

No. 0909
Division of Homeland Ministries
of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Inc.

dba Disciples Home Missions

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Board of Directors: Voting members of the DHM Board of Directors are: Janet Casey Allen, Indianapolis, Indiana; George Crawford, Gig Harbor, Washington; Paul Few, Lincoln, Nebraska; Marilyn Fiddmont, Spring, Texas; Janet Fountain, Milton Nova Scotia, Canada; David Geenen, Rock Island, Illinois; Alan Hilberg, Bakersfield, California; Jim Hockman, Columbia, South Carolina; Debra Joseph, New Orleans, Louisiana (Local Church Ministries delegate of the United Church of Christ); Rebecca Littlejohn, Anniston, Alabama; Madelyn Logan, Ashland, Virginia; Caroline Martinson, Louisville, Kentucky (Local Church Ministries delegate of the United Church of Christ); William McConnell, Wichita, Kansas; G. Lee Parker, Lynchburg, Virginia; James Rivers, Wadsworth, Ohio; Norweida Roberts, Jackson, Mississippi; Esther Robles, Riverview, Florida; Jean Vandergrift, Boston, Massachusetts; KK Wiseman, Nashville, Tennessee. Ex Officio Members without vote are the representatives from The United Christian Missionary Society: Martha Carroll, South Bend, Indiana; Sarah Draper, Hoover, Alabama; Mary Lou Kegler, Kansas City, Missouri; Richard Petty, Houston, Texas.

I. PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS

The Apostle Paul deemed it important to communicate by way of letter to the early church. Nourished by the Holy Spirit, planted by the apostles, and disciplined at scripture reading, singing, praying, sharing all things in common, and gathering together as one body around the Table – the early Christians in places like Corinth and Philippi, Galatia and Thessalonica, as well as Rome, learned how to be followers of “the way,” the earliest name given to those who followed Jesus. I submit this letter to you (aka “Report”) who are 21st century followers of “the way” in the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), reflecting on the initiatives, ministries, and mission activities of Disciples Home Missions this past biennium.

II. SALUTATION

Ronald J. Degges, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be President of Disciples Home Missions, set apart for the gospel of God, equipping Disciples for Christ and connecting people to the life changing love of God,

To all of God’s beloved who will gather in Indianapolis, Indiana for the 2009 General Assembly of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), who are called to be saints: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

III. THANKSGIVING

I thank God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed throughout the world. Who would have ever thought it? Born on the early 19th century American frontier, ignited with a Declaration and Address, sealed with a handshake at Cane Ridge and set ablaze at Brush Run, you Disciples have proclaimed the gospel without ceasing. For two centuries you have served the God of truth, even when paradigm shifts have thrown the church into a frenzy and rumors of economic collapse, lack of vitality, and dissention among sisters and brothers have threatened to dismantle you. You have stood by your faith, as it is written in Isaiah: “I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.” [Isaiah 43:19]

I give God thanks for you and your faithfulness in uncertain times, knowing that God will make certain that for which you long. The day is coming when God will reveal the kingdom that has no end. Hence my eagerness to proclaim the good news of what Disciples Home Missions has been doing in partnership with other general ministries, regions, and congregations to build up the body of Christ.

IV. THEME OF THE LETTER

A. The State of the Mission of Disciples Home Missions

Since the mission of the whole church is to be “a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world,” I want to give you an accounting of how in Christ God has acted powerfully through the ministries of Disciples Home Missions:

1. *Disciples Women are on the Move*, guided by Executive Director Adonna Bowman, Program Merger Staff Director, Sheila Spencer, and the Quadrennial Assembly Coordinator, Gloria Hernandez, providing 10% of the total giving to Disciples Mission Fund (DMF); networking with NAPAD, the National Convocation, the Hispanic Assembly, Church Women United, Black Ministers Retreat, Justice for Women Working Group, Global Women’s Connections, the World Convention, etc.; Women to Women Worldwide in their travels to Israel and Palestine; planning for the 2010 Quadrennial Assembly in Greensboro; participating in Habitat for Humanity Blitz Builds in Beaumont, TX and Greensboro, NC; and, publishing the new quarterly resource for Disciples Women, Just Women, with the first issue appearing in January 2009. Disciples Women, a DHM movement for the wholeness of the church is *on the move*.

2. *Christian Education and Family and Children’s Ministries are on the Move*, celebrating the Rev. Billye Bridges’ 12th year as a Program Staff Director with DHM, building upon her leadership as a Merger Staff for Specialized Christian Education serving the National Convocation, expanded in 2003 to embody the notion of whole church as she serves all congregations in the United States and Canada. Ministries include expanded Web-site research design; partnerships with the National Convocation’s Leadership Institute for Clergy, Lay Leaders, Music Ministry and Leaders in the Making; working with Family and Children’s Ministry Director, Kaye Edwards, in the 2008 Association of Church Educators and Children’s Welcome!Conference. Kaye’s involvement in The Disciples Care for Children Network, Kids-to- Kids, Adults Relating to Kids (ARK), and Worship and Wonder are re-energizing our church. Kaye forever reminds us: “There are still too many people who believe their children are the church of tomorrow and do not see the gifts children have to offer now . . .” Christian Education, Family and Children’s Ministries, a DHM movement for the wholeness of the church *on the move*.

