitator of such services. DBS is open to what each situation warrants as far as the level of our partnership. We recognize that in some situations we will be asked to be more of a full partner and in other situations we will be asked to be a partner who provides only a part of the process. We have been intentional in starting out with ministries of care that are smaller in scale and not capital intensive, but wide in scope in regards to the number of people served.

DBS recognizes that mission work is very much at the heart of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). DBS has heard the call from the Church to be more mission-oriented. DBS acknowledges that in many ways the Church is seeking to reduce the overall reliance on a single general ministry unit to provide mission on behalf of its regions and congregations, such as NBA once did throughout its long history. We believe that the Church is now looking to have mission work developed and administered at the “grass roots” level and we see our role within the Church as being the one who helps to enable mission work at the “grass roots” level. Our primary goal is to enable Regions, congregations and others to develop locally-based ministries of benevolent care.

Our mission focuses on partnering with Regions and congregations of the Church in order to develop ministries of care at the local level. Our mission is to help Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) congregations do mission work in their own communities. We don't seek solely to perform mission work on behalf of the Church, but rather, to help the Church perform mission work where it sees the greatest need.

In light of this, DBS has engaged in conversation with the Disciples Care Network ("DCN") to discuss the potential of becoming Partners in Care. We see the following benefits to such a partnership:

1. We have synergies in mission statements and purpose.
  - o Partner with Regions, congregations and others to develop ministries of care
  - o Increase awareness and encourage celebration among Disciples of the significant compassionate care provided by Disciples organizations
  - o Help shape the future direction of social and health care services among Disciples
  - o Encourage members of our Church to act as catalysts in the formation of new ministries of care
  - o Provide collegial consultation to Regions, congregations and others for ministries of care
  - o Provide support, consultation and improve communication among Disciples ministries of care
  - o Offer training to aid Disciples ministries of care
2. The Church is calling for the streamlining of processes & structure, non-duplication of efforts and collaboration among/between groups.
3. We have an opportunity to Partner for purposes of Church-wide communication, awareness, publication, and promotion of social services ministry, etc.
4. We have an opportunity to Partner for the purpose of Church-wide education, training, leadership development and networking conferences.
5. We have an opportunity to Partner for the purpose of being a catalyst for the development of new social services ministries.
6. We have an opportunity to Partner for the purpose of facilitating peer consultation of ministries of care.
7. We have an opportunity to help Disciples meet the Church's Mission Priority of leadership development.
8. We have an opportunity to be pro-active, forward-thinking and a catalyst for other areas of the Church.

We believe that a partnership between DBS and DCN will only help to strengthen the Church's benevolent care ministries throughout the denomination.

### **MISSION PRIORITIES OF THE CHURCH AND DBS**

DBS has contributed and is contributing to fulfilling the Church's mission priorities in the following manner:

**Transforming Existing Congregations for Mission:** The main role of DBS in fulfilling the four priorities is that of being a partner with different segments of the Church in helping to develop and to carry out mission work. As a partner, DBS will work with congregations in identifying mission needs and desires within their own community and in developing new programs to carry out the mission work. Through these efforts, DBS helps fulfill the Church's priority of transforming existing Disciple congregations for mission work.

Starting with the 2007 General Assembly of the Church in Fort Worth, Texas, DBS has been approached by dozens of Disciple congregations throughout the United States about developing new ministries of care within their local community. Since the 2007 General Assembly, DBS has called upon multiple congregations, at their request, to offer support, guidance, direction and consultation on how to get started on their particular vision of a new ministry of care program within their community.

DBS continues to provide funds to Regions in which there is a former NBA older adult service unit to help support senior care in the Region through spending rate earnings on benevolent care funds. DBS will also be working with Regions in which there is a former NBA older adult service unit to help support either current senior care programs or new senior care programs through spending rate earnings of other funds that we continue to hold in the name of the corporations of the former NBA older adult service units.

DBS engaged Southeast Gateway Area (of the Mid-America Region) congregations of the Church to develop a new ministry in the St. Louis area that is consistent with the congregations' mission desires. For an 18 month period, a steering committee of approximately 15 individuals from the Southeast Gateway Area met on a monthly basis in order to develop viable, new programs for the 9-acre North St. Louis campus of ECHO. We are in the process of redeveloping the ECHO campus in order to carry out such new programs. We believe that these new programs will only help in the priority of transforming St. Louis area congregations for mission.

**New Congregation Establishment:** In much the same way as our efforts to transform existing congregations for mission works, we believe that by providing benevolent care ministries in local communities new Disciples congregations can be born and established around such mission work. We believe that such ministries of care can be a catalyst for new church start-ups.

**Leadership Development:** As a partner with Regions and local congregations in the development of new programs of mission work, DBS will nurture and enable leadership at the local level to administer the programs and services. By working with a de-centralized model that includes local ownership, management and governance of the programs, services and projects, DBS helps fulfill the Church's priority of nurturing and developing leadership within the Church.

