

Title: **Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Florida**

Origin: William C. Morrison, Jr., Regional Minister

The following is provided for information to the General Board of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Regional Staff:

William C. Morrison, Jr. - M, African American

Merle Decker – F, Anglo

Charlene Bigio – F, Hispanic

Jasmine Sanchez – F, Hispanic

Lamar Thompson - M, Anglo

Nilda Fres – F, Hispanic

Cheryl Thompson - F, Anglo

Richie Sanchez – M, Hispanic

Number of Congregations: 117 (69 churches and 48 new church starts)

Total Members: 17,465

States included in Region: Florida (except for the Northwest Panhandle)

Please answer the following questions:

1. *What are your long range planning goals and how are they integrated into the mission and vision of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)?*

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Florida is in the process of drafting its five year strategic plan that supports the vision of *Reclaiming the Great Commission – Florida Disciples Making Disciples*. The Regional Church accepted the challenge of moving from a maintenance model church to a missionary model church.

We embrace the mission of the General Church and affirm that in order “*to be and to share the Good News of Jesus Christ, witnessing, loving and serving from our doorsteps to the ends of the earth*”, then we must become a missionary model church that transforms the lives of people and make new disciples. We have challenged our congregations to become externally focused and strive to create a community that makes new disciples.

As a follow-up to our April, 2007 Clergy and Laity training event with Dr. Hamilton Beazley, co-author of “*Reclaiming the Great Commission*,” we conducted a clergy convocation entitled: “The Power of a Vision,” on January 24 -25 with the Reverend Dr. Bill Lee as our senior trainer. This training event was designed to get pastors and other clergy more active in the vision process of the General and Regional Church by reclaiming the great commission.

2. *Knowing that the current priorities of the church are to start new congregations, transform existing congregations for mission, nurture leadership for these new and renewed congregations, and become an anti-racist/pro-reconciling church, what is the role of your ministry in fulfilling any of these priorities?*

The Christian Church in Florida continues to be very active in supporting these current priorities. The Florida Regional Church has a goal of 50 new congregations in support of the 2020 Vision. We celebrate that we have 48 congregations in formation and expect to exceed our goal by the end of this year. The Regional Church is extremely concerned with renewal and rebirth of our older congregations. While we have not developed an adequate revitalization process, we are still examining various ministries and programs that are successful in this area.

In partnership with the Florida Center for Theological Studies (FCTS), the Christian Church in Florida will begin a Diploma in Theological Studies Program in August, 2008. This program is designed for licensed ministers without a baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university, local church leaders, Christian educators, and individuals involved in ministries which do not require graduate degrees. The program consists of eight courses that will be taught over a two year period and it is interdisciplinary and contextual in character. The faculty for this program will be academicians and ministers with graduate level degrees that are able and willing to participate with students in their journey of faith and theological inquiry. FCTS will include in the core faculty professors from other

Christian confessions to confirm the importance of our vision of working in unity with other faiths. This program will be offered in English, Spanish, French, and Portuguese.

3. *In what ways are you partnering with the other expressions of the Church and with other general ministries?*

The Florida Regional Church has worked in very close partnership with the New Church Ministry Team in establishing new congregations. We have also work in partnership with Week of Compassion and Church Extension. The Christian Church Foundation maintains an ongoing partnership and visits the Regional Church on a regular basis. We partnered with the Central Office for Hispanic Ministries in providing clergy boundary training and professional development. We are also in discussion with the Florida Conference of the United Church of Christ in regarding becoming part of our Diploma in Theological Studies Program.

REGIONAL FINANCIAL REPORT

4. Financial Information, Concerns, and Reports of the Region:

- A. What type of accounting method do you use? _____Cash X Accrual
- B. Is a professional audit done annually on your books? X Yes _____No
If not, please explain.
- C. For the last three years, with regard to your OPERATIONS BUDGET ONLY, Please provide the following information:

	2007	2006	2005
Operational Income	\$793,751	\$847,956	\$718,935
Conference Center	<u>316,463</u>	<u>280,694</u>	<u>290,131</u>
Total Income	\$1,110,214	\$1,128,650	\$1,009,066
Operational Expenses	\$787,936	\$812,028	\$717,592
Conference Center	<u>331,358</u>	<u>347,767</u>	<u>358,795</u>
Total Expenses	\$1,119,294	\$1,159,795	\$1,076,387
Surplus (Deficit)	(\$9,080)	(\$31,145)	(\$67,324)

- D. If your Region has had insufficient income or deficits in Part 6 C above, how has your Regional Board and Finance Committee been trying to balance your budgets (e.g. staff reductions, program cuts, larger draws from permanent funds, initiative postponements, new streams of income, etc.)?

The Florida Regional Church has used larger draws from savings and investments to cover the deficits in the past three years. We are slowly recovering from the large deficits that we experienced due to hurricanes that hit our region in 2004 and 2005 which resulted into loss of income for our conference center. We have also acquired a new major expense for 2008 in that we had to replace our 54 year old swimming pool at the conference center. The Regional Church is hoping and praying that we will receive donations and private gifts to offset this expense.

- E. What are the key financial issues and concerns currently facing your region's life and vitality?

The key concern and goal of the Florida Regional Church is to increase Disciples Mission Fund giving and develop new streams of funding for the Regional Church.

5. Additional information:

The Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Florida will celebrate its Centennial Regional Assembly on September 18 – 21, 2008 at the Florida Hotel and Conference Center, Orlando, Florida. The theme for this historical event is "The Journey." Our keynote speakers will be Sharon E. Watkins, General Minister and

President, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada; Chester L. Aycock, Presiding District Bishop, Goldsburg-Raleigh District Assembly, Church of Christ, Disciples of Christ; and Marta Ramirez, Senior Pastor, Iglesia Cristiana (Discipulos De Cristo), Vega Alta, Puerto Rico. Our Bible lecturer will be Samuel Pagan, Academic Dean, Florida Center for Theological Studies.