3. *Evangelism, New Church and Transformation Ministries are on the Move*, guided by our Minister of Evangelism and Merger Staff Specialist, R. Wayne Calhoun, Sr., as four, possibly five, cluster Church Transformation events are held throughout the country beginning in the fall of 2008 and continuing through the winter of 2009. Each event is designed to help regions and congregations move toward transformative life. Disciples Home Missions provides resources in evangelism and witness to both new and existing congregations that call for passionate worship, joyful giving, intentional faith development, and bold mission. A team of gifted ministers who have guided congregations to new life provide insights, a DHM movement for the wholeness of the church *on the move*.

4. *Chaplaincy Services are on the Move*, providing to those serving in ministries outside local Disciples congregations support, encouragement and denominational oversight. Disciples Military Chaplaincy Endorser, Steve Doan, and Institutional Endorser of Specialized Services, Susan Galasso, reach out to clergy serving in the military and institutional settings. A process is underway with Search and Call, requiring all new applicants to have background checks. Communication about chaplaincy has been enhanced with a new monthly e-mail called *Chaplaincy News and Notes*. Chaplaincy Services, a DHM movement for the wholeness of the church, *on the move*.

5. *Search and Call on the Move*, directed by Warren Lynn, provides care for clergy in the area of relocation discernment with partnerships between regions, the general church, and indirectly with congregations. There is a Web-based Search and Call Profile System in place, but still the need to tutor clergy in its use. Long-time Search and Call’s Administrative Assistant, Kelly Harris, is moving to Nashville with her family. But we are happy to announce that Anne Marie Moyars is in training for the position and will assume that role in mid-March 2009. Search and Call is a DHM movement for the wholeness of the church, *on the move*.

6. *Leader Development on the Move*, directed by Tod Iseminger and all Program Staff of DHM, is reaching out with intentionality to four specific constituency groups of our church, in addition to that being done by Disciples Women; namely, the Youth Ministry Commission, the Young Adult Commission, the General Youth Council, and Disciples Men. The goal is to “identify, grow and nurture the current and future leaders of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).” In July, 750 youth gathered at Chapman University in Orange, CA to experience life-changing ministry. Leader Development, a DHM movement for the wholeness of the church, *on the move*.

7. *Refugee and Immigration Ministries on the Move*, directed by Jennifer Riggs and assisted by Linda Williamson, helped relocate 871 persons in 2008 who otherwise would have had no place to lay their heads. As the refugee and immigration caseload increases, we are in need of more Disciples congregations to participate. Those who have participated speak of how their congregations have been

transformed when partnering with RIM. Refugee and Immigration Ministries, a DHM movement for the wholeness of the church, on the move.

8. Disciples Volunteering on the Move, directed by Carl Zerweck, provides 'hands on' mission experiences in the United States and Canada for individuals, regions and congregations of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Both Short-term and Long-term Training Events provide leadership development tools for those who participate in this concrete expression of mission. It is expected that more than 2700 volunteers will donate in excess of 130,000 hours of volunteer service to those affected by disaster. Disciples Volunteering, a DHM movement for the wholeness of the church, *on the move*.

I sincerely hope that this abbreviated description of the Ministries of Disciples Home Missions gives you a good idea about the state of the mission we at DHM provide. I must also acknowledge the hard work of our Director of Web Site Development, Angela Herrmann, in keeping us informed through the DHM website: www.discipleshomemissions.org. Special news releases of importance as well as our personalized Constant Contact give you up-to-date information about the ministries of DHM as does our publication the Home Mission Advocate. Comprehensive reports for each of our ministries are on file at the Disciples Home Missions Office. We will willingly make them available to you upon request.

We also lift up the Scout Ministries directed by Robert Thornton; the Kentucky Appalachian Ministry directed by Lon Oliver; the Yakama Christian Mission directed by David Bell; All Peoples Christian Center directed by Saundra Bryant; the Inman Christian Center directed by Dan Saucedo; the ministry at Kansas Christian Home directed by Jim Nachtigal; the ministry at Urban Spirit directed by Deb Conrad; the Disciples Farm Workers Ministry, whose convener is Amy Cates; and, the AIDS Ministry Network directed by Joseph Grieb.

Special acknowledgements must go to our Vice-President for Finance, Lonna Owens, who keeps our financing of mission on target; to Executive Administrator/Corporate Secretary, Jennie King, who keeps me on target; and, to all those dedicated and hard-working Administrative Staff members without whom none of us could possibly do our work.

It is clear that the state of the mission of DHM is strong and vital as we go about equipping congregations for Christ.

B. Disciples Home Missions and the Four Priorities of the Church

Our single-focus is on fulfilling the four mission priorities established in the "2020 Vision" statement. In fact, as the Apostle Paul would remind us, our four priorities are as foundational to the well being of the church today as they were to the well being of the church back in the first century:

1. New Congregation Establishment

Disciples Home Missions celebrates GeunheeYu's 17th anniversary with us as a partner in ministry to the North American Pacific/Asian Disciples. Over the past 17 years, Geunhee has provided leadership within DHM that has grown Pacific/Asian Disciples congregations from two to approximately one hundred. In 2008, three new congregations were adopted: Filipino Christian Church, Raleigh, NC; Chin Christian Church, Syracuse, NY; and Chinese Christian Church, Palo Alto, CA. In addition, three missions have been launched. DHM recognizes the growth and expansion of new multi-cultural and multi-ethnic congregations and is determining ways to provide language-appropriate curriculum, teacher training, Bible Study, elder and deacon resources as well as consultations to enhance these diverse ministries. New collaborative efforts with Church Extension, with our multi-ethnic constituencies, and with Disciples Women, who are women of many cultures and races, promise rich hope for the future.

2. Transforming Existing Congregations for Mission

Working with general and regional staff and partnering with local congregations and ministers who have experienced transformation, DHM has launched a series of events across the country known as God's Positioning Spirit (GPS) seminars to provide the needed tools, resources, and how to handles to assist congregations desiring revitalization. Beginning with the Indianapolis Assembly in 2009, the Pension Fund of the Christian Church and Disciples Home Missions will collaborate to establish a pre-assembly event for clergy new to congregational settings. Resources for healthy ministry and clergy self care are the aim of this joint effort.

3. Leadership Development

Disciples Home Missions continues to provide scholarships to seminarians on the M.Div. track as well as scholarships for Continuing Education for clergy. In this day of ever-increasing costs associated with earning a M.Div. degree and continuing studies beyond the seminary to increase clergy effectiveness, DHM has been entrusted with funds to support those who serve the church. Many of our regions have mandated Continuing Education requirements for clergy with the expectation that their congregations will pay the expenses. In instances where the local congregation is not able to bear the financial burden

of such a requirement, both Disciples Home Missions and regional entities work together to insure that clergy have the resources needed to meet all requirements. In recent months, the Presidents of DHM and HELM have started a discussion about ways in which we might work more closely together on young adult ministries and with the administering of scholarships. Needless to say, each ministry of DHM has a leadership development component which acknowledges the need in our church for leaders.

4. Becoming a Pro-Reconciling/Anti-Racist Church

Disciples Home Missions has an active Anti-Racist/Pro-Reconciliation Team (ARPRT) that meets monthly to address questions and issues that arise as we seek to become one church untarnished by the sin of racism. Our team lifts up for our mutual edification two books per year that give us understandings of different forms of racial injustice. Our Board of Directors and Staff have received Anti-Racism training and plans are being made to provide such training to our Staff and Board members on a continuing basis. During the summer and fall of 2008, outside consultants conducted a Racism Audit which resulted in an Audit Report that was received on December 13, 2008. The report has been distributed to the Board of Directors and DHM Staff. The Anti-Racism/Pro-Reconciliation Team appointed a special Task Force consisting of Executive Staff, Program Staff, and Administrative staff to make recommendations to the appropriate committees of the DHM Board for further review. Although no overt forms of racism were identified in the report, areas were identified where DHM might take a more careful look at some of its practices, potentially necessitating policy changes.

V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

I have written to you, my sisters and brothers, regarding the state of the mission of Disciples Home Missions and our work in regard to the four mission priorities of our church. Even though DHM has reason to boast, I will not speak anything except what Christ has accomplished through DHM for the well being of our church. I so appreciate the collegial spirit and attitude that permeates our life together as Disciples, the intentional partnership in mission between general ministries, regions and congregations, and the promise we have that the God of hope will fill us with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope.

VI. PERSONAL NOTES

I would be remiss without acknowledging the dedicated service of Interim President Dan Clark ('07), Acting Interim President Lester Palmer ('08) and Interim President Don Shelton ('08) who guided Disciples Home Missions during a time of transition and change. These servant leaders have stood on the shoulder of accomplishments of those who came before, as I now stand on theirs. Their work in behalf of the whole church is dear to me and I am privileged to build on the foundation they have laid.

VII. BENEDICTION

Now to God, who is able to strengthen us by the gospel, healing our fragmentation, and joining our ministries together by the power of the Spirit, bless and keep us all both now and forever more. Amen.

The General Board reviewed report No. 0909 of Disciples Home Missions.
The report is submitted to the General Assembly for consideration and discussion.
No action is required. (Discussion time is 12 minutes)