We are planning an annual training conference program not only for the chaplains in our Chaplaincy Care Program, but for chaplains throughout the denomination. This training program along with the efforts to provide Church-wide education, training, leadership development and networking conferences in partnership with DCN for benevolent care providers is another example of how DBS plans to meet the mission priority of leadership development.

In the spirit of assisting with development of "grass roots" ministries, DBS looks to meet the need for chaplaincy services in local communities. A promising possibility is partnering with clergy in local congregations to enlist them to serve in a chaplaincy capacity in their community.

**Becoming a Pro-Reconciling/Anti-Racist Church:** Because our programs, services and operating units have always provided ministries of care to all walks of life, without discrimination, and because our mission is to continue providing similar ministries of care into the future, without discrimination, DBS helps meet the Church's priority of becoming a pro-reconciling/anti-racist Church. Without question, DBS will minister to all of God's children, regardless of race, color, creed, sex, national origin, age or disability.

## OPERATIONS SUMMARY

**Chaplaincy Care of Des Moines, Iowa,** since 2008, in partnership with the Upper Midwest Region of the Church, offers chaplaincy services to the residents of Ramsey Village, as well as to their families, the staff and administrators. The Des Moines area chaplain also ministers to residents of other senior adult facilities in the greater Des Moines, IA area.

**Christian Services for Children in Alabama (CSCA),** in Selma, since 1991. CSCA's Family Outcome Centered Unification Services (FOCUS) program serves a five-county area surrounding Selma. FOCUS works with family members to instill and maintain family safety and unity. These individualized services are provided to families based on their own unique strengths and immediate needs. Also, in partnership with the Alabama Department of Human Resources, CSCA provides therapeutic foster care services for youth diagnosed with emotional and behavior needs.

**Dorothy Rueff Chaplaincy Care of Jacksonville, Illinois,** since 2008, in partnership with the Illinois-Wisconsin Region of the Church, offers chaplaincy services to the residents of the Barton W. Stone Home, as well as to their families, the staff and administrators. The Jacksonville area chaplain also provides pastoral care at other residential facilities, including those for senior adults and for the hearing impaired.

**ECHO,** founded in 1889 as an orphanage called the Christian Orphan's Home, has adapted its services throughout its history according to the needs of the community. In the 1970's, ECHO worked with the Missouri Children's Division to create an emergency program that allowed police and the Missouri Children's Division to refer youth to ECHO in crisis situations. In 1978, the Christian Orphan's Home changed its name to ECHO/Emergency Children's Home to reflect its change in services. Since then, ECHO has continued to develop numerous programs such as residential living, transitional living and recreational programs to assist its "psychological orphans." Currently, ECHO serves the area's children and youth through community outreach and partnerships with other agencies, local congregations and others in the community. While ECHO continues its proud tradition of serving the children and youth of the community, staff are developing plans for the campus that will include affordable services for senior adults.

**Florida Christian Center**, in Jacksonville, since 1994, has a one-story, 8,246 square foot building that provides a home for ongoing programs and activities for the residents of neighboring Florida Christian Apartments and Sundale Manor, two NBA-sponsored HUD facilities for older adults. The Community Center is staffed by a full-time director/chaplain who ministers to on-site older persons as well as to expand services into the greater Jacksonville area. The Center is a popular gathering place for residents where they meet for fellowship, classes and other group activities. Amenities include a chapel, auditorium, kitchen, TV studio, therapeutic pool and a well-equipped exercise room. Chaplaincy services include ministry and pastoral care, worship services, classes on faith and aging, and other programs focused on spiritual health. The Florida Christian Center contracts with an outside health care company to provide a health clinic for seniors in the Community Center building. A local Disciples Hispanic congregation uses the chapel on a regular basis for their church services.

**Serra Center**, in Fremont, California, established in 1973, offers three types of support services for persons with developmental disabilities. The Intermediate Care Facility – Developmentally Disabled Handicapped Care (ICF-DDH) program provides 24-hour care and supervision in group living settings within the community. Supported Living Services offers individuals the opportunity to live in the environment of their choice – regardless of their disability. And Independent Living Services focuses on providing 1:1 staff-to-client training on specific identified living skills, thereby eliminating the need for the services when the skill is mastered. All individuals served are active during the day either at jobs or in a day program.

**Woodhaven**, in Columbia, Missouri, has been serving men and women with developmental disabilities since 1964. Woodhaven serves over 100 men and women who have developmental disabilities in its community-based supported living program, and provides a Day Program for more than 50 individuals who do not work during the day. The people served live in family-sized homes and apartments in established neighborhoods and are supported in being active members of the community. Woodhaven’s Direct Support Professionals provide living skills training, monitor health and safety, and assist with personal hygiene, cooking, shopping, transportation, recreation and other daily needs as required by each individual. This fully accredited program is nationally recognized for its high standards of treatment of the people it serves.

In all, every day, these seven units provide support and care to over 1,100 families, children and adults, helping them lead a happier, healthier, spiritual and fuller life.

---

The General Board reviewed report No. 0907 of Disciples Benevolent Services.  
The report is submitted to the General Assembly for consideration and discussion.  
No action is required. (Discussion time is 12 minutes)

---