

Title: **Report of Christian Church in Georgia**

Origin: **W. Ray Miles, Regional Minister**

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

Regional Staff: (Listing by name, with gender, whether ethnic minority)

Ray Miles, Regional Minister - male

Michael Weeks, Associate Regional Minister

& Executive Director Camp Christian Conference Center - male

Betty Brewer-Calvert, Director of Women's Ministries (part time contracted) - female

Pam Mikovitz, Administrative Assistant - female

Brooke Ostberg, Financial Administrator (part time contracted) - female

Number of Congregations: 65

Total Members: 15,625 total, 10,789 participating, per reports 2007 Yearbook and Directory

States included in Region: Georgia, and one congregation in Alabama

The mission statement for the Christian Church in Georgia states "*Our Mission is to be Christ's witness in the Georgia Region, growing, building and equipping vital faith communities*" In fulfilling this, the Region has focused on the equipping and nurturing of congregations, relating them to one another, and helping them be transformed towards the vision God has for them. The emphases of the Regional ministries have been directed towards consolidating the Region and fulfilling the Regional mission.

The Design of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) reads "*The primary purpose of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in regions is twofold:*

(1) to extend the ministry of Christ in mission, teaching, witness, and service among the people and social structures of the region;

Towards this part of the purpose of regions, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Georgia has continued a partnership with the Christian College of Georgia for providing training and education for those seeking to enter licensed ministry. This also assists those seeking to deepen their leadership capacities. These courses of 18 contact hours are provided by qualified instructors and seek to cover the competencies outlined in current and contemplated Ministry documents.

The Region continues a strong teaching component in camping and youth ministries. Responses and reflections indicate these are powerful educational and formative experiences in the lives of our church members. A variety of other workshops offered or facilitated by staff of the Region continue to emphasize our commitment to extending ministry. This year a new event offered was a Retreat for women sponsored by our Women's Ministry and Reconciliation units. It's objective is to begin a network for the witness of Reconciliation and Anti Racism within this Region.

(2) to establish, receive, and nurture congregations in the region, providing help, counsel, and pastoral care to members, ministers, and congregations in their mutual relationships, and relating them to the worldwide mission and witness of the whole church.

The Region is emphasizing the establishment of new congregations. We have moved from the task of initiating new congregations to supporting and assisting wherever possible new congregations which are being established. Our goal, in partnership with New Church Ministries, is to provide training and support for church planters, and to encourage newly forming congregations to connect with those support networks. At present we have 6 new congregations directly relating to our New Church Task Force and are engaged in conversations with 4 other congregations exploring Disciples of Christ affiliation.

The bulk of the Region's ministries are in nurturing existing congregations and helping them become what God has called them to be in this new century. Our camping and youth ministries are opportunities to nurture the young faith of our members and include a heavy component of leadership development. The Youth Advisory Commission is essentially a leadership development ministry. We are working to enrich the opportunities for youth sponsors and youth ministers. Women's Ministries also focus a major portion of their efforts on leadership and faith development workshops offered in 6 different locations around the Region. We are also partnering with The Christian College of Georgia to revive Atlanta United Divinity Center as support mechanism for seminarians in Atlanta.

Primary work assisting congregations is done in ministerial transition and helping congregations and pastors discover the working relationships in which they live out God's call. This year we have a continuing heavy load of ministerial transition, and at one time 10 of the 12 largest congregations in the Region were in transition. One key aspect of this ministry is developing and maintaining a pool of qualified interims to help churches through the transitional period.

Another helping ministry is the Regional Transformation Task Force. It is working on hosting a church-wide event for transformation in January of 2009. Another emphasis is to link congregations intentionally working towards transformation, so they might be resources and support to each other. Our Associate Regional Minister, Michael Weeks, during sabbatical, took training to be certified as a congregational coach and is able to offer that ministry as a part of the Regional resources.

Regional Staff serve as resources to congregations in conflict management, transformation, future visioning and planning, etc. A new ministry is offering the services of our regional financial administrator as a resource to congregations trying to set up more adequate bookkeeping systems.

Pastoral care and support continue as an emphasis and priority for the Region. We meet with clergy individually and in cluster groupings, to support and offer a listening pastoral ear. Again our partnership with Christian College of Georgia enables us to offer quality retreats and continuing education opportunities for our clergy. We continue to use electronic media more than print to share information and resources.

We have one Global Ministry Mission Interpreter trained and soon will have others. We hosted a Division of Overseas Ministry staff person who travelled throughout the Region to connect congregations to the mission world wide. Our promotion of DMF continues to be emphasizing and supporting the whole ministry of the Disciples of Christ. We also are increasing our efforts to strengthen the Georgia Christian Council in order to have a stronger ecumenical voice in Georgia.

Our major emphasis continues in connecting congregations and clergy with one another so we do not see ourselves as isolated. The tendency toward isolation is part of the culture. The Region has made the General Board representative a named and continuing position on our Regional Board to counteract the temptation to be narrow and provincial in our deliberations.

Challenges to the ministry continue as previously reported. We have many congregations in ministerial transition and the time demanded, while essential and valuable, inhibits other ministries. Our finances continue to challenge us and limit what we can do. We end up spending excessive time on fundraising and financial administration instead of ministry touching people's lives. We also face a continuing challenge of trying to successfully draw all racial and ethnic aspects of the Region together into a sense of being one Region.

Financial Information, Concerns, and Reports of the Region: Christian Church in Georgia

- A. **What type of accounting method do you use?** Cash Accrual
- B. **Is a professional audit done annually on your books?** 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- | Income \$653,134 | Expense- \$653,433 | (Deficit \$12,753) |
| 2006- | Income \$716,200 | Expense- \$718,200 | (Deficit \$2,000) |
| 2005- | Income \$755,078 | Expense- \$841,940 | (Deficit \$86,862) |
| 2004- | Income \$768,907 | Expense- \$839,479 | (Deficit \$70,572) |
- D. **Currently, what is the total amount of Permanent Funds the Region has from which an “Annual Draw” of endowment earnings income is used to support your operations and programming?** \$117,490
- E. **What is that percentage of draw and how is it calculated?** Draw is the interest earned which is not designated for specific uses.
- F. **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 Region has continued to work hampered both fiscally and emotionally by the stress of always trying to find the resources to do ministry. That is taking a toll upon staff and upon the ability to do ministry with a positive and uplifting attitude.
- The Region has continued a tighter policy on spending and has eliminated needed maintenance and capital replacements because of the fiscal deficit. Necessity has forced us to proceed with some projects even though funds were short. Volunteers are raising money and doing the work to enable some of the repairs. Replacement of the air conditioners still will be a matter to be addressed.
 - The Region has embarked upon various fund raising schemes to increase revenue. These have meant time and energy taken from the other ministries in order to work on financing. We have borrowed money in order to pay expenses. This debt is planned to be repaid from the sale of property which is proving to more difficult to sell than we had imagined.
- G. **What are the key financial issues and concerns currently facing your region’s life and vitality?** Key issues facing the Christian Church in Georgia continue to be declining DMF contributions from congregations. In the past year the DMF giving declined by nearly \$80,000. The efforts at fund raising and seeking additional income have raised designated giving to approximately 20% of DMF giving. Even as we continue that emphasis, we are committed to the covenant to fund all the whole church through DMF. Financial issues in congregations are meaning less money for larger ministries. The worsening economy bodes continued stress for congregations and for the whole church. The costs of doing ministry have increased significantly. Cumulative deficits have taken a toll on the Region and we have reached the point where, with no reserves, our assets are being eaten away at an alarming rate.