



Title: Report of the Christian Church in Indiana

Origin: Richard L. Spleth, Regional Minister

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

Regional Staff

Richard L. Spleth, Regional Minister	M
Carolyn Casey Reed, Associate Regional Minister	F
Dean Phelps, Director of Church Multiplication	M
Becki Nunnally, Minister for the Commission on Ministry	F
Sylvia E. Mill, Consultant for Women’s Ministries	F
Cheryl Cloar, Regional Ministry Intern	F
Sharon Stribling, Executive Assistant	F
Vonnie Cloud, Events Coordinator	F
Melissa Carlson, Accountant/Receptionist	F
Terry Best, Co-Manager, Camp Barbee	M
Jill Best, Co-Manager, Camp Barbee	F

Number of Congregations: 189

Total Participating Members: 33,000

States included in Region: Indiana

Our mission is

**to energize and connect congregations
to proclaim the gospel and
make disciples of Jesus Christ**

We accomplish this mission by equipping congregations to
promote health and growth
cultivate spiritual formation and discipleship
call out and develop passionate leaders
plant new congregations
claim God’s unique mission for them

1. Information regarding how your region has fulfilled the region’s primary purpose as stated in paragraph 20 of *The Design*.

. . .extending the ministry of Christ in mission, teaching, witness, and service among the people and social structures of the region

The region primarily seeks to extend the ministry of Christ by equipping congregations to operate at their best capacity in mission, teaching, witness, and service. We provide opportunities to explore new ministry options both by offering our own workshops and connecting ministers and congregations to each other. We represent the churches collectively to the ecumenical, governmental and social structures of the state.

. . .establishing, receiving, and nurturing 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.

As a region we are engaged in the process of assisting new congregations as they come to life, helping existing congregations discover and claim their mission for this time, and in guiding congregations at the end of their days come to a graceful end of their ministries. We have a team of 17 volunteer Regional Elders to assist the regional staff in providing care and counsel to ministers. Together with this team we are able to be present with congregations in moments of celebration, moments of conflict, and moments of sorrow. The objective of our regional programming is faith formation, the development of leadership skills, and the expansion of understanding of the church's mission.

2. Particular highlights or challenges of ministry in your region since the last report

Congo Partnership

The Region hosted missionary Art Mahaffey for three months as the first part of beginning a new global mission relationship with the Disciples Community in the Congo. Rev. Bonanga Eliko, General Minister and Legal Representative of the Congolese Disciples visited Indiana in October and invited the Region to enter into a partnership with the Mbandaka District of the Congolese church. A partnership agreement, modeled after a similar agreement the Michigan Region has with the Kinshasa District, is being negotiated, and will be formally signed when a delegation of nine Hoosier Disciples travels to the Congo in May 2008. A partnership committee has been formed to connect Indiana congregations to our mission in the Congo over the next decade.

LEAD program

Eleven seventh graders from across the Region are involved in a program called LEAD (Learning Everything About Disciples.) The program will provide a six-year opportunity for youth that begins in the seventh grade and concentrates on total immersion in the church. LEAD youth attended the General Assembly of the Christian Church in Fort Worth last year. They will travel together this year to Cane Ridge and Bethany accompanied by Professor Scott Seay of Christian Theological Seminary. The overall goal of the program is that after six years of involvement the participants will be going off to college with extraordinary leadership skills and a deep knowledge and understanding of the church. The result will be a new generation of clergy and lay leaders for the church. A second LEAD group will form in 2008.

Camps

In 2007 we launched an 8th grade camp on human sexuality based on the model developed by Linda Goddard of the Southwest Region. Additionally in 2006 we introduced two "*Grandparent and Me*" camps with great success. Children who have completed kindergarten through third grade can register for camp with their grandparent or other significant older adult.

Communications

We have revamped our regional newspaper, *The Indiana Christian*, as a result of a communications audit. The paper has a fresh design, uses more color, and is filled with more stories of congregational life consistent with our mission statement to "connect congregations." We have increased our effective use of electronic communication for the sharing of information and concerns and registration for events. We plan on improvements to our webpage, www.indianadisciples.org, in the coming year.

Clergy debt project

The Region has received a \$50,000 planning grant from the Lilly Endowment Fund for the purpose of designing a process to address clergy indebtedness. Of particular concern is the education debt of newly graduated seminarians that is often \$40,000 to \$50,000 or more. The Lilly Endowment believes that the burden of this debt compromises the ability of the pastor to give effective leadership to the local congregation. The Region is working with some pilot groups of clergy to test two different consultative models in order to secure data for a formal grant application to Lilly later this year.

Conversations with Illinois-Wisconsin and Michigan Regions

Twenty-five representatives of the Illinois-Wisconsin, Indiana and Michigan Regions met together at the Lindenwood Retreat Center in Donaldson, Indiana on June 24-26, 2007 to consider the possibility of the merger of the three regions. This was the second meeting of the group. Dick Hamm of The Columbia Partnership facilitated the conversation. A consensus statement was released following the event that said "While not feeling led at this time to pursue a radical systemic change such as structural merger, we do claim that the Holy Spirit is moving us to pursue practical ways in which we can be faithful stewards of the resources and dreams we share for ourselves as God's people and as a part of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Our time of discernment has challenged us to consider sharing life together in some important ways which are shaped around these questions: Will it increase the quality of our ministry and life as Regions? Will it require less energy and other resources than it produces/generates? Will it empower local people to claim their rightful role to 'be the Region'?"

It was agreed to pursue partnerships in areas of work where we may be able to assist one another right now including: Congo partnerships, Congregational Transformation, Regional Elder programs, Young Adult ministries, Anti-Racism training, and Commission on Ministry work.

3. Current goals related to the mission and vision of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). Please give particular attention to your region's goals in fulfilling the church's priorities.

Our long-range goals are to fulfill the Mission Statement that was adopted by our Regional Assembly in 2002. As printed above the statement calls us to focus our attention on *energizing* and *connecting* congregations in order to fulfill the Great Commission. We believe that our particular mission statement is consistent with the 2020 Vision for the whole church.

Establishing 1000 new congregations

We have nine "congregations-in-formation" (five African-American, two Hispanic, one Chin, and one multi-racial). Our Church Multiplication Team meets regularly to nurture our newest communities of faith.

Transforming 1000 existing congregations

A Congregational Transformation Team is actively developing processes to assist congregations who are seeking to discover a fresh movement of the Spirit in their midst. Nine congregations are currently engaged in an intentional process with a consultant, Alan Roxburgh, who is guiding the Regional staff in this process.

Forming and re-forming leadership for these ministries

We currently have 70 candidates for ordination under care in our Nurture and Certification program and an additional 70 persons in our licensed ministry program. Over 50 clergy and lay volunteers work in these programs with our student and licensed ministers to assist them in articulating their faith, developing gifts for service, and clarifying their sense of call. Leadership development is a primary component of our ministries for women, men, and youth. Each of those constituency groups has a commission that spends significant time in developing leadership skills.

Becoming anti-racist/pro-reconciling

We do not currently have an Anti-Racism Committee. We do focus the efforts of our new church establishment on the creation of multi-cultural, Hispanic, Asian, and African-American communities of faith to affect a broader mix of congregations in our Region. We intentionally work to have commissions and the Board of the Region inclusive of persons of different racial backgrounds. We address this issue with every congregational search committee and encourage consideration of pastors who are of racial identities different than their membership.

4. The Administrative Committee would be interested in knowing what barriers you experience in carrying out your ministry as well as other information that is important as a matter of record for the church.

We are conscious of a sense of lethargy and complacency in too many of our congregations. In too many of our churches there is no energy or investment in evangelism. This suggests the potential for numerous congregations to close in the coming decade. The Regional staff is seeking to equip themselves by studying together *Unbinding the Gospel* by Martha Grace Reece as we attempt to help congregations reclaim the Great Commission.

The question of the ordination of homosexual persons continues to be an unresolved issue in the life of the Region. A process of discernment was initiated at the 2000 Regional Assembly. Eight years later there appears to be some new openness and interest in renewing that conversation. A Commission on Ministry retreat is planned for the fall of 2008 as well as consultations with clergy on this issue.

The Regional Assembly will be held at Purdue University, West Lafayette, Indiana on October 10 and 11. Rev. Elizabeth Myer-Boulton will be a guest preacher.

We are proud of the great number of congregations who are assisting in the recovery along the Gulf Coast. Several of our congregations have made multiple trips, and several Hoosier Disciples are under contract with DHM to provide ongoing oversight to the mission stations.

The Heartbeats of Faith campaign to support Churchwide Healthcare is well organized in the Region under the leadership of Rev. Roger Heimer. Twenty-one congregations have set goals and are conducting campaigns. Hoosier Disciples contributed 19% of the gifts to Heartbeats of Faith received in 2006 and 2007.

Regional Minister Richard Spleth will be on sabbatical May–July 2008. Rev. Linda McKiernan-Allen will serve as Acting Regional Minister during this time.

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.

C. *For the last three years, with regard to your OPERATIONS BUDGET ONLY, please provide the following information:*

	2007	2006	2005
Total Income	\$956,727	913,382	865,421
Total Expenses	<u>\$897,595</u>	<u>972,839</u>	<u>913,855</u>
Surplus (Deficit) \$	59,132*	(59,457)*	(48,434)*

*Note, net surplus or deficit numbers include all end of the year audit adjustments including depreciation.

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? What is that percentage of draw and how is it calculated?*

Total Endowment Fund balances from which we take a draw to support our Operational Budget---\$1,067,905 [Total of all Designated and Endowment Fund balances as of 12/31/07 is \$2,881,938.]

We currently draw 5% off of the 12 quarter rolling balance. We take no draw from the principal amount, only from growth in the endowment funds.

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

Overall decline in giving to Disciples Mission Fund has hampered our ability to faithfully address the mission priorities of the church in congregational redevelopment, leadership development, new church establishment, and clergy/congregational care. We continue to live at the edge of our ability to respond to basic congregational needs with the staff reductions we have had to absorb. Nevertheless we celebrate the 3% increase of Indiana Disciples congregations to Disciples Mission Fund in 2007 reversing a several year trend of decreased giving, and we also celebrate the an increase in our Annual Fund giving.

Indiana continues to offer financial support to the whole church disproportionate to our size. Our 189 congregations, representing 5% of the whole church, provided \$1.2 million in funding for Disciples Mission Fund in 2007, which represented 8.4% of all DMF giving. Hoosier Disciples provided \$1.9 million to all Disciples outreach causes last year